

Publisher's Note

Why Does Unity Matter?

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In late August I participated in a prayer conference that was nothing short of amazing—a conference that would not have happened perhaps even a decade ago. The Praying Church Conference was sponsored by Doug Small and Alive Ministries and co-sponsored by the Church of God (Cleveland). It took place at the Church at Liberty Square (COG) in Cartersville, GA, with more than 500 people attending.

What was so amazing about the event was the large number of participants from two vastly different denominations—Church of God and Southern Baptist. Both denominations were well represented in attendance and in the lineup of speakers.

In one of the evening events, Small interviewed a Southern Baptist pastor who had recently experienced a significant move of God in his church. It was both powerful and fascinating to watch these two leaders. Instead of focusing on their traditionally different views on what marks a move of God, they highlighted and praised God for what He was doing among the other group.

Later Small spoke about how believers can be in unity with each other. He commented that there is a core theology we all agree about—especially related to who Christ is, what He has done for us, and what our mission should be (to reach lost people). But we all come from different tribes (in the same way the 12 tribes of Israel were different) with our own idiosyncrasies and emphases. The problem has been that we too

often make those idiosyncrasies and emphases our core theology. When that happens, believers are not likely to fellowship together.

In one of the few recorded prayers we have of Jesus, He prayed specifically for unity of His future followers, “that all of them may be one, Father” (John 17:21). Why did He want His Church to be unified? “Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (v. 23). First Timothy 2:1–4 indicates God’s desire is for all men to be saved. That is the heart of Jesus. And, according to Scripture, that happens best when His people are in unity—working, fellowshiping, and praying together.

Looking historically at revival and spiritual awakening in the United States, a key element that launched those moves of God was unity. Churches started praying together, seeking God for their communities and nation. In the prayer meeting revival of the late 1850s, believers from many different churches gathered in noontime prayer meetings across cities. They did not care what “tribes” were represented and they were not concerned about mingling with each other. They simply had a common goal and vision in their prayers.

We need to tear down those walls that divide the denominational (and non-denominational) tribes—for the sake of the gospel. Pastors, we need to be less concerned about what intermingling might do to our theological purity and more concerned with what unity will do to rescue lost souls.

A simple starting point is to go to nationalprayeraccord.com and see how you can be involved in this unified prayer rhythm. Then look for ways to pray with pastors and believers from other tribes.

–Jonathan Graf

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