

# Four Ways To Promote Church Unity

I Corinthians 1 Through 3

June 6,2010

## I. THE SETTING I Cor. 1:1-18

**FOUNDATIONS:** (Simple Things DO Matter!!!) A ship was wrecked off the Irish coast. The captain was a careful man, and the weather had not been severe enough to make the vessel veer from its course. Nevertheless the ship went down, and many lives were lost. So much interest was taken in the wreck that a diving bell was sunk. Among the portions examined was the compass, and inside the compass box was found a tiny bit of steel. The day before the wreck, a sailor had been ordered to clean the compass. Using his pocket knife, he had unconsciously broken off the point under the edge of the box. That tiny bit of steel changed the dip of the needle, and the man at the wheel had driven the ship onto hidden rocks.

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The Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy is going to fall. Scientists travel yearly to measure the building's slow descent. They report that the 179-foot tower moves about one-twentieth of an inch a year, and is now 17 feet out of plumb. They further estimate that by the year 2007 the 810-year old tower will have leaned too far and will collapse onto the nearby ristorante, where scientists now gather to discuss their findings. Quite significantly, the word "pisa" means "marshy land," which gives some clue as to why the tower began to lean even before it was completed. Also--its foundation is only 10 feet deep!

Unknown.

**FOCUS:** The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table

Whichever way you point a wagon tongue, that's the way it goes.

—Proverb (Russian)

## II. THE SOLUTION I Cor. 1:10, 1:21-31; 3:9-10, 3:16-17

Foundations that fit the purpose:

The great architect Frank Lloyd Wright was given the challenge of building the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, one of the most earthquake-prone cities in the world. Wright's investigation showed that a solid foundation could be "floated" on a sixty-foot layer of soft mud underlying the hotel, which would provide a shock-absorbing but solid support for the immense building. Shortly after the hotel was completed it withstood the worst earthquake in fifty-two years, while lesser buildings fell in ruins around it.

Today in the Word, March 1989, p. 6.

A weakness of all human beings, " Henry Ford said, "is trying to do too many things at once. That scatters effort and destroys direction. It makes for haste, and haste makes waste. So we do things all the wrong ways possible before we come to the right one. Then we think it is the best way because it works, and it was the only way left that we could see. Every now and then I wake up in the morning headed toward that finality, with a dozen things I want to do. I know I can't do them all at once." When asked what he did about that, Ford replied, "I go out and trot around the house. While I'm running off the excess energy that wants to do too much, my mind clears and I see what can be done and should be done first."

Bits & Pieces, September 19, 1991, p. 18.

**UNITY:** Calvin, who saw that the Devil's chief device was disunity and division and who preached that there should be friendly fellowship for all ministers of Christ, made a similar point in a letter to a trusted colleague: "Among Christians there ought to be so great a dislike of schism, as that they may always avoid it so fast as lies in their power. That there ought to prevail among them such a reverence for the ministry of the word and the sacraments that wherever they perceive these things to be, there they must consider the church to exist...nor need it be of any hindrance that some points of doctrine are not quite so pure, seeing that there is scarcely any church which has not retained some remnants of former ignorance."

Charles W. Colson, The Body, 1992, Word Publishing, p. 107-108.

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"To remain divided is sinful! Did not our Lord pray, that they may be one, even as we are one"? (John 17:22). A chorus of ecumenical voices keep harping the unity tune. What they are saying is, "Christians of all doctrinal shades and beliefs must come together in one visible organization, regardless... Unite, unite!" Such teaching is false, reckless and dangerous. Truth alone must determine our alignments. Truth comes before unity. Unity without truth is hazardous. Our Lord's prayer in John 17 must be read in its full context. Look at verse 17: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Only those sanctified through the Word can be one in Christ. To teach otherwise is to betray the Gospel.

Charles H. Spurgeon, The Essence of Separation, quoted in *The Berean Call*, July, 1992, p. 4.

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In a Peanuts cartoon Lucy demanded that Linus change TV channels, threatening him with her fist if he didn't. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" asks Linus.

"These five fingers," says Lucy. "Individually they're nothing but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold."

"Which channel do you want?" asks Linus. Turning away, he looks at his fingers and says, "Why can't you guys get organized like that?"

Charles Schultz.

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There are two ways of being united -- one is by being frozen together, and the other is by being melted together. What Christians need is to be united in brotherly love, and then they may expect to have power.

Moody's Anecdotes, p. 53.

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Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look at what they can do when they stick together.

Vesta Kelly.

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RELIEF ON THE HOLY SPIRIT: Sometime back the Associated Press carried this dispatch: "Glasgow, Ky.--Leslie Puckett, after struggling to start his car, lifted the hood and discovered that someone had stolen the motor."

Associated Press.

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**The basic principle of diving is:**

**"DON'T STAND ON YOUR OWN AIRHOSE!"**

**Sadly, too many believers are standing on their own spiritual air hose by failing to live in the power of the Holy Spirit. When He is quenched, we suffocate!**

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The president of the Pennsylvania Railway, was making a quiet tour over one of the branches of the system, and wandered into an out-of-the-way switch-yard, where something one of the yard men was doing did not meet with his approbation. He made some suggestions to the man, who asked: "Who are you that's trying to teach me my business?" "I am an officer of the road," replied the president. "Let's see your switch-key, then," said the man, suspiciously. Mr. Cassatt pulled from his hip-pocket his key-ring, to which was attached the switch-key, which no railroad man in service is ever without. It was sufficient proof for the switchman, who then did as he was told. This story suggests a great spiritual lesson. If you are going to have any real leadership in dealing with the souls of men, they must see in your conversation, in the tone of your character, in the spirit of your life, that you possess the "switch-key" of the Holy Spirit.