



I AM A CHURCH MEMBER “A Unifying Church Member ”

Ephesians 4:1-6
February, 9 2014

- ✓ We Must Diligently Pursue Unity
- ✓ We Must Be Realistic in Our Expectations
- ✓ We Must Focus on What We Have in Common and Not Our Differences
- ✓ We Must Not Gossip and Refuse to Listen to Gossip
- ✓ We Will Not Talk About Others Behind Their Back
- ✓ We Must Speak the Truth in Love
- ✓ We Must Be Willing to Forgive and Ask Forgiveness
- ✓ We Must Practice the Biblical Model for Conflict Resolution
- ✓ We Must Choose to Encourage Rather Than Criticize
- ✓ We Must Support Our Pastors and Leaders

Why: Because We Are ONE

One Body; One Spirit; One Hope; One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism; One God

THE SECOND PLEDGE

I will seek to be a source of unity in my church. I know there are no perfect pastors, staff, or other church members. But neither am I. I will not be a source of dissension. One of the greatest contributions I can make is to do all I can in God's power to help keep the church in unity for the sake of the Gospel.

Our Response:

1. Do you understand how much God values your life and desires to have that personal relationship with you? You can ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart and life and save you right now. Remember it is as simple as **ABC!** **Admit** to God you are a sinner, **Ask** for His forgiveness, **Believe** Jesus is God's Son, **Confess** Him as Savior & **Commit** Your Life to Him as Lord (the Boss).
2. Maybe you have made that decision, but never have made it public. He is calling you to step out and take that next step that He asks us to do. Be baptized.
3. In order for you to grow and be all that the Lord is calling you to be, you need to be plugged in to a church. If you do not have a church home, and God has called you to be a part of **Petal FBC**, then step across the line today and join! We need you and you need us
4. How will you pursue unity in our Church Family?
5. Is there anyone that you need to forgive? Is there anyone that needs your forgiveness? Do it today!!
6. Do you have someone who will speak the truth in love to you? Are you willing to do that and to receive that?
7. How can you be supportive of our Staff and Leadership?
8. How can you encourage someone this week in our Church?

I AM A CHURCH MEMBER

“A Unifying Church Member”

Ephesians 4:1-6

February 9, 2014 AM Service

We continue this series this morning with the 2nd in the series. Last week we talked about being a Functioning Church Member. That we are all a part of the body of Christ and each one is vitally important and none more important than the other. We need each other and must learn to depend and rely on one another. Being a member means that we serve and don't expect to be served – it's a fresh reminder of what the Bible says what it means to be a Biblical member.

This morning we move to the 2nd commitment of our Series – I Am a Church Member – Being a unifying Church Member. We see that call hear and in other letters Paul wrote to the Churches In Phillipi, Paul told them it made “his joy complete for them to be of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in Spirit, intent on one purpose.”, and in Colossae when he said “Above all put on love - the perfect bond of unity.” and here in Ephesus. It was also something that Jesus talked about with His disciples especially in the book of John. His prayer for them and challenge to them was to be ONE just as He and the Father were one, so too that the disciples would be One with Him and with each other. And in fact, this love displayed in unity was the clear and obvious way that the world would know that were Christ Followers.

This unity is vital to the health of any Church – just like in a sports team, though the church far more important, look at the difference of a team that works together and doesn't. They don't win much.

The question to ask this morning – Are We ONE here at Petal FBC?

We must walk worthy of the calling we have received...

The word worthy means balance – as in the balancing of scales. Let your actions equal what your profess.

How do we that? Unity is critical and vital to the health of a church and for us to be the kind of biblical church member He is calling us to be. So let's look at how we can be a Unifying Church Member...

✓ **We Must Diligently Pursue Unity.**

It is God's command to every believer. The Bible says that we must diligently pursue unity – that means it's not something that is passive, but active. It requires something of us. It's not just something that automatically happens because we join a church or it is a good or growing church. It happens because the people in that church make it a priority.

Again as a reminder, unity is not uniformity. It doesn't mean we are all the same, but instead we all agree on the Biblical foundation the essentials and we rally around that – the other things that are minor ones, the non-essentials, we agree to- work through them and even agree to disagree over them. That's the sign of a mature believers and a maturing church when members can disagree and still be unified. Not going to say that it's always easy, but it can be done when in the spirit of unity. I have friends that are Calvinist and we deeply disagree over the issue, but we are still close friends and were unified in the Church that we were a part of.

✓ **We Must Be Realistic in Our Expectations**

Sometimes once we understand what a Church Family is supposed to be and what genuine fellowship looks like, we see the gap between the ideal and reality and it can be a let down. We see people aren't perfect and people will let us down and disappoint us. This can lead to disillusionment and disappointment. It can cause to be overly critical or settle for less and become complacent about what God intended. We must grow in our maturity and seek to be part of helping the Church become what she needs to be and not bailing when things don't go our way or don't happen the way we like. **ILLUS: Bonhoeffer**

✓ **We Must Focus on What We Have in Common and Not Our Differences**

“Let us concentrate on the things which make for harmony and on the growth of one another' character.” Romans 14:19 We'll talk about this at the end, but let's touch on it briefly here. We have so much in common when we look at the Lord and what He has done for each of us and what He has done through us. We have to stay focused again on those things that matter most and those that are not as important, we must certainly not let those difference divide us. Many times when you

have a Church that is made up of lots of different kinds of people, it can be a challenge to focus on what's in common rather than what's different. We must rely on the Holy Spirit to help us do just that

✓ **We Must Not Gossip and Refuse to Listen to Gossip.**

This is so important and one of the most damaging things that can happen in a church both for those inside the church and for those outside of it. We must make a deep commitment this morning that we will not be a part of gossip, especially about those who are a part of the body of Christ and even for those outside these 4 walls. It destroys a church quicker than anything and it can destroy a church's reputation in the community because of member who gossip about other believers or other people. James talks about the tongue and the fire that it can be. The tongue can be used for great good or for great harm.

The other part of this is we must gently and firmly refuse to listen to gossip and encourage those who do to not do it. To lovingly and kindly remind them of your commitment to not gossip! The more you do this, the word will get out not to come to you and if we all do that there will be no place for gossip in this fellowship!

✓ **We Must Not Talk About Others Behind Their Back.**

This goes hand in hand with gossip, but taking it even further in that maybe there are things we don't like about others and we talk about them, and are critical of them or demean them in front of others. Or perhaps they did something you didn't like or agree with and we won't somebody to jump on our bandwagon. This is never what Christ intended for His Church to be about. This lead us to the next.

✓ **We Must Speak the Truth in Love**

This is one where we all must grow and one that Paul encouraged the Ephesian Church to do – speak the truth to one another but do so in great, tender love. This is one that is missing in our Churches. We don't speak the truth because we are afraid of what others might think about us or say about us, or we don't want to hurt someone's feelings or want somebody coming and saying something to us. Yet, Jesus says clearly, the truth will set us free. It doesn't mean that we run around looking for ways to correct others or find things wrong with others, but that as we become close as a family, we allow others to speak truth into our lives

even if it stings or bites because they want what is best for us and for the church. Better then would of a friend than the kiss of an enemy Proverbs says. We must be a Church that speak the truth in love.

✓ **We Must Be Willing to Forgive and Ask Forgiveness**

This is also a fundamental part of being a unified church. There is no doubt that in a body this big and one that is growing, we will eventually hurt someone's feelings or there be a misunderstanding or something not get communicated, it just happens. The real sign of a healthy church and one that is growing is where there are believers who are quick to ask for forgiveness and quick to forgive. There is a lot more that can be said about this, but we must be willing to forgive and also humble ourselves and ask for forgiveness when we've wronged someone even if it was unintentional or we don't think we we're wrong.

ILLUS: Lady – held a grudge of a preacher, would never forgive him and made her so bitter and it poisoned her and those around her – it turned into resentment and bitterness. This pastor had left the church long ago and then even died but she never let it go! Unforgiveness hurts you and the body, rarely the person you won't forgive! Take back that control today and choose by the grace and power of God to forgive! [Matthew 6:14-15](#); [Colossians 3:12-14](#) How can we not forgive when we realize what we have been forgiven of in our lives by Jesus Himself?!

✓ **We Must Practice the Biblical Model for Conflict Resolution**

[Matthew 18:15-17](#) speaks clearly and how we are to resolve conflict. Let's read it. It is one that many choose not to practice and ties into the last 4 we just talked about. If we would practice this, division would be so much less in the church because things would be made right from the start and there would be no room for Satan to grab a toehold and create disunity which is one of most favorite weapons!

✓ **We Must Choose to Encourage Rather Than Criticize.**

This comes easier for some of us than others by our nature or the kind of home we grew up in, some are just born encouragers like Barnabas. Others of us are more prone to be critical rather than encourage. This is again one that we must constantly be on guard as we grow as a church family and that is that we choose to encourage rather than criticize and if we do so a problem or have a concern, then we find an encouraging

way to share that or even better become a solution to the problem ourselves by helping, stepping in, whatever. Let's make a fresh commitment to not have a critical spirit, but one that lifts up and brings out the best in people!

✓ **We Must Support Our Pastors and Leaders.**

There are no perfect leaders and I'm definitely not one – I try to be honest and transparent with you and remind you that I'm not. Yet the Lord has given me this awesome and many time overwhelming responsibility of being one of the shepherds of this flock. One day I will have to stand give account for how I led this body and others that I have the privilege of leading. And you also will have to stand account for how you followed your leaders. We will talk about this more specifically next week, but let me say now, our call is to pray, encourage, and appreciate them. [“Honor those leaders who work so hard for you, who have been given the responsibility of urging and guiding you along in your obedience. Overwhelm with appreciation and love.” 1 Thessolians 5:12-13a](#) You have done just that for us for sure!! Thank you!!

Why: Because We Are ONE

One Body; One Spirit; One Hope; One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism; One God

And the World will know we are Believers by the way we are ONE – by the way we love and care for others and how we conduct our lives and our Churches.

Could it be that the Lord sends people ready to find Christ to churches that are ready for them – that are unified and a place where love is found – a church is functioning as it should. It's like what we learned in the NICU setting. Could it be that one of the reasons that some churches are growing and others are not? Now I'm not saying we are doing all we need to do yet by any means, we have a long way to go – but I believe we are well on the way!

The 2nd Pledge

I will seek to be a source of unity in my church. I know there are no perfect pastors, staff, or other church members. But neither am I. I will not be a source of dissension. One of the greatest contributions I can make is to do all I can in god's power to help keep the church in unity for the sake of the Gospel.