

# Integration

(Week 6)

**Central Truth:** *“The church coming together to understand itself as a unit.”*

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## Integration Defined

(Day 26)

Everything one group in the Body does affects the whole Body. “My” ministry is really designed to strengthen the whole ministry of the Body, more than the other way around. The vision is seeing First Baptist Church act as a unit. We should long for the day when each ministry will understand the direct effect it has on other ministries and on all the Body, and learns how to truly defer to others in the best interests of the whole church, and to the Body’s priorities at any given season.

Good communication will result in integration. This in part will grow out of the staff acting as a unit and seeing clearly how each aspect of ministry and budget expenditures affects every other emphasis and program. Each special program is not responsible for all other programs or to even know completely about all other programs, but every program is required to integrate its work into the whole fabric of the church’s life. We should make each program subservient to the mission statement of the church. If that program cannot define itself in light of the mission statement and the Great Commission, then a serious question is raised about the need for that program to exist in our church Body. We share a stewardship of money, time, corporate interest, and spiritual momentum. This is a function of staff and lay leadership together serving one another in love. We need the attitude and wisdom of the men of Issachar who *“understood the times and knew what Israel should do.”* (1 Chronicles 12:32)

This calls for a strong perception of what it means to defer to one another in honor, and to “out-do” each other in honoring the other. What this means in a practical sense is that planning is not done in isolation from the rest of the church’s entities. It means we agree to value the resources (building, vans, volunteers’ time and staff) by utilizing them caringly and wisely, aware that other ministries are affected by any disregard and wastefulness of these resources.

We agree to use the Church Council as a clearing house to make sure that not only is the calendar open for planned events, but that the capacity of the members for ministry activity is not overtaxed by too many events, or with the substitution of amusing activities for ministry. It is central to integration to have the church pull together for worship and the core services of the Body (worship, evangelism, missions, fellowship and discipleship), protecting worship, Sunday School, training and outreach events from

competing committee meetings or other organizational work being held at the same times.

### **Points to Ponder**

**What comes to mind when you hear the word “Integration?” What are some ways First Baptist Church can promote integration? What can you do personally to promote integration? Do you view our staff as a group here to service your personal needs or serve the good of the Body under the direction of Jesus Christ? Is your personal ministry in alignment with the purpose and vision of First Baptist Church? If not, are you willing to drop that ministry or realign it for the good of the Body?**

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## **Unity in Christ - The God of Hope**

(Day 27)

**You are encouraged to read the article located in the Appendix section of our Vision Walk entitled “*Henry Urges Leaders to Pursue Unity in Christ*” written by Trennis Henderson reporting on an address prepared by Jim Henry and presented at a Pastor/Deacon/Spouse Retreat for the Kentucky Baptist Convention held February 2-3, 2007 in Bowling Green, Kentucky.**

“It’s the blood of the cross that holds us together,” Henry said. “When we realize where we are at the cross of Jesus Christ, we understand the call for unity.”

Read Romans 15:1-33 as we examine this God of hope more closely.

The chapter begins with summing up of the previous teaching of considering others in our demeanor, actions, and deportment. We need to act in accordance with what will glorify our Lord, and keep our brother or sister in Christ from falling. Paul even means that we go much further than tolerating a brother’s weakness, but rather do all possible to strengthen them in faith. Carry their load. Carry them when necessary.

We are to see to it that we with one mind and one mouth glorify God together, “...*grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...*” (Romans 15:1-7).

Paul was obviously a believer in God’s promises. He understood that Jesus was the fulfillment of the promises of God, and their confirmation.

The confirmation of the promises came by Jesus Christ (Romans 15:8). The Old Testament is full of promises. Promises of the coming One. A Deliverer. The Messiah. A Savior who will save the people from their sins.

- In Jesus's birth He confirmed scripture. Born a Jew. Born in Bethlehem. Called a Nazarene. He fulfilled the law.
- He was a healer, healing the lame and the blind. Lepers were freed from their sores, the dead were raised to life. He walked on the water, stilled storms, fed multitudes, and cast out demons.
- Only few followed Him, and still He chose to go to the cross and die for our sins as the suffering servant (Isaiah 53).

Jesus confirmed the promises by opening the gate for all people. Paul reminds his readers that God's plan has always been to include all people no matter what their race or nationality or culture (Romans 15:9-13).

- *"Therefore I will give thanks to You among the nations, O Lord, and I will sing praises to Your name." (Psalm 18:49)*
- *"Rejoice, O nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance on His adversaries, and will atone for His land and His people." (Deuteronomy 32:43)*
- *"Praise the Lord, all nations; laud Him, all peoples!" (Psalm 117:1)*
- *"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious." (Isaiah 11:1, 10)*
- All our hope and power is from the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

We have something in which to boast (Romans 15:14-21). When is it right to boast? We can boast of the faith, work, patience, boldness, and goodness that others do through Christ Jesus.

- We can boast of the goodness of God, and what He has done in us, and through us.
- To boast of anything concerning Jesus' mighty deeds is a good boast.

Through prayer for the sovereign leadership of the Lord in our lives and other's lives we can grow in trusting The God of Hope (Romans 15:22-33). The following was the desire of Paul's heart, and his requests from the Roman Christians.

- To be delivered from the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem;
- That his work and ministry for Jerusalem would be accepted by the believers;
- That he would be able to visit them, at Rome, in the will of God and be "refreshed," renewing joy, peace and rest with them.

God is the sovereign One. He directs the affairs of all people in all lands. His will will be done despite our arrogant, self-styled, self-willed disobedience.

**Points to Ponder**

**Have you ever had someone befriend you only to find out later they just wanted something? How did that make you feel? How do you think God feels when we unload on Him after long periods of “silence” in our relationship with Him? How will our “horizontal” relationships change if we truly see value in people? How will that enhance our “vertical” relationship?**

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**A Heart for Harmony**

(Day 28)

**You are encouraged to read the article located in the Appendix section of our Vision Walk entitled “*A Heart for Harmony*,” written by Jeff Ginn.**

Read Philippians 4:2-3 and review the conclusions drawn by Mr. Ginn relative to harmony in the church that follow.

Any time conflict arises in the church, it should concern us. We are to live at peace with all people as much as possible, yet this will not be possible in all circumstances. The instructions of this passage apply to us as we seek to move forward together in Christ’s service.

**Case Study #1**

A story was told of a high school basketball team blessed with some very talented players; however, they were not united. One big fellow on the team was a hulk of a high schooler (we’ll call him Max). After a game one of the other players harassed Max all the way home on the bus. Once the team arrived in their parking lot, the harassment continued as the rest of the team stood around. Max finally turned around and slapped his tormentor down. How were they going to win a game against another team when they were fighting among themselves? The truth is they didn’t win many games, but the next season the team went 30-0. Two of the players went on to NBA careers. The talent was certainly there the year before, but they didn’t have the “harmony.” Giftedness without harmony won’t win games!

**Points to Ponder**

**In Philippians 4:2 Paul recognized that conflicts between believers can and will occur. What must we each do in times of conflict to make sure harmony in our church family is maintained? Who must take the first step?**

Case Study #2

Recently a congregation had the privilege of hosting their association's area-wide crusade. Congregations from all over southern Virginia gathered to worship and hear God's Word proclaimed. The crusade was a united effort. Attendance was high, and scores of people committed their lives to Christ. When we stand united, God's power is unleashed in unique ways.

**Points to Ponder**

**The area-wide crusade was successful because it was a united effort between many different congregations working in harmony to achieve God's purpose. Can you remember a time when our association displayed that kind of harmony? If you were a part of that event, how did it make you feel? When was the last time you experienced that kind of harmony in our church?**

Case Study #3

Years ago a terrible conflict erupted in a church after the pastor and his wife left for the mission field. A dear family wanted to put a special tombstone on the grave of their loved one. Another church member opposed this on the grounds that the church had established rules for headstones in the church's cemetery. The conflict escalated until the fellowship actually divided. Imagine a church split over a tombstone!

**Points to Ponder**

**Conflict is a part of our daily life simply because no matter how hard we try, we won't always agree with each other. Disagreements can turn into bitter conflict when we fail to put God's purposes ahead of our own desires. In this case study a church divided over something trivial, something that had no real bearing on God's plan for this church. Has a similar event happened to a church you attended? As the conflict grew in size and the division became more evident, how did you feel about what was happening? What can you do to prevent conflict from destroying the harmony that is so essential to the spiritual wellbeing of Christ's church?**

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## **Fellowship – The Power of Oneness (Reprise)**

(Day 29)

**This section is an excerpt from a sermon prepared by Steve Andrews. You are encouraged to read this sermon in its entirety located in the Appendix section of our Vision Walk. As you recall, we addressed this during DAY 22 of our walk in Fellowship. This also applies to Integration and is worth revisiting.**

Read John 17:19-26

Our text says that Jesus prayed for all who would call upon His name to be one, and a watching world would be drawn to believe in Christ (John 17:20-21). Here Jesus shares

one of the most overlooked tools of evangelism. Jesus says, “When a watching lost world looks at a Body of believers, they see something that they can’t find anywhere else. They desire love, support, encouragement, and acceptance, and they will be drawn to the Savior.” He didn’t say the world is going to be drawn because of great preaching. He didn’t say great singing would cause hoards of people to be drawn to Christ. He said, in effect, “I’m praying that they will be one as the heavenly Father and I are one, and that unity will draw them to the gospel.”

Several characteristics of Christ-honoring fellowship, as well as Christ-honoring integration, can be identified simply by using the word UNITY as an acronym:

- “U” represents the word uplift. Follow the commands of God to uplift one another.
- “N” stands for the word need. God has placed us here so that we can meet the needs of others.
- “I” stands for integrity. Glory calls attention to the holiness and the purity of God. Jesus represented the glory and the holiness of God, and we have received the call to represent that same type of integrity or holiness.
- “T” means trust. Where there is integrity, the saints of God are willing to trust one another. You can focus on your assigned area because you trust other saints to do their job.
- “Y” stands for yielding. Two areas of our lives require yielding. First, we yield to the Lordship of Christ. Then, having yielded to the Lordship of Christ, we have the capacity to yield to one another in the glorious cause sharing the gospel. We should be willing to yield our selfish desires to the greater goal of extending the love of Christ to a lost world.

When we diminish the importance of unity in the Body of Christ, we risk being invaded by the enemy. God has called us to divine fellowship and is leading us to an understanding of the church working together as a unit. That fellowship is one of the most powerful tools of witness to a lost and dying world. If we don’t protect it, strive for it, and do everything we can to promote it, we open the gate to the enemy. The enemy will attack your family and your church, causing ineffectiveness and destruction.

### **Points to Ponder**

**Trust is a key factor in realizing unity in the Body. For other believers who live by the same Biblical values, can we trust God enough to include them in our assembly even though they may see things from a different perspective? For those other believers who might see things differently, can we listen without refuting or trying to control their comments? Instead, can we communicate with the goal of motivating their growth in faith?**

## **Application**

(Day 30)

There are many practical things that we can engage in as we accept the responsibility personally and corporately for “Integration” under the guidance and strength of the Holy Spirit. These include, but are not limited to:

- Every committee and team ask “How does this plan affect other people and committees, and is it for their good as well?”
- Everybody working to protect the gathering times of the Body (worship services), not allowing committee meetings or personal activity in the facilities compete with worship
- Everybody becoming sensitive to the positive momentum of the Body, and works carefully to add to it
- Everybody knowing our church’s purpose, and repeats it to each other through practical activities
- Fitting gifted members into appropriate gift roles
- Being flexible enough to initiate additions and reductions of administrative and teaching units

### **Points to Ponder**

**Where are you gifted spiritually? Are you exercising those spiritual gifts to promote integration? Do you experience seasons of frustration at First Baptist Church? When you examine the source of those frustrations, do you find that they are typically rooted in your own selfish desires? How would your heart attitude change if that energy was redirected to focus on what is “best” for the Body?**



# Henry Urges Leaders to Pursue Unity in Christ

Written by Trennis Henderson/Western Recorder

BOWLING GREEN, Ky. (BP)--After more than 45 years of pastoral ministry, Jim Henry has plenty of experience working with deacons and other church leaders.

Henry, who retired last year after nearly 30 years as pastor of First Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla., drew on that experience as the keynote speaker for the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Feb. 2-3 Pastor/Deacon/Spouse Retreat in Bowling Green.

In addition to Henry leading three sessions on effective deacon ministry, his wife Jeanette led a pair of sessions for spouses on "Dealing with Life Issues in Ministry."

Affirming that "I have a high esteem for the office of deacon as well as high esteem for the office of pastor," Henry emphasized the importance of pursuing unity in the body of Christ.

Noting that 1,300 Southern Baptist pastors and church staff members were fired or forced to resign last year, the former Southern Baptist Convention president said, "There's something not healthy going on in our churches.... We're having a whole lot of heartaches and problems in our local churches.

"How do we stay together?" he asked before noting, "The pastors and the deacons have a critical role to play in that in the church."

Citing the Apostle Paul's teachings in Philippians 1 and 2, Henry said the first element of unity is prayer.

"What holds us together? It's prayer," he declared. "I can't tell you the strength that comes from prayer for one another."

Paul also emphasized the importance of being partners in ministry, Henry continued.

"We're all together in this. We're partners in ministry, sharing fellowship together," he said. "We're in it together, to sink or swim.

"There's a self-sacrificing in ministry ... in order that Christ can live through us," he added. "That's a powerful thing to remember.

"You can have differences, difficulties and disappointments," Henry acknowledged, "but if you are partners, you will not have disruptions."

Pastors and deacons also "are bound together in a persevering faith," Henry said.

Citing such historic Baptist doctrines as the divinity of Christ, salvation through Christ alone and the security of the believer, he added, "What holds us together? Jesus Christ and some commonness in some basic doctrinal issues."

In addition to prayer, partnership and a persevering faith, Henry said, "A very practical thing that holds us together is compassion for each other."

"When we practically say, 'You're my brother and you're my sister and I love you,' it will keep the church growing stronger and will get us through the disagreements that come."

Reiterating Paul's call for Christian unity, Henry declared, "Unity is the highest expression of the Christian faith. When they see unity in a world that is disunited, it's like a magnet drawing people to Christ."

Henry said unity is essential in today's church in order to overcome spiritual warfare and strengthen our relationship to Jesus.

Detailing the difference between unity and uniformity, he noted, "Uniformity comes from pressure from the outside. Unity comes from pressure from the inside and the pressure from the inside is the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the One who compels us to do everything we can do bring unity into the body of Christ."

"It's the blood of the cross that holds us together," he said. "When we realize where we are at the cross of Jesus Christ, we understand the call for unity."

In a session geared toward pastors, Henry shared a list of ways "you can be a pastor your deacons will love to work with and follow." Among his suggestions for pastors to "be the leader God intends you to be" were:

-- Understand the heart of your people. That includes understanding each congregation's unique culture and learning the church's expectations, Henry said.

-- Serve with a shepherd/servant heart. "Some of our pastors think they are too big to get in there with the people and have a CEO mentality," he cautioned. "It's very important to be close to your people; they've got to know you love them."

-- Listen to wise counsel. "All of us preachers make mistakes. We have clay feet. We don't know everything," he acknowledged. "Get close to the wise men of the church."

-- Wear humility as a badge of honor. "All of us have to fight the demon of pride," Henry said. "If you're going to pastor in a noble way, you must do it with humility."

-- "Make your own butter." He exhorted pastors, "Don't preach somebody else's sermons. Avoid plagiarism." He added, "Pastor, you have to make prayer and study a priority. That requires three things: work, discipline and a plan."

-- Be careful about chasing the latest church fad. "God does not take a cookie cutter and say, 'This is what I want to happen in every church.'"

-- Make much of Jesus. "After we're gone, Jesus is still there," Henry concluded. "It's all about Jesus; it's not about us. We're just His messenger boys for a season."

***Trennis Henderson*** is editor of the *Western Recorder*, newsjournal of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.



# A Heart for Harmony (Philippians 4:2-3)

Written by Dr. Jeff Ginn

## Introduction

One result of September 11, 2001 is that Americans are more united. A phrase that has appeared repeatedly is "United We Stand." This phrase applies also to the church. God calls us to live in peace with one another as we serve Him, so we must stand united.

## Outline

### I. Concern expressed (4:2).

Paul says, "I urge" Euodia and Syntyche to "agree in the Lord." Their living together in harmony was important to him. Why was he so concerned that the church be unified?

1. God is concerned about harmony (Prov. 6:16-19).
2. Jesus is concerned about harmony (John 13:34-45).

### II. Combatants exposed (4:2-3).

1. They were Christians. They are described as persons, "whose names are in the book of life" (4:3).
2. They were committed Christians.
3. Unfortunately they were also carnal, cantankerous Christians (1 Cor. 3:1-3).

### III. Conflict examined (4:2-3).

1. The conflict was most likely not over a doctrinal matter since Paul had no hesitation to address doctrinal disputes.
2. The conflict was a divisive matter with the potential to divide the church. We often divide over issues that are not doctrinal but personal in nature.

## Conclusion

Any time conflict arises in the church, it should concern us. We are to live at peace with all people as much as possible, yet this will not be possible in all circumstances. The instructions of this passage apply to us as we seek to move forward together in Christ's service.

## **Illustration Thumbnails**

- In high school I played basketball with some talented teammates; however, we were not united. One big fellow on our team was a hulk of a high schooler (I'll call him Max). After a game one of the other players harassed Max all the way home on the bus. Once we were in our parking lot, the harassment continued as we all stood around. Max finally turned around and slapped his tormentor down. I asked myself, "How are we going to win a game against another team when we are fighting among ourselves?" The truth is we didn't win many games, but the next season the team went 30-0. Two of the players went on to NBA careers. We had some of that talent when I played, but we didn't have the harmony. Giftedness without harmony won't win games!
- Recently our congregation had the privilege of hosting our association's area-wide crusade. Congregations from all over southern Virginia gathered to worship and hear God's Word proclaimed. The crusade was a united effort. Attendance was high, and scores of people committed their lives to Christ. When we stand united, God's power is unleashed in unique ways.
- Years ago a terrible conflict erupted in a church I pastored after my family and I left for the mission field. A dear family wanted to put a special tombstone on the grave of their loved one. Another church member opposed this on the grounds that the church had established rules for headstones in the church's cemetery. The conflict escalated until the fellowship actually divided. Imagine a church split over a tombstone!

## **Related Biblical Texts**

John 17:20-21: "I pray not only for these, but also for those who believe in Me through their message. May they all be one, just as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You. May they also be one in Us, so that the world may believe You sent Me."

Romans 12:16: "Be in agreement with one another."

# Forgiveness And Fellowship Essential For Corporate Worship

Written by David Roach

GLORIETA, N.M., 7/26/05 -- True corporate worship depends on fellowship among believers, according to Ergun Caner. "What you and your church take years to build can be destroyed with one cross word, one bad thought, one bitter spirit.

"The responsibility for the power of God in worship rests on us," said Caner, dean of Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and professor of theology and church history at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

Caner spoke to the 500 participants attending Music Week at LifeWay Glorieta Conference Center near Santa Fe, N.M., July 10-14. The event was sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources.

Preaching from Exodus 15, Caner said that contrary to popular teaching, Christians cannot worship corporately by focusing only on God. Focusing only on God may result in individual praise, but it will not foster the fellowship required for corporate worship, he said.

In order to grow fellowship, church members must restore broken relationships - a task far more difficult than the preacher's job of preparing sermons, Caner said.

"What you do to bring about true worship in your church is harder than a pastor's job," he said. "... All it takes for a good sermon is a sanctified preacher. But for true worship to take place it takes a unified people. His job is easier than your job."

Some churches may "want" God to reveal Himself in their worship services, yet dissension and fighting in their congregations indicates they do not truly "welcome" God, Caner said. Welcoming God requires the difficult step of rejuvenating a church's fellowship, he said, adding that a key to rejuvenating fellowship is for believers to remember their common experience of salvation.

"Want to unite your people?" Caner asked. "Remind them what it was like the day they got saved."

After believers remember their common salvation, the next step to rejuvenating fellowship is forgiveness, he said.

"True fellowship depends on forgiveness," Caner said. "... True forgiveness destroys bitterness, and bitterness is the secret enemy of worship."

Caner illustrated the importance of forgiveness by recounting how a failure to forgive in his own life resulted in a prolonged period of inhibited worship. When Caner became a born-again believer in Christ, his Muslim father disowned him and refused to have any contact with his son. Caner developed bitterness toward his father that "ruined my heart and my worship," he said.

Though his father died without ever reconciling with Caner, Caner forgave his father in 1992 and experienced a new freedom to worship God, he said.

"Forgiveness is the key," he said. "... Regardless of how bitter and cynical I was at my dad, it wasn't his fault because the bitterness did not reside in my father's heart. It resided in mine.

"... [In] 1992 I realized the great secret of knowing how to be broken before God is to forgive those who don't want forgiveness."

Caner concluded by encouraging listeners to take any steps necessary to forgive those toward whom they harbor bitterness. Forgiving is a sure way to move a congregation toward God-honoring corporate worship, he said.

"You want to know the secret to worship? There's somebody you've got to release," he said.