

## THE POWER OF UNITY IN A DIVISIVE WORLD

Scripture used: [John 17:11 \(NIV\)](#) & [John 17:20-23 \(NIV\)](#)

### OVERVIEW

This week we had a guest teacher: René Schlaepfer from Twin Lakes Church in Santa Cruz. Pastors Hurmon and René have worked together closely during the pandemic, and NBCC supported TLC when the wildfires destroyed so many homes this summer. Pastor René shared the story of his encounters at the Fire Evacuation Center, comforting and helping people. He is amazed how many people — including many non-Christians — feel the love of the church and are being drawn to it. This unity of purpose is exactly what Jesus wanted. It was actually the prayer request that Jesus made at The Last Supper! He knew the church would be tested, and he knew it could be destroyed by division. This division is worse during a crisis, and right now our world is experiencing multiple crises. The temptation to be divided is so strong that many Christians are giving in. Pastor René shared story after story from people who felt like they were being driven away from the church by people with divisive messages, especially about politics. That cannot be us. NBCC was founded on the idea of reaching people who feel far from God. As Jesus followers we must draw in others, not repel them. Today's message is ultimately about oneness. Oneness as a church and as a nation. We must contribute to that spirit of oneness that Jesus prayed for at The Last Supper. If we aren't contributing to unity, then we are subtracting from it!

### KEY POINTS

- 1) **Jesus wants us all to unite.** Jesus had one thing on His heart during the Last Supper: unity. In [John 17:11 \(NIV\)](#) He prayed for his disciples' protection so they can be one. In [John 17:20 \(NIV\)](#) He prayed for future generations so we can all be one. In [John 27:21 \(NIV\)](#) He prayed for the entire world — even those outside the faith — to be one. Jesus wanted us all to be as close to each other as He was to God. He knew how important it would be, since Jesus followers would be persecuted by the Roman Empire, the most powerful civilization in history.
- 2) **Maintaining unity is hard.** The early church was not able to stay as one easily. Paul spent a lot of time writing to different churches trying to help them maintain a focus on salvation through Jesus. In [Romans 14:1 \(NIV\)](#) he explained the importance of acceptance without “quarreling over disputable matters.” Paul wrote in [Romans 14:3-4 \(NIV\)](#) that we are not qualified to judge each other. Why? Because God is our master. He will judge us, not our neighbor. At this time, people were arguing about issues such as whether they were allowed to eat meat, or whether to hold services on Saturday or Sunday.
  - a. **Believe the best of others.** In [Romans 14:5-6 \(NIV\)](#) Paul reminds us that what matters is not agreement. We don't have to agree on everything. Instead we must focus on our motives. Whatever we do, we do it for God. We can disagree on specific policies if we remember and focus on how we agree about the Biblical principles that motivate all of us.
  - b. **Build up others.** We have a responsibility to do things that build each other up, not tear us down. Paul describes this about food in [Romans 14:13-15 \(NIV\)](#) but we should consider social media. We should never destroy others with the things we choose to say. Our own freedom of expression should never be a barrier to others.

### DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - Pastor René shared a quote from Bishop TD Jakes: “Be more Christian than anything. Be more Christian than Democrat; more Christian than Republican.” This reinforces our oneness as Jesus followers. Do you think you are one of those people? If not, how can you start to act like and be one of those people?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Pastor Hurmon asked us to consider a special reflection question this week. It will help us lay the foundation for next week's message. The question is “How can I show unconditional love to someone with whom I disagree politically?”
- 3) **DO** - Pastor René asked us to pray for oneness. This unity is so important. With it, the early church outlasted the Roman Empire. Billions of people follow Jesus today because of that oneness. Oneness with God, and oneness with each other.