

1 October 2023

Unity – Part II

Dear Sisters and Elders,

Last week in my email to you I spoke of Unity, using the first 11 chapters of 1 Corinthians as the basis for the doctrines taught. Today, I will refer to chapter 12, to further confirm this important principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When a family member is sick or has been injured, what is the response of the rest of the family? Do we not seek to find ways to help them heal more quickly? To provide comfort to them? To fast and pray for them? To bless them? In some cultures, people will even send flowers to the hospital room or home of the afflicted to cheer them up.

Consider what we do when we are injured, in particular a foot, knee, arm, hand, or finger. Do we not protect that member of our body? If a bone is broken, a cast is set so the bone can heal. Crutches or braces are provided. If a finger or arm is broken, is it also not protected? Consider a “sling” for a broken arm where the arm will be placed in a cast and then a sling will keep it close to the body so it can heal.

I love the imagery of these two examples. Collectively as a family and individually we will always protect, comfort, and heal one of our own limbs or others in need of our help (see attached pictures). This is exactly what we should be doing as a mission. Rather than spread rumors and gossip (and yes, we are aware that missionaries are still doing this despite repeated requests to stop), we should be “one” because if we are not one, we are certainly not “His”. (see D&C 38:27).

We learn so much about unity in 1 Corinthians 12. Paul tells the saints in Corinth that “*there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit*” (v 4). In other words, there are many gifts of the spirit, but they are all intended to do the same thing: to bless and strengthen us individually and the Church as a whole. He goes on to list some of these spiritual gifts: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discernment, and both speaking in and interpreting tongues. In verse 11 he explains that we all have different gifts and then in verse 12 he explains how we individually can bless the Church with our unique gifts. “*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*” We can think of this another way, if we are one in Christ, then we all bring our individual gifts forward to bless each other, the Church, and all of God’s children.

In verse 13, Paul reinforces that it doesn’t matter whether we are a Jew or a Gentile. Whether we are in bondage, or whether we are free. When we are baptized, “*we have been all made to drink into one Spirit*”. If we apply this to the mission, it doesn’t matter if we were born in Madagascar or the Philippines. The United Kingdom or the United States. Congo or Cote d’Ivoire. Nigeria or Liberia. “*We have all been made to drink into one Spirit*”. What is the Spirit referenced? It is the oneness of coming unto Christ and becoming like Him.

Regarding this concept of unity, Elder Quentin L. Cook counseled:

The culture of the gospel of Jesus Christ is not a Gentile culture or a Judaic culture. It is not determined by the color of one’s skin or where one lives. While we rejoice in distinctive cultures, we should leave behind aspects of those cultures that conflict with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our members and new converts often come from

diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. If we are to follow President Nelson's admonition to gather scattered Israel, we will find we are as different as the Jews and Gentiles were in Paul's time. Yet we can be united in our love of and faith in Jesus Christ. Paul's Epistle to the Romans establishes the principle that we follow the culture and doctrine of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the model for us even today. The ordinances of the temple unite us in special ways and allow us to be one in every eternally significant way. [General Conference, October 2020 "Hearts knit in Righteousness and Unity"]

Continuing in chapter 12 starting in verse 14, Paul refers again to the members of the body, comparing us and our different talents, gifts, experiences, and abilities to different parts of the body.

"For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him." I love how he makes it clear that if we were all eyes, then how could we hear? Or if we were all ears, how could we smell? If we were all born in Ghana, how could we understand what the Church is like in Tonga, Samoa, Australia, the United States, or Uganda? We are only unified when we bring our different gifts to the Ghana Kumasi Mission and learn and grow together because of our differences. This is such a blessing when we teach people with needs that may be different from what we have experienced, but like those our companion has been through.

Paul goes on to explain that there should "be no schism [division] in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another". [v 25]. And then he sums it all up in verse 26 "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

This is a beautiful definition of unity. All of us, regardless of our experiences or background or spiritual gifts, we come together to suffer with one another and to be honored and rejoice with one another because we are all one in Jesus Christ. We are all seeking to do His will. We are all trying to become like Him.

In closing, I will share two scriptures from the Book of Mormon. The first is from 2 Nephi 1:21. "... arise from the dust, my sons, and be men, and be determined in one mind and in one heart, united in all things, that ye may not come down into captivity". And the second is from Alma counseling those recently baptized and newly ordained to "teach nothing save it were the things which he had taught, and which had been spoken by the mouth of the holy prophets." [Mosiah 18:19] He continues, "And he commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism, having their hearts knit together in unity and in love one towards another" [Mosiah 18:21].

May we in the Ghana Kumasi Mission be unified. May we each bring and share our individual spiritual gifts that we may be stronger together. May we reach out to help those who are struggling. May our hearts be knit together in love for one another and for God. May we truly become one in the body of Christ.

All my love,

President Kunz