

# Ron Recognizes an Important Step Is Still Being Realized in 2011

Ephesians 4:1-13

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As your pastor here at Manette Community, it is my job to help you move along to spiritual maturity and to make sure as a church we are fulfilling the Great Commission. Both parts of that command are important, first, to lead people to belong and believe in Jesus Christ, and second to help them to fully obey Him as Lord.

I used to believe that if I put together good, biblical sermons that challenged people to love, know and serve God, and then developed great small groups where people grew, and then helped people to discover and use their spiritual gifts, we'd have a successful church. I do still believe all those are key ingredients to an excellent church. But this year I have come to learn I need to add another step in the above mentioned process of being the church. It can be the hardest step for many churches. It's called "unity".

Jesus spoke of this unity when He told His disciples about He and the Father being one, and of their oneness with Him – that they, the disciples, belonged to Him as He belonged to them and to the Father. To help them know and experience this unity, Jesus told them of the Counselor, the Holy Spirit who would soon indwell them on a daily basis. This spiritual transformation is God's work in us, to help us as witnesses of His love, power, and glory. (Read John 14-17)

Unity is that important!

The enemy of the church wants division, factions (one group vs. another), unhealthy conflict where people refuse to get along and in doing so sin against God and one another. Unity doesn't mean we won't disagree about ministry, direction, resources, etc. It means we won't try to force people into our mold or divide and fight over issues that are not essential. Most fights are over doctrine and political type issues (i.e. women's roles in ministry, right to life, environmental issues).

Unity is a choice I make, an attitude I bring to the Body of Christ. There may be doctrinal differences but they are all put into second place to serving Jesus as my Lord and King. (See our church's statement of beliefs in the 101 class materials)

Next, we need to give respect and build friendship. I know everyone can't be best friends, but we need to get to know each other so we avoid the miscommunication and personality conflicts that come because we choose to judge others before we know them. Friends are people who will work together, be vulnerable and patient with one another, and give the benefit of the doubt in all situations. Friends talk to each other.

Strangers are cautious, suspicious, and tend to be quick to argue. We must continue to build and broaden our friendships in the church, because it is spiritually healthy to do so.

Finally in unity as a church, we need to be headed in the same direction and hopefully on the best path to get there.

This last element to unity is where we are currently working the hardest. What is it, specifically, that we as MCC in this current time need to be focused upon for the Kingdom of God?

We have an excellent leadership board of dedicated and growing Christians who work well together. And we covet your prayers to help us serve you well and hear God's voice as we work together.

We will follow Paul's admonition to the Ephesians in chapter 4 verse 3:

*"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."*

Why? Verses 12-13 tell us

*"To prepare God's people for works of service, so that the Body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."*

Great job being His people in 2011. It is a joy to serve you as your pastor.

Blessings,

*Ron*