

# The Body of Christ: Playing Unity's Song



■ by Debi Mitchell, MS, LMFT

*“Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity”  
~Psalms 133:1*

We long for unity even while fearing it. We yearn for peaceful environments while demanding our own way. We desire conflict-free community while fearing loss of self.

The Apostle Peter urges Christians to live in harmony with each other, with unity in thought and purpose (1 Peter 3:8). Individual believers create Christian unity as an increasing knowledge of Christ leads us toward oneness of mind and purpose.

## Being One vs. Being the Same

Unity means both “oneness” and “harmony” (Webster’s online dictionary). Oneness doesn’t equal sameness. Oneness equals harmony: forming a pleasing, consistent whole (Oxford’s online dictionary).

God desires we live in unity, yet he created us to be different. He gave each person different gifts to fulfill different callings in different ways by one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-7). Paul uses the analogy of a human body. He said, “Our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it” (1 Corinthians 12:18, NLT).

Consider this music analogy: oneness sounds like an orchestral symphony. Each instrument plays a different part, working together to create a single song. Sameness sounds like each instrument playing the same part. While many may recognize the song, it lacks fullness and quickly becomes boring.

## Jesus and Unity

John reveals unity’s significance through Jesus’ fervent prayers for unity (John 17). As his sacrifice loomed, Jesus gave thanks for his own unity with his heavenly Father and petitioned for his disciples’ and future believers’ unity. Why? As unity grows, believers’ understanding of God’s love and glory grows. Our unity shows the Father’s sacrificial love and Jesus as his son to an unbelieving world.

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## Oneness in Mind

We become one in mind as Christians learn the mind of Christ. We focus on Christ as truth and join together in this quest.

Paul implores us to “speak the truth in love” in order to mature in faith and become more like Christ (Ephesians 4:15). Our pride battles against the humility required to admit ignorance and seek out knowledge. Our humility battles pride’s attacks when others seek our knowledge. We experience fullness as we respectfully dialogue on differing beliefs. We grow into Christ’s image.

## Oneness in Purpose

Unity first requires each believer learning God’s design for them. We move toward perfect unity as we peacefully, lovingly work together. We achieve perfect unity when the whole body resembles Christ’s fullness (Ephesians 4:3-13).

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The body's health requires different parts coming together in a single purpose. Each part affects the others (1 Corinthians 12:12-24). Our harmony equates to how we treat all the parts (vs. 25). God created us connected in a way that "if one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad" (vs. 26, NLT).

Have you heard a band or orchestra immediately prior to a concert? After taking a seat, each player begins "doing their own thing." It sounds chaotic, but they share a purpose. Each tunes the instrument with precision because off-key instruments destroy the music's purpose.



## Building Each Other Up

So how do we do it? We foster unity when we ponder and practice.

Ponder these points:

- Trust God for control (John 16:33).
- God created our differences. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Romans 12:4).
- Healthy priorities. Remind yourself: "I am not the center of the universe" (Philippians 2:3).

Practice these actions:

- Forgiveness. It creates internal peace and gives God glory (Proverbs 17:9; John 17:22-24).
- Good communication. Respectfully respond after listening closely. (James 1:19)
- Finding positives and dwelling there (Philippians 4:8-9).
- Accountability. We cannot control others' decisions, but we control our own (Romans 12:18).
- Get counseling, if needed (Proverbs 15:22).

## True Unity

I see all of the above encompassed in this way:

Songwriters create very simple to extremely intricate songs. Musical performers hone skills and learn new techniques. Directors communicate their directing styles and performance needs.

The director communicates his needs. The performers, individually and as a group, faithfully practice their parts. They listen attentively to each other to maintain balance, while watching the director who hears it as a whole.

God chooses the song and places his performers to suit his purpose. He teaches us the "how" and the "why." He directs each path and encourages each believer. As believers, we need to know our Director's vision and mature our God-given talents. To create unity, we must choose to listen and speak encouragement. We address concerns with humility as we acknowledge poor performance and listen to God's teaching.

Unity requires hard work, but it creates beautiful life-songs! ■

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