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more? I suppose it can, but is another declared meeting time going to change people's hearts and relationships? Should the church decide "we're going to serve one another more" or "focus on building relationships?" What would that look like? I think we mean that people, – as individuals, just more of them than currently – should focus on these changes. "We need to consider one another more" usually means "The people I'm thinking of, who recently did not consider someone else when they said or did something, should really change that." "We need to be more hospitable" usually means "Nobody has (or perhaps, "Somebody in particular has not...") had me over, invited me out, or tried to get together with me in any way recently." These concerns may most often be accurate – I'm sure the unnamed subjects of these pleas for unity-building behavior really do need to wake up, and grow up, and do better. Even those who are diligent in these things may hear the exhortation to, "*excel still more.*"

But I would show you still a more excellent way. Your brothers and sisters all have many specks. I won't argue with that. But what I will say is that I really only know they have specks because the Bible teaches that we all have specks. I can't really see any of theirs, or yours, too clearly on account of a massive beam in both of my eyes. It's a real bother. I read a book recently about unity written by another flawed and frustrated man who came to realize – and thus, laid the realization and all its weight squarely on my shoulders – that for all his talk of unity and anger at the absence of unity, he wasn't really living a very pro-unity life himself. He'd complain about disunity, and refuse to interact (read, "build relationships") with people he saw as causes of the disunity. Does that avoidance lead to more unity, or less? He'd complain about the lack of spiritual maturity, and shy away from people he saw as spiritually immature. Does that lead to more unity, or less? How many times do we complain about someone, "not taking the time to build a relationship" with us and so we avoid them, dismiss them, or literally, any other behavior that doesn't actively seek to know and make known? Does that lead to more unity, or less?

To come at it another way, biblical unity is described as the positive operation of the body as the result of each member supplying everything it ought. We tend to focus our efforts, it seems, on how the leg needs to improve, instead of what I, the lowly foot, need to improve. I'm not suggesting it's wrong to see the big picture and how various parts are contributing to the problem, but that's just it. When your body has a knee problem, does the foot call in sick? Hold a

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grudge against the knee and fight stubbornly on, further wounding the knee and making walking less and less possible, and its own job vastly more difficult? Or does the foot naturally contort itself to evert, or pronate, or tiptoe so the knee has less work to do and can focus on getting better? How often should I, then, when the knee is bruised and twisted and out of sorts, unthinkingly try to take some of their load and let them heal and know they're cared for? Does the knee need to get better so the foot can walk normal again? Absolutely. Is the foot's griping and building resentment conducive to that outcome? Certainly not.

We're getting good at diagnosing division. Discernment and honesty are important qualities for Christians – don't lose that. But we are behind the curve on solving the problems, and I think that's because we are waiting for someone else to make the change in our relationship with them. The solution, as usual, is trying, but very simple. Make the same suggestions, but change it from "We" to "I." Are there things that need to be improved as a group? Absolutely. But is the group going to change its dynamic at the behest of a grumbler who's not doing anything to prove they aren't part of the same problem? But here we must be careful; if you're like me, you might be toying with the idea of some kind of threshold question. "If I'm proactive for x amount of time then people will have to listen to me!" It only works if it's not a shortcut. Shortcuts are dishonest, and underhanded, and very often transparent. And then, when the shortcutter stops serving after the change seems to be accomplished, the whole group deflates and the change slows to a stop. More seriously than that, a temporary change on your part to manipulate others seriously cheapens the Gospel message we're supposed to be living. The only real thing to do is change your entire nature. Become a person whose every thought, word, action, and motive is proactively promoting unity. Build your life around God's people and your relationship to them. Assume complete responsibility for your relationships that lack unity. The other party(ies) have made, are making, and will continue to make bad decisions. Don't join the disunified party by not doing your duty to your brother, neighbor, or enemy. Pursue peace. Pursue unity. Give the other party no excuses.

So challenge yourself. Challenge each other. Next time some unity or unity-adjacent problem comes up in a conversation and you get to the part where you start figuring out how to fix it, whenever you or anyone else starts with something like, "Well we need to [insert

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## **"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?"**

**ACTS 16:30**

### **LEARN THE GOSPEL**

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

### **BELIEVE IN CHRIST**

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

### **CONFESS CHRIST**

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

### **REPENT OF SIN**

Acts 3:19; 17:30

### **BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST**

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

### **REMAIN STEADFAST**

1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

## **"THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

**HEBREWS 10:24-25**

### **SUNDAY**

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

### **WEDNESDAY**

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard

Belén, New Mexico

**Seekers Welcome.**

**Members Expected.**

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improved behavior],” call it out, and change the conversation to what each of you, specifically, can do to do more [improved behavior] with the parties being talked about. Genuine leadership by example is a powerful drug, but I suspect you may also find when you truly devote yourself to improving on, say, hospitality – not just having a few more interactions for a while, but persistent, sustained, intentional increase and growth in the behavior over a long period of time – that you may start feeling less and less concerned about the shortcomings of others since you are increasingly occupied with doing good. Either way, Jesus did far more to facilitate unity than he ever did to complain about the lack of it. Be like Jesus. Pray like Jesus. Long for Unity. And start with You.

## **"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN"**

**PROVERBS 25:11**

“I would rather beg for bread on earth like Lazarus than beg for water in hell like the rich man.”

– D.L. Moody

# **"WHOLE COUNSEL"**

**ACTS 20:27**

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## **UNITY STARTS WITH U**

Trevor Trokey

Are you part of a disunified group? An HOA board, a work team, a military unit, a family, ...a congregation ...that doesn't agree on what to do or how to do it? A group where there's frequent, if not constant, spats, hurt feelings, miscommunications, power plays, and even outright feuds? How do you think those groups should get better? I hear a lot of solutions offered frequently, so I know we have ideas! We need to talk to each other more often. We need to consider one another more. We need to be more hospitable. We need to study together more. We need to assume the best about each other. We need to be honest, humble, ask for help and accept it. We need to pray for one another more. We need to pray together more. We need to serve one another. We need to be open and clear about our expectations, desires, consciences, stumbling blocks, and beliefs. We need to make more time for our relationships. Brethren, all of these are true, and these only scratch the surface of things that we need to do to be a more unified body. But here's the rub: When we say, "We need to \_\_\_\_\_," what does that mean? What can that statement ever accomplish? Especially when "we" are far from being in the practice of moving naturally as a unit, what can we hope to change by insisting that "we" do something? Are we saying that the church should decide, for example, to consider one another more? Or perhaps a more practical suggestion, should the church decide to study together

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