

Unity in Diversity



Lord! You've been God of all my days

Lord, you've been my God
Even before the day I was born,
In my mother's womb,
You knit me, sewed my flesh together
The day I was born, you saw me and smiled
When I was a babe, you watched me as I cried
As I took my first steps, you rejoiced over me,
When I was growing, your hand guided me
You brought me back when I was unfaithful
You held me close and wiped away my tear
In my darkest moments, your light shone through
In my discouragements I found hope in you
In uncertainties, You opened my eyes
That through faith I may be assured of the unseen
You've been the God of all my days
From eternity before the world was made
And when I close my eyes and sleep at last
My Spirit would rise up again in hope
In glory bright I'll find myself
As Your grace carries me to my Eternal Home.



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In Christ – We are all one and Equal

(Celebrate Diversity for Unity)

India exemplifies unity in diversity, with a varied population encompassing different ethnic, linguistic, religious, and social backgrounds. It has a rich heritage of art, literature, music, dance, cuisine, and architecture. And the Indians accommodate all faiths, promote common values such as brotherhood, hospitality, tolerance and non-violence.

God created various ethnic and linguistic people from a single man and woman to be united with Him to bring fruitfulness and His rule on the earth (Acts 17:26-28 & Gen 1:28). God punished humanity for their wickedness initially by flood and later He confused their languages at Babel, and scattered them (Gen 10:32 & 11:8-9), then, God chose Abraham to bring them back to Himself for His purpose and His blessing. Later, The Israelites failed to do His mission. Therefore, Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, took on human form and died on the Cross and destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, between circumcised [the Jews] and uncircumcised [the Gentiles] (Eph 2:14-18). On the day of Pentecost, the Spirit gave birth to the Church (Acts 2: 3-4 & 9-11). Peter was enlightened through the vision that “God does not have favouritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him” (Acts 10:10-16 & 35).

Paul clarified in his epistle to the Galatians that “All people in Christ are one and equal regardless of ethnicity, religiosity (neither Jew nor Greek), socio-economic disparities (neither slave nor free), and gender distinctions (no male and female)” (Gal 3:28). However, Unity is not about uniformity; rather, it is about harmony amidst diversity. Furthermore, Paul portrayed the Church as the Body of Christ, comprising of numerous members with diverse functions, all of whom are equally important and interdependent (Eph 1:23). Jesus prayed for the unity among believers, which has already been achieved and needs to be maintained based on the unity between the Father and the Son (Jn 17:11, 21-23).

As followers of Christ, we are called to be His people in the world, to reconcile people to God (2 Cor 5:18-20). We should seek to build bridges of peace and justice, not walls of hostility and prejudice. We should not discriminate or show partiality based on ethnicity, region, class or gender, but let us celebrate the diversity of God's creation. Amen.



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Biblical Basis for Unity in Diversity



In essentials unity, in non- essentials liberty, in all things charity
- G K Chesterton.

Unity in diversity is a concept that celebrates the differences and similarities among people, cultures, religions, languages and regions. The Bible reveals that God is a Triune God Who exists in perfect unity and diversity as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:16-17). God created human beings in His image, with the capacity to reflect His unity and diversity in their relationships (Gen 1:26-27). However, human rebellion disrupted the harmony and fellowship that God intended for His creation, and resulted in division, hostility, and confusion among people (Gen 11:1-9).

God unites people from diverse backgrounds, cultures, languages and races through their faith in Jesus Christ and their membership in His body, the Church.

I. Biblical basis for Unity:

God's unity shows us that He is the one and only God. But it also teaches us that the three persons in God (the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit) are one in God. God is three-in-one. God cannot be divided or separated. Our triune God is the supreme example of unity. God, Who is love (1 Jn 4:8), has forever existed in perfect unity as Father, Son, and Spirit (Deut 6:4, Matt 28:19). Further, biblical unity is not uniformity. The family of God has a diversity of people, gifted to



Lead

serve each other for the sake of unified maturity in the faith (Eph 4:11–13). Though we are one in Christ, God doesn't erase our unique gifts, abilities, personal preferences or other distinctions like gender or age. He also doesn't erase our ethnic and cultural heritages (Rev 7:9).

1. Unity leads to blessing (Ps 133)

When God's people dwell in unity, God's blessing will dwell among them. Love your neighbor as yourself is an old command but Christ gave a new command to love one another just as Christ loved us so people will know we are His disciples (Jn 13:35).

2. Unity among God's children should resemble the triune God's unity

Jesus prayed for Christians to be united as the triune God is united from eternity to eternity. Unity among Christians will glorify God (Jn 17: 20-26).

3. The Holy Spirit initiates and God's children keep the unity

Among all the ministries of the Holy Spirit, unity is the first and foremost and we have to keep that unity with all humility and gentleness with patience and forbearance.

II. Biblical basis for Diversity

Diversity, in and of itself, is a God-created good that reflects the unity (oneness) and diversity (three-ness) of the Triune God. Christian theologians have argued that the doctrine of the Trinity—God as one in being and three in person—can serve as a model for human society and community. God's oneness calls us to unity while His three-ness affirms our diversity and uniqueness. God's handiwork, His creation, also reflects this unity in diversity. The incredibly rich diversity of uniquely individual creatures—of plants, animals, rocks and trees—are all created, united, and held together in Christ (Col 1:15–17). Even humanity was created with the diversity of male and female. It must be stressed, then, that creational diversity is never a diversity of division. It is not differences that divide; it is a diversity of unity—differences that are united in relationship to each other in love and obedience to God the creator. Thus, difference and diversity, in and of itself, is a created gift from God that reflects part of God's own nature. And the unity that Christ brings through His redemptive work is not a new unity; it is a restoring and renewing unity that was already there at the

beginning of creation, a unity that was disrupted by sin.

1. Diversity in human nature

Gen 1 & 2: God created man and woman with diversity of nature but they are united in reaching their destination. It is not only their compatibility but also their complementarity that brings completeness. Diversity in nature makes us depend on one another.

2. Diversity in gifts and ministries

Fruit of the Spirit is common for all but gifts and ministries are different for different people (1 Cor 12: 4-11, 27-30). Gifts are not to substitute one another but to support and to depend on one another to bring maturity in the fellowship.

3. Diversity in society

We are different in geographical, ethnic and lingual terms (Acts 17:26). Our birth and upbringing are affected by all these societal factors. Biblical diversity will always bring glory to God but unbiblical diversity or divisions will never bring glory to God (Js 2:1-7).

III. Biblical basis for Unity in Diversity

The Church, or the Christian community, is God's strategic vehicle for embodying, proclaiming, and promoting God's reconciliation of all things, including racial

reconciliation. Being united in Christ through faith does not mean that ethnic and cultural differences will be erased. Rather, ethnic and other categories (economic, gender, and so forth) are no longer definitive of our identities. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* - is not a call to erase ethnic, class, and gender diversity in an ontological or absolute sense (Gal 3:28).

Diversity is part of being human. God delights in the plethora of differences His human creatures possess. The book of Revelation describes the final gathering of God's people from *"every nation, tribe, and tongue"* (Rev 7:9). The angels and elders around God's throne adore Jesus with the words *"with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,"* (Rev 5:9).

1. Unity in beliefs

Five solas of Protestant Reformation

- *Sola scriptura*: "Scripture alone" (Rom 3:10-12)
- *Sola fide*: "Faith alone" (Rom 4:4-5)
- *Sola gratia*: "Grace alone" (Jn 14:6)
- *Solo Christo*: "Christ alone" (2 Pet 1:21)



Lead

- *Soli Deo gloria*: “To the glory of God alone” (Rom 11:36)

We have five Solas of faith which are essentials and there can be few more beliefs for each fellowship. If you don't maintain unity of belief in these 5 it is wrong and not to be united with those who believe these is also wrong (2 Cor 11:1-4).

2. Unity in fellowship

- Don't judge the weak - Rom 14: 1-3, 10, 15, 18, 20, 22
- Bearing with the weak - Rom 15: 1-4
- Unity that brings glory to God - Rom 15: 5-7
- Unity by being filled with the Holy Spirit - Rom 15:8-13
- Unity in mission - Rom 15:14-21

3. Unity in gifts and ministries

Fruit of the Spirit brings unity among the diversities of gifts and ministries.

- No single organization can bring completeness in the body of Christ. Each one doing the task given by God in unity with others will bring glory to God.
- Though the gifts are different we must be united as one body with many members having different purposes.
- No part of the body is great or negligible. Every part has its role

to play. We all succeed together or suffer together and support together (1 Cor 12:12-26).

- Fruit of the Spirit qualifies, gift of the Spirit empowers and the ministry of the Spirit implements.
- Gifts are mapped with ministries (2 Cor 12: 27-31).

Christ talks about the Universal Church (Mt 16:18-19) and practical issues of disunity in the local fellowship (Mt 18). The principle and practice of unity in diversity can be achieved through childlike humility (Mt 18:1-6), purity (Mt 18:7-14), unity (Mt 18:15-20) and the process of getting unity (Mt 18:21-35).

The reasons for increasing disunity is that we are not able to resolve the issues as per the process suggested by Christ: talking to the person directly, talking to the person in the presence of two or three and finally in the presence of the higher body (Mt 18:15-17). Only those who are committed to maintaining unity are given authority to bind and authority to release. The Lord's presence is assured only where there is unity in spite of diversity (Mt 18:20). If there are still some itches of diversity unity can be brought about by the process of forgiveness. Forgiveness can become habitual by exercising it as many times as 7 times 70 per person (Mt 18:21-35).

Moreover, Christ taught His disciples that they must learn to rebuke with forgiveness and to have faith with faithfulness. Paul practiced it and taught the same to the leaders in the Corinthian Church to bring unity there (Lk 17: 1-4, 2 Cor 2:5-11).

In conclusion, God's plan of redemption is to restore the unity and diversity that He originally designed for humanity. Through the person and work of Jesus Christ, God reconciles people to Himself and to one another, breaking down the barriers of sin and death that

separated them (Eph 2:14-18). The Holy Spirit empowers and equips God's people to live in unity and diversity as they exercise their spiritual gifts and serve one another in love (1 Cor 12:4-31). The Church is called to be a witness and a foretaste of the unity and diversity that God will fully establish in the new heaven and the new earth, where people from every nation, tribe, people and language will worship God together in harmony and joy (Rev 7:9-10).



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One Body with Many Parts

(Unity in Diversity)



You must be wondering how Unity and Diversity could come together at the same time? Well this is how God loves to work, doing what seems to be impossible with our eyes and proving that He's greater than any possibility or thing we can ever see or imagine.

In the Bible, we have been seeing the concept of unity frequently and repeatedly in many instances. This gives us at least a clear cut idea of how sensible God is when it comes to staying together and keeping all the diversities, prejudices or discriminations out of our hearts, minds and ultimately our practices. Thankfully, the Bible makes it very

clear to remain united despite our social or cultural diversities, which were created and carried out by the world in the first place.

As mentioned in the book of Galatians 3:28, it is written, *"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

Here Apostle Paul refers to the church and all those who are in Christ with the diversities and differences to embrace one another with love and acceptance, since it is Jesus Christ who brings all together in spite of the differences. Another thing that Apostle Paul

has been speaking boldly about is the role of acceptance as the first and foremost need for a strong relationship between oneness and the differences which makes it even more an essential part of a Godly family.

Apart from what I say, the Bible talks about it elaborately in various places, as it is written in the book of 1 Corinthians 12:12 *"Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ."* You might have read this particular passage and realized that no matter what you are, God still loves you and has a purpose for you. If you stand in someone else's shoes who is different from you and is not accepted by everyone, it brings a realization to accept others no matter the differences

we have with each other. Remain united with acceptance because this is how we prepare the body of Christ (*not by staying apart but letting those differences overpower us and United in Christ because He loved each one of us knowing us in our worst*) by being different ,but remaining together as we have the same Father and share the same spirit of acceptance through God.

The Bible says that God intends for today's and tomorrow's society to be nourished by a combination of unity and diversity. Our Heavenly father expects us to be responsible to welcome, embrace and accept our diversities that exist in our social and cultural backgrounds. By doing this, we can present Christ in all we say, do, and think.



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Themes for Campus Link

Jan - Feb 2024: Family

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The Dream Team



in Christ we, though many, form one body and each member belongs to all the others. - Rom 12:5.

E*sprit de corps* or comradeship is a buzz word depicting a form of closeness, oneness and togetherness in human relationships. In Christian life the word '*fellowship*' is in use signifying a unity of purpose amongst Christians. The word '*fellowship*' derived from Greek *koinonia* stands unique both in its meaning and practicality in relationships. Following Christ means love, righteousness, service and these

can only be achieved and expressed through relationships. That's why Billy Graham Says "Christianity is a religion of fellowship".

In an objective sense faith means the body of truth which God has revealed. It is the sum of Christian teaching. For this faith Paul urges Philippians to strive together (1:27) Jude also exhorts in verse 3, to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. We are also encouraged in Jude 20 'But you beloved, building yourselves upon your most holy faith...' Paul urged

Timothy to guard this faith which was committed to his trust (I Tim 6: 19,20). In a subjective sense, faith means a moral and spiritual quality of the individuals by which men are held in relations of confidence in God and fidelity to Him. A person who holds this mentioned faith is often known as an 'Evangelical' that is the reason we call ourselves as Evangelical students/graduates. Evangelicals are followers of the Bible, having born again experience, careful about his/her life, takes care to maintain good works and lives a life above reproach.

God saved us by His grace, in another sense all of us are blood-bought children of Christ. So, in Christ Jesus we are all children of God through faith. *There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor male and female for we are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's seed and heir according to the promise.*

(Gal 3:26,28). God saved us not to live alone but to live in harmony with other believers in Christ in spite of their background, no doubt, we are the blood-bought children of God from every tribe, language, people group and nation (Rev 5:29).

Every person on earth is created in God's image (Gen 1:27). Since man is a social animal, people are eager to become members of a group to satisfy some or all of their needs. However, whether rich or poor, no one is favoured more than any other in God's eyes (Rom 2:11). We glorify our great God when we refuse to show favouritism (Jas 2:1) in our groups, especially while making decisions. The apostle Paul reminds us that sin would always bring trouble, selfish desires and conflict in relationships. But as those who are made alive in Christ, we are called to live out our new identity in practical ways. We must make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit



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through the bond of peace. Unity is a powerful force while disunity costs us our credibility. But our egos often defy logic. We would rather lose with an unbroken will than win by submission. There is no reason for the world to believe we are from God if we act like the devil.

The church is made by people with many cultural barriers, potentials, tastes and preferences. It is not easy to unite one another for a common cause. Sometimes as believers in Christ we are challenged to learn and play tug of war game. Personal agenda, selfish desires and conflicts becomes hurdles to ministry. That's why Apostle Paul commended Philippians to have Christ-like attitude/mind and pleaded with Euodia and Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord (4:2). We can't achieve unity by our own power, but only by God's perfect power that is at work within us (Eph 3:20). We need to be baptized in the spirit of love by the One Who alone creates genuine unity and gives us the heart to serve one another instead of seeking pre-eminence. When the Holy Spirit convicts us, we must submit or we will never accomplish all that God has called us for.

Together Melanie and Trevor have hiked miles of mountain trails, but both cannot do without the other.

Melanie was born with spina bifida and uses a wheelchair. Trevor lost his sight to glaucoma. As he walks the trails, Trevor carries Melanie on his back, while she gives him verbal directions. *They describe themselves as a dream team.* We are all created by God and bound together in one beloved human family. *God has created each of us, regardless of gender, social class, ethnic identity or political persuasion in His own image (Gen 1:27).*

Whatever else might be true, God is reflected in both you and me. Furthermore, He's given us a shared purpose to 'fill' and 'rule' God's world with wisdom and care (v28). Whenever we forget how we are bound together in God, we do damage to ourselves and others. But when we come together in His grace and truth, we participate in His desire to create a good and flourishing world. Israel trusted in their high walls, but God said their security lay with Him. He reigns from heaven, and His Word governs all (Isa 55:10-11). If God's people would return to Him and stand together, He would have mercy on them, and restore them to bless the world (Gen 12:3).

Transformation happens whenever we open ourselves to see another's experience, looking beyond our own vision and encountering

another's pain, fear or hope. When we follow Jesus' example, we would do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Instead, we will value others above ourselves in humility. We gain compassion for others as we discover new ways to love our family and fellow believers.

In the year 2016, we conducted a regional spiritual life conference in AP, and were part of the coordinating committee. Though the venue could accommodate only

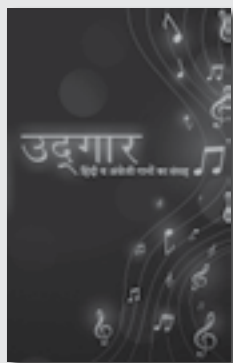
around 600-700, more than 1000 delegates participated and were blessed. This was only because, as a team, all the students, graduates and their families encouraged one another and everyone tried their very best for the glory of God. As we team up with God and His people, we can enjoy godly fellowship anytime and anywhere.

May the Lord our God help us to live in unity amid all our diversity through His power.



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Build Bridges and Restore Relationships



We live in a pluralistic society known for its cultural, linguistic and other diverse attitudes, perspectives, beliefs, values and customs. Naturally, these differences have an enormous influence on our relationships and interactions with other members in our society. Resisting differences will result in confusion, chaos and crisis. But a proactive approach of embracing diversity and understanding these distinctions will yield high dividends. Such broad understanding will help us to relate with our fellow beings effectively and intelligently. Vibrant interpersonal relationships will be sustained even in the midst of differences, disagreements and diverse opinions. This healthy approach fosters balance between community and individuality, transparency and trust. Strengthen-

ing strong interpersonal relationships within a Movement wins the confidence and allegiance of the members. Spontaneous involvement, willingness to walk the extra mile and sacrifice in achieving the goals are the natural outcome of respecting the individuals. Members should strive towards identifying the relationship strains in the initial stage before they are blown out of proportion. Major breakdowns in relationships happen due to lack of communication. Effective communication is the best remedy to the interpersonal problems that wreck the relationships in family, fellowship, community and movement. Stephen R. Covey says: **"The biggest communication problem is that we do not listen to understand. We listen to reply".**

"Next to the salvation experience, a child of God should understand that people, including seasoned saints, are different." With these words, a senior EGF member advised one of her mentees who was struggling with her interpersonal problems in her place many years ago. This sane advice drives the fact that we will have to rub our shoulders with Peters and Pauls, Eurodias and Syn-tyches in our fellowship as long as we are working with human beings of different ethnic, denominational, linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In any community of people, disagreement and misunderstanding are unavoidable. However, if such issues are not addressed, they shall distract the members and their goals will be pushed to the margins. The Devil is synonymous with division, disaster, chaos and crisis. Division is used as a good pitch by the Evil one to settle his score with the kingdom of God. The word 'Devil' comes from the Greek Word, 'diabolos' which means 'to divide' 'to separate. Wherever there is division, especially the division that pits one member against another, it rings an alarming bell that the Enemy is at work. The Arch-enemy of God is a Master Schemer who pits one linguistic group against another, one regional leader against another. The members do not know that they fall into the traps set by the serpent. For

example, an ICEU or EGF may have had a glorious past. It has produced many committed men and women of God. It may have the distinction of sending missionaries too. It was looked up as a model through its transparency in relationship, active involvement of members and unity in the fellowship. But now the ministry is in a mess and other centers are praying fervently for its revival.

The subsequent generation has fallen prey to the divisive forces of darkness. As the Indian statesman Rajagopalachary observed about Christianity, a few EU centers have **"been divided into sects, sub-sects and finally they have become insignificant insects"**. The churches in India stand divided due to Intra and Interpersonal problems. It is painful to observe that some of our EU and EGF groups also face the threat of becoming defunct.

The Bible warns us to identify the little foxes that ruin the vineyard and get rid of them: **"Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines, for our vines have tender grapes"** (SS 2:15 NKJV). It may be fun to watch those little foxes playing, jumping and rolling in the grass. Of course, these 'little foxes' may not look dangerous. But they represent the evil forces that damage the church or a fellowship. Slander, envy, gossip, anger, hidden



agenda, and being judgmental are some of the examples of little foxes that ruin our vineyards in UESI. When the EGF members resort to gossip, character assassination, mudslinging, fault finding against fellow members particularly in the presence of young graduates and the students, we allow the little foxes to spoil the 'tender grapes'.

Churches and Christian organizations have lost their 'saltiness' as they have allowed the little but deadly creatures to grow into intimidating giants. The scriptures warn us not to play with them but to crucify them: **"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desire of their sinful nature to His cross and crucified them there"** (Gal 5:24 NCT). Many devotionals and studies have been done on the 'little foxes' that play havoc with believers. This article will focus on the following three venomous evils which have damaged many homes and fellowships: **Pride, Prejudice, and Pollution.**

Pride: It is the queen of all Sins. That is why the Apostle John labels it as one of the three '**Cardinal Sins**' that characterize worldliness: the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the Pride of life (1 Jn 2:16). Pride is the root cause of all broken homes, fragmented fellowships, and divided churches. It is not easy for

the fellow members to be comfortable with an arrogant and egoistic leader. A few Christians are inflated with the size of an 'elephantine ego' that they cannot stomach someone questioning their decision. **C.S Lewis puts it more precisely in his comment on Pride: ". . . It is because I wanted to be a big noise at the party that I am so annoyed at someone else being the big noise . . . "** (Source: John C. Maxwell in his article on '**The Problem of Pride**')

This attitude is an enemy to the character and ethos of UESI which advocates Team work & Servant Leadership. A person who assumes himself to be great rebels against servant-hood. He will ride roughshod on the feelings of his fellow members. We may have perhaps lost quite a few men and women of God because we are not humble enough to say: "Sorry brother/sister, I have hurt you". Resentment and bitterness continue to poison our fellowship as broken relationships are not reconciled through forgiveness and confession. **Paul advises his fellow Christians to "Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other"** (Romans 12:10 NLT). Highfield is our Heritage structure handed down to us by the Sterretts. It was nurtured like a beautiful

vineyard by Dr. Sterrett and Eloise. But little foxes sneaked their way stealthily in to this UESI family once. The study center, which focused on the scriptures and servant-hood, was struggling with relationship problems and unhealthy factions. Dr. Sterrett was devastated. When he was going through a phase of pain, the Spirit of God stirred up his heart to compose the song: Jesus commanded us something to do Love one another as I have loved you: My love will guide, and enable you to, Love one another” (Source: A Tale of a Legend)

As Pride leads to our division, the cross leads to our humility, and our humility leads to our unity with others.

As Pride leads to our division, the cross leads to our humility, and our humility leads to our unity with others.

Prejudice: Dictionary defines Prejudice as a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. History testifies that Hitler and Stalin have wiped out millions of people from the face of the earth due to their deep rooted prejudice against a race. Ethnic violence and wars have erupted due to prejudice. Churches and Christian fellowships are no exception to this deadly virus. A sister cannot stand the sight

of a beloved sister for her shape of nose or the way she dresses or her manner of walking and talking. Is it possible to expect uniformity among all the members of UESI which is Interdenominational? Variety is the virtue of our Movement and diversity is its beauty. This diversity in unity brings increase!

Respecting the individuals and integrating the differences and upholding ‘charity’ should be our guiding principles. The Spirit of God who dwells in the body of Christ would be grieved if one section of UESI looks at the other with a different ethnic or linguistic background through the glasses of prejudice. I may not be able to align with the thinking, principle, and practice of another brother in my fellowship. But I must learn to respect him, love him and team up with him to achieve our goals. **The ‘jaundiced view’ of a few believers will create a toxic atmosphere.** The members of UESI should do a self-examination honestly and find out if they are guilty of the following prejudices:

a). Spiritual Social / Economic Snobbery: This prejudice means that people think they are socially, spiritually and economically better than others. In other words, we become judgmental about others who are not up to our spiritual standards or convictions. And we have



a tendency to look down on such brothers and sisters with contempt. It is a grave offence if we measure fellow believers by the yardsticks of status, spiritual growth and personality. If a fellowship is guilty of snobbery (despising the interior), then it becomes another secular club. When William Booth was not able to address an important Salvation Army Conference due to his ailment, he sent a one word telegram to the organizers: **'Others'**. Think of others, love others, respect others and value others. As the Lord Jesus Christ has accepted us with all our imperfections, lowly status and unworthy condition we should accept one another.

b). Intellectual Elitism: It means having an attitude of looking down on those who are poorly educated. Our forefathers have taught us through word and deed on how to relate with people of different intellectual caliber. Paul mentions about 30 different individuals in Romans 16th chapter. They labored with him, as co-labourers. UESI needs people from diverse backgrounds. **"Everyone is important but no one is indispensable".**

c). Ageism: It is another prejudice which is raising its ugly head in a subtle way in some quarters of UESI. The seniors think that the young-

sters are inexperienced, impulsive, fast and modern gadget friendly. The youngsters think that many senior graduates have become old fashioned and they are out of touch with the trends and challenges of the fields. Both of them may be right in their opinion. But ignoring either of them will make UESI lose its sheen. We need the wise counseling and the guidance of the gray hairs or bald heads and also the energetic, vibrant, tech-savvy of the Youngblood. When age, health and mental coordination do not cooperate, it is advisable for the seniors to step down graciously giving to the next generation. But it is the responsibility of the elders to caution the members of the movement when things go wrong with the core values, distinctives and ethos of UESI.

Pollution: It is the third virus that damages the credibility of the movements. Pollution in an organization is caused by gossip. These vices create a toxic environment in our fellowship what is shared for prayer and confidence reaches the itching ears in the next few hours. It is too difficult to find a fellow graduate or senior member in whom the young graduates can pour his heart, share his struggles and temptations in complete trust and confidence.

The destructive power of the tongue:

The Book of the Proverbs and the Epistle of James have warned about the pain, anguish and the trauma caused due to acid spouting sharp tongues. "There are those who speak rashly, like the piercing of a sword" (Prov 12:18a AMP). Reckless, rash and hurting words inflict deep and incurable wounds on the victims. They cause irreparable damage. We always remember some of our senior graduates who would listen to us with empathy. They would use the right words to correct us. One must speak the truth but in love (Ephesians 4:15). During World War II, there was a saying: "Loose lips sink ships". It may be adapted to the Christian life: "Loose lips sink human spirits". More damage is done to the body of Christ through 'loose lips'. How can we ask someone to smell the rose after cutting his nose? Prov 12:18a also highlights the constructive power of the tongue: "... But the tongue of the wise brings healing." May gracious, healing and encouraging words flow from our tongues!

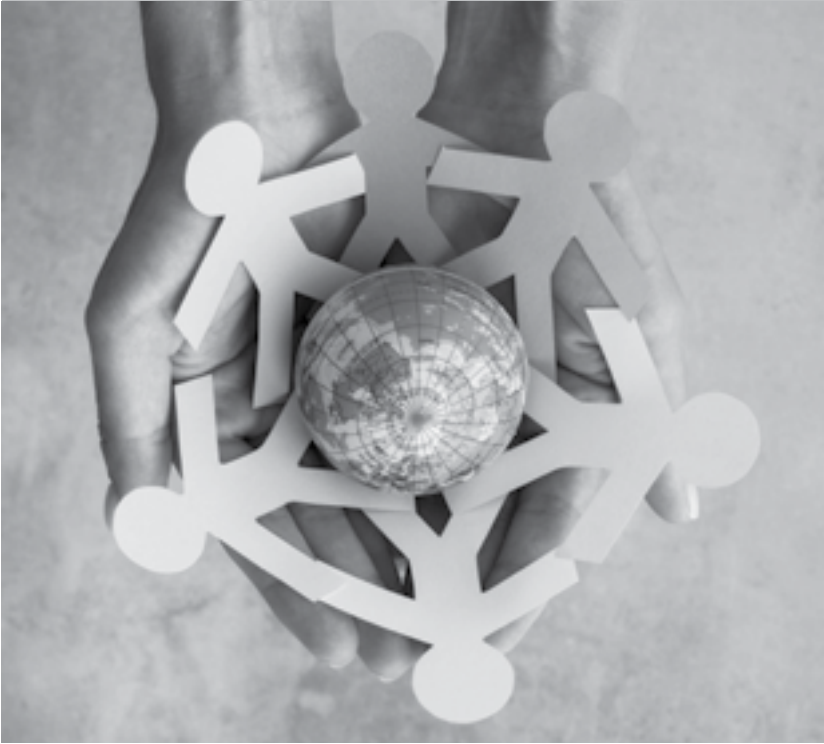
In conclusion, Conflicts in interpersonal relationships are inevitable. As human beings, we are vulnerable to hurt through careless walk and talk. Strains in relationships create a toxic atmosphere in our fellowship. If the members walk in the light of the Scriptures, the Spirit of God, who loves unity, will convict us when there is an estrangement and bitterness towards one another. Spiritual maturity is synonymous with humility. It drives us to take the initiative in reconciling the broken relationships by saying 'sorry' if we are wrong. A phone call or a text in WhatsApp "I am sorry, dear brother/sister, I have hurt you" will restore our strained relationships and bring back the dear ones. **Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has given us a golden rule in Matthew 7:12: "In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you". The towel and basin found in the wrapper design of the book LEARNING TO LEAD by Chua Wee Hian, the Former General Secretary of IFES, make a powerful statement about servant leadership.**



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The World is One Family



***F**or just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ, we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (Romans 12:4-5 NIV)*

Unity in Diversity is a phrase that signifies the unity among people with diverse cultural, and religious beliefs, social statuses, and other demographic differences. Unity refers to a sense of togetherness and integration. Diversity is a natural phenomenon that fosters a variety

of perspectives, experiences, and acceptance among people.

The Biblical narrative begins with the creation story, where God creates and blesses the world, declaring it to be good (Gen. 1:1, 21-22, 27-28, 2:3). The creation of humans, both male and female, emphasizes the idea that all human beings belong to one family, starting with the first human family: Adam and Eve, who were created in the image of God and are considered the ancestral parents of all human beings. This story highlights the common origin

of all people, made in the likeness of God, while also acknowledging the alienation of human beings from God due to the sin of Adam and Eve. God establishes a covenant for all living creatures on earth through Noah, symbolized by the rainbow, as a sign of His everlasting covenant (Gen 9:12-16). This emphasizes God's universal providence and protection for all living beings on the earth. Additionally, the narrative emphasizes that natural resources such as water, air, the sun, and the moon are meant to be beneficial to all human beings, demonstrating God's impartial care for all.

The entire human family once shared one language and a common speech, but the Lord intervened by confusing their language and scattering them across the earth (Gen. 11:1, 11:8). The history of Israel begins with Abraham, recognized as the father of many nations (Gen. 17:5).

Israel Selvanayagam argues that the primary fundamental affirmation from the Bible and the Christian creed is that God is the creator of Heaven, Earth, and All peoples. The Hebrew Bible calls Israel, the People of God, with whom God made a covenant after liberating them from the Egyptian slavery and said 'I will be your God and you shall be my

people.' There are two aspects: one is God is the God of the whole earth, and by implication, the God of all peoples. The other is God is God of the Israelites, with the condition of keeping God's commandments. The purpose of the commandment in all its variety is to establish a community based on justice, peace, and love, which aims to be which are repeated in different combinations throughout the Bible (Ex. 19:5-6, Lev. 26:12 NIV).

"Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्)" is a Sanskrit phrase that translates to "The world is one family" (AV-Maha Upanishad VI.71-73), Vasudha (Skt. वसुधा) means 'The Earth,' Eva (Skt. एव) translates to 'Is Thus,' Kutumbakam (Skt. कुटुम्बकम्) means 'Family.' This ancient Indian saying conveys the idea that the entire world is interconnected and that all people are part of a single global family. Our world is divided by race, language, religion, ethnicity, continents, countries, states or provinces, and further divided in terms of economic power: developed and developing countries, and the third world countries. The theme for the G20 Summit 2023 is "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam: One Earth, One Family, and One Future." This theme aptly captures India's outlook and emphasizes the interconnectedness of all nations. It highlights the



need for nations to work together to address common challenges such as climate change, economic disparities, and global health crises. The theme promotes a vision of a more inclusive and harmonious world, where nations collaborate for the collective well-being of humanity.

The Global Church: the family of God (as “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”):

At present, the world has become one big family. Though the traditional idea of a family consisting of a husband, wife, and children sometimes extended to the grandparent still exists. All humans are the offspring of the first man and woman (Adam and Eve) on the earth. Today we, as humans, are found everywhere in the world but we should not forget that we are from one father and mother, so we are not and can never be diverse from one another. The Church is a great model of Unity in diversity that signifies the unity among believers with diverse cultural, and religious beliefs, social statuses, and

other demographic differences. Our triune God sets an example of unity, equality and feeling of togetherness and amalgamation in oneness.

Key elements to promote unity in diversity through the following areas:

1. Expanding the Notion of Family views the entire world as an extended family, fostering a profound sense of belonging and responsibility towards all beings, irrespective of their differences.

2. Universal Brotherhood promotes empathy, compassion for all humans, and the interconnectedness of all people as part of one global family, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, or religion.

3. Compassion and Empathy involves recognizing the shared humanity and being sensitive to the needs, struggles, sufferings, and joys of all living beings. It is important to cultivate compassion and empathy in order to take collective action to alleviate suffering and promote well-being.

Readers' Response

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4. Ethical Values such as honesty, integrity, accountability, empathy, respect, kindness, and inclusivity, serve as a moral compass for individuals and societies to treat others with dignity and respect.

5. Peace and Harmony promotes the idea of shared humanity and urges individuals, communities, and nations to collaborate in resolving conflicts peacefully and creating a more peaceful world.

6. Global Responsibility involves the collective responsibility of the global community for the welfare of the planet and its inhabitants. It urges both individuals and nations to take responsibility for tackling

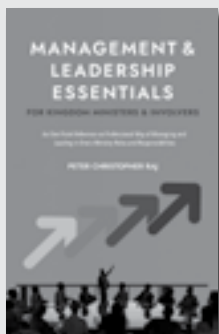
global issues such as poverty, climate change, and inequality.

In Conclusion, UESI, as one family of students, graduates and staff, promotes peace, love, tolerance, unity, respect, compassion, and cooperation. UESI thrust area - 'Caring and Growing' for 2021-24 gives the sense of one family of God and the opportunity to nurture caring and growing together. As God's one family, let us inherit God's blessings by loving one another and living in unity as one family. "One Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all." (Eph 4:5-6 NIV). May God continue to bless the UESI family! Amen!



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Biblical Unity with Diversity at its Heart



India is home to twenty-two scheduled languages, hundreds of dialects and thousands of ethnic groups and tribes. Each of its twenty-eight states and eight union territories represents a unique blend of diverse culture, cuisine, and faith. As I look at this kaleidoscope that is India, in all of its breath-taking beauty, its diversity amazes me.

Though I grew up in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, the Civil Services took me to Kerala and to many States across North India, where I tasted a slice of many diverse cultures, each as beautiful as the other. Travelling across the nation, one can notice that India is a diverse multi-ethnic country, home

to thousands of small ethnic and tribal groups.

The more I interact with the people of different communities and cultures, different faiths and values system, the more I see and celebrate how the festivals and dances of India, the art forms and architecture of Bharat, the ethnic attires and cuisine from Kashmir to Kanyakumari all reflect the heart of God.

Ever since God touched my life during my college days, there was a drastic change in my understanding of the people and of humanity. I realised that the ethnic and other categories like economic, gender, religion, region, etc. can no longer

define our identities as given in Galatians 3:28 - "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

Church is a place/ community to celebrate the diversity of breaking social barriers of diverse ethnicities. Our Christian identity is not meant to snuff out our unique cultural or ethnic Indian identity. My posting in various parts of India and abroad enabled me to practise this and that's why I feel enabled to share four foundational aspects on 'unity in diversity' to the esteemed readers of this publication.

1. Diversity is God's creation

As I go through the first few chapters of Genesis, I find that God's intent is for a world filled with diverse peoples. In the creation account, God created Adam and Eve in His image. As many different races and ethnicities emerged from Adam, the image of God was imprinted on each of them. People of North and South, East and North-East India are people from different ethnicities and each of them is God's wonderful creation. We need to embrace one another with love and appreciation because diversity is God's creation.

In the Book of Revelation, when God begins the eternal story of a new creation, people from every

nation, tribe, culture, and ethnicity gather to worship Jesus Christ.

2. Differences are to be respected and not despised

Democracy is a system that encourages and allows diverse views of diverse people. People, by design have diverse views. Differences are to be respected but never despised.

History records that when the people of some castes were despised and not allowed to enter into the temples, B. K Gaikwad and Dr B R Ambedkar led a protest outside the Kalaram temple in Nashik, Maharashtra on the 2nd of March 1930, in order to allow Dalits into the temple. According to Ambedkar, in order to break the wall between the upper class and lower caste, it was important to get an entry into the temple because temples have been considered a place of origination of caste annihilation.

Differences which are communal, caste-based, linguistic, sexist and region-based in nature, which should have been the scaffolds of a healthy, pluralistic society, instead fuel a hate machine that threatens our society. We should be cautious of casteism, communalism and parochialism that will endanger our lives. I am glad that my faith



in God enables me to respect and appreciate people irrespective of caste, colour, creed or gender.

Rosa Parks of USA changed the course of history on the 1st of December 1955! In her quiet, determined and courageous manner - she sat so that others could stand. This 'small action' of Rosa Parks sparked unity among the entire community. The United States Congress honoured her as "the first lady of civil rights" and "the mother of the freedom movement"

How often is the caste ingrained in the minds of people, even among Christians! How long will the 'caste' be a consideration in marriages? How long will the 'caste' be a part of the admission process in our schools and colleges? Bring the change and be the change.

3. Break the barriers and be a game changer

In the story of the Samaritan woman, Jesus goes through the places that we think are off-limits, speaks with the people that we think are off-limits, talks about matters that we think are off-limits and meets with communities that we think are off-limits. As Jesus and his disciples strolled through Samaria, he was on a mission to break the barriers and bring transformative changes in the 'racial divide' and 'gender divide'. In

this story, Jesus brings change in the mindsets that are foundational. Don't marginalise women, uplift them; don't abuse women, respect them; don't bring down women's dignity, rather raise their esteem; don't discriminate women, give them equal status.

Look at the Church boards, UESI boards and Mission boards. What percentage of the Boards constitute women? What stops us from involving the women in our decision-making processes? If we are to be role models, consciously we need to bring women in our boards and in our decision-making bodies.

The Gospel of Christ is the great emancipator! Jesus came to set the captives free, and this includes women! 'Equality among men and women' is a foundational value upon which humanity exists. Break the barrier and be a game changer.

4. For unity, leave your egos and logos behind

"Our lack of unity is not only contrary to God's will, it's also a scandal to the world. The Lord asks us for unity; our world, torn by all-too-many divisions that affect the most vulnerable, begs for unity," declared Pope Francis during his address at the 70th Anniversary of World Council of Churches

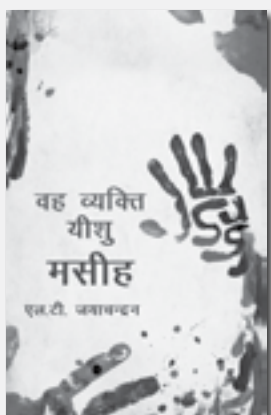
We can do more if we ignore our ego and forget our ego. Arrogance and hubris is un-Christian and never an option to bring unity. I was amazed when I read the third Chapter of the book of Nehemiah, which records the names of each person who was involved in building the wall.

Unity does not come by accident. It's achieved as a result of our conscious decisions to align ourselves horizontally as well as vertically. While the vertical dimensions of unity are foundational; the horizontal are consequential. Time to leave our egos and logos behind.



John Samuel served as Chief Post Master General, Govt of India and UN Consultant. He is married to Ramona, and they are blessed with two lovely girls. He is currently based in Delhi

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Christmas amid Chaos?



Winter has well and truly arrived. The evening and morning temperatures have dipped to 14.3 Celsius. Burr...it's cold. That is, subjectively speaking. While Tokyo and Washington DC would have celebrated the blossoming of cherry blossoms in all their hues over Thanksgiving, our winter blooms in potted plants now display their beauty and riot of colours. We are told that climate change is the reason for the delay in the 'Season'. We should have had these floras fill our hearts with joy in November. There is a paradigm shift.

What paradigm shift is that?

The answer is, perhaps, staring us in the face. Why are we unable to see it? I am not a YouTuber. Nor am I fond

of those individual news reporters who have moved away from the 'godi-media' to use YouTube as their platform to disseminate their views, assessments and perspectives about events shaping India. Nevertheless, we must grow the discipline to hear these Youtuber folks and the 'godi-media'. Listening to them talk about the 'invaders and colonizers' who have brought war to people isn't amusing. A god-free society displays its unbridled humanity. Or is it inhumanity that has dehumanized and demonized us?

"He who is informed is also warned"!

However, I am an avid listener to the Word – the Bible - that speaks in that

small, still voice. Sadly, though, we are quick to speak and lazy to listen. Worse, we are not very discerning in what we hear, decipher, interpret, apply, and respond. In fact, it is often noticed that our responses are emotionally influenced and supported by our warped mindset. We want to do (and justify) what we want to do. Admittedly these wield power that makes us insensitive, biased, cold, indifferent, subjective, and negative. Yes, one wishes that these could make us objective and critically analytical. Alas...!

That said, unfortunately, such behaviour and mindset exists across every international border, too. As a direct consequence of this mentality and attitude, we are forced to live in a world that is relationally in chaos and irrationally arrogant. All attempts to bring about mutual respect, acceptance, harmony instead of cacophony, forgiveness, and reconciliation instead of hate and violence appear to be a very distant dream. In a metaphor, it is like a mirage in a desert of hopelessness. As such, it seems to reinforce the notion that we choose to stew in our current state of brokenness and rejection instead of honestly seeking help to be pulled out of the cauldron in which we are being stewed.

Not all is lost. Thank God!

There is good news. A remedy is made available. It is a remedy that fixes the broken and shattered people, communities, nations and even our destroyed environment. It heals and restores. It provides assurance and belonging, all built on the strength of that prayer, "Forgive us as we have been forgiven..." (Lk 11:4). Its core value and ethos drive it into action. That action has purpose, acceptance, and worth building as its goal. All because it is God-centric. And God loves repentant people! (Jon 3:10; 4:10-11).

Where and Who provides such a therapeutic treatment?

Here is the News – the Good News, if you please.

It is back to the Bible. The Bible reintroduces us to meet the eternal Specialist – The one and only - our Creator, revealed as an infant born to Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. His name is Immanuel, viz., God with us!

"Good News of Great Joy" – 2023 AD:

Christmas 2023 returns once more with the message, ***"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people."*** (Lk 2:10)

Dr Luke, Physician and author of 'The Gospel according to St Luke',



narrates to Governor Theophilus the event that took place at night – at an hour when the night is at its darkest and sleep at its deepest.

The shepherds, as they did each night, having grazed their sheep through the day, had gathered their flock into their pen. The pen itself offered some protection for the flock from the ravenous wolves. Yet the experienced shepherds knew that the pen had to be watched through the night, especially between 1 am and 4 am when the wild beasts, by instinct, knew the most vulnerable hour to prey on their prey – the hour just before dawn. Surprisingly, more than the visits of the wolves, the sudden visit of “an angel of the Lord” would have shocked the shepherds guarding the pen. Such an unexpected visit would have certainly sent shock waves down one’s spine. Even the bravest among the brave would have trembled.

Please allow me to quote what Dr Luke wrote to Governor Theophilus. “When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him,

they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child. (Lk 2:15-17).

A vital element of Luke’s narrative is his construct of information. It is a researched and verified narrative for a well-informed, highly intelligent friend who is also a powerful ruler. That throws out all impressions pertaining to arguments for the story being mythological or a hallucination. Truth sweeps away all arguments built on presumptuous propositions.

Dr Luke says that after their extraordinary experience, the shepherd’s conversation, and physical verification of that which was announced to them, repudiate all arguments to support the theory built for hallucinations and dreams. Another element in Luke’s narrative is that as the day broke and people poured into the streets, the shepherds told everyone in the village of their amazing, extraordinary discovery and perhaps reminded the people who, for centuries, had been waiting for the long-awaited prophecy to be fulfilled. [Lk 2:17-18].

As for the actual content of the message, it amazes us that the shepherds should receive communication that said, **“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the**

people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ, the Lord. [Lk 2:10-11].

As the angel leaves after delivering the message, an angelic choir joins him, singing, **“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests,”** two facts/truths emerge.

Two truths/facts:

1. Were the shepherds' fear solely driven by the sudden appearance of one angel and then being joined by many more? Such an experience and response would be both - legitimate and logical. There was nothing extraordinary, then, to hear the angel assure them that he and his companions were not sent to hurt them. Rather, they were the privileged few to receive very direct information - the good news. And the good news of the birth of the 'Prince of Peace' and Saviour wasn't to be exclusively for them (Jews in general) alone but was Global [universal] in scope – “for all people”.

2. Could it also be that shepherds' fear was more than a situational fear? We ordinary folks live with a variety of fears. Who doesn't fear tyrannical leaders and rulers? The ruthlessness of the Romans and their government was an established fact and well-known. The economy was in bad shape, too. Besides high taxes and corrupt

officials (Lk 19:1-10), manipulative religious vendors and the cost of living, took more from them and the people than their due. The social reality at the time was the existence of bandits and marauding raiders who raided and happily marched away with what wasn't theirs in the first place (Lk 10:30-36).

So, yes, this was good news in more ways than one – for the shepherds, the city of Bethlehem, Israel as 'a people' and 'all the people', making it global in scope.

Again this Christmas announces this GOODNEWS again!

Good news according to the Men of East:

The 'King of the Jews', to quote the Wise Men, whose star they had seen in their own countries, was born to liberate people from sin and its consequences – the eternal consequence of separation from God our Father. [The gifts presented to Baby Jesus speak to us with profound meaning]. Immanuel was born among us - a reality. For the Jews, the much-expected and waited-for Messiah was among them. God had heard their social, political and religious abuse and acted, again, just as He had done when their ancestors were slaves in Egypt. The difference this time was that God Himself had come down



among them, born as a baby in the lineage of King David. He had not sent another team of Moses and Aaron. And in that personal coming, John the disciple said, “as many as received Him, He gave the power to become children (sons and daughters) of God”. (Jh 1:12-14).

Christmas is all about – Immanuel (to quote Isaiah’s prophesy - Isa 7:14) – God with us. Christmas has returned, announcing its message once more, saying Jesus Christ is the

only hope and healer of shattered dreams. He specializes in mending broken lives and relationships. He offers acceptance for the rejects of the world, living in hopelessness and doubting their worth. In fact, His standing offer is, (Matt 11:28). He says that we may have life, a life that is abundant for today, tomorrow and eternity ahead (Jh 10:10b).

May the blessings of the Christ of Christmas be yours this Christmas and the New Year, 2024!



Hansraj Jain, a widower, is a UBS graduate and CEO of Inheritors, a ministry focused on Family and Human relationships. His son Prakash, a Liver Transplant Surgeon, daughter is a business woman and owner of Tiger-way Coffee. They live in Nagpur, Maharashtra, you can reach him at hansraj.jain@gmail.com

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The Glory, Unity and Purity of The Church, The Body of Christ (Apostle Paul's Epistle to Ephesians)

The epistle of Ephesians is often called the Queen of his epistles. No specific problems, no definite situation, no personal greetings and no names are mentioned here. After addressing the challenges faced by the Church at Colossi, Paul's mind was filled with Christ and his unimaginable work done on the cross. Paul articulated his thoughts and presented the church in all its glory and splendor.

The book is beautifully divided into two sections. The first one talks about **the establishment of the Church** (Eph 1-3). Our sins have alienated us from one another and also from God and we are doomed for destruction and death. But Christ, through his death on the cross has destroyed the barriers, the dividing wall of hostility and established peace between the Jews and Gentiles and made them as one body and has also made peace with God. This new humanity created in Christ is now called as the body of Christ, temple of God and a dwelling for the Holy Spirit.

The second one talks about **the standards of the Church: "unity" and "purity"** (Eph 4-6). The first

one is **"Christian Unity,"** its basis is the unity in the Godhead and Paul explains it in detail in Eph 4:1-16v. The beauty of the unity of the Church lies in its diversity. The same God has given gifts to all and each one received different gifts from God to use them for the edification of the Church and for the maturity of each member. The second one is **"purity"** and its base is found in the holiness of our triune God (Eph 4:16-5:3v). Unity and purity can be practiced by being filled with the Holy Spirit, which can be experienced between husband and wife, parents and children and between servants and masters. In other words at home, in family and at the work place.

Satan who failed to defeat Christ during His earthly ministry, now tries to attack the body of Christ, the Church. The two main weapons of Satan are **"disunity"** and **"impurity."** How often we fight among ourselves in terms of unity and purity and succumb to the evil one's schemes. Paul is exhorting every believer to be filled with the Holy Spirit, put on the full Armor of God and fight the principalities of the world.



Mr. Sudhir Kumar Gaddam, Staff Secretary for UESI-OPED & BDC, based at Gurugaon, Haryana, He was an EU student at Palvoncha, UESI-AP Staff (1999-2014), UESI-AP State Secretary (2014-16) & UESI-TS State Secretary (2015-21). He is married to Madhavi and blessed with daughter Hannah and Son Jonathan





*Hear...
oh daughter...*

Blessings & Cost of Obedience

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