

Unified Purpose

Welcome back to Walking with Purpose! Now, I know you didn't come for a Science lesson, but have you ever wondered what makes the difference between a spotlight and a laser beam? How can a medium-powered laser burn through steel in a matter of *seconds*, while the most powerful spotlight can only make it *warm*? Both may have the same electrical power requirements...but the big difference is unity!

A laser can be simply described as “a medium of *excited* molecules with mirrors at each end.”

Some of the excited molecules naturally decay into a less excited state, yet in the decay process they release a “photon”, which is a particle of light.

It is here that the unique process of the laser begins.

The photon moves along and “tickles” another molecule, inviting another photon to join him on his journey.

Then these two photons “tickle” two more molecules and invite two more photons to join the parade.

Soon there is a huge army of photons marching in step with each other.

It is this unity that gives the laser its power.

A spotlight may have just as many photons, but each is going its own independent way, occasionally *interfering* with other photons.

As a result, much of its power is wasted and cannot be focused to do any useful work.

The laser, because of its unity, is like an army marching in tight formation and can focus all its power on its objective. God wants that same effectiveness for us! So today, let's talk about laser-tight unity!



Fellowship

1. Do you tend to work better alone or in a group?
2. How has a friend “tickled” or “spurred you on” into doing something positive this week?



Discipleship

Lately we've been talking about the third purpose for which God created us, and that is "***fellowship***". Because this area is so important to God, we need to be sure we've guarded against any destroyers of unity...any ways that Satan would like to infiltrate our ranks and keep us from effective, unified purpose. There is **such power** available to us and for the Kingdom when we work and live together! I don't know if you've ever thought about this—but I'm convinced that this intimidates the enemy!

Psalm 133:1 says, "How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!" Something that brings such pleasure to God is sure to be challenged! So how can we guard ourselves against *disunity*?

Things like gossip, selfishness, looking out for our own agendas...those things have no place in a unified team of believers.

Let's look together at Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 12:20. (***read aloud***) "For I am afraid that when I come I may not find you as I want you to be, and you may not find me as you want me to be. I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder." Let's list these again and feel free to underline them in your Bible: quarreling; jealousy; outbursts of anger; factions; slander; gossip; arrogance and disorder.

It's been said that the reason a dog has so many friends is because he wags his tail instead of his tongue. (***chuckle***) I wonder if there isn't more truth to that than we realize. The tongue is a powerful tool, and will be used to either destroy or build unity.

A man once overheard his mother passing along to his father a newsy tidbit concerning a neighbor. "You know, you shouldn't repeat stories about others," he said with mock seriousness. "That makes you a gossip." "I'm ***not*** a gossip!" she snapped back. "I'm a *news analyst*." (***chuckle***)

Gossip; it's such an easy trap to fall into, isn't it? Proverbs has a lot to say about this insidious unity-breaker:

A gossip betrays a confidence, but a *trustworthy* man keeps a secret.
A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.
The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.

Jean Richter lived hundreds of years ago, but realized the timeless truth that "A man never discloses his own character so clearly as when he describes another's." For us to have laser-like unity and power, we must each come to accept and love each other, imperfections and all, and use our tongues and time encouraging--rather than destroying each other.

Let's take a quick look at our less-than-perfect brothers and sisters in the *Bible*: Noah was a drunk; Abraham was too old and a liar; Sarah laughed at God's promises; Isaac was a daydreamer; Jacob cheated and stole; Leah was *ugly*. Joseph was abused; Moses had stuttering and temper problems; Miriam was a gossip and judgmental; Gideon was afraid; Samson was a womanizer with long hair; Jeremiah and Timothy were too young; Naomi was a widow; Job went bankrupt; David had an affair and committed murder; Solomon was too rich and had too many wives; Elijah was burned-out and suicidal; Isaiah preached naked; Jeremiah was depressed; Jonah ran from God; Amos' only training was in the school of fig-tree pruning; Hosea's wife was a prostitute. John the Baptist ate bugs; Martha worried about everything; the Samaritan woman was divorced more than once; Peter denied Christ; the disciples fell asleep while praying; Thomas doubted; Zaccheus was too small; John Mark was rejected by Paul; Paul himself was too religious, plus, he was a murderer, along with Moses and David. And of course, Lazarus was dead!

In other words, we can always find *someone* to compare ourselves to who we feel is "worse than we are." But a loving community with *healthy fellowship* is interested in vigilantly guarding *against* the things that destroy unity and each other; in closing the ranks, encouraging each other to love and good deeds, and focusing all of our energy and strengths into effectiveness for God's Kingdom.

In the book, "The Pursuit of God", A.W. Tozer points out that one hundred pianos all tuned to the same fork are automatically tuned to each other. They are of one accord by being tuned, not to each other, but to *another standard* to which each one must individually bow. So one hundred worshipers meeting together, each one looking away to Christ, are as near in heart to each other as they can possibly be.

I recently saw a documentary on Siamese twins. That got me to thinking about the incredible unity required between those two individuals! When one wanted to do his own thing, the other had to be in agreement. Two lives were forced to work in harmony or serious problems ensued. Remember those “destroyers of unity” we listed earlier? (***read slowly***) Quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder? By destroying *those destroyers* through the power of the Holy Spirit, God’s power is unleashed in our lives and world for laser-beam effectiveness.

3. Read John 17:20-23. What was the unity like between the Father and the Son?

What is the ultimate picture of “one-ness” Christ paints for us?

Why does Jesus say this unity is so important? What’s at stake if we show disunity?

4. Read Romans 15:1-7. What modern day examples can you think of that demonstrate “bearing with the failings of the weak”?

Where do verses 4 and 5 point us to get encouragement for this difficult task?

5. Compare Romans 15:1 with James 4:3. How do proper motives play a part in answered prayer?

6. Read Ephesians 4:3. What extent must we go to for unity? What will obedience to this verse look like in your family? Church? Workplace?

7. Read Ephesians 4:13. What is a prerequisite to spiritual maturity?



Ministry



Evangelism

8. What will you do this week to help restore unity to a broken or fragmented relationship in your circle of influence?



Worship

9. Close with a time of prayer for each member and the upcoming challenges of the week. Remember to pray throughout the week for the needs mentioned!