

From Our Pastor...

United for Maximum Influence

Part 7 of the Series

For more than twenty years, Ingleside has been a remarkably united church. Across those two decades, we have learned some important truths about our unity – some of which I am recounting in this series of articles.

In earlier installments (read them all at www.ingleside.org), I have addressed (1) why we should talk about this topic now; (2) how unity is both a gift and a goal; (3) seven dimensions of our spiritual unity; (4) how we are united by what we believe – our doctrinal unity; (5) how we are united by a common purpose; and (6) how strong leadership promotes unity. This week our focus is on the relationship between unity in the church and influence in the world.

The longest recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible is in John 17, and a key theme of that prayer is unity. As he interceded for his disciples, Jesus prayed “*that they may be one*” (v. 11). Later in the prayer, he again asked “*that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us*” (v. 21, ESV).

The unity for which Jesus prays is not a unity achieved at the expense of the truth – he affirms clearly that “*your word is truth*” (v. 17b, ESV). Nor is it a unity at the expense of holiness – he prayed that the Father would make his followers “*pure and holy*” (v. 17a, NLT).

It is, however, a unity that will give Jesus’ disciples maximum influence in the world with the gospel. Notice carefully verse 21. Jesus prays “*that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me*” (ESV).

Simply put, Jesus is teaching us that ***when a church is united its influence for Christ in the world is maximized; when a church is divided its influence is diminished.***

This truth has been confirmed by recent research. In a report entitled, “FACTS on Growth,” and based on surveys completed by more than 800 churches, Kirk Hadaway writes:

The strongest correlate of growth when all controls were in effect was the presence or absence of conflict. Obviously, conflict cannot be completely avoided, but whether or not a congregation finds itself mired in serious conflict is the number one predictor of congregational decline.

The bottom line: a church that wants to grow numerically and in influence for Christ will prize and protect its unity.

I am thankful that our church family has long embraced this truth. As a result, Ingleside has been a healthy, united, and growing church for many years. As we look to the future, our effectiveness in making disciples will depend on our ongoing commitment to unity.

So, whether young or old, a newcomer or an oldtimer, a worshiper at 9:30 or 11:00 a.m. (or perhaps at 8:30 a.m. or 6:30 p.m.), for the sake of our witness to the world please join me in renewing your commitment to biblical unity. ***God is greatly glorified and the influence of the gospel is magnified when the church is unified.***

I’m grateful for God’s favor on our journey together across the years. And I am convinced: *the best is yet to come!*

Your Pastor and Friend,



Tim McCoy