

**The Power of Together**  
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Jesus rarely did anything alone. He was always surrounded by crowds or His disciples and He had to work hard to get any alone time at all. He understood a principle found in Isaiah 65:8

*Thus says the Lord: "As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one says, 'Do not destroy it, for a blessing is in it,' so will I do for My servants' sake."*

There is a major principle in this verse: new wine is found in the cluster, not in the individual grape. The cluster represents a community of believers who are connected to the vine – Jesus Christ – and who are connected to each other. The Bible says – don't destroy that cluster – that community – because that's where the blessing is.

We're in a series entitled Stronger Together. Today I'm preaching on The Power of Together.

America's history has been based on individualism and self-reliance and independence – but the Bible says the new wine is in the cluster.

In the Bible new wine speaks of fruitfulness, the infilling of the Holy Spirit, the joy of the Lord and the anointing of God. New wine is found in the cluster – in the community of believers.

Fruitfulness is found in the cluster.

Anointing is found in the cluster.

Power is found in the cluster.

Blessing is found in the cluster.

Yet so many people think, "I'll just go to God on my own and get everything I need by myself." No you won't! Yes – you should go to God on your own. But the new wine is found in the cluster. Your one little grape doesn't have it all. We need each other.

There is power when one prays, but there is multiplied power in when two or more pray in agreement. The new wine is in the cluster!

We have authority over Satan as individual believers, but one of us puts a thousand to flight and two of us can put ten thousand to flight!

The new wine is in the cluster!

In Exodus 17 Israel was at war and as long as Moses held the rod of God up, Israel was winning – but when his arms got tired his arms came down and Israel started losing. So Aaron and Hur held his hands up and Israel won the battle.

This is the power of together!

You can worship God alone – and you should. But the corporate anointing when we all worship together is greater than the individual anointing when we worship alone. In Matthew 18:19, Jesus said:

*For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*

New wine is in the cluster because Jesus is in the cluster!  
 God's manifest presence is in the cluster. God's power in the cluster.  
 The cluster multiplies our impact and gives bigger and better results.

This is the power of together! There is power in unity. And there is power in community.

Why do you think AA and 12 Step Programs have been so successful in dealing with addictions? Because they combine truth with community. New wine is in the cluster.

Why is Weight Watchers the longest lasting, most successful weight loss program in history? What makes them different? Their food? Their point system? Maybe. But Weight Watchers has tapped into the power of community. Studies show that people who attend Weight Watchers meetings are three times more likely to lose weight than those who try losing on their own.

There is power of being together in community.  
 There is even greater power in God's community.

The word community comes from two words: common and unity. A community is a group of people who are united by something they have in common. They could be a community because they live in the same area. They could be from the same race or background.

But the amazing thing about God's community is its diversity. And our church has the vision to show the world how different races can get along. Because I believe that they can and they should and they will. How's that going to happen? It's obvious that the government and politicians can't make it happen. It's obvious that judicial legislation can't make it happen.

There's only one way to make it happen and that takes heart change. And Jesus Christ is the only one who can make that happen! Galatians 3:28 say that in God's family:

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

In Christ color does not matter.

In Christ gender does not matter.  
 In Christ occupation or income do not matter.  
 In Christ level of education does not matter.

What matters is that we are in Christ.  
 What matters is that we are one in Christ.  
 We are the body of Christ - God's community - we are the family of God.

Satan wants to steal this from you! He wants to steal your identity by giving you an orphan spirit that keeps you from knowing God as Father. The result of that is a self-centered and independent life where you live for yourself, but without any real identity, purpose or destiny. That kind of life is way beneath what Jesus died for! 2 Corinthians 5:15 says:

*He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.*

There are other people who do find their identity as a son or daughter of the Father, but they think they're an only child! Everything is about them. They don't initiate relationships with other people. They make church all about themselves and their needs. They don't give anything, but they expect everyone to give to them. They expect others to pray for them, but they don't pray for others. They expect the worship leaders to sing only the songs they like and worship in the way they want. They want to do what pleases themselves without thinking of others.

But this is not what Jesus died for!  
 He died so that you would no longer live for yourself, but for Him!  
 He died so that you could stop making all about you and realize that you need other people and other people need you.

The path to spiritual maturity goes from orphanhood to child of the Father to mature sonship that is a vital part of God's family. That family is the church.

- The church is not a family where you're an "only child"; the church is a family full of children. These are your brothers and sisters in Christ.
- The church is not for one generation; it's for all age groups.
- The church is not a place of segregation; it's a home for every race, every color, every people group, and every nation.

And when you are joined to a church – not just attending, but really connected – whatever blessing the church has becomes yours. That multiplies your blessing. You have your individual blessing and the corporate blessing.

But there is a big key to corporate blessing. We find it in Psalm 133.

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing — life forevermore.*

Where does God command blessing? Where there is unity. Psalm 133 shows us three results of unity: Anointing, refreshing and blessing. No unity results in no anointing, no refreshing and no blessing.

By the way, refreshing is another word for revival. There is individual anointing, revival and blessing. There is also corporate anointing, revival and blessing. I want both. I want everything God has for me.

I want to look at five biblical principles to experience the power of together. I'm using the word UNITY as my outline.

## **U Understand the true meaning of unity**

Unity is not uniformity. We don't have to all be the same to get along. Some people think that Christians must act like we have no differences. But that's not true. We have differences between us, but what should make us different from the world is the way we handle our differences.

Unity is choosing to love and accept each other, even with our differences. People need to see us love one another enough to work through our differences.

Sometimes we can think that everyone should see things exactly like us. But I want to show you a valuable truth from Ezekiel 1:1-13 which records a vision that Ezekiel had.

*... in the fire was what looked like four living creatures. In appearance their form was that of a man, but each of them had four faces and four wings... and their wings touched one another. Each one went straight ahead; they did not turn as they moved.*

*Their faces looked like this: Each of the four had the face of a man, and on the right side each had the face of a lion, and on the left the face of an ox; each also had the face of an eagle. Such were their faces. ...Each one went straight ahead. Wherever the spirit would go, they would go, without turning as they went.*

These creatures had the face of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle.

LION – King of the Jungle - Courage - Warfare

OXEN – Very strong and inclined to serve - Work

EAGLE – Soar in heavenly places and vision – Worship

MAN – Understanding, speaking and love – Word – Walking in love

These creatures moved but never turned.

They had eyes all around – speaking of vision – and moved as led by the Spirit. What does this mean for us? The major purposes of the church are worship, word, warfare, the work of the ministry, witnessing and walking in love. Each is represented by one of these four faces. But the spirit will move different ways at different times. There will be different emphases at different times.

We must be willing to trust the Lord as He leads. We must also keep our vision on our area of gifting, knowing our turn will come. There will be times when God emphasizes the area that we are most interested in. We must also understand that if we are in a time in the church where our area of gifting or interest is not being emphasized – there are others with other gifts who are really happy.

This is true unity. We stay together. We stay focused. Even when God is moving in an area other than ours.

If we are united in our vision, we will be tolerant for the sake of unity. But here's what we will never tolerate:

**N Never tolerate discord.**

In your family, relationships, church. If you are a boss, never tolerate it in your workplace. Why? Discord is alike a cancer that spreads and affects everyone. Proverbs 6:16-19 says:

*These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.*

God places sowing discord and dissension on the same list as murder! This is serious! What is sowing discord? In music - chords are made from different notes played together. Discord happens when a note is played not in harmony with the chord. It clashes and causes noise rather than music.

To sow discord is to spread disharmony – contention – strife. It's planting seeds that cause problems in families or work or church. Discord tries to alienate people from one another. It could be gossip, slander, or anything else that hinders unity. Romans 16:17-18 says:

*I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. People who sow discord are trying to divide people.*

In 1 Corinthians 1:10, Paul said:

*Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be*

*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*

To experience the power of together, we cannot tolerate discord.

### **I Intercede – pray for unity – prayer creates unity**

A major key to unity is to ask for it. Do warfare against the spirit of disunity. Jesus said a house divided against itself cannot stand – so Satan’s plan is always to bring division. Stand against it! Pray against it.

### **T Teamwork makes the dream work.**

One is too small a number to accomplish anything great! There’s an old African proverb, ‘When you run alone, you run fast. But when you run together, you run far.’ It’s easy to give up when you are alone, but if other people are walking or running with you, then you keep on going.

New Testament ministry almost always happened in teams. Jesus sent out His disciples in twos. You rarely hear of Paul alone – it’s always Paul AND – Barnabas, Silas, Timothy.

God tells us why we need others to work with us. Yet many of us try to do everything in life alone. But God never intended for you to walk through life alone. Never. In fact, God said in Genesis 2:18:

*It is not good for man to be alone.*

I want you to see a truth from 1 Chronicles 15:3-4

*And David gathered all Israel together at Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the Lord to its place, which he had prepared for it. Then David assembled the children of Aaron and the Levites...*

We see here that David gathered the people and then assembled them into teams. We sometimes see gathering and assembling as the same thing. But there are some differences. A gathering is a crowd. Assembling is being part of a cluster.

A gathering is a meeting of individuals. Assembling is when they each find their place and begin to function together. Hebrews 10:25 tells us:

*Do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

Assembling does means to keep meeting together. Obviously – attending church is something the Bible commands us not to give up. But assembling is more than just meeting. It’s like the difference between an auto parts store and an automobile assembly plant.

You can go to an auto parts store and find all the parts of a car.  
All the parts are gathered there.

Carburetor – really carburates

Muffler – really muffles

Catalytic converter – can convert some catalycts

But parts do nothing on the shelf. They might look good, but they don't work until they are assembled, put together. It takes an assembly plant to put all the parts together to make a working driveable vehicle.

A church is not a parts warehouse!

This is not just a place where all the parts just gather to say hi.

This is not a place where we just show up to show off and look good.

The church is an assembly plant where different parts are being fitly joined together into a working unit.

We must move beyond just going to church and start being the church. We must move beyond looking good on the shelf and get into working order. That means we must get connected to others. The new wine is in the cluster!

Individuals cannot accomplish what the power of together accomplishes.  
Ephesians 4:16 says:

*From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

many parts must do their share for the church to grow? Each part!

What's your part? And are you doing it? That brings us to the Y in Unity.

## **Y     You are the key to unity!**

We all have the same responsibility for unity. Don't leave the work of the ministry to everyone else. You need to find your place in the family and do what God leads you to do. We are all needed. Romans 12:5 says:

*Since we are all one body in Christ, we belong to each other and each of us needs all the others.*

We do need each other. Each of us is important to the body of Christ.

It's only as we are all willing to do our part in unity that we get the results God promises: anointing, refreshing and blessing. The new wine is in the cluster. Do you want anointing? It's in the cluster. Do you want revival? It's in the cluster. Blessing? It's in the cluster.

Who's in your cluster? The cluster is not a church service. Community is what happens when you're with a small group of people.

I want everyone here to experience the power of together.  
That's why we want everybody to get in a small group.  
I'm talking about 100% of our church. I'm talking about you.