

**Anger Pandemic**  
**Week 5: Unity over Anger**

There is a lot of anger in our world right now. It does not take a genius to figure that out. I accidentally looked at **Facebook** last night. I was intending to look at marketplace to see if there were any good deals on fishing gear. You see the front page of Facebook first before going to the buying and selling part. In that moment I saw people saying horrible things to one another and angry reactions. It was upsetting.

This series has looked at the **building blocks** that have produced so much anger and so much harm. It goes like this; fear and anxiety lead to anger. Anger that is held on to produces bitterness. Bitterness will affect us both physically and emotionally. It will also destroy relationships. Bitterness, that takes root, poisons many.

**It's the destroying others and our relationships with them that brings us to the choice, Unity over anger.**

Unity is the **state of forming a complete and pleasing whole**. The Hebrew word of peace is **Shalom**. This means a state of completeness, lacking nothing. **The mathematical definition of unity is one.**

**None of this completeness, wholeness, being one, can happen if we are allowing fear and anxiety to cause us to unleash anger on each other.**

**Think about the possibilities if the church is united.** So many things are possible that we could achieve. We will be that **light on a hill** in this divisive, angry, culture. **We will have people love us and are there for us, even when we disagree.**

**Unity is the difference between being the church of Jesus Christ, or not.**

The other side of the coin is that **disunity is potentially our biggest problem** that will hold us back in our desire to be a disciple making church who makes the kingdom present for others. **It's not strategy, or money,**

**or the right people in leadership.** Those are important, but without unity, we cannot be the church, the body of Christ, in this angry world.

This verse is the center of what we are going to look at today. **Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.** <sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. <sup>3</sup> **Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.** <sup>4</sup> For there is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you have been called to **one** glorious hope for the future. <sup>5</sup> There is **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, <sup>6</sup> **one** God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all. Ephesians 4:1-4

**Where's the repetition? "one"**

These next words make clear where **the whole idea of unity** in the body of Christ comes from. <sup>22</sup> "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. <sup>23</sup> I am in them and you are in me. John 17:22-23a  
Unity is based in the **very nature of God**. He is **the blueprint** for what we are to be. There is **no competition** between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God, the father, does his role, God, the son, does his role and God, The Holy Spirit, does his role.

**Choosing unity over anger.**

In the JRR Tolkien book, **The Silmarilian**, Tolkien tells the **foundational story** that becomes The Lord of The Rings and The Hobbit. This is the creation story. God has created those spirit beings that are under him, called the Valor. **The Valor** have different areas of strength and responsibility. **Ulmo** is over the water. **Manwe** is over earth. **Mandos** is over the house of the dead. **Melkor is the mightiest of them all**. God uses these demi-gods to create the world and both elves and humans.

**The way he does it is through a song.** When each valor adds his or her part, the beauty of it creates this beautiful world and these two amazing races of beings who are loved by God and the valor.

After all of this is created, the most powerful of the valor, **Melkor**, decides that he wants to improvise and play what he wants, regardless of the music that God has given them to play. He wants to play lead guitar and have everyone else play off of what he is doing. **Because in his mind, he knows better what he, the most wise and powerful of them all, should be doing.**

You can imagine the tug of war that goes on. The rest of the Valar are trying to continue to play their parts, but that no longer works, because Melkor is doing his own thing. **The song is no longer beautiful.**

That is a picture of disunity or divisiveness. The music that the whole group is making is no longer beautiful, but **upsetting, off tune, frustrating, out of tune.** All it took was one person to decide that they are not getting what they deserve, something is being taken from them, they are entitled and that produces anxiety of fear. That fear then creates anger.

In this story, Melchor begins to hate the elves and humans because they are loved by God and they are beautiful. He wants to dominate and subjugate them. He wants to replace them with his own creation, the ugly, violent, evil species called orcs. He wants them to serve him, not the other way around.

He wants to be not only lead guitar, but composer and conductor. He begins to sow division within the elven community. It is that division that sets all of this suffering off. The light of Valanor, their home, is turned to darkness.

Choosing unity over anger begins with the understanding that...**Unity was created by God through Jesus.**

**People didn't engineer it, design it, or bring it about through force.**

**It's very important that we not think that we are to bring it about in the church.** We are working with something that is of God's design, based upon God's very nature.

**God created everything out of this unity.** The Bible says “**the word**” was in the beginning and nothing was created without this “word.” This is in the beginning of John’s gospel. **The word took on flesh and lived among us.** The word was Jesus.

**Nothing beautiful could have been created, and we could not have been created in God’s image out of any disunity.** If Jesus wanted to play lead guitar when that was the father’s job, nothing beautiful would have come out of it.

**Sin caused separation between people and their God.** That is disunity. That caused all of the problems that we have now with this world and in this world. **People wanted to play lead guitar instead of trusting the composer and conductor.**

**Back to one of our previous phrases...“...binding yourselves together with peace”** This is where Jesus’ death brought peace instead of hostility to us. Listen to what Paul says earlier in this same letter to the Ephesian church. He explains this peace that is binding us together.

**<sup>15</sup> He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Ephesians 2:15**

**Where there was hostility between Jews and Gentiles, now there is none, and they are together the new people or new humanity God is creating.**

There was a lot of hostility. **Jews were on the inside** of what God was doing in the world. Everyone else, gentiles, were on the outside with no way in. **Jews were to have very little to do with them. They were not to eat meals with them or socialize for fear of being made unclean by them.**

**Whatever are the hostilities or walls that separate us now cannot be any worse than that.**

It's this **peace that Jesus created that holds us together**, even with our differences. Peace is like **ligaments and tendons**. They hold bones and muscles together. That connection allows the body to work together.

**A football player with massive leg muscles** will be out of commission for months, maybe even a year, if he tears either his mcl, or acl or a hamstring tendon. These are the ligaments that connect these bones together so that he can run away from or over the competition. **We are connected together by the peace that Christ created for us.**

**God created unity in his people through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.**

I want to read a quote from the book *Love in Hard Places*, by D.A. Carson, that I **introduced last week**. **Ideally, however, the church itself is not made up of natural "friends." It is made up of natural enemies. What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything of the sort. Christians come together, not because they form a natural collocation, but because they have been saved by Jesus Christ and owe him a common allegiance. In the light of this common allegiance, in light of the fact that they have all been loved by Jesus himself, they commit themselves to doing what he says—and he commands them to love one another. In this light, they are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake. Love in hard places, D. A. Carson**

**We love one another in the church who we don't agree with, who personality wise rub us the wrong way, who, because of our brokenness, we have conflict for Jesus' sake.**

**When we try to create unity on our own, we usually create hostility. We pick an issue, or a belief, and make it the reason we are united. We have a cause other than to be the hands and feet of Jesus, making the kingdom present for others and making disciples that is what we unite around. That will create group speak and will cause an "us versus them" mentality within the body of Christ.**

**Choosing unity over anger begins** with the understanding that...Unity was created by God through Jesus. That takes us to our part of "making every effort." **We must maintain what is already there.**

**Again, like our coming to Christ, it wasn't our idea that we initiated.** When you came to Christ, the **Holy Spirit drew you** toward God. It wasn't your idea. Unity, in the same way it was initiated by God through Jesus. We just have to maintain it.

**You didn't build your car from scratch.** But you do need to **get the oil changed** and when one of those lights start flashing **or the mileage says** it's time for whatever you take the car to a mechanic. If you don't give it regular maintenance, the car will no longer operate. It will **break down** on the side of the road or maybe not even make it out of the driveway.

**The church is a vehicle that moves God's people** by bringing them together and preparing them for what God has for them to do. **There is nothing wrong with the vehicle;** it will operate in harmony from engine to transmission. to steering and brakes. We just have to keep maintaining it.

**The enemy of maintaining anything is simply neglect.** A car, a relationship, a business, a team, a church, isn't just going to **keep going forever like it is right now.**

Assuming that a car, a relationship, a business, a team, a church is **just going to keep going forever** like it is now, is wrong thinking.

**Entropy—Scientific principle that all systems have a tendency to move from order to disorder unless energy is added on a regular basis.**

**If we don't put energy into maintaining the unity that God created in and for the church, the body of Christ will move from unity to disunity and become an ugly mess.**

**Choosing unity over anger begins** with the understanding that...Unity was created by God, through Jesus. That takes us to our part of "making every effort." **We must maintain what is already there.** This is where neglect

comes into play...**Fear, anxiety, and bitterness** (and anger) **left unattended destroys** unity.

<sup>26</sup> And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> for anger gives a foothold to the devil. Ephesians 4:26-27

**Anger is too heavy, there is no such thing as righteous anger, if we hold on to anger we will sin.**

**Fear and anxiety makes us protective of what is ours that leads to Consumerism, viewing the church as the producer of what I need and deserve instead of the body of Christ.**

And now I make one more appeal, my dear brothers and sisters. **Watch out for people who cause divisions and upset people's faith by teaching things contrary to what you have been taught.** Stay away from them. <sup>18</sup> Such people are not serving Christ our Lord; they are serving their own personal interests. By smooth talk and glowing words they deceive innocent people. <sup>19</sup> But everyone knows that you are obedient to the Lord. This makes me very happy. I want you to be wise in doing right and to stay innocent of any wrong. <sup>20</sup> The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus<sup>[f]</sup> be with you. Romans 16:17-20

**There was a Lady who said, "I don't feel like I've been to church today." She didn't hear the kind of music she wanted to hear. Then she proclaimed that this was the reason she left her previous church. She is teaching the wrong thing about the church.**

**You don't go to church, you are the church, and the church is made to be in unity.**

Unity was created by God through Jesus...We must maintain what is already there. Fear, anxiety, and bitterness (and anger) left unattended destroys unity. That means that...**Maintaining unity demands sacrificial love.**

**The answer is always Jesus. We are to love like Jesus did, which we cannot do with His Holy Spirit.**

**When we give our money, time, and attention to the fellowship of the believers, it is practice in Jesus style sacrificial love. It's sacrifice before we know if our sacrifice will actually pay off.**

**Deb's story** of sacrificing her desire to do youth ministry so that we could hire Matt.

**In many cases, what we sacrifice is our need to win, be vindicated, or proven right.**

Use example of our willingness to go up to Beaverton next week.

Guess what happens when we love sacrificially, like Jesus in His Church?  
**Unity unleashes the power of the church toward a common goal**

<sup>22</sup> "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. <sup>23</sup> I am in them and you are in me. **May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.** <sup>24</sup> Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. **Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began!** John 17:22-24

**It is clearly supernatural. It's got to be God.**

**God wants us to experience some of what he experiences, that perfect unity.**

**When people see a church in divisive times experiencing unity, they will be able to know that Jesus is the answer. They will know that no matter what they have done, Jesus loves them.**

**Then you will be able to see God's glory here on earth. This is how together we can make the Kingdom of God present for others.**

**Steps of Obedience:**

**Confront my divisive anger.**

- **Squeeze.**

**Anger makes you tired. It takes a lot of energy that doesn't produce anything good. When you hold on to it or squeeze it, the weight of it will steal our joy and affect those around us.**

- **Cast.**

**The bible says to cast all your cares on him, because he cares for you. This might be something that was done to you as a child that has set off a chain reaction of fear, anxiety, anger, and bitterness. This might be something that has happened in your family or the church, where you felt like something you needed, deserved, was taken from you. Maybe it's about your kids. It's in the lives of our kids that our anxiety shows up in anger.**

- **Embrace.**

**This is where we embrace or accept our adoption as children of God. We live in the new reality where we aren't trying to get God's attention by doing really good or religious things. We aren't trying to get closer to him because he has come close to us through Jesus. We stop trying to earn our acceptance, but rather live like we are accepted that we are loved and, therefore, we can love like Jesus.**

**Therefore, God is asking me to sacrifice \_\_\_\_\_ in order to maintain the unity of believers.**

**Is there a like, want, preference that you are willing to sacrifice for others? Worship music, I don't have kids but I can help with other kids, I'm retired and hate golf. A night/morning as a Cultivate Youth leader**

**Releasing something you have held onto that wasn't right that happened in the church. Sacrifice my desire to be vindicated or have my way acknowledged. It might be giving up that bitterness that is keeping you from experiencing real fellowship in the body of Christ.**

**If nothing is coming to mind, then focus on being willing to as God reveals.**

**I am willing to sacrifice something that isn't foundational or vital to the church being the church, so that the church can be the church.**

