

How Can I Have Faith Like Abraham (Part 4) (Slide 1)

Deny Self: Work Together as a Team

Reading Acts 2:37-47

Matthew 12:22-28 (Slide 2)

A House Divided Cannot Stand

22 Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. **23** And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?"

(Slide 3) **24** Now when the Pharisees heard *it* they said, "This *fellow* does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons."

25 But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. (Slide 4) **26** If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? **27** And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast *them* out? Therefore they shall be your judges. **28** But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.

(Slide 5) In our last lesson we defined Christians, who are waging a war in the spiritual realm, as warriors. In this lesson we'll see that the individual warrior must rely on the team God has set up, that is, the church to realize success.

Modern war, despite all its technology, still relies on an army to win. Whether it be on the ground, the sea or the air, it requires all the military within each unit to function in sync. Lives are saved when the team works together, yet lives are lost when the unit becomes divided in strategy, philosophy, and action.

A church that is divided, splits, closes or loses warriors. When personal feelings and interpretations become such that a variety of opinions are held, a satisfactory solution cannot be reached, the church splits. I have no idea what the cause of it was, but the history of this church here on South 2nd street was involved in a split.

When we are not unified, we create confusion. Paul warns the brethren at Colosse about becoming arrogant and using spiritual gifts inappropriately as to create confusion. Unity affords no room for confusion. **(Slide 6)**

Jesus makes the point that a kingdom or house that acts in opposition of each other or the common goal, will collapse. God knew that to be the case and that is why He established through inspiration by the Apostles, particularly Apostle Paul and through Timothy, the Evangelist, a governing autonomous body to keep the church functioning as a unit.

The Psalmist wrote in:

Psalms 133:1 **(Slide 7)**

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is

For brothers (God's People) to dwell together in unity!

2 Corinthians 13:11 **(Slide 8)**

11 Finally, brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.

We can find several verses and passages where Christians are encouraged to live in unity and to function in harmony.

In a military unit, there are designated leaders. **(Slide 9)** In the Army and Marine Corps, we can find various ranking officers such as Major, Lieutenant Commander, Lieutenant Colonel, and Brigadier General. Each has a role and a responsibility.

(Slide 10) In the church we have designated leaders: Elders (Shepherds), Deacons, Ministers, Evangelists, Teachers. Each has a designated responsibility but functions within the scope of the same goal, and that is to Worship and Glorify God.

Paul spoke directly to the elders in Ephesus in:

Acts 20:28 **(Slide 11)**

28 Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

It is an awesome and fearful responsibility!

I often picture Elders as the team captains. They are still subject to everything that everyone else on the team is subject to, but they have an added responsibility to lead. And they must do so through prayer and humility or be disqualified in the end.

The team captains are usually chosen by the coach. However, some are chosen by the team to represent them. The latter describes the selection process for elders.

(Slide 12) Before a contest the team captains will meet with the officials to go over the rules and expectations of the game. It becomes their responsibility to convey that message to the rest of the team and ensure that everyone follows the rules and expectations. Particularly, the component of sportsmanship.

If the officials see that someone isn't following the rules, they often address the issue with the team captain rather than the coach. The captains will then talk with the one who is in violation of the established rules.

The captains themselves are held at a higher standard. They can be disqualified or removed and replaced if they violate those set standards.

However, even though there are different roles within a team, the military or the church, each must function in the hopes of reaching the common goal.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 **(Slide 13)**

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. **5** And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. **6** There are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all *persons*. **7** But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (Slide 14) **8** For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; **9** to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, **(Slide 15)** **10** and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another *various* kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. **11** But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills.

This chapter of 1 Corinthians fittingly describes that individual Christians make up the whole of the church. We need to understand that the miraculous gifts of the spirit given early Christians was to make believers. Christians are no longer able to perform these gifts of the spirit because it was imparted to them by the "Laying on of Hands" by the apostles. Two points to make clear;

1. The apostles are no longer with us
2. Miraculous spiritual gifts are no longer necessary because we now have the written word

However, the various abilities that individual Christians now have, work together for the "Common Good" as mentioned in verse 7. Some have the ability to lead singing, teach a bible class, preach, perhaps some simply show support for these and many other elements of worship. Some are really good at performing benevolent works and a variety of other functions. Each function of the individual member supports God's work here on earth.

This chapter continues to emphasize the importance of the individual Christians role in the common goal of the church. Look at verses 14-27

1 Corinthians 12:14-27 **(Slide 16)**

14 For the body is not one member, but many. **15** If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a *part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a *part* of the body. **16** And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a *part* of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a *part* of the

body. **(Slide 17)** **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? **18** But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. **19** If they were all one member, where would the body be? **(Slide 18)** **20** But now there are many members, but one body. **21** And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." **22** On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; **(Slide 19)** **23** and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, **24** whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked, **(Slide 20)** **25** so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another. **26** And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

The big toe may say to the little toe, you're not as important as me. However, the feet and the legs may put the big toe in its place, if the little toe is ever severed from the foot. Balance and mobility are certainly affected. So even the smallest part is significant and affects the whole.

When we lose a member of the Lord's church, the entire church experiences the loss. By the same token, if a member of the church is grieving because of a loss of a family member, the church that is in sync, grieves right along with them.

Ephesians 4:1-7 **(Slide 21)**

Unity of the Spirit

1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, **2** with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, **3** being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **(Slide 22)** **4** *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

7 But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Unity, much like the declaration of one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father, dictates to the many individuals that make up the church that oneness is not a recommendation, but a requirement.

Unity is a team concept. One that requires commitment, sacrifice, endurance, hard work, faith, and great love.

I cannot think of a better example of teamwork, than one I learned about many years ago. It regards a father and a son. It is one of the most heartwarming and inspiring stories that I have ever heard. Together they are known as; "Team Hoyt." **(Slide 23)**

The duo is made up of Father "Dick Hoyt" who passed away in March of 2021 at the age of 80 and his son, "Rick Hoyt" who was born in 1962 with cerebral palsy.

Rick has been immobile his entire life and lives primarily in a wheelchair. He is physically nonverbal, but a modern invention has given him the ability to speak. A computer, with marvelous ability was given to him at age 11. It allowed him to speak through it and it was apparent at the very beginning of his communications, that Rick was extremely intelligent and had great compassion and love for others. You can watch this phenomenon on youtube or via the internet.

In 1977, at the school Rick attended, a Lacrosse player had become paralyzed. Rick sensed the depression that this person was experiencing and wanted to do something to encourage his classmate. He wanted him to know that life goes on despite the disability. He asked his father if they could run in a race together. At the time, Dick Hoyt, a retired Lieutenant Colonel from the Army National Guard, was 36 years old, wasn't a runner and was severely out of shape. But he agreed.

(Slide 24) They began to train with Dick pushing Rick in his wheelchair. Physically and mentally preparing their minds and bodies together. When Rick was in school, Dick would load Rick's wheelchair with a cement bag and train, pushing that wheelchair. He became so physically fit that he recorded a 5K personal best of 17 minutes.

Not only did they run that first race, but they competed in 1,130 endurance races, 72 marathons, and 6 ironman triathlons. **(Slide 25)** They ran the Boston Marathon 32 times. They were actually running the marathon in 2013 when two bombs exploded with approximately a mile to go. **(Slide 26)** They ran and biked across the United States in 1992 completing 3,735 miles in 45 days. Their last race was 2016 when Dick Hoyt was 75 years old. **(Slide 27)**

Rick told his dad, **(Slide 28)** "Dad, when I'm running, it feels like I'm not handicapped."

1 Thessalonians 5:11 **(Slide 29)**

11 Therefore encourage one another and build up one another, just as you also are doing.

Work as a team!

Invitation