



TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS



A publication of the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- Who has personally experienced the trauma of a church split? Without gossiping names and details, tell us about the impact it had on you, on others, and on Christ's reputation.

Read John 13:34-35 and 17:20-23. Who can tell us a story of non-Christians becoming convinced that Christ truly is the Savior of the world as a result of seeing Christians loving each another?

Which sort of story happens more frequently? What does that suggest to you? What should we do?

- Pastor Doug gave four reasons for pulling together and loving one another (see Sermon Summary). Which reason is most powerful **to you personally**? **Why** that one?

Which of them do you think TCC fosters **most** effectively? **Least** effectively? What can you do to help?

- Pastor Doug discussed five sins which are frequent barriers to mutual love (see Sermon Summary).

Without gossiping names or details, which of those do you know to be active at TCC now?

Have you played **any** role in its spread?

Read Matthew 18:12-17.

What should you **do** to bring unity?

Pair-up and role-play taking that action.

Are you pursuing biblical unity?
A biblical counselor can help:
counseling@tcc.org

Application-Challenge

Meditate on 1 Peter 1:22 and Philippians 2:1-8 (see enclosed card), asking God to help you apply them in all of your relationships.

Take One Step: What is one small, concrete step of obedience you will put into practice this week?



Sermon Summary

By the grace of God we've had great unity here at TCC for over 25 years, and I'm incredibly grateful for that. But that's not the case for many churches. Some of you have witnessed a church spit first hand. It's not pretty, and it breaks God's heart. On Jesus' final evening with his disciples, he washed their feet (John 13:12-15). If Jesus had asked them to return the favor by washing **his** feet they would have lined up to do it. Instead, he asked them to wash one another's feet. Since love and service are always connected, Jesus then placed this sort of service in the context of his "new commandment" (John 13:34-35). Later that evening, Jesus prayed for his disciples and for us. And for what did he pray? He prayed for unity. Not uniformity. He prayed for oneness, not sameness (John 17:21-22). The theme of unity is an important one in Paul's writings as well. Consider Philippians 2:3-4. It sounds pretty basic—like something a kindergarten teacher would say to her classroom, doesn't it? "Share. Don't be selfish. Think of others first." With the teachings of Jesus and Paul as our backdrop, we'll be able to better appreciate Peter's comments.

The first century Christians to whom Peter wrote were hurting as persecution arose in the Roman Empire (1 Peter 1:6). Some were tempted to compromise their faith (1:14-15). Above all, the church needed to pull together. They needed the love and support of a community of believers. Three qualities enable us to love one another the way that God intends: obedience to the truth, purity of soul, and freedom from hypocrisy (1:22). Obedience to the truth means that you don't look at others through the distorted lenses of your own biases. You view them as God does and you love them as God does: consistently and sacrificially. Being obedient to the truth has a purifying effect on us. It purges us not only of a limited perspective, but also of prejudice, resentment, hurt feelings, and grudges. Purity of soul helps us love each other unhypocritically, with a sincere love. It doesn't make us blind to each other's faults; it gives us the grace to overlook faults.

Verse 22 speaks of a passion, a strong emotional commitment, which is difficult to render in English: "Fervently love one another from the heart." The kind of love Peter is calling for here is no casual, superficial, "call me if you need anything" kind of love. It is an intense, pure, un-hypocritical love—a love that is modeled on what Jesus has done for us. Peter gives us four reasons for pulling together and demonstrating this type of love for each another.

[1] We love each other because we are **children of the same Father** (1:23). We have been born again into a new family. If God is your Father, then we are spiritual brothers and sisters. We come from different parts of the country, we have different personalities and vocations, we are in different stages of life, but we are bound together through our common faith in Jesus. We are family.

[2] We love each other because **we take our instruction from the same source** (1:23-25). The seed is the Word of God which teaches us to love God and neighbor. But that seed needs to grow and produce fruit in our lives (James 1:21-25; 2:15-16).

[3] We love each other because we have **struggles in the same areas** (1 Peter 2:1). The specific sins mentioned here are frequent barriers to mutual love, so let's look at each one more closely. "**Malice**" describes the wickedness that characterizes those who are entrenched in this world's Satanic world system. It is a desire to do harm to others, especially if they are blocking your goals or desires. "**Deceit**" is deception aimed at getting our own way. It flatters people, bends the truth, or withholds the whole story (only keeping in the parts that make you look good). "**Hypocrisy**" means to act out a part, to hide behind a mask, to pretend to be someone that you're not. You are play-acting for your own selfish reasons. "**Envy**" involves hidden resentment over another's advantage and wanting that advantage for yourself. Everyone wants to be in the "in" group, and when you're not, envy and jealousy leads to petty squabbles. People take sides and destroy unity. It's one of Satan's favorite tools. "**Slander**" literally means "evil speaking" and usually occurs when the victim isn't there to defend himself. It's especially prevalent when rumors are being passed around. The goal is to erode confidence in someone, smearing their reputation. Peter literally commands us to "strip off" these five destructive garments of our old sinful nature (21).

[4] We love each other because we have the **same objective—spiritual maturity** (2:2-3). But the truth is, we won't grow in spiritual maturity apart from the deliberate study and application of God's Word. Peter says that we should "long" for the milk of the word—"to deeply desire it, to crave it". When a baby wants milk, it doesn't work to say, "Be patient." They want it now—and the more the better! The same is true with God's Word. More is better! We have far too many "snackers" in the church. Some of you go days, weeks or even months without spending personal time in God's Word. As a result, you are not growing spiritually. Churches are full of spiritual anorexics.

But a growing, loving, unified, spiritually mature church is an unstoppable church! And selflessly giving ourselves to one another is the key to experiencing that kind of unity (Philippians 2:1-8). Think about it: How many marriages would be mended if Philippians 2 was fervently applied? How many fractured friendships would flourish? How many divided churches could find unity? How many non-believers would believe that God sent Jesus and that we are his disciples? (John 13:35; 17:23)

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

"Five Question Bible Study" (see page below) is a simple way to study any passage.
Let's use it learn about unity in the Christian life...

Monday— 1 Corinthians 1:10-11

Tuesday— Colossians 3:12-17

Wednesday— Psalm 133

Thursday— 1 Peter 3:8-12

Friday— Romans 12:9-18

Saturday— ***In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord tomorrow with your church family,*** study 1 Peter 2:4-12.

Need blank copies for doing more

"Five Question Bible Study"?

e-mail: Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com

Bible Text: _____

Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) is it found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text?