

Unity or Uniformity

Before you read any further, stop and look at these two images. And tell me what you see.



I'm guessing that you said something like, "The boy's hat is gone. The girl is looking the other way. The bucket and spade are the other way around."

Oh, that's right... and the umbrella has rotated around too.

Let me tell you what I see.

It's two pictures of the same boy and the same girl building the same sandcastle on the same beach near the same umbrella.

Do you get my point?

It is very easy to see differences. It comes naturally to us.

It's not so easy to see similarities, to see the things which unify us. It's not easy to see the 99% we have in common with each other, but it's incredibly easy to see the 1% we have that's different. And when it comes to church... we not only see the 1% difference, we divide ourselves because of it.

Sadly this is nothing new. It has always been a problem.

Paulus said in 1 Corinthians:

"Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly - mere infants in the Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarrelling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, 'I follow Paulus,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not mere men?"

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paulus? Only servants, through whom you came to believe - as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building."

We are so quick to divide.

I think it's because we're obsessed with being right. With being right and being seen to be right.

But who cares who's right! I seriously challenge you to find a Bible passage where God teaches that we must be right.

But I can find some where he says, regardless of who is right and wrong... love one another.

For example... "The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?"

The question God would ask, is not "Who is right?" He would ask, "Who is loving?"

1 Corinthians 12 is all about how we are different but part of one body. In fact, we are designed to all be slightly different. You are a hand, I'm a foot, someone else is an eye. But we are all needed. We are all part of the same body. We are not a cloud, and a hammer, and a tree, things with nothing in common. We are all parts of a body. And how ridiculous it would be if the eyes said that the other parts were no longer parts of the body because they were not eyes! We are all the same, with little differences to make us more useful.

1 Peter 2 tells us that we are a building of living stones. Stones. Not bricks. We are not all identical. But we are all the same. Get it?

Rocks are all rocks. Each one looks a little different, but they are still all rocks. They are all part of the same building. Bricks are all exactly the same. If we were a building of bricks, that would be uniformity. But we're meant to be different, (and yet the same), a building of stones is unity, not uniformity.

We need to focus on the bits that are the same, not on the bits that are different. We are all living stones.

That's incredible! Have you ever seen a living stone before?

And yet, instead of greeting other Christians with, "Wow. Another living stone. How awesome to meet you." We greet them with, ... "You're different. You're not welcome."

So, how about you?

Are you focused on similarities or differences?

Are you looking for unity? or uniformity?

Are you loving? Or are you just "right"?