

10 Things You Have to Understand to Experience True Unity

As someone who has had to work hard at unity (from a personal perspective with my family as well as in the church and marketplace), I have come up with 10 things I must understand to achieve true unity with others.

Not understanding these principles can truly cause shipwreck in any relationship. (Whether in your marriage, with your children, with church elders or business partners.)

1. I must understand the different levels of emotional maturity.

I learned a long time ago to take into consideration the level of emotional maturity of the person I am dealing with. Some people are very immature and offended easily and others have learned to have thick skin and walk in forgiveness. My perception of their emotional maturity (based on their track record if I have experience with them) will determine how I interact with them.

2. I must understand the broken places of their soul.

Before you get into any serious relationship with a person, whether personal or business, you need to know their story—the good, the bad and the ugly, so you have an idea of possible triggers in their life.

Many people have broken places in their soul; deep wounds in their heart that have never been fully resolved. Some can manage these broken places because they have forgiven others—but some people have unresolved issues that are like live wires that will react if someone touches them. For

example, those who marry a wounded person must understand that their spouse is most likely viewing life with a “victim mentality” and/or with a “spirit of rejection” that will cause them to overreact to a present situation because of unresolved trauma in the past.

Those entering into a partnership with a person, either in marriage or business, without fully understanding their painful history will likely have challenging experiences when they interface and navigate together through life.

3. I must understand various perspectives.

I have learned that everyone has different perspectives regarding our relationship and/or the organization they are joining, which determines the kind of commitment they will make. Understanding this means I have to interview and/or orient myself with the person’s perspectives they have of me and the relationship they endeavor to have with me, either on a professional or personal level. Not understanding their particular perspective is a recipe for disaster for our ensuing relationship.

4. I must understand that there are always various agendas.

Another important thing I have learned is that nobody walks into a relationship with a clean slate—everyone has a particular agenda and/or something they are looking for to benefit themselves in any commitment they make. It’s best to discern their true agenda (not necessarily what they say to you) to know how to proceed with them moving forward.

5. I must understand that there are diverse motivations.

Along with their agenda, every person has general motivating factors regarding what gives them passion in life. Understanding their passions, values, proclivities and goals in life is essential before you enter into a serious relationship with them.

6. I must understand that there are different modes of communication.

Every person has a particular “love language” and ways of communicating how they feel. Some are very transparent and raw; some hide their true feelings but communicate through body language or passive aggressive behavior; and some people speak in riddles, hoping you will take the time to delve into their heart with questions. It is essential to understand a person’s mode of communication if you expect to have true unity with them.

7. I must understand the diverse assumptions in the relationship and/or commitment.

Every person has an underlying assumption of the relationship and or the entity they are getting involved with. It is best for you to understand their basic assumptions so you are not taken by surprise in the future when you find out that what they believed about you and or the entity they were joining was erroneous!

8. I must understand the baggage of past experiences.

All people bring with them the ghosts of past relationships and experiences along with past failure and success that serve as a lens of interpretation for all future relationships and experiences. Every time you are with a person, there are invisible people with both of you in the room who are still influencing your lives. Understanding this baggage is essential before you enter into a serious relationship or commitment with another person. Truly, the baggage of past relationships will continue to crowd the room and affect the patterns of behavior moving forward unless they are properly dealt with through biblical truth and forgiveness.

9. I must understand different ideas of methodology.

Every person has a different way of achieving goals. To have

unity, we must agree on the essential mission and values of the relationship; however, the methods of operation to achieve the mission can be flexible. In order to have true unity with a person, you must learn to distinguish between the mission and the methods of achieving it. You cannot confuse the two if your relationship will be sustainable long-term.

10. I must understand the biblical reality of our sinful nature and tendencies.

At the end of the day, we are all sinners with sinful, self-focused tendencies—which means that anything is possible in a relationship. Consequently, it may be difficult to fully trust a person unless they are people of integrity with a history of walking with God for spiritual and emotional formation.

5 Solutions to the 10 Challenges for Unity

1. You must have a compelling vision that unites all.

In spite of all the challenges mentioned above, having a compelling vision to accomplish a common mission can motivate people to work together for the long haul.

2. You must have clear lines of communication and access.

In every relationship, whether personal or business—clear lines of communication and access have to be established for the sake of continual clarity, focus, motivation and unity.

3. You must have clarity of mission and methods.

As mentioned above, understanding the difference between the non-negotiable mission and the flexible methods to achieve the mission is essential for unity. Consequently, every person has a different way of achieving a goal based on his or her own gifts, personality, aptitude and skill. Don't try to fit every person in the same methodological box if you desire to experience unity with him or her.

4. You must have much corporate prayer for ownership and empathy.

I am a strong believer in the need for corporate prayer, whether in a marriage, family, church or business, to allow God to gel hearts and minds together for the sake of the mission and goals.

5. Be a collaborative or bridge building person as opposed to a vertically-driven person.

The most skillful people in regards to facilitating unity with others are those who are collaborative in their approach, thus understanding how to build bridges with others. Vertically minded approaches have the attitude, "It's my way or the highway!" They will have the most difficult time enacting the five solutions listed here to overcome the 10 challenges to unity I listed in this article.