

How Do We Find Unity in a Divisive Society?

The ability to have an honest debate has become a lost art in our nation. In our homes, businesses and statehouses, we have lost the ability to have an honest disagreement, to reason together and to find a solution and spirit of agreement in a tone of civility.

Recently, in a television interview, billionaire real-estate mogul Donald Trump said, "The race card is being played to a fare-thee-well. The woman [gender] card they're now starting, and a lot of women are very upset about it. ... They're extremely angry about being used. So, it's a very divisive society—the worst I've ever seen. ... What everybody is doing—it's become so divisive, and the level of hatred and animosity is so great. It's really very, very sad for the country."

Mr. Trump recognized the fact that it is, regrettably, no longer enough for some people in our nation to disagree with one another. We must vilify, insult and denigrate the character of the person with whom we disagree. We must invoke every card in the deck in order to paint this person in a negative light to any spectators of the debate.

And while we see this played out in the political arenas of news programs, public discourse and talk shows, the specter of this cancer is not found merely outside the walls of the church. Strife and disunity are no strangers to the people of God, tracking back to the Garden of Eden itself. Throughout the pages of the Bible—from the tower of Babel to Jacob and Esau to the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah and more—disunity and disagreement have played out in Scripture and history with disastrous results. The current long-standing strife in the Middle East can be tracked all the way back to

Isaac and Ishmael.

So, what's a civilization to do?

In order to find unity, we must find a rallying point. We must find that place to which we can all go that has a central, unifying potential: the cross of Jesus. While the cross represents the place where Jesus died for individuals, it also makes possible miracle-working relationships. It is the symbol of our reconciliation with God, but it is also the point of agreement with others who have been saved by the same grace the cross represents.

Before Jesus died, He stated, "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:19–20).

When a symphony comes together, it is a group of musicians that gather to play a piece of music. Every instrument is different. Some are made of wood and some of brass. Some are blown into, some are plucked, others are struck. Even instruments of the same kind are different—just ask any violin player, and they'll tell you the age and type of wood can mean dramatic differences between two seemingly similar violins.

Yet for all of the differences between instruments—big and small, loud and quiet, soothing and brash—when played in cooperation with each other, under the direction of a skilled conductor, the result is beautiful, complex and intriguing music. In fact, when a composer wants to make an even stronger, unmistakable statement within the context of a piece of music, oftentimes that statement will be made as a unison passage—all of the instruments playing not just the same piece, but the same notes and rhythms as well.

Our English word *symphony* comes from the Greek word *sumphoneo*. *Sum* is the word "together," and *phoneo* is "voice" or "say." It

means “to let the same word of faith go forth from all of us in harmony.” This is the kind of harmony that is sweet to the ears of God. This kind of relationship makes miracles possible, for God loves this kind of unity. When we as the body of Christ gather together with Jesus as our conductor (for He promised to be where two or three are gathered together in His name), we see walls fall down, peace flood in, and hope and promise accompany the presence of God into His new temple—a holy habitation built on the firm foundation of the unity of the Spirit.

So, what is your *sumphoneo*? Who are the ones around you that you need to come into agreement with? We as believers stand a much better chance of being heard as the unmistakable symphony of God in a noisy and clutter-filled world than as millions of soloists, improvising around the central theme of Jesus but containing neither unity, harmony or power.

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