

Things That Make for Great Relationships

Rich Nathan

March 24-25, 2001

"I Believe in the Church" Series

Ephesians 4:1-6

I've been doing a series from the book of Ephesians, a series that I've titled "I Believe in the Church." Last week I took the weekend off because my son got married. I had the privilege of performing his wedding to a young woman with whom we couldn't be more delighted to embrace as part of our family. John Cook did a fine job in filling in for me.

We've been looking at the book of Ephesians for the last couple of months and the theme of the book of Ephesians really is the church. In the portion that we are going to look at today, we are going to be examining our relationships within the church. Now, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to see that the Christian church across the world is divided and fractured, fighting with each other. I didn't know this fact when I was growing up as a Jew in New York City. In fact, it was an amazing discovery to me after I became a follower of Christ at age 18 to find all the divisions within the Christian church.

See, growing up I knew that Christians, by and large, didn't like Jews. I lived with that fact. I knew that Christians would say negative and prejudice things about Jews. What I didn't know, what was really an amazing discovery, and this is absolutely the truth, was that Christians didn't like each other either. They not only didn't like Jews, but Protestants didn't like Catholics and Catholics didn't like Protestants.

About 8 years ago I wrote a response paper on behalf of the Association of Vineyard Churches, which VCC is a part. Our association, which numbers now a little over 1000 churches, asked me to write a response to a book that had come out by a well-known Christian author that was unbelievably critical and negative about the charismatic movement in general, a movement that believes in the present day activity of the Holy Spirit, and unbelievably critical about the Vineyard, in particular.

As I read this well-known author's book, I was sickened by the pejorative and flat out nasty labels that he gave to other Christian believers. It was obvious that page after page, as I read the book, that this man didn't regard folks attending Assembly of God churches or Vineyard churches, or Rhema, as brothers to be embraced, but rather as enemies to be despised.

He wrote in his book that the biblical challenge is not to avoid truth that is controversial, but to speak the truth in love. And then he went on to say that charismatics fall back on the all too easy defense that virtually every critique of

their movement is unfair and unkind. Non-charismatics, intimidated by that accusation, are effectively silenced.

I wrote in my response that perhaps the author would understand why so many Christians find it difficult to receive his message if he would simply go back through his book, page by page, and note the disparaging labels that he used and the accusations that he made about his opponents' motivations and intelligence and orthodoxy. He called the charismatic movement a "destructive tsunami" that leaves chaos and confusion in its wake. He said we were corrupting the message of the gospel. That we were unbiblical and that we didn't believe in the deity of Christ. That we were engaged in a skillful marketing campaign. He said that we were immoral, keen, but clueless, anti-intellectual, not far removed from existentialism, humanism and paganism. And that we were [direct quote] "perilously close to neo-Baalism." In other words, we were like the prophets of Baal, or to use the American pronunciation, Bale, who cut themselves and danced in a frenzy before their idols and who Elijah opposed on Mt. Carmel in the book of 1 Kings.

And so I wrote about the utter absence of love, this pervasive spirit of lovelessness that ran through the book and runs through so much of Christianity and our approach to each other.

There was a man named Carl Henry, who began the Christian magazine, Christianity Today, about 50 years ago. He spoke about the lovelessness that characterizes much of contemporary Christianity in general and fundamentalism in particular. In Henry's day in the 1950s, Billy Graham had fallen under severe attack as a heretic and as a corrupter of the gospel from certain people who believed that it was their job to maintain the purity of the faith. Henry wrote that the real bankruptcy of fundamentalism has resulted not so much from a reactionary spirit as from a harsh temperament, a spirit of lovelessness and strife. Historically, fundamentalism was a theological position. Gradually, the movement has come to signify a mood and disposition as well. If liberalism is a perversion of scriptural theology, fundamentalism has become a perversion of the biblical spirit; attacking one another, devouring each other.

It is a rare thing when we find churches that go out of their way to maintain healthy relationships with other Christians in their community and with other churches, and teach their membership to maintain healthy relationships with each other. One of the things which I say in our newcomers class, which we host here at Vineyard about every two months – one of the things I say very often is "When you get offended by someone else in this church; not if, but when...because you will be offended, someone will say something to one of your kids that bothers you; someone will ask you to do something that offends you; someone will write you a note or you will hear something from the pulpit or something will happen in a small group that bugs you or hurts you; when you get

offended, you will be faced with a choice whether to handle that offense in a biblical way or in an unbiblical way.”

There are tons of unbiblical ways to handle these things. You can leave the church. You can gossip about the person or the pastor who offended you. You can call up the Ohio Prayer Line and make sure that everyone in Ohio gets to hear about how you were offended, get a good covering of prayer and spread the sin around. Or, you can commit yourself to resolve the problem in a biblical way.

It is a rare thing, friends, when people handle their relationships well.

I read an article not too long ago in The Dispatch. It was not in a church context, but in a marital context. A couple here in town had been married for 81 years, close to a record. And after 81 years of marriage, they both died. They died within hours of each other. And their children were interviewed and they spoke of their parents passing so close in time to each other as a grace and a gift from God. They said that they couldn’t imagine that their parents could have lived in the absence of each other. These were two people who not only stayed together for 81 years, but had a great marriage, apparently, for 81 years. One of the reporters asked the appropriate question, “Well, what is it that gave them such a good relationship?”

They said, “Well, our parents did all the little things right. We heard them only thanking each other and being polite to one another. They used please and thank you a lot. They regularly said, “I love you” and “I’m sorry.” They were quick to apologize. They never held grudges. They resolved their conflicts quickly.”

As we continue in this series on the church, we are going to look at some of the things that make for great relationships in the church. I want to call today’s talk, “Things that Make for Great Relationships.” Let’s pray.

Ephesians 4:1-6 – As a prisoner of the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is overall and through all and in all.

The apostle Paul begins Ephesians 4 with “Therefore.” It doesn’t come through nearly as clearly in the New International Version. He says, “As a prisoner of the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” This verse 1 is clearly a transition, although not nearly so sharp a transition as some of the commentaries suggest. But there is a transition that happens in Ephesians 4. For three chapters the apostle Paul has been telling us what God has done. Now he switches his term and begins to speak to us about what we must do in

response. He is moving from belief to behavior, from creed to conduct, from principle to practice.

And here in Ephesians 4, if you are outlining these chapters, the apostle Paul lays out for us the two great marks of the Christian church. What is it that distinguishes the Christian church from the rest of the world? What should our badge be? Not funny hats, not strange dress, not weird super-spiritual speech – what is it that marks the Christian church out from the rest of the world?

The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4:1-16, the first mark of the church is unity. And in Ephesians 4:17-5:20, the second mark of the church is purity. So often, the two great marks of the church are unity and purity. And yet, so often the church is a contradiction of what it is meant to be. We say we believe in a holy God, a pure God, and yet we live with such a high degree of impurity in our lives. And we say that we believe in a God who reconciles and a God who unifies, and yet we are so comfortable in writing each other off.

So here in Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul begins with the first great mark of the church: unity. Without unity, we really don't have a church. His first exhortation to us is found in verse 3, "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."

Unity was a major theme of the 20th century. The 20th century was all about trying to form some kind of unity between various groups of people. The 20th century was about the League of Nations and the United Nations, and the unification of the church through the whole ecumenical movement and the World Council of Churches.

I am going to date myself here, but I even remember that Coca-Cola was supposed to bring the world together. They used to have this Coke ad, I think in the early 1970s, where they had these young adults from all over the world gathered on a hillside - I don't remember where - good looking young adults of different races, different ethnicities. The girls were all wearing those long flowered print dresses and the guys' haircuts were all long and their pants were baggy. In fact, it could have been filmed just last week. But they were singing this song,

"I'd like to teach the world to sing,
In perfect harmony.
I'd like to buy the world a Coke
And keep it company."

That somehow by drinking Coca-Cola, if all of us had a Coca-Cola we would all get along better.

I share that to suggest to you that even though unity and having great relationship is a goal that most folks want. Most folks want to have healed relationships. Most people don't want to live isolated, angry and alienated lives. Even though having great relationships and having unity is a goal, the vast majority of us are clueless regarding how to get to that goal. Paul is going to tell us that unity doesn't happen by committee meetings and by sitting around in groups that exchange papers with each other and negotiate with each other. Having great relationships doesn't happen by having a Coke with another person.

He said, "Let me lay out the foundation stone for having a great relationship with other people." The first thing Paul mentions is that you have to be passionate about making unity and a great relationship your aim and goal. Great relationships don't happen automatically. We don't have unified churches just because people have a Coke or a cup of coffee together. We don't have an 81-year marriage, a fabulous marriage, a great marriage with someone else just because we luck into it. We have to be passionate about unity.

Read verse 3 with me. "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace." Here is where doctrine turns into practice. Here's where the rubber meets the road of our Christian profession. Do you make every effort to have healthy, united relationships with other Christian believers?

I am so challenged by this phrase, "Make every effort." It is almost as if the apostle Paul was saying, "Spare no expense. Be urgent. Be passionate. Don't settle for just OK in your relationships."

You know, friends, isn't it the case that you and I often settle for such a low standard in our relationships with other believers, and often we settle for such a low standard in our own marriages? If we were honest, we would have to say that we are satisfied with a certain level of disunity, a broken relationship with each other. It's almost like, if I can use an analogy, that we say, "Well, you know, nobody can keep all Ten Commandments. That's a lot. So I will keep eight of the commandments and forget about the one regarding not stealing. I will just steal stuff from my work. That's no big deal. I will use the office phone for personal long distance calls and I will steal office supplies for my home because no one can keep all the commandments. I will also forget the one about not lying and I will exaggerate. I won't make every effort to be scrupulously honest in my communications. At least I am not bowing down to idols and I do try to honor my parents."

That's the way we are in our relationships. Well, I know that I am at odds with these two folks, but that's alright. There are these other 8 relationships that are OK. Isn't that enough?

I know that I have real difficulty with these three women in my women's group. As I think about the state of all my relationships, I see that there is disruption over

here and a burned out bridge over here and some upset and hurt and anger with that individual I no longer call. But I am very busy. My job has been incredibly demanding. I have two kids that I am trying to raise. I have so much on my plate and they are busy too.

The apostle Paul says, "Make every effort." Stop settling for a certain amount of relational disharmony. Aim to be at peace with every single person you know. Aim at total unity just as you would aim at obeying all the commandments of God. This is one of them. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

How far should you go in making every effort to be at peace with your siblings? With your parents? With your mate? With another person in the church? With folks outside the church? Between churches? How much time and effort, how much energy should we expend?

As I have meditated upon this, I was struck by the thought that this is one of the few things that God tells us to keep him waiting until we accomplish it. In general, worshipping God comes before everything else, right? The Bible teaches that we should worship God above our desires to make money. That worshipping God should come in front of our leisure. Go to the gym another time. Clean your house another time. Read the paper another time. But don't keep God waiting. Worship him. Worship him before anything else. That's what the Bible teaches.

Except...in Matthew 5 Jesus says, "If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there. First go and be reconciled to your brother. Then come offer your gift." In other words, first, make every effort to be at peace and then worshipping God. Reconciliation between people is so important that Jesus teaches us, in a sense, to keep God waiting. Put off worship until you do this one thing.

This runs all through the scriptures. The prophets were regularly challenging the people of God regarding what they called phony worship. The people of God would come to the Temple and make a big show of their worship, offer sacrifices, sing songs. But there were all these areas of disobedience in their lives. These places of darkness, of sexual immorality – all of these demonic strongholds in their lives. But they said, "That's OK. I will lift my hands and worship God. I will sing and clap and that will take care of everything."

But the Lord says, "No. Worship can wait. First straighten out your relationship with the person you are at odds with. Then come and sing and praise and worship me."

The reason why we are to make every effort and spare no expense and be passionate, be urgent, be extreme about clearing up problems is because God

ties his relationship with us to our relationship with each other. There is no more common temptation for followers of Jesus Christ than to separate what God has joined together, our relationship with him, and our relationship with each other. Prophets in the Old Testament constantly dealt with this – people claiming to worship God while they neglected the poor and while folks neglected simple acts of justice and mercy to their neighbors. Jesus, in the book of Matthew, even ties our forgiveness from God to our forgiving people who have hurt us. In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray this way: Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Forgive us, Lord, of our sins, as we forgive those who have sinned against us, those who have offended us, those who have angered us, those who have hurt us, those who have abused us. Forgive us, Lord, as we forgive others.

I take this to mean that to the same extent we refuse to forgive another person, to that extent our hearts are hardened and we can't receive forgiveness from God. Forgiveness is there. Grace is there. But our hearts are calloused and hardened by unforgiveness. We can't receive it. This is all through the scriptures. James tells us of the absolute hypocrisy of claiming to bless God while we curse people. John says the same thing about hating a person we can see, while claiming to love the invisible God we can't see.

And to those of us who are married, the apostle Peter, in 1 Peter 3 say if you are at odds with your spouse, you better clear that up before you pray. I would add that all of these things are conditioned upon if it is possible. Sometimes a spouse will not listen. Sometimes a spouse will not talk about "our problems." Sometimes a person refuses to accept our apology or invitation to a relationship. There is nothing we can humanly do.

But honestly, in the majority of cases, the problem rests on our end. If we were standing before the judgment seat of Christ, and Jesus himself looked at us and said, "Son/Daughter of mine, regarding the relationship with your spouse, or the relationship with your parents or your brother or sister or this other person in the church, have you made every effort, spared no expense?" I know this is tough; these are challenging words. The apostle Paul understands that our relationships with each other tend to break down. That's why he says to make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit. Or in the New International Version "to keep the unity of the Spirit." Our relationships with each other always need constant repair.

I have a friend who does nothing other than repair his cars. The principle of entropy, that things tend to wind down and break down, is really at work at my friend's house. But things do break down and this business of making every effort means that if we want to keep our relationships going with each other, it is going to take work. You can't have a great relationship with someone at your job unless you work at it. There is a great temptation to just let sleeping dogs lie. Why mention the big lump that is under the rug in the middle of the room? Just

leave it alone. It is too difficult in my family. Sure, there's a rift in my relationship. I can live with that.

No. You can't live with broken relationships with other believers unless you are prepared to live with a much less than perfect fellowship with your God. We must pick up the phone. We must write the letter. We must pay the visit. We must set up the appointment with the counselor. We must go to one of those Begin Again weekends for couples who need to revive their marriages. If we can't solve it on our own, we go to a small group leader or pastor, or a counselor, or a peer counselor, or a friend. Make every effort.

You know, maintaining unity just doesn't involve work. It involves wounds. No one who takes the Christian call to relational harmony seriously can escape being wounded. There is a wonderful story in John 20, after Jesus rose from the dead. One of his post-resurrection appearances was to his disciples. He says, "Peace be with you." And then the text goes on and to say, "He showed them his hands and his side and again he said, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'" Do you get it?

Jesus is saying, "Do you see, Son/Daughter, do you see beloved, what it took for me to make peace between you and God? I was wounded in the process. I was hurt. Do you see the wounds in my hands and side? Now as the Father sent me into the world, I am sending you."

If you want unity and healed relationships, if you want to be a peacemaker, you are going to be wounded also. Virtually, every day I talk with people about their relationships with someone. And I almost never meet someone who isn't troubled by a tear in their relationship. Tears in relationship create pain. They create guilt. No one wants a bad marriage. But very often what people are looking for to repair the tear is an easy remedy, a quick fix, a painless solution. And it is frustrating for us to hear that there is no easy, painless way to have unity with someone else.

Isn't there another way besides risking disappointment again? Isn't there some other way than putting my neck on the chopping block and hoping and then being disappointed again? Isn't there another way other than becoming vulnerable, giving them the impression that I am the one who is wrong? Going through this long process of counseling and the time it takes?

The answer, often, is no. Forging real peace involves risking real pain. The pain of hoping again for a good relationship. The pain of being vulnerable again. Being wounded is part of the process of making peace. As God sent Jesus into the world, so Jesus sends us. And I know that Jesus understands my temptation to avoid the cross. And he understands your temptation to avoid the cross. He can protect us and he can heal us.

Now, if being passionate, making every effort is a foundation stone for the healing of our relationships, what attitudes are required for us to have unity with each other? We see in verse 2 that the attitudes that are foundational for a great relationship: “Be completely humble and gentle. Be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

I want you to picture a husband and wife who are at odds with each other. They settled into a cold war of virtual non-communication about anything that is really significant. Because whenever they start moving towards something significant, it flares up and creates more hurt. They don’t want to live in that cold war anymore. What should they do?

No amount of counseling, no amount of reading, no amount of advice will ever bring a couple together unless something happens in their hearts. Unless there is an attitudinal change, they can schedule date nights from now until forever, they can go through all of the motions; but without an attitudinal change, the house will still collapse.

The apostle Paul says, “Be completely humble.” Pride is behind so much of the discord and the disunity that we find in the church. Let me focus on just one thing in the church that often divides us from each other, something I call spiritual elitism. I need to be careful here, but I often see people in the church who are involved in very good things, very important things, like missions or work with the hearing-impaired, or worship ministry, or children’s ministry, the arts, or the pro-life movement – these folks are gifted and are called to that work. It is all very lovely and glorifying to God.

But there is this other thing that you see when they talk about their activity and the way they talk about the larger church that is not so lovely. There is this edge, this perspective regarding others who don’t share their passion: that these other folks are lesser Christians. Spiritual elitism, this tendency to promote what you’re into, what you are passionate about, what your agenda is, what your calling is – it is the very essence of pride. Humility loves the whole church. Pride loves our particular work in the church. Humility recognizes, humility rejoices in all the different interests, the different passions, the different talents and all the diversity that we find in the church. But pride can’t understand why other people don’t value what we value to the same degree that we do.

Pride is behind so much of our discord and our relational breaks with each other. I am not getting the recognition I deserve. What about my needs? I will apologize after she does. Humility says, “I will take the first step.” I will humble myself and before you say “I was wrong,” I will say, “I was wrong.” I will be the first to risk and say, “I blew it. I want this relationship.” Pride says, “I have to look good. I have to save face.” Humility says, “I don’t care about that. I value the relationship over me saving face and looking good.”

Paul mentions gentleness: “Be completely humble and gentle.” Literally, he is talking about meekness. Being willing to give up your rights. The counsel the apostle Paul gives is so different from the counsel the world gives regarding difficult relationships. If you read Ann Landers, she forever repeats her mantra to wives who are miserable in their marriages and to husbands who have been hurt by their wives. The ultimate question she writes to miserable wives and hurt husbands is, “Will you be better off with them or will you be better off without them?” That’s the question you need to ask yourself, Ann Landers, says. Will you be better off with them or without them? Every time she writes that I just want to scream and say, “No. A thousand times no. The question is not whether you will be better off with or without them. What about your marital vows? What about your children? What about your relationship with God? What about what God wants? What about God’s plan for his church?”

Looking out for #1 is probably what got you in the mess to begin with. Looking out for #1 never healed a relationship, ever. There is a difference between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. And the wisdom of God says, “Be meek. Lay down your rights.”

This week I heard from a member of this church who was completely ripped off by a builder, an architect, here in town. They gave this builder a lot of money and the guy just walked off the job. When he pursued the builder, the builder turned around and sued him for defamation of character, claiming that the fellow in the church had defamed and slandered him. Well, this church member had this guy dead to rights. This builder had done this around the city. But after listening to a message here, this particular church member saw that he was being literally eaten up, completely obsessed with crushing this fraudulent builder. He couldn’t sleep at night. He was dominated by the desire to have justice. He came to the place of saying, “Enough. I care more about my relationship with God than I do about this money.” He offered to lay the lawsuit down.

Meekness. Not asserting your rights. He found peace.

“Be patient, bearing with one another in love.” You know, there are a lot of aggravating people and a lot of aggravating situations. And this business of being patient and forbearing with each other in love means that if I want to have good relationships with others, I cannot be thin-skinned and easily offended. I have noticed that some folks walk around the church as if they have bad sunburns. The least bit of insensitivity, the most minor kind of oversight and neglect of love, they react and overreact.

Friend, if you want to maintain a relationship, you can’t focus on people’s weaknesses. Just read the advice columnists. Every day someone writes to Ann Landers or Abby about a coworker, roommate, or spouse’s annoying habits.

My coworker has cracked their knuckles for the last 15 years. If they do it again, I am going to burst.

Discord happens when we focus on each other's weaknesses. Stop looking at other people's flaws. Stop magnifying other people's weaknesses. Stop talking about what you notice is wrong with another person. Get rid of, Paul is saying, the hypercritical spirit. Talk about what's good in another. Focus on what's pure. Forbearance and patience means that we accept people with their quirks and weaknesses. We cut each other some slack. We give each other some space – space to fail and grace to mess up.

And all of this, this passion for our relationships, these attitudes are built on a foundation of truth about God and about us. If we tolerate broken relationships with each other, if we settle for less than the best, it is because we do not understand who God is and we do not understand what he intends for the church.

The apostle Paul focuses upon the Triune God in verses 4,5 and 6. In verse 4 he says, "There's one body and one spirit." In verse 5 he speaks to us about the one Lord, Jesus Christ. In verse 6, one God and Father of us all. If you understood what God intended for the church and you understood your relationship with God, you would make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. The church is a reflection of the Trinity, the unity and the diversity of the Triune God.

We are not asked to form some kind of great organizational unity. We are asked to maintain a unity that has been given to us by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit gives you instant relationship with another Christian who you've just met. I've had instant fellowship in a cab in New York City on the way to an airport when I discovered the cab driver was another believer. I had an instant relationship with an old man in a hut in the back woods of Haiti. I had instant relationship, instant connection in a village in India with another believer. And the other day, I sat down for lunch with a pastor from England – instant connection. Why? Because of the Holy Spirit. We share the same Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit is poured out, there is unity.

Well, one of the marks of the great Azusa Street Revival back in 1906 that gave birth to the modern Pentecostal and charismatic movements was black and white, men and women, young and old, coming together repenting of their prejudices, laying down their past hurts, coming together – that's where the Spirit is. The church comes together.

I have spoken in this series about racial reconciliation, about God's desire for Vineyard Columbus to be a diverse group, to be a testimony to the miracle power of God, that we are not just birds of a feather who flock together, that there are differences in racial backgrounds, sociology, economics and education. I have

spoken in this series about God's desire to build unity among Christians across the city.

I am going to ask a woman in this church to come up and share for a couple of minutes about something that has been on her heart and is on my heart now. About the coming together of singles and married couples in this church. Virginia has been a member of this church for about 13 years. She is a single woman and I think what she has to share is really important for all of us, single and married to hear.

Virginia: 4 minutes

And Paul says not only were we given one Spirit, but we have one hope. "Just as you were called to the one hope when you were called." There is a wonderful old story about Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry. Matthew Henry was a great Bible commentator back in the late 17th century. Well, Philip Henry, his father, was courting a young woman who was of a higher class than he was. They were very much in love and Philip Henry went to her father and asked for this young woman's hand in marriage.

Her father refused. In talking privately with his daughter later, he said, "Who is this Philip Henry that I should grant your hand to him in marriage? Where does he come from? What's his background? Who are his parents? These are poor people. He is going beyond his class."

His daughter answered in this immortal phrase that comes down to us in church history. She said, "I don't know where Philip Henry has come from. But I do know where he is going."

You know, division comes when we focus on where each of us has come from. I come from a Jewish background. You come from a Gentile background. This one comes from Northern Europe. That one comes from Africa. This one has a post-graduate degree. That one didn't even graduate from high school. It doesn't matter, friends, where we've come from. The only thing that matters is where we are going. If you have the Holy Spirit in your life, if you are a child of God, if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are going to be with God one day in his heavenly kingdom. Are you going there? Who cares what church they are coming from? Do they have the Holy Spirit? Do they belong to Christ? Then they are going where we're going.

Last thought. One Spirit. One Lord. One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all and through all and in all. I want to close with a focus upon our one Lord. I have regularly seen, friends, that as people focus upon lifting up Jesus and worshipping him, there is unity. Whenever we have different traditions exalted, or different leaders exalted - I am a John Calvin. I am a John Wesley. I am John Wimber - or respective churches exalted - Grace Brethren or Rhema or Xenos or Vineyard or Nazarene or Baptist or Episcopal - whenever you have

people exalted, whenever you have traditions exalted, whenever you have churches exalted, there is going to be disunity.

But when Christ is exalted, when we gather around Jesus, the person of Christ, not just some aspect of his teaching – some people will focus on the aspect of the teaching of Christ – we gather around our particular interpretation regarding what Jesus taught regarding the second coming or our interpretation what Jesus taught about the Sermon on the Mount. Hold on to those things, if you will. But when you meet with other Christians, people who have the Holy Spirit, who are true sons and daughters of God, when you meet with other Christians, then let's exalt Jesus together. Let's talk about our love of Christ. Let's be passionate about him.

The one mediator. The one Savior. The one great High Priest. The one Head of the Body. The one King. The one Lord Jesus Christ. These are the things that make for great relationships. Let's pray.

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March 24-25, 2001

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Ephesians 4:1-6

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A. Humility

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III. The Foundation Stone of Belief (Eph. 4:4-6)

A. One Spirit (Eph. 4:4)

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