

**TEXT:** Ps. 133

**TITLE:** “Kingdom is Spelled U-N-I-T-Y”

**INTRO:**

Two youth groups from Texas met and merged at a mission site in a distant land. Unplanned and unprecedented, they joined forces swiftly in order to accomplish the task at hand. They had to do so in order to effectively serve the local community to which they had been assigned. Acting independently was not an option. Their efforts would require teamwork and cohesion. Time was short to make an impact, so chemistry between these two groups would have to be developed almost immediately. At one location, they were to strip and paint a houses’ exterior in two days. At another, they were to uproot and clear desert foliage from a lot of land in a single afternoon. And yet at another, they were to run a week-long kid’s camp in which little briefing had taken place. All of these things were accomplished by our youth group, hailing from FPCD, merging with another youth group from Melissa UMC, who happened to choose the same mission site as we did (Show pic). **C’MON, GIVE IT UP FOR THESE GOOD-LOOKING YOUTH!!!**

Here’s the point: None of the faith-based actions accomplished by these two youth groups could have been completed independently of one other. Many gifts and talents were discovered in each of them, and we found that every person was valuable, and every person was needed on that trip. As the trip leader, I am proud to say that our team served well. We worked hard, and we *loved* hard. In a matter of four days, I saw firsthand how two youth groups from two different locations and denominations became one in order to reach a culture that was brand new to them. What a pleasure it was to witness as amazing unity developed between them, and they accomplished great works for the kingdom of God because of this. The kingdom of heaven came closer to the Navajo people because of their combined efforts. Praise be to God!

To the youth who went, I believe the Lord would say, “*Well done, my good and faithful servants.*” Amen.

Now wouldn’t it just be wonderful if such unity, effort, and accomplishment were present in our families and our communities? How about in our schools? Our college campuses? What about our churches? Our businesses? Even our politics? Somebody said, ‘OOO Ross, don’t go there!’ Think about it, though. How might our nation at large benefit from such unity and agreement? What could we get done? What could we stop from being done? What could we achieve? Might marriages be restored? Might broken families be healed? Might children be adopted? Could the foster care system become obsolete because all the kids found solid homes to go to? Might communities be built and strengthened on firm, faith-based foundations? Might schools actually be halls of learning and not fighting or shooting? Might college campuses be places of spiritual revival and societal advancement rather than locations to rebel and party away young adulthood? Might churches see beyond generational gaps and denominational lines in order to link arms for the kingdom of God to advance? Might businesses develop into networks for the purpose of meeting needs beyond their own? Might politics become more about serving the people rather than satisfying one’s own party? Here’s a thought: What if media outlets sought to focus on sharing the good that people do instead of feeding us constant bigotry and biased negativity?

Call me an idealist, if you will. But I tell you, all of this and more is possible with God!

Jesus said in Matthew 19:26. "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible!"

However, there is one key ingredient to make all these things possible and more. This ingredient is so key; it is like yeast in bread. With it, the dough will rise; without it, the dough will remain flat. It is the difference between wonder-bread and a crusty cracker.

This wonderful, result-altering ingredient is called UNITY. With it, the dream will rise; without it, the dream will remain flat. It just works like that.

Unity has a certain flow, too. Have you ever noticed that? When there is chemistry and agreement in a group, things just seem to flow well, and dreams are accomplished!

Now let's talk about my favorite sport for a moment, basketball. Let it be known, I am a Dallas Maverick's fan at heart (any Mav's fans in here?), so it pains me to say this. But there just so happens to be this lil team down in San Antonio that is so consistently good it's annoying! Any Spurs fans in the house? Yeah, get out. There's just something special about them Spurs players. They don't seem to have the biggest and the baddest star players in the NBA, but they do have the one key ingredient. It's called CHEMISTRY. In fact, they have five championships in the last twenty years because of it! Sickening, right? The Mav's only have one, and I can't stand it! But at least that one was glorious. Now I'm gonna give up three minutes of my sermon time to let you all take a look at a highlight reel of the last year the Spurs won the NBA championship, from the 2013-14 season, and the reason I believe why they won it all.

#### **\*PLAY VID – 2013-2014 Spurs Ball Movement**

Makes me sick every time. Do you see what they have that other teams don't? Do you see the rarity of their unity? Do you see the chemistry in their flow? It's a little something called **ball movement**! It's poetry in motion! It's preferring others before themselves! It's passing up one's own scoring opportunity for the best shot possible to be made! And it's something that has been drilled into them over and over by their long-time coach, Gregg Popovich, whom the players call 'Coach Pop.' Make no mistake, this kind of unity and teamwork does not happen by accident. Players must be trained to operate in it.

Did you know, the theme of unity appears at least 66 times in the Bible? That's at least once for each book in the Bible. I wonder why this theme is mentioned so many times, over and over again. Could it be that God is trying to drill it into our heads in the same way? Unity is the goal, between God and man, and from man to man?

The kingdom of God runs on unity. It is the gasoline to the tank. And it is for this reason I have titled my sermon: Kingdom is spelled U-N-I-T-Y.

Now I've grown quite fond of acrostics, so I would like to present this all-important theme to you in acrostic form. Here it is, spelled out for you:

**MESSAGE:**

## U – Understanding

- Two things:
  - o 1. That no two people are the same! Every person is different, with a unique set of God-given talents and abilities. Variety is the spice of life, and praise God for this. Wouldn't you agree that life would be boring if every person was exactly like you? It would be!
  - o 2. That every person is flawed. Hate to break it to ya, but no person is perfect on this side of Heaven. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Thankfully, by putting out trust in Jesus, we can fall into the hands of a merciful God. Therefore must also choose to be merciful with one another! Amen?

## N – No Tolerance

- No tolerance, or intolerance, means to be narrow-minded towards things you don't agree with. There tends to be a negative connotation with these words, but what if we were narrow minded against envy and jealousy? What if we were close-minded to comparison?
  - o It's called compari-SIN for a reason! God has made every person unique, in His image and likeness, so comparing ourselves to one another is useless and only leads to insecurity! The only person we should be comparing our lives to is the Lord Jesus Christ!
- In addition to these things, for the sake of unity, we must also be intolerant towards bitterness, unforgiveness, and resentment. Those are ugly words, aren't they? Yes, we must be quick to forgive, just as Christ forgives us! Thank God, Jesus isn't up in Heaven saying, "Well, you're sorry today, but yesterday you were a complete JERK, Karen." No! The Bible says that love holds no record of wrongs! Neither should we keep a record of wrongs against one another! FORGIVENESS is the cure to these things!
  - o Let me take a moment to harp on something real quick... We live in one of the most offended generations in history. Is it just me, or does every one seem triggered by everything all the time?? This is a sign of the times, you all! Jesus said in the Gospels, "In the *last days* the love of many will grow cold due to lawlessness (some versions say OFFENSE)." Therefore, realizing the times, we must be living in the last days. Jesus must be returning soon! So we must be all the more diligent to guard our hearts from offense, so that our love for one another does not grow cold! Amen!!

## I – Intentionality

- We must be INTENTIONAL to pursue unity, you all! It will not happen by accident!
  - o We must be as serious about unity as the devil is about division!
- **ILLUSTRATION: DISCOVERY CHANNEL – Lions only hunt isolated prey!**

## T – Testing

- Write this down: “Teamwork will be tested.” Sparks will fly in relationships. According to Scripture, that is how we are sharpened.
  - o Proverbs 27:17 – “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.”
- Conflict is Biblical, you all! We simply must learn resolve conflict well!
  - o There are entire marriage seminars on the topic of conflict resolution, and we won’t go there. But it is important to remember, especially in the heat of the moments, that in Christ, we are all on the same team.
- The pursuit of unity will always be marked by TESTS.
  - o You cannot have a TESTimony without first having a TEST. Remember that.
- **STORY: BUC-CEE’S VISIT**

## Y – Yielding

- This is the most important application statement of all. We must learn to *yield* to the Holy Spirit and *yield* to **others**. This is what the gospel is all about, and there is a certain flow when we learn to do so.
  - o Have you ever been at a four-way stop sign, and you witness a driver go ahead of his or her turn? Isn’t it so frustrating? You know that you stopped before them, but they went before you! My goodness, it is such a pet peeve of mine. I just want to lay on the horn and mean mug them every time. I am sure no one in this room has ever done such a thing. But why is it so frustrating? Because it interrupts the flow of how traffic should go. I wonder how many accidents could be prevented if drivers practiced this simple principle.
- You see, if we can learn to yield to one another, by the grace of God, preferring one another before ourselves, we might enter into such a flow. How much more smooth and steady and easy would life be?
  - o This is only possible if we learn to practice what Jesus said in Matthew 16:24-26, “If any person desires to come after me, let him deny himself (who? Himself!), pick up his cross daily, and follow me.”
- This is the essence of the gospel, you all! Step one is denial to self! Or in other words, dying to self, so that we might live for God!

**CONCLUSION:**

*\*Read John 17: 20-23 TPT – “I ask not only for these disciples, but also for all those who will one day believe in me through their message. I pray for them all to be joined together as one even as you and I, Father, are joined together as one. I pray for them to become one with us so that the world will recognize that you sent me. For the very glory you have given to me I have given them so that they will be joined together as one and experience the same unity that we enjoy. You live fully in me and now I live fully in them so that they will experience perfect unity, and the world will be convinced that you have sent me; for they will see that you love each one of them with the same passionate love that you have for me.”*