

Biblical Unity, Diversity, and Social Engagement

**CCS' Core Convictions and
Commitments According to
Biblical Worldview Truths**

Preamble

As we know, in every classroom around the world there is a struggle to understand unity in the midst of diversity and how to engage the challenge from a biblical worldview. Unfortunately, secular ideologies and strategies dominate the unity, diversity, and social engagement landscape and have caused considerable dissension in the body of Christ. This is especially pronounced when dealing with racial and ethnic-based strife. CCS remains true to our mission as a Christ-centered association and walking faithfully in our present moment. God's Word will establish and guide CCS' convictions. With God's Word as our foundation, CCS' banner chapter on biblical unity is:

Psalm 133

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.

Ultimate Goal

The pursuit of unity in the body of Christ has as its ultimate goal in the glorification of God by foreshadowing the permanent establishment of His kingdom, which is characterized by justice and love (shalom) and enjoyed by diverse peoples redeemed from every tongue, tribe, and nation (Isa. 61; Luke 4).

Five Biblical Principles of Unity, Diversity, and Social Engagement

1. Unity in Christ Does Glorify God
2. Biblical Diversity Does Glorify God
3. Unbiblical Division Does Not Glorify God
4. Social Engagement Is an Outworking of the Holy Spirit
5. The Pathway to Unity Is through Maturity

Unity in Christ Does Glorify God

Unity is made possible through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those who are in Christ are first reconciled back to God (their Creator) and then reconciled to each other. Unity, in Christ, is held together by the bond of the Spirit. In Spirit and in truth, believers proclaim, in unison, that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Conviction: In all things, Christians must pursue unity in Christ.

True unity can only be found in Christ.

- It is the chief end of all creation, whether believers or non-believers, to bring glory to God (Ps. 133; 1 Thes. 4:16-17; Phil. 2:10-11; John 17; Isa. 60:21; Rom. 11:36; 1 Cor. 6:20, 31; Rev. 4:11; Eph. 2:11-12). This is the chief aim of all believers as they use their gifts in his service (Col. 3:23; Rev. 5:9).
- Those who confess their sins and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord will spend eternity with God, and those who do not will be eternally separated from God (Matt. 25:31-46).
- Those who confess their sins and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord are new creations. Being new creations, reconciled to God in Christ, makes God-glorifying unity possible (Eph. 2:14; 1 Pet. 1:23-25; Rom. 8:21; Gal. 2:20, 5:15).
- Reconciliation to God through Christ and reconciliation of believers to each other is the only unity that is God-glorifying (2 Cor. 5:18; Col. 1:21; 3:11).
- Believers will not enjoy perfect unity until united with Christ in glory (Zeph. 3:9; 1 Cor. 13:12; Rev. 19:1-5).
- The aim to achieve unity outside of the bounds of Christ is a foolish endeavor (Amos 3:3; 2 Tim. 3:1; 1 John 3:13; 1 John 3:13).
- “And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay” (Dan. 2:43).

Christians are called to the ministry of reconciliation.

- Those who have been reconciled in Christ, having had their sins eternally forgiven, now being children of God, are now ambassadors for Christ, ministers of reconciliation, and have been called to share this Gospel without exception or exclusion to all nations under the authority of the local church (Eph. 4:8-17; Matt. 28:19-20).
- Salvation in Jesus Christ is offered to ALL without exception or exclusion (Matt. 28:19-20; Rom. 10; Rev. 5:9; John 4; Acts 8:36) and effectually applied to all those who believe in Him and confess their sins (Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:10-11; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Ezek. 36:26-27; Tit. 3:4-7).

Humility and love of neighbors are hallmarks of Christian unity.

- Those who have been called to fellowship with Christ are to take on the role of a servant (Phil. 2; John 13), seeking the growth and maturation of every believer in Christ, and willingly take on the cause of those who are in need and can't defend themselves (Luke 4:18-19; Mark 12:28-34) in accordance with the faith that has been appointed. Believers should, as much as it is within their power, seek the general welfare of their neighbors as fellow image bearers (Gen. 2; Jer. 29; 1 Pet. 3; Rom. 12; Matt. 5:45; John 5:7).
- Biblical unity is only found in those believing the same truths about God and submitting themselves to the same Spirit in love through the redemptive work of Christ, who is the only way to God the father in heaven (Eph. 1:17-10; 1 Pet. 3:18, Eph. 4:4-6, 1 Pet. 1:22; Col. 3:14; John 14:6).
- Our unity is powered by the Holy Spirit who unites us through the truth of God's Word (John 17:17; Eph. 4:13), a shared mission (Matt. 28:19-20), brotherly affection and service (Gal. 6:10; 1 Pet. 1:22), and maintained through reconciliation with each other. Therefore, all believers are obligated to seek unity and be reconciled to their brother or sister in Christ, whether the offender or the offended (Eph. 2:11-22; Matt. 5:24; 18:15-20).
- This unity is blind to any carnal distinction on the basis of race, ethnicity, status, and gender (Gal. 3:26-28; 1 Cor. 12:13) that may otherwise seek to divide the body (Eph. 2:13-16).
- Any doctrine that teaches that man's sinfulness or salvation is essentially or necessarily connected with race, ethnicity, status, or gender contradicts the Word of God and must be rejected as false (Rom. 3:23; 4:1-25; 10:1-13; Col. 2:8, 3:11).
- True biblical unity is marked by reconciliation and fellowship (Acts 2:42, Col. 3:11; Acts 6; John 13:35; 17; 1 John 4; Eph. 4:27).

Biblical Diversity in the Body Does Glorify God

Diversity in the body of Christ glorifies God and is a by-product of the pursuit of God-glorifying unity. God in His sovereignty expresses His creativity through the diversity found in His creation. Human beings are His special creation because they bear His image. Therefore, all image bearers have an intrinsic worth due to them devoid of any distinction.

Conviction: Diversity is part of God's good creation and is intended to glorify Him.

Diversity is inherent in God's creation.

- Diversity is inherent in God's creation (Gen. 1-2). It is not something that is manufactured; it exists and should be celebrated to the glory of God.
- Diversity in created things: Human, Animals, and Inanimate objects (Gen. 1-2)

All human beings are created in the image of God.

Diversity in human nature

- All human beings are created in the image of God (both redeemed and condemned) and are due the full dignity associated with this creative distinction (Matt. 5:45), which includes the affirming and security of unalienable rights.
- God has further distinguished humanity into two groups: • Male and Female (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5)
- Image bearers (to greater or lesser degrees) are:
 - Personal (Dependent) – Gen. 2:18; 1 Cor. 12:12
 - Rational (Thinking) – Gen. 2:20; Phil. 4:8; Rom. 12:1-2
 - Volitional (Choosing) – Gen. 3:6; 1 Cor. 10:13; Gal. 5:13
 - Emotional (Feeling) – Gen. 3:6; Eccl. 3:4; Rom. 12:15; Phil. 4:6-7

Further expressions of image bearers include:

- Care for Creation—Responsible dominion/stewardship – Gen. 1:28; 2:15
- Creativity through the expression of natural talent and spiritual gifts – Rom. 12; Eph. 4; 1 Cor. 12:1 Pet. 4:10
- Communion (fellowship with other believers, but not limited to it) – Heb. 10:25; Eccl. 4:9-12; Matt. 18:20; Acts 2:42
- Conforming to the image of Christ (through renewing our minds) – Rom. 12:1-2; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:23; Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 2:6; John 8:32
- Contemplating the goodness and glory of God, His creation, and activity within it. – Psalm 19, 107, 145; James 1:17

A biblical view of diversity honors the created order and the will of the Creator.

Diversity in Socialization

It is God who has chosen when, where, and under what circumstances all men and women would be born, their purpose on earth, and how they will die (Acts 17:26; John 9; Eph. 1:4; Rom. 8:29; Heb. 9:27; Rev. 5:9).

- Geographical
- Ethnic
- Cultural
- Tribal
- Language

Diversity of Roles/Functions (within God-ordained Institutions)

- Family (Eph. 5)
- Work/Economic Status (Col. 3-4; Eph. 6:5-9)
- Church Organization (Eph. 4)
- Government (Rom. 13; 1 Tim. 2:2)

Diversity in Ability (Potential/Natural and Spiritual Gifts)

- God provides each person with gifts and talents to serve the church in unique ways (Eph. 4:7-12; Rom. 12:3-9; 1 Cor. 12).

Diversity in Maturity in Christ (Age)

- While age doesn't necessarily denote maturity, the experience of those who have walked faithfully in Christ (longer than others) is indispensable to the maturation of the body (1 Peter 5:1-10; 1 John 2:12-26; 1 Tim. 5; Titus).

Diversity in Trials, Temptations, and Convictions

- Not all believers are put through the same spiritual test or tempted with the same sins. Therefore, their expressions of faith regarding how to endure those trials and combat those temptations will vary and are a matter of the faith of the believer. Scriptures implore us to withhold judgment on expressions of faith that are not explicitly in conflict with the Word of God (Rom. 14-15; Eph. 4; Heb. 12:1-2).

There is only one interpretation of Scripture with a diversity of applications.

- While there is unity in the testimony of Scripture in that there is one interpretation of it (Eph. 4:3-6) and that interpretation is rendered by God alone (2 Pet. 1:19-21), there is, however, a diversity of applications (2 Tim. 3:16) being subject to the test of experience that is informed and influenced by circumstance, tradition, and the leading of the Holy Spirit as exhibited broadly by the many denominations within Christendom. Therefore, in matters of dispute involving the interpretation of the Word of God and its application, an appeal should always be made to that which is clear (cardinal truths) without a shadow of a doubt, thus establishing the basis of unity (1 Thess. 5:21); further, grace should be given to each dissenting believer (Rom. 14-15; Acts 15:36-40) to follow the conviction laid upon them by the Holy Spirit (Col. 3:17) within the clear bound outlined in Scriptures.

The pursuit of diversity must never compromise the aim towards unity in Christ.

Limitations of Diversity

- Diversity is not the highest aim of the universal church; however, its pursuit is worthy as a desire to experience a more complete expression of His kingdom (Rev. 5:9, 7:9).
- It is a by-product of the communication of the Gospel, discipleship, and pursuit of unity in Christ (Matt. 28:19-20).
- In Acts 2, the church grew in numbers, not from a pursuit of diversity, but from the preaching of the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. It was a desire for “all men to see.”
- “Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5).
- The Holy Spirit enabled the people to hear Peter’s message.
- “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand
- were added to their number that day.”
- Being renewed in the knowledge of the image of our Creator (Acts 3:10) results in maturity in Christ. A by-product of a mature believer is one who desires all men and women to experience life in Christ

Diversity has a saturation point.

- Resources (time, money, personnel, energy) are limited and must be taken into account when diversity is considered a key objective. No organization can respond and accommodate every “diverse” option.
- Diversity doesn’t extend into the area of truth.
- Self-evident truths are the foundation of knowledge, communication, meaning, and reflection. In other words, a thing cannot be a thing and not a thing in the same sense and the same respect if we desire to make sense of the world we inhabit.

Diversity doesn’t extend into the area of sexual orientation/identity.

- In Gen. 2, a clear distinction is made between male and female, and sexes are understood to be biologically fixed, with the scope of their sexual interaction being limited to heterosexual monogamy. Proclaimed identity or physiological alterations cannot alter biology, nor do they nullify God’s will—his original intent. These biological distinctions and prohibitions are affirmed by Christ (Matt. 5:21-22, 27-28) and explicated by Paul (Rom. 1:24-31). Further, any perversion of God’s design or transgression of His will for sex constitutes immorality and is therefore a sin (Lev. 20:13; 1 Tim. 1:10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Acts 15:28-29; Gal. 5:19-21; Jude 7).

Unbiblical Division Does Not Glorify God

In the pursuit of unity, all worldly strategies—those that subvert or are in opposition to the Word of God—must be avoided. Discrimination or favoritism on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, age, ability, religious convictions, or status are prohibited by Scripture. However, there are biblically warranted circumstances where division is necessary to maintain God-glorifying unity.

Conviction: Unbiblical division and worldly strategies do not glorify God.

Discrimination and favoritism are sin and lead to unbiblical division.

- Preferential treatment and or blanket exclusion in the body of Christ on the grounds of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, age, ability, religious convictions, or status are prohibited by Scripture (James 2:1-12; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 3:1-6; 1 Cor. 12; Acts 6; Acts 10; Col. 2:21-23).

Humans are capable of judging each other's actions, but only God can thoroughly assess motives.

- Only God is fully capable of judging accurately the motives and intentions of any individual (1 Cor. 2:11). Nor should the thoughts of an individual be assumed on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, ability, culture, status, roles, or to a degree, religious expression. Therefore, every believer must be careful not to pass judgment or bear false witness on another believer in Christ. If there is a grievance, each member of the body has an obligation to follow the biblical prescription for reconciliation (Matt. 5, 7, 18; Rom. 14). In matters of a direct offense from a brother or sister in Christ, we are called to patience (Eph. 4) and to seek reconciliation. In matters not related to a specific sin, we are called to bear with one another (Eph. 4; Rom. 15; Col. 3).

Division is an inherent feature in God's ultimate plan (Matt 25:31-46) yet solely based on His decree.

- God allows division to further the work of the Gospel (Acts 15:36-41).
- Division is necessary for the marriage covenant to be fulfilled (Gen. 2:24; Matt 19:5).
- Though the sacrifice of Jesus is sufficient to cover all of humanity, it only applies to those who have been elected and receive the free gift of salvation by faith. Those who do not accept Christ will be eternally separated from God (Matt. 8:12, 13:42, 13:50, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30; Luke 13:28).

Division is sometimes necessary when there is willful disobedience to God's Word.

- Sometimes division is necessary to preserve unity in Christ (Luke 12:49-53); it is nonetheless good to desire unity (Psalm 133:1).
- Division on the grounds of willful sin, doctrinal heresy, or pride is warranted by Scripture (2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 John 2:19; Matt. 13:24-30; Heb. 6:4-6; Gal. 2:11-14; Gal. 5:16-24; Jude 19; Rom. 12:3-8; Rom. 16:17).
- Division may also result from different ministry methods and failures in leadership and discipleship (Acts 15:36-41; 1 Cor. 6:1-11; Ex. 22:25-27; 1 Cor. 1:10-17, 3:1-23; 1 Kings 12:16-24).

Division is required when the world's laws, decrees, cultural norms, and teachings contradict or subvert God's Word.

- While all believers should seek good and the welfare of the land in which they live (Jer. 29:7), uphold the laws, and honor those who are charged with executing them (Rom. 13), the believer's allegiance lies ultimately to God and to His law (Acts 4:18-20). God has established laws for the greatest good of mankind (Psalm 19:7-13). These laws, in general, pertain to: Authority, Human Life, Human Relationships, Property, Integrity, and Material Restraint. The full expression of human creativity is possible when these laws are obeyed and upheld. Any perversion or transgression of God's law has a direct bearing on human flourishing.
- Willful disobedience to the law and decrees of the land is warranted if they violate God's laws (Dan. 3:16-18; Dan. 6; Ex. 1:15-17; Rom. 13; Acts 5:27-29; Amos 3:3; Matt. 10:33).

Social Engagement Is an Outworking of the Holy Spirit

Social engagement is the supernatural outworking of the presence of the Holy Spirit in all believers (being unified by that same Spirit), who are obedient to the call to make disciples of all nations, confirming their salvation through baptism, and teaching their disciples to walk in obedience to all the commands of Christ. The Holy Spirit leads and works in every believer according to the gifts apportioned to them by God to build up the people of God in order to advance his kingdom towards complete restoration through good works.

Conviction: Social Engagement (the pursuit of biblical justice and love) is an outworking of the Holy Spirit.

God has ordained certain institutions that are designed to contribute to an individual's general welfare (justice) and allow them to collectively achieve the highest good possible (love). Therefore, the pursuit of love and justice (shalom) should govern (as the highest goods) all God's ordained institutions.

The principles—purpose, moral quality, and structure—that govern each institution's function has been determined by God. Violation of these principles is rebellion against God and an injustice to all mankind.

- The individual – being made in the image of God, every human being has intrinsic value that is not dependent on gender, race, ability, or class and should be extended the common grace associated with such a designation (Gen. 1:26).
- The family – the first and fundamental social institution established by God on which all other institutions depend, has been designated for the procreation of the human race, its physical and spiritual maturation, and for experiencing (though in a very finite sense) the unity of the Godhead (Gen. 2:21-24).
- The economy – God ordained work as an opportunity for human beings to participate in the creative and stewardship process. Creativity is an inherent feature of all image bearers (to greater and lesser degrees in some). As stewards, image bearers are to exercise responsible dominion over all creation (Gen. 2:15; Col. 2:23; 2 Thes. 3:10).

- The government – the second social institution ordained by God to ensure the structure of society to contribute to the common good of all. This includes laws that promote creativity and stewardship, as well as those that protect against abuses and perversions of God’s ordained institutions (Rom. 13:15; 1 Ti. 2:1-3; 1 Pet. 2:13-15).
- The church – the third social institution ordained by God is concerned with our relationship to God. It is the means by which all human beings experience their greatest fulfillment as they grow in the knowledge of God and use their gifts in service of His kingdom in a community of faith (Eph. 4). The church is the primary means by which the Gospel is advanced (Matt. 16:18). Christian education is, therefore, an extension of the church in its mission to “teach them to observe all things I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20). The church also has a responsibility to herald an incarnate God’s transcendent standard for each institution to both believers and non-believers (Acts 1:6-8).

Ambassadors of Christ are ministers of reconciliation.

- All who believe Jesus Christ is the only Savior and Lord over all creation are now ambassadors of Christ (Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:11-21; Col. 1:13).
- Ambassadors of Christ are ministers of reconciliation desiring that all of mankind hear the Gospel (Matt. 28:16-20; Luke 24:28).
- Ambassadors of Christ by their witness (in speech and action) foreshadow the coming kingdom of God where all things will be restored and perfected (John 14:12).
- Ambassadors of Christ are most effective when they seek to proclaim and uphold God’s standards and commands (purpose, moral quality, and structure) within His divinely established institutions—the individual, the family, the economy (work), the church, and the government. Within these institutes, the dignity of the individual as an image bearer is never to be violated except that which God has ordained (Matt. 7:12).

Ambassadors of Christ are obligated to make disciples, share the Gospel, use their gifts for the church and the common good, and actively seek unity with all believers.

- Ambassadors of Christ are obligated to make disciples by sharing the Gospel within their sphere of influence (socially, culturally, ethnically, and geographically) to the greatest extent possible, as they are compelled by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20).
- Ambassadors of Christ are obligated to use their spiritual gifts, natural abilities, and resources to aid in the maturation of the church (Rom. 12:2-7; Eph. 4:7-13; 1 Cor. 12:4-11) and seek the common good of all humanity (Matt. 5:45; Jer. 29:7; Matt. 9:36; 1 John 3:16-18). The common good refers to the basic needs that contribute to human flourishing (food, shelter, clothing, love and fellowship/community, knowledge, protection from all forms of injustices, and the freedom to do good).
- Ministers of reconciliation are obligated to seek unity in Christ, primarily between brothers and sisters in the Lord, especially when there is dissension amongst them (Matt. 5:24, 18:15; John 13:35, 17:20-21; Heb. 12:15).

Ambassadors of Christ find their greatest joy in serving the local church.

- Ministers of reconciliation find the greatest amplification of their gifts, greatest protection from unbiblical practices, greatest personal fulfillment, and bring the most glory to God when they operate under the authority of the local church whose members (both leaders and laity) submit to the authority of God's Word and the leading of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:7-32; Col. 2:6-3:4; Phil. 1:27-30).

The Pathway to Unity Is Through Maturity

The pathway to unity begins with understanding that true unity can only be found in Christ; diversity in the body of Christ can glorify God; unbiblical division does not glorify God; and all God-glorifying social engagement is an outworking of the Holy Spirit. As every believer matures in Christ, characterized by living a worthy life, the body grows in greater unity, ultimately bringing glory to God.

Conviction: The pathway to unity in Christ is through maturing in our individual relationship with Christ and with fellow believers.

Holy Spirit-led believers make a personal and collective commitment to live a worthy life.

- All believers are obligated to live by the Spirit (Rom. 8; Gal. 5:13-26; 1 John 2:20, 27).
- Carry out all work for the glory of God and not to please man (Col. 3:23; Eccl. 9:10).
- Maintain God-honoring relationships in both their private and professional lives (Rom. 12:18; John 15:12). A commitment to practice humility, patience, forbearance, while seeking and granting forgiveness as prescribed by Scripture (Matt. 5:23-24, 6:14-15, 18:21-22).
- Grow in the knowledge of God and understanding of the love of Christ (Col. 3; Eph. 1:17-18, 3:14-19).
- Allow for the exercise of spiritual gifts under the leading of the Spirit and direction of leadership (Rom. 12; Eph. 4; 1 Cor. 12; 1 Peter 4).
- Live in a state of submission, acknowledging the difference within the body as God's design and a means to maturation and the recognition of each believer's gift as essential to the overall maturation of the church (Eph. 4:2-3, 5:21; Rom. 12; James 4:7).
- Endure hardship and battle against sin, the world's systems, and the enemy (1 Pet. 4:12; Eph. 6:10-20; 2 Tim. 4:5). Support each other through difficulty and hardship (Gal. 6:2; Heb. 12:7-11; James 4:7).
- Regularly give thanks to the Lord for who He is, what He has accomplished, and what He has in store for us (Col. 1:12, 3:15-17; Eph. 5:18-20; Heb. 13:15).

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