

30 March 2025_Philippians 4:1-9_Unlocking Joy: Walking in unity as a church.

Let me ask you a hard question:

What kind of church do you want to belong to?

Not just in theory—but in real life.

A church where people actually love each other?

Where joy is genuine?

Where conflict doesn't linger, and peace runs deep?

Where worship is rich, relationships are honest, and the mission stays clear—even when life gets messy?

If that's the kind of church you want, I've got news for you:

It won't happen by accident.

Unity doesn't just fall out of the sky.

It takes people—*spiritually grounded, gospel-centered people*—to build and protect it.

That's exactly what Paul's aiming at in [Philippians 4:1–9](#).

This isn't just the closing paragraph of a letter.

It's a blueprint for lasting unity in the body of Christ.

And we need it—because let's be real:

We live in a divided world.

A distracted world.

A world that pulls at your peace, tests your patience, and chips away at your joy.

So how do we become a people—and a church—that stands firm in the middle of all that?

Paul gives us **8 ways** to cultivate lasting unity.

Not gimmicks. Not quick fixes.

But Spirit-empowered rhythms that help the church become strong, joyful, and united.

So today, we're going to let the Word do what only the Word can do:

Call us back to what matters.

Correct what's drifting.

And restore what's broken.

This isn't just a to-do list. It's an invitation to deeper faith, deeper joy, and deeper unity.

So let's walk through [Philippians 4:1–9](#) together to learn how to walk in unity as a church, beginning with...

1. Stand firm in the Lord. v1

Unity doesn't happen by accident—it takes spiritually grounded people.

That's what Paul means when he says, "*stand firm in the Lord*." He modeled it. Now he's calling them to it.

If we want a joyful, united church, we need believers who don't fold when life hits hard.

People who know what they believe, and *why* they believe it.

People who stay rooted in Christ—especially when everything else is shaking.

Let's be honest because we hear it so much—"*stand firm*" can sound like just another Christian phrase. Easy to say. Hard to live.

But in a world pulling you in every direction, standing firm isn't optional—it's essential.

So let me ask: are you standing firm—or just standing nearby?

Built to last—or just built to look good?

This matters. Because where you plant yourself spiritually—where you're fed, formed, and led—shapes your walk with Jesus.

And when individuals stand firm in the Lord, the church stands strong in unity.

That's why we've never chased flash—we've only chased faithfulness.
And by God's grace, we've weathered storms that could've split us. Not because we're strong—but because we stood firm *in Christ*.

If we want joy and unity to last in this house, it starts with people locked in—anchored to Jesus.

So don't just say you're standing—*stand for real*.
Because standing firm is just the beginning.
Lasting unity also takes a relentless commitment to peace.

Therefore...

2. Agree in the Lord - squash beef relentlessly v2

This argument between the two ladies wasn't a petty or cordial disagreement behind closed doors—it was a public conflict that threatened the health of the whole church.

Paul doesn't pick sides. He doesn't assign blame. He just says: “**Agree in the Lord.**”

In other words—squash the beef.
For the sake of the body. For the glory of Jesus.

Here's why this matters:

1. Conflict robs God of glory.

The church exists to lift up Jesus. But when we're fighting, gossiping, and holding grudges, we don't reflect Him—rather we grieve Him.

Just like a parent is grieved when their kids constantly fight, God isn't honored when His children refuse to make peace.

2. Conflict creates division in the church.

Unresolved drama doesn't stay contained.
People take sides. Walls go up. Cliques form.
What started with two people turns into a church-wide divide—especially when influencers are involved.

That's why Paul says, “**I urge you...**”

He's pleading—because he knows unity is fragile, and disunity is contagious. Just like pink-eye.

So what do we do?

We squash the beef—quickly, humbly, and relentlessly.

That means:

- **Go to them early.** Don't let bitterness take root. As you go...
- **Assume the best.** They might not even know they hurt you. (semi truck blind spot)
- **Forgive quickly.** Grace should be your first move—not payback. (not peace of my mind)
- **Let it go.** Don't replay it. Don't weaponize it. Move on.

And hear this with love:

If someone refuses to reconcile—refuses to protect our unity—the elders *will* step in.

Because unity isn't optional. It's essential.

The health of the church matters more than the pride of any one person.

So if there's beef—squash it.
Don't wait. Do it today.

Agreeing in the Lord is more than avoiding tension.

It means actively restoring what's been broken.

That's the second way we cultivate unity—but there's more. Real unity runs even deeper...

3. Practice peace and restoration. v3

They say *time heals all wounds*—but let's be real, that's a myth. Time doesn't heal wounds; it hides them. And what's hidden doesn't get better—it gets infected. It festers. It poisons everything around it. That's why unresolved conflict in the church is so dangerous. If we don't deal with it, it *will* come back—louder, messier, and more damaging than before.

Paul knows this, so he doesn't just call Euodia and Syntyche to reconcile—he pulls someone else in. He says, “*I also ask you, true partner (lover of Jesus and his church) to help these women.*” In other words: I need you to step in between their mess. step in. Not to take sides. Not to throw gas on the fire. But to be a bridge. A peacemaker. An agent of restoration.

That's what the church needs: people who don't just walk past tension, but step into it with humility and grace. People who say, “*Let's talk. Let's forgive. Let's agree to move forward in Jesus.*”

Peacemakers are so vital. They aren't afraid of hard conversations. They don't sugarcoat truth, but they also don't weaponize it. They speak with love, like Jesus did—with both truth and compassion. They have a way of showing you the error of your ways in a way that makes you feel remorseful and cared for.

So be that kind of person. The one who steps in—not with drama, but with peace. The one who helps others come together, heal, and move forward. Let's be the church that is known for its peace and restoration.

Can you commit to that? I'm confident that you can and will.

Although necessary, peace and restoration aren't the end goal—they're the environment we want to have. And that brings us to the next way we cultivate unity... We...

4. Always rejoice in the Lord. v4

They say time heals all wounds—but that's a myth.
Time doesn't heal wounds. It hides them.
And hidden wounds don't disappear—they fester.
They infect your heart, your relationships, and your church.

That's why unresolved conflict is so dangerous—it doesn't stay quiet. It comes back louder, messier, and more destructive than before.

Paul gets that. He doesn't leave to *Euodia* and *Syntyche to make peace*—he calls someone else in. He says, “*I ask you, true partner, to help these women.*”
In other words: *Step in.*

Not to take sides.
Not to stir the pot.
But to be a bridge.
A peacemaker.
An agent of restoration.

This is what the church needs—people who don't walk past tension, but step into it with humility and grace. People who say, “*Let's talk. Let's forgive. Let's move forward in Jesus.*”

Peacemakers are vital.
They don't run from hard conversations.
They don't sugarcoat truth—but they don't weaponize it either.
They speak like Jesus did—with Truth and Grace.

They show you where you're wrong in a way that makes you feel convicted *and* cared for.

Work to be that kind of person.
Step in—not with drama, but with peace.
Not to divide, but to restore.

Let's be a church known not for gossip or grudges—but for peace and restoration.

You peace and restoration aren't just good ideas—they're the kind of environment where unity thrives. And that brings us to the next way we cultivate it...

5. Be Known for Peace (v.5)

Paul keeps it simple: “**Let your graciousness be known to everyone.**”

In other words—be someone marked by peace.

Not tension.

Not drama.

Not chaos.

You shouldn't be the one always stirring things up, always in the middle of conflict, always needing the last word.

Be the one who brings calm into the room. Who gives grace, not attitude. Who quiets storms instead of fueling them.

Just so know—most conflicts aren't about big issues. They usually start when someone feels ignored, disrespected, or like they have something to prove.

But if you already have everything in Christ, there's nothing left to fight for.

You've been seen. You've been chosen. You've been loved.

So if you're constantly demanding attention, recognition, or payback—ask yourself: *Is Jesus really enough for me?*

Peace is a fruit of the Spirit ([Galatians 5:22–23](#)).

So if peace is consistently absent from your life—if you're always angry, always offended, always feuding—it's not just a personality thing. It's a heart thing.

Because that kind of unrest doesn't come from the Spirit of God.

And if that's you—confess it. Repent. Surrender your need to be right, to be in control, to be seen. Let Jesus lead you—for real.

So be known for peace. Be known for grace.

And don't forget Paul's next line: “**The Lord is near.**”

He's watching. He's coming. You will give an account—not just for what you believed, but for how you treated people.

So today—and every day—choose peace over drama.

And the only way we can consistently choose peace is by staying in constant prayer, trusting God with our every need and burden. That's our 6th way to cultivate lasting unity...

6. Pray in agreement, and trust God to meet every need. v6-7

Nothing kills unity faster than unchecked worry.

Why? Because worry turns your focus inward.

It traps you in fear, insecurity, and comparison—and it never stays private. It spills out. Into your tone. Your attitude. Your relationships.

Unresolved worry makes us impatient, defensive, jealous—even bitter when someone else gets what we've been praying for.

And that kind of anxiety doesn't just steal your joy—it poisons community.

So what's the answer?

It's not just “don't worry”—Paul gives us something better: *pray*.

But not just any kind of prayer. Prayer that keeps your peace, and honors God.

Here's how:

1. Change Your Perspective.

Paul says, “**Don't worry about anything.**” That's not advice—it's a command.

Worry says, “I'm on my own.”

Faith says, “God's got this.”

Shift your perspective: stop obsessing over what you lack and start seeing your situation as a setup for God's provision.

You serve a faithful God who delights in blessing His children—so choose trust over worry.

2. Present Your Request—and Leave It With God.

Sounds simple. But let's be real: how often do you actually *leave it* with God?

We pray, then vent to our friends about how bad things are.

We surrender, then snatch it right back.

But sometimes our stress doesn't come from waiting on God—it comes from trying everything *but* God.

Paul says, “**Make your requests known to God.**” Lay it all at His feet—and don't pick it back up.

Pray. And let it alone.

Just like your cake won't rise to perfection if you keep opening the oven door to check on it. Neither will your prayer be answered if you keep touching it, make your request known to God and leave it in his trust.

3. Pray God's Will.

This is key—because God won't bless what contradicts His character or goes against his will.

So as you prepare to pray, make sure your request are consistent with his heart.

You do that by:

- Asking what does Scripture say about my given situation?
- Asking are your motives rooted in God's glory—or just your comfort?
- Inviting the Holy Spirit to direct your thoughts as you pray. Are you letting the Spirit lead you—or just your emotions?
- Being persistent. Show Him that your'e relying on him and him alone.

Because when your heart aligns with His will, it's not *if* God answers—it's *when*. **Prayer's that build peace..**

4. Embrace God's Peace.

Peace isn't just a feeling—it's a gift.

And too many of us reject it.

God gives peace, and we respond,

But God, my bills aren't paid... But God, my body still hurts... But God, I'm still lonely...” And with every “but,” we reject the very thing that was meant to carry us through.

Don't do that.

Don't fight the peace that's working to hold you together.

Wrap yourself in it. Let it calm your heart and steady your faith.

So as you pray:

- ✓ Change your perspective.
- ✓ Make your request—and leave it.
- ✓ Align your prayers with God's will.
- ✓ Embrace the peace He gives.

This kind of prayer doesn't just honor God—it protects your heart and strengthens the unity of this church.

Because when we trust God together, we walk in peace together.

Now, that covers how to pray.

But what about the rest of your day?

What happens after the “Amen”?

That's where Paul goes next.

It's one thing to have peace in the moment.

It's another thing entirely to *live* in peace.

Ever met someone like that?

A believer who doesn't panic, doesn't spiral, doesn't feed drama.

Life hits hard—and they stay steady.

Not because life is easy, but because their peace runs deep.

A tree crashes through their roof:

“We’re safe. Thank God for insurance.”

They lose a job:

“God must be opening another door—He’s never failed me yet.”

You share a need, and they don’t just say, *“I’ll pray for you.”* They stop and pray—*right there*. And they follow up.

At first, it might seem fake.

But over time, you realize—it’s not.

Their peace is real.

Not because they ignore problems, but because they intentionally feed their faith.

And it all starts in the mind.

7. Fix Your Mind on What Feeds Your Faith. v8

Paul says, “**Dwell on these things.**”

He’s not talking about positive vibes or wishful thinking.

He’s talking about building a mental filter—one that guards your peace by controlling your focus.

Here’s the filter:

- True – Not gossip. Not assumptions. Not your feelings. Truth is rooted in God’s Word and grounded in reality.
- Honorable – Fill your mind with what lifts your character, not what tears others down.
- Right – Think thoughts that line up with God’s standard—not just what feels right to you. I’m so sick of people asking, “what feels right to you?” The right question is, “God what’s right with you?”
- Pure – Keep your mind clean. Don’t contaminate your spirit with smut and mindless content.
- Lovely – Let your thoughts reflect the beauty of holiness—not evil.
- Admirable – If someone could hear your thoughts, would they be encouraged or embarrassed?
- Excellent – Set your mind on things that are morally strong—not sloppy or half-hearted.
- Worthy of praise – Think in a way that brings glory to God.

This matter?

Because your thoughts shape your life.

What you dwell on will either feed your faith—or fuels your fear.

Fixing your mind on godly things gives you stability. You stop reacting to life, and start responding in faith. Instead of following your emotions, you’re led by Biblical convictions.

And when a whole church starts thinking this way? Everything changes.

Gossip dies.

Comparison fades.

Encouragement rises.

Grace multiplies.

And unity thrives

Not because we’re trying harder, but because we’re thinking differently.

So if you want to walk in peace and stay in unity, fix your mind on what feeds your soul and builds your faith.

And once your mind is set—don’t just think differently but...

8. **Live the faith that you’ve both seen and learned for yourself.** v9

Paul says... “**9 Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.**”

Notice—he doesn't say, "Just think about it." He says, *do it*.

Faith isn't just something you hear. It's something you live.

It's not about being a spiritual consumer—it's about being a committed disciple.

There comes a point when every believer has to grow up spiritually.

Just like you had to start owning your life as an adult, you have to own your walk with Jesus.

No one drifts into maturity. Growth takes intention. It takes ownership.

You've heard the Word.

You've seen faith modeled.

Now it's time to live it out.

That doesn't mean you're on your own—we still need each other.

It doesn't mean you've arrived—none of us have.

But it *does* mean this: your spiritual growth is your responsibility.

You've got to pursue it. Prioritize it. Protect it.

And when you do, it strengthens the whole church:

Here's how:

1. It lightens the burden on the church.

When you take ownership of your spiritual life, you don't put all the weight on pastors and leaders.

They're here to equip you—not carry you.

That creates a healthier, stronger discipleship culture.

2. It unites the body.

When everyone's chasing personal growth in godliness, we move together.

We're united—not by preferences or personalities—but by a shared pursuit of Jesus.

3. It keeps you grounded.

A growing faith guards your heart from drifting into pettiness, criticism, or apathy.

You stay sharp. You stay joyful. You stay mission-focused.

So here's the call:

Take ownership of your walk.

Live what you've learned.

And in doing so, you'll bless your life—and build up your church.

Conclusion

From [Philippians 4:1–9](#), we've seen eight powerful ways to pursue unity.

And yeah—it's a lot to take in. But rather than just give you a list to remember, let me give you a picture to carry with you.

Imagine a person who actually lives this out.

They stand firm in truth.

They pursue peace instead of drama.

They rejoice even in hardship.

They pray with trust, not panic.

They fill their mind with what's good.

And they take ownership of their spiritual growth.

What kind of person do they become?

They become a pillar in the church.

Not just a regular attender—but someone others lean on.

Someone steady. Grounded. Life-giving.

The kind of person you want near when things get hard.

The kind of person who quietly leads by example.

They don't need a title—they carry weight just by who they are.

They bring unity where there's tension.

They speak life where there's discouragement.

They love deeply, forgive quickly, and live in a way that makes people say, *"Jesus must be real—because look at their life."*

Now picture a church full of people like that.

What happens?

The atmosphere shifts.

Worship is real.

Love is genuine.

Ministry is shared—not hoarded.

Conflict doesn't linger.

Joy spreads.

And unity isn't just something we talk about—it's something we see, something we feel, something we *live*.

So Bridge, the call is clear:

Let continue to become that kind of church.

Let's be those people.

Not instantly, but intentionally.

Not perfectly, but faithfully.

One step at a time.

One prayer at a time.

One act of obedience at a time.

And as we do, the God of peace will be with us.

That's not just a promise—but experientially now and into the future.

Amen.