

#### 4. Unity through Humility (1Q 2026 Christ in Philippians and Colossians)

**Biblical material:** Phil. 2:1–8, Jer. 17:9, Phil. 4:8, 1 Cor. 8:2, Rom. 8:3, Heb. 2:14–18.

##### Quotes

- It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels. *Augustine*
- Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less. *Rick Warren*
- There is no respect for others without humility in one's self. *Henri Frederic Amiel*
- Church unity comes from corporate humility. *Leonard Ravenhill*
- Obedience is the road to freedom, humility the road to pleasure, unity the road to personality. *C. S. Lewis*
- Only humility will lead us to unity, and unity will lead us to peace. *Mother Teresa*

##### Questions

Does unity through humility mean giving in to others? How do we best achieve unity? With much talk recently about needing church unity, can this be achieved by programs and propaganda? How is it that the early church wasn't concerned to promote unity? How do we balance respect for leadership and humility in behavior with maintaining personal convictions?

##### Bible summary

Philippians 2:1–8 described Jesus' incarnation and how he emptied himself. Jeremiah 17:9 is the warning about the human mind's ability to deceive. "Whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, beautiful, commendable, whatever is truly good and deserves to be praised, think about these kinds of things." Philippians 4:8. 1 Corinthians 8:2 warns us about thinking that we know anything! Romans 8:3 God can do what the law could not. Jesus is our high priest (see Hebrews 2:14–18).

##### Comment

"Unity in diversity is a call to distribute the authority, the power, the budgets and the privileges of the church hierarchy to the diverse segments of the church, i.e., the lower organizational levels, the local churches and the church members. It is a call for efficiency in fulfilling our gospel commission. It has to include all people and all places for the witness... Unity in diversity mandates against both kingly centralization of the center and any minority group seceding from the world church." Jong-Keun Lee, "The Word of God and Unity in Diversity." Presentation to the Adventist Church's Annual Council October 1, 2000.

Far from being the result of an administrative edict, church unity results from the harmony found in the body of believers.

There's much discussion today about church unity, and much of it is misguided. Attempts to define the basics of unity in terms of a creed have always failed, and we have taken the position that the Bible is our only creed. Administrative attempts to impose unity only end up in the abuse of power and cause damage to the body of Christ. True unity comes from agreeing with and accepting the methods and mission of Jesus, who encouraged us to come to him to find the only way to live and find salvation.

As is often mentioned, unity is not uniformity. We are all unique individuals, with all the diversity that God delights in. We do not think the same thoughts and we see things differently. But this should not destroy the unity we have together in Christ. As Galatians 3:28 states, we are all one in Christ Jesus, though we have different ethnicity, social position, and gender.

We are encouraged to live a life worthy of our calling. Our calling is to the one hope in Christ. In this hope we are united; we recognize that there is no other way, no other future apart from God and his promised hope. As a result, we work towards this hope together, and wish to help others find this blessed hope. As conveyors of hope, we are a spectacle to the whole universe.

Here we see the unifying power of this hope to which we have been called, and how God leads through the motivating power of hope. We also understand that we are to share this hope, especially with our family and friends. Our goal must be the sharing of hope in the best way; not sensationalizing our expectations but putting hope in the best context. Our message must not be based on fear but on love, not promoting anxiety but providing assurance. We are to be a “spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men,” as God’s ambassadors at the end of time.

Only as we are united in this hope, can we rightly represent God to a dying world. Such unity cannot come about by human plans, but only through being committed to the God of hope who leads us through. We need to be true to this calling of hope, being the representatives of the God who wishes to lead all to such a saving hope. In doing so our lives need to reflect what we believe, while our church must demonstrate the oneness that this hope brings. As a worldwide community of faith it is our privilege to call everyone to the unity of faith in Jesus.

The battle we face is not won by force, but by humility. It is not by might, nor by power. It is by God’s spirit, which is spirit of peace, love, joy, happiness, long-suffering—and all the other divine virtues. If the war could have been won by power, then *all-mighty* God could already have won. The argument however is not over who has the most power. The war is over how that power is used, over the legitimacy of God’s government, over the real nature of his character.

So how do we “help God win”? The question is of course flawed, since God can surely win without our aid. But he has invited our participation, and we certainly make our contributions, to one side or the other. We may sometimes think that we can in our own power fight on the right side and gain the victory. But the Bible and Ellen White make it clear that the battle is not against flesh and blood and that the issues are truly on a huge scale. Our little battles are only meaningful if they play into the wider scheme of things. This is why Ellen White makes the comment that “It is by teaching the truth that we are to defeat the purposes of Satan.” {UL 77} Our role is to identify with God and his character, not because we are forced to, or induced to, but because in all humility we agree that right is right, that the moral laws of the universe are entirely well-founded and not arbitrary at all.

Recognizing what we are up against should lead us to be very humble about our own strength and abilities. In and of ourselves we have no capacity to defeat the devil and his unjust use of force. However our role is to make the right choices, to place ourselves on the side of righteousness and truth, demonstrating in our lives that whatever comes we will not give up our clear conviction that God is telling the truth and is entirely trustworthy. For the war can only end in victory as God’s case is finally proved entirely and eternally right.

### **Ellen White Comments**

When God's people are one in the unity of the Spirit, all of Phariseeism, all of self-righteousness, which was the sin of the Jewish nation, will be expelled from all hearts. The mold of Christ will be upon each individual member of His body, and His people will be new bottles into which He can pour His new wine, and the new wine will not break the bottles. God will make known the mystery which hath been hidden for ages. He will make known what are the "riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27) {verses 28, 29 also quoted}. {1SM 386}

Jesus Christ is the one great Unity; he possesses the attributes that harmonize all diversities. And he, the Gift above all others, was given to our world to give expression to the mind and character of God, that every intelligent being, if he will, may see God in the revelation of his Son. {YI, August 19, 1897}

Mutual forbearance is called for. We should love and respect one another notwithstanding the faults and imperfections that we cannot help seeing; for this is the Spirit of Christ. Humility and self-distrust should be cultivated, and a patient tenderness with the faults of others. This will kill out all narrowing selfishness and make us large-hearted and generous. {PaM 95}