

THE POWER OF UNITY

(Gen. 11:1-9)

III - accident on freeway

One of the interesting phenomenon's of modern society is the growth in cultural values towards individualism and the belief that we are free independent, individuals who have the psychic or material power to shape our unique destinies; and that our primary pursuit in life must be self advancement and self fulfilment. Probably no society has honed this philosophy more than the American society with its frontier, rugged cowboy, Marlboro man individualism. Of course there are very few geographic frontiers left and so the definition of frontier has changed to industrial, entrepreneurial frontiers in computer science, research, commerce and industry. The go-it -alone mentality, and don't let anyone stand in your way. Interestingly however, research does not forward this as the best way to achieve extraordinary goals in any organisation. In their book "The Leadership Challenge", James Kouzes, the former director of the Executive Development centre at the Leavey School of Business and Administration; and Berry Posner, a professor of management and Business Administration, Santa Clara University interviewed 500 managers in companies that were excelling to find out what was the cause of their success? In almost each case, the answer came back "*I didn't do it alone*"

Individualism can accomplish great results, but only co-operation accomplishes the extraordinary. God intimated as much several thousand years ago when, as reward in

Gen. 11:6, he said. "If as one people speaking the same language they have began to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them."

I want us to learn from this text today and I'm going to ask you to listen with 3 ears:

1. Those friends you dream your dreams with your close relationships; spouse
2. Your organisation - entrepreneurs, managers and directors here.
3. Church - for we are all members of this church.
4. National ears in light of the current problems we face with majimboism, ethnicity and self aggrandisement of national leaders.

Now Gen. 11:1-9 is actuarially a negative lesson that finally brought Gods wrath and judgement upon these people; but we don't discard the text; bear with me and you will see we can learn some valuable lessons from those peoples mistake.

When God made this amazing pronouncement on the power of those peoples unity - there were 3 components to that unity that he pointed out.

One People - These were a people that had a common heritage or bond. They moved together, they had settled in the planing of shiner together; if the transition in shiner represented a transition from a nomadic into an agrarian community that they had probably hunted and herded together, and were now farming together. The idea behind their oneness here is possibly one of a geographic, maybe also a genealogical bond.

One language - the 2nd component of their unity was their ability to speak and understand each other - they were a people of common understanding for language is no more than a vehicle to facilitate understanding. They had effective communication here 'They could say to each other... develop an idea and come to a consensus on it; and having done so - actually implement that idea in action together. The depth of their common understanding can be seen in the awesomeness of the goal they committed themselves to - to build a tower that reached the heavens - were talking about the architectural advancement and mathematical knowledge to build such a tower, not to say anything of the political will needed to mobilise people to such a corporate endeavour.

One mind - the 3rd component of their unity was that they were a people of common purpose. They had all given themselves to fulfilling the twin objectives of fame and a sense of corporate security for they had said 'we want to make a name for ourselves, and we don't want to be scattered over the face of the whole earth'.

God looked at them and said - as one people with one mind and one language - nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them!

Their ultimate goal however was not accomplished, for their common purpose was a purpose between man and man but not man and God; what they desired to do was not to Gods liking and so he frustrated their attempt to and yet a valuable lesson stands for us today.

If you and your spouse or friends, if you and your organisation, if we as a church or a nation can stand as one

people, bonded together, speaking one language and having one goal or purpose that we have set our hearts to, that is a goal in line with Gods will, then nothing we plan to do will be impossible!

"Individually can do great things, but it unity that accomplishes the extraordinary." Think of all the problems you face in your marriage, organisation, church or nation and realise how important it is you begin to work towards unity!

But how close are we to such unity and how do we deepen it? Lets look at ourselves as the body of Christ.

One people - we are one people, of a common heritage and bond. The bond that exists between one Christian brother and another is a multifaceted bond that should never be broken. In the words of Paul in Eph 4:4 "There is one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all who permeates all for he is over all, and though all and in all.

7 strands of a cable that hold us in oneness, and one could increase it to 10 strands with these additions;- there is only one blood that was shed for us all; and only one cross and only one family in Christ.

In Gal 3:28, a passage that has been called the "magna carta" of the church, Paul says "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ."

Now of-course there are still men and women, but the meaning of the passage is that these outward differences of

ethnicity, social and sexual status no longer separate us in Christ, they are subordinated to our greater commonality that was purchased for us through the cross.

Social and sexual distinctions are still important especially when it comes to roles in society, but they must never, never be used to separate us.

Ethnicity and genealogy are a reality in society and we have heard it said “Blood runs thicker than water” to encourage genealogical bonding - but remember “no blood runs thicker than the blood of Christ”, and that is where our first allegiance belongs!

III- carbon (diamond and graphite)

Each carbon atom in diamond is tetrahedral linked to 4 others by a single bond - not to every atom! Just 4 others. This arrangement is repeated throughout the molecule hereby making one of the hardest substances known to man.

Graphite - is soft and slippery and is used as a lubricant each carbon atom is joined in a pattern of interlocking hexagons to 3 others, but the bonding in between the layers is much weaker than the bonding in the layers.

We don't have to know everyone - God has a network of relationships and if you were to take 4-5 people in this congregation but have them deeply, and they were to love a different 4-5, then the lattice of bonding relationships would spread to encompass everyone in the fellowship, and to ensure no one falls through the cracks.



Secondly - we already speak one language. If I may borrow a leaf from industrial psychology - research there has shown that one of the best ways to ensure outstanding performance in a company, is to make each member, irrespective of rank, recognise their valuable and unique contribution to the company and hence give them a sense of responsibility and ownership for the accomplishments of the company. This is done by getting people to talk to one another, clearly communicating the company vision and helping them see how their unique contribution in excellence, clearly makes a difference to the company as a whole. This way they have a sense of ownership for the company's goals. This is true for us as the body of Christ. The bible tells us that to each one has been given a spiritual gift for the sake of the body. God in his wisdom has amazingly crafted his body, the church, such that no one individual has it all together - we must depend on each other. For the same reason no one can say “I am useless for I have nothing to contribute”. To you God has given a spiritual gift, and that coupled with your temperament, maturity and experiences becomes your unique contribution to this body. If you do not play your part, then we could not be all that God intended or desired for us. If you try to copy others - we can't need 2 Oscar's/Sunil's in this church, the church is much richer when we have a Oscar and a Marcy.

Unfortunately uniqueness is a problem with many Christians - we understand unity to be the same as uniformity where we all behave the same way, dress alike,

use the same versions, believe the same thing and use the same liturgy.

But that was never the expectation of the scripture. In a matter as contentious as the circumcision of Gentile converts; or the eating of eat sacrificed to idols he wrote "...let us stop passing judgement on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brothers way... let us make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. DO NOT DESTROY THE WORK OF GOD FOR THE SAKE OF "NON ISSUES".

As someone has aptly put it - major on the majors - that Jesus Christ came, died, rose again and saves. On this we are agreed and it makes up 95% of our language and common understanding; and so don't let the remaining 5% of how Christians should greet one another; should Christians drink or smoke, should women plait their hair and wear long trousers - don't let that 5% divide us.

Ill - synergism

"When 2 or more parts work together they produce an effect that is greater than the sum of their individual effects" i.e. $1+1+1=3=5$

Ill - migratory wild geese

distance greater than each bird could cover

sum total of relay

Ps 133 - a synergetic fellowship how do we foster such synergism in the fellowship? By honouring 2 laws the scriptures give us Law of reciprocity "Do unto other as you would have them do unto you"

- If I want others to listen to me...

- If love me...
- if trust me...
- If get excited about my ideas...

Humility (Phil 2:3) "In humility consider others better than yourself..."

then I am able to listen and learn, I want to hear, I weigh their words carefully and examine my own stance.

Finally we are a people of one mind and purpose.

I am always amazed to think of how many marriages are began each year without the couple ever having asked "why are we getting married. What is the goal of this whole venture?" Its like starting a company in partnership with another without having asked - what are the objectives of our company and how are we going to fulfil them? Must couples begin their married life by taking each independent day and building it into the brickwork of their lives and they build and build and build only to find 10 years down the road that they build an architecturally unsound building that comes crushing down around them.

The same can be true of the church, but we are not the church for the sake of meeting together - we are the church for the sake of reaching out to a lost world for whom time is running out.

As the people of God we must remember daily that we are a commissioned people and our one goal is to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. As the bible says "Since... you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things." Let

your eye be singular, let your mind be focused on one thing - Jesus Christ and him crucified. The best metaphor is that of an ambassador “we are ambassadors”, here to tell the world of the kingdom we come from; to invite men and women to be citizens of that kingdom, to bring them into the employ of our king, and to prepare them for eternity in that kingdom. Your place of work, your neighbourhoods, your families are the arenas where God has called you to be his ambassador! Are you faithful to your king?

Be of this one mind, let it consume your whole life for this is what you have been commissioned for. In Ps 69:9, the Psalmist says “Zeal for your house consumes me” I pray this passage for my life, my wife, and each of my children and for you as a church. Together we have the unique vision to impact this city.

How? When? Through unity “If you as one people, speaking one mind will begin to do this, then nothing you plan to do will be impossible!” What will your individual contribution be?

Ill - laser and light

- will you be a light photon
- or a laser photon, exciting others in our single minded purpose?

Jn 17:20-23