

We are all one in Christ, one in the spirit—

Gracious God, May these words be your words of grace. Amen

I Corinthians 12:12 – 13

We are all one in Christ, one in the spirit – those that like country music, those who like classical, those who are rock-n-rollers & those who sing gospel with sheer joy. We are one in the spirit. Those who are Asian, Latino, German, Irish, Palestinian, immigrants, and Native Americans. – We are one in the spirit...liberal and conservative, pro-life or pro-choice. We are one people. These are pretty radical words in a world in which we are divided.

For some reason we think being a Christian means that we should be like “Stefford Wives”... all looking, thinking, and acting alike. BUT we are not. We have hitched our wagon to the notion that unity means uniformity. Paul, in fact, says quite the opposite. He says that our unity comes out of our diversity. We need each other and we depend on each others uniqueness. Each of our different talents, perspectives, and personhood all come together, work together to make the body of Christ whole. The body of Christ would be incomplete without each and every one of us.

?The body is made of 700 trillion cells.

God made and makes creation with such diversity. Our world is not painted with one color. It is dynamic. From blue jays to whales, from snails to sharks, from sea weed to grains of wheat, God has created a universe that is vibrant and connected. Each species, each river, each tree depends on others to survive and thrive.

Yet, we live in a world in which we wished that everyone would just think like us. In I Corinthians, Paul was writing to a church in conflict – from whether folks should marry at all, to proper hair dos for women, to the ranking of spiritual gifts...it sounded like they argued about everything! They wanted uniformity. In our very real lives, we aren't going to always agree with people we love. With depth, with honesty comes conflict. It is a given. As we sit about the Christian family table, we face many a disagreement. We try to swallow our words...but we can't.

-Just think. From the moment a child becomes self aware, he/she is trying to claim a separate, independent life from his/her parents. They think they are grown when they aren't. Parents have a hard time letting go when they are. Domestic wars have been waged over: bedtimes, curfews, dating, diet, and homework.

-Spouses disagree – if they are honest – from what kind of couch to get, to how to raise their children, to how one spends free time, to sex and finances. I often tell couples in

pre-marital counseling that conflict is NOT a bad thing. How one deals with it can make a couple closer and healthier, or wounded.

-Family members fight over inheritance, prodigal sons or daughters, whether to forgive or not, outrageous behavior.

-Our country's political climate has become so charged that we can't seem to just sit down and talk. We just yell slogans at each other instead of talking. Yet, we are one in the spirit. We depend on each other! How do we grow to appreciate our differences and learn from each other?

It is important to begin with prayer. Prayer gives us perspective. We invite God into the discussion. We open our eyes to the bigger picture. We are called to trust God. That means letting go of our NEED to be right....It means surrender to God's spirit....and hope for revelation.

-It is important for us to ask ourselves why we hold onto the beliefs we do. What is our history? Where are our wounds? What experiences have we had? Last week I was suppose to drive Luke to a TV class on UNL's campus. I had worked on that campus for almost 15 years. I spent 30 minutes looking for the Journalism Building. Right in the very space the class was supposed to be the Insurance building stood. This is where students sometimes tried to park, were ticketed, or hauled away. So I drove around and around the block. That Insurance building was purchased by the University and is now Anderson Hall, the very place Luke was supposed to be. Sometimes a new truth is staring us right in the face and we are blind to it. Other times, if we understand ourselves better, we can better communicate our perspective.

-As Christians, I believe that respect and understanding are central to kindness. If we understand the back story, why the other person is passionate about their perspective, we can listen with new openness and care.

-We are called to listen to one another....to really hear each others stories. If we listen for understanding, if we listen without fear or anger, we might just hear something new.

-There is always a place where we can find common ground in the midst of disagreement. I think it was Jimmy Carter who reflected on the fact that before diplomatic conversations began, leaders would have conversations about their children, their spouse, and their homes. That brought a human element to their conversations.

We all come from different places, different backgrounds, different childhoods...each has a unique perspective of the world. Let's talk, let's listen and let us hear the voice of God.