

When One Plus One Does Not Equal Two!

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

Weddings are a time when a man and woman become one. That is how the Bible describes marriage: ***“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”*** You are becoming one today. You will symbolize this later with the unity sand. Others do it with the unity candle lit by two candles. You are becoming one today. You see, it doesn’t make mathematical sense. One plus one equals two. But when a man and woman come together in Christ as husband and wife, one plus one no longer equals two. It equals one.

You know what that means? It does NOT mean that you become some sort of mutant Siamese twin thing. It doesn’t mean that Adam goes wherever you go, Katie, like to that shower for one of your friends. It doesn’t mean you smile in unison with the exact same smile or when you talk, you talk in perfect unison. That would be freaky. You are still two individual persons with your own strengths and weaknesses and personality. But you form one unit like how five basketball players form one team. Each wears the same uniform and has one goal in mind. To win in his own way.

But would it surprise you if I said you were already one? Let me take back to verse three of our text: ***“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”*** It talks about the unity of the Spirit. You have been one for a long time, even before you met. You both believe in the Triune God. You both acknowledge God the Son coming in the flesh to redeem sinful mankind. You both understand why Jesus came in the flesh, to redeem us who are lost and condemned creatures because of sin. You look to the cross as the place where Jesus saves you. You both look forward to the resurrection to eternal life. You and all believers are united as one because of God the Holy Spirit. You are united by one faith, one Lord, one Baptism, one Spirit.

This means you have the same outlook on life. You look at things as redeemed children of God. You look at things as ones who commit sins but don’t like it and rejoice God forgives you in Christ. You look at the world as God looks at it because you have the Bible. You still have different personalities and strengths and weaknesses. You may even have two different political flavors. But in Christ you have the same Christian worldview. This unity already exists. Your job is to make every effort to keep this unity.

And you know what? When you do, you will also keep, preserve and maintain your unity as husband and wife. You do when you approach your marriage as redeemed children of God. You see, it doesn’t make mathematical sense. One plus one equals two. But when a man and woman come together in Christ as husband and wife, one plus one no longer equals two. It equals one. So let’s see how you stay as one both as Christians and as husband and wife.

“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” “Be completely humble.” Humble. Are you humble? It is the opposite of proud. You consider anyone else in the room as more important than yourself even if they are not. Adam and Katie, you both have your needs, but you are more concerned in meeting the needs of the other. You will respect each other’s opinions. This humility may cause a couple awkward moments. You will have trouble deciding what to do. “What do you want to do?” “Whatever you want to do.” “But what do you want to do?” Humility also assumes you have weaknesses. Mac Davis, the country singer, once sang, “Lord, it’s hard to be humble when you are perfect in every way.” It is hard to be humble when you consider yourself better. It will be easy when you realize you are not perfect. That is why humility involves forgiveness. We are not perfect, but the Lord forgives us in Christ. You are not so big that you can’t forgive the other.

“Gentle.” What happens when you meet a grumpy person? You want to be grumpy too. When you meet a harsh person, you want to be harsh right back. When you meet a mean person, you want to respond with equal meanness. Not when you are gentle. You treat the mean person, the grump, the harsh person with gentleness. It’s the difference between picking up a sack of seed and a baby. And it’s the difference on how you drop that sack on the ground and you gently place that baby in a crib. I know, we still have sinful natures and arguments may pop up. But being gentle, you will want to prevent any argument by being kind and gentle with each other.

“Be patient, bearing with each other in love.” The Greek word for “patience” literally means to be long angered, or it takes a very long time to become angry. Of course, you want to encourage each other to become more efficient and to improve and do better. But patience means you don’t get mad if they don’t, and it certainly means you don’t get frustrated because they didn’t do it your way. I remember teaching my boys how to mow. I had the perfect mowing routine down after twenty years of mowing. I taught it to them. When they mowed, they did it completely different. I was frustrated until I realized the lawn got mowed and it looked just as nice. Be patient. You will reach the same conclusion at two different times. You have two different ways of achieving the same thing.

Bearing with each other is another way of being patient. It means you endure. It means to lift your head high and stand firm. I think of that Labrador sitting there and kids are tugging on his ears and pulling on his tail. He doesn’t growl or bite or run away. He lets them tug on his ears and pull on his tail. It is like the Olympics. The athletes strained every muscle. Their bodies said stop, but they didn’t. Don’t let anything get between the two of you, even different personalities or habits.

Finally, you do this “in love.” The truth is, no one deserves to be forgiven. You do something wrong and hurtful, and you should be punished for it. If you are harsh, people should be harsh right back. If you push someone away, they should stay away. But love says forgive. Love says be gentle. Love says be patient and endure anything the other may do. Love is a very strong expression of humility. Love loves even the unlovable.

Do you see the Christian mindset and worldview you have already because of your unity in the Spirit? Now bring that into your marriage. Treat each other as redeemed children of God. Christ considered himself nothing and endured the cross for us; God is gentle, patient, and longsuffering with us. He forgives us for the sake of Christ. He loves us unconditionally. Maintain that unity in the Spirit and don’t be surprised that you will also maintain your unity as husband and wife. INJ Amen.