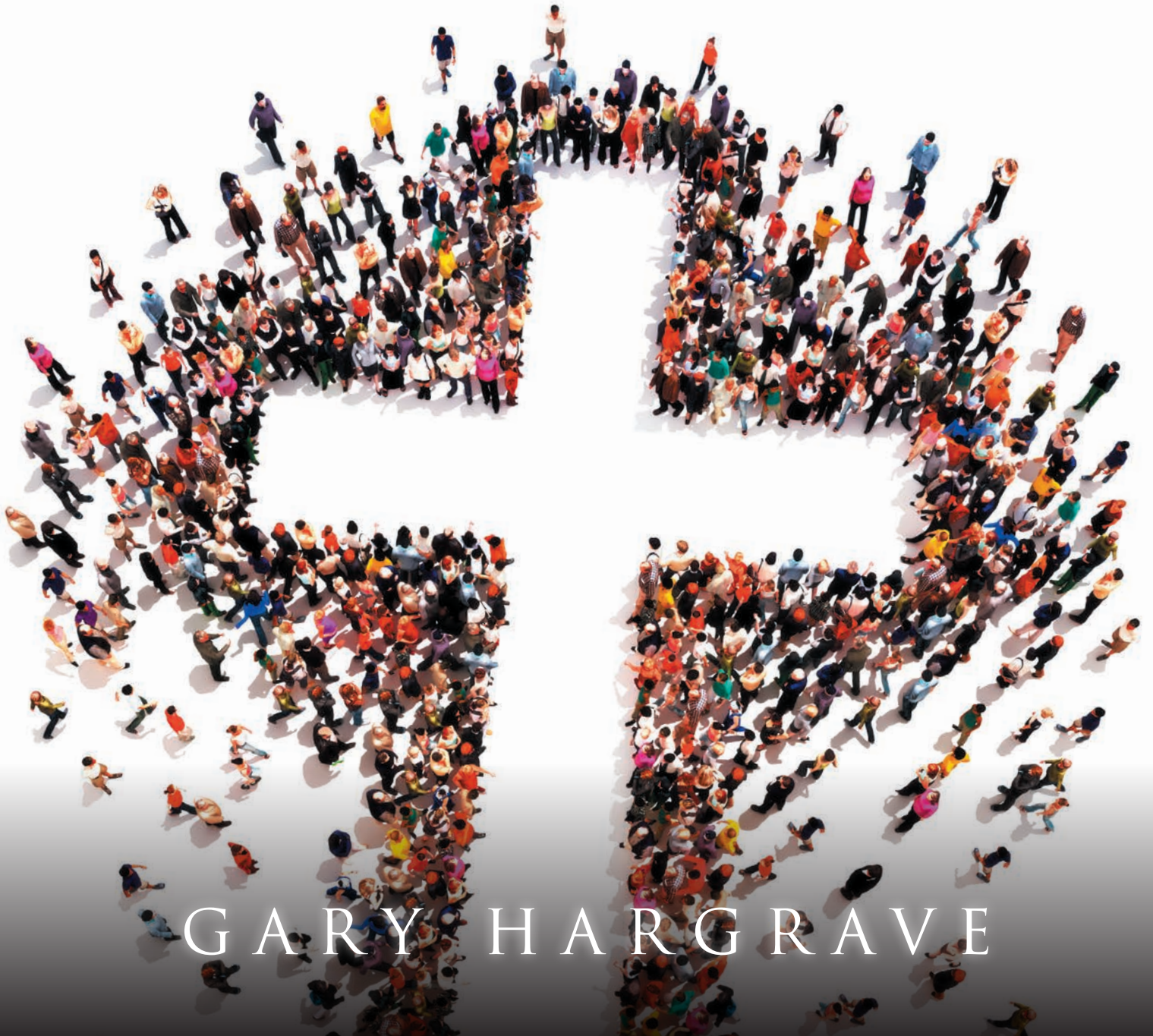


END DIVISION: **EMPOWER THE CHURCH**



GARY HARGRAVE



I CANNOT STRESS ENOUGH THE IMPORTANCE OF **ENDING DIVISION IN THE BODY OF CHRIST.**

As a believer, you may have already experienced the effects of division in your local church, denomination, or greater fellowship. You may have witnessed how destructive it can be, not only to your church as an organization, but to the individual members in the church. As a result, you may have a greater burden for ending division. However, you do not need a negative experience to have this burden. You only need to read the Scriptures to understand the necessity of unity and your responsibility in preserving that unity (Ephesians 4:3).

Yeshua (Jesus) was emphatic that there be no division among His believers, as we read in His prayer to the Father recorded in John chapter 17.

I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent me.

— JOHN 17:20-21

Yeshua prayed to the Father “that they may all be one, so that the world may believe that You sent me.” Christ said that the world will believe in Him when they see His believers relating without division. Some theologians teach that this prayer does not apply to us today, that Yeshua meant it only for His disciples at that time. However, the Lord was clear. He said, “I am not asking only for these listening to me right here, but for those who believe in Me through their words.” That means this prayer is for every believer who hears the Words of the Gospel and then believes. That means it is for you.

I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

— JOHN 17:23



In verse 23, Yeshua (Jesus) reiterates that unity among His believers is a necessity for the world to believe in Him. This is obviously something crucial to the Lord, something He is emphasizing. Should it not be important to us? Clearly, His disciples took it seriously. At the command of the Lord, about one hundred twenty persons who had been with Yeshua gathered in the Upper Room and were “all with one mind continually devoting themselves to prayer” (Acts 1:13-15). Then we read in Acts 2:1 that when the day of Pentecost had come, or “was being fulfilled,” they were all together in one place.

PENTECOST: THE GREATEST EXAMPLE OF UNITY

What followed was the greatest manifestation of unity in history. Jews of the Diaspora, people who had a common heritage but were separated by different cultures and languages, heard the Gospel spoken in their own language (Acts 2:7-11). Then three thousand people in one day believed that Yeshua was *ha Mashiach* (“the Anointed One”), the Messiah sent by the Father. People with diverse backgrounds, with cultural and political divisions, were now together in one place, just as the disciples had been in the upper room, and they were “continuing with one mind in the temple,” having “all things in common.” In this atmosphere, the Lord kept adding to their number (Acts 2:41-47).

Afterward, the greatest wall of division was torn down (Ephesians 2:14). Gentiles, with whom Peter himself did not even associate until later, were gathered into the Church or *ekklesia* (assembly), into the fellowship of believers who were unified as the Lord intended (Acts 10:28, 44-48). Of this Church, Paul wrote, “There is one Body and one Spirit, one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father who is over all, in all, and through all.” And we must be diligent to preserve this unity in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3-6).

It is clear from reading the Book of Acts that the power resident within the early Church has been lost. We must understand how division was at the core of eroding that power, and then we must commit to ending division to see that power restored. From the very beginning, division made inroads into the newly formed Church. According to Acts 6:1, the Hellenistic Jews complained against the native Hebrews that their widows were being overlooked in the serving of food. The apostles acted quickly to resolve the problem (Acts 6:2-3). Nevertheless, cultural and racial differences began to be emphasized.

From the moment of Christ's ascension until now, satan has been set to destroy the Body of Christ through racism and cultural differences. For centuries, this plan has eventually thwarted, or diminished, every move of God. We must commit ourselves to ending this destructive pattern. We must refuse to have any barriers or boundaries. We cannot become exclusive entities hiding behind our walls of doctrine, safe and secure. If the Body of Christ is separated by walls, disagreements, hatreds, doctrines, and schisms, there will be no power and there will be no growth. But if there is the proper working of each individual part, it will cause the growth of the Body for the building up of itself in love (Ephesians 4:16).



...from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

EPHESIANS 4:16



DIVERSITY NOT DIVISION

We have become conditioned by the pattern of division that has existed in Christianity. Over time, schisms and divisions have become acceptable to us. In our belief system, the Body of Christ is just divided. We look at all its diversity and distinctions and assume it to be division. Schisms and divisions are not acceptable! They are destructive to our growth and to our ability to be what Christ wants us to be in the earth.

We should not believe that the natural state of the Body of Christ is to be divided! That is the exact opposite of what God created the Body of Christ to be.

Diversity does not mean division. Individual gifts and burdens do not mean division. We cannot diminish ourselves or separate ourselves from one another because we have unique functions within the Body. We still experience that for which Paul admonished the Corinthians. Members will feel they are not part of the Body because they are not like another member. Or they will say to another member, "I have no need of you" (1 Corinthians 12:15-21). We must have the maturity that allows the Body of Christ to function with the proper working of each individual part.

Ask yourself if you will function with the other members where God has placed you in the Body of Christ. Do you accept them, and will you function with them? What would happen if your kidney said, "I'm not going to function anymore. You can circulate all the blood through me you want, but I'm not going to clean it"? Your body would become a polluted mess in a very short time. What happens when someone's liver or heart stops functioning? In the natural, that means certain disease or death. All the members functioning together correctly is crucial to the life of the physical body.

GROWING UP IN CHRIST

Just as God has composed our physical bodies using distinct and uniquely different parts, so He has composed the Body of Christ using us, each one unique and distinctly different, each one necessary. In a physical body, these diversities are necessary for the health and life of the body. Yet Christians have turned diversity into division, harming the health and life of the Body of Christ.

The other members need you, and you need the other members. We learn from 1 Corinthians 12:22-23, “that the members of the Body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor.” The word “deem” applies to how we perceive someone, not necessarily the truth of that person’s value. We put walls up to other believers because we “deem” there is a problem with them. Instead, we should bestow more abundant honor on them.

As you read this, you may find yourself saying, “I see the problem. I have the burden for ending division. But what can I possibly do as an individual to make a difference in this vast world of Christianity?” You can start right where you are in your local church. Simply be who God created you to be, ministering to others knowing who you are and who others are in Christ.





One of the greatest things you can do is follow Paul's exhortation: "But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ" (Ephesians 4:15). Speaking the truth in love is how we mature, how we grow up in Christ. Our immaturity is directly related to the fact that we do not speak the truth in love with one another.

It is a scriptural principle. When you come to worship the Lord, and you remember that your brother has something against you, what do you do? You leave your offering and go talk to your brother (Matthew 5:23-24). What would happen if we truly put this principle into practice with each other? Speaking the truth in love to one another allows our wounds to be healed.

BESTOWING ABUNDANT HONOR

As we follow these principles in our local church, it is also important to apply them to other groups and churches. We read above from 1 Corinthians 12:22-23 about bestowing more abundant honor on one another. That process cannot stop in your local church. It also applies to how you relate to other churches and denominations. Begin to see them as parts that you need. In another passage from 1 Corinthians 12, we find, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are varieties of ministries, and the same Lord. And there are varieties of effects, but the same God who works all things in all persons. But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

This vision of the "common good" has been lost to the Church. As we have been separated either by community or anointing or direction of the Holy Spirit, our various gifts have been misinterpreted as divisions among us. When you realize that there is a common

good, then you realize that without other churches and ministries, your church is lacking something. In yourself, or even in your local fellowship, you are not doing many things that the Holy Spirit wants done; you are incomplete. Whatever you have is only a piece of Christ's personality, of His burden. You must find a way to minister to this common good. God wants to restore His Church so that every area of ministry has His presence and power. It is up to us to look for the ways to bring the Body together so that there is no longer division.

BREAKING THROUGH THE BARRIERS OF OUR MINDS

When the Church began, cultural, racial, and religious walls were torn down. Now, great divisions which are like fortified walls or uncrossable chasms exist in Christianity. However, these barriers are not in Christ; they are only in our thinking. One of the greatest barriers we have is the division between Protestants and Catholics. There is tremendous resistance among Christians to even entertain the idea of unity between Catholics and Protestants. It is simply accepted as impossible. Yet, a recent moving of the Holy Spirit saw many Roman Catholic and Protestant ministers making deep love connections with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

The greatest and most destructive division is that which occurred between Gentile Christians and Jews. Because of the anti-Semitism that has been prevalent in Christianity, this division is widely accepted as being from God Himself. Nothing could be further





from the truth. As we read at the beginning of this article, it was God who tore down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles. God did not rebuild the wall He permanently tore down. We are the ones who built a new wall, and we are responsible for tearing down that wall.

RESTORING POWER TO THE CHURCH BY ENDING DIVISION

The Holy Spirit has been moving in recent years, causing many—Jews and Christians, Protestants and Catholics—to flow together in love with one another. And cracks are forming in the walls of division that were thought to be impenetrable. We must be persistent in our faith and intercession to see this process continue until these walls are permanently removed.

Today, racial, cultural, and ideological hatreds are tearing this country and the world apart. Yet, the Church is powerless to make a difference because the Church itself is overcome by these same divisions. Now is the time to apply John 17:20-21 to ourselves and take the responsibility to end the divisions within Christianity so that the world may believe that Yeshua is *ha Mashiach*, the Messiah sent by the Father. We must see restored the power that came after one hundred twenty believers obeyed the commandment of the Lord and were all with one mind, together in one place.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

For a deeper study of this important subject, read the book *Tearing Down the Walls*. This book is available from Hargrave Ministries with a gift of any amount.

**All Scripture references are taken from the New American Standard Bible 1995 (NASB95).*

ABOUT GARY HARGRAVE



GARY HARGRAVE has a passion for leading people into spiritual maturity. Gary effectively ministers the life-changing truth of God's Word through Bible teaching and prophetic revelation that emphasizes the Lordship of Christ.

Gary embraces the teachings and insights of the Hebrew Scriptures as the essential foundation of God's Kingdom and the roots of Christian faith.

By cultivating spiritual maturity in Christians, Gary is deeply committed to teaching and inspiring unity in the Body of Christ and between Christians and the Jewish people.

Throughout decades of ministry, Gary has worked closely with leaders in the Jewish, Catholic and Protestant communities to build relationships based on commonality and understanding. He frequently leads study tours to Israel and the lands of the Bible.

Gary is the host of a weekly podcast entitled *Growing In God*, and is the founder of Shiloh University, an accredited online Bible college and seminary.

Gary and his family reside in Hawaii.

For other insightful resources by Gary Hargrave, including podcasts, books, articles, videos, and other educational materials, please visit: www.HargraveMinistries.org

ABOUT HARGRAVE MINISTRIES

The calling of the Lord upon this ministry is to lead people into spiritual maturity by revealing biblical truth. **Our passion is to see the Kingdom of God manifest on earth** as the Body of Christ grows in unity, power and love.

Everything we do flows from the revelation of the Jewish roots of our Christian faith. It is our desire and privilege to bless the land and people of Israel. Our Israel outreach includes:

- **Feed the poor** and break the cycle of poverty in Israel
- **Support the orphans and widows** of fallen Israeli soldiers
- Provide physical and emotional care to **child victims of terrorism**
- **Build bridges** between Christians and Jews with biblical study and research
- Support archaeology and **preservation of the biblical City of David**
- Provide 24/7 **care for Holocaust survivors**
- **Help persecuted Jews** around the world return to Israel and start new lives
- Plant trees to **reforest Israel** and **help create "The Gospel Trail" between Nazareth and Capernaum**

Hargrave Ministries is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization supported through the generous contributions of ministry friends and partners. To learn more about the work of Hargrave Ministries or to partner in its outreach to Israel, please visit: www.HargraveMinistries.org

