

KEEPING WITH UNITY

GBC EQUIPPING HOUR | MAY 3, 2020



Class 4 – Unity Goals & Challenges with *Ligonier Ministries*

PURPOSE: Local church and global church sustainability.

Introduction

In the 1970's and 80's as evangelicalism became more seeker-sensitive, R.C. Sproul led a movement in the opposite direction. Rather than becoming increasingly man-centered he made his aim to be God-centered. Rather than relying on worldly techniques he relied upon the Holy Writ. Dr. Sproul's path followed that of the early Reformers. *Ligonier*, named after its birthplace in Pennsylvania, has since informed millions with a robust reformed theology not ordinarily accessible to them.

I. Unity Goals for Strengthening Churches

For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, **that our fathers were all under the cloud**, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and **all ate the same spiritual food**, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, **with most of them** God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

-1 Corinthians 10:1-5

A. The Character of God

1. Holiness in terms of human impact: we are both drawn to it and terrified of it (cf. *The Holiness of God*, p. 52; see also Exod. 3:1-5 & Isa. 6:1-5).
2. Transcendent: "Something never comes from nothing." (cf. *The Holiness of God*, p. 8). "There are no maverick molecules." (cf. *Chosen By God*, p. 16).

B. Calling Sin for What It Is: “Cosmic Treason”

1. Creator God, the owner of Universe.
2. Fallen man, a rebel in disguise...*exposed* (cf. *The Holiness of God*, p. 140).

C. Helping Churches to See How “Old is Gold”

1. Church history shows how the reformed faith has weathered many storms (cf. *Ligonier* lectures by W. Robert Godfrey –“Survey of Church History”).
2. Church history shows how it was Sola Scriptura, not revivalism, which truly made things take off.
3. Old Testament theology, far from being a hindrance, increases our reverence for God; it helps and aids the church for the long haul.
 - a. Sojourners: this world is not my home.
 - b. Covenants: being married to the Savior.

D. The Centrality of Christ

1. The sufficiency of Christ.
2. Jesus as Lord of His Church.

II. **Unity Challenges Further Up Ahead**

And all the people shouted with a great shout when **they praised the LORD**, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. ¹² But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, **old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice** when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, ¹³ so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the **joyful shout** from the sound

of the **people's weeping**, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

-Ezra 3:11-13

A. Responding to Those “State of Theology” Surveys

1. *A question to revisit:* how many of those surveyed were truly saved believers? The same question goes to local churches (as it concerns unity): when does prolonged doctrinal deviations and no thought to repentance = unregenerate?
2. Where to start when the state of the church seems to be biblically illiterate?

B. Coming Back to the Ancient Creeds

1. Coming back to adhere to them:
 - a. Trinity.
 - b. Five Solas.
 - c. Predestination.
2. Coming back to evaluate them (& ourselves):
 - a. Infant baptism: Guy Richards vs. John Piper who emphasizes the “by faith” clause in Colossians 2:12.
 - b. The covenant body...*indivisible*? Jesus as the “new wineskin” eventually leads to some discussion on dispensationalism.
 - c. Our current writing style: texting makes everything short and succinct. Some historical confessions wonderfully fit that description but others require long intros and footnotes.

- d. What unifies a church: clear affirmations and denials (what the Bible clearly teaches and what it clearly warns against). More modern statements are being drawn up this way.
- e. What produces a creed in the first place: the church having to speak in *one voice* against threats to our unity; we have new ones today which our spiritual forefathers probably would never have imagined. More creeds to come.
- f. Unavoidable for fostering unity: *theological constructs*, as they are improved upon over time.

Conclusion

Ligonier Ministries is now led by a fellowship of reformed theologians and pastors. Each one was in some ways impacted by Dr. Sproul who has since gone to be with the Lord, so in that sense Sproul's legacy is continuing. *Tabletalk Magazine*, *RefNet*, and the annual *Ligonier Regional Conferences* continue to arm and strengthen churches for the uphill race ahead.

Keeping with Unity Course Outline:

- The Ascent of Unity (Psalm 133)
- The Depth of Unity (John 17:20-23)
- The Body of Unity (Ephesians 4:1-16)
- Unity Goals & Challenges with *Ligonier Ministries*
- Unity Goals & Challenges with the *Southern Baptist Convention*
- Unity Goals & Challenges with *9 Marks Ministries & T4G*
- Unity Goals & Challenges with *The Gospel Coalition*