

# Coach House Church BEACONS

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## BOUNCING BACK

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9TH MARCH 2021

1 Peter 3:8 (NLT)

Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tender-hearted, and keep a humble attitude.

These are the words the Peter uses to encourage a young church as he writes a letter to show them what is expected of them as they live their lives in front of others. These words can be found in 1 Peter chapter 3 verse 8 and they form a small part of a letter which is detailed in its instructions to live as good examples, even if the new believers were being harried and pressurised from those around them. This might include society as a whole, but Peter also mentions this as important even in marriage.

It's Andy here with this Coach House Beacon and I trust that this will be helpful to you as you live out a Christian life, which is increasingly under pressure. In church we have been looking at this letter together to see how we should conduct ourselves in these difficult times.

One thing that keeps cropping up, is the encouragement to submit, whether to authorities, masters, or husbands – it is a fairly inclusive instruction for us to live in harmony with each other, in order to show those outside the church, how good God is. It culminates with the plea to 'to be of one mind'.

In the Old Testament, King David wrote a short Psalm all about the merits of harmony. It is Psalm 133 and it goes like this:

Psalm 133:1-3 (NLT)

How wonderful and pleasant it is when brothers live together in harmony! For harmony is as precious as the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head, that ran down his beard and onto the border of his robe.

Harmony is as refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon that falls on the mountains of Zion. And there the LORD has pronounced his blessing, even life everlasting.

It is only a very short Psalm that paints a vivid picture of what existing in harmony looks like. No wonder we are urged to pursue this state throughout the scriptures! I was thinking a few things through at the prayer meeting earlier this week. I had a little conversation with God in my head – like you do! – something had made me ask a question in my mind:

'surely it won't matter if one or two are not in complete unity or harmony with everyone else – would it?'

I wasn't meaning particularly to have a conversation with God. I had just framed a question in my mind, probably triggered by a prayer or circumstance – when I suddenly realised that I was picturing a trampoline with people on it. It was a fairly clear picture of a group of people bouncing in unison on the circular trampoline. As they bounced, they reached higher and higher, all completely in tune with each other, the timing perfect to achieve the optimum momentum. I then saw in my minds eye, what would happen if the one or two, - which I had reasoned earlier wouldn't matter if they were not in unity, - became out of step, out of harmony with the others.

They began to bounce out of sequence, hitting the trampoline as it was on the rebound from the main group. This disturbed the recovery of the trampoline and limited its stretch. The result was fairly catastrophic for the couple, whose knees buckled as they met the trampoline in its opposite trajectory. They stumbled and found it hard to gain any height and soon crumpled into an exhausted heap not able to overcome the momentum of the main group still bouncing together. I then became aware that the main group were also suffering because of the couple out of step. The disturbing of the trampoline's rhythm meant that the optimum momentum could not be achieved and the height gain by the group began to diminish. They had enough collective weight and force to make the trampoline work but they were not as effective in reaching the previous highs. Everyone was suffering. How insightful is God's word to us – being in harmony, unity and accord is something that is good for us.

The important aspect that we need to remember, and it is always advantageous to see the whole context of what is being said, is this:

Being in harmony, isn't actually about being in harmony with each other thoughts, rather, it is the object or focus of our harmony that is the real reason for the blessing. Unity is not about majority rule. It is about being in Harmony with Gods desire and will for our lives, which brings blessing and peace. God is the focus of our harmony – we are urged to be in step with God's will. Our unity is centred on obedience to God.

It is possible for an entirely 'harmonious group', acting as one unit, to be out of step with God's will and therefore be in disharmony. Conversely it is possible for a single person to be the only one in 'harmony' with Gods will and therefore in a place of unity! So often we rely on 'strength of numbers' to dictate whether we are right or wrong, but scripture warns us of this folly.

Remember Joshua and Caleb? They were part of a group of 12 spies, who were sent out to see if the land could be conquered. 10 spies said that it was impossible to conquer because the land was occupied with giants that could not be overcome. Only Joshua and Caleb argued that as GOD had commanded that the land would belong to the Israelites, so this would be the case. They were in step with God's will – they were the ones in harmony – not the majority of 10.

What about Noah, his sons and their wives? They were the only ones in the entire world who were in step with God's will and purposes. They built a boat (and it took over 100 years to do so), when everyone around questioned their mental state! In the end though, only Noah his wife, three sons and their wives, were spared from the catastrophic flood.

Being in unity and harmony isn't just going with the crowd.

This is not what God meant then, or indeed, what he means for us today, rather, it is good for man to be in harmony with God's love and intended plan for mankind. God never designed us to be robots. We each have personalities and characters that make us unique. Being in unity does not mean sacrificing all that we are and becoming clones.

No! God takes us and uses us uniquely, but our understanding of this collectively unites us under the mercy and grace of God. Our unity is basically founded on who God is and the relationship established by Jesus' sacrifice.

Look at what John records in his gospel account. This is Jesus praying to God, His Father:

John 17:20-23 (NLT)

"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.

I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

"I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me".

Being in unity is a sure sign to those around that we belong to God, but it is the unity that Jesus enjoys with His Father. Being in complete step with God.

So where are you on the trampoline? Are you forcing your will on others, either directly or indirectly or are you content to surrender to God's will for your life? Are you listening carefully to God's voice and the direction it brings? Being in peace and at peace with all, as we learn to be content in God's presence.

It's never too late to get back in step and in doing so, reach the heights that God intends for you. God understands us and is patiently waiting for us to approach Him and ask to put back on the right track.

Being out of unity brings pain and discouragement... It literally takes the bounce out of your step.



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