

Healing Our Broken Humanity

Chapter 1: Reimagine Church

“Jesus calls us to reimagine the church as the new humanity in Jesus Christ. This is about learning together and anew about injustice and division in the church and the world. It’s also about learning mutually and afresh what it means to be the new humanity in Jesus Christ.”

What is the “New Humanity in Christ?”

When Paul uses this terminology, he means that Jesus Christ has done away with the old divisions and enmities and united Jews and Gentiles as one new and undivided humanity in him through his death and resurrection. God has created one new people out of two (Jew and Gentile) and “abolished the old divisions based on culture, politics, race, religion, law, gender, social standing, and so on.”

“This doesn’t rid us of our Jewish or Gentile (or American, Korean, Australian, Chinese, Rwandan, Brazilian, Native American, etc.) cultures, identities, and unique contributions. But now our primary identity is in Christ and in that he has made us ‘one new humanity in him.’”

Our Christian identity is rooted in Christ and not in nationalism, ethnicity, partisan politics, economic status, gender, etc. This identity is developed in the act of discipleship as we learn what it means “to be a distinct people with an alternative way of life together.

This unified identity is not the opposite of diversity. The church is intended to be diverse as we learn what it means to understand Christian life as a social revolution that transcends difference while honoring and enjoying it. The church is called to be “less monocultural and more multicultural” in keeping with the commitment to welcome all as we have been welcomed by Jesus.

It is not sufficient to simply talk about unity in diversity. Rather, we need to act with intentionality in order to promote this in our communities. This will require a deeply engrained vision of unity and diversity rooted in, and shaped by, the gospel of Jesus Christ, scripture, and theology. Diversity without genuine biblical and theological substance is often shallow and difficult to maintain.

The Qualities and Conviction of New-Humanity Churches

New-Humanity churches “know that they are one body, with one Messiah, one Spirit, one life, one table, one politic, one righteousness, one peace, one mission, one faith, one hope, and one love.”

One Body: “Jesus Christ calls his church to be one unified and diverse body...As one body, our unity in diversity is under Christ and witnesses to him. It witnesses to his redemption and to his restorative future for all creation and humanity.”

One Messiah: “Our unity comes from our Messiah, Jesus Christ. We are united with him in his death and resurrection as his body. He has created this new humanity and is the source and sustainer of our new life in him.”

One Spirit: The Messiah unifies a diverse church in the power of his Spirit. The Spirit establishes, fills, empowers, and renews the church as his ongoing and dynamic creation.”

One Life: “The Messiah unifies and renews his church through his divine life...The Messiah doesn’t just offer the church new life—he infuses the church with his very life-giving presence and power. People from every nation, tribe, and tongue join to receive this life, made one in the Messiah.”

One Table: “The new people that Jesus had in mind are a hospitable, welcoming, open, and generous people. We have responded to Jesus’ welcome at the table, as we are recipients of Jesus’ divine hospitality. We invite people of all nations, languages, cultures, and colors to our tables.”

One Politic: “God calls God’s church to be a distinct people, with a distinct ethic, a distinct story, a distinct peace, a distinct community, a distinct diversity, and a distinct witness...As the new humanity in Jesus Christ, our life together is political...Together, as God’s new creation, we display a new and redeemed politic before a watching world.”

One Righteousness: “This new people is made holy and righteous by God’s grace. God purifies God’s people and cleanses them from sin. God sanctifies them so that together they are God’s holy and righteous bride. This is all God’s work and all according to his grace, a righteousness by faith in Christ alone...The Messiah is righteous and makes his people holy, pure, and just through faith in him.”

One Peace: “God calls the church to be a people of peacemaking and reconciliation. The Messiah is our peace, and he has abolished the conflicts and enmities that divide people. Peace and reconciliation are at the heart of the new humanity in Christ. Jesus calls his church to express peace and unity, to be a peaceable community.”

One Mission: “Being missional means alerting everyone everywhere to the universal reign of God through Jesus Christ. We do this through word, sign, and deed. The new humanity in Christ integrates proclamation, evangelism, church planting, and social transformation in a seamless whole.”

One Faith: “Our faith is in Jesus the Messiah and his gospel of salvation. This new people—formed as Christ joins Jew and Gentile together as one in him—embraces confident faith in him and his gospel.”

One Hope: “Since our hope is in the age to come, we should seek to be that church now.” The church is called to be a sign, instrument, and foretaste of the hope we have for the world through Jesus Christ as a provisional demonstration of God’s will for all people.

One Love: “What does this love look like? Pray for those who persecute you. Forgive those who have wronged you. Seek the welfare of your city and neighborhood, including those who oppose you...Care for creation. Give away your time, goods, money, and gifts, Stop judging others. Imitate Christ’s humility.”

Practices, Challenges, and Activities for Small Groups

Serve with other groups in your community: “Find practical and tangible ways to collaborate with Christians from a variety of backgrounds. Do this in your local community...Now expand this out to collaboration with non-Christian groups that are trying to make a difference in your community.”

Visit with Christians from a different race and ethnicity from your own: “Once every eight weeks, visit a worship service, Bible study, discipleship-training event, prayer meeting, or mission program conducted by Christians from a different ethnicity from your own. Mix it up over a two- or three-year period.”

Start “listen and learn” nights: “Invite someone from different faith, ethnicity, theological perspective, and so on to come and share. Invite them to share their story and their views in an attentive, nonthreatening environment.”

Discussion Questions

Why (and how) do we often root our Christian identity in nationalism, ethnicity, partisan politics, sociopolitical-economic status, gender, and other such things? How can we change this?

What's most difficult about expressing or living into the full diversity of the church? What's rewarding?

What needs to change for you and your church to reimagine the church as the new humanity in Jesus Christ?

What steps will you take to apply this practice fully and in the long term? Think about how you can apply this practice in your life, family, small group, church, and neighborhood.