

TEXT: Ephesians 4:4-6

THEME: CHRISTIANS, UNITED WE STAND

1. United Under One God
2. United in Faith

CUE 17—flash—There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. (Ephesians 4:4-6)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

CUE 18—There can be only one champion. After the football season, there is only one Super Bowl champion. After the NCAA basketball tournament, there is only one champion. After the hockey season, there is only one Stanley Cup champion. After the baseball season, there is only one World Series champion. You get the picture. There can be only one champion.

But during the college football season, the polls may not be clear about which team is the best. The sports shows are filled with arguments and debates about who should be the champion. Finally, it all gets settled when the two best teams play for the national championship.

CUE 19—When we talk about God, the same debate occurs for some. Some argue about who the true God is. Others suggest that there are cochampions—more than one God. But there is only one, the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He has proved it by his actions.

The triune God is our only champion. **CUE 20—**God the Father created us. He made us who we are, with all our gifts and abilities. Every day he provides for our every need and protects us from harm and danger. He works everything out for our good, even the bad things. He invites us to take all our problems to him in prayer, and he does hear and answer us.

The triune God is our only champion. **CUE 21—**God the Son redeemed us. Though by nature we are sinners and rightly deserve damnation, long before we were born, God the Father mapped out our salvation. Jesus carried out this plan to perfection. By his perfect life, his suffering and death, and his resurrection, he overcame sin, death, the devil, and damnation. Through him we are forgiven. Our guilt is gone.

The triune God is our only champion. **CUE 22—**God the Holy Spirit sanctified us. We were born “**dead in [our] transgressions and sins**” (Ephesians 2:1), but he made us alive in Christ. He created in each of us a new self that desires only to love and serve our champion. He empowers, encourages, and energizes us in our Christian living through his Word and the Lord’s Supper.

CUE 23—There can be only one champion. He has proven his superiority by his actions for us. Our champion is the triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As Christians, we stand proudly and joyously united under him.

CUE 24—Yet today, how few share our faith and joy in the triune God! How few are UNITED IN FAITH with us! I was struck by how casual and flippant she was about it. Debbie was a prospective member of our church. Throughout our conversation, she listened, even welcomed what I had to say. She understood the Bible’s teaching about sin and grace. She understood who Jesus was, what he did, and why he did it. But in the end, she nonchalantly said, “I just don’t believe it. It’s great that you do. But I don’t believe it.” I couldn’t believe it! How could she understand it but not believe it?

I asked her a final question: “Aren’t you worried about what will happen after you die?” She wasn’t. “Whatever you believe will happen is exactly what will happen,” she answered. “If you believe you will go to heaven, you will. If you believe nothing will happen, nothing will happen.”

Debbie’s story is tragic. What is worse is that she is not alone. Many people think it does not matter what you believe. To them, the truth is relative. “Be true to yourself and your beliefs. That’s all that matters,” they claim. That just isn’t true.

There is only one faith. Yes, there are many different beliefs, but there is only one saving faith—faith in Jesus. **CUE 25**—Jesus is “**the way and the truth and the life**” (John 14:6). We weren’t born believing this. We were born spiritually ignorant of the disaster our sins created. We were born blind to the damning consequences of sin and our desperate need for a Savior.

But by God’s grace, the Holy Spirit called us to faith. He gave us faith in Jesus. This faith separates us from everyone else. Our saving faith in Jesus unites us with all believers on earth. No matter what our skin color, country of origin, or nationality, all Christians are one.

CUE 26—This truth was brought home to me when I had the opportunity to preach and teach in a cross-cultural setting in India. As I shared the good news that Jesus has cleansed us from our sins and given us eternal life, I saw with my own eyes that the gospel knows no social barriers. It is for all people regardless of their color, culture, customs, or country.

CUE 27—Sadly, there are many Debbies in the world. Thankfully, we are not among them. Rejoicing in God’s universal grace and in our faith, we make and take every opportunity to share our faith with others. Christians, what a privilege we have together! United we stand under one God, under one faith! Amen.

Prayer of the Church

O triune God, you are our true champion. As the devil seeks to lead us to follow him, do all it takes so that you are forever the champion of our hearts and lives.

Lord Jesus, thank you for the unity that we share with all believers. Forgive us when we fail to share our faith. Help us see and seize the opportunities we have to witness to others.

In your wisdom, O Father, you have blessed us with the institution of marriage. You bring a man and a woman together at your altar to bless their union. We ask you to bless the union of Alan Schulz and Tammy Jarras, who will be married before this altar this coming Wednesday. We also thank and praise you, Father, for the 67 years of marriage you have given to Art and Edna Lijewski. Let each married person treasure their spouse as a gift from you. Let them treat each other as special every day you give them together. When troubled times come, let them seek your wisdom and forgiveness so they can remain as one.

Lord Jesus, we now look forward to kneeling before your altar to receive your body and blood, together with the bread and wine, as your personal promise that our sins have been forgiven, that each of us is your child, and that we are heirs of eternal life. May your name be praised! Continue to lift us up that we might glorify your name in all the earth.

Hear us as we pray the prayer you taught us:

THE LORD'S PRAYER