



There are many differences among people—including ethnic, socio-economic, and biological differences. But that does not matter when it comes to our standing in Christ. Paul says that all Believers are one in Christ. But the culture views things differently. The culture either denies our differences altogether or exploits our differences to divide us through class warfare and race-baiting. But the church should be the most diverse and unified group of any people on the planet. In this study, we will see that we have a responsibility to be one in Christ.

1. **Galatians 3:26–29** – *“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*
2. Differences in the church
 - a. **Galatians 3:28** – *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”*
 - i. Paul argued against excluding people based on differences—not against the existence of differences altogether.
 - ii. Paul mentioned three differences:
 1. Ethnic differences (Jews and Gentiles)
 2. Socio-economic differences (slave and free)
 3. Biological differences (male and female)
3. Jews and Gentiles
 - a. The Jews are God’s chosen people.
 - i. The Jews are the ethnic group through whom God chose to reveal the Messiah, Jesus.
 - b. Jews and Gentiles can both receive salvation.
 - i. The Gospel came first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles.
 1. **Acts 26:22–23** – *“Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come—that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.”*
 - ii. Sometimes Jews struggled to comprehend the salvation of Gentiles, whom they thought were created as fuel for the fires of hell.

1. Even Peter, who uttered the great confession—that Jesus is the Son of God—struggled to accept the salvation of Gentiles.
2. Paul called Peter out for withdrawing from the Gentiles when the Jews came to visit him.
- c. Jews and Gentiles are both held accountable.
 - i. Jews received the Ten Commandments, so they are accountable to God based on the Law.
 - ii. Gentiles did not receive the Law but are accountable to God based on their conscience.
 - iii. **DISCUSS:** How are knowledge and accountability linked? Are you responding to the knowledge God has given you?

4. Slave and free

- a. Slavery in the Roman Empire
 - i. Roughly 10 to 20 percent of people in the Roman Empire were slaves.
 1. There were 5 to 10 million slaves in the empire.
 - ii. People were enslaved for three reasons:
 1. They were prisoners of war.
 - a. Ceasar enslaved over a million Gauls at the end of the Gallic Wars.
 2. They were convicted criminals serving their sentence as slaves.
 3. They were debt slaves until they paid what they owed.
- b. The term **doulos**
 - i. The Greek word **doulos** is translated as “slave,” “servant,” or “bondservant” in the Bible.
 - ii. The term **doulos** describes those subject to an earthly master, and Paul used the same word to describe Christians.
 1. In **Galatians 1:10**, Paul calls himself the bondservant of Christ.
 - a. **Galatians 1:10** – *“Do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.”*
 2. Paul calls other Believers bondservants of Christ.
 - a. Christ paid our debt.
- c. Slavery in the Bible
 - i. God condemns slavery.
 1. In **1 Timothy 1:10**, Paul lists “slave traders” among those who will not inherit the kingdom of God.
 - a. Sometimes “slave traders” is translated as “kidnappers” as that is how people were often enslaved.
 - ii. God addresses slaves but does not condone slavery.

1. Paul did not condone slavery, but he was aware of the reality and gave advice to those in that situation.
 - a. **Ephesians 6:5–8** – *“Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free.”*
 - b. **DISCUSS:** Were there times God called you to make the best of a bad situation?
2. Paul urged slaves to live well, knowing their ultimate Master is Christ and that they owed God their first allegiance.
 - a. **DISCUSS:** Who holds your first allegiance? How has this principal allegiance helped you prioritize what is important?

5. Male and female

a. Different roles

- i. In **Ephesians 5**, Paul laid out men and women’s different roles in the home.
 1. God exhorts men to love their wives.
 2. God exhorts women to respect their husbands.
- ii. In **1 Timothy 2** and **Titus 2**, Paul laid out men and women’s different roles in the church.
 1. God calls men to be responsible for laying down sound doctrine.
 2. God calls women to be responsible for mentoring other women in the faith.

b. Equal worth

- i. The natural differences between men and women have no bearing on our value and standing in Christ.
- ii. Paul highlighted the equal worth of men and women because of the sexism present in first century Jewish and Roman culture.
 1. Jews had a morning prayer called the **Birkot HaShachar**.
 2. In this traditional prayer, Jewish men would thank God for not making them Gentiles, slaves, or women.
 - a. The women prayed the same, but they changed the last line to thank God for making them according to His will.
 3. Jews still say this prayer, though they have changed it to be less offensive.

- a. Now, Jewish men thank God for making them Jewish, free, and male.
- 4. Paul was countering the cultural narrative.
 - a. Jews thought they were better than Gentiles.
 - b. Free people thought they were better than slaves.
 - c. Men thought they were better than women.
 - d. Paul reminded the Galatians of their equality under Christ.
- 5. We must also go against the cultural narrative when it falls short of God's standard.
 - a. Our culture either denies the differences between groups to a dangerous degree, or it uses these differences to stir division and animosity.
 - b. **DISCUSS**: Knowing man's tendency to stray from God's truth, how should we determine what is right and wrong?
- 6. Accepting diversity in the church
 - a. Paul rebuked the Galatians for using their differences to act superior to one another.
 - b. Church should be the most diverse, unified, accepting, and loving place on earth.
 - i. Accepting and loving others means we welcome all sinners—not that we welcome all sin.
 - 1. **DISCUSS**: How is the Biblical understanding of love different than that of the world? How is accepting people different from accepting their sinful choices?
 - ii. God calls us to speak the truth in love.
 - 1. People withhold the truth for two reasons:
 - a. They do not know the truth.
 - b. They do not love people enough to bring up uncomfortable truths.
 - 2. **DISCUSS**: How can you speak truth in love instead of becoming angry or watering down God's Word to avoid offense?
 - c. Diversity continues in heaven.
 - i. **Revelation 5:9** – *“And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.’”*
 - ii. **DISCUSS**: How well do you love and accept people who are different from you?
 - d. As Christians, we have a responsibility to:

- i. Esteem each other.
 - 1. **Philippians 2:3** – *“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.”*
- ii. Love each other.
 - 1. **John 13:35** – *“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”*
- iii. Receive each other.
 - 1. **Romans 15:7** – *“Therefore receive one another, just as Christ also received us, to the glory of God.”*
- iv. Forgive each other.
 - 1. **Ephesians 4:32** – *“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”*
 - 2. Where you have people, you will offend and be offended. When that happens, we must choose to forgive.
- v. **DISCUSS**: How can you do your part to maintain and improve unity in the church?

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James (NKJV)