

A Shared Origin: The Story of Creation

Genesis 1 – 2

Unity, Diversity and Our Identity in Christ

Part 1 of 14



Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

- Brett Kavanaugh
- Colin Kaepernick
- Guns
- Immigration
- An October 21, 2018 [nbcnews.com](https://www.nbcnews.com) headline said it simply:
- “Americans are divided over everything except division.”

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- The article with that headline reported,
- “In the latest survey, 8 of 10 people polled say they believe the country is ‘mainly’ or ‘totally’ divided.”¹

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

The American Church:

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The American Church:

- At the start of the 21st Century, some researchers tallied the numbers on congregations.
- They defined a racially mixed congregation as one in which no one racial group made up **more than 80%** of the total.
- By that modest standard **only 5.5%** of Christian congregations were racially mixed.²

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The American Church:

- Racial division is not the only way that Christian congregations remain separate or divided.
- They can also be broken down by socioeconomic, educational and other factors.
- Regardless, this is not the model the Bible presents to us.

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The American Church:

- Uniformity can sometimes be the result of location.
- There is no easy way for an isolated small-town congregation to bring a diverse population to church.
- Sometimes there is a language barrier, though this can be overcome with translation and targeted effort.

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The American Church:

- In the average American city, however, there is no reason for congregations to remain uni-this, that or the other.
- At least there is no biblical reason.
- From the beginning, the biblical model of the church was to be multi-racial, multi-class, multi-cultural, multi-whatever.

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

About This Series:

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- We will not solve the problems that divide Americans.
- By examining the Bible's big story from beginning to end, we can, however, give ourselves a basis for unity as a church.
- This unity is found in **our shared identity in Christ**.

Unity, Diversity, and Our Identity in Christ

About This Series:

- **Our identity in Christ** provides the inner motivation that compels us to unite rather than divide.
- In so doing, we can validate our various identities.
- Rather than negate them, our identity in Christ transcends them, giving us a larger focal point that all of us share.

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3. To accept that **our identity in Christ** is something shared, and is a basis for unity with diverse others in the church.
4. To appreciate **biblical diversity as a spiritual strength** that expresses itself in the people and ministries of our church.

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First things first:

- The Bible has a big storyline with a beginning, a middle and an ending.
- The story is complex but it still moves in a forward direction beginning with **Creation**.
- That is where we are beginning today.

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- **Genesis 1:1** is one of the most important verses in the Bible.
- It tells us that **the universe had a beginning** and that God got the whole things started.
- There is nothing – no person, place or thing – which does not ultimately owe his, her or its existence to God.

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Genesis 1 – 2

- **Genesis 1:31** is another important verse.
- When God completed the creative process he saw that everything he had made was **very good**.
- **Evil** does not originate with God – but we will say more about that next week.

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Genesis 1 – 2

- **Genesis 1:26** informs us that the human race is unique in all of creation.
- We are created **in the image and likeness of God**.
- What does this mean?

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 4. We are **relational beings**, hinted at by the “**Let us ...**”

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- **Genesis 1:27** declares that God created us **male and female**.
- We are **gendered beings** placed in curiously gendered world.
- Again, there is probably more to this than we can grasp.
- Nonetheless, the image of God in humanity would not be complete without this male and female distinction.

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- **Genesis 2:8-9** The **tree of life** and the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil** were there at the beginning.
- **Genesis 2:15-17** Only the **tree of the knowledge of good and evil** was off limits to Adam.
- This will be important next week.

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- **Genesis 2:18** This the only place in the creation story where we see God say that something is **not good**.
- **Genesis 2:19-23** Creation was **incomplete** until both the man and the woman were created.
- Again, there is probably more here than we can grasp.
- Still, as a result, the story moves from “**not good**” in **2:18** to the “**very good**” we saw back in **1:31**.

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- **Genesis 2:24-25** The **one-flesh marriage relationship** is integral to the creation story.
- It is designed to be a lifelong covenant between the husband and wife.

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- **Genesis 1:28** God's initial blessing came in **two parts**.
 1. He told the man and the woman to multiply, to increase from one couple until they ultimately fill the earth.
 - According to the NIH's National Human Genome Research Institute, "All human beings are 99.9 percent identical in their genetic makeup."³
 2. He gave humanity dominion as his representatives. They were not to exploit the creation but rule in God's place.

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- The image of God is equally present in each one of us despite our various differences.
- We are all related. If we go back far enough, we all share at least two common ancestors.
- Our identity in Christ transcends all our various differences.

A Shared Origin Conclusions

- As a church, let's pray for a supernatural ability to:
 1. Look at others as created in the image of God.
 2. Look at others as literally related to us, because they are.
 3. Look at other Christians as those who share the most important component of our identity – Christ.
 4. Look at Jesus as one who desires to unite us with other Christians – even with all our differences.

A Shared Origin Conclusions

- **John 17:11** (ESV)

And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

Next Week

A Shared Tragedy: Sin and Its Effects

Genesis 3 – 11

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Reference List

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