

## July Week #4 Devotionals & Consideration



Contentions are certainly a huge roadblock to becoming of one heart and mind. Synonyms for contention are strife, controversy, disputes, quarrels, belligerence, disagreement with anger. Someone who is contentious is always ready to argue or provoke controversy.

**D&C 136:3b Contentions, bickerings, and strife are unseemly, hinder the work of the church, and should not find place among the Saints.**

**Mosiah 1:73 But O my people, beware lest there shall arise contentions among you, and ye list to obey the evil spirit.**

**Helaman 5:13 And they were much disturbed, for Satan did stir them up to do iniquity continually; yea, he did go about, spreading rumors and contentions upon all the face of the land, that he might harden the hearts of the people against that which was good, and against that which should come.**

Yes, there are times when we must “*contend for the faith*” (**Jude 1:3**), but even then, we can stand strong for **God’s** truth without descending into “disagreement with anger.”

We know that contentions are of the devil and that we should avoid them, but it seems like they still crop up. What is the root of the problem? Many, if not all, contentions come when we decide in

our hearts that we are right and others are wrong. Contentions come when we insist on having our way. Contentions come when we think we know more than others. **Proverbs 13:10** says, “*Only by pride cometh contention.*” Our world must not revolve around us, but around Christ.

As you recall, in the book of Fourth Nephi, we find the reason why there were no contentions in the land during the period of time after the visitation of Christ: “*And it came to pass that there was no contention in the land because of the love of God which did dwell in the hearts of the people*” (**4 Nephi 1:17**, Emphasis added).

Other scriptures confirm this:

**Mosiah 9:54 And he [Alma] commanded them that there should be no contention one with another, but that they should look forward with one eye, having one faith and one baptism; having their hearts knit together in unity and in love, one towards another (Emphasis added).**

**Mosiah 11:16 Thus did Alma teach his people, that every man should love his neighbor as himself; that there should be no contention among them (Emphasis added).**

It is hard, or even impossible, to have contentions when our hearts are full of the love of God—when we are keeping the first great commandment to love God with all our hearts, souls, minds, and strength, AND we are keeping the second great commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves. (See Mark 12:35 and Matthew 22:36.)

It is possible to keep the first commandment even if we are in isolation from all other humans—but not the second commandment.

The truth is that we cannot establish the cause of Zion by ourselves. We cannot become of one heart and one mind alone.

Many mainstream Protestant churches focus on individual salvation—“Are you saved?”

But we who hold the fullness of the gospel have a calling from God to go beyond individual salvation to work together as one body to establish the cause of Zion.

**We need each other** to fulfill this purpose. This truth is woven all through the scriptures.

Alma spoke of how we must interact with each other to become the people of God.

**Mosiah 9:39-41** And now, as ye are desirous to come into the fold of God, and to be called His people, and are willing to bear one another's burdens, that they may be light; Yea, and are willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort, and to stand as witnesses of God at all times, and in all things, and in all places that ye may be in, even until death, that ye may be redeemed of God, and be numbered with those of the first resurrection, that ye may have eternal life:

Now I say unto you, If this be the desire of your hearts, what have you against being baptized in the name of the Lord, as a witness before Him that ye have entered into a covenant with Him that ye will serve Him and keep His commandments, that He may pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon you?

One of the most beautiful illustrations of our need for each other is **I Corinthians 12:12-16, 20-26**:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.

If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked; That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.

We need each other!

The modern teaching of individualism in the world around us is an enemy to our mission for Christ. The definition of individualism is “the belief that the needs of each person are more important than the needs of the whole” or “the leading of one’s life in one’s own way without regard for others.”

We see individualism promoted all around us: “Do your own thing.” “Find yourself.” “You deserve it.” “Look out for number one.” Even the army has ditched its slogan “Be all you can be,” and replaced it with one intended to appeal to the individualism of today’s young people: “An Army of one.” Individualism equals pride. It is the idea that our own needs, goals, and desires, trump everyone else’s. This sounds like plain old selfishness to me.

Jordan Bajis, an Eastern Orthodox minister, speaks clearly on this topic in chapter eleven of his book *Common Ground*. “Unfortunately, most Christians see the Church only as a place where they can get their private spiritual needs met. The Church, however, is foremost to be an environment of love where brethren care about each other. It is a family in communion, not a forum. Individualism and self-centered independence are not characteristics of God’s Church. They are characteristics of the world outside of Christ. It is love, for God and the people of God, which makes the Church community.”

(Even though the word “community” has taken on a negative connotation for us, it is good for us to remember that Enoch’s city was a community. Zion will be a community.)

Jordan Bajis continues: **“Unity within God’s family is not achieved by getting one member to submit to another member of a ‘higher spiritual rank,’ or by persuading numbers of people to conform to a set of laws intended to order them into oneness.**

“The military may do this, but the Church leads us another way: **the way of love—here is ‘the perfect bond of unity’ (Colossians 3:14).** A ‘unity’ attained through laws, common teaching, intimidation, or anything else but participation in God’s love and life, is counterfeit.

“Loving one another in [the Church family] truly happens **when we start to love people whom we know personally. It is much easier to love one’s brethren in China than to love those with whom one must constantly rub elbows.**

“Christians within the first Communities [referring to the Church of the New Testament] were not strangers who met only at weekly church services. They had ongoing, significant, relationships with people with whom they spoke, worked, lived, ate, laughed, and cried.

“If it is difficult for us to live as a Church, we must work at making it easier. **We must accept sacrifices of time, money or convenience if we are to live as Christians embracing the mandate of the Scriptures**” (Emphasis added).

**First John 3:18** puts it this way: *“My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue only; but in deed and in truth.”*

In his blog article “How can a Church experience community?” Steve Cornell offers this list of how we should endeavor to relate to each other within the body of Christ. Take time to look up these scriptures and mark them in your Bible.

**(Please note that these are KJV references, and they may be slightly different in our Inspired Version):**

Accept one another (**Romans 15:7**).

Carry each other's burdens (**Galatians 6:2**).

Have equal concern for each other (**1 Corinthians 12:25**).

Watch out for one another (**Hebrews 3:12-13**).

Encourage one another (**1 Thessalonians 4:18; 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; 10:25**).

Live in harmony with one another (**1 Peter 3:8**).

Confess your sins to each other (**James 5:16**).

Be devoted to one another (**Romans 12:10**).

Edify one another (**Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11**).

Consider others better than yourselves (**Philippians 2:3**).

Bear with one another (**Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13**).

Forgive each other (**Ephesians 4:32**).

Honor one another (**Romans 12:10**).

Offer hospitality to one another (**1 Peter 4:9**).

Be kind and compassionate to one another (**Ephesians 4:32**).

Live in harmony toward one another (**Romans 12:16; 15:5**).

Love one another (**John 13:34-35; 15:12, 17; Romans 13:8**).

Be members of one body (**Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25**).

Be at peace with each other (**Mark 9:50; Ephesians 4:3**).

Pray for each other (**James 5:16**).

Serve one another (**Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10**).

Spur one another on to love and good deeds (**Hebrews 10:24**).

Submit to one another (**Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:5**).

Teach one another (**Colossians 3:16**).

Steve Cornell says, "Based on this list, believers were/are intended to have deeply meaningful interaction of life with one another. This is not a picture of superficial or casual engagement. It depicts life together in mutual love, honor, unity, service and accountability."

We cannot have deeply meaningful interactions of life with each other if our only interactions are superficial casual engagements between Sunday school and worship services or across the table at potluck. We have to become part of each others' lives.

A good step in this direction is participating in our Spiritual Stewardship Groups and Women's Proximity Groups. Taking time to visit others in their homes also builds relationships. To fit these things into our busy lives will start requiring "the sacrifices of time, money or convenience" of which Jordan Bajis spoke in his book.

In **Philippians 2:1-8** it confirms our task of being stripped of pride (and its offspring of contention) and full of humbleness and love as we come closer to unity:

**If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient**

unto death, even the death of the cross (Emphasis added).

When we truly “let this mind” be in us—when we let the mind of Christ, the mind of love and humble servanthood, be in us—we will take a giant step toward becoming of one heart and mind.

At the Friday morning prayer meeting at CMRB reunion last month, Patriarch-Evangelist Vernon Darling said that we must work on our hearts and our minds to become one. He said that the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father in such a way that they are perfectly one. The scriptures verify that love is the way to oneness. We cannot be one with each other until we are one with Christ. As we each allow more and more of Christ into our lives, there is less and less room for self-centeredness. Love increases, and selfishness and pride decrease.

I am personally challenged as I write these words. What am I willing to do to have more of Christ and less of me?

Jesus prayed in this way for us to be one: “Neither pray I for these alone [His disciples], but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word [that’s us!]; **That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me**” (John 17:20). Take time to read all of John, chapter 17.

A few chapters earlier in the book of John, Jesus said these words: “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words; and My Father will love him, and We will come

unto him, and make Our abode with him” (John 14:23).

And from **D&C 34:1b**: “I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who was crucified for the sins of the world, even as many as will believe on My name, that they may **become the sons of God, even one in Me as I am in the Father, as the Father is one in Me, that We may be one.**”

As we move toward becoming one with Christ and the Father, we will begin to have more and more of the nature of God within us. We will become love, even as God is love.

**1 John 4:8 He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love.**

**1 John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.**

**John 13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.**

We know the type of love that we must have to become one. It is charity—the pure love of Christ. Even though this passage from Corinthians is very familiar, make an effort to truly ponder what it means.

**1 Corinthians 13 Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.**

**And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.**

**And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.**

**Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her**



own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

Here are a couple more scriptures on charity for you to consider:

**1 Corinthians 16:14** Let all your things be done with charity.

**Colossians 3:14** And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

And finally this verse from Moroni which I consider to be one of the most profound passages of scripture that we possess:

**Moroni 7:50-53** And if a man be meek and lowly in heart, and confesses by the power of the Holy Ghost, that Jesus is the Christ, he must needs have charity; for if he have not charity, he is nothing; wherefore he must needs have charity.

And charity suffereth long, and is kind, and envieth not, and is not puffed up, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, and rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things; wherefore, my beloved brethren, if ye have not charity, ye are nothing, for charity never faileth.

Wherefore, cleave unto charity, which is the greatest of all, for all things must fail; but charity is the pure love of Christ, and it endureth for ever; and whoso is found possessed of it at the last day, it shall be well with them.

Wherefore, my beloved brethren, pray unto the Father with all the energy of heart, that ye may be filled with this love which he hath bestowed upon all who are true followers of His Son Jesus Christ, that ye may become the sons of God, that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is, that we may have this hope, that we may be purified even as He is pure. Amen (Emphasis added).

As we look back at the times when God's people became of one heart and one mind, we can see that it was after times when God moved in mighty power—after the ministry of Christ in America; after the day of Pentecost; after the mighty power of God was displayed through Enoch and God came to dwell with his people.

The scriptures tell us that another such time is coming soon: *“Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion” (Isaiah 52:8).* (See also **Mosiah 7:78, Mosiah 8:67, 3 Nephi 7:43, and 3 Nephi 9:69-73.**)

There is plenty for us to do to prepare for that day. We must pray with all the energy of our hearts for charity. We must make daily choices that will subdue our pride, curb contention, and bring us closer to Christ. We must learn to submit to the will of Christ.

Then, when we have done all we can, the Lord will make us one. *“And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh; That they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God” (Ezekiel 11:19-20).*