

Unity
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I like to keep things simple, but sometimes simple can be dangerous.

I recently read an article about **the worst passwords of 2015**. You'll never guess the worst one: **123456**. That, indeed, takes some creativity, as did these other examples in the top 20: **12345**, **12345678** and **123456789**. As a change of pace, there was also **111111**.

The #2 most dangerous password?

Password. Yes, the word *password*. So if you've been using that one, feel free to add this line to your Facebook page: "*Please, hacker, come steal my stuff, because I have no imagination whatsoever.*"

Among the rest of the **top 20 worst passwords were: baseball, football, monkey, dragon and mustang, Porsche, firebird, rosebud...** Also the name Michael for some reason. Not sure why that is.

But I got to thinking about the book we are reading...Connection. (*Vision of church – show vision in three parts etc*) – book out at the Welcome Center.

And also about Jesus' prayer right before he goes to the garden for UNITY for all of us. Did you catch that Jesus is praying for you and for me in that passage?

"I pray for those who will believe in me through their (the disciples) word."

That's us here today.

And when he prays for us what does he pray for? *Money, faith, purity, scriptural knowledge, miracles, visions and dreams?* No! He prays for UNITY. "I in them and thou in me, that they may be one, even as we are one...so that the world may know that that they are my disciples."

Why is unity among the body of Christ so important?

Because when we are unified as a body of believers the Holy Spirit can work among us in powerful ways to bring God's kingdom here, and change lives, and we can love people deeply and well. The Body of Christ the church is meant to be a community that is the most loving place in town. And that love comes from unity of purpose and vision - which is to make Christ known.

Take a minute and turn to the person next to you and share a time when you have been in a situation where working together with others was a necessity, not an option. Maybe you were working on a medical team to save someone's life, maybe you were working to fly a plane with a co-pilot, or you were working together with someone to lift something too heavy to manage on your own.

Discuss that among yourselves for a minute.

You see when there is a bigger purpose involved, the little things that could divide us, disappear in the light of a common purpose or goal that is bigger than any of us and can be accomplished ONLY when all of us are working together.

So that is why the Enemy does not want us to be unified as the Body of Christ. We actually might be a pretty powerful force in the world if we were. Division and dissent is Satans MO. He loves it! And as I was thinking about Passwords and computer hackers I got to thinking about how the Enemy, would so like to HACK into our unity here.

And then I got to thinking... *how would he do it?* What ways would he find to steal away our connection with one another in the body of Christ?

Well the first thing that Rainer saysis a huge disrupter of unity in the church and that is gossip. What is gossip? **Gossip is talking about someone behind their back, saying things about them to someone else that you would not say about them if they were there...present with you.**

How many of you have ever been talked about behind your back? And when you find out about it, don't you just feel terrible. Most of the time too, people who are talking about you don't even have the full story, or simply are just wrong. And you get that feeling in the pit of your stomach and just feel awful.

Why would we want to make anyone feel that way by talking about them behind their back?

See, if our spiritual password is weak and simply **“talk randomly about anything you feel like”** the Enemy is going to have no problem hacking in there and causing our tongues to rattle off things about other people that we should not be saying – whether we do it innocently or with hostile intent.

Our spiritual passwords have to be stronger than that. They have to be something like, **“I will use my tongue only to encourage and speak well of others- never to put them down.”** That’s a good password, albeit a little long. If you intentionally choose this password, it can’t be hacked.

What’s another way the Enemy can hack into unity in the church?

2. Unforgiveness. This is such a big issue in so many churches. We harbor grudges against each other. We might be nice to each other on the surface, but deep down we hold things against people. If we’ve been here for awhile, maybe over the years we’ve pigeon holed folks perhaps... as “annoying” or “out to lunch” or “irresponsible” or whatever, and when we see people through these lenses we simply don’t give them another chance, or give ourselves the ability to see them for their strengths and the goodness that is there.

If your spiritual password is “I will never let go of my resentments” the Evil One...our Hacker is right there to steal our unity in Christ. If however your spiritual password happens to be a bit stronger than that...maybe its **“I need forgiveness just as much as the next person.”** **The Hacker has a harder time of it.**

Better yet, what if ...because we are so caught up in the mission of connecting to God, and people that– we don’t even notice when someone does us wrong. Maybe the best password to keep the Hacker away...the most secure password is, **“huh?”**. In other words *“if you wronged me, and I didn’t notice because I was very busy doing the work of the kingdom...but if you did....you are already forgiven in Jesus name.”* I am not going to stir in my juices about this one. We are all flawed...As is. Right now though, the need is too great to talk about this anymore. Take my hand. Let’s go serve the world together.

The word forgiven means given ahead of time. **For-given.** So before we ask, God has already forgiven us. God longs to forgive...its his nature to do it...he likes to do it. So we should forgive one another.

Rainer talks about that fateful day, 9/11 in the year 2000. We just remembered this date in September as happening 15 years ago. The words, **“Let’s roll” became the rallying cry of our nation in one of its darkest hours.** Travelers from different backgrounds, races, and age groups set aside their differences and bonded together for a common mission. United by their urgent goal, they selflessly disregarded differences that normally would have separated them and instead worked as one to get the job done.

And Rainer says, what if the church operated with the same courage and resolve? We wouldn’t have time for unforgiveness, for resentments, and for division. We would be unified in our goal and purpose...We’d call out “Let’s roll” and we’d be about bigger things than holding onto resentments.

3. The third, and final way the enemy hacks into our unity is to blind us to our own contributions to any disunity that may be going on.

If our password is “I am perfect” the hacker gets in. However a stronger password would be “I am a sinner and I need to confess”.

Confession is a good thing when we do it with God, and confession to one another is also a good thing.

It heals relationships and it makes things go deep.

On the surface human interaction can be intensely shallow. Ever notice that?

Ask someone how he/she is doing and out pours the numb and rehearsed response
“I’m alright”.

This may be true on the surface but doubtful underneath. It is no wonder Richard Foster says that **superficiality is the curse of this age**—it ruins people, it robs communal beings of true community.

To hack into unity, the enemy would love it if we all stayed real shallow here at WVPC, and never became real. Never showed anyone our true selves but kept it all well hidden.

Confession however, in its raw transparent honesty, restores community with God and with one another. Confession stands in blatant opposition to superficiality.

Henri J.M. Nouwen says, **“Confession and forgiveness are the concrete forms in which we sinful people love one another”**.

What makes this love difficult is something Foster points out saying, **“Confession is a difficult discipline for us because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners”**.

So I remind you that as we come before this table today we come as sinners.

People who need to confess to God and to one another our shortcomings, where we have fallen; and also confess perhaps that we aren't okay.

Friends, God will meet you in that honesty. (not in the superficiality, but in the honesty...)

God will meet you in the moment where your faith is wavering.

God will meet you at the point where you are at your lowest ebb

God will meet you as you confess who you are and what you are, without pretense, without fear...

Because our God is a forgiving God...his nature is to forgive us...

God unifies us with him and with each other through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's what we celebrate at this table.

That is true unity.

If we have no unity, as M. T. said, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other through Jesus Christ.

There is one God, one faith, one Lord...one God and Father of us all...who is above all and within all and who calls us all his own.