

Deepening our Relationship with God

Day 10

Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be ONE, even as we are one. John 17:11

Key Thought: Jesus prays that we would be ONE

As the dad of five children, few things grabbed my attention faster than when two or more of them got into a 'spat.' As their voices rose in volume and agitation, I would give them a few moments to work things out, and then I would intervene. Family unity and harmony were important values I wanted my children to learn and live by. I didn't expect them to always agree with each other. In fact, misunderstandings and just plain rubbing each other the wrong way was going to happen. What was important was learning to how to handle and resolve these issues when they did occur.

Family unity and harmony are important values to Jesus as well! As he prayed for all of us who are Fully Devoted Followers, he asks the Father to make us One. This does not mean we are always in agreement with each other, but are connected to each other through spiritually healthy relationships. As he prays, Jesus puts the bar up very high. The unity we are to have as a church is to reflect the perfect unity experienced by the Trinity!

This was not the first time the Disciples heard Jesus talk about the importance of unity among his followers. Earlier that evening, he had told them:

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35

Later in his prayer, Jesus continues to speak of this unity. We see this in verses 20-23. Note this theme of the power of unity as he prays, "so the world may believe that you have sent me." One of the ways God uses unity among us as believers is as a testimony to the world around us. When we are unified, this shows the power of God in transforming our lives to be like Jesus.

So, what does this unity or oneness look like? It begins with the common faith we have in Jesus Christ as we acknowledge him as Savior and Lord of our lives. Then we share a common love for the Lord that encompasses our

whole being. We share a commitment to and love for the Word of God. We share a determination to live lives that are worthy of Christ, putting off sin and putting on righteousness. All of this takes place through the enabling grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Above all of these is the love we have for one another. This love is described in 1 Cor. 13. It is also shared through the 20+ 'One Another's' listed in the New Testament. This includes loving, forgiving, accepting, praying for and encouraging one another. When we are living these out, we will experience the 'Oneness' Jesus was praying for.

Finally, look again at John 17:20. Jesus prayed for us as well as the 11 Disciples in the room with him on that night. "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word." I trust you are encouraged and blessed to know Jesus was praying for you the night before his crucifixion... and that you will commit yourself to growing in Oneness with your brothers and sisters in Christ!

Questions to Ponder

1. Read Ephesians 4:1-6, and note the ways we are to treat and speak to each other. Which of these come more natural to you?
Which are more challenging?
2. What are some of the ways you have been encouraged by other believers?
3. When have you encouraged or comforted another believer?
4. Is there anyone you need to forgive or reconcile with? When will you reach out to them?

Possible Prayer Points

1. Using 1 Cor. 13:4-13 as a prayer guide, ask God to grow each of these qualities of love in your life.
2. Ask God to give you the grace to grow in your fellowship with other believers.

How do you think you should relate with God as a result of Him trying to relate to you in this way?