

HOME BIBLE STUDY

~ Lesson 10 ~ BIBLE UNITY

In John 17, Jesus prayed for unity. As we have seen in our studies so far, the world is very divided and confused. There are countless numbers of denominations with different names, organizations, doctrines, ways of entering, etc. But this cannot possibly be what Jesus wanted. Jesus prayed that believers would be "one" (17:21). So, how can we have the unity that Jesus prayed for?

UNITY BASED UPON THE TRUTH

In Jesus' prayer, He speaks of the basis for unity. He said that the word of God is Truth (John 17:17). He also declares the word of God to be the means of "sanctifying" or "setting apart" people unto God. This bedrock is the only true and sure foundation for unity. Man's wisdom changes, God's does not. Man's knowledge is limited, but God's is perfect.

Jesus said, in His prayer for unity, that His disciples (the apostles) would be charged with spreading the truth He delivered to them (v. 18-19). Then, He added that those who believe on Jesus through their word are included in this prayer for unity (v. 20-21). His desire is that all believers be "one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" and "that they may be one, even as we are one" (v. 21-22).

The Father and Son illustrate the kind of unity we should have. When we see the Father and Son, are they divided doctrinally? No (John 17:8). Are they divided in practices? No, Jesus always walked in harmony with the Father's will (John 8:29). Thus, can we teach different doctrines and follow different practices religiously and still have unity that Jesus

prayed for? No. Jesus did not preach, believe or practice "unity in diversity" when it came to doctrines or morals.

WHAT THE APOSTLES TAUGHT ABOUT UNITY

Since Jesus prayed for the apostles, and that through their word all believers would be united; let us examine what the apostles had to say about this important topic. It is essential to remember that the apostles were not left to their own ways or wisdom. After spending 3 and 1/2 years with Jesus, He told them that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and remind them of the things Jesus had said (John 14:26). They would be miraculously guided into all the truth (John 16:13). So, what they taught and wrote down was not just from memory, but was inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thus, those who receive the word of the apostles, receive Jesus who sent the apostles (John 13:20). This is why we see that the first converts "continued steadfastly in the apostle's teaching..." (Acts 2:42). This is the truth that Jesus delivered to them and through them. This was the basis for their unity and is the basis for ours today.

Thus, when Paul wrote to Corinth when the Christians were dividing and differing, he said: "speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but be perfected together in the same mind and same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). Paul did not approve of "speaking different things" any more than Jesus did. We cannot differ doctrinally from the Truth and be right with God or have unity with one another. We cannot be "perfected together in the same mind" if one follows the Truth, while another follows their own wisdom, and others this teacher or that.

Paul goes on and asks, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized into the name of Paul?" (1 Cor. 1:13) These are rhetorical questions, meaning the obvious answer is:

"No. Christ is not divided. Paul was not crucified for them. Nor were they baptized into Paul." They were focusing on men, rather than simply staying with Christ (1 Cor. 1:26-31; 3:1-9). Throughout this Corinthian letter, Paul chides and rebukes them. He directs them to "not go beyond the things that are written" (1 Cor. 4:6). He commands them to see and accept that what he wrote as an apostle is "the commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). Therefore, to go beyond the scriptures and ignore the Bible is to disobey God and to commit sin. It is to sow the seeds of discord and division. If we want Biblical unity, we must unite upon the words and teachings of the Bible. Nothing more and nothing less will do.

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

In Ephesians 4 we read of what is described as "the unity of the Spirit" (4:2). This is something we are to "give diligence to keep". Thus, if we are to be united, we must give earnest effort to follow what is described here and put away anything that is contrary to it. So, what is listed here?

"There is one body" (4:4). Whatever the "body" is, there is one of it. Over in Ephesians 1 Paul reveals to us what it is. It is "the church, which is His body" (1:22-23). The church of the Lord is His body. He is the head of His church and the savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). This we have already studied in lesson 7, "What is God's kingdom?" It is the church that Jesus built (Matt. 16:18-19). Lesson 8 asked, "Does it matter which church I belong to?" Only if the blood of Christ matters, for it was His blood that purchased the church (Acts 20:28; Rev. 5:9-10). Lesson 9 was, "Where did all the churches come from?" They came from men who were were not content with doing things the way Jesus made them. Men create different

names, which highlight particular men, doctrines, or distinctions; rather than glorifying Christ (1 Pet. 4:16). If you use a human name, men are pleased. But if you say that you are a member of the "church of Christ" - men grumble and frown. Yet, what better name can be found than Christ's? What better way to describe those who wish to do Bible things in Bible ways? What better way to express that we want to follow Christ, not men, human wisdom, denominational doctrines, etc.? Friends, will you unite upon what the Bible says? Or divide because of a love for and an attachment to man made ways?

The unity of the Spirit also includes "one Spirit" and "one hope" (Eph. 4:4). These we have touched on, but will discuss in more detail in the Advanced Home Bible Study Series. But in brief, there is one Holy Spirit. He is God (Acts 5:3, 4) and teaches, speaks, acts and feels (John 16:13-14; Eph. 4:30). And the one hope is heaven (Phil. 3:20). Some teach different things about this, but again, this is where division creeps in rather than unity upon what is revealed in the Bible. If someone teaches that the Holy Spirit is an "it" rather than a "he" (John 16:13-14), they contradict the Truth. If someone teaches there are two hopes, heaven for some and earth for others, again they contradict the Truth.

There is "one Lord, one faith and one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). We have talked about the one Lord in lessons 3 and 4. You must come to know the Lord in order to have the unity He wants us to have. The "one faith" is the one message from God, the gospel, the Truth. It is the standard and measuring stick for our lives (John 12:48). It is the basis for unity (John 17:17).

The "one baptism" is what we discussed in lesson 4, "How can I be saved from my sins?" Many people teach different baptisms. Some even teach

multiple baptisms. But water baptism (Acts 10:47) in the name of the Lord (Acts 10:48) for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 11:14) is a command (Acts 10:48). Bible unity is based upon Bible teaching. Division comes when men are not satisfied with doing Bible things in Bible ways.

Again it is written that there is "one God and Father" (Eph. 4:6). This is who we introduced in lesson 1, "Why should I believe in God?" This is who Jesus reveals to us and leads us to (John 14:6). Many worship Buddha, Krishna, Allah or some other deity or "higher power". Some choose to worship no god at all (Atheists). The bottom line is, though, God expects us to honor Him (Malachi 1:6). and no matter what connections people try to paint and no matter what similarities people try to draw between the God of the Bible and other religious ways; what it comes down to is that when man's beliefs are different from the Bible, then they are wrong and erroneous beliefs (Matt. 15:13).

CONCLUSION

Friends, true faith is learned from the word of God (Romans 10:17). We must study the Bible in order to know about God, His love for us, and His will for us. When we truly believe in Him through His word, we will act in harmony with His will. And as a result, we can have the unity that Jesus prayed for, that the apostles wrote of, and the unity that the Spirit revealed.

Friends, are you following the path that the Bible describes? Or are you part of a way that is different from what you can read about in your Bible? Are you upholding the unity Jesus prayed for? Or upholding division by being in a way that is created and fashioned by men?

If you are not a member of the Lord's church, why not make a change today? If you long to be justified from all

your sins, then test all things by the standard of God's word. This includes your beliefs, your practices, your religion, everything. You have a soul to save, friend. You have eternal life to gain. Surely it is worth the effort to, "Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves" (2 Cor. 13:5). There is nothing more valuable and more precious that you possess than your soul (Matt. 16:26).

And why not look for those of "like precious faith" (2 Peter 1:1)? Why not seek out and join with those who hold to the same precious Truths (Acts 9:26-28)? Friends, God has ordained and ordered that we should work together and be united according to His will (Heb. 10:24-25). Let us study His word together. Let us uphold and obey the same gospel that the one God has revealed. Let us encourage one another in following our Savior. Won't you come and visit? Won't you come and find joy in the company of those who love the Lord and His will? We warmly invite you.

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"Sanctify them **through thy truth**: thy word is truth... Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me **through their word**; 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 17:17, 20-21)

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"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye **all speak the same thing**, and that there be **no divisions** among you; but that ye be **perfectly joined together in the same mind** and in the **same judgment**."
(1 Cor. 1:10)

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"Giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is **one** body, and **one** Spirit, even as ye are called in **one** hope of your calling; **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."
(Eph. 4:2-6)

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"All scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be **complete**, furnished **completely** unto every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

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After the Holy Spirit fell on Cornelius and his household, Peter said: "Can any man forbid the **water**, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit as well as we? And he **commanded** them to be baptized **in the name of Jesus Christ**"
(Acts 10:47-48).

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Peter later reviews these events and includes a description of what he taught and commanded as being: "words, whereby thou shalt be **saved**"  
(Acts 11:14).

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Please complete the Home Bible Study questions page for this lesson, then send it in to be checked. After checking it, we will return it with the next lesson in the series. If you have any questions please write them down and let us know. We are here to serve you and will point to the Bible for the answer to all things.

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