



December 4, 2022

“A Prayer for Unity”

[John 17:20-26](#)

Pastor Gary Hamrick

When Jesus prayed for us in John 17, He asked the Father to give us UNITY. But what kind of “unity” was Jesus speaking of? Did He mean that we should just all “get along,” accepting everything and anything under the “umbrella of unity?” Not at all. Unfortunately, some Christians and/or churches, in pursuit of unity, have forsaken integrity and doctrinal purity. So how do we receive and maintain the kind of unity that Jesus prayed about for us?

[John 17:20-26](#) – *“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”*

1. This passage concludes the Upper Room Discourse
 - a. This was Jesus’ final Passover meal and private conversation with His disciples before His crucifixion
 - b. Jesus prayed for Himself, His disciples, and those who would later believe in Him
2. The significance of unity
 - a. [Psalm 133](#) – *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on*

the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forevermore.”

- b. King David compared unity to oil running down on Aaron’s beard and dew running down from Mt. Hermon (the highest point in Israel)—both speak to something higher flowing down
 - i. Unity comes from above; it cannot be humanly contrived
- c. God is a God of unity, not division
 - i. **Genesis 2:24** - *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*
 - ii. **Ephesians 2:14-16** - [speaking of the hostility between Jews and Gentiles] *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”*
- d. Jesus was speaking to the same kind of unity that the Trinity experiences: *“that they may be one just as We are one”* (**John 17:23**, 1984 NIV)
- e. God’s objective is to unite and complete us; Satan’s objective is to divide and conquer us

3. God hates divisiveness

- a. **Proverbs 6:16** - *“These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him ... one who sows discord among brethren.”*
- b. **Titus 3:10** - *“Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition...”*
- c. Our sin nature is self-centered; Jesus was others-centered
 - i. **Philippians 2:8** - *“And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*
- d. Self-centeredness brings division; others-centeredness brings unity

4. Consider the purpose for the pursuit of unity

- a. Jesus was not implying that we should all just “get along” at the expense of truth
- b. There is a false notion that love tolerates everything
- c. Jesus was very intolerant of our sinful lives but died for our sins so we would not have to bear the consequences
- d. We should not forsake integrity and doctrinal purity in the pursuit of unity

5. Unity is centered on Christ and His Word

- a. **John 17:17** - *“Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”*
- b. *“Peace if possible, but truth at all costs”* - Martin Luther

- c. Truth is non-negotiable, but we must allow for non-essential differences—oneness does not equal sameness
- d. Unity assumes that there are differences that need to be brought together in harmony under Christ
 - i. Non-negotiables
 - 1. Inerrancy, veracity, and reliability of Scripture
 - 2. Virgin birth of Jesus
 - 3. The sinless nature of Christ
 - 4. Salvation through grace alone by faith alone in Christ alone
 - ii. Non-essentials
 - 1. Modes of baptism (immersion or sprinkling)
 - 2. Operation of the gifts of the Spirit
 - 3. Chronology of End Time events
- e. *"In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; and in all things, charity"* (Early church motto)

6. Unity is diversity with harmony

- a. How do we make our differences work in a complementary way rather than a competitive way?
- b. Example of an orchestra
 - i. If orchestra members all played the same notes in the same manner, the result would be boring—the diversity of instruments and musical notes is what allows for a beautiful-sounding symphony, so long as everyone is playing in harmony
 - ii. If orchestra members all played whatever notes they individually wanted to play, the results would be chaotic—but if they all work together in harmony, they create beautiful music
- c. [Colossians 3:13b-14](#) - *"...as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."* (ESV)
- d. [1 Peter 3:8](#) - *"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble."* (1984 NIV)

7. Unity is based on a mutual relationship with Christ

- a. You can have unity with non-believers, but it will be limited
- b. There is a richness that cannot be manufactured that exists in relationships between Christians
- c. When you have Christ in common, you can have an instant connection and camaraderie with someone you just met that you may not even have with members of your own family
- d. The kind of relationships Jesus was praying for in John 17 are best experienced when individuals have a mutual relationship with Christ

8. Unity is obtained from God but maintained by us
 - a. [Romans 15:5-6](#) - *"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (1984 NIV)
 - b. [Ephesians 4:2b-3](#) - *"...bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*
 - c. Unity is not part of our flesh nature—there is constant war and tension between our flesh and our spirit, and we must work hard to daily crucify our self-centeredness
 - d. [Romans 12:18](#) - *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."* (1984 NIV)

Discussion Questions

1. Read [John 17:20-26](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Read [Psalm 133](#). What is the significance of King David comparing unity to oil running down Aaron's beard and dew coming down from Mt. Hermon? (See #2a and #2b above) What practical application does this have for us as we pursue unity in our own lives?
3. Why does self-centeredness bring division? How does others-centeredness bring unity? Speak about a time when you experienced either (or both) of these situations in your own life. (See #3d above)
4. When should we forego the pursuit of unity? Explain a time you encountered a situation like this. (See #4d above)
5. Read [John 17:17](#). On what should we center unity? (See #5a above).
6. What are "non-negotiables" in relation to unity? What are "non-essentials?" How should we handle conflict regarding non-essentials? (See #5d and #5e above)
7. Read [Colossians 3:13b-14](#) and [1 Peter 3:8](#). How do we make our differences work in a complementary way rather than a competitive way? (See #6c and #6d above)
8. Why is unity with other believers different from unity with non-believers? How have you experienced this in your own life? (See #7b and #7c above)
9. Read [Romans 15:5-6](#), [Ephesians 4:2b-3](#), and [Romans 12:18](#). Why is it hard to maintain unity? What are some practical things we can do to encourage unity? (See #8 above)

10. Close your meeting by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead your time of prayer.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New King James Version (NKJV)