

**Find Life in the Son:
The Divine Gift of Loving Unity
John 17:20-26**

Introduction

From the beginning God has shown Himself to be great and to be good. We see part of that goodness in God's establishing the family in the Garden of Eden before sin made life hard and man was exiled from paradise. Adam's response to the woman God created from Adam's side was, "This is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman for she was taken from man." His words reflect the profound loving unity between husband and wife, both made in the image of God. After their fall into sin, God promised that the seed of the woman would crush the serpent's head. Adam responded by naming his wife *Eve*—which means "living" or "life," for she was to be the mother of all future living human beings. Together they tackled the creation mandate to fill the earth and subdue it. So both their creation purpose and the redemption promise are inseparably connected to motherhood. Loving unity was to characterize family life; and through the redemption that Christ accomplished that loving unity extends beyond just the physical family to all the family of God.

The high priestly prayer of Jesus in John 17 concludes with this grand emphasis of loving

unity God produces in His people. If you are using a Bible from the book rack, our text is on page 903 (page 849 in the thinline).

20 I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, **21** that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22** The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, **23** I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. **24** Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. **25** O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. **26** I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

1. The Evangelistic Impact of Loving Unity (20-23)
2. The Heavenly Future of Loving Unity (24)
3. The Divine Source of Loving Unity (25-26)

1. The Evangelistic Impact of Loving Unity (20-23)

²⁰ I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

What Jesus prays here reveals His full knowledge of the far-reaching success the apostles will see through their gospel witness regarding Jesus. Millions will believe their eyewitness testimony. Like the apostles, they would come to know that God the Father sent Jesus into the world as our Messiah, our Savior-King. They would trust in Him and His finished work on the cross and His victory over the tomb. Their genuine faith in Christ, rooted in what would become the NT Scriptures, would bind them into the loving unity Jesus prays for here. It is not a unity apart from this foundation. *Every denial and deviation from the revealed Word of God, any deletion or addition, mars and disrupts the loving unity God gives.*

He prays that they all would be one—in what way, to what degree?

In the way the Father and Son are one—spiritually intertwined in their words and works. Believers enter into this same spiritual union with God the Father and God the Son through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. It is a living connection that flows out into practical lifestyle.

John expresses it this way in 1 John 1:3, 6-7: ³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Where there is genuine life from God in the soul of man, it unites a born-again believer with all other regenerate believers in a loving unity stronger than any other distinction, including blood relationships.

It is a living spiritual unity to be nurtured and practiced.

Ephesians 4:1-6

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Christian unity is not uniformity. There can be all kinds of variety of ethnicity, culture, language, giftings, insights, interpretations on secondary matters—and there should be because of the creative genius of God and the wide variety of experiences and abilities. *The beauty of this unity is that the variety remains intact—all woven together in a common faith in Jesus and a common spiritual life that comes from Him.*

Nor is this a mere organizational unity where individual needs and nuances are lost. This unity does not preclude any disagreements or differences of perspective. It is not so superficial. Rather, this unity roots itself in Jesus Christ as the apostolic testimony presents Him to be—and the life that comes from Him creates a deep bond of relationship—in sharp contrast to the selfish

warring among people and people groups all over the world.

Every generation of believers live in a worldly culture of selfish ambition, rivalries, hatred, and strife that easily worm their way into our minds, words, and actions. The apostles call us to be on guard against such worldly mindset and practice.

James 3:13-18

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. **14** But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. **15** This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. **16** For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. **17** But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. **18** And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

James 4:1-4

1 What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? **2** You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

You do not have, because you do not ask.
³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.
⁴ You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

When believers are at each other's throats they are living like the world around them, not like the God who saved them. Their disunity reflects deviation from the Word of God. It smells of death not life. It speaks hatred, not love. It is the opposite of godly. It is instead worldly.

This loving unity among believers that grows from and reflects the unity of Father, Son, and Spirit unveils the glory of God to the world. Jesus has given us this glory—the shining splendor, the beautiful magnificence of God—His truth, His love, His communion—to show to the world what God is really like through the lives of those who have trusted in Jesus. Twice He says it:

John 17:21

That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

The company of believers is ever expanding with each new believer.

John 17:23

I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Believers who shine out the glory of this divine gift of loving unity make credible that God the Father really did send Jesus, God the Son. As those who have trusted in Jesus, they show the love of the Father for them by their love for one another. Love binds them together in unity. Love from God. This demonstrated power and love of God in believers calls people into the faith.

This is not a loving unity at odds with faith in the revealed Word of God through the apostles. Rather it grows from it. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Such faith displays itself in a profound unity of love. It is attractive. It is powerful. It resonates as real and authentic. It calls to the human heart to believe and thus to move from being of the world to being of the Father.

Applications

- In what ways does your life display the loving unity of God and His people?

- What kinds of things tend to disrupt your loving union with believers you know and with whom you interact?
- What are some ways you can restore and protect your loving unity with other believers?
- Why would the inability of true believers to get along with each other in love cast doubt on the credibility of the gospel of reconciliation?

2. The Heavenly Future of Loving Unity (24)

Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Think of it, if you are a believer, Jesus desires you to be with Him and has made request of the Father to bring about that very result. He wants you with Him! He wants you to experience heaven as He has for all eternity, past, present, and future!

In other words, the joy and beauty of this loving unity among believers with God the Father and Son in this life only gets better in the life to come.

When we reach our heavenly home in the presence of God the Father and Son, when we

see the full glory of Christ unveiled, the loving communion of the saints will reach perfection. Can you imagine how joyful that will be? (Illus: the difference between spending time with people where you have to walk on eggshells in contrast to those with whom you feel completely comfortable and safe)

We move from this world of sorrows and disappointments, shortcomings and divisions, into the perfect harmony of the heavenly city. The sin that easily besets us, along with a host of human weaknesses and flaws, will be gone. Nothing to disrupt. Nothing to disturb. Nothing to divide.

Jesus has prayed that all who believe in Him through the apostolic testimony will one day personally enter in to this exhilarating experience that will last forever.

1 John 3:1-2

¹ See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

It is good for us to keep this certain future in mind—to remember that the brother or sister most difficult for me to get along with is a blood-bought saint with whom I will spend eternity—a next-door neighbor, if you will. Such a heavenly mindset helps me bring some heaven to earth in the personality conflicts and misunderstandings common to this life.

Applications

- Who are some specific believers you struggle most to get along with and how could your anticipation of the perfect communion you will enjoy with them in heaven help you treat them better?
- Since seeing Jesus in His full glory will bring about this perfection of loving unity, how can you practice focusing more on His loving beauty even here on earth?
- How does selfish fixation on earthbound concerns tend not only to distract us from our heavenly home but also to disrupt our relationships with others?

3. The Divine Source of Loving Unity (25-26)

²⁵ O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I made known to them your name, and I will continue

to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.

This is the third time in these verses that Jesus declares that the Father loves Him (23, 24, 26). The Father's love directed toward the Son flows through Christ to those who believe in Him. Jesus desires that they taste the Father's love.

God the Father is righteous and good. Everything about His character and His deeds is exactly in line with what should be.

The world in rebellion against God does not know Him for who He really is. That's why they try to run from God, hide from God, and resist His wisdom and instruction. But Jesus knew Him perfectly. And His followers knew that the Father had sent Jesus. They saw in Jesus the character and kindness of the Father.

Jesus made known the true character of God to the disciples—"your name." He continues to make God's true character known through their testimony. People today can come to know God for who He really is because Jesus made Him known and the apostles proclaimed what He revealed.

God pours His love into the hearts of those who have come to know Him—the deep, eternal love the Father has for the Son extends into every person who has living connection to the Son through faith in Him.

It is part of Christ Himself being in them—His beautiful character—divine love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control grows like fruit from the Holy Spirit's vital work in their lives.

Loving unity is a God thing. That's why it exists at all. It does not come through human ingenuity, wisdom, and strength, but through the life-changing operation of the Spirit of God in our lives to make us more and more like Jesus. That's why the unity is deeply embedded in our core identity and productive of sacrificial love, rather than being merely superficial and pragmatic.

Applications

- Since the world's experiential ignorance of God feeds its selfish strife, what can a believer do in this world to be a peace-maker? See Titus 3:1-3.
¹ Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show

perfect courtesy toward all people.

³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

- In what ways do the people who know you see God's love and Christ's character in you?

Conclusion

Don't underestimate the power of such a life—or forget that it is a loving gift from God.

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- Since the world's experiential ignorance of God feeds its selfish strife, what can a believer do in this world to be a peace-maker? (See Titus 3:1-3.)
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