

**John 17:11**

Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, **that they may be one even as We are.**

**John 17:20-23**

"I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; **even 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 sent Me. "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, **just as We are one**; I in them **and You in Me**, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.

Based on the latest statistics provided by Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, as of mid-2008 there were 39,000 different Christian denominations in the world with 3,684,000 different centers of worship. In addition to that there were over 27,000 para-church organizations. Just contemplating these numbers is mind boggling.

How can there really be 39,000 separate and distinct denominations, which by definition have different takes on what is or what is not true Christianity? How does any of this sync up with Jesus prayer that we would be one? What does it even mean for Christians to be one? Does it mean that we all should have the same take on things? And, if that is the case, could the body of Christ really be

---

that far off the mark? Does it mean that we are all supposed to just love one another and get along in some kind of ecumenical umbrella of peace? Does it mean we are free to have all our differences in beliefs, theology, and practices just so long as we find our unity in the fact that we are all one in our testimony of Christ?

These are hard questions surrounding a very hard and often misunderstood concept. I do believe however that this issue is dealt with quite comprehensively throughout the scriptures but it means we have to be good students in order to comprehend all the ways in which the Holy Spirit has brought revelation to Jesus' desire that we are one.

First of all, it is clear that whatever "oneness" is, the definition is not open to a free for all as each time Jesus comments on our "oneness" it is likened to the "oneness" that He shares with the Father: "**as we are one,**" "**even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You.**" So we need to first understand the "oneness" of the Godhead before we can even attempt to form an opinion regarding how it is to be lived out in our lives in relation to one another.

If you remember back in our study of **John 10:30** where Jesus said: "I and the Father are one," it was clear that since "one" was in the neutered tense and not the masculine tense that Jesus was not saying that the Father and I are "one" person but are "one" in nature and essence. This supports the fact that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are 3-separate persons with variant roles and responsibilities within the Godhead (so there is not a homogeny in terms of identity or function; but the homogeny comes in purpose, intent, and fundamental character attributes).

---

We see this operation in the fact that the Father sent the Son to the world to do the Father's bidding. Different roles, different functions working toward one purpose all employing the same character attributes (*John 17:2-3, 6, 8, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, and so on*).

Jesus says that everything that is the Father abides in Him in the same way that everything that is in Jesus abides in the Father. And the one thing they both live for is to bring glory to the other (*17:1, 4-5, 10*). Jesus never did anything on His own accord, but always only lived to honor the Father and do what the Father wanted Him to do and He, thereby, glorified the Father with His obedience (*17:4*). Alternatively, the Father always exalted Jesus and gave Him priority and absolute authority over all flesh so that all of creation would honor and glorify the Son (*17:2*). From this we can surmise the following:

- They have different roles and functions;
- They work cooperatively toward the same unified purposes: to glorify one another.
- They employ the same immutable attributes in carrying out this work; for example, all that they do is: holy, righteous, true, faithful, is full of wisdom, and is love.

So with that said where does it leave us in terms of understanding how we are to live with each other? First of all, it is important to understand that our "oneness" with the Godhead will not be fully realized or fully perfected until He comes again for it is then that we will see Him as He really is and we will be like Him (*1 John 3:2*). But even though our "perfection" is yet to come, John still tells us that we are already children of God and so we are to believe we are children of

---

God and henceforth live as children of God (**1 John 3:1-10**). It is not something we wait for but something we are to live as.

So following the pattern of the Father and Son, let's look to where the Holy Spirit gave us meat to put around the bones, so to speak, regarding how we are to be "one" as they are "one" and thereby live as children of God.

1. *We Have Different Roles and Functions:*

The Bible uses the metaphor of the body to describe our relationships. Jesus is the head and we are all individually a part of His body. Therefore, in order for the body to be healthy and free from defects, we must all do what we were created to do, and only what we were created to do, and not what someone else has been created to do. And the good news is that regardless of what responsibilities we have been assigned by Jesus, we are all vital to the overall health and vitality of the body. That is why we must be very careful never to elevate one part of the body over another part or one function over another function. All are necessary.

***1 Corinthians 12:12-28***

For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a

---

part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? But now there are many members, **but one body**. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, whereas our more presentable members have no need of it.

But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

This passage is to be understood both in a micro view of our little fellowship but also in the macro view of the entire body of believers all over the globe. Remember, there is only **one body**. In the same way that each of us has a part to

---

fulfill within Pathway Fellowship, Pathway Fellowship has apart to fulfill in the larger body of Christ. Thus, it is vital that we understand our role and do exactly as Christ has asked of us. We are not independent of other believers; they need us and we need them. We may not understand the overall picture that God is painting as He works amongst the nations in often strange and unfamiliar ways, and we may not know how our little piece impacts the whole, but we can understand what He wants of us (our little piece) and only do that, all the while trusting Him with the rest.

Practically this is hard to put into action since even in our local community the things God have asked of us, and the work He is doing here, is all very unique and many do not understand it or even care to understand it and have chosen to come against it. In the same way, it is hard for us to understand what God might be doing in another fellowship and our tendency is to want to compare them to what God is doing here and make some sort of comparative judgment. All of this is wrong. That is not where God wants our head, our eyes, or our attitude.

***Proverbs 30:10***

Do not slander a slave to his master, or he will curse you and you will be found guilty.

***Romans 14:4***

Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

---

We must keep our eyes only on Jesus and what He has asked us to do and He will take care of the impact our efforts will have in the larger body of Christ. What goes on in another fellowship is between them and God unless 1) God specifically creates an intersection between us and them or 2) specifically asks us to speak to what is going on there. Otherwise, we are not to be in the business of comparisons.

Comparisons are such a waste of time and they create so many problems; even though it may be with good intention and good meaning. After all, we just want them to experience what we are experiencing and they probably just want us to experience what they are experiencing. However, despite our “good” intentions, it still is prone to create problems and disunity.

Besides, we have so much that God has actually placed in front of us that we need to be busy about the work He has assigned to us and not be worrying about someone else’s work.

If, however, God does create those intersections with other fellowships then like Jesus and His interactions with the religious leaders, we must not be afraid to speak the truth in love; that is if God asks us to speak. In perusing the gospels you will find that Jesus never left an encounter with the religious leaders without having dismantled their wrong belief, pointed out their unbelief, and having set forth the standard of the truth (but of course He only said what the Father told Him to say). And we have been charged to live as He lived; therefore, we must be willing, when called upon, to similarly speak the truth in love.

***Ephesians 4:11-16***

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (ESV)

This truth also applies within our own fellowship. God has gifted each person quite uniquely and has given out unique assignments; therefore, we are not to be fixated on what God has asked another to do; rather, we are to ensure that we are only doing what our Father has asked of us. We are not to desire their assignment, their position, their connections, or even how God has decided to bless their piece of the work.

Rather, we are to know how important we are to the overall functioning of this body and trust ourselves to Jesus wisdom for our lives. He knows what is best for you and what is best for the next person and your best is neither better nor worse than another person's "best."



---

Further, being part of the same fellowship, the intersection with each other has already been made for us by God. Therefore, as God leads we are to freely speak the truth in love for the sole purpose of building up our body until we attain to a unity of faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ. This is how we will collectively mature in His love and not be tripped up by all manner of wrong belief and unbelief.

Many of us, sadly, are still afraid to do this. Now, how open we are to each other in this regard may change by the day or the hour, but if our goal is Jesus, and growing to the full maturity in Christ, then those doors in each other's lives need to be open so we can help each other. We need each other to keep us believing the truth; to remind us how to stand and walk in the truth and be focused on Jesus. Open those doors. Let each other in.

To do this, however, requires that we have access to the wisdom of God—the kind of wisdom which is first of all pure (not corrupted with your motives and self-interest), peace loving (bridges relationships), gentle, and willing to yield to others (**James 3:17**). And since we must speak the truth with Agape love, we know that the wisdom of God demands that we must always place the other person's interest above our own. This provides a perfect segue to our 2<sup>nd</sup> point.

In summary, we all have different functions, we all are critically important, and we must be focused on what God has for us. We must encourage that in everyone in this body so each member is healthy and we all grow up together into the fullness of Christ.

---

2. *We are to work cooperatively toward the same unified purposes: to glorify one another.*

It is far too easy to get to get carried away with thoughts of yourself and live as if you are at the center of your own personal universe. I cannot help but think that the reason there are 39,000 different denominations is not really because there are 39,000 vital doctrinal differences that define each unique group; rather, I believe that many of these denominations were birthed out of power struggles, church politics, and a striving for power—people wanting to be important and receive glory unto themselves, all the while refusing to yield to others.

This is absolutely contrary to how Jesus lived! He never sought the approval of men but only the approval of God. In **John 7:18** Jesus says: “He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory (either you are speaking what God has given to you and you are seeking to glorify the Father or you are speaking from yourself and seeking to glorify yourself); but He who is seeking the glory of the One who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

In this statement He not only brought an indictment on the religious leaders for speaking from their own authority and seeking their own glory but He also exculpated Himself by saying He only speaks what God gives Him because He lives to glorify His Father. Jesus basically said, “This is not about me, this is about my Father. He is using me but this is not about me!” “I am pure and I am innocent because these are my Father’s words and I only live to give glory to the Father.”

---

The religious leaders cared very little about God's approval but first and foremost sought to maintain their political and positional power; and they would do anything that was needed to preserve it.

That is like many of us. We spend a big part of our day not worrying about the glory that comes from God. We are worried about ourselves and whether or not we are being liked, accepted, etc. Our thoughts are centered on the "ME" and not on what God thinks about us.

Jesus told them: "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?" (**John 5:44-45**). Please don't be confused here. It is very simple. If your priority is making sure everything and everyone is ok all the time; if your priority is anything other than God and what He wants done in your life—what He wants you to say and do—then you are seeking your own glory. It is not to be how we live.

This next part might be a bit ridiculous (so bear with me) but I want to emphatically make the point that Jesus not only never exalted Himself, but He always gave the credit for what He did and what He said to the Father. So to prove the point I went through our entire study in John and pulled the verses where Jesus Himself made this more than abundantly clear that He did not try and take what rightfully belonged to His Father: **John 5:19-20, 30, 36, 41; 6:38, 57, 65; 7:6, 16-18; 8:26, 28, 49-50, 54-56; 9:4; 10:17-18, 25-32, 37-38; 11:4, 41-42; 12:27-28, 44-45, 49-50; 13:16-17, 20, 31; 14:7-14, 20, 24, 28, 31; 15:10, 15, 23-25; 17:1, 8, 14, 19, and 26**. The way Jesus lived was more than impressive. Imagine if this were how we lived.

---

In **Philippians 2:5-11**, we are told that we must have the same attitude that Jesus had. His life is the example of what our live in the **New Creation** is to be like. We cannot just look at Jesus life and think, “Wow Jesus is amazing;” for He has given us His life and He abides in us. His life is to be the way we live. So we are told we must have the same attitude that Jesus had who, although He was part of the Godhead, chose to always live in complete obedience to the Father.

Jesus emptied Himself of His own glory and took on the form of a bond-servant. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross; and **His obedience glorified the Father**. In turn, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, **to the glory of God the Father**.

The Father is not standing there saying, “hey, what about me; bow your knee to me and confess that I am Lord.” No, He gladly let’s Jesus receive all praise, glory, and honor. The Father gave Jesus the highest place of authority such that when we honor Jesus we are in effect honoring the Father for having all power and authority such that He could give Jesus such standing. As Jesus said, the Father is greater than I (**John 14:28**) so Jesus’ glory is the Father’s glory.

What this means is that we are to likewise empty ourselves of our own glory, humble ourselves, and in obedience to our Father serve one another. We can no longer be at the center of our little universe always striving to be recognized by others seeking the honor and attention that we think should be ours. We must desire to honor Jesus only and in so doing choose to serve one another in love

---

(***Galatians 5:13***) and choose to be devoted to one another in love, giving preference to one another in honor (***Romans 12:10-11***).

Serve, devoted, and preference, these are powerful words. Are these at the forefront of your relationships within the body of Christ? In order to breathe life into these otherwise empty words, you must set aside the “ME” and really believe that your honor will come from the Father if, like Jesus, you are willing to humble yourself in order to exalt, honor, and care for another rather than trying to take or preserve what you think you deserve.

This requires an intense faith. To give such deference to a person who might not give anything back goes against everything that we have been taught in the world and all that is in our *Old Sinful Nature*. In fact, this way of faith is extremely offensive to our *Old Sinful Nature*.

Therefore, instead of trying to take back or demand something that you think you deserve you must trust that the Father has your back and is going to take care of you and honor you; thus, you are free to give and free to love because you know that your Dad will faithfully do His part.

Let’s go back to ***Philippians 2*** as it speaks, in no uncertain terms, of the unifying purpose for our relationships with each other and puts the meat on the bones of what it means for us to dwell in unity and be “one” as the Father and Son are “one.”

***Philippians 2:1-4***

Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the **same** mind, maintaining the **same** love, **united** in spirit, intent on **one** purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

Paul starts out by making a plea to the fact that we have Christ living in our hearts and says that if there is any solace to the fact that we have this relationship with Jesus, if there is any comfort in the love feast in which we have been privileged to participate, if there is any partnership with the work of the Holy Spirit, and any inward affection (or literally bowels), and any pity (even a little bit), we are to be of the same mind, maintaining the same Agape love, of one accord, intent on one purpose: to serve, to give preference and to be devoted to one another.

Notice he says that we are to do nothing—absolutely not even one thing—from selfishness or empty conceit. In other words we are not to seek to serve ourselves, give ourselves preference, honor or glory, or in any way be devoted to the ways and desires of the “ME” falsely believing that we deserve it. Yes, I know, this is hard to swallow but if we use this passage as a mirror it will help us come to understand what it really means to walk in the Spirit of God verses walking in some religious deception of our *Old Sinful Nature* who loves to clothe itself with

---

all the accoutrements of religion and righteousness but really just lives to serve the “ME.”

With the mind of Christ, with His humility, we are to regard one another as more important than ourselves; and we are to not merely look out for our own interests but also the interest of others. Just so you don't take me wrong, I do not believe this passage is saying we need to be living doormats or objects of abuse, as it is clear that we do need to care for ourselves. But the point of the passage is that most of us have absolutely no problem taking care of ourselves and have little to no hesitation in prioritizing ourselves over others.

Therefore, we are instructed to choose first and foremost to consider others as more important than ourselves. This is why the commandment to love is both an *old* commandment and a *new* commandment. We are no longer to just love our neighbor as ourselves (the *old* commandment), but with God's Agape love we are to give our brothers and sisters in the Lord preference over ourselves—this is why the commandment is *new* (**1 John 2:7-8**).

Think about the people in your life. Imagine asking them to be honest and tell you all the ways in which you tend to honor yourself and not regard them as you regard yourself, much less prefer them. It could be in the small things like how you care for the house, complete the chores, manage your responsibilities, give space in conversations, or even how you fail to notice if they are hurt or struggling or how you tend to notice yet decide to do nothing about it. It could be in the big things in the ways you strive to get attention, position, power, and privilege rather than letting them have it. I could be in the way you would rather be honored and preferred by others versus honestly finding joy when those you love

---

get the spotlight. It might be scary to ask and actually hear what others might say, but it would be really good for us to understand that to which we are probably otherwise extremely blind.

Finally, being purposeful and intentional to honor others becomes very extreme when we think about having to let the Word be authoritative over our lives toward other believer's who do not get it and who purpose to hurt, discredit, and damage us. But this is where the rubber really meets the road. Are we going to be the kind of people that are always carving out exceptions for ourselves or are we truly going to honor Jesus and let His Word be our ultimate authority?

### ***Matthew 5:43-48***

"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.' "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

This is totally intense. When a brother or sister chooses to treat us poorly (no matter how ugly they might be toward us) we are to serve them by praying for them and we are to love (agape) them by not retaliating. I believe this means we are not to purposefully disparage or disrespect them in front of others. We have



to trust that the Father will be our protector and our defender. It is not our job and not something we should grasp out of the Father's hands. This is our issue of faith.

Now, there may be a time when God may tell you to say something and to take a stand when you are being attacked or treated unfairly, but you must know that is what He wants. Often I have found that if you are willing to not take matters into your own hands that He raises up others around you to protect and defend you. But we must be careful to not usurp the Father's responsibility.

***Romans 12:18-21***

If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. [Now sometimes it is not possible because people just want to be mean and hate you—but as far as it depends on you be at peace with all men]. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord. "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Like the Son who always lived to glorify the Father and the Father who greatly exalted the Son, we are to ***always*** be intent on one purpose—bringing glory to one another.

---

Oh and just in case you passed over that phrase in **Matthew 5**, Jesus said we are to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. Yes, absolutely perfect—we are to be like Him. If we are to be “one” with Him and “one” with each other then we need to be like Him. However, there is only one way to be perfect and that leads us to our 3<sup>rd</sup> point.

3. *We are to employ the same immutable attributes in carrying out this work; for example, all that they do is: holy, righteous, true, faithful, is full of wisdom, and is love.*

All that we do is to be about sharing the same attributes. Our oneness—all these things are issues of faith. Our obedience is about believing the Father. Do you understand that this message ran through this whole teaching? You have to believe that God has gifted you and put you into this body because He deems you important and are necessary for the health of this body. That is to be your belief. You also have to believe that He will honor you if your goal is to honor the Son and honor each other.

You have to believe that He will protect you and defend you when people come against you so you can choose to prefer them, honor them, and pour out God’s Agape love on them. This is all an issue of faith. And we know that without faith it is impossible to please God (**Hebrews 11:6**).

Let’s pray.

