

The Unity For Which Jesus Prayed

In a religiously divided world, is it possible for Jesus' followers to be unified in the way that He prayed they would be?

Jesus Prayed For The Unity of His Disciples

Joh 17:20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

Joh 17:21 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.

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Introduction

- Jesus prayed for unity of His disciples then and now
- Yet, we see widespread divisions among those claiming to be His disciples
- Could talk about denominations but there is much division among those who claim simply to be Christians, members of Jesus' church

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Introduction

- Sadly, men have perverted Jesus' teaching on unity
- False teaching has been made acceptable and must be tolerated so that "unity" may prevail
- This is basis of denominationalism – agree to disagree
- Even among churches of Christ – accept those believing and teaching error for sake of unity

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Introduction

- Becoming popular for brethren to accept diverse beliefs, attitudes and practices as things that don't matter and should have no effect on unity
- Result is local churches physically together in a building but spiritually divided
- Local churches nothing more than worshipping societies that play no part in directing members' daily lives

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Introduction

- Preachers instead of boldly and plainly teaching and standing for truth look for ways to compromise and not address issues facing local churches
- Elders and preachers more concerned with large numbers of members rather than upholding Divine standard of truth
- Is this the type of unity for which our Lord prayed?

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Introduction

- Let us study the teaching of Jesus on unity with a view to apply it here and now that His prayer may be answered among us
- Let us not settle for a false unity that compromises His word and helps people be lost

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The Unity For Which Jesus Prayed

Possibility of unity
Nature of unity
Means to achieve unity
Results of unity
Obstacles to unity

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Possibility of Unity

Joh 17:20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

Joh 17:21 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.

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Possibility of Unity

- If unity is impossible, Jesus' prayer is vain
- Many, including some brethren, believe this to be so
- Therefore, they have adopted their version of so-called unity because what Jesus prayed for must be impossible
- But, unity is possible

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Objections To Possibility of Unity

We cannot understand the Bible

Eph 3:3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

Eph 3:4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

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Objections To Possibility of Unity

Impossible for us to obey His word

Joh 12:47 "If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.

Joh 12:48 "He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.

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Objections To Possibility of Unity

Judgment - we should not judge one another
Joh 7:23 "If a man receives circumcision on *the* Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on *the* Sabbath?"

Joh 7:24 "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

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Objections To Possibility of Unity

Judgment - we should not judge one another
Mat 7:1 "Do not judge so that you will not be judged.

Mat 7:2 "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.

Mat 7:3 "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"

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Objections To Possibility of Unity

Judgment - we should not judge one another
Mat 7:4 "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye?
Mat 7:5 "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

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Objections To Possibility of Unity

Judgment - we should not judge one another
Rom 14:3 The one who eats is not to regard with contempt the one who does not eat, and the one who does not eat is not to judge the one who eats, for God has accepted him.

Rom 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.

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Possibility of Unity

- Jesus' prayer proves unity is possible
- Objections must be removed

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Nature of Unity

Joh 17:11 "I am no longer in the world; and *yet* they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as *We are*.

Joh 17:21 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.

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Nature of Unity

- Jesus prayed his followers might be one as He and the Father are one
- Jesus and the Father are in perfect harmony in thinking, attitudes, practice and purpose
- This is the essence of unity he desired and prayed for, oneness of mind resulting in oneness of belief, attitudes, practice and purpose

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Nature of Unity

1Co 1:10 Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

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Nature of Unity

Eph 4:4 *There is* one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

Eph 4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

Eph 4:6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

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Nature of Unity

- False concepts of unity must be rejected
 - Protestantism – diverse bodies of churches being “one”
 - Unity in diversity – in local churches, let us agree to disagree - overlooking doctrinal and moral differences
- In contrast, Jesus prayed that we might all believe, speak and practice the same things

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Nature of Unity

Amo 3:3 Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?

Mat 12:25 And knowing their thoughts Jesus said to them, "Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself will not stand.

Mat 12:26 "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then will his kingdom stand?

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Means To Achieve Unity

Joh 17:20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

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Means To Achieve Unity

Joh 17:6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

Joh 17:8 for the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.

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Means To Achieve Unity

Joh 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

Joh 17:14 "I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

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Means To Achieve Unity

Joh 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Joh 16:13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

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Means To Achieve Unity

- Unity comes through the preaching and application of the Word
- Preachers must plainly teach truth while clearly exposing error

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Means To Achieve Unity

Act 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

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Means To Achieve Unity

2Ti 4:2 preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

2Ti 4:3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,

2Ti 4:4 and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. 31

Means To Achieve Unity

All teaching must be examined by members to determine if it is the truth

All teaching differing from the Word must be rejected

All who teach error must not be assisted or approved

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Means To Achieve Unity

Act 17:11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily *to see* whether these things were so.

1Th 5:21 But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good;

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Means To Achieve Unity

Gal 1:8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!

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Means To Achieve Unity

2Jn 1:9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

2Jn 1:10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into *your* house, and do not give him a greeting;

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Means To Achieve Unity

2Jn 1:11 for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

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Means To Achieve Unity

- True unity can be established only through our teaching of and submission to the gospel, the New Testament
- Christians believing they can hold any type of teaching fail to understand Jesus' concept of unity
- Christians who believe we must tolerate doctrinal differences fail to understand Jesus' concept of unity

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Means To Achieve Unity

- Any plan for unity that minimizes the need to believe, teach and apply the Word faithfully is not from Jesus but from men
- Those who despise and depart from the Word cannot be unified with those who follow truth
- It is those who rebel against the truth that are responsible for division, not those who follow the truth

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

- Only means for unity with God and others is the New Testament
- Those who believe and practice the truth will be unified with God and others
- Those who do not believe and practice the truth will be divided from God and others who follow the truth

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Act 2:36 "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ--this Jesus whom you crucified."

Act 2:37 Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Act 2:38 Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Act 10:34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality,

Act 10:35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

Act 10:45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Act 10:46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,

Act 10:47 "Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?"

Act 10:48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days. 43

Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Act 11:2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him,

Act 11:3 saying, "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Act 11:17 "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as *He gave* to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

Act 11:18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance *that leads* to life."

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Act 15:1 Some men came down from Judea and *began* teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

Act 15:2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, *the brethren* determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Act 15:7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Act 15:8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Act 15:9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Act 15:10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"

Act 15:11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Gal 2:3 But not even Titus, who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.

Gal 2:4 But *it was* because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage.

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Gal 2:5 But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you.

Gal 2:9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Gal 2:10 *They only asked* us to remember the poor--the very thing I also was eager to do.

Gal 2:11 But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned.

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Gal 2:12 For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he *began* to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision.

Gal 2:13 The rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy.

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Example 1 – Unity on Gospel Only Means For Salvation

Gal 2:14 But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, "If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how *is it that* you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

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Example 2 – Unity on Jesus Being The Son of God

- Only means for unity with God and others is the New Testament
- Those who believe and practice the truth will be unified with God and others
- Those who do not believe and practice the truth will be divided from God and others who follow the truth

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Example 2 – Unity on Jesus Being The Son of God

Mat 16:16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Mat 16:17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Mat 16:18 "I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.

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Example 2 – Unity on Jesus Being The Son of God

Joh 5:17 But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

Joh 5:18 For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

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Example 3 – Unity on Vocal Music

- Only means for unity with God and others is the New Testament
- Those who believe and practice the truth will be unified with God and others
- Those who do not believe and practice the truth will be divided from God and others who follow the truth

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Example 3 – Unity on Vocal Music

Eph 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord;
Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms *and* hymns *and* spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

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The Unity For Which Jesus Prayed

Possibility of unity

Nature of unity

Means to achieve unity

Results of unity

Obstacles to unity

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Example 4 – Unity on Marriage, Divorce And Remarriage

- Only means for unity with God and others is the New Testament
- Those who believe and practice the truth will be unified with God and others
- Those who do not believe and practice the truth will be divided from God and others who follow the truth

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Example 4 – Unity on Marriage, Divorce And Remarriage

Mat 19:3 *Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?"*

Mat 19:4 And He answered and said, "Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,

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Example 4 – Unity on Marriage, Divorce And Remarriage

Mat 19:5 and said, 'FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'?

Mat 19:6 "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

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Example 4 – Unity on Marriage, Divorce And Remarriage

Mat 19:9 "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."

Mat 5:31 "It was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE';

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Example 4 – Unity on Marriage, Divorce And Remarriage

Mat 5:32 but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Rom 7:2 For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.

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Example 4 – Unity on Marriage, Divorce And Remarriage

Rom 7:3 So then, if while her husband is living she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress though she is joined to another man.

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Example 5 – Unity on Disciplining Disorderly Members

- Only means for unity with God and others is the New Testament
- Those who believe and practice the truth will be unified with God and others
- Those who do not believe and practice the truth will be divided from God and others who follow the truth

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Example 5 – Unity on Disciplining Disorderly Members

1Co 5:1 It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.

1Co 5:2 You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.

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Example 5 – Unity on Disciplining Disorderly Members

2Th 3:6 Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from every brother who leads an unruly life and not according to the tradition which you received from us.

2Th 3:14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame.

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Example 5 – Unity on Disciplining Disorderly Members

2Th 3:15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

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Example 6 – Unity on Church And Individual Christian Work

- Only means for unity with God and others is the New Testament
- Those who believe and practice the truth will be unified with God and others
- Those who do not believe and practice the truth will be divided from God and others who follow the truth

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Example 6 – Unity on Church And Individual Christian Work

1Ti 5:16 If any woman who is a believer has *dependent* widows, she must assist them and the church must not be burdened, so that it may assist those who are widows indeed.

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Results of Unity

Joh 17:21 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.

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Results of Unity

- Being one in Christ sets the right example to the world so they will be encouraged to believe in Him
- Division sets just the opposite example giving them an excuse not to believe in Him

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Results of Unity

- Also, when we obey His will, we are unified with God, partners with Him
- And, automatically, we are unified with others who obey His will
- Accomplished without any “unity” meetings that seek to ignore our differences and focus on our similarities – a false unity

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Results of Unity

1Jn 1:3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1Jn 1:5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

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Results of Unity

1Jn 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;

1Jn 1:7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1Jn 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

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Obstacles To Unity

- As there are now, there were those who opposed Jesus' teaching on unity based on submission to the Word of God
- In all cases, Jesus was not indifferent but spoke out plainly without compromising truth

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Obstacles To Unity

Ungodly attitudes

Mat 21:12 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves.

Mat 21:13 And He *said to them, "It is written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER'; but you are making it a ROBBERS' DEN."

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Obstacles To Unity

Ungodly attitudes

Mat 21:23 When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?"

Mat 21:24 Jesus said to them, "I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.

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Obstacles To Unity

Ungodly attitudes

Mat 21:25 "The baptism of John was from what *source*, from heaven or from men?" And they *began* reasoning among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Then why did you not believe him?'"

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Obstacles To Unity

Ungodly attitudes

Mat 21:26 "But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the people; for they all regard John as a prophet."

Mat 21:27 And answering Jesus, they said, "We do not know." He also said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

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Obstacles To Unity

Perverted scriptural teaching

Mat 15:1 Then some Pharisees and scribes *came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, Mat 15:2 "Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread."

Mat 15:3 And He answered and said to them, "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?"

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Obstacles To Unity

Perverted scriptural teaching

Mat 15:4 "For God said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER IS TO BE PUT TO DEATH.'

Exo 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you.

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Obstacles To Unity

Perverted scriptural teaching

Mat 15:5 "But you say, 'Whoever says to *his* father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given *to God*,"

Mat 15:6 he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And *by this* you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

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Obstacles To Unity

Perverted scriptural teaching

Mat 15:7 "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you:

Mat 15:8 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME.

Mat 15:9 'BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'" 85

Obstacles To Unity

Failure to obey scriptural teaching

Mat 23:1 Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to His disciples,

Mat 23:2 saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses;

Mat 23:3 therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say *things* and do not do *them*." 86

Jesus Prayed For Unity Based on Truth, His Word

Joh 4:24 "God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Joh 8:32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

Joh 17:17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." 87

Jesus Prayed For Unity Based on Truth, His Word

1Co 14:37 If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment." 88

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