

Unity Prayer Curriculum / October 2021

Week 1

Reflection

The book of Romans is famous for “Justification by faith”— “how to get saved.” The topic is so important that many miss that justification is an illustration of a much larger theme: unity.

Paul wrote about unity to a well-meaning and greatly divided church of Jewish and Gentile believers.

- Jewish believers had a history of Scripture study, food laws, the practice of circumcising 8-day old males, and Saturday Sabbath keeping.
- Gentile converts included those who used to participate in pagan cult rituals—like the cult of Dionysius (Bacchus)—in which the participant would get intoxicated to experience an infilling of a false spirit resulting in ecstatic utterances.

Discipling a convert from Judaism would look very different than discipling a Gentile convert from a wine cult of a false god. So, the church in Rome was fighting. They were at war with the culture, and with each other—they made no room for each other to grow.

Paul wrote Romans to tell us that God would call us to a higher walk of unity and acceptance.

Bible Study

- 1) Romans 14 is about the apostle forging peace between divided Christians. Which verses show that Paul was asking the church to “get along, despite their differences...”?

Two verses speak definitively to this—first negatively and then positively:

- a. *“But you, why do you judge your brother? Or again, why do you treat your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the Judgment seat of Christ” Romans 14:10 NASB.*
- b. *“So then we pursue the things that make for peace and the building up of one another” Romans 14:19 NASB.*

Prayer

This week, pray for unity in our Alliance congregations. Reflect on these two texts and ask God:

- a) to open our eyes to when we are judging others.
- b) to make a plan to chase after and pursue things that brings peace and encouragement to our congregations, in our families, and to those around us.

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Week 2

Reflection

Ephesians is unique in four ways. It is the only New Testament book that:

- Uses the word “unity”
- Teaches us how to defeat demonic powers in a comprehensive way,
- Speaks of “the heavenlies” (God/Christ/Spirit, the resurrected church, and the demonic hordes all dwell there)
- Proclaims that the Church can be filled up with all the fullness of God.

Those four realities intertwine. We defeat demonic attack by being “in Christ—together”. We cannot be “in Christ—alone.” To be “in Christ” is to be melded together with every believer throughout history. The Spirit joins us to the Risen Jesus—and God pours His fullness ***into that joining***—making us a new race, “a temple in which God dwells by Spirit.”

The Spirit forges unity—the Devil foments division.

The unified church contains the fullness of God—and embarrasses the devil’s rule.

A divided church serves the devil’s agenda—and impedes the Gospel’s power. The book tells us to stop fighting, so that we don’t give the devil of foothold (4:27).

Bible Study

1) Who dwells in the heavenly places? Ask that question of each of these texts

a. 1:3

b. 1:19-21

c. 2:6-7

d. 3:10

e. 6:12

2) Notice that:

- a. We are blessed in Christ in the heavenlies,
- b. We are on display to the demonic forces in the heavenlies, and
- c. We wage war against the demonic forces in the heavenlies—and do this, not as individuals alone, but as a race, a temple, an army. We are to maintain “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” to defeat the devil. So...

3) What is your plan to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace?

Prayer

This week, pray for Alliance leaders—those charged with overseeing the work of the Gospel among us. Grant pastors and leaders unity, strength, and wisdom to act in such a way that the shared focus of our movement grows deeper and more profound.

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Week 3

Reflection:

Jesus prayed just before his crucifixion in John 17. Words fail to convey the depths of this intercession. One theme pervades the prayer—unity.

Strangely and wonderfully, a tax collector named Matthew—committed to serving the conquering power, found himself working with Simon the Zealot—committed to overthrowing the conquering power. Under any other circumstances, they would have been bitter antagonists—their political views were completely opposite—yet somehow Jesus' presence called them beyond their worldview.

They were united around Jesus. Now He prayed that they be united around Jesus' mission. It is striking to notice that their unity would directly impact their ability to carry out the assignment. Listen to the prayer that Christ offered for us:

"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 may also be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me" John 17:20-21 NASB.

Jesus makes it clear in this prayer, that such a unity is not only possible, but that our unity with each other can match the unity of the Father and the Son! Stop right now and remember that this unity is about Christ-follower with Christ-follower, across political lines, attitudes, races, and genders. It happened with the tax collector and the Zealot. So, it can happen with us too.

Notice also that the world believes when believers find their unity together.

Evangelism requires a commitment to each other—even though we are on other sides of the room. Evangelism needs not only a commitment to the Christ we love, but a commitment to union with the church He birthed.

Bible Study:

- 1) Read through John 17 in three translations. Then jot down your thoughts. What stuck out from this chapter?
- 2) Can you commit to agree with God, that your unity with other believers reflect the unity of the Father and the Son? Pray to that end.

Prayer:

This week, pray for the National Ministry Center (NMC), our districts, and our national and international associations. Pray that these clusters of leaders who are focused on proclaiming Christ in their regions, would be granted unity, strength, and wisdom in all their work.

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Week 4

Reflection:

In Acts 3, Peter and John took part in an astonishing miracle of healing. A man who couldn't walk, known to everyone who went to the temple to pray, was instantly healed in the name of Jesus. They declared the power of God and used the name of Jesus as the basis for the miracle.

Then “the powers that be” had the two men arrested, tossing them in jail due to their use of the name of Jesus. The authorities told them to never teach in that name again—and released them.

The church gathered—and they did something very different than our usual response in our culture. We would call a lawyer and insist on justice being done. They thanked God together for the privilege of being persecuted.

They quoted a Psalm about rulers and authorities fighting the Lord's Christ—and claimed that what was written a thousand years before was being fulfilled, first in Jesus' suffering under Pilate and Herod, and now, in their being persecuted.

They prayed like this:

“A healing in Jesus' name got us into trouble.

So, send more healing in Jesus' name.”

As they chose to preach the Gospel together, the building was shaken, the Holy Spirit fell on them afresh, they began to declare Jesus' name even more boldly—and they found themselves united in purpose:

“And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul...” Acts 4:32a NASB

They were “on purpose” on purpose.

Unity arises when we are on purpose. Can we intentionally be “on purpose?”

Bible Study:

- 1) Read through Acts 3-4. Notice how they were “on mission together” and how the effect of that was to create unity. What is the mission of your church? Are you on mission together?
- 2) The church prayed this: *“And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence, while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.”* Can you pray it when you are faced with trial from speaking the name of Jesus?

Prayer:

This week, pray for our nation and its leaders. Pray for the Prime Minister, the party in power, and for the governments over each region— pray that they be guided.