

IS THERE A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN



UNITY



ONENESS

AND

Is there a difference between being in unity and being as one? We, as people and as Christians, many times interchange these words with each other. Leaders and pastors discuss this topic of being in unity in reference to their congregation or ministry, as well as connecting with other pastors and leaders to bring forth the Kingdom of God within their neighborhoods, cities or regions.

The term "unity" suggests the idea of a group of individuals coming together and uniting together for a common purpose or goal. The term "unity" in the KJV is used only three times throughout the Bible. In the Greek, it is the word, "*henotēs*" which means, "agreement." Hence it is used in Ephesians 4:13, "*Till we all come in the **unity** (agreement*) of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:*" (*added by this writer) In the Hebrew, "unity" is the word, "*yachad*" which means - "alike, together." It is used in Psalm 133:1 - "*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in **unity!***" The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines unity as follows: "The state of being in full agreement; a way of combining the parts in a work of art or literature so that they seem to belong together."

In the New Testament, the word translated into our English word for "one," is the Greek word, "*heis*," which interestingly enough simply means, "one." It is simply a numerical word or value. It is used as an adjective, a descriptive word for a noun which is a person, place or thing. It is what it is - one. It implies being whole or complete. In numerical terms, one is one. That's it. In Hebrew the word translated into English for "one" is the Hebrew word, "*'echad*," which interestingly enough simply means, "one." The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term "one" as follows: Having the value of 1 —used to refer to a single person or thing. Interestingly, in the scriptures (KJV) the word "one" is used 1967 times. As stated previously, the word "unity," in the KJV, is used only three times. Hmm...

In Genesis 11, we read of the account of the "Tower of Babel." It tells that the people were "of one language and that they were as one." This "oneness" is what got God's attention. Notice what God, Himself says concerning the idea of "one," found in verse 6, "*...and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.*" God declares that because the people are "one," that there is nothing that they would not be able to accomplish. The people in Babel were out to build a tower that would enter into heaven for the purpose of overthrowing God. Today, we laugh at such thoughts. We all know that they would never have been able to accomplish their mission. However, God took it very seriously because He understood the principle of being "one."

The difference between the word "unity" and the word "one" is significant. As we have just discussed the word "unity" infers that there are a group of individuals, each in and of themselves, coming together for a single purpose or goal. They may think alike. They may want the same thing, However, they are each different in makeup and composition. They are all still "individuals." For that moment, they choose to put aside themselves for the purpose of the single, likeminded agenda of the group they belong to. There is nothing wrong with this. As we know there is a power in this "unity."

The thought that I would like to interject here is that "unity" is not necessarily "oneness." In the idea of "oneness," there is no other identity but the one. When God brought the woman to the man in Genesis 2:24, He states, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his*

wife: *and they shall be **one** flesh.*" (See also Ephesians 5:31) God was expressing here the idea that the two, the husband and the wife who were both individuals, would now be joined together and lose their individual identities and become something totally different - instead of two individuals they "became" one flesh - a totally different entity. They may each have different functions within this new "entity," however, the two are now one - a totally "new species of being" other than what each of them were before God made them one in marriage. This is the thought behind the concept of the Bride and Jesus.

I would like us look at to John 17 which is Jesus' final prayer before His passion. If we look closely, this prayer is really in response to the disciples finally getting something that Jesus was stating and preaching throughout His ministry. It is a fundamental principle of Christianity which is the fact that Jesus came from, and was sent by, the Father and therefore, He, Jesus, was also God. In John 16:30, we see that the disciples finally got this vital principle, *"Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God."* We then read of Jesus' delight in them finally getting this as He declares in verse 31, *"Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe?"* You can almost hear Jesus' joy in that the "light finally went on" and the disciples finally got it. It meant that they were beginning to believe that Jesus and the Father were the same - The Father was God and Jesus was God; they were one.

As Christians we grasp the concept that the Father, the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit make up the "Trinity." This is true and it is a fundamental truth of Christianity. However, Jesus never mentions the term unity when He speaks of His relationship with the Father. He only speaks of their relationship as being "one." This is telling us that the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are not three separate entities that are in unity with each other. No, this is telling us that they are one in the same just as we see the principle expressed in the "marriage" scenario expressed previously. Their only identity is "One God." Jesus was declaring that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are not just in unity with each other, they are "one" - One God!!! (Deuteronomy 6:4 - *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is **one** [echad]."*)

Jesus emphatically expresses this over and over in John Chapter 17. Then He expresses His heart for His people, those who would come to believe in Him and who He is.

*John 17:20-23, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be **one**; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be **one** in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be **one**, even as we are **one**: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in **one**; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."*

Notice how many times Jesus uses the word, "one" in just these few defining scriptures. This is His heart. This is what His Body is to be. We are to be **one** with the Father and with Jesus, just as He and the Father are one **AND** we are to be **one** with each other. That "oneness" is what will cause the world see and come to know that the Father sent Jesus into this world because the Father loves them just as much as He loves Jesus. (John 3:16) That is a wow moment!!! Or as some may say, an "Aha" moment.

In understanding this we get a better picture of what Jesus' definition of what "eternal life" *really* is. In John 17:2, 3, Jesus expresses the purpose of why He came to this earth and He gives us His definition of what "eternal life" is, *"As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. **And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.**"*

When I ask a class, "What is the definition of eternal life?" Most, if not all, reply, "Spending eternity in heaven with God." This is not an incorrect answer. However, this answer is actually a result or "perk" of eternal life. A very good "perk," at that, I might add. However, according to Jesus, "eternal life" is the restoration of the relationship between God and His highest creation - Man. Eternal life is not going to heaven. That is a result.

Eternal life really means that we become one with the Father and with Jesus, through the regenerative power of the Holy Spirit making us alive to God and bringing us into “oneness” with Him. We do not come into unity with God. We become “one” in Him. We lose our identities. We are no longer our own as the scripture tell us. We are not just God’s possession but we are “one in Him” just as Jesus is “one in Him.” Through Jesus, who is the “First Begotten Son,” we are brought into a relationship of “sonship.” We are brought into the family of God, known as the “Household of Faith.” We become, “joint heirs” along with Jesus to the Kingdom of God. We lose our old identity of self and we are now a “new creation in Christ.”

This understanding of what true “eternal life” really is, I believe, is lacking in many of our evangelism outreaches. We ask people, “Do you want to go to heaven or hell?” Anybody with half a brain would say, “Heaven.” Then we say a prayer and say they are “saved.” Now I am not saying that this is not a tool that can be used. However, the crux of the salvation message must be that Jesus came, and is “the Way” to have relationship restored back to God, the Father through His Son, Jesus. By accepting Jesus we become a “*new creation in Christ* (we are one in Him and the Father) *old things* (our old identity, character and personality) *are passed away, behold all things are **made new.***” (2Corinthians 5:17) We must not neglect this aspect of our salvation message. Eternal Life is really about “relationship” not “destination.”

The concept of “oneness” is also lacking within the Body of Christ these days. We are into “unity” and we declare and decree unity, which is good. However, it is not the fullness of what Jesus desires for us as His Body. As we have discussed, unity means that the individuals are still living and walking in their own identity. Jesus expresses that we are not to just be in unity but rather we are to be “one.” We are to lose our own individual identity and take on the identity, the character and personality of the One who we are one with - Jesus and the Father in the ability and power of the Holy Spirit. We are to live as Jesus lived and walked. The Body of Christ needs to not be so concerned with unity as much as we should desire and recognize that we are to be “**one**” in Christ. I have heard messages and teaching about ministries and churches having a certain “DNA” that distinguishes them from other ministries and churches and how that needs to be developed within their members. However, what I hear Jesus saying is that once we become one with Him and the Father, it is now His “DNA” that should be manifested from the lives of His people.

When we are one, just as the Father and Jesus are one, it truly becomes all about **the** Kingdom and not our own little kingdoms, churches or ministries. Oneness with each other means that we rejoice with each other’s successes and weep with each other’s failures and hurts. Just as in the human body (as Paul expresses in 1Corinthian 14), we may each have a function but we are all “one Body” - the Body of Christ. We use this principle to teach and train up people within our congregations and ministries concerning our own churches and ministries that we oversee as leaders and pastors. However, Paul was not expressing this for individual churches and ministries. He was inferring this for the Body of Christ as a whole - **as one!!!**

In Ephesians 4:11 we read of the “five-fold ministry.” Again, we have used this for individual churches, ministries and even regions. Again, this is not necessarily wrong to do. However, the true purpose of the five fold ministry is to bring the whole Body of Christ into oneness with Jesus and the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:13 (Amp.) - *[That it might develop] until we all attain **oneness** in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ’s own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him.*

If we look at the five-fold ministry found within the scriptures and within the local churches that were established in the Book of Acts, it was the purpose of the "five-fold" leaders to make sure that all the churches were thinking, acting, saying and expressing the same thing, as well as caring for the other churches, their people and their needs - being as one. This was so that if anyone would go into any village or city they would recognize the Body of Christ because they were not just in unity, but there was a "oneness" to them that would be recognized.

You may ask, "Well what about cultural and ethnic differences? Should we all look the same?" To that I would say, of course not. God made us culturally and ethnically different and that is a good thing. Different styles and forms are good because they open up the message to people attracted to certain styles and forms. However, if we are truly born again, it is our spirits that are now "one with the Father and Jesus." If this "oneness" within our spirit is truly manifested within the Body of Christ, it would bypass and not allow cultural and ethnic differences, styles and forms to bring division (denominations). The "attitude of our heart" would want to be in "one accord" through the Holy Spirit, connecting each part/function/member within the Body of Christ, together, to make up the "One New Man in Christ" - all believers - Jew, Gentile, male, female, etc.

Unfortunately, we have strayed from this. I had heard that it is estimated that within the earth today, there are over 46,000 denominations. That is not including those we do not know about and all the "lone ranger" ministries out there. Whether this is totally accurate or not is not the point. The point is as follows: the term "denomination" comes from the mathematical function of division. What that statistic just mentioned reveals is that there are over 46,000 divisions within the Body of Christ. How can the world see the Father and Jesus in all that division?

Jesus, in John 17 was expressing the heart of His ministry of intercession because He is the One who is constantly interceding for us today. I believe everything in John 17 is the foundation and essence of Jesus' intercession for the Body of Christ, today and always. That is His heart - that the world will see the Father and the Son through the "oneness" of His sons and daughters, in Him, on this earth. That has not happened as of yet. However, I am convinced that it will happen through a "remnant" that He is breaking through upon in this hour that will grasp His "heart" and put aside their own identity of self, ministry and church and lose it in the identity of the Father and Jesus. I believe this is what the world is waiting for. We need to come together and repent together of this. As we enter into this principle of "oneness with the Father, Jesus and each other," we will truly become effective in the neighborhood, the region, the city, the nation and any sphere of influence where the Lord has positioned us.

Referring back to Genesis 11 and the people of Babel, we read that what got God's attention was that the people were "one." The statement that God made in verse 6 was that, "... Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and **now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.**" The wicked people of Babel were as "one" coming against God. God knew this principle and confounded their speech to "divide" their "oneness." The devil also understands this principle and has used a strategy that has "divided" the Body of Christ.

Just imagine if we, as the Body of Christ, were as "one" - being one in Jesus, the Father and with each other just as Jesus and the Father are one; speaking with "one language" - the Truth because it is His Word that "sanctifies" us (John 17:17); just imagine how "*now nothing will be restrained from them (the Body of Christ), which they have imagined to do,*" in bringing forth the Kingdom of God upon this earth. It is only when the Body of Christ is "**one**" that all will see and experience that our God is, "*...able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*" (Ephesians 3: 20, 21)