UNITY IN GOD'S FAMILY

Course 7, *The Remnant Church*, Lesson 11

The Problem: What kind of unity does God desire for His church? To what extent does God desire unity within His church on earth—and what kind of unity is He truly concerned about? These are vital questions, and throughout Christian history, many different answers have been proposed. Some have emphasized external unity, defined by loyalty to centralized authority. In this view, unity is achieved when all members submit to appointed leaders, regardless of personal convictions or lifestyle. But is this the kind of unity Christ prayed for? Is it what Scripture teaches?

Others have promoted unity through love and tolerance, suggesting that doctrinal differences are secondary as long as believers treat one another kindly. They argue that since love is the heart of the Christian message, unity should be possible even among those who hold contradictory beliefs. But is this sustainable? Has history shown that love alone can preserve unity when foundational truths are in conflict?

Still others insist that doctrinal unity is all that matters, even if it comes at the expense of love. They may pressure others to conform to their views, mistaking uniformity for spiritual harmony. Jesus warned against this approach, condemning the Pharisees for their rigid, loveless proselytizing: "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves*" Matthew 23:15.

In everyday life, we recognize the value of unity in teamwork. No sports team, business, school, or hospital can thrive without cooperation. This often requires humility, sacrifice, and a willingness to prioritize shared goals over personal preferences. The same is true in the church—but with one key difference: Christian unity is not built on human strategy, but on divine truth and love.

So what kind of unity does Christ desire in His church?
What is the foundation of the unity He prayed for in John 17?
And how does this unity embrace diversity without compromising truth?

Let's turn to Scripture and explore the answers.

Objectives: In this lesson we will discover--

I. *Unity through Commitment to Christ*.
II. *Unity in Doctrine*. While diversity of background and experience enriches the church, unity in core biblical teachings is essential. Truth matters—and it must be held in love.
III. *Unity in Character*. Christ longs for His people to reflect His character: humility, compassion, integrity, and grace. This kind of unity cannot be faked or forced—it grows from within.
IV. *Threats to Unity*. We'll identify attitudes and behaviors that fracture the church, such as pride, gossip, doctrinal confusion, and spiritual apathy.
V. *Prophetic Unity Before Christ's Return*. Scripture teaches that before Jesus comes again, His remnant people will be united in truth, love, and mission. This unity will be both visible and spiritual—a testimony to the world.

I. UNITY THROUGH COMMITMENT TO CHRIST

True unity begins with a shared relationship with Jesus. He is the vine; we are the branches. Our connection to Him is what connects us to one another.

The Word:

1. To what extent are Christian believers to be united? Romans 12:5

2. How does the communion service illustrate the unity of believers in Christ? 1 Corinthians 10:16-17

3. In what way are national and racial differences transcended within the church? Galatians 3:27-283 Ephesians 2:14

4. Who produces the unity in Christ enjoyed by believers? Ephesians 4:3-6

Explanation: Christian believers are described in Scripture as *"one body in Christ, and individually members of one another"* Romans 12:5. This powerful truth is echoed throughout the New Testament. Though we come from different backgrounds, cultures, and personalities, we are united by our shared faith in Jesus. We all believe in Christ. We all partake of Him symbolically in the Lord's Supper. And we receive Him daily into our hearts through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who pours the love of Jesus into our lives—transforming us into people who are merciful, gracious, and patient.

This unity is not built on uniformity. It is built on love. We do not discriminate based on race, nationality, personality, or background. We are called to love all people—even those who do not yet believe as we do—because Jesus died for all and loves all. "*God shows no partiality"* (Acts 10:34), and neither should we. This love, however, does not mean we compromise truth. We do not condone sin or false teaching. But we follow Jesus' method: truth spoken in love, correction offered with compassion, and conviction held with humility. *"Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ"* Ephesians 4:15.

Relevance: When every member of the church is fully committed to Christ, the result is a beautiful unity—a unity of love, belief, and behavior. This does not mean we will agree on every detail of taste or tradition. There will be differences in style, culture, and personal preference. But in matters of biblical principle and spiritual conviction, we are united by one standard: Jesus Christ—His words, His life, and His example**.** He is the measure of our faith. He is the model of our conduct. And He is the source of our unity.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY IN DOCTRINE

The existence of many Christian denominations today highlights a sobering truth: believers do not always agree on doctrine. While all may claim allegiance to Christ, their understanding of who He is, what He taught, and how His followers should live can differ significantly. These differences raise an important question—how can there be true spiritual unity if foundational beliefs are not shared?

The Word:

5. How important is it that Christian believers teach the same truths? 1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Timothy 1:3

6. What danger is there in false doctrine? Ephesians 4:14-15; Galatians 1:6-8

7. What instruction are we given regarding unity of mind? Philippians 1:27; 1 Peter 3:8

8. Who brings believers into the unity of doctrinal understanding? With what documents will His teaching always be consistent? John 16:13, 26; 2 Timothy 3:147

Explanation: The existence of many Christian denominations today reflects a deeper issue: a lack of unity in doctrinal belief. The divisions within the Corinthian church during Paul's time were not merely about practice—they stemmed from divergent teachings and doctrinal confusion. Paul's counsel was unmistakably clear: *"…that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the*

same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Such unity cannot be manufactured by church leadership or imposed by policy. It must arise from each believer's personal reception of the Holy Spirit's teaching ministry.

False doctrine is dangerous because it separates people from Christ. This is why Paul was so urgent in his appeals: the doctrinal uncertainty among early Christians needed to be replaced by wholehearted acceptance of the Spirit's inspired counsel. He even pronounced a curse on those who taught contrary to the Spirit's instruction.

True unity—of understanding and belief—comes only through the Word of God, interpreted by the Spirit Himself. Any teaching that contradicts Scripture is not of God and not for the believer. The Holy Spirit inspired the messages of the Bible (2 Peter 1:20–21), and He will never contradict His own Word. The Bible, illuminated by the Spirit to the surrendered heart, is the sure foundation of sound doctrine.

Relevance: Have you prayerfully sought to understand the teachings of Scripture? The Holy Spirit always leads us to Christ, and Christ is always the center of His Word. Knowing Jesus and knowing what He teaches are inseparable. You do not truly know a person until you understand what he believes—and you only truly know Christ when you understand and accept His teaching.

III. CHRIST'S WISH THAT WE BE UNITED IN CHARACTER

Holiness is God's ideal for every believer—not a rare achievement reserved for a spiritual elite, but a daily calling for all who walk with Him. Throughout Scripture, holiness in character is consistently upheld as the mark of God's people. What is holiness? Holiness is the state of being set apart for God—reflecting His purity, love, and truth in our thoughts, actions, and relationships. It is a life surrendered to Christ, shaped by the Holy Spirit and growing in grace, enabling believers to walk in obedience and reflect Christ's character more fully.

The Word:

9. How did Jesus emphasize His wish that His people be united in love and character? John 17:21-23

10. What ideal of character development does God seek for His people? Ephesians 4:11-15

11. In what words did the apostles stress the importance of unity in holiness? 1 Peter 1:15-16; Hebrews 12:14; Revelation 3:5

Explanation: *"Be holy, for I am holy" 1 Peter 1:16. H*oliness is not something we attain through human effort alone. It is the fruit of abiding in Jesus—of allowing His righteousness to shape us from within. It is both a gift and a journey: a lifelong transformation into His likeness, empowered by grace. This calling is not reserved for a select few. It is extended to every believer, regardless of background, personality, or past. *"For this is the will of God, your sanctification…" 1 Thessalonians 4:3.*

God desires a church not only united in truth, but also united in character—a people who reflect His love, humility, and integrity in a broken world. Jesus Himself emphasized the character He longs to see in His followers: *"…I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" John 17:23.* This is not perfection in the human sense, but a spiritual completeness made possible by the indwelling of the perfect Deity. While no fallen human will be free from weakness this side of heaven, every believer is called to be free from sin—clothed in the righteousness of Christ and transformed by His Spirit. Unity of character becomes the hallmark of God's people, because they have received, by faith, the character of Jesus.

Paul spoke of *"the perfecting of the saints"*—a process by which all Christians grow *"unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" Ephesians 4:12–13.* Likeness to Christ in character is not merely an aspiration—it is God's intention for every life surrendered to Him. Peter echoes this truth, urging believers to be holy *"in all your conduct."* As the One who calls us is holy, so we are to be. *"…you also be holy in all your conduct. 1 Peter 1:15–16.*

This holiness is not self-generated. It comes only as we receive the Holy Spirit into our hearts (Romans 8:9–10). It is essential for those who seek eternal life with Christ: *"Without holiness no one will see the Lord" Hebrews 12:14.* The one who, by grace, overcomes sin through the indwelling Spirit is empowered to live a holy life—and is prepared for heaven: *"He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments…" Revelation 3:5.*

Holiness within is the foundation of holiness expressed in conduct. And when believers receive this divine gift, their ideals and character qualifications become so harmonized that they are united in the bonds of Christian fellowship.

Relevance: Are you seeking such a union with Christ—by the Holy Spirit—that you may receive His holiness and be united in heart with others who share this transforming experience?

IV. WHAT DESTROYS UNITY?

The answer, in a word, is sin. It was this that first disturbed the unity of heaven, and throughout history, it has been a constant source of disunity among God's people.

The Word:

12. What effect does pride have upon the body of believers? Proverbs 28:25; 1 Corinthians 4:18; Revelation 3:17

13. What does persistence in sin by one or a few do to the church? Joshua 7:1; Jude 4, 11-13

14. What is the effect upon the church of a conspiracy of unbelief? Matthew 8:34; Acts 17:5-6; compare Revelation 17:3-6

Explanation: Unity in the church is fragile when pride and self-exaltation take root. Scripture warns that *"pride of opinion"* can fracture the body of Christ. Even one individual who esteems himself above his brothers and sisters can disrupt the peace and harmony God intends for His people.

In the last days, one reason for widespread disunity is the spiritual condition described in Revelation: *"You say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" Revelation 3:17.* This Laodicean pride blinds many to their true spiritual need, weakening the church's witness and unity.

But pride is not the only threat. Any cherished sin—no matter how private or subtle—can hinder the Spirit's work and fracture the fellowship of believers. God cannot bless His people when sin is harbored in the heart. The story of Achan in Joshua 7 illustrates this sobering truth: one man's hidden sin brought defeat and suffering upon the entire nation. Jude echoes this warning, comparing the sins of professed believers to those of ancient apostates—men like Cain, Balaam, and Korah—whose rebellion disrupted the unity and mission of God's people.

When a faction within the church unites in unbelief or opposition to truth, division and heartache inevitably follow. Such conspiracies become tools in Satan's hands, especially dangerous to those who are spiritually vulnerable. The Gadarenes (Gergesenes), who collectively resisted Jesus' presence, forfeited the greatest blessing heaven could offer. Likewise, when the Jewish leaders rejected Christ and the gospel, they ignited division and persecution across the Roman world. Even within the early church, false teachers arose—distorting doctrine and seeking personal prominence. Their influence threatened the unity of the believers: *"Certain men…troubled you with words, unsettling your souls" Acts 15:24. "…false brethren secretly brought in…" Galatians 2:4. "…they desire to make a good showing in the flesh…" Galatians 6:12.*

In the final crisis, spiritual Babylon (Revelation 17:5) symbolizes churches that have compromised with the world, opposing God's faithful remnant who stand firm on Bible truth. Peace and unity will be violently attacked—but God's people will press together, living for Christ and proclaiming His Word with courage and love.

Relevance: The only safeguard against becoming a source of division is to live in unbroken union with Jesus. One heart harboring sin can ripple into disunity across the entire body. But one heart surrendered to Christ can help restore peace, healing, and spiritual strength to the church.

V. THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH PREDICTED

Bible prophets foresaw that before the second advent of Jesus, the Christian church would enjoy unity and strength.

The Word:

15. What unity of belief and practice did Isaiah predict for God's people before the end of time? Isaiah 11:12-13; 52:8

16. What similar prediction was made by Jeremiah? Jeremiah 50:4

17. What statement of Jesus indicates that the Old Testament predictions will be fulfilled for the true church of Jesus Christ? John 10:16; compare Revelation 18:4-5

Explanation The Old Testament prophets foresaw a time when God's people would be gathered together in unity—bound by love, devotion, and faithfulness to the Lord. While literal Israel failed to fulfill this divine purpose, these promises now find their fulfillment in the spiritual Israel—the worldwide body of believers in Jesus Christ. *"That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God…" Romans 9:8. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ… you are all one in Christ Jesus" Galatians 3:27–29.*

The unity that could have been realized in ancient Israel is being fulfilled in the church that follows the Lamb wherever He goes. Jesus affirmed this vision when He said: *"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd" John 10:16.* As the end of time approaches, God will call His faithful ones out of spiritual Babylon—out of confusion, compromise, and falsehood—into a united fellowship of truth and grace: *"Come out of her, My people…" Revelation 18:4.*

This final gathering will be marked by:

- Commitment to Christ
- Unity in biblical doctrine
- Unity of character through the indwelling Spirit
- A shared rejection of sin as a way of life

This is not superficial unity—it is deep, Spirit-led harmony rooted in truth, love, and transformation.

Relevance: Have you found unity of commitment and understanding with God's people? As you receive Jesus and embrace His Word, this fellowship becomes your privilege and joy. *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalm 133:1.* Such fellowship is essential—not only for peace of mind, but for spiritual growth. God has given us to one another so that we may encourage, support, and strengthen each other—sharing faith, offering emotional and material help, and walking together toward the Kingdom.

God's family is not complete without you. In Christ, you are welcomed, cherished, and called to grow in unity with fellow believers.

Review Questions

1. True or False
    a. Unity is merely a matter of obeying church rulers.
    b. It is not important to believe the same doctrines as other people in the church.

c. Jesus wants His people to be united in character.
d. Sin of any kind can cause disunity in the church.

2. Reflect and Discuss: What underlying attitudes or misunderstandings led to disunity among Jesus' disciples? How did Jesus respond—and what does His approach teach us about restoring unity today?