

Unity in Purpose and Truth John 17:20-26

“My prayer is not for them alone, I pray for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” John 17:20-21 NIV

In John chapter 17, Jesus prayed a prayer to His Father. He prayed for his disciples, but not just for them...He prayed for all believers, including you and me. Tucked in that prayer is a truth about the power of unity. We see in the prayer words like “that all of them may be **one**” in verse 21, and again in verse 22 “that they may be **one** as we are **one**”. In verse 23, it reads, “so that they may be brought to complete **unity**”. Jesus is concerned in his prayer that his followers would emulate the oneness that He possesses with His own Father. The unity Jesus wants for us is to be a replica of the unity that He enjoys.

There are different ideas today of what unity means, so we should understand what Jesus meant by unity. Unity has to do with oneness of purpose. Unity is not sameness. It is *distinctiveness going in the same direction in order to achieve a common purpose*. Unity is purpose driven, not persons driven.

For example, when the football team lines up on the field with different players, all with different backgrounds, to play different positions, yet they are facing only one goal line. Their differences are brought together to accomplish the same purpose...to make the touchdown. Together, unified in their purpose, they achieve their goal.

Or maybe you have arrived early to the symphony when the orchestra can be heard warming up their instruments ... there is discord. No one can tell what the harmony is ...it sounds like noise. Then the conductor walks out and holds up the baton and everyone’s attention is fixed on him. All of a sudden, the individual sounds are harmonized into one song played by multiple instruments following the leader to achieve the common melody. Unified in their purpose.

Jesus gives us a key element to achieving biblical unity in verse 17, when He prays to His Father, “Sanctify them in the truth; your Word is Truth.” *Sanctified* means to be set apart for a purpose. The road to oneness is sanctification in the truth. God will not sustain unity that leaves Him out. Unity is oneness of purpose, and defined biblically always includes the Truth.

How confident are you of knowing God’s truth, or knowing God’s purpose?

How might knowing God’s truth help you to minister to others experiencing discord and isolation?

*What would it be like if we fully embraced our purpose to experience unity in Christ?
Unity in our families, in our neighborhoods, in our cities and in our nation.*

The Prayer Team invites you to consider these questions fully in a time of prayer at the **Spring Prayer Gathering** this Saturday, here in the sanctuary, come any time between 9 and 11 am. We ask God to bless this time to strengthen the unity we share here at Hope and to prepare our hearts to build unity with truth wherever there is discord through the mercy and grace He showers on His people...so much “more than we can ask or imagine”.

---The Prayer Team, Hope Lutheran Church