

“That They All May Be One”
Unity of the Believers
[John 17:20-24]

Background Scripture: *O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.* [John 17:25-26]

Note: The unity that Jesus prayed for was not organizational unity, but spiritual unity based on: living in Christ (**vs.23**); knowing and experiencing the love of the Father and the fellowship of Christ (**vs. 26**); separation from the world (**vs. 14-16**); sanctification in truth (**vs. 17,19**); receiving and believing the truth of the Word (**vs. 6,8,17**); obedience to the Word (**vs. 6**); and the desire to bring salvation to the lost (**vs. 21,23**). When any one of these factors is missing, the true unity that Jesus prayed for cannot exist.

(1): Jesus does not pray for His followers to “become one,” but rather that they may “be one.” The present subjunctive used here designates ongoing action: “continually be one,” oneness based on their common relationship to the Father and the Son, and on having the same basic, attitude toward the world, the Word and the need to reach out to the lost (**I John 1:7**).

(2): To attempt to create an artificial unity by meetings, conferences or complex organization can result in a betrayal of the very unity for which Jesus prayed, what Jesus had in mind is much more than cosmetic “unity meetings.” It is a spiritual unity of heart, purpose, mind and will in those who are fully devoted to Christ, the Word and holiness (**Ephesians 4:3**).

[Ephesians 4:1-4]
Keeping the Unity of the Spirit

Note: in (**chapter 4**) Paul teaches that the “unity of the Spirit” (**vs.3**) and the “unity of the faith” are maintained and perfected by **(1)** accepting only the faith and message of the **NT** apostles, prophets, evangelist, pastors and teachers (**vs. 11-12**); **(2)** growing in grace, advancing toward spiritual maturity and growing up in all aspects into Christ (**vs.15**), and being filled with all the fullness of Christ and God (**vs.13; 3:13**);

(3) no longer being children who accept “every wind of doctrine” but who instead have a knowledge of the truth by which to reject false teachers (**vs.14-15**); **(4)** holding and speaking the revealed truth in Scripture in love (**vs.15**); and **(5)** living in “righteousness and true holiness.”

Deeper Study: [James 4:1]: *From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?* [internal struggles]

Note: The major source of quarrels and conflicts in the church centers in a desire for recognition, honor, power, pleasure, money, and superiority. The satisfaction of selfish desires becomes more important than righteousness and the will of God. When this occurs, self-centered conflicts are created in the fellowship. Those responsible show themselves to be controlled by the sinful nature rather than by the Spirit.

Discussion: [Ephesians 4:16]: *From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*

Final Thought: *And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.* [Colossians 3:15].