



All One in Christ Jesus

All Saints Church, Hoole

**Two homegroup studies
for September 2017**

1. Living in Unity

John 17: 20-26

For Starters : Think of 2 of the most significant things you really want at this point in your life. (It may be health, financial security, a new job, a particular relationship or) How often do you find yourself thinking/praying about these things?

In context : In John 17, Jesus is praying to God the Father in the presence of his disciples. We (like them) have the privilege of listening in and learning from him.

Jesus is about to be betrayed, arrested and killed. In full knowledge of this he prays for himself, for the disciples gathered around him, and then (in verses 20-26) for all who will become his followers in the future; in other words – for us!

Read John 17:20-26

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My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ 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. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³ I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

²⁴ Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. ²⁵ Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I

Questions to discuss

1. Circle the words “one” and “unity” in these verses.
How important is this to Jesus?
2. What type of unity does Jesus want His followers to have?
(v21, 24ff)
3. Underline the phrases that describe the impact this unity will have on the world.

have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.

4. How much does it surprise you that unity is Jesus's top priority for his followers?

5. Share with one another any other observations you have, arising from this passage.

Jesus makes clear that we ARE one. Unity is not something we construct from scratch. It is something we have already been given and which we need to maintain. This unity comes from the Spirit of God. Jesus prayed His people would be one, and they are one. Our job is not to *make* ourselves one, but to KEEP ourselves one. Paul takes up this theme in Ephesians 4.

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

6. "Make every effort" (4:3) – what does this suggest to you?

7. Every application here is relational – focussed on how we relate to our fellow believers in church. What are we instructed to do?

- Think about your own circumstances. What will doing this mean for you at "ground level" in practical, relational ways? (Answering this honestly may hurt – resist the temptation to duck this question!!)

"Unity is both a given and a goal. It is to be maintained and attained. It is from the Spirit and through the Spirit"

Sam Allberry

General Questions – choose one, or more, of these to discuss and to apply.

8. Have you ever considered that unity in the church is not just about ourselves, but that it serves a far bigger purpose (“that the world may believe...” John 20: 21,23) ?

How does this give you greater incentive to maintain unity?

9. Does something as simple as ‘showing up’ also help to maintain unity?
Why, or why not?

10. When you pray for our church and for Christian believers, how prominent in your prayers is the request for unity? Why is this?

11. How have these scriptures motivated you to pursue and protect unity in our church?

- Has it challenged your view of church unity?
- Do you need to think about it differently? (*Do we sometimes confuse ‘unity’ with ‘uniformity’?*)

‘ “Wounded by friendly fire” could describe many of us in the church. We have been hurt by the comments and behaviour of other believers, and it is hard to keep working towards unity. But don’t give up! Unity is our witness to the world. It is deeper than differences over worship styles and any number of other secondary issues that cause controversy. Our unity is based on Christ.’

Simon Manchester

Pray

- Ask God to convict you afresh of the importance of being one with His people
- Ask God how you can contribute to unity in our church.

2. Living at peace when we disagree Col 3:12-17

For starters: Think back to when you got dressed up in your best clothes for a special occasion. How did it make you feel? Why did you make the effort?

In context:

Previously in Colossians chapter 3, Paul told the Christian believers what behaviours and attitudes to get rid of. Now he turns to what believers are to put on and wear because of their new life in Christ. The “Therefore” at the start of verse 12 indicates that this continues the thoughts from earlier verses and especially, in verse 11, that the old divisions between us have been done away with in Christ.

Read Colossians 3:12-17

1. Paul addresses the believers as “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved.”

Dwell on this truth by considering -

- What does each facet of this description mean for you?
- How is this description not dependent on our feelings or efforts?
- How would a strong grasp of this truth impact how you relate to others?

2. Paul also reminds the believers that they are forgiven (v13b). Why does he start with these reminders of who they are in God’s sight before giving them any further counsel?

Living at peace is the goal, but Paul recognises that grievances occur within the church family.

3. What is your *usual* reaction when you disagree with someone? Think:
- what happens with your words, (do you declare your difference of opinion? keep your opinion to yourself? try to convince the other person of the strength of your views? or ...?),
 - what happens with your tone of voice?
 - what happens with your posture (body language)?

(If you are unaware of your instinctive response, perhaps ask your group members what they have observed!)

4. How are these biblical instructions for handling grievances different from the way our society handles them? (v13-14)?

5. If, or when, you have a grievance (however small) against another Christian, what would obeying God involve according to these verses?

Paul has been describing character. Now from verse 15 onwards, he talks about conduct.

***“Let* the peace of Christ rule in your hearts
Let the word of Christ dwell in you (plural) richly” vs 15, 16**

6. List what we are to prioritise in our life together as Christians, and discuss what these instructions mean. (vs 15-17)

7. How would conflicts between Christians be better managed with peace ruling (literally "*functioning like an umpire*") in our hearts? (v15)

8. Think of possible scenarios in our church life, where these attitudes need to be demonstrated in our relationships.

General Questions – choose one, or more, of these to discuss and to apply.

9. What does doing everything "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (v17) mean? How will this transform what you do and say today?

10. Imagine you have just had a row and exchanged angry words with a family member, church member, or with a next door neighbour. According to this passage, what should you now do?

In conclusion

Our new life in Christ calls for new "clothing" and a new lifestyle. Day by day we draw closer to the final 'marriage feast' of Jesus Christ and His bride, the church. In preparation for this, we are to be dressed in these "new clothes" which are the appropriate expressions of the fullness we have in Christ.

The rest of this term's studies are to be found in a separate booklet:

