

## WHY DOES CHRISTIAN UNITY MATTER?

John 17:20-26

INTRODUCTION: We have an awesome privilege and responsibility. We can make one of the most important prayers ever offered on earth either happen or not happen. When it happens the benefits are immediate and yet another generation of believers will come into being. But when we don't do this one ingredient is missing they won't happen. As a part of the body of Christ each of us has a part to play in bringing the blessing of heaven down to this earth. That element is Christian unity: John 17:20-26. In John 17:6-19 Jesus prays for his eleven remaining apostles. In John 17:20 Jesus prays for those of us who have come to faith through their witness. If we become one in Christ the world will want to know more about Him. If we are not becoming one in Christ the world will not want to know more about Christ. A lot is at stake here. Tonight we will look at where, what and how we become one in our Lord.

### I. WHERE DOES OUR LORD'S PRAYER FOR UNITY APPLY?

First, let's look at where our Lord's prayer for unity apply? Unity should apply between churches and denominations. Sadly, followers of Christ have divided into hundreds of competing denominations. Sadly most denominational differences have their roots in politics, personalities, and personal preferences not in honest differences of Scriptures. Many outside the church dismiss the teachings of our Lord Jesus because of the discord among those who claim to be His followers. 1 Corinthians 1:10-15. Jesus' prayer also calls for oneness in racial divisions. Many of us in our life-times have seen the harm this had brought to Christ's Name. Galatians 3:28: We need to start rehearsing what shall be true of every follower of Christ in heaven now! Even inside our churches today there are many things that separate instead of unite us. John 13:34-35.

### II. WHAT DOES CHRISTIAN UNITY LOOK LIKE?

Christian unity does not mean organizational union with those of unlike faith. The last thing our world needs now is one big, monolithic religious denomination. True unity does not mean structural and organizational unity nor uniformity. We can be one in Christ and yet different: 1 Corinthians 4:7. Real Christian unity means others can have differences of opinion on lesser matters without being disrespectful of each other. Christian unity is the result of a genuine relationship with Christ and with all His children.

### III. HOW CAN WE DEMONSTRATE TRUE CHRISTIAN UNITY?

How can we as Christ followers demonstrate true Christian unity here and now and there by fulfill the prayer of our Lord? Real Christian unity requires a Christ-like transformation on three different levels. First it starts in our hearts. Do we truly believe that Jesus is Lord of my life? If He is then I am not! We don't have to approve everyone else's likes or opinions in order to accept them as our brothers and sisters in Christ. We dare not allow our politics or likes or dislikes separate us from our love for our brothers and sisters in Christ. True Christian unity begins in our hearts but continues on in our habits of life. Christian harmony is a direct result of spending time together and truly getting to know each other. Finally, the answer to Christ's prayer for unity calls for a transformation of our words: Ephesians 4:25-32. We could take a giant step toward fulfilling our Lord's prayer for us by listening more and criticizing others less. By refusing to say anything negative or critical of our sisters and brothers in Christ. We need to join hands with other Christians in order to fulfill our Lord's prayer for us. That is what Jesus prayed for us.