



2018 Q4 Oneness in Christ - Lesson 5: The Experience of Unity in the Early Church

by Dr. Wendell Moses

1. **Memory Text:** “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Acts 2:42 NKJV
2. **Sabbath Afternoon**

3. Read the first paragraph
4. “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14:6
 - a. How do you read this?
 - b. Is this a true statement?
 - c. In what way is it true?
 - d. Many read this as a declarative statement.
 - e. This statement by Christ is descriptive: He is describing reality as it is made.
 - i. He is not keeping everyone out.
 - ii. He is trying to get everyone in.
 - iii. “He that is not against us is for us.”
 - iv. “God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.” John 3:17 NLT
5. Read the last paragraph: “I would insist that fellowship is a particularly important element in corporate worship. . .”
 - a. Is this true?
 - b. If so, why?
 - c. We are made communal beings. No one lives to himself. This is how we are designed.
 - d. True holiness is wholeness in the service of God. This is the condition of true Christian living. Christ asks for an unreserved consecration, for undivided service. He demands the heart, the mind, the soul, the strength. Self is not to be cherished. He who lives to himself is not a Christian. {COL 48.4}
 - e. Love must be the principle of action. Love is the underlying principle of God’s

- government in heaven and earth, and it must be the foundation of the Christian's character. This alone can make and keep him steadfast. This alone can enable him to withstand trial and temptation. {COL 49.1}
- f. Many who really want to live for God spend too much time thinking about their faults. In this way Satan tries to separate them from Christ and hopes to gain the victory. We should not make self the center of our thoughts, nor worry whether we shall be saved. Thinking of self turns our minds from God, who gives us strength. We should give ourselves to God and trust in Him. We should talk and think of Jesus, and forget ourselves. {STJ 70.5}
 - g. We must put away our fears and believe in God. Then we may say with the apostle Paul, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. This life that I live now, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave his life for me." Galatians 2:20. {STJ 71.1}
 - h. God asks us to rest in Him. He is able to keep that which we have given to Him. If we leave ourselves in His hands, He will give us power through Jesus to make sure that we win the battle against Satan. {STJ 71.2}
 - i. When Christ became a human being, He tied the people of the world to Himself by a tie of love. This tie can never be broken except by our own choice. Satan is always trying to get us to choose to break this tie to Christ. We need to watch and pray that nothing will lead us to choose another master. We are always free to do this. {STJ 71.3}
 - j. Let us keep our eyes on Christ, and He will hold us. We are safe when we are looking to Jesus. Nothing can take us out of His hands. We are to look at Him all the time, for then "that same glory, coming from the Lord, ... transforms us into his likeness." 2 Corinthians 3:18. {STJ 71.4}
 - k. Time alone in nature, engulfed in heavenly music, meditation, and prayer are all gifts of God for enrichment and spiritual development.
 - i. They can not and should not take the place of community
 - ii. We are a community of believers for others
 - iii. We are nourished when we expend ourselves for others.
 - iv. We are communal beings.
 - l. Steps to Christ vs Steps to Jesus



- i. Bible versions
- ii. Translations
- iii. Comfort in hearing, language
- iv. Fear of deviation from original
- v. There is benefit of original for the original hearer

6. **Sunday: Days of Preparation**

7. Read the first paragraph.
 - a. Remember the promises given to the disciples are also for us.
 - b. In Christ's prayer (the true Lord's Prayer)
 - i. John 17:20-21 (GNT with Deuterocanon) "I pray not only for them, but also for those who believe in me because of their message. I pray that they may all be one. Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me.
 - c. Notice the purpose of being in unity.
 - i. To be like the Trinity
 - ii. "So that the world will believe" that Jesus was sent by GOD.
8. The colored questions at the bottom of the page.
 - a. Caution of paying too much attention to self
 - b. "Lest we forget how God has led us in the past"

9. **Monday: From Babel to Pentecost**

10. Read 2nd paragraph about Pentecost
11. Read 6th (final) paragraph about the Tower of Babel
12. When mankind turned away from God - the result was selfishness and self centered ideas / plans
 - a. This called for the therapeutic maneuver of confusion (Babel) of languages.
13. When mankind turns back to God - there is unity of purpose and a reversal by God of confusing of the languages
14. Why was it a good thing for God to reverse what He had done in the beginning?
 - a. Does God change?
 - b. If not, what made His actions change?

15. **Tuesday: Unity of Fellowship**

16. Read the second paragraph: “It is remarkable that the first activity...”
- What did this do for the disciples?
 - We are best when our lives are consumed with the betterment of others.
 - We remember things better when we are teaching others the concepts we have barely learned.
17. In the 3rd paragraph: “The mention of fellowship certainly infers that this new community spent time together,”
- Time together bonds people for good or bad
 - We see this in relationships, marriages, intentional groups
 - We would do well as a church (or any organization) to foster activities together.
18. “Absence makes the heart grow fonder”
- Why is this a true statement?
 - or is it “Absence makes the heart go wander.”
 - You grown fonder of the absent individual only if your thoughts dwell on that individual.
 - A model for Christian growth and community.
19. **Wednesday: Generosity and Greed**
-
20. Comparison between Barnabas vs Ananias and Sapphira
- When did Barnabas and Ananias / Sapphira join the church?
 - Were they part of the Acts 2 church?
 - This is one narrative
 - Parables
 - Wheat and tares
 - Sower: rocky soil, good soil, weeds
 - Just because we have sinners in our church, does not mean God is not there
 - There are highs and lows within each congregation, family, Christian life.
 - Acts 4 & 5 are part of the Acts 2 church
21. 4th Paragraph: Read the 4th paragraph. The second sentence says: “Perhaps no sin can destroy fellowship and brotherly love faster than selfishness and greed.”
- Why?
 - It is the antithesis of unity.
 - Survival of the fittest vs “Not my will but thine”



- d. “Here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus”
 - e. John 15:13 (GNT) “The greatest love you can have for your friends is to give your life for them.”
 - i. That not only includes Christ’s literal death for us but the giving our lives, time, attention, priorities for others.
22. 5th Paragraph: “In the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1 - 17), the last commandment, about covetousness, is unlike the others.”
- a. Is this true? **NO!**
 - b. If you view the commandments as declarative statements of commands, this might be true.
 - c. The Ten Words are 10 descriptions of what truly Godly people look like.
 - d. Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5: 21, 22 and Matthew 5:27, 28 are showing that the source of your thoughts is the issue. Christ is not making finer and finer commandments that you must obey. He is describing the converted heart.
 - i. Matthew 5:21-22 (GNT) "You have heard that people were told in the past, ‘Do not commit murder; anyone who does will be brought to trial.’ But now I tell you: if you are angry with your brother you will be brought to trial, if you call your brother ‘You good-for-nothing!’ you will be brought before the Council, and if you call your brother a worthless fool you will be in danger of going to the fire of hell.”
 - ii. Matthew 5:27-28 (GNT) "You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But now I tell you: anyone who looks at a woman and wants to possess her is guilty of committing adultery with her in his heart.”
 - e. The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}
23. Colored section at bottom of page, first sentence: “What are ways in which we can seek to uproot covetousness from our own lives?”
- a. Is this our job
 - b. What is the natural result if our attention is on self

- c. By beholding we become changed.
 - i. What should be the focus of our attention?
 - ii. Where should our time be spent?
 - iii. By comparing ourselves to the Law, we get the diagnosis, but our attention shouldn't be there.
 - (1) Our attention should be on the remedy, not the problem
 - (2) 2 Corinthians 3:18 - we need to behold Him

24. **Thursday: Remember the Poor**

- 25. First paragraph:
 - a. Did the gift of the Asian Churches strengthen the unity of the Jerusalem believers with them?
- 26. Read second paragraph: "The experience of unity in the early church shows. . . ."
 - a. How is this done?
 - b. With rules?
 - c. With committees?
 - d. With personal rules?
 - e. The third paragraph as an answer

27. **Friday:**

- 28. Question #3: What is the importance of the phrase found in Acts 5:5 and 5:11 about the "great fear" that came upon the church in regard to the two deaths?
 - a. Is God the source of fear?
 - b. What causes fear?
 - c. What is the result of fear?
 - d. Anything that causes us to focus on ourselves will ultimately create fear within us.
 - i. Fear is not in the creative blueprint for mankind/the species human.
 - (1) We are to be other focused.
 - (2) It is pretty hard to fear when your main concern is not for yourselves, but for others.
 - ii. The antidote for fear is an abiding trust in our heavenly father/God.
 - (1) Example of Christ in the boat during the storm.
- 29. **Teachers comments:**
 - a. Learning cycle: Key concept for Spiritual Growth: "As we share in worship and fellowship, the Holy Spirit works through us to transform our attitudes to that of love for one another. This transformation gives glory to God."
 - i. How and why?



- ii. Because it reveals what a master creator He is to design such a perfect, other-centered creation.

b. **Bible Commentary**

- i. Read the first paragraph on page 67: “Acts 2 provides a glimpse into the life . . .”
- ii. The last sentence says: “Such unity does not occur by accident.”
 - (1) No. . . . it occurs by design.
 - (2) It is not something we have to work at.
 - (3) That is how God designed us.
 - (4) It does require effort on our part. Just as anything else in God’s creation requires energy input to maintain reality.
 - (a) 2nd Law of Thermodynamics
 - (b) God is constantly inputting energy of our recreation and sustenance.

iii. **Defining Devotion:** (Page 67)

- (1) This paragraph was written some months ago but is very appropriate in light of recent events in Battle Creek, Michigan.
 - (a) “The wholehearted attention that faithfulness demands means that devotion cannot happen without a significant level of commitment and discipline. Therefore, devotion cannot be ordered or imposed on others.”
 - (b) **Consider This:** “How would you describe devotion? What forms does devotion take in the twenty-first century? Are all these forms of devotion healthy? Why, or why not?”

iv. **Devotion to God**

- (1) “We should not forget that the loving interactions with others both inside and outside of their community also were acts of devotion to God. When we respond to God’s grace in tangible ways, we honor Him.”

30. Additional Thoughts:

- a. RH 8. 19. 1890 “If you have been permitted to stand in the presence of the Sun of Righteousness, it is not that you may absorb and conceal the bright beams of Christ’s righteousness, but that you may become a light to others.”