

Weekly Newsletter: 23rd May 2023

Reflection: Christian Unity Is Deeper than ‘Getting Along’

By Trevin Wax (the full article is available at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/christian-unity-deeper/>)

Jesus cares about church unity because it’s a testimony to the world.

That’s the simple way of explaining what Jesus prayed the night before he was crucified. But reading through John 17 again recently, I was struck by the deeper logic of the passage and the desire that his followers be one. There’s something more powerful at work here than “church unity is a witness to the world.”

Getting Along in God

Jesus wants us to get along, yes, but the deeper truth is that we get along *in God*. Eternal life is knowing the only true God and the Son he sent to save us (John 17:3). The interplay between the Father and the Son (everything Christ has is the Father’s, and everything the Father has is the Son’s) provides the context for Jesus’s prayer that his followers “be one as [they] are one” (vv. 10–11). The unity of the church is to be tightly connected to the unity of the persons of the Trinity.

This means, in all our distinctiveness as members of Christ’s body, we reflect something of the nature of God when we’re one and when we display this oneness to the world. The divine unity of Father, Son, and Spirit, enjoyed from before the foundation of the world—the joy and happiness that overflows that union of eternal love—is what Jesus wants for his followers. He wants our joy to be completed (v. 13) and for us to be one just as he and the Father are one. We’ve been adopted into the family, united to Christ, and therefore united to God.

It’s more than just “getting along.” It’s getting along *in God* and as a mirror of his glory.

Participating in God’s Oneness

But there’s more. Jesus wants his followers to be one *as a way of participating in the oneness of the triune God*.

Listen to how he later prays: “May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I am in you” (v. 21). The unity of the church is bound up in the divine life of God. We’re invited into the triune life of love. “May they also be in us” may be one of the most profound and surprising things Jesus ever prays. His desire is that, together, we be *in God*.

Participation in the divine love of the Father and Son is the prerequisite for the world believing that Jesus has been sent by the Father (v. 21). In case it's unclear, Jesus gets more explicit: "I have given them the glory you have given me, so that they may be one as we are one" (v. 22). And if the participation element isn't clear enough: "I am in them and you and you are in me, so that they may be made completely one" (v. 23). Lesslie Newbigin comments, *It is a unity which not merely reflects but actually participates in the unity of God—the unity of love and obedience which binds the Son to the Father.*

So, yes, Christian unity matters so the world will know we're Christ's followers, but there's a deeper sense in which Christian unity shows the world *what God is like*. And an even deeper sense follows: Christian unity participates in the divine life of God as Three-in-One. In our different ministries, in our variety of gifts, in our works of service and love, we're manifesting the same Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4–11). United to Christ, we're filled by the Spirit as we serve one another. Our unity is one of divine love.

Enduring the World's Hostility

Why does all this matter? Because the world is going to hate us: "The world hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I am not praying that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:14–16).

Jesus prays for his followers to stand firm, to be sanctified by the truth because God's Word is truth (vv. 17–19). He prays for the unity of the church not merely so our "getting along" will be a testimony of God's power but because our participation in the life of God himself will be necessary if we're to endure the hatred and hostility of the world. Unless we participate in the divine love, unless we hold together in love, unless we're overcome by the love of God for us expressed in our love for one another, we'll fail the test when we experience the world's hatred. Apart from the love of God, we'll fall prey to the fear of man.

In the end, the goal isn't papering over differences and finding surface-level agreement. Church unity matters because (1) our unity is connected to the unity of God himself (and thus our disunity is a scandalous affront to the gospel), (2) the world sees a reflection of God's inner life in our fellowship when we participate in his divine love, and (3) it's the means by which we withstand the pressures of the world that rage against God's truth.

Maureen Gowans' Funeral

Maureen's funeral will take place at 1pm on Wednesday 24th May at Warriston Crematorium, EH7 4HW and afterwards everyone is invited to the church for a time of fellowship and light refreshments. Please contact Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) if you would like details of the livestream.

Book Group – this Saturday

This month's book group meeting this Saturday at 3.30pm and we are reading *The hole in our holiness* by Kevin DeYoung. If you would like further information please speak to Anncris (anncris@gmail.com).

Edinburgh Marathon – this Sunday

Just a reminder that the marathon takes place this Sunday starting at 10am. There here will be a number of road closures and details can be found [here](#).

Ladies' Afternoon Tea – Saturday 3rd June



We're really looking forward to getting together as women to hear from God's word, pray, share testimonies, have time to catch up and enjoy afternoon tea together on **Saturday 3rd June from 2 – 4pm** in the church. Dayspring Macleod will be our speaker on the topic of 'Resting in the Lord'.

To help us with catering, please can you sign up [here](#). There will also be a hard copy sign up sheet at the church door on Sundays.

We don't need contributions of food from everyone, so just bring yourself!

Sunday Club Helpers

As we plan for the coming months at Sunday Club, we need volunteers in two ways:

1. **Summer Sunday Club:** we would love the Sunday Club Team to have a break over the summer holidays and are looking for volunteers to lead and teach the group during July and August. All the materials and resources will be provided and it's a great way to spend a Sunday morning!
2. **Sunday Club:** we are looking for helpers to join the Sunday Club Rota for the autumn term. No teaching or preparation will be required, you will be there as an extra pair of hands and to assist the group leader.

These are great ways to get to know the children in our church family and be involved in encouraging the next generation. Please contact Aileen, Jean or Aaron if you can help in anyway.

Church Barbecue – Saturday 17th June

We're looking forward to getting together as a church family for a time of fellowship, food and fun! There will be team games, races, a tug of war and hopefully some sunshine...

We're back at the Newlands Activity Centre, Romanno Bridge, West Linton EH46 7BZ on **Saturday 17th June from 12 noon until 4pm**. Food will be served around 1pm.

Please sign up [here](#) so that we have an idea of numbers for catering.



If you need transport, please speak to your home group leader to make arrangements in the first instance and contact Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) if there are any problems or you need help organising a lift. Thank you!

Christine Quinn's Funeral

Christine's funeral will take place on Wednesday 31st May at 10.30am at Mortonhall Crematorium, EH16 6TX and then a thanksgiving service at 12 noon in Holyrood. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Serenna's Mission Trip



It was great to hear from Serenna about her mission trip to Moyobamba in Peru and pray for her at the prayer meeting on Wednesday. She leaves on 30th May for five weeks to teach music with Asociacion San Lucas.

If anyone would like to give financially, here's a link to her fundraising page - <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/serenna-peru-2023>

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info –

- Monday:
 - Baby and Toddler Group from 10am – 11.30am
 - Warm Space from 12.30pm- 4pm
- Wednesday:
 - Maureen's funeral at Warriston at 1pm and afterwards at the church for light refreshments
 - Prayer Meeting at 7pm on Zoom
- Thursday:
 - Women's Bible Study at 10.30am in the church – last one!
- Saturday:
 - Elders' Meeting at 9am at the church
 - Book Group at 3.30pm
- Sunday:
 - Worship Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
 - Home Groups



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