

PART 5: GIFTS TO UNIFY

READ THIS OVERVIEW

12 JUST AS A BODY, THOUGH ONE, HAS MANY PARTS, BUT ALL ITS MANY PARTS FORM ONE BODY, SO IT IS WITH CHRIST. 13 FOR WE WERE ALL BAPTIZED BY ONE SPIRIT SO AS TO FORM ONE BODY—WHETHER JEWS OR GENTILES, SLAVE OR FREE—AND WE WERE ALL GIVEN THE ONE SPIRIT TO DRINK. 14 EVEN SO THE BODY IS NOT MADE UP OF ONE PART BUT OF MANY.

We are one body. Even though it sure doesn't feel that way these days. Yet that is what we are. One body that is connected to each other and created to depend on each other. And yet, these days, it seems like a lot of time what we do is consistently harm each other. As I look at the state of the Church today I can't help but think that there must be a better way. This is what Paul was writing to the church of Corinth about in this 12th chapter.

There were a lot of divisions happening in the church at that time, specifically around the topic of spiritual gifts. So Paul writes this letter to tell them that there must be a better way. He tells them that they are one body and therefore supposed to act like one body. He reminds them that they are each valuable and necessary and useful for the glory of God. In fact he uses the word indispensable.

Do you know that you are indispensable to the body of Christ? That word indispensable means you are absolutely necessary. All of us are. What that means is that if any of us are not doing and being all that God has called us to, then we are actually all at risk. Just like when the kidney does not function it affects the abilities of the rest of the body, so it is with us as well. Which means there really is no room in the body of Christ for comparison, but only cheerleading. There really is no room in the body of Christ for hatred, but only helping. Because just like with our physical bodies, when pain is healed in one part of it, stress is relieved in all of it. Which means instead of being petty towards each other we really ought to be consistently praying for each other.

Can you imagine if we lived like that? Consistently praying for the wellbeing of the body of Christ. Knowing that their well-being has everything to do with our own as well. Knowing that that is the true heart of the Father for us. Not that we would be divided in any way, but that we would be united in every way. Can you imagine what healing could take place if we decided to intercede before we decided to intercept?

Oh friends, this is what we were created for; to tend to, pray for, and love on the body of Christ. Because the reality is that we all need it. And the even greater reality is that our survival actually depends on it. So friends, let's cover each other well, because we only get better when we all get better.

So how do we actually live out that unity? Well, let's talk about a practical step we can take this week towards unity!

PREPARE WITH SOLITUDE, SILENCE, AND PRAYER

5-10 MINS

To prepare our hearts for what the Holy Spirit wants to do in us during this time, we'll need to be intentional about 3 postures that we'll revisit each week throughout this series. Solitude, silence, and restful prayer. Let's unpack that really quick.

Henry Nouwen says, "Solitude is the furnace of transformation. Without solitude, we remain victims of our society and continue to be entangled in the illusions of the false self." So the idea here is that the spiritual life can't grow without normalizing "aloneness." So each week, set apart a time and a place, away from people and things, to be with the Holy Spirit and Him alone.

Next is silence as a posture. Nouwen says that silence completes and intensifies solitude. Why? Because we live in a busy, noisy world, under a non-stop assault of words. In order for our spiritual lives to emerge in the midst of the chaos, we need to normalize "listening." So each week, insert a 3-5 minute pause before you move to the next step, and normalize stillness in your solitude. "Do not be quick with your mouth, do not be hasty in your heart to utter anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few." Ecclesiastes 5:2

Lastly, rest as a prayer posture. The literal translation of Paul's command to "pray always" is "come to rest". The Greek word behind this term carries the idea of someone resting in God amid a very intense daily struggle. So the prayer of rest, in the context of solitude and silence, is about bringing our heart's activity to a complete stop so it can simply receive whatever the Spirit wants to surface.

Here's a simple prayer that you can recite 2-3 times to tie all these together before you engage in this week's practice. Spirit of the living God, I am here before You, I am listening to You, and I am resting in You.

ENGAGE THE PRACTICE

15-20 MINS

Ok, so we've given you a posture of the heart, now we'll provide you with a practice of unity! Intercession is a word that often gets lost in translation. Most think it's merely about giving our desires, wishes, or sympathies to God. In reality, though, it is so much more.

This form of prayer finds its home in our desperation and desire to see God radically move – to change both lives and circumstances around us. Simply put, intercession is the place where we join with Jesus in praying for God's will to be done in the lives and circumstances of those we love “on earth as it is in heaven.” So to intercede for others is to practice unity!

This week grab a marker and some index cards to engage in this exercise that you can do as an individual or in a small group. You'll be making a huge difference in areas that have been coming up in our world lately.

1. Take out a few index cards and create a prayer card – a short list of areas or circumstances where you desire to see God radically move this week.

- Pray for the families who grieve the loss of a loved one today. Rev 7.16-17
- Pray for the weariness of the teachers and safety at our local schools. Mt 11.28-29, Ps 46.1
- Pray for the peace and mercy of God to cover our communities, our nation,

and our world. John 14.27

- Pray for the gifts of the Spirit to bring unity to a broken relationship in your life this week. Ephesians 4.32

2. Invite the Holy Spirit to come and teach you to pray. Spend just a minute or two in silence before you move on.

3. Thank God for these three realities:

- God is your “Father.” He has good intentions

toward you and the world. He cares about everything in your life and this world He created – small and large.

- God is “in heaven” – here, now, as close as the air up against your skin.
- Your prayers really do make a difference.

4. Pray through your prayer cards. Read the scripture attached to each one aloud, and lift up your own prayer of intercession.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

5 MINS

Wrap up your time by writing a prayer of expectation. This type of prayer is about trust and confidence. “Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.” [Deuteronomy 31:6](#). What do you want to say to God today about your confidence in Him and unity with others?