

## **“How to Experience Life-changing Unity”**

John 17:20-26

I was talking with a couple recently about their marriage, 54 years of marriage I think. This couple was quick to say they didn't have a perfect marriage; but, they were also glad to say they were still “together” after all these years. And, by “together” they meant together physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Really together.

Today's message is a primer on “how to experience life-changing unity.” It's an important message if only because Jesus prayed for us to experience unity. Beyond the spiritual benefits of unity, I have found that I'm a LOT happier when the people I love most are on the same page as I am, or at least, reading from the same book!

VOTE: Android or iOS?

### **A. Agree on a message.**

John 17:20, “I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message.”

-- You might think the “life” in “life-changing unity” is yours ... yes, but when you agree on a message you leave a life-changing legacy. The best part of being together is that you are empowered to change other people's lives.

-- The message matters. When we focus on love, forgiveness, and hope ... that is life changing. When we focus on conformity, guilt, or exclusion ... that steals life.

-- Unity Tip: What would be your family's advertising slogan? Agree on a message, it makes a difference in your life, and the lives of those that follow you.

VOTE: Coke or Pepsi?

### **B. Agree on a model.**

John 17:21, “I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.”

-- We have a model for Unity: The Trinity ... Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Three distinct expressions of God with a singular character and purpose.  
-- Water can be found in three forms: solid (ice), liquid (water), and gas (steam). Same essential element, found naturally in 3 forms. Each form has a purpose.  
-- Unity in purpose and character doesn't negate your unique personhood ... you can still be "you" and be in complete Unity with someone who isn't like "you" at all!

-- Unity Tip: Who would you like to be like when you grow up? If you can decide together "who" that is, you are well on your way to life-changing Unity.

VOTE: Toilet Paper ... over top or underneath?

### **C. Agree on a method.**

John 17:22-23, "I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. <sup>23</sup> I am in them and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me."

-- How did Jesus expect us to remain unified? By receiving and reflecting God's glory. When people focus on reflecting, giving away, what God has given them ... they experience Unity.  
-- "Perfect unity" flows from being loved perfectly. Giving away God's love to others helps them believe that this "Jesus thing" is real.

-- Unity tip: You get to pick what's important to you. You can major on the minors, which produces division and exclusion ... or focus on #1's, like "God loves us both, let's figure out a way to celebrate that together."

VOTE: Cat or Dog? Is being a "cat-person" or a "dog-person" a 'major' or a 'minor'? You get to decide that.

### **D. Agree on a mentor.**

John 17:24-26, "Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began! <sup>25</sup> O righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do; and these disciples know you sent me. <sup>26</sup> I have revealed you to them, and I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them."

-- When you take Jesus as your mentor, He agrees to do that 24/7/365 inside your life. It's a different kind of mentorship ... because it becomes inescapable.

-- A great benefit of Unity is being together, forever with people. If we cannot get along here on earth, how can we expect to get along in eternity with folks?

-- In heaven, there is no sin to divide us.

-- In heaven, the presence of Jesus is enough to unite us.

-- In heaven, we see instantly the difference between "major" and "minor."

I have zero doubt we can get along in Heaven.

-- I do have doubt we can get along here, and now. Until people listen to and follow Jesus, we will experience dis-unity in our lives.

-- NOTE: following Jesus will, of course, create dis-unity among your family and friends who don't follow Him. The Unity we're talking about is among followers of Jesus. We will never "get along" with the world, nor should we.

-- Unity Tip: Is the person you're trying to get along with a believer? That could be the root issue of your situation. If you don't agree on message, model, method, or mentorship ... then obviously, there's going to be dissonance in your relationship.

VOTE: Brownies ... chewy or cakey?

A closing prayer ... "Dear God, I ask that You would work among Your people to create the kind of Unity that changes lives, and Lord, begin with me. In Jesus' name, amen."