

Inspiring thoughts on Unity

From the Bible & Ellen White

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."

John 17:20-23 NKJ

"Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* For brethren to dwell together in unity! *It is* like the precious oil upon the head, Running down on the beard, The beard of Aaron, Running down on the edge of his garments. *It is* like the dew of Hermon, Descending upon the mountains of Zion; For there the LORD commanded the blessing-- Life forevermore."

Psalms 133:1-3 NKJ

"Strive earnestly for unity. Pray for it, work for it. It will bring spiritual health, elevation of thought, nobility of character, heavenly-mindedness, enabling you to overcome selfishness and evil surmisings, and to be more than conquerors through Him that loved you and gave Himself for you."

--*Counsels for the Church, page 290*

Mission not fulfilled without Unity!

"To the early church had been entrusted a constantly enlarging work--that of establishing centers of light and blessing wherever there were honest souls willing to give themselves to the service of Christ. The proclamation of the gospel was to be world-wide in its extent, and the messengers of the cross could not hope to fulfill their important mission unless they should remain united in the bonds of Christian unity, and thus reveal to the world that they were one with Christ in God. Had not their divine Leader prayed to the Father, "Keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are"? And had He not declared of His disciples, "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world"? Had He not pleaded with the Father that they might be "made perfect in one," "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me"? (John 17:11, 14, 23, 21) Their spiritual life and power was dependent on a close connection with the One by whom they had been commissioned to preach the gospel."

"Only as they were united with Christ could the disciples hope to have the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit and the co-operation of angels of heaven. With the help of these divine agencies they would present before the world a united front and would be victorious in the conflict they were compelled to wage unceasingly against the powers of darkness. As they should continue to labor unitedly, heavenly messengers would go before them, opening the way; hearts would be prepared for the reception of truth, and many would be won to Christ. So long as they remained united, the church would go forth

"fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Song of Solomon 6:10. Nothing could withstand her onward progress. The church would advance from victory to victory, gloriously fulfilling her divine mission of proclaiming the gospel to the world."

Acts of the Apostles, pages 90,91

"It is necessary that our unity today be of a character that will bear the test of trial. . . . We have many lessons to learn, and many, many to unlearn. God and Heaven alone are infallible. Those who think that they will never have to give up a cherished view, never have occasion to change an opinion, will be disappointed. As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed." - *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen White*, page 203

Living Testimony of Unity

If the members of the church are one with Christ, there will be union one with another. The unity of believers will be a living testimony to the world of the power of the Gospel. When there is love one to another, the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness will be diffused to a world that lies in darkness. Why can we not see from the lessons of Christ, and especially from his prayer for the unity of believers, that Christians must be perfect in unity in order to represent the glory of their Redeemer? If those who believe the truth would bring the prayer of Christ into their practical life, they would grow up into the full stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. As believers in Christ, we are "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." {ST February 7, 1895, par. 6}

The believer in Christ should understand that dissension and division in the church are brought about through the working of the powers of darkness, in order that those who profess to be the children of God may not present the oneness for which Christ prayed. God's people greatly dishonor his name, and misrepresent his truth, when they manifest a lack of love one for another. As love for God grows cold, they lose the childlike simplicity that knits heart to heart in loving tenderness. Hard-heartedness comes in, and there is a drawing away one from another. Many are saying by their actions, "I care not for the prayer of Christ." They feel under no special obligation to love others as Christ has loved them, and Jesus can do little for these souls, for his words and Spirit are not permitted to enter into the heart. {ST February 7, 1895, par. 7}

Many are in darkness, and know not the cause; they are not at peace with God; they are not one with Christ nor in unity with the brethren. They seem to think that they are at liberty to act out the natural feelings of the heart. They testify by their words and actions that they do not desire to be in union with those who do not exactly meet their mind, even though they are believers. All who entertain evil surmisings, and cherish ill feelings to others, need to be converted. They need to learn to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. {ST February 7, 1895, par. 8}

Love for one another is not to be manifested by praise and by flattery of one another, but by true fidelity. The love of Christ will lead us to watch for souls, and if we see one in danger, we will tell him so, plainly and kindly, even at the risk of his displeasure. The

religion of Christ is not to be controlled by impulse. We need to pray much and lean wholly upon God. We need to hold the truth with firmness, and in all righteousness and truth; but while we speak the truth with fidelity, we should speak it in love. {ST February 7, 1895, par. 9}

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another.” How much?—“As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” Do we regard this commandment sufficiently? Do we permit it to control mind and heart, and mold the character? “By this shall all men know ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” Thus believers are to bear to the world the credentials which will testify that they are indeed the children of God. Jesus says: “The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” {ST February 7, 1895, par. 10}

Manuscript Releases No. 863—Christian Unity

God’s chosen ones are to reveal to the world their union one with another. It is not possible for a few to walk to heaven alone because they can agree with no others. God’s people are a unit. If some entertain ideas so peculiar that God’s people cannot accept them, they should compare notes in a teachable spirit and be willing to learn. They should make the most strenuous efforts to be one, to come into the unity of the faith in the bonds of peace. [James 2:12-18 quoted.] {11MR 49.1}

The Lord has called us to unity in the bonds of Christ and fellowship and love. In His prayer for His disciples, Christ said: [John 17:20-23 quoted.] {11MR 49.2}

We see that which the Lord requires of us. Shall we not put our pride and our dignity where it shall not be so easily bruised and wounded? Shall we not lay it all at the feet of Christ? Shall we not allow our minds to be sharpened by the Holy Spirit, that we may not act like children in our association with one another, but as Christ’s brave soldiers, going without the camp and bearing the reproach for His sake? “A new commandment I give unto you,” Christ says, “That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34, 35). Shall we not, at the beginning of the year 1897, covenant with God that we will not be like the children of the wicked one, pettish, envious, jealous, and full of evil surmisings, but like the tree that is known by its good fruit? Then by our unity and love for one another all men will understand that we are Christians. Shall we not cherish love, rather than strife and malice and hatred? [John 15:7-14 and Ephesians 2:1-8 quoted.] {11MR 49.3}

No provision has been made for Christians to draw apart from each other. By our unity and love we are to reveal the character of Christ. “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour” (Ephesians 5:1, 2). There is a class named in this chapter that we are not to associate with. If we cannot lift them up, they will pull us down. We know the will of God. Shall we not practice His word? Shall we not love each other as brethren? [Colossians 3:12-17 quoted.] {11MR 50.1}

The Word of God clearly points out our duty. We are to cultivate kindness and forbearance and love. We are to represent Christ in character. Evil speaking, accusing, and faultfinding, misrepresenting our brethren because our own individual ideas are not considered as of the highest value, can find no place in a Christian's life. By our conduct we show what our influence and the principles we hold are worth. If self is our center, self will be seen in all we do. If Christ is our center, we shall bear His likeness. [1 Thessalonians 5:9-15 quoted.] {11MR 50.2}

Are we striving most earnestly to obey these words? Shall we not eat and practice them? Shall we not draw nigh to God, fearing to sin against Him by being unjust to our brethren? Then we shall fear to offend His children. We will not wound or bruise His heritage. If we hope in His mercy for sinners, we shall manifest the most tender interest for all for whom Christ has died. We shall not, because our ideas are not exalted and honored as we think they should be, handle the reputation of our brethren in a way that offends God, who loves them as He loves us, and who takes as much pleasure in them as He does in us.—Manuscript 157, 1897, pp. 3-7. (“Make Straight Paths for Your Feet,” no date.) {11MR 50.3}

White Estate, Washington, D. C., May 28, 1981.

“That They May Be One”

Christ prayed for his disciples “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” The unity of believers is to be an evidence to the world of the divine power and mission of Christ. This should be the mighty argument to convince the world that Christ is the Son of God, the Redeemer of fallen man. The love existing between believers is to be similar to the love existing between the Father and the Son. And this love in the soul is the evidence of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We are to love God supremely, and our neighbors as ourselves. It is in the lack of this love that thousands fail, and are found transgressors of the law. Supreme love for God will lead to love for our fellow-men, and the commandment of Christ is, “Love one another as I have loved you,” “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one for another.” We cannot have this love unless Jesus is abiding in the heart by living faith. The very unity of disciples, the love manifested one for another, will be evidence to the world that God has sent his Son into the world as its Redeemer. This unity and love will exist wherever the Spirit of the Lord abides; heart will be bound to heart, and works of righteousness will appear in the daily life. {ST April 13, 1891, par. 1}

Jesus saw there was constant danger that his disciples would lose the divine image, through Satan's suggestions of using policy toward one another, and he gave many lessons upon that sanctified, unselfish love that should be cherished by believers one for another. Love is the fruit of genuine sanctification. A true estimate of man is the thing that is lacking in the hearts of many professed followers of Christ. A confession of love, a profession of friendship, is not enough to meet the divine requirement; there must be deeds of kindness, feelings of tenderness, sincere sympathy and love toward our fellowmen. The fruits we bear will reveal the condition of our hearts, and give evidence of our sanctification through the truth. This sanctification takes in not only our greatest, but our smallest actions. The little things done for Christ's sake, humble acts of kindness, a cheerful disposition to do others good,—this is confession of Christ. There must be patient continuance in well doing, a wise improvement of talents. Jesus must be formed

within, the hope of glory, before you can rightly represent him to the world in words and works. In every little matter of life, in your deportment, in your forbearance, patience, long-suffering, you make known to others whether or not you are abiding in the living Vine. Jesus must be revealed in our every-day life, by the practice of the virtues that he revealed in his life. {ST April 13, 1891, par. 2}

The church is made up of persons of different temperaments and of various dispositions; they have come from different denominations; for the Cleaver of truth has separated one here and one there from the great quarry of the world, and in the church of Christ all these various members must be cemented together by the Spirit of God. If the love of Christ is in the hearts of the members of the church, through the abundant grace of Christ, there will be oneness, unity, among brethren. We must close the door of the heart to every suggestion that shall have the least tendency toward keeping us from this state of harmony. We must not hamper the soul and cripple its powers by the indulgence of selfishness. Selfishness is sin, and it grieves away the Spirit of Christ. When we cherish unkind thoughts, and harbor suspicions against our brethren, we are cutting ourselves off from the channel of God's light and love. Jealousy is as cruel as the grave, and should never be cherished in the heart, much less expressed in the actions. How cruel it is to cherish evil surmising against those who are members of Christ's body! Accusation, condemnation, and revenge are all of Satanic origin, and evil thoughts of others should be at once rejected from the mind, for these things repulse, and separate the hearts of brethren. Satan rejoices when he can create division in the church of God; for weakness follows, and the things that remain are ready to die. {ST April 13, 1891, par. 3}

Those who keep the truth will be found faithful to God and to one another. While base passions will surge in the hearts of unregenerated men, while pollution will corrupt the multitudes, those who love Christ and one another with pure, unselfish love will stand in Christ-like nobility, free from the contaminations of the age. By a life of truth and faithfulness they will confess their Lord before men. Their separation from evil will be manifested by silence as well as by words. By purity of character, by forbearance, by the manifestation of unselfish love for others, by the peace and joy of heart, the living witnesses for Christ will be made manifest, and will preach effective sermons of the power of Christ in the soul. Thus will genuine sanctification be displayed. {ST April 13, 1891, par. 4}

Guarding the Interests of Brethren

By his baptismal vows every member of the church has solemnly pledged himself to guard the interests of his brethren. All will be tempted to cling to their own cherished plans and ideas, which appear sound to them; but they should watch and pray, and endeavor, to the utmost of their ability, to build up the kingdom of Jesus in the world. Every Christian is required by God, as far as it is in his power, to ward off from his brethren and sisters every influence which will have the least tendency to divide them or to separate their interests from the work for this present time. He should not only have a regard for his own spiritual interests, but should manifest a burden for the souls of those to whom he stands related; and he should, through Christ, have a constraining power over other members of the church. His words and deportment should have an influence to lead them to follow Christ's example in self-denial, self-sacrifice, and love for others. {5T 480.1}

If there are any in the church who exert an influence contrary to the love and disinterested benevolence which Jesus manifested for us, if they draw apart from their brethren, faithful men should deal with these cases in wisdom, laboring for their souls, yet being careful that their influence shall not leaven others, and that the church shall not be led astray by their disaffection and false reports. Some are filled with self-sufficiency. There are a few who they think are right, but they question and find fault with every act of others. These persons must not be allowed to imperil the interests of the church. In order to raise the moral tone of the church, each should feel it his duty to seek personal spiritual culture, through the practice of strict Bible principles, as in the sight of a holy God. {5T 480.2}

Let each church member feel that he himself must be right with God, that he must be sanctified through the truth. Then he can represent Christian character to others and can set an example of unselfishness. If each will do this, the church will increase in spirituality and in favor with God. {5T 481.1}

Let not one man feel that his gift alone is sufficient for the work of God; that he alone can carry through a series of meetings, and give perfection to the work. His methods may be good, and yet varied gifts are essential; one man's mind is not to mold and fashion the work according to his special ideas. In order for the work to be built up strong and symmetrical, there is need of varied gifts and different agencies, all under the Lord's direction; He will instruct the workers according to their several ability. Cooperation and unity are essential to a harmonious whole, each laborer doing his God-given work, filling his appropriate position, and supplying the deficiency of another. One worker left to labor alone is in danger of thinking that his talent is sufficient to make a complete whole.—Evangelism, 104.

When it becomes necessary for a minister to do a work of correction, he should be very careful to act righteously and wisely. He is not to denounce the erring harshly before those who know not the truth. The unconverted judge the servants of God by such actions, and conclude that this cannot be the work of God. Those who are not of our faith but who are convicted of the truth, when they see a lack of unity among the ministers who claim to be obeying the truth, close the door of their hearts, saying, We want none of these things. Thus by the exercise of unsanctified speech, souls are turned from the truth, and an example given that opens the way for the things of truth and righteousness to be lowered in the dust. Our workers, when tempted to speak hasty words of criticism and judgment, should remember that silence is golden.—The Review and Herald, November 14, 1907.

It is the purpose of God that His children shall blend in unity. Do they not expect to live together in the same heaven? Is Christ divided against Himself? Will He give His people success before they sweep away the rubbish of evil surmising and discord, before the laborers, with unity of purpose, devote heart and mind and strength to the work so holy in God's sight? Union brings strength; disunion, weakness. United with one another, working together in harmony for the salvation of men, we shall indeed be "laborers together with God." Those who refuse to work in harmony greatly dishonor God. The enemy of souls delights to see them working at cross purposes with one another. Such ones need to cultivate brotherly love and tenderness of heart. If they could draw aside the

curtain veiling the future and see the result of their disunion they would surely be led to repent. [4] – {CCh 43.1}

When Christ's prayer is fully believed, when its instruction is brought into the daily life of God's people, unity of action will be seen in our ranks. Brother will be bound to brother by the golden bonds of the love of Christ. The Spirit of God alone can bring about this oneness. He who sanctified Himself can sanctify His disciples. United with Him, they will be united with one another in the most holy faith. When we strive for this unity as God desires us to strive for it, it will come to us. [6] – {CCh 45.2}

Notice that it was after the disciples had come into perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place, that the Spirit was poured out. They were of one accord. All differences had been put away. And the testimony borne of them after the Spirit had been given is the same. Mark the word: "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." Acts 4:32. The Spirit of Him who died that sinners might live animated the entire congregation of believers. – {CCh 98.4}

If God's professed people would receive the light as it shines upon them from His word, they would reach that unity for which Christ prayed, that which the apostle describes, "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "There is," he says, "one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Ephesians 4:3-5. – {GC 379.2}

Additional Bible Texts for Study & Reflection:

[Ephesians 4:1-16](#)

[2 Chronicles 30:1-27](#) (N.B. verse 12)

[Romans 15:1-9](#)

[Colossians 3:1-17](#)

Hymns

348: The Church Has One Foundation

350: Blest Be The Tie

401: In Imitation, Lord of Thee

402: By Christ Redeemed

410: Thy Broken Body, Gracious Lord

492: Like Jesus

587: In Christ There is No East nor West

637: Son of God, Eternal Savior

654: Lord Bless Our Homes

Responsive Scripture Readings:

732: Jesus' Prayer For His Disciples

[Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 2](#) - Ellen White