

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity – January 18-25, 2012

Unity is a very difficult goal to achieve. Whether its unity as a couple, in family, in friendships, in congregations and in communities ... it's really hard to be one in mind and one in heart! And so, if these are difficult, just try to imagine oneness in faith among the all the Christian churches!

The unity of the faith is a centerpiece concept in the New Testament. Christ, our Lord, prayed for it just before his crucifixion in John 17:20-21: *"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."* All Christians must strive for unity of the faith to build up the body of Christ.

The Bible condemns the opposite of unity—division. The largest group of the acts of a sinful nature is divisive sins: hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy. Notice that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5: 19-21). The church cannot be strong when the members act in these ways.

The New Testament teaches clearly that our job as Christians is to work toward unity and keep division away from our Christian community. We must work to attain the unity of the faith, to protect that unity once we attain it, and to refute those who contradict the sound doctrine that supports it. The clergy and elders, as shepherds of the flock, must take the lead in achieving the unity of the faith. To this end, they need your help and prayers.

God has given the church a recipe for attaining and maintaining the unity of the faith in the local congregations. In Phil 2:1-5, described how we may be united in Christ: *"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: We should be like-minded with the mind of Christ."*

Let us pray during the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* that, at the end of our time, the congregation(s) where we attend will still be a faithful, unified, and a true church of the Lord. This goal can only be achieved if we continually seek the build up the body of Christ till we attain the unity of the faith.

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