

Unity of Believers (True Believers)—Christians

Written by: Bill Richardson Edited by: Bill Kelly

Why would you prepare a “Study Writing” with the title as stated? You could possibly ask also, where is the emphasis? Will the emphasis be on unity, believers, true believers, or on Christians? I can’t say where the emphasis will be right now. However in my evaluation, each word and its meaning or principle as used in the Bible are important and there is a need for study for all of us in order to gain knowledge and grow as Christians must. There is another reason also. I borrowed the title from Nelson’s Topical Bible Index which was “Unity of believers” and then added to it. I challenged myself more by the add-on and it was proven so when I began my research and scripture selection to reference, to quote and discuss thus providing good, strong and befitting. By so doing we can enjoy and gain or grow in knowledge and love for Him and each other.

To me, definitions are in order at this time. In researching for the definition of unity, here is what came up: “The state of being one; singleness; absence of diversity; agreement; harmony; accord; uniformity; as a unity of sentiment. The Scriptures exhort children of God (Christians) to dwell together in unity. I will quote some scriptures and reference some, and if you are a believer let the words and the thoughts that develop have place in your heart and let them give you “goose pimples.”

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psalms 133:1).

“Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the Saints and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:9).

“Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Philippians 2:2).

“Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing” (Philippians 3:16).

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be tenderhearted, be courteous” (1 Peter 3:8).

Other scriptures with reference to unity are: Isaiah 52:6; John 10:1; Acts 4:32; Romans 12:5-16; 1 Corinthians 10:17, 12:13-14; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 1:10, 2:19, 4:3-6.

“Believers” are defined as ones who have been persuaded to give more heed (yield), trust, obey and abideth faithful doing God’s will and thus identified as being a Christian or follower of Christ, (See Acts 11:26) and being partakers of Christ’s sufferings, (1 Peter 4:13). Now let’ study in more detail the features of the first three words of the lesson title, “Unity of Believers.”

Unity of believers based upon:

1. Indwelling Spirit. *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you. If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are”* (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). (See also 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21). *“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have from God, and you are not your own”* (1 Corinthians 6:19).

When all true believers (Christian), members of the local congregation, are united together in true spirit in one accord doing God’s will they will never defile the temple of God. It is tragic when there is the absence of indwelling of an essential element of the basic structure of a Christian. Do we not fully realize what happens to us individually as temples of the Holy Spirit and collectively as the Church the temple of God when we fail to walk with the Lord in the light of His word?

2. New birth: It is then we are reconciled and transformed. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). Think about it! Realize how beautiful it is when one experiences the new birth and is transformed into a new creature. The old is done-away-with. The old life is passed away in the death and burial of baptism for remission of sins. A new birth, a new life is created. A transformation takes place; we are joined to Christ by faith and are then able to view life through the love of Christ.

We all must realize living the new life, doing His will, is the best life and the only life that will receive the reward of the place Christ has prepared for the obedient Saints. (See also John 6:63; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 4:24; Revelation 2:4).

3. Union with Christ: Unity of believers based upon union with Christ is very serious. Consider the admonishment given by Paul as he said to the church in Ephesus, *“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed you are disqualified?”* (2 Corinthians 13:5). In giving thought to exercising the test on ourselves individually, it seems that we would have to muster up all our faith, love and seriousness. Also, when we are asked to examine or test ourselves implies that we could be disqualified, does it not? Should we fail, we lose our salvation and the grace and providence of God is naught...for and to us. I can not think of anything to which we should give more serious consideration. Note this: *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all* (James 2:10). God expects consistent obedience. This requires twenty-four/seven examinations and or testing. (See Romans 8:10, what a powerful text; Galatians 4:19, child bearing pains of Paul; 1 Corinthians 9:27, discipline of the body/our body is us).

4. Mind: Unity of believers expressed by oneness of mind. Remember my saying in so many of my writings that “it” is a mind thing? The “it” being whatever the subject of the study. Now, hear this, *“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers. Be tenderhearted, be courteous...”* (1 Peter 3:8).

It is never out of sync to remind ourselves in study of the truths’ of scriptures which admonish us to set our minds on things above not earthly things. Where we set our affections is one of the tests mentioned above. We must be perfectly joined together in the same mind (see 1 Corinthians 2:16); having a willing mind (see 2 Corinthians 6:12); being of one accord, of one mind (Philippians 2:2); of love and sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7) purified hearts (James 4:8).

5. Unity of spirit: Yes, unity of believers must be expressed by oneness, unity of or in right or proper “spirit.” It is tragic when unity of spirit is manifested outside the realm of unity. The ugliness of this sin has been seen by the acts of some brethren. *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity”* (Psalm 133:1)! Is that not an expression of love? If whatever we do is not done in love it is hypocrisy, sinful, and unacceptable by our Lord. It has to be unacceptable, “It is not Christlikeness.”

How do we love each other as brethren? *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another”* (Romans 12:10). It will do us good, so go ahead and read all of Romans 12:9-13, it tells us how to treat believers. If you want to know how to “Live among nonbelievers” read and ponder Romans 12:14-21. Also note 1 Thessalonians 4:9, it is concerning brotherly love and God’s gift. Then check 2 Peter 1:7, it will give a refreshing review of “add-on” listed there. All of these are good and we need to read, study, and make them a constant part of our lives.

6. Faith: Remember, we are to walk in unity as expressed by oneness. What better thought-refresher is there than what is said so richly by Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God when he proclaimed, *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all”* (Ephesians 4:4-6). It truly is regarded a great blessing for believers, through faith, in love and through knowledge learned to realize the unity between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ is our one Lord in whom we have a common faith thus, one faith. God is the one Father of all the Christian family. As God is one so His true church is one. Our one greatest blessing will be when the one body, His church, will be returned to Heaven to be with Him for an eternity.

7. Fellowship: Unity of believers expressed by oneness of fellowship. Is there a need to have a delineated word study on “fellowship”? Have you ever done

a detailed study on fellowship? It was said (written) by a good Brother, a Gospel preacher, (Lynn Parker), “Ambiguous language may foster misunderstanding and dispute. It is always good to define our terms when we enter a study of discussion. With that said, let us define fellowship so all understand precisely what we have in mind.” Then Brother Parker quoted Vine’s meaning of FELLOWSHIP (p. 115). The paragraph explaining fellowship was commandingly well written using and citing 15 scriptures with the beginning in Acts 2:42. I will tell you, fellowship (the word) is used 2 times in the OT and 15 times in the NT and the first time it is cited in the NT is in Acts 2:42.

There is much that can be said of and about fellowship; And as a believer what do you think? And will you agree that it is a needed study? Do an experiment—Ask someone, “Please explain to me the meaning of fellowship? Now I want to cite 1 John 1 to get us started, it will help us: *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanseth us from all sin”* (vv. 3-7).

After you read the following you may want or desire to read vv. 3-7 again, but now think with me what John says in Chapter 5, v. 13, as he speaks to or about the knowledge of eternal life. These are some of the most beautiful words you will ever give thought to. *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”* (1 John 5:13).

Now go ahead and read the rest of Chapter 5 vv. 14 through 21, which is the rest of the book of 1 John. Amen! Here are some collective remarks from a study Bible in my library (Page 1969). They are thoughts which we can appreciate and they do have relevance. “The scriptures clearly teach that it is possible to know whether you are saved or unsaved. The assurance of the believer (Christian) is not based on feeling, (though the Christian may ‘feel’ saved), but on the principles of God’s word. We can know we are saved because Christ is in our hearts (Colossians 1:27; 1 John 5:12), because of the witness of the Word of God (1 John 5:10-11), because of the answered prayer (John 14:14; 1 John 5:14-15), because we keep His commandments (2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 5:18), because we love the brethren (1 John 3:14), and because we have this inner confidence and are fully persuaded concerning the keeping power of God in salvation (2 Timothy 1:12). Because of this

assurance, the believer need not be ashamed of Christ, even when he finds himself in difficult circumstances (2 Timothy 1:12). Now, don't you believe there is truth and a need for believers—Christians to have unity manifested by oneness of mind, unity of Spirit, faith, fellowship and concern one for the other. The concern we are to have is next in line for our study. It's good!

8. Concern: Unity of believers expressed by oneness of concern! That is powerful when genuinely manifested by the Agape (the Greek word rendered love) love as taught by the word of God to be an attribute of our heart. Let's read and study these great words which will answer the question for whom and what we are to have concern, "...that there should be no schism (division) in the body; but that the members, should have the same care one for another. And whether (if) one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored all the members rejoice with it" (2 Corinthians 12:25-26). It is true, there are God given abilities to the members of the body (Cf. Ephesians 4:11) and that is for a purpose and is not in any way reason or excuse for division... NEVER!

The diversity of the abilities is "*for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of ministries, for the edifying of the body* (see Ephesians 1:15; Colossians 1:4) *of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect (mature) man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro...*" (Ephesians 4:11-13); See also (Ephesians 2:19-22). This gives thought to: Soul winning is the responsibility of ALL Christians regardless of their spiritual gifts. All Christians are ministers and soul winners. Dear ones, the ball is in our court!

9. Physical, Social and Mental—Unity of believers is consistent with such difference. For physical please read, ponder, absorb and be thankful in obedience thereto for the blessing of guidance and responsibility of exercising behavior of wives and husbands in their relationship as set forth in (1 Peter 3:1-7). Please, using your reference Bible, look at related scriptures and study them.

For *Social* behavior give thoughts to and acceptance of the great and loving advice of the scriptures which is given to children and servants. Please know this; as children we are ALL servants and children of God. God is our Master and the referenced scripture gives our relationship to Him. Please read and study (Ephesians 6:1-9). If you read v. 10ff, you will know how to dress; we all should, well, we must dress by the dress-code given there. Check also reference scriptures to gain greater knowledge and reminders also.

Learn of the mental capacity and our downfalls thereto by study of (1 Corinthians 26-29). Again check reference scriptures. Check and study the word "confound", used in v. 27, it is used two times. If you don't do this you will be put to shame!

One other thought that just came to me and it is something to be considered. Note all the scriptures we considered and discussed in this lesson. The lesson and attributes of unity and the beauty of making them a part of one's life is clearly seen. Now give thought of life and "doing-not" the will of God in unity...that is not a life you live, its prolonged death. The antonym of unity is disarray/confusion. Think about that kind of life. Oh my! How terrible and sad it would be to be associated with brethren that do not "...*dwell together in unity*". The thought that comes to me...it better get "fixed" and faster than quick!

"This was a good and needed study"—for all of us and that is for sure. I pray God will bless us all in our study as we think, and participate, so that all things are done for learning and edifying each other in the spirit of love glorifying God. May we resolve to manifest what we think, say and do be justified in His sight!

The scriptures and commentary that has been set forth in this study has been of great benefit and did me much good. These wonderful scriptures that teach great principles and conscious motivation and prayers that you and I will pray, have their place in this study. Let's pray that we will accept all truth herein, and that it will be a conscience server to us for dedicated lives in the Lord.

The well-trained conscience is equal to the knowledge, abiding faith, and love that we submit or expose to our mind. With confidence, I say that you are studying this lesson with faith and love, and that it will be of great benefit to you. With confidence I also say that you desire to be blessed, to gain more knowledge, (true abiding biblical knowledge) , which is associated with responsibilities, which creates a desire to seek, to search diligently, to accept when found, to associate with, and be an active part of, and that you will abide faithfully in the Lord's Church until death.

The church, of which I am speaking, cost the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is His Body, His Kingdom, and His Church. Please be an obedient dedicated part of the church that you read about in Bible, Christ's church. It is the only church we read about in the Bible (See Ephesians 4:5). You cannot pass through Heaven's gate if you are not in His Body, (His Church); that is the truth; that is what the Bible teaches.

I invite you to view my Website often, www.geocities.com/dubbyt, and please note other consecrated writings. New study writings are added along as completed. There is a writing posted that I am sure you will want to view and copy. The writing title is, "The Church of the Bible, Christ's Church." It has a two-page enclosure, which has the title, "What Must I Do To Be Saved." Please study both "biblical-truth" writings with an honest and receptive heart for truth and obedience. You will be blessed! God bless you for studying with me on this great subject. God loves you! And I do too! Your servant in the Lord...There is one enclosure, page 7.

Bill Richardson. Member, Hartselle Church of Christ, Hartselle, AL 35640

P.S. "What do you think about this thought?" "Christianity does not remove us from the world and its problem. It makes us able to live in it, triumphantly and usefully."

KNOW THAT YOU ARE SAVED

By: Mark N. Posey – Minister – Austinville Church of Christ, Decatur, AL

QUESTION: Sometimes I do not feel saved! How can I know I am saved?

ANSWER: Beloved, feelings can be deceiving! However, if you obey God's Word, you are right! There is no shame in being right (Romans 1:16)! If you believe Jesus (John. 8:24; Romans 10:17, repent of your sins (Acts 2:38), confess Christ as Lord (Matthew 10:32, 33), and baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38), you are forgiven and saved (Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21).

The Lord adds you to His Church (Acts 3:47). ONLY those in Christ's Church will be saved (Romans 15:24; Eph. 5:27). The Scriptures were given to grant assurance to the saved (Romans 15:4). It is God's will that all be saved (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9). Christ died for everyone (Hebrews 2:9; 1 John 2:2) and saves the obedient (Hebrews 5:9; Acts 4:12).

Are you an obedient of Christ's Church? John wrote, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). Those "born again" [baptized] have a "living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3-5).

Hope means, "Expectation, assurance and confidence." You must remain faithful to the Lord (John 5:13). However, even the fallen can come home (Luke 15:20), receive forgiveness (John 1:9) and the assurance of salvation (Rev. 3:5).

Therefore, if you do as the Word of God directs, there should be no doubt about eternal salvation. Cf. 1 John 2:3, 5; 3:14, 19, 24; 4:14. And God bless!

"ISN'T THAT A BLESSED STATEMENT" IF ONE IS IN THE RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR BLESSED LORD, IT GIVES ONE THE DESIRE TO ASK JESUS TO COME QUICKLY! DOES TO ME!

I SNEAKED THIS IN. Mark won't mind. I can hear him saying, Amen, Bill Richardson! Love you Mark!