

“Enjoying the Abundant Life of Jesus: Church Life”

Our Union with Christ

The abundant life of Jesus is a “church life” – a life of intimate, rewarding relationships with other believers. The basis of this fellowship is our union with Christ.

John 17:20-23 – “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; ²¹ that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. ²² The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; ²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

- We are invited to share in the mutual, reciprocal love that the members of the Godhead have enjoyed for eternity.
- Our union with Christ not only unites us with the members of the Trinity, but with each other.
- J.I. Packer: “Union with Christ is the basic fact of salvation. It is the foundation of all the blessings of the gospel. To be in Christ is to be personally joined to the Savior, so that all that He has is ours, and all that we are is His.”
- The phrase *in Christ, in him, in whom, or in the Lord* appears over 200 times in the New Testament.

7 Elements of Unity

Ephesians 4:4-6 – “There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.”

1. One Body

In the New Testament, the emphasis is on “we” rather than “me.”

2. One Spirit

1 Corinthians 12:13 – “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

3. One Hope

We are people of hope:

- God of hope (Romans 15:13)
- Grieve with hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13)
- Rejoice in hope (Romans 5:2)
- Blessed hope (Titus 2:13)
- Hope of righteousness (Galatians 5:5)
- Hope of the gospel (Colossians 1:23)
- Hope of glory (Colossians 1:27)
- Hope of salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:8)
- Hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2)
- Hope stored up in heaven (Colossians 1:5)

4. One Lord

This refers to Jesus Christ:

- Greek word is *kurios* – ruler, master, commander, one who exercises authority.
- It's not enough to call Jesus your Savior. Is he your Lord?

5. One Faith

Jude 3 – “Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”

Three Levels of Doctrine:

- Tier One – beliefs that are absolutely essential for salvation. All genuine believers must affirm. Examples: Trinity, virgin birth, full deity & humanity of Christ, substitutionary death and resurrection, salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. (See Apostles' Creed)
- Tier Two – not essential for salvation, but important enough to separate over. A church or denomination's theological distinctives, such as mode of baptism, exercise of spiritual gifts, or role of women in ministry. Genuine believers can disagree but may choose to serve in different churches because of theological convictions.
- Tier Three – matters over which Christians in the same church can disagree without breaking fellowship. Examples: views on eschatology, style of worship, style of dress.

When it comes to biblical unity, first-tier doctrines bind all Christians together and are non-negotiable.

6. One Baptism

There's no such thing as an unbaptized believer in the New Testament.

7. One God and Father

- Just as we are born into physical families, believers are "born again" into God's spiritual family by faith (John 1:12, 3:3).
- If God is our Father, that means we are brothers and sisters in Christ, and we are going to spend eternity together.
- God's family transcends bloodlines and offers an even greater spiritual connection than our physical families (Matt. 12:48-50).

Conclusion: Because of our union with Christ, believers co-share in the life and oneness of the Trinity, which binds them together in a profound unity that will last for eternity. Let's celebrate, cherish, guard and protect the oneness that we have in Christ.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How has being part of a local church impacted your life in a positive way? Have you ever had a negative church experience that shocked or hurt you?
2. What exciting truths does John 17:20-23 teach about our union with Christ?
3. Ephesians 4:4-6 lists 7 elements of unity that tie all true Christians together. Which one encouraged you or challenged you the most, and why?
4. What gives you hope on a daily basis?
5. What's the difference between receiving Jesus as your Savior and your Lord?
6. How do the three tiers of doctrine help you understand what biblical unity looks like?