

"One Body"

Did you know that the New Testament emphasizes that Christ has only one body. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders, and this is a Bible study "In Search of the Lord's Way." We not talking here about His physical body but His spiritual body. To learn more, stay tuned.

Welcome to In SEARCH of the Lord's Way! We're here to search the Scriptures for God's will. We search the Scriptures because it is divinely inspired. It reveals the will of God for our lives and gives us all things that pertain to life and godliness. We know the that Lord's way is a narrow way that leads to life, and we want life. Our life in Christ is a new life, an abundant life, and eternal life. We can get this no place else, so we look to Jesus Christ. Thanks for taking time with us today. We'd love to hear from you and we want to be a part of your life each week.

Now if you drive through any town or city in this nation, you will see multiple churches with many names and beliefs and practices. Yet, when you read the Scriptures, the emphasis is on the one church and that's significant. The contrast between many differing religious groups and the one church is stark and surprising. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could all realize and participate in the vision of the Lord of having just one church filled with brothers and sisters who followed the Lord, were of the same mind and judgment, and loved each other?

That vision can only take place when people stop having itching ears that want to hear what culture and the world say and start listening to the Lord and His apostles in the New Testament. We must go back to the Bible if we desire to be the one body that Jesus desires. We must turn away from doctrines and practices that are never found in Scripture and go back to doing Bible things in Bible ways. Loving the Lord means humbling ourselves and letting the Lord guide all that we believe and to do His will. It means putting Him and His righteousness first.

Now we offer this study on the one body free! And if you'd like a printed copy and live in the United States, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also have many free programs and materials on our website, www.searchtv.org. You can also see us on YouTube.

We'll now worship in song, read from John 17:20 to 23, and explore how the Lord Jesus wanted His people to be united in one body.

Our scripture reading today comes from the gospel according to John chapter 17: 20 to 23. And is part of a prayer that Jesus makes to His Father.

"I do not ask on behalf of these (speaking of the apostles) alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; 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.

The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; 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.

Isn't it wonderful to know that God can love us the way He loved His Son Jesus. Let's pray together. Father we're thankful for Your love for us and the giving of Your son Jesus. And Father we're

thankful that we can be one together in truth. And as we love You and serve You. This is our prayer in Jesus name, Amen

Jesus prayed to the Father for His followers to be one, just as He and the Father are one. But before He prayed this, the Lord Jesus recognized that the unity He longed for was built upon the truth. In fact, the Lord Jesus prayed for unity among the people. And before He prayed that He first sanctified or set them apart in the truth. The Lord prayed in John 17:14 to 19, "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth."

You see the things that unify God's people are found in Whom they believe and what He teaches. We have a common love and a common faith. Christians who devote themselves to the Lord are bound to Him and His teaching. The one body has one head, Jesus Christ. So the body listen they listen to Jesus, and His authority rules their lives through His word. There can be no unity if Jesus doesn't rule in their lives. When people reject the teaching of Jesus, they separate themselves from Him.

The Lord Jesus promised to build His church in Matthew 16 verse 18. Now He purchased His church with His own blood (Acts 20 and verse 28). He is the head of His church (Ephesians 1:22 to 23). And notice that He is here speaking of church in the singular—one church. The New Testament sometimes mentions churches, such as the churches of Galatia in Galatians 1 verse 2 or the seven churches of Asia in Revelation 1 through 3. We also, so, should not think that these are denominations who had different names and believed different doctrines. When these churches varied from the truth, the apostles called them to forsake their error and to return to the truth. Some need to do that today.

The New Testament speaks of the church as the body of Christ in several passages. Consider these Scriptures. Romans 12:3 to 5 says, "For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." Though individual Christians have differing skills and abilities, they still make up the one body.

When churches take communion, the Lord's Supper, they are unified with Christ and one another. 1 Corinthians 10 verse 17 says, "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." Now the bread in communion points to the physical body of Christ, and the fruit of the vine points to His blood. By eating the same bread and drinking the same fruit of the vine, they are uniting in fellowship with the Lord and with one another.

1 Corinthians 12:12 to 13 says, "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit." I tell ya we are baptized into the one body of Christ, which is the church. In baptism, we cease to belong to ourselves. We belong to Jesus.

Ephesians 1:22 to 23 says, "And he (that is God) put all things under his (that is Christ's) feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all." Now just as one head and one body is normal physically, so spiritually there can be only one head and one body, and that body is defined as the church.

Now the church in the first century began with not Jews alone, but soon Gentiles came into the church. Ephesians 2:13 to 16 explains, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility." You see the Lord unites into one new man both Jews and Gentiles. Now since I'm a Gentile, I'm thankful God included me.

The Lord Jesus spoke of His intention to unite Jew and Gentile in John 10:14 to 16. He said, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd." Again, the Lord's flock is to be one flock, not many.

When the church at Ephesus had struggles getting along, Paul reminded them in Ephesians 4:1 through 6, "Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 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."

Jesus loves the church, like a husband loves his wife. And the closeness of Christ to His church cannot be overstated. Ephesians 5:28 to 30 says, "So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body." Christ loves and cherishes His church, and so should we. Yes, we too.

Colossians 1:17 to 18 says, "And he (Jesus) is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent." Now Jesus must be first if we are to remain united. His ways must become our ways. And Paul urges us in Colossians 3:14 to 15, "And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful."

When Christians fuss, the world stops paying attention and they reject Christ too. Hundreds of fussing churches makes millions of unbelievers. Jesus prayed, in John 17:20 to 21, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just 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 have sent me." Christians must let Jesus rule through His word. And we cannot live in selfishness and expect the world to see Jesus in us.

The church at Corinth was badly divided over their commitment to various leaders. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10 to 13: I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you,

my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." (then he asks) Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? Paul couldn't imagine the Corinthians putting Christ in the same category as men.

This scene of division is multiplied today in the denominational world, where people follow their brands with their own beliefs and practices rather than focus on following the word of God. Christians must be united in the same mind and judgment. They must regard Jesus as Lord in every respect and go back to His word for our faith and practice. Paul wrote in Philippians 1:27, "Only live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about your circumstances that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind contending together for the faith of the gospel."

The concept of denominationalism with brand name Christianity rather than wearing the name of Jesus Christ has promoted division and devalued the truth. People can't believe differing doctrines and maintain real unity. We must set aside any human doctrines and devote ourselves to a true discipleship of abiding in the words of Jesus Christ.

Now Paul had to deal with Jewish Christians who were not content to follow the teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ. They demanded the Gentiles to also obey the Law of Moses with the traditions of the elders. And they added to God's gospel something that could never save. Paul fought this and said in Galatians 1:6 to 10, "I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! (then said Paul says) For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ." We must serve Christ.

When people add to God's word, subtract from God's word, edit it, or twist it because it doesn't match their desires or live up to the times, they're like the false teachers of Galatia. They're deserting Christ and His one true gospel and substituting their own false beliefs and practices. Now if your goal is to please men, you will not please God or be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. God's will must never take second place or be an afterthought. It must be our focus and our priority. Loving the Lord with all our heart and soul means listening to His words and obeying Him. God will never accept people putting their things first! And doing their own will and not His.

Where is your heart? Is it truly on serving the Lord Jesus or on being popular with people. Let's not turn the one body of Christ into something God never intended or God never approved. Let's go back to Jesus Christ and to His word and serve Him and Him only.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father we're thankful that through Your love and the sacrifice of Jesus that we could have the church and forgiveness of sins. Help us Heavenly Father to be one body to listen to You and to the things that You teach and not allow the world to tell us what to believe. This is our prayer in the name of Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Since the New Testament says there is but one body, and that body is the church, then we can conclude there is but one church built by Jesus and purchased with His blood. Shouldn't we be part of that church? You cannot read of any denomination in the New Testament. There is no record of denominations until after the 1500s; Jesus built His one and only church in the first century. And for

this reason, the church is undenominational. Not only that it is pre-denominational, and it must oppose the existence of denominationalism. You can't embrace the church Jesus built and believe Jesus accepts all the denominations that were never mentioned in Scripture.

Jesus prayed for a unity that assumes people are holding to the truth, not a unity where people can believe whatever they please. When you hold to denominationalism, you must believe that we cannot know the truth or that the truth really doesn't matter. Both ideas strongly contradict the teaching of Jesus Christ. He promised we could know the truth (John 8 verse 32) and He said everyone who is of the truth listens to His voice (John 18:37). Are you listening to Jesus?

To become a Christian, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and acknowledge that He is the Son of God. Believe Jesus died for your sins and rose again on the third day by the power of God. Turn from sin by repenting of your sins and devote yourself to the way of the Lord. Confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God and be baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Now just as the people on Pentecost repented and were baptized in response to the first gospel sermon, so should you. Baptism is the immersion in water of a person old enough to understand, believe, and repent. We have no biblical record of infant baptism.

We hope that today's study about the one body has helped you see the need to follow Christ alone. If you live in the United States and want a free printed copy, send your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call the Search office toll-free at 1-800-321-8633. There's a schedule of our programs and a map of churches in your area at www.searchtv.org. And you can watch SEARCH any time on YouTube! Subscribe to our channel, "SearchTVMinistry" and like the programs you watch. We also offer free Bible Correspondence courses. Now don't worry, we're not asking for money. We're here to help you draw close to God.

We do ask that you show God your love by worshiping at church. You need a church family. And if you can attend, don't neglect worshiping at church. There's probably a church of Christ near you. If you're looking for a healthy, Biblical church home, we'll gladly help you find one. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. Keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.