

## Relationships and our Unity in Christ

### Part A

This study looks at what unity in Christ really means in practice. We see how Christ's work of reconciliation on the cross not only brought peace between us and God; it also brings the unity of the Spirit between all who believe on Christ, in the midst of great diversity.

#### Key verses

**John 17: 20-23 Jesus Christ prayer for us with these words:**

*"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.*

*I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*

**Galatians 3: 26-29 The practical consequences of true unity in Christ:**

*'You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

*If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'*

Read also

**Colossians 3: 9-11**

**Ephesians 4: 1-7**

#### Themes

- A. Jew and Gentile
- 1) The difference in *background and upbringing*
  - 2) No difference in Christ
  - 3) Principles for all our relationships  
(crossing boundaries of background and culture)
- B. Slave and Free
- 1) The difference in *circumstance and opportunity*  
(Rich & Poor, Educated & Non Educated etc.)
  - 2) No difference in Christ  
(All Abraham's seed, all heirs)
  - 3) Principles for our relationships  
(crossing boundaries of class and power)
- C. Male and Female
- 1) The differences in *body and soul*.
  - 2) No difference in Christ
  - 3) Principles for our relationships  
Comparison: Adam with Eve / Christ with the church (Gen.2& 3/ Rev.2&3)

*Part B (Slave and Free) and Part C (Male and Female) will be sent at a later date.*

**A. Jew and Gentile** (Ethnic Differences)

*The following is an examination of the Christian Teaching on this subject, as found in the Bible. It is not a political statement.*

Please read accompanying verses.

	Many great differences because of our backgrounds		No difference for those in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile
	Jews	The Nations	Disciples of Christ
1) Relationship to God as a Nation	A chosen Nation. 2 Samuel 27:23-24 Inheritance, gifts Romans 9:1-5	The Scriptures declare that no other nation and no group of people (outside of Christ) are "God's People". Deu. 32:21, 1 Peter 4:17	Disciples, both Jew and Gentile have the same Lord (Jesus) Ro.10:11,12. Believers together called by God "my people" Ro.9:24-26
2) Earnestness	Seeking, Zealous. Ro. 10:2 & 11:7	Not seeking; No understanding. Ro.10: 19-20 Isaiah 65: 1	The objects of God's mercy. Called to obey Christ. Ro.9:23 + 24.
3) Works	External rituals to keep the law.  The Law (Deut. 4:8)  Circumcision (8 <sup>th</sup> day)	External Rituals to appease gods.  Without the Law through Moses.  Not circumcised on 8th day	Clothed with Christ. Gal. 3:27  Gal. 6:15 (God's Work, not man's.)  Circumcision of the heart (Deut. 30:6)
4) Attitudes	Hostility: Lack of respect, mistrust and anger towards Gentiles (non Jews).	Hostility: Lack of respect, mistrust and anger towards Jews.	"He himself (Jesus Christ) is our peace" - through the cross. Eph. 2:14-18

When true believers are able to understand what Christ has done for them, a real breakdown in barriers occurs. In the New Testament churches, the natural barrier that existed between Jew and Gentile was broken down by the love of Christ. Barriers of misunderstanding, bitterness and mistrust were removed.

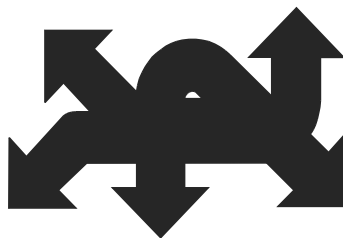
Just as then, so now: A full understanding of Christ's work on the cross will inevitably, even if gradually, bring about a deep heartfelt love of Jews for Gentiles, and Gentiles for Jews. When the Lord Jesus lives in us, we can **love from the heart**, despite the failings we can see in the other. *"Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs."* Proverbs 10:12 NIV.

What this truth shows us is that, although the one who loves sees wrong, he does not stop loving because of what he sees. In fact, his love *is proved* by the fact that he continues to love despite what he sees and knows (see 1 Corinthians 13:7). Isn't that how Christ loves us? Of course it is! If it was not so, we would have no hope. Christ says: *"My command is this, love one another as I have loved you"* John 15:12.

The barrier between Jew and Gentiles still exists today. This barrier is broken down, when the two groups of people with a different background and upbringing are united IN HIM. The dividing wall is broken down. These same principles work to bring healing in every other relationship between all true believers.

## Principles for our Relationships

*How to love your fellow believers in Christ. These **actions** of love are drawn from the lesson on page 2.*



### 1. Rest in the Lordship of Christ

instead of comparing  
your relationship to God  
with that of other believers.

Rom. 10:11-12 & Eph. 4:5

### 2. Be thankful for God's great mercy to you

instead of comparing  
your earnestness in seeking and obeying God  
with that of other believers.

Rom 9:23-24 & 11:25, Gal 6:4-5

### 3. Bear with the weaker brother in love

instead of comparing  
your freedom in faith  
with the law-bound lifestyle of other believers

Gal. 6:15 & Rom.14:1- 15:13  
especially 14:13 & 15:5

### 4. Seek after peace *'in one body through the cross'* of Christ

instead of pointing out  
the failings, sins and hypocrisies of other believers  
against you and your group.

Eph. 6:15 & Rom.14:1- 15:13  
especially 14:13 & 15:5

### 5. Be a faithful disciple

Be eager to maintain faithfulness as a disciple of Jesus  
in that you prove all things and hold fast that which is good

instead of becoming confused and led into error  
through a great number of teachings, ideas and activities

Gal. 1:6, 3:1, 4:17, 5:7 & Eph. 4:14  
1 Thes. 5:21 & Rev.2:14-16

### 6. Speak out the truth in love

Discern the spirits which are at work, and follow the urge of the Holy Spirit speaking to you, in that you do not shrink back from speaking out the truth in love.

instead of becoming filled with bitterness  
and making matters worse through gossip and the spread of false information.

Mat. 18:15-17, Gal. 6:16, 1Joh. 4:1  
Eph. 6:11-12, 2Cor.10:4-6  
Tit.1:10-16 especially 13!

Principles for our relationships (continued)

## **What next?**

We may know about these things but are we putting them into practice? We may know all about what the Scripture says, but often in our own daily lives and habits nothing changes.

***Our life is not a product of what we know, but what we have become.***

So, how do we receive these truths into our lives - to have them become our own attitudes and thoughts, our words and deeds? Can the kind of reaction and lifestyle we have been looking at become part of us...of me?

The surprising answer is no....., that is....

.....not without keeping in a close relationship with Christ!

**Jesus said: "No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. *Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*" John 15:4**

In this world, where the spirit of the age is saying "Peoples of the nations, let us love one another" and "Let us make peace with one another - we can do it if we try!", the root is the '**pride of life**' 1 John 2:16 (*'the boasting of what he has and does...' NIV*). This proud answer to our relationship problems "*...comes not from the Father but from the world.*" 1 John 2:16. There are two basic parts to the one response we need to make for true unity:

**TURN TO CHRIST,**

in

**repentance**

and

**faith.**

This is not just a 'once-for-all-time' move that we make. Everytime we are convicted by the truth and we desire to take hold of it, the only step available to us is this: To turn to Christ in repentance and faith. When we do this, God will meet us. Moreover, when we make that move, he will come to our aid with his Holy Spirit's power.

The proof of that is in the following verse in which Christ speaks to Christians:

*"Those I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and **repent**. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and **opens the door**, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me."* Rev.3:19-20.

**Christ is close**, not far away. The very act of opening the door, in a **simple step of obedience in faith**, brings the presence of the **Master right into the believer's heart** - once again into the centre of your being. There, your attitudes and thoughts, words and deeds, are **changed by fellowship with Him**. As Christ eats with you, the Holy Spirit's presence helps you to react in love to those around you. (Eph. 4:29- 31)

Say "Come right in!" to Jesus' knocking. Remember how Lot invited angels into his house (Gen.19:1-17 esp.3). This shows us that 'our house' means 'our responsibility'. Instead of eating on our own, now we can prepare, and share a meal with the Lord Jesus in worship, thanksgiving and praise. A simple meal of 'unleavened bread' - which is the pure life of Christ himself (see Luke 22:19 & 24:28-32).

**Through Christ's presence in your heart, your specific needs will become clear. As you receive his counsel, he will enable you to buy from his provisions.** (Rev. 3:17-18)