

Reflection Guide

John 17:20-26 - Union with Christ

Jesus now looks to all believers. He is praying that we would be one... so that the world may believe that he is the one God has sent to redeem them. God's intention is that the very love that is between the Father, Son and Spirit would be between you and I. This love and unity is going to put God on display... so compelling that through it the WORLD will know who Jesus is.

What is Jesus' confidence that he can put the whole redemption plan of the world in the hands of us?

*21 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 **23 I in them** and you in me, they may be perfectly one, so that the world may know you sent me...*

*John 14:18... **you in me, and I in you.***

Jesus affirms the indwelling of himself in all believers and their BEING in him. This is the reality of our union with Christ. We are most familiar with the phrase "in Christ". Paul uses it 33 times. It is "the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation".

5 Pictures of our Union with Christ

- 1) **a physical body** - *Eph 5:29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body.*

We are united with Christ in the same way that the human body is united with its head.

The union between Christ and His Church is so real, so vital, so intimate that God has never viewed the one apart from the other. There is such an indissoluble oneness between the Redeemer and the redeemed, such an absolute identification of interest between them, that the Father of mercies never saw them apart. He never saw Christ as "Christ" without seeing His mystical Body; He never saw the Church apart from its Head. (A W Pink)

Where does Paul get this? Where does his understanding come from?

Acts 9:4 And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" 5 And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.

- 2) **Water Baptism:** *And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them INTO the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

Just as we are put into the water, we are being put into Christ and we are being given a NEW name. a new identity. Baptism is a naming ceremony. Everyone born has the name of Adam all over them. His guilt and his corruption. We can't escape it. He's dad, we've got his name. So to save us, God puts us into Christ and we get a new name. Here its expressed here so clearly as the ONE name of God: Father, Son, and Spirit.

- 3) **Tree** - *John 15:4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

*Luther - My holiness, righteousness, and purity do not stem from me, nor do they depend on me. They come solely from Christ and are based only in Him, in whom I am rooted by faith, just as the sap flows from the stalk into the branches. Now I am like Him and of His kind. **Both He and I are of one***

nature and essence, and I bear fruit in Him and through Him. This fruit is not mine; it is the Vine's.

4) Incarnation - Jesus is the union between God and man. 100% God, 100% man. We see this in the gospels. At times he acting like God: controlling weather, raising the dead. At times he's acting like a human: hungry, tired... The whole picture of the incarnation is that God has joined himself to his people in his Son Jesus. Consider Jesus' Baptism: *Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented.*

John could not bear the holy Son of God to be counted among the sinners. But that's exactly what Jesus came to do. Not only are we baptized into Christ, but he is getting baptized into us.

5) Trinity - *24 Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.*

Jesus is saying to us... we are in him and he is in us IN THE SAME WAY that the Father is in him and he is in the Father. The closest picture that we have of our union with Christ is the union that Father, Son, and the Spirit has with each other. Jesus says: *if you want to understand how united you are to me, consider how united I am to the Father, how united the Father is to me.* One being, 3 persons.

Which one of these pictures were you most/least familiar with?
Which one helped you see/sense/understand YOUR union with Christ? Why?
What misunderstanding / unbelief / forgotten truth did this picture address?
Which one is the most difficult for you to enjoy / understand? (help each other)

5 Characteristics of our Union with Christ

1) **ETERNAL** - eph 1: he chose us IN HIM before the foundation of the world. It began with God in the counsels of eternity past and will continue forever. It is as sure as God is God and will last as long as God is God.

2) **INDIVISIBLE** - for us to be separated from Christ would mean Jesus would be severed, cut to pieces. Jesus nourishes and cherishes you and I as much as you care for your own body. Jesus would no more cut us off that he would cut off his own arm.

Christ and the believer have the same life. They are not separate persons linked together by some temporary bond of friendship. - they are united by a tie as close and indissoluble as if the same blood ran in their veins.

3) **LIVING** - its not just a theory or a perspective that God has on us. We are part of him and he is part of us. The vine and the branches is a picture what Jesus said earlier in John 14... because I live, you will live also. His sap, his life is bearing fruit in us right now.

4) **PERSONAL** - Jesus said his sheep knows his voice and he knows them. He knows them by name. Many of us when we think of God's love or Jesus' death on the cross we only think that he loves us as part of a whole and he does. But if we stop there, we miss it. He nourishes and cares for us as individuals. Paul was persecuting, imprisoning, killing a finite number of individual Christians. And Jesus said: you are persecuting ME.

- 5) **LOVING:** in eastern religions, God is a force, and impersonal spirit, and in most cases PERFECTION is losing our person and melding into a universal oneness. But union with Christ is not that. Its two personal beings and Jesus compares our union with him to the interpersonal love from person to person to person in the trinity.

Does it get more personal, intimate, and loving that between the perfect, sinless God and himself? Father and the only begotten son? And again, why do we get this love? We are IN HIM!

Which of these aspects of our union strikes your heart? Why?
What would happen to us if these were not true? If our union with Christ was temporal, divisible, mechanical, or impersonal...

What's the functional understanding of our connection to Jesus Christ?
Is it still shaky...like you're dating... One day he loves me, one day he doesn't?
Name one thing that would change if you lived like you were with one with Christ?

3 Implications of our Union with Christ

1) **Whatever happens to him, happens to me.**

... We are told that when the Savior was nailed to the tree "our old man was crucified with him" (Rom 6:6). We are told that when He expired at Calvary "if One died for all, then all died" (2Co 5:14). We are told that when He was revived, we were "quickened together with Christ" (Eph 2:5). He did not rise again as a single and private person, but as the Head of His Church: "If ye then be risen with Christ" (Col 3:1). O how surpassingly wonderful is the Christian's oneness with Christ! (AW Pink)

*Now a Christian is a man who must assert this truth. The beginning of Christianity is to say, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). **The Christian is not a man who is hoping to be forgiven; the Christian is not a man who hopes that ultimately he will be able to satisfy the demands of the Law and to stand before God.** If he is a Christian who understands Christianity, he says, "I am already there, I have ceased to be dead, I am alive, I have been quickened, I have been made alive!" ... (Dr. Martin Loyd-Jones)*

Are we convinced of this?
Where do you typically turn when you need reassurance?
Your record, achievement, efforts, depth of confession, contrition, suffering?

2) **Whatever belongs to Jesus, belongs to me.**

We are in desperate need of righteousness. So how we get righteousness? God has given Christ to us and put us in Christ. He has done it!

1 Cor 1:30 - But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, [v]and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

Calvin: We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ. We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else. If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that it is "of him." If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in his anointing. If we seek strength, it lies in his dominion; if purity, in his conception; if gentleness, it appears in his birth. For by his birth he was made like us in all respects that he might learn to feel our pain. If we seek redemption, it lies in his passion; if acquittal, in his condemnation; if

remission of the curse, in his cross; if satisfaction, in his sacrifice; if purification, in his blood; if reconciliation, in his descent into hell; if mortification of the flesh, in his tomb; if newness of life, in his resurrection; if immortality, in the same; if inheritance of all blessings, in his Kingdom; if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given to him to judge. In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in him, let us drink our fill from this fountain, and from no other.

3) Whatever I have belongs to him...

Beginning with his birth and through his baptism and then the cross, we see Jesus taking our sin into himself. Our salvation comes from being united to our savior. He shares with us his Righteousness and we share with him our sin. Our guilt of our sin gets removed in crucifixion and death. Our pollution gets removed in his righteousness. He shares with us His record and our record get's removed in Him.

Take some time tonight to worship in God in prayer. Thanking him for all that Christ is to us!