



## FIND JOY AND UNITY AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

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(<https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/joy-and-unity-as-the-body-of-christ>)



The church is the body of Christ because we are united with the body of Christ. And Jesus longed for and prayed for us to be united with each other in the same kind of unity He shares with us and with the Father. The verses below are part of a prayer Jesus prayed to the Father, referencing all who will believe in Him across the whole course of history, including you!

*"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. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me." - John 17:20-23, ESV*

Our unity with each other stems from the fact that we all have the same relationship to God. Every other Christian is our brother or sister in Christ, chosen and adopted by Him into His family. And we all are indwelt by Him. In fact, we are not just individually the dwelling place of God, but the church itself is the dwelling place of God. [Ephesians 2:18-22](#) describes us as a building God is establishing, with Jesus as its cornerstone, "in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" (vv. 21-22).

As eternal family, we're not only inextricably joined with Him, but with each other too. And to be fair, "joined" is probably too small a word to capture the dynamics and dimensions of this relationship—we are fused, grafted into it.

God's love for us not only reveals how we should love, but it also compels us to love. Just as God is outgoing in His love, we should be too! We are deeply involved with Him and with each other on every level of kingdom life, though it's often challenging to remember this and live it out. The picture Scripture paints is one where Christ-followers of various tribal, political, and socioeconomic backgrounds live together with Christ as their focus.



Among Jesus' disciples, He had the wealthy tax collectors and the poor fisherman; He had those who worked for Rome and those who wanted to overthrow Rome; He welcomed those who were considered filthy and godless—pagans, prostitutes, and lepers.

What a beautiful demonstration not only of His love and unity, but of His diversity! Not only did Jesus live in this way, but His followers did too. The early church, which was made up primarily of circumcised Jews, began to see an influx of Gentile followers after the coming of the Holy Spirit, but they didn't demand circumcision of them ([Acts 15:1-21](#)). Their primary concern was that their shared belief in Jesus not be disrupted by division. But this definitely wasn't a seamless process. Change can be difficult for any of us, especially where religious beliefs are concerned, and it often results in conflict as people adjust. That's what happened with the early church. They had to get through some bumpy times to throw open the doors of the gospel. Even the leaders struggled at times. In fact, Paul had to call out Peter when he caved to peer pressure and disregarded the Gentile believers, choosing to eat only with the Jewish believers. Paul rebuked him for showing partiality, which is divisive ([Gal. 2:11-14](#)).

Jesus spent more time identifying Himself with His church as a whole than with any one individual. For instance, prior to his conversion to Christianity, the apostle Paul was an outspoken persecutor of Christians. When the voice of the resurrected, ascended Christ spoke from heaven and confronted Paul about His actions, He asked, "why are you persecuting me?" ([Acts 9:4](#)). Jesus was already back in heaven, but He was identifying Himself with the persecution of the church. Additionally, Scripture calls Jesus "the head of the body" ([Col. 1:18](#)), and the head certainly knows and experiences all that the body endures.

The New Testament repeatedly affirms the connection between the unity of the church and the triune life of God. Just as God's unity and diversity is revealed in His triune nature, we participate in the triune life through the Son, being united in Him in our diversity. Donald Macleod said, "We must be careful not to set this unity and this diversity over against each other. The church is not one despite its diversity but because of its diversity." This is harmony not homogeny. Every person playing the same instrument with the same note does not make a symphony. But different instruments hitting different notes to the same rhythm and key of the same song? That's beautiful! The Economic Trinity has demonstrated this for us, working out a unified will and purpose through distinct roles to accomplish it.

As the people who are made in His image, conformed to His image, and called to imitate Him, we should expect that others will be drawn to Him through our lives and witness! The very love that rescued us is pursuing others who don't yet know Him, and He's using us as His ambassadors in that process.

When others see our relationship with God, our hope is that they'll want to have that relationship too!

Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples. The word disciple means "learner." He wanted the learners to learn, then teach. He told them to baptize the new disciples, but He didn't just say to baptize them in His own name—He said to baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We are baptized into Christ—buried and raised with Him—and this is how we participate in the communion of the Trinity. Our verbal confession and action of being baptized are important, but we need to understand that baptism is fundamentally about who we are. It's about our union with the triune God.

Since many professing believers know very little about the three Persons of the Trinity, we have failed terribly at obeying Jesus' command in our lives and in our churches. It's vital that the doctrine of the Trinity not be glossed over, but be widely taught and understood among professing Christians.



Our new, richer understanding of who God is will begin to inform everything about the way we make peace with our past, live in the present, look to the future, and interact with others around us. Knowing Him better changes the way we know ourselves. Knowing Him better changes the way we love others. Now that we see Him more clearly, we can confidently say: He's where the joy is!

*Excerpted from He's Where the Joy Is: Getting to Know the Captivating God of the Trinity © Tara-Leigh Cobble 2021. Published by Lifeway Press.*