



## STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, January 17, 2010

---

### Coming Together...The Power of Many *What Difference Do It Make? (Week 2 of 4)*

#### **Matthew 18:19-20**— *The Word from the Bible (TNIV)*

*“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.”*

---

---

---

---

#### **Coming Together in Jesus’ Name**

In verse 19 Jesus stresses the necessity of our lives together. This passage speaks directly to the individualistic nature of our culture. Agreeing in the “name” (literally spirit) of Jesus is difficult for us. This agreeing is evidence of our function as disciples of Christ rather than individuals. These two verses are shared as part of a unified answer to solving conflict. The presence of this promise further stresses the importance of the church community to put aside difference in seeking what God wants for all.

Many have problems with the phrase in verse 19, “that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” Does this mean that as long as we are community, we get anything we want? Jesus clears this up in verse 20 by adding “come together in my name.” This is not formula for manipulating God. Instead, Jesus is declaring the necessity of our oneness with him in his will for us.

Further, the question has been asked, “Does this mean that Jesus is not with the prayers of an individual?” The Bible is full of examples of God answering the prayer of a single person. But it does point to the power of God’s people when they are joined together in unity. The New Testament includes other references to the power of Christ’s presence when the community is unified in the Spirit. (*John 14:12-14; Acts 4:9-12; 1 Cor. 5:3-4; and Rev. 1*).

#### **Unity through Diversity — I Corinthians 12:1-31**

This chapter directly addresses any church’s effort to build unity. We see all around us in our culture the principle of which Paul speaks. We go to an athletic event where there are several players on one team. And while they have different positions to play and differing skills, their goals is the same. This unified goal makes it possible for them to play as one. The same is true when we go to the symphony. There is great variety in the instruments played and the skills required of the players, but all those instruments and all those different musicians create a musical unity as they create music with one voice.

Paul uses the analogy of a human body to make his point about unity among diversity. He uses a rational approach that draws upon everyone’s knowledge of the human body. He likens the different members of the community to the different parts of a human body and shows in this way both its great diversity and its essential unity. The picture of a foot withdrawing from the body because it can’t be a hand, or an ear resigning from the body if it can’t be an eye, is so ridiculous that it is funny. The picture of a body made up of nothing but eyes or nothing but ears is ludicrous. The idea of the eye discussing with the hand its not being needed, or the head telling the feet, “You’re not needed,” simply compounds the folly. What Paul is describing are things that would never happen in a physical body but that were happening in the church in Corinth and continue to plague our culture and church today.

Paul is reminding the church at Corinth as well as every community of faith since that we are stronger together. While we may think we have it all together, there is always something missing that can only be filled by Spirit of God working through God’s people. There is power in our unity and purpose together.

Finally, in the body, what affects one member is felt by all. One of the great insights into the nature of the church is shown in

Paul's reflection that "If one member suffers, all the members suffer ..." and also "if one member is honored, all the members rejoice..." (v. 26). This happens automatically in the body. An infection in the hand spreads and the whole system feels the impact. This is unity.

Paul then puts an exclamation point on this discussion of the strength of God's people uniting their diversity through the spirit of Christ by defining the full nature of love, Verse 31 calls love, the more excellent way. Without love our differences divide us. With love our differences make us the most powerful force in this world.

---

---

---

---

## Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Here a few prayers to guide you. I have included the same prayers from last week. I believe they are worth repeating this week as we prepare for the birth of our Lord.

### Prayer for Unity

**I pray... that all of them might 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.**

**--John 17:20-21**

**Heavenly Father,  
your blessed Son asked that your church be one  
as you and he are one,  
but Christians have not been united as he prayed.  
We have isolated ourselves from each other  
and failed to listen to each other.  
We have misunderstood and ridiculed  
and even gone so far as to attack each other.  
In so doing we have offended against you,  
and against all who have not believed in you  
because of our scandalous disunity.**

**Forgive us, Father, and make us fully one.  
Blot out our sins, renew our minds,  
enkindle our hearts,  
and guide us by your Holy Spirit  
into that oneness which is your will.  
Amen.**

***Have a great week!***

***Remember Ron Hall, bestselling author of "Same Kind of Different as Me"  
and "What Difference Do It Make" will speak in worship on Jan. 24  
at 9:30 & 11 a.m. INVITE YOUR FRIENDS!***

***God is waiting to use you to begin some great work for the Kingdom.  
Invite someone to worship this week. You will be glad you did. God***

# Daily Readings

*Starting February 21st, we will be doing a four-week study on the book of Galatians called "Real Christians." During the next few weeks, we will be reading through the book of Galatians in preparation for this series. Hopefully these readings and reflective questions will prepare you for the sermons. The study guide reading allow us to dig deeper.*

## **Monday, January 18 – Read Galatians 3:15-18.**

"For if the inheritance comes from the law, it no longer comes from the promise; but granted it to Abraham through the promise." Paul is reminding us that the work of God to bring together all humanity began with the very first promises made to Abraham and not just the keeping of the law. This promise has been passed down now to Christ, who offers it to us through forgiveness and grace. What in your life needs forgiveness? Who in your life needs to be forgiven?

---

---

## **Tuesday, January 19 – Read Galatians 3:19-29.**

What is the purpose of the law? Paul affirms that the law is good. It gives us guidance in life. There is wisdom in the law. But the law does not connect us to God. It is by faith that all are one in Christ. The promises of God are ours to claim. How is the law and faith connected? Can we follow the law and still be lost to Christ? Can we be one with Christ and outside the law?

---

---

## **Wednesday, January 20 – Read Galatians 4:1-7.**

Now Paul makes his main point, "because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God." Paul believes that the demands of the law can separate us from God and from each other. It separates, blames, condemns and rationalizes our behavior. For Paul, there is no other demand but faith in Christ and the ethic of love for one another that results from that faith. How has your relationship with Christ changed your relationship with others?

---

---

## **Thursday, January 21 – Read Galatians 4:8-20.**

Evidently the Galatians have turned away from the teachings of Paul. One of two things might have happened to cause them to reject Paul. 1) They may have felt rejected because the Jewish Christians condemned them for not being circumcised or following the food laws. 2) They returned to their pagan practices. Do you know someone that is no longer active in their faith because of someone judged them for some action or because some habit that got in the way of their faith? Have you ever had that experience? How did you handle it?

---

---

## **Friday, January 22 – Read Galatians 4:21-5:1.**

The story of Sarah and Hagar is used as an allegory for the conflict between the Jews and Christ followers. Sarah (wife of Abraham and mother of Judaism) was the mother of the promise and Hagar (slave of Abraham and mother of the Gentiles) was the mother of slavery. Paul is proclaiming freedom now for all through Jesus Christ whether born through slavery or freedom. How has your faith in Christ given you freedom in life?

---

---

