

Loving Unity

The Way to Breakthrough Praying

By John Robb



In John 17, in which Jesus prayed for the last time with His disciples before the crucifixion, He had every right to focus on His impending suffering, which would be terrible beyond belief. However, true to His nature, He rose above His own human fears to think about the welfare of His disciples and His followers of future generations. What was it He prayed for?

Unity—that we might be one as He and the Father are one. Wow!

Of course, such unity is a supernatural thing, only possible by the presence and enabling of the Holy Spirit. We humans tend to divide at the drop of a hat, dwelling on what our differences are. We compare ourselves and can split off from one another because of pride and feelings of superiority, thinking our doctrinal adherence or ministry practice surpasses that of other organizations and churches. Personality splits also exacerbate this phenomenon of division that has resulted in tens of thousands of separate denominations around the world.

I was recently blessed by Gaylord Enns's book, *Love Revolution*, that he gave the participants at the Transform USA

Prayer Summit. Enns maintains that Jesus' primary command gets lost in our effort to have the right beliefs about Him. That command is, "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34). That kind of love enables us to have real unity. Also, humility, realizing our many flaws and that we need each other, also enables such unity.

We, as the Apostle Paul so brilliantly teaches, are part of the organism called the Body of Christ, and each of us has particular gifts that are meant to benefit one another. Unless we exercise those gifts with the love and humility that comes out of the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, we are all impoverished, incomplete, and lacking. Only in that way of loving service to one another can we become One Body rather than remaining a deformed or handicapped body.

Such loving unity is fostered through prayer together. The early church quickly developed a culture of prayer at the command of Jesus that they should wait in Jerusalem. Acts 1:14 describes how they "all joined constantly together in prayer." Great breakthroughs came out of this culture of prayer as can be clearly traced throughout the book of Acts. The history of revivals and mission advances bear similar witness to the power of united prayer. Too often, we succumb to the mistaken idea that our activism is what will transform the world. Mission is a supernatural thing. It requires God's mighty moving to change hearts and societies that are in the grip of the prince of this world through enslaving spiritual forces of darkness and deceptive ideologies that bind and hinder humankind.

Over the last couple of decades, colleagues and I have found ourselves facilitating special prayer initiatives in the midst of awful, hopeless conflicts, especially in Africa of which there were 19 such conflicts raging in the mid-1990s and early years of this century. Over and over again, we witnessed the Lord graciously bring about peace breakthroughs and the ending of these wars as His people confessed corporate sin, got

reconciled with one another, and then prayed unitedly. Remarkably, it was often the next day or in a few days that we felt the atmosphere shift and a peace process was begun by the politicians and diplomats. In addition, spiritual revival or advances for the Gospel often also attended such amazing changes.

The re-establishment or beginning of new unity among His people was invariably the crucial thing that the Spirit of the Lord was seeking to bring about. After repentance for corporate sins and splits between church leaders were confessed with reconciliation and unity being reestablished, the participants could ask virtually anything and the Lord would grant it, even impossible things humanly like the ending of these hopeless ethnic conflicts that had gone on for many years, in some cases decades.

During a national prayer initiative for Germany and Berlin in 1997, significant division among leading pastors arose even though many were rejoicing that about 500 intercessors from 78 cities had come together, a real triumph for His church in the nation. I was wondering what to do and finally while on stage asked the participants to say this simple sentence to each other, which exemplifies the Spirit of Christ: "I want you to succeed more than myself."

This helped among other things to defuse the divisive, competitive atmosphere. Humility and love that is more concerned for the success of others comes out of the realization that the most important thing is not our individual accomplishments but rather our united functioning as members of His Body. It is that unity in prayer and the loving service that flows out of such praying that will bring His transformation to our world.

Let's therefore pray accordingly for ourselves and for the international prayer movement:

1. That we and other ministry leaders will maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and that Satan, the diabolos or one who divides, would be bound.

2. That we and others in Christ's Church will love one another as He has loved us. May we all experience a baptism or rebaptism of love in the Body of Christ.

3. That increasingly pastors and other ministry leaders will pray together across denominational boundaries for their cities and communities in every nation.

4. That this unity of the Spirit in prayer will result in the greatest and most pervasive global spiritual revival ever along with the fulfillment of the Great Commission—to reach the remaining 5500 unreached people groups still without movements to Christ and very little access to the Gospel.

John Robb is the chairman of the International Prayer Council and a member of America's National Prayer Committee. The IPC works to connect leaders and national prayer leaders around the world to encourage unified prayer efforts for important global issues and concerns. This originally appeared in the IPC's monthly newsletter "International Prayer Connections." We encourage you to sign up for this monthly email that will provide you with hot prayer topics from around the world.