

04-12-15

Series: [The Anatomy of a Church](#)

The Anatomy of a Church (55)

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

[Acts 20:28](#)

(Continuation from 04/05/15)

The Internal Systems-2

UNITY

The Root of True Unity

[John 17:20](#) (NASB)

²⁰“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word.”

The opening words of [John 17:20](#) introduce the third thing for which Christ said He was not praying. In [John 17:9](#) He made it clear that He was not interceding on behalf of the unbelieving world; while in [John 17:15](#) He said that He was not asking for the disciples to be removed from the world. His words **I do not ask on behalf of these alone** introduce another group distinct from the then-living disciples for whom He had just prayed ([vv. 6-19](#)). Jesus looked ahead through the centuries and prayed for all the believers who were to come in the future. Although the vast majority had not yet been born, they nevertheless were and had been for eternity on the heart of the Savior. He knew them all, since their names have **“been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life”** ([Rev. 3:5](#); [Rev. 17:8](#); [Rev. 20:12, 15](#); [Rev. 21:27](#); [Phil. 4:3](#)). Christ’s intercession for us, which began with this prayer 2,000 years ago, continues to this day, **“since He always lives to make intercession for [us]”** ([Heb. 7:25](#)).

Jesus further identified these future believers as those who would **believe in Him** ([John 1:12](#); [John 3:15-16, 36](#); [John 6:40, 47](#); [John 7:37-38](#); [John 11:25-26](#); [John 20:31](#); [Acts 13:38-39](#); [Acts 16:31](#); [Rom. 10:9-10](#); [Gal. 3:22](#)), reminding all again that salvation comes through faith alone, **“not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”** ([Eph. 2:9](#); cf. [Rom. 3:20-30](#); [Gal. 2:16](#); [Gal. 3:8, 11-14, 24](#)). The Lord’s reference to believing in Him again preserves the biblical balance concerning salvation. On the one hand, only those given by the Father to Christ will come to Him ([John 17:6](#); cf. [John 6:44](#)). But on the other hand, their salvation does not take place apart from personal faith (cf. [Rom. 10:9-10](#)). In much the same way, the reality that the Lord will draw those whom He chooses to Himself ([John 6:44](#); [Acts 2:39](#); [Acts 11:18](#); [Acts 13:48](#); [Acts 16:14](#)) does not obviate the church’s responsibility to evangelize the lost ([Matt. 28:19-20](#); [Luke 24:47](#); [Acts 1:8](#)).

The Lord’s first request may be examined under four headings: **1) the root of true unity, 2) the request for true unity, 3) the representation of true unity, and 4) the result of true unity.**