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

The Anatomy of a Church (57)

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

[Acts 20:28](#)

(Continuation from 04/19/15)

The Internal Systems-2

UNITY

The Request for True Unity

[John 17:21a \(NASB\)](#)

²¹ **“That they may all be one; even 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 sent Me.”**

Despite their outward denominational differences, all true Christians are spiritually united by regeneration in their belief that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone, and their commitment to the absolute authority of Scripture. All those who savingly believe in the Lord Jesus Christ **“are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another”** ([Rom. 12:5](#)).

D. A. Carson notes that the unity for which Christ prayed

“is not achieved by hunting enthusiastically for the lowest common theological denominator, but by common adherence to the apostolic gospel, by love that is joyfully self-sacrificing, by undaunted commitment to the shared goals of the mission with which Jesus' followers have been charged” (*The Gospel According to John, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 568).

By the power of God, believers, united in spiritual life, are also united in purpose, share the same mission, proclaim the same gospel, and manifest the same holiness.

The actual fulfillment of Christ's prayer began with the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost. Suddenly, sovereignly, supernaturally, believers were united by the Spirit into the body of Christ and made one positionally ([Acts 2:4](#)). All who have been saved since then have immediately received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, by which they were placed into the body of Christ ([1 Cor. 12:13](#)). Consequently, there is an extraordinary, supernatural unity in the universal church; it is the **“the unity of the Spirit,”** not created by believers, but preserved by them ([Eph. 4:3](#)). In [Ephesians 4:4-6](#) Paul lists **seven features** of that Holy Spirit-created unity.

First, there is **“one body”** the body of Christ, which is comprised of all believers since the church's inception on the day of Pentecost.

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Second, there is “**one Spirit**,” the Holy Spirit, apart from whom no one can believe savingly in Jesus Christ ([1 Cor. 12:3](#)). The Spirit is also the agent by which Christ baptizes believers into His body ([1 Cor. 12:13](#); cf. [Matt. 3:11](#)).

Third, there is “**one hope**,” in the promised eternal inheritance guaranteed to every believer by the Holy Spirit ([Eph. 1:13-14](#)).

Fourth, there is “**one Lord**,” Jesus Christ, who is the sole head of the body ([Col. 1:18](#); cf. [Acts 4:12](#); [Rom. 10:12](#)).

Fifth, there is “**one faith**,” the “**faith which was once for all handed down to the saints**” ([Jude 3](#)); the body of doctrine revealed in the New Testament.

Sixth, there is “**one baptism**.” This probably refers to water baptism, the believer’s public confession of faith in Jesus Christ. (Holy Spirit baptism is implied in [v. 5](#).)

Finally, there is “**one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all**.” The one true God is the sovereign ruler of everything, including the church.

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.**