

The Anatomy of a Church (60)

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

[Acts 20:28](#)

(Continuation from 06/14/15)

The Internal Systems-2

The Representation of True Unity

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.

[John 17:21b-23a \(NASB\)](#)

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.

²² The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

The unity of nature Christ prayed for reflects that of the Father and the Son, which is expressed in Christ's words **You, Father, are in Me and I in You**. Because of His unity with the Father, Jesus claimed in [John 5:16](#) to have the same authority, purpose, power, honor, will, and nature as the Father.

[John 5:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶“For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.”

That startling claim to full deity and equality with God so outraged His Jewish opponents that they sought to kill Him ([John 5:18](#); cf. [John 8:58-59](#); [John 10:31-33](#); [John 19:7](#)).

[John 5:18 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁸“For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”

[John 8:58-59 \(NASB\)](#)

⁵⁸“Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I Am.”

⁵⁹ Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.”

John 10:31-33 (NASB)

³¹“The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him.

³² Jesus answered them, “I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?”

³³ The Jews answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out *to be* God.”

John 19:7 (NASB)

⁷“The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out *to be* the Son of God.”

The unique intra-Trinitarian relationship of Jesus and the Father forms the pattern for the unity of believers in the church. This prayer reveals **five features** of that unity the church imitates.

First, the Father and the Son are united in motive; they are equally committed to the glory of God. Jesus began His prayer by saying, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You” ([v. 1](#)), as He had done throughout His ministry ([v. 4](#)).

John 17:1 (NASB)

¹“Jesus spoke these things; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “**Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son, that the Son may glorify You.**”

John 17:4 (NASB)

⁴“I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”

In [verse 5](#) He added, “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”

Finally, in [verse 24](#) Jesus expressed to the Father His desire that believers would one day “be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me.”

John 17:24 (NASB)

²⁴“Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, **be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me**, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

In [John 7:18](#) Jesus declared that He was constantly “seeking the glory of the One who sent Him.”

John 7:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is **seeking the glory of the One who sent Him**, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

He did not need to seek His own glory ([John 8:50](#)), because the Father glorified Him ([John 8:54](#)).

John 8:50 (NASB)

⁵⁰“But I do not seek My glory; there is One who seeks and judges.”

John 8:54 (NASB)

⁵⁴ “Jesus answered, “If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing; it is My Father who glorifies Me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’”

Both Jesus and the Father were glorified in the raising of Lazarus ([John 11:4](#)).

John 11:4 (NASB)

⁴ “But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”

In [John 12:28](#) Jesus prayed, ‘Father, glorify Your name.’ Then a voice came out of heaven: ‘I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.’”

Shortly before His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus had said to the disciples,

John 13:31-32 (NASB)

³¹ “Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him;

³² if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.”

Jesus promised to answer the prayers of His people “so that the Father may be glorified in the Son” ([John 14:13](#)).

John 14:13 (NASB)

¹³ “Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

The church is also united in a common commitment to the glory of God. “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do,” Paul wrote, “do all to the glory of God” ([1 Corinthians 10:31](#)).

Second, the Father and the Son are united in mission. They share the common goal of redeeming lost sinners and granting them eternal life, as Christ made clear earlier in this prayer:

John 17:2-4 (NASB)

² “even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom You have given Him, He may give eternal life.

³ This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

⁴ I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do.”

John 17:6 (NASB)

⁶ “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; they were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.”

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God chose in eternity past to give believers to Christ as a gift of His love, and Christ came to earth to die as a sacrifice for their sins and redeem them. That the church lives to pursue the one goal of evangelizing the lost is clear from Jesus' words in [verse 18](#):

[John 17:18 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁸“As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”

[Matthew 28:19-20 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Third, the Father and the Son are united in truth.

“The words which You gave Me,” Jesus said, “I have given to them” ([v. 8](#)), while in [verse 14](#) He added, “I have given them Your word.”

[John 17:8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁸“For the words which You gave Me I have given to them; and they received *them* and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.”

[John 17:14 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

Earlier that evening Jesus had told the disciples, “The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works” ([John 14:10](#); cf. [John 3:32-34](#); [John 7:16](#); [John 8:28](#), [38](#), [40](#); [John 12:49](#)).

[John 14:10 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁰“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.”

[John 3:32-34 \(NASB\)](#)

³²“What He has seen and heard, of that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.

³³He who has received His testimony has set his seal to *this*, that God is true.

³⁴For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.”

[John 7:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶“So Jesus answered them and said, “My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me.”

[John 8:28 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁸“So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.”

John 8:38 (NASB)

³⁸ “I speak the things which I have seen with *My* Father; therefore you also do the things which you heard from *your* father.”

John 8:40 (NASB)

⁴⁰ “But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.”

John 12:49 (NASB)

⁴⁹ “For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak.”

The church is also unified in its commitment to proclaiming the singular truth of God’s Word. In [Romans 15:5-6](#) Paul prayed,

Romans 15:5-6 (NASB) (cf. [Acts 2:42, 46](#); [Phil. 1:27](#)).

⁵ “Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Acts 2:42 (NASB)

⁴² “They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

Acts 2:46 (NASB)

⁴⁶ “Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.”

Philippians 1:27 (NASB)

²⁷ “Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

Far from dividing the church, commitment to proclaiming sound doctrine is what defines it.

Fourth, the Father and the Son are united in holiness.

In [verse 11](#) Jesus addressed the Father as “**Holy Father**,” and in [verse 25](#) as “**righteous Father**.”

John 17:11 (NASB)

¹¹ “I am no longer in the world; and *yet* they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. **Holy Father**, keep them in Your name, *the name* which You have given Me, that they may be one even as *We are*.”

John 17:25 (NASB)

²⁵ “**O righteous Father**, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.”

The utter holiness of God is expressed throughout the Old and New Testaments.

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God's holiness is His absolute separation from sin. In [Habakkuk 1:13](#) the prophet declared, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor."

[Habakkuk 1:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³ "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor. Why do You look with favor On those who deal treacherously? Why are You silent when the wicked swallow up Those more righteous than they?"

In Isaiah's vision of God the angelic beings cried out, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" ([Isa. 6:3](#); cf. [Rev. 4:8](#)).

[Isaiah 6:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ "And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory."

[Revelation 4:8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁸ "And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

The writer of Hebrews described Jesus as "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners" ([Heb. 7:26](#)).

[Hebrews 7:26 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁶ "For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens."

In [Revelation 4:8](#) the heavenly chorus unceasingly cries out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come."

[Revelation 4:8 \(NASB\)](#)

⁸ "And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

When they see believers united in the pursuit of holiness, unbelievers will be drawn to Christ. In [Hebrews 12:14](#) the writer of Hebrews exhorted his readers, "Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord." If a church tolerates sin, it not only obscures the glory of Christ it is called to radiate, but also faces the discipline of the Lord of the church ([Rev. 2:14-16, 20-23](#)).

[Revelation 2:14-16 \(NASB\) Message to Pergamum](#)

¹⁴ "But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit *acts of immorality*.

¹⁵ So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

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¹⁶ Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.”

Revelation 2:20-23 (NASB) Message to Thyatira

²⁰ “But I have *this* against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit *acts of* immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.

²¹ I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.

²² Behold, I will throw her on a bed *of sickness*, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds.

²³ And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.”

Finally, the Father and the Son are united in love.

In **verse 24** Jesus affirmed that the Father had “loved [Him] before the foundation of the world.”

John 17:24 (NASB)

²⁴ “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

In **John 5:20** Jesus said, “For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing’ (cf. **John 3:35**).

John 5:20 (NASB)

²⁰ “For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and *the Father* will show Him greater works than these, so that you will marvel.”

John 3:35 (NASB)

³⁵ “The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand.”

Both at His baptism (**Matt. 3:17**) and at the transfiguration (**Matt. 17:5**), the Father declared Jesus to be His beloved Son.

Matthew 3:17 (NASB)

¹⁷ “And behold, a voice out of the heavens said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.”

Matthew 17:5 (NASB)

⁵ “While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!”

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Similarly, love is the glue that binds believers together in unity ([Col. 3:14](#); cf. [Col. 2:2](#)), and it is that love for one another that is the church's ultimate apologetic to the lost world ([John 13:34-35](#)).

[Colossians 3:14 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁴“Beyond all these things *put on* love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”

[Colossians 2:2 \(NASB\)](#)

²“That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and *attaining* to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, *resulting* in a true knowledge of God's mystery, *that is*, Christ *Himself*.”

[John 13:34-35 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁴“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Though not to the same infinite divine extent, the spiritual life and power that belongs to the Trinity belongs also in some way to believers and is the basis for the church's unity. This is what the Lord meant when He said, **The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as we are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity.**

[John 17:22-23 \(NASB\)](#)

²²“The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;

²³ I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”

That stunning truth describes believers as those to whom the Son has given glory—that is, aspects of the very divine life that belongs to God. The church's task is to so live as to not obstruct that glory ([Matthew 5:16](#)).

[Matthew 5:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”