

Maturing toward Wholeness in the Inner Life

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Our goal: Christian unity. How should we go about it?

Jesus' goal: Christian unity. How is he going about it?

1. He prayed for it in John 17.
2. But he began laying foundations for it in John 1 when he called disciples.
3. Discipleship (formation of Godly character) is foundational for all ministry.

What is the connection between Christian unity and discipleship?

1. God's overall purpose=>to restore the creation.
2. For creation to be restored, human beings must be restored—re-created.
3. We chose to rebel against God; the results were disastrous—1) guilt 2) damage.
4. Jesus came to 1) remove our guilt (easiest part) and 2) make us whole again.
5. (Most of what Jesus and the apostles taught was about making us whole again.)
6. Jesus not only saves us from guilt. He also delivers us from sinful behavior.

"Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." John 8:34b, 36

7. We are delivered from sinful behavior as Christlikeness is formed in inner life.

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. Romans 8:29

8. Christlikeness is formed in the inner life through discipleship to Jesus.

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Luke 6:40

9. Primary cause of Christian divisions=>leaders not yet formed in Christlikeness.

If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. James 3:14-16

10. Christian unity is an expression—a fruit—of Christlikeness.

WHAT IS DISCIPLESHIP?

1 - I am with Jesus.

1. A disciple is a learner. We must rediscover Jesus as Master Teacher for all of life.

"You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am." John 13:13

2. To be able to learn from Jesus I must know how to be with him.
3. (We know how to be with Christians. We must now learn how to be with Jesus.)
4. Jesus teaches me how to be with him as I follow him as his disciple.
5. Perhaps learning how to be with Jesus is the most crucial thing I can learn.
6. Every gift of God's grace flows from knowing him and being with him.

"And this is life eternal, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." John 17:3

7. Abiding in his Presence, I encounter the love that heals me—transforms me.

"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love." John 15:9

2 - To learn from Jesus.

1. Jesus intends that we actually keep his commandments. We can do this.

"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." John 15:10

2. His commandments restore us to wholeness, sanity, maturity, fullness of life.
3. How do we keep them? Not by will-power. Not by focusing on external behavior.
4. Righteousness of scribes and Pharisees—legalism—leads to hypocrisy. Luke 12:1

"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:20

5. God's righteousness is a righteousness of the heart—the source of behavior.

Jesus taught this: *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone."* Matthew 15:19-20

Moses taught this: *You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart.* Deuteronomy 6:5a

David prayed for this: *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.* Psalm 51:10

The prophets taught this: *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.* Jeremiah 31:33a

6. Abiding in Jesus, I allow him to transform my heart—inner life—to be like him.
7. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees leads to pride, judging, division.
8. The righteousness of the heart leads to repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation.
9. Central issue of the Christian life=>the person I am becoming.

*My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth
until Christ is formed in you! Galatians 4:19*

10. How can I love my enemy? I become the kind of person Jesus is.

3 - How to become like Jesus.

1. Heart. It must be transformed. I don't do it; God does it; but I must choose it.
 1. I choose discipleship. I establish Jesus as Master Teacher for all of my life.
 2. I choose the Scriptures. Discipleship to Jesus takes me there.
 3. I choose faith—to rely on God in all. I trust him with what I don't understand.
 4. I choose the cross. I allow Christ's death to work in me; his life forms in me.
 5. I choose spiritual disciplines—biblical practices to open my inner life to God.
2. Grace. Empowerment—God doing for me what I cannot do for myself.
3. (Grace is not opposed to effort; grace is opposed to earning.)
4. Healing. Unhealed inner wounds may hinder or block my maturing.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man [adult], I gave up childish ways. 1 Corinthians 13:11

5. The Holy Spirit. "Jesus is Lord" comes first—then "Come Holy Spirit".