

7. UNIFYING WALK

Thesis: Christian oneness is deepened through intimate fellowship.

“All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other’s gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.”¹

I. Fostering the Communion of the Saints with Our Lips

“But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all” (Col. 3:8-11).

“Satan always hates Christian fellowship...He attaches far more importance to godly intercourse than we do. Since union is strength, he does his best to promote separation.”²

A. Stirring Up

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb. 10:24-25).

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing” (1 Thess. 5:11).

“Consider how directly your divisions cross, and frustrate the design and end of church-fellowship, which is instituted for the improvement of each other’s graces, and helping on the mortification of each other’s corruptions.”³

B. Supplicating

“And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:9-10).

“As to your opponent, I wish, that, before you set pen to paper against him...you may commend him by earnest prayer to the Lord’s teaching and blessing. This practice will have a direct tendency to conciliate your heart to love and pity him; and such a disposition will have a good influence upon every page you write.”⁴

¹ Westminster Confession of Faith 26.1.

² Charles H. Spurgeon, “Satanic Hindrances,” sermon 657 in *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit Series*, vol. 11 (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1865).

³ John Flavel, “A Sermon on Gospel Unity” in *Works* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1968), 3:602.

⁴ John Newton, *The Works of John Newton* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2015), 1:269.

C. Sympathizing

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Rom. 12:15).

“This unity of believers should be vigorous in this way: whatever evil things happen to others, believers should be affected with them as if they are their own....As it is thus for mourning, so also for rejoicing: there ought to be such unity among believers that we are to rejoice in the gifts, graces, and good things that others have, as if they were our own.”⁵

II. Fostering the Communion of the Saints with Our Lives

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

“A distinctive feature of the nascent church was its sense of belonging, marked by an unusual level of caring and sharing.”⁶

A. Serving

“To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7).

“As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1 Pet. 4:10).

“I wonder how many of the problems that local congregations face would be remedied if the members and officers and pastors would stop and realize that the church does not revolve around them. The church is about one person, but that person is Jesus. Further, now that he has ascended into glory, he has determined to manifest himself to the world through a plurality of people—not just you and not just me. A proper, God-glorifying use of our gifts is for ‘building up the church’ (1 Cor. 14:12), not for building our own platform. Use your gifts to help others, not to highlight yourself.”⁷

B. Sharing

“And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:44-45).

“Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common” (Acts 4:32).

“The Christian community and the practice of that community should cut across all lines. Our churches have largely been preaching points and activity generators. Community has had little place. In the New Testament church this practiced community was not just a banner but cut all the way down into the hard stuff of the material needs of the members of the community.”⁸

⁵ Anthony Burgess, *Advancing Christian Unity*, ed. Matthew Vogan (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019), 31.

⁶ Luder G. Whitlock Jr., *Divided We Fall: Overcoming a History of Christian Disunity* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2017), 32.

⁷ Jonathan Landry Cruse, *Church Membership* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2024), 79-80.

⁸ Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the 20th Century* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1970), 39.