

THE PRAYER OF JESUS

John 17:1-26 is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in the Bible. Jesus prayed this prayer on the night before he was crucified. This prayer can be easily divided into three parts.

1. First, Jesus prayed for himself (John 17:1-5). Among other things he prayed: **“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world was.”** (John 17:5)
2. Second, Jesus prayed for his disciples (John 17:6-19). Among other things he prayed: **“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”** (John 17:15)
3. Finally, he prayed for all who would believe in him through their message (John 17:20-26). This includes you and me! His only prayer for us is that we would be united in the same way that Jesus was united with his Father. The unity of believers is the main focus of his prayer for us. He prayed: **“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one! Father just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us that the world may believe that you have sent me.”** (John 17:20-21)

Please note that Jesus prayed that we would be “one” so that “the world may believe.” There is obviously a connection between a united church and world that believes.. Conversely, there is also an association between a divided church and a world that does not believe.

This study will be about Christian unity! This was a top priority of Jesus! It should also be a top priority for us!

BELIEVERS TODAY ARE DIVIDED

The seeds of division were sown by Satan many years ago in the church at Corinth. Paul wrote: **“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?”** (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). According to W. E. Vine, in his word studies, Jesus said “follow me” 77 different times in the four gospels. If everybody only followed Jesus we would not be divided.

Today, these seeds of division have produced a horrible harvest. Donavyn Coffey reported on July 29, 2022 that the Center for the Study of Global Christianity has counted more than 45,000 different denominations in the world. The report states: *“Followers of Jesus span the globe. But the global body of more than 2 billion Christians is separated into thousands of denominations. Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Baptist, Apostolic, Methodist — the list goes on.”*

There is a sense in which all the saved people in Corinth are members of one body: **“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body.”** (1 Corinthians 12:13) This “one body” not only includes all the saved on earth, but also those who have died in the Lord and gone to heaven. Sadly,

however, there was quarreling in the church at Corinth that caused Paul to ask **“Is Christ divided?” (1 Corinthians 1:13)**

THE WORLD DOES NOT BELIEVE

Not only is it obvious in our modern world that believers are not “one” as Jesus and the Father are “one”, but it is equally obvious that the world does not believe! Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, reports: *“Christian population growth is the population growth of the global Christian community. According to a 2011 Pew Research Center survey, there were more than 2.2 billion Christians around the world in 2010, more than three times as many as the 600 million recorded in 1910. However, this rate of growth is slower than the overall population growth over the same time period.”*

Remember! Jesus prayed that we would be “one” so that the “world might believe.” Division among brothers in Christ keeps people from being saved!

WHY IS THE CHURCH DIVIDED?

While there may be many things dividing the church, one major source of division is over how to interpret the Bible. Consider, for example, the doctrine of “predestination.” John Calvin believed that man does not have free will and that God alone predestines in advance who will be saved and who will be lost. Jacobus Arminius disagreed with Calvin. He believed that man does have free will and can choose whether to be saved or lost. Both men believed the Bible. Even though they disagreed, both men believed they were properly interpreting the Bible. Brilliant scholars still disagree on this subject.

Most, of the different denominations in the world believe the Bible, but are still divided. Yes! Even though they believe the Bible, they are still divided over how it should be interpreted. It is hard to imagine a Baptist, for example, that does not believe in the authority of the Scriptures, and yet, according to a denominational census released in 2021, the Baptist World Alliance lists 245 different Baptist denominations. According to a Spring 1998 article in Christian History, there are also about 11,000 different Pentecostal or charismatic denominations in the world. Other Bible believing groups are similarly divided over how to interpret the Bible.

Sadly, as we have said before, the Christian world is not “one” as “Jesus and the Father are one”, and the world does not yet believe.

THE BIBLE IS NOT THE PROBLEM

This truth cannot be emphasized too much! THE BIBLE IS NOT THE PROBLEM! GOD WROTE THE BIBLE AND HE DOES NOT MAKE MISTAKES!

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Timothy was told: **“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)**

Jesus said: **“It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:4)**

The Psalmist said: **“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (Psalms 119:105)**

The word of God is the sword of the Spirit and the principal weapon we have to defeat the devil. Every time Jesus was tempted in the wilderness he overcame that temptation by quoting the Scriptures (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

The word of God is essential for our salvation. Peter said: **“You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.” (1 Peter 1:23)**

New believers are to crave the spiritual milk in the Bible like a new born baby craves its mother’s milk (1 Peter 2:1-3). The Scriptures are essential to our spiritual growth!

The word of God is eternal and will never pass away. Jesus said: **“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.” (Matthew 24:35)**

The Bible is inspired by God. The Bible is not the problem!

The problem is the way we use the Bible!

WHO DECIDES WHAT THE BIBLE MEANS?

The answer to this question is important for it directly involves Christian unity. In the Catholic Church the pope is considered infallible in defining what the church must believe. While Catholics claim this has always been true, *Papal Infallibility* was not officially declared until the First Vatican Council in 1870. The historical context for this decree involves the “Age of Enlightenment”. During the 17th and 18th centuries a number of famous skeptics dared to challenge the church. Men like Charles Darwin, John Locke, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Descartes, Voltaire, Rousseau, and others concluded that the church was wrong. The Pope reacted to their skepticism by dogmatically declaring his infallibility. Since 1870 only one pope has made an *ex cathedra* utterance defining a doctrine that all Catholics must believe. It happened in 1950 when Pope Pius XII officially declared the doctrine of the *Assumption of Mary*.

This official declaration cleared up an apparent contradiction in Catholic teaching. Catholics teach the doctrine of the *Immaculate Conception*. This doctrine declares that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was free from original sin from the moment of her conception. Since “original sin” is responsible for death and decay, Mary’s body should not decay and return to dust. The church, however, believed that Mary died and was buried in the Kidron Valley near Jerusalem. Modern scholars, however, believe that Mary died and was buried at Ephesus. In either case the burial of Mary was a problem for Catholics. If she had an “*Immaculate Conception*”, as they claim, her body should never decay. So in 1950 Pope Pius XII solved this problem by declaring from his papal throne (*ex cathedra*) that when Mary died her body did not decay but was taken directly to heaven.

Are you willing to let the Roman Catholic Pope decide what you must believe?

In Protestant denominations orthodoxy is often determined by official creeds. The hierarchy in each denomination codifies what the members of the denomination must believe. Someone quipped that the Catholics insist on an “infallible interpreter” and the Protestants insist on an “infallible interpretation”.

In the controversy between Calvin and Arminius, the decision about who was right was made by the Synod of Dort. This synod was composed of some one-hundred delegates. **There were thirty-five Dutch clergymen accompanied by Dutch elders, six deputies representing the States-General, five theology professors from Dutch universities, and twenty-seven delegates from foreign countries.** The deliberations of this synod lasted for over six months. Their first meeting was November 13, 1618 and their last meeting was May 29, 1619.

After six months of debate the Synod concluded that Calvin was right. To insure doctrinal purity 13 ministers were ordered to remain in Dort for further instruction. Others were apparently considered unteachable and ordered to abstain from all ministerial activities. On July 5th those who disagreed with the synod were called to the States-General assembly and required to sign “The Act of Cessation” promising not to preach. Those who refused to sign were sentenced as “disturbers of the peace” and ordered to leave the United Provinces. Special punishment was decreed for Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, who had been protecting the Arminians. He was beheaded! His friend, Hugo Grotius, escaped the axe and was given a life sentence in prison.

Are you willing to let the Synod of Dort dictate what you must believe?

Please ask yourself if God has empowered anyone on earth today to tell you what you must believe? Does God allow you to personally choose what to believe, or has God appointed someone else to decide what you must believe? To those who may seek to control and judge you, the Scriptures ask: **“Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And the Lord is able to make him stand.” (Romans 14:4)**

Yes! To your own master you will stand or fall!

CAN WE AT LEAST AGREE ON THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?

Some may suggest that while we may not be able to agree on the whole Bible, we should at least agree on the Ten Commandments? The answer is “no”! We do not agree on The Ten Commandments. As you may know, the Ten Commandments are actually the “Old Covenant” which God promised to replace. Moses said: **“He declared unto you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets.” (Deuteronomy 4:13)** As we have said, this is the covenant God promised through Jeremiah the prophet to replace (See Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Instead of bringing unity these commandments have always been a source of debate and controversy. Consider, for example, commandment # 3 - **“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain” (Exodus 20:7)** Most Jews are not sure what it means and therefore will not even pronounce or spell the name of God for fear of taking his name in vain. Or consider # 4 - **“Remember**

the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8). After 3,000 years of debate the Jews still do not agree on what a man can legally do on the Sabbath. Or consider # 6 - **“Thou shalt not kill.” (Exodus 20:15)** The difference between a “murder” and an “accidental death” is determined by intent (Numbers 35:22-25). Since only God knows a man’s heart human judges will invariably make mistakes. If you think human judges never make mistakes take another look at the trial of Jesus! Similar debates occur on all of the Ten Commandments.

Since the Old Covenant creates so many arguments it is represented by Hagar and Ishmael (Galatians 4:24-26). Ishmael, as you know, was always creating controversy and hostility. The angel of the Lord said: **“He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand will be against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.” (Genesis 16:12)** This is one reason why Hagar and Ismael represent the old covenant.

GOD’S PLAN FOR UNITY

God has a plan to unify the whole universe under the headship of Christ: **“he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.”**

Among other things, the plan of God for unity involved creating a totally new race of people. The first Adam produced a “physical” race. Since Jesus created a new race he is called the “last Adam” (1 Corinthians 15:45) Just as the first Adam produced a physical race, the last Adam produced a spiritual race. All of the people on earth born from Adam’s seed will die. Since the new race comes from a spiritual seed (1 Peter 1:23), those who are born of this seed will live forever: **“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22)**

Please note: **“If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.” (1 Corinthians 15:44-49)**

The Greek word translated as “image” in this passage is “eikon” from which we get our word “icon”. When you click on the “image” or “icon” on your computer screen you open up a whole body of information. Jesus is the “image” of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) and when you “click” on Jesus you get God! Those with the DNA of Adam are born of the flesh and will die. Those who have the DNA of Jesus are born of the Spirit and will love forever.

This new creation is “in Christ”. **“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)** Thus Jesus is the foundation for our unity and not the Bible! While addressing the division at Corinth Paul insisted: **“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11)** Again, we remind you that all the books of the New Testament Scriptures were not written at this time. Jesus, however, could still bring unity! Consider the way Jesus brought unity to the apostles. The apostles did not agree on how to interpret the Bible.

For example, the apostle Matthew was a tax collector (Matthew 9:9-13), and the apostle Simon was a Zealot who hated tax collectors (Acts 1:13). Both, however, believed the Bible. While these men did not agree on what the Bible said about politics, they did agree on Jesus. The apostles had many other disagreements, such as the one mentioned in Luke 22:24-30. Never, however, did the apostles disagree about Jesus. The apostles were not united by the Bible, they were united by Jesus. This was true of all believers then, and it can also be true of all believers now!

Please consider the beautiful way that the foundation of Christ brings unity.

- The people at Pentecost were united in Christ before one word of the Christian Scriptures was written.
- **“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.” (Acts 4:32)**
- They were not united on the Bible for the first book of the Christian Scriptures was not written for 20 years, and the last was not written for over 60 years.
- In fact, it took many years for all of the inspired books of the Bible to be collected!
- The oldest list of all 66 books in the Bible dates back to the fourth century.
- Bibles originally had to be copied by hand and were therefore rare and expensive.
- The first Bible to be printed was in the 1450s. It is called the Gutenberg Bible and was in Latin.
- Even after several centuries of printing Bibles there are still millions of believers who do not have a Bible and millions more who do not even have a written language.
- There are 7,300 languages spoken in the world today and more than half have no written form.
- Consequently, one in five people in the world do not have a Bible in their own language.
- Many who do have Bibles have never read the whole Bible. If you doubt this, please ask for a show of hands in your own church.
- This does not keep us from being “one” if Jesus is the foundation for our unity.
- False teachers are not those who are weak in faith and are confused about food and holy days (Romans 14:1-8). False teachers are those who deny the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 2:1).
- The antichrists are not those who differ on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the antichrists are those who deny that Jesus came in the flesh (2 John 7).
- You can be wrong about many things if you are right about Jesus! If you are wrong about Jesus it doesn't matter what else you may be right about!

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS UNITES US

When Philip, the evangelist, heard the Ethiopian Eunuch read from the prophet Isaiah: **“Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus” (Acts 8:35).**

As you know, the word “gospel” means “good news”. Here is the way the Apostle Paul defined the gospel: **“Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though**

some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.” (I Corinthians 15:1-8)

The “gospel” involves the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus! How many denominations do you know of that are divided over this good news? Virtually all Christians believe the gospel. In fact, if you don’t believe the gospel you can’t be a Christian. When Philip preached the “good news about Jesus” to the Eunuch, not one book of the New Testament Scriptures had been written.

Remember! While the Bible is inspired by God and is essential for growth in Christ, it is not the foundation for our unity. Yes, the Bible is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training, but Jesus is still the foundation!

THE GENIUS OF THE NEW COVENANT

The “Old Covenant,” that is, “The Ten Commandments.” were written by God in stone when God took his people by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. This covenant was cold rigid and inflexible and had to be read and interpreted. Not everyone agreed on how these ten commandments should be interpreted that’s why it was allegorized by Hagar and Ishmael. So God decided to write a new covenant where men couldn’t read it and argue about it. God chose to write the new covenant in the minds and hearts of believers. The minds and hearts of believers are not cold, rigid, and inflexible. Neither is this covenant written with **“ink but with the Spirit of the living God.” (2 Cor. 3:1-6)** Consider this “new covenant”: **“The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”** By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.” (Hebrews 8:8-13)

This “new covenant” is a personal covenant between you and God. It does not require the approval of any preacher, priest, church, or synod. You can become a Christian out in the wilderness just like the Ethiopian Eunuch did! No matter where you are, you can personally decide to confess Christ, be baptized, and go on your way rejoicing! (Acts 8:26-40)

THE LOVE SERVANT

Immediately after the Ten Commandments were recorded in Exodus 20, Moses described two kinds of servants in Exodus 21. One was a servant by “law”, and the other was a servant by “love”. **“If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him. If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or**

daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free. “But if the servant declares, ‘I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,’ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.” (Exodus 21:2-6)

Please note that love is more binding than law. The law required six years of service. Love, however, lasts for a life time! **“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us. This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.”** (1 John 4:7-13)

As you know, the Jews were commanded to love God. The *Shema* is a prayer that the devout Jew repeats every day. It is found in Deuteronomy chapter 6. That prayer includes the fact that we are to **“Love the Lord your God with all you heart and with all your soul, and with all your strength.”** (Deuteronomy 6:4) Further, the Law also required **“Love your neighbor as yourself.”** (Leviticus 19:18)

The love required by Jesus, however, is different. Jesus said: **“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”** (John 13:34) Jesus explained the “new” aspect of this love by saying: **“Love one another as I have loved you.”** This new love surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:19). This love is supernatural and can only come from the Holy Spirit. **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”** (Galatians 5:22-26)

This supernatural love is what binds the church together and has the power to convert the unsaved. Remember! **“By this will all men know that you are my disciples if you love one another”**.

ALL LIFE IS IMPORTANT TO JESUS

An estimated 73 million abortions take place every year. Unborn babies are especially not wanted if they are not “normal.” For example, according to LifeNews.com if a baby is determined to have Down Syndrome and be mentally retarded 100% of these babies are aborted in Iceland. 67% of Down Syndrome babies are aborted in the United States. Jesus, however, loves all babies regardless of their physical or mental condition (Matthew 18:1-6).

Please consider the story of a Down Syndrome baby known as John Mark Stallings. Baby John also had a serious heart problem and was not expected to live beyond his fourth birthday. John’s father

was a famous football coach named Gene Stallings who has been inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame.

At first, Gene prayed that God would change Johnny and make him “right”. Later, however, in an interview with Dr. James Dobson, Gene said that if he had it all to do over, he would never ask God to change Johnny. He considered Johnny an angel from heaven who taught him about love, and friendship, and what it means to really care. Against all odds, Johnny lived to be 46 years old. As the end drew near, Johnny’s oxygen level plummeted from the normal 90’s to only 63. His daddy said: “Johnny, how do you feel?”. Johnny replied “I fine”. He passed away the next morning. It was Aug. 2, 2008.

Gene began by praying that God would change Johnny, but in the end, with God’s help, Johnny changed Gene. Gene even wrote an inspirational biography about his son: *Another Season – A Coach’s Story of Raising an Exceptional Child*. This biography has literally inspired millions. As word spread of Johnny’s death, 1,500 letters poured in from all over the country. Two governors sent police cars to lead the funeral procession, and hundreds of mourners showed up to pay their respects. Although Johnny could not read or write, or even count to ten, his short life had a positive influence on millions.

Here is a partial list of his achievements of John Mark Stallings:

- A best selling biography honoring his life was written by his father.
- He received an honorary High School Diploma from Dallas Christian High School.
- He received a “Change the World” honor from Abilene Christian University.
- An equipment room was named in his honor at the University of Alabama.
- A playground was also named for him at the University of Alabama.
- A football field was named in his honor at Faulkner University.
- A life size statue of him and his father is also at Faulkner University.
- He was named a Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary International.
- He was made an honorary Marine by the U.S. Marine Corps.
- The Texas A & M Class of ‘57 endowed a Medical School Scholarship in his honor.
- He proudly represented Texas in the International Special Olympics.
- He was featured in the only United Way commercial produced for the NFL.
- He received the Alabama Sports Festival Medal which was carried on the space shuttle.
- He kicked off the “First Down for Downs” associated with the NFL Arizona Cardinals.
- He appeared on many TV programs such as the Today Show, Dateline, and an ABC Special.
- He was featured in People’s Magazine, Reader’s Digest, and also many Christian publications.
- He assisted teaching Sunday School classes for four year olds in several congregations.
- One university included him in a special list of five famous people who have changed the world.
- He was baptized into Christ in 1985 in Dallas, Texas.
- His precious name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life in heaven.

The Psalmist said: **“you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” (Ps 139:13-14)**

Little babies are not born by accident. There is no life in the womb without God! One day, as Jesus went along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. **“His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents**

sinned’, said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life” (John 9:1-3).

Thank God that John Mark Stallings was not aborted, for we can certainly see that the work of God was displayed in his life.

JESUS IS NOT ASHAMED OF HIS BRETHERN

The Bible is clear about this: **“Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.” (Hebrews 2:11)**

When two men have the same father, they are brothers whether they like it or not. Sometimes brothers are radically different. Esau, for example, was red and his body was covered with hair (Genesis 25:25). His brother, Jacob, did not look like that at all. Yet they were still brothers.

Just because someone in the church does not look like you, or think like you, does not mean that you are not brothers. There is a sense in which we must seek relations with those other’s despise: **“Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.” (Romans 12:16)**

Jesus once told a parable about **“some who were confident in their own righteousness, and looked down on everyone else.” (Luke 18:9-14)** Jesus concluded that parable with the warning: **“Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:14)**

DON’T BE LIKE HAMAN

I have a dear friend who is a brilliant student of the Bible and excelled in defending what he believed and proving others wrong. One day, as he was studying the book of Esther, it dawned on him that he was like Haman. Please consider:

- Haman was elevated by the king higher than any of all the other nobles (Esther 3:1).
- The king commanded all the royal officials to bow down to Haman (Esther 3:2)
- Haman was given the king’s signet ring and made a decree that all the Jews in all 127 provinces of the kingdom were to be killed (Esther 3:10-15)
- Haman was rich, had many sons, had been elevated above all the other officials of the king, and further, he was the only person invited to a special banquet with Queen Esther and the king.

Mordecai, by comparison, seemed to have no way of avoiding condemnation.

- The king commanded all the royal officials to bow down to Haman, but Mordecai wouldn’t do it (Esther 3:2).
- Mordecai was a Jew and all Jews were to be killed on the 13th day of the 12th month (Esther 3:10-14).
- The king had given Haman his signet ring, and Haman used this ring to certify the death warrant for Mordecai and all the Jews (Esther 3:10).
- A gallows 75 feet high had already been built upon which to hang Mordecai (Esther 5:14).

When the King said to Haman: **“What should be done for the man the king delights to honor?”** Now Haman thought to himself, **“Who is there that the king would rather honor than me?”** So he answered the king, **“For the man the king delights to honor, have them bring a royal robe the king has worn and a horse the king has ridden, one with a royal crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king’s most noble princes. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, ‘This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor!’”** (Esther 6:6-9)

Wise King Solomon said: **“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.”** (Proverbs 16:18).

The king said: **“Go at once,”** the king commanded Haman. **“Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, who sits at the king’s gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.”** (Esther 6:10)

Haman knew a lot of things, but there were some things he didn’t know. Haman was not only wrong, he was dead wrong. Mordecai was honored and Haman was hanged on his own gallows (Esther 7:10).

There are also many things that we do not know. We should know, however, that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

We should also know that Jesus wants all who believe in him to be “one”, just as he and the Father are “one”!

DON’T BE LIKE HAMAN!