

A Plea for Unity

by George Verwer

George Verwer's sermon emphasizes the critical need for unity among believers, rooted in love and effective communication, as modeled in Jesus' prayer in John 17.

Duration: 22:20

Scripture: John 17:17-22, John 17:24

Topics: "Unity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the challenges faced by mechanics and switchboard operators in their daily work. He emphasizes the importance of spiritual balance and commitment in dealing with various challenges. The preacher also discusses the history of the charismatic and fundamentalist movements, highlighting how God is bringing these two movements together in a powerful way. He encourages the congregation to work towards biblical unity and mentions their association with organizations like the Evangelical Alliance and the World Evangelical Alliance. The preacher concludes by urging the congregation to handle differences and misunderstandings with calmness and to strive for unity without becoming overly sensitive or unable to handle disunity.

Transcript

Let's turn to John 17, we just have a short time. John 17 is the great priestly prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ and it's when we see our Savior just opening his heart in prayer. We'll start with verse 17, sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word.

That they all may be one as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee. They also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me and the glory which thou gavest me. I have given them that they may be one even as we are one.

I in them, thou in me, that they may be made mature or perfect in one. That the world may know that thou hast sent me and has loved them as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am and that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me for thou lovest them before the foundation of the world.

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name and will declare that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them. I'm sure some maybe in the past have felt that in OM we overemphasize love and we don't emphasize doctrine enough.

We don't emphasize maybe some other important biblical concepts enough. The whole movement of OM was built on this basic principle that without love whatever else we may have, strong doctrine, great vision, tremendous faith, it won't work. Sooner or later things will come apart.

I've been reading a very interesting new book on the history of the church and especially the Bible-believing church that broke away from liberalism in the early part of this century who became known as fundamentalists. All the enemy attack upon that movement, Billy Graham's roots, go right into the heart of that. You never understand Billy Graham if you don't understand fundamentalism back in the 30s.

Dr. Schaeffer in the early chapter of this book, it just mentions in passing this young man who took over as pastor of this church that broke away from the denomination, Dr. Francis Schaeffer. He wasn't, I don't think, a doctor at that time. Just fascinating history.

But it's so clear that the main thing that Satan used to slow that movement down to break it into several pieces was division and disunity. It's really quite incredible. I couldn't sleep this morning about four.

I read that, found it rather depressing though it was fascinating to see how the Holy Spirit has worked and raised up great movements that became such a major part of the world's greatest missionary thrust. And one of the beautiful things we see today, you study the history as I've also done of the charismatic movement running parallel with the fundamental movement, very little overlap in the early days, and see how in our day God is bringing those two movements together to varying degrees of course. And not in an easy way, not in the absence of struggle, but in a very powerful way.

Billy Graham who became one of the great voices of a more moderate fundamentalist who later got accused of being neo-evangelicals many years ago, put his hand of a blessing and said something very positive about the work of the charismatic movement around the world. And if you missed last Friday's message, you may want to try to get that on cassette tape. God is calling us, God is commanding us to work toward biblical unity.

This is one of the reasons that we associate ourselves with things like the Evangelical Alliance. Why people like Peter Maiden who's involved even in the coordinating group of the Missionary Alliance Conference of about a week ago that I spoke at, 200 missionary leaders and executives and workers from all over the nation, we are now in the process of making a decision, should have done it years ago, to be aligned more with the World Evangelical Alliance. We of course have linkings with the Lausanne Committee.

I know those of you who are new don't understand these things, and I hope that we can expose you to more of this. One of the greatest blessings in coming on OM, I would say this if I were an outsider, is the exposure you get. You may not agree with everything, you may not like everything you hear, but OM gives you the privilege of a wide exposure to people from many, many backgrounds.

I don't think we always appreciate it as much as we should. I don't know if people know how much it costs to bring someone like David Bryant over to our conference, or Edith Schaefer, or some of the other people

that we have. We live in a day which everything seems to cost, but we feel that this linking with the whole body of Christ is just so important and so essential.

And in one way, one of the greatest tasks we have in ICT, and STL also do agree, is maintaining that unity, building that unity, dealing with enemy devices, the phone call, the letter, the answering of questions. I was speaking at People International yesterday morning. Got up on the road early, headed down to Tunbridge.

Just a tiny meeting, maybe nine people on the staff. Why do we do that? We have enough to do up here. Because this kind of meeting builds love and unity.

Actually, People International, directed by Ron George, the first person from Bromley to ever get involved in OM, is tied into Love Europe, and they are launching a huge endeavor tied in with Love Europe that is out on that little leaflet, and very, very challenging to say the least. But there, as we had a little time of question and answers after I spoke, one man took an OM prayer letter from back in May, and something in that letter upset him. He wrote to Dale Roton.

The little article that upset him or concerned him was below Dale's letter. It had nothing to do with Dale. It was just something, you know, Quintus Communication just put in there, like they do the letters now.

They put in different things. You don't know who said it, but it's there, and it sounds good. So I said, you know, Dale isn't the man that you should write to Quintus, and you don't have to write to Germany.

This is England. And we talked about that. It was just a small thing, but it's bothering him.

I already somehow got that in process this morning to get him some kind of an answer. Building unity, dealing with misunderstanding, answering people's questions. We had a brother who was involved with our work and linked with us in the ExoEver for 20 years, turned against us, turned against me personally, because we pushed Eros Defiled by John White for a number of years.

That man got so caught up with that thing in his mind that he developed a file, I don't know how thick, and when I saw him again a year ago, still just such a tense thing. We made changes in that book. You know, I guess we just never satisfied him.

Something got in his mind about that. And you know, I find that this is one of the things that so brings this unity among us as God's people. And I think we face it at times here in Bromley.

Some people call it a bug in the bonnet. Do you know that expression? Is that English or American? It's American. A bee in the bonnet.

Well, I changed it to a bug. But you know, I have that problem. I get something in my mind that's bothering me and it won't go.

And I know it's trivia. I know it's not that big, but it's bothering me. This happens often in marriage.

The wife gets something. I don't want to embarrass my wife this morning. I promised not to do that two weeks in a row.

But I know my wife sometimes gets something in her mind. Something, of course, very important. And on the other hand, I may get something in my mind and somehow it brings disunity.

And we here in Bromley are dealing with such a wide range of people. I think of even now as we go into the Christmas season and different people of different nationalities and different complexity. Marge and I have had long talks about her coming Christmas trip.

And I think we should pray for Marge as she goes back to her mother. When we first launched OM, we didn't expect we'd be getting so many grandmothers who were coming, carrying on major responsibility. I need to talk about these things because I'm going to be a grandfather perhaps in March.

But as I think of the need for Marge to return to the States and then compare her situation with other people's situations who are 18 or 21 or whatever, I just, you know, my circuits just sometimes begin to freak out. And I wonder how, how can we maintain unity? I pray with individuals all through the permanence, isn't it? You know, I've been thinking about that for two or three years. I haven't done it because I like to be here praying with the body whenever I'm anywhere within range of problems.

Maybe I'm extreme in it. But anyway, I finally got the courage to just pray with individuals because I find it hard standing here speaking to people week after week that I don't know. I've not even met.

So I prayed with individuals and I got to meet, to meet more personally. A lot of wonderful people here. I think I pray with about seven or eight different people.

I don't think I had one of the same nationality except the married couple who both came from Brazil. Every new person that came in the door was another country. Colombia, Denmark, Brazil, Canada, one or two other places.

And we really are an international conglomerate. And I'll tell you, humanly speaking, what we are attempting here in Bromley is impossible. And we are going to have some heavy, heavy hurt here even in the next six months.

I'm not saying that because I see some big thing right now. No, no. Just because I have a few years, like 32, working with people.

And my plea as we go forward in the next weeks is that everything we do, we work toward love and unity. What are some practical things? We don't have time to give a lot of practical things. But just a few before I close.

If we can make sure before we open our mouth about something and we develop that little thing that's in our mind and speak out about it, usually it's to a close friend, that we somehow could try to make sure we have the information correct. And I speak to myself. And if you catch me saying something about a person, about a situation, where the information is not correct or what I'm saying is based on wrong information, correct me.

Leaders are more vulnerable because we have to keep speaking. We've got to keep doing what we are assigned to do. We will make mistakes.

But it's so beautiful if we can feel free to go to one another. Let none of us here, especially if we're struggling with the leadership thing, it's quite normal for you to have struggles with your leader. It's quite normal.

Don't say, you know, he's too busy. I don't want to hear that about STL. I know Keith has to be away.

His sister just died. He has huge responsibility. But he does have a secretary.

I know he needs to see one raised up and I'm praying for that longer term. He has other co-workers who have direct access to him. You can leave a note.

You can phone his wife if it's urgent and say, leave a message. But most leaders would much rather get a note from you, a message. Hey, you know, I got a problem.

I need to somehow see you soon. Then later on pick up the pieces because there's some kind of confusion, whether it's dealing with social policy, money or whatever. We know as leaders that we, of course, need to improve in every area.

And I just say as the team leader of ICT that I see what I'm doing now as a huge challenge in which God is trying to do a deeper work in my own life. And I just really appreciate the way my own team, STL, is not so involved in that. They're going the extra mile, especially when I am away.

But let's communicate. Let's believe the best. Let us get our information before we make our decision.

And let us, this is the strongest thing I wanted to say, not be afraid to go to the people and ask them, you know, why did you do that? Why did you put that giant cockroach in my bed yesterday? You know that this is not funny for me. This is a big thing that I have an emotional mental illness linked with woman eating cockroaches. And my grandmother was eaten by one.

And, you know, I have a legitimate fear. So I don't feel this was funny that you put this in my bed. I don't know if any of you are playing practical jokes in your flats.

If I knew all that was happening in these various places where you all live, you know, I'd probably just give in my resignation. No, I hope not. Unity has to be on the grassroots.

It's got to be in those places where we live. My biggest challenge for unity is with my own family, my own wife. Now there's only two of us.

We're privileged now we have the dog back for three days. We've already had two or three crises. So there's three of us there now.

And you may think, well, a married couple 20 years together, that's nothing. Not too many of you have got that far yet. There are a few.

In fact, in any marriage, working toward unity and love and all that that involves is always a priority. So I just leave this with you as we move toward Christmas, that the Lord Jesus prayed with all of his heart that we may be one. We must not have living situations where people are just tolerating one another.

We can't have that. We must not have living situations where two people are on the same roof and they are actually living in two separate worlds. There must be a continual working toward unity.

You may be very different. You may have different activities. Accept that.

Don't make a big thing out of little differences. We don't make, I don't believe in any way that we are cultic, making excessive demands on those who join us, you know, one year. No cult takes people for one year.

And if you think, you even hear in the slightest criticism that we are cultic or behaving like a cult, let us know because I think personally the pendulum has gone the other way. We are in danger of becoming a gigantic free-for-all at which we emphasize so much our individuality and our differences that sometimes it can become chaotic. So let's think of John 17 as we go in to the days to come.

Let's realize that real unity will only take place as we have some disunity. Don't panic when a little disunity comes to your house, to your flat, to the office where you're working. Little differences of opinion.

We all have a degree of moodiness. If there's anybody here that has no struggle whatsoever with mood swings, you are the totally consistent non-mood swinger. That doesn't sound right.

I'd like to get your autograph in my Bible. You know the section that I have there. You've heard me speak before.

And I'm so ashamed, I really am so ashamed sometimes of the moods that I get in and repress it. And then my poor wife has to suffer or maybe someone else has to suffer. And I'm working on that with all of my heart through repentance, through the Word, through books, everything I can possibly get.

Let's just pray. Father, we just thank you for the challenge of John 17 that we may be one. We know we are already one through the gift of salvation.

We know that we are already one theologically and in a sense in terms of biblical relationship together, one family. But on a practical level, we are here from different nationalities, different backgrounds. Some are here, the only person from their country.

How easily they can feel terrific emotional left outness in one sense. And Lord, give us increased sensitivity without becoming super sensitive. Give us a greater thrust for unity without becoming neurotic and unable to handle disunity and differences and even misunderstandings.

Help us to be able, and I pray for myself especially, to as much as lieh within us, be able to calmly talk out our differences. Guard us especially in our telephone calls when we try to say a lot in a short period of time. Help us in all that we're doing in connection with vehicles.

Just where to park all these vehicles sometimes. Help the mechanics as they wrestle with so many different challenges. Strengthen those especially who are at the switchboard picking up the phone, the first one to answer.

People calling with their complaints. People sometimes easily offended down at the bookshop. As we walk here and there, we can, as we discovered, so easily offend people, our neighbors, the unsaved.

Sometimes we get caught up in our own world. Lord, we believe you are teaching us commitment with spiritual balance. We believe you are taking us deeper into oneness, into unity, whether we're a fundamentalist background or charismatic background, whether we're of a major denomination or a cathedral or a new mini house group movement.

We thank you, Lord, for the grandmothers in our midst. We thank you, Lord, for those who are 18 or younger and have only just joined. We thank you, Lord, for those that live in Britain and have a distinct set of situations as they face Christmas from those of us who are thousands of miles away from our loved ones and parents over the Christmas season.

That together we may join hands, join hearts, esteem one another, and live together in love and harmony and unity. For your glory that all around us, people, we know that we are your children and we will believe you for the reality to continue to flow through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

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