

BFF425 Unity

Scott Moore: Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good afternoon, Steve. How are you today?

Steve: Yeah. This is different, isn't it? We've both been up for a couple hours.

Scott: Yes. I'm awake. I'm alive. This could be weird.

Steve: Lets jump in. Jesus prayed an amazing prayer. We've discussed this in previous podcasts, and I don't want to overdo it. However it was fascinating when a friend of mine pointed out to me that when Jesus taught His disciples to pray, we call it "The Lord's Prayer." But because of his influence, I have chosen to call it "The Disciples' Prayer."

The Lord's Prayer I believe, is in John 17 when Jesus pours out His heart just before His crucifixion. Last Tuesday night my kindred friends and I, who meet weekly on a Zoom call were discussing this chapter. As we discuss unity, I'm going to encourage all of us to not look around at the condition of the church today, but to look up and focus on God Himself. This is the first point today.

The second thought happened about a week and a half ago. Without me even asking, God made two words known to me. He said, "informed faith." I'm still chewing on that. During my daily prayer times, I do a lot of asking for things that are to come to pass in the future. I don't want to do this haphazardly. I want my faith to be informed, hence, informed faith.

Of course, when I want to be informed, I'm going to go to Scripture. I'm not going to read books about stuff. I'm going to go to Scripture. To God's Word. So when we think about this topic of unity, we're going to go to God's Word. We're going to inform our faith because it does take faith.

We can all take one little glimpse around us and recognize that we are not what we're going to be, that there's a lot of disunity and division in the body of Christ. It's one of the saddest things that there is.

However, we're going to get our eyes back on Jesus, and we're going to look at what He has to say. We recognize that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things that we don't even see yet, but we're going to see them when we see Him. How's that for an introduction?

Scott: Sweet.

Steve: OK. Let's pray. Father, help us. Help us. Help us. There are certain words that are triggers to people. There are other there are other words that when we hear them, we feel like we have a handle on them. I pray today that we'll come at Your feet with

our hands raised, and simply say, "Teach us from Your Word what we need to see today."

I pray for Your spirit's work. I know that You're working Spirit of God. I know that You're managing the affairs of the church. I pray that You'll manage this podcast and will give us ears to hear and hearts to understand what You are pouring out today. Whether our minds are able to capture it, that's one thing, but our hearts, we latch onto this concept today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: I'm going to begin by reading a big chunk of John 17. "When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your son, that the Son may glorify You since You have given Him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom You have given Him.

"This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent. I glorified You on earth, having accomplished the work that You gave me to do. Now, Father, glorify Me in Your own presence with the glory that I had with You before the world existed.

"I have manifested Your name to the people Whom You gave me out of the world. Yours they were, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they know that everything that You have given Me is from You. For I have given them the words that You gave Me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from You, and they have believed that You sent Me.

"I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those Whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. All mine are Yours, and Yours are mine, and I am glorified in them. I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world. I am coming to You, Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are one.

"While I was with them, I kept them in Your name, which You have given Me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, but now I am coming to You, and these things I speak in the world that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.

"I have given them Your word and the world has hated them because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that You take them out of the world, but that You keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth. Your word is truth.

"As You sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world, and for their sake, I consecrate myself that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word, that they may all be

one, just 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 have sent Me.

"The glory that You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one even as We are one, I in them and You in Me, that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that You sent Me and love them even as You love Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, may be with Me where I am to see My glory that You have given Me because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

"Oh, righteous Father, even though the world does not know You, I know You, and these know that You have sent Me. I made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known that the love with which You have loved Me may be in them and I in them."

Now, if anybody else had prayed that, we would think, "Well, that's nice." But this is not anybody. This is Jesus. This is God in the flesh. This is the Son of God, and He gets His prayers answered because He prays according to the will of God. He's talking to God Himself, and He says, "I want them to be perfectly one, and the result will be, then the world will know that You sent Me."

It's not just so that we can be one. It's so that the whole world will know that You sent me because My people love each other so much, and they love You so much that they are one.

Now, I'm going to see what Paul has to say about this topic. In Ephesians 4, "I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

"There is one body and one spirit just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all Who is over all and through all and in all."

I've got four more pages of notes. I'm not going to read them yet. We need to chew on what we've already been listening to. I'll just say that I believe that the key is not to get us all together and sing "Kumbaya" and hold hands, and then decide what's the least common denominator of our faith.

The point is, I don't think that should be the focus. I think the focus is God Himself. In some ways, it's complex, and in other ways, it's simple. To simply love God with all our heart, soul, might, with everything in us, and love His word and love the truth and be led by the Spirit.

You and I have probably been to tons of weddings. At many of them they read 1 Corinthians 13. There are unity candles. Probably the main message is that when you are joined, you become one. When you're young, you're not thinking too much. But

when you get older, you think, "Wow. Really? Because we're really different. We're from different planets."

The preacher, hopefully, will point them to Jesus and say, "Yes, but the closer you get to Jesus, the closer you will get to each other." You can't be looking at each other thinking, "How can we be more one-y? We have to keep our eyes up. How can we be closer to Jesus?" It's like a triangle. The closer we get to the point where the two lines intersect, the closer we're going to be to each other. There's no other getting around it. We've got to get our eyes up not horizontal.

We have to be looking at Jesus, loving Jesus, coming into Jesus' presence and being led by His spirit and tasting that He's good and not just reading books about His goodness, but knowing for ourselves. We need to get really close to Jesus because when we get into that throne room with Him, there's not going to be any debates or divisions or different ways of doing stuff because we're going to be in God's presence, and our eyes are going to be fixed on Him.

All we're going to do is, like those great bodies of believers in Revelation, is singing and worshiping. We're not going to be thinking about the stuff that makes us different. We're going to be thinking about the one God of all. That's my main point right there. What do you think of that?

Scott: I'm still back on Jesus praying for all of us, so...

Steve: That's all right. I'm like the water fountain after I've been soaking this all up for some time. You poor guy, you had to put your umbrella on. So take us back to Jesus' prayer.

Scott: Well, it's so powerful just in what He says, but at that point, the disciples and everybody had really no idea what was coming. They heard Him talking about His death and whatever, but they didn't even know if He meant literal death. That kind of put an exclamation point on that prayer.

I wonder how they felt after His death and resurrection, like when He went and got crucified and then rose from the dead, it's like that's that makes all the rest of this stuff He said beforehand have a whole lot more meaning and a whole lot more power to it. You know? I read that, and I'm just like...I don't know. I'm humbled by it. That He prayed for me and for us like that. You know?

Steve: Yeah. Because he covers everybody. Not just these people present, but for all who will believe in Him through their word.

Scott: Interestingly, He excludes the people that don't belong to him. I don't know if that means anything or not, but that jumped out at me a little. I'm like, "Interesting."

Steve: OK. I'm just going to have jump down down here then. You're going to be surprised where we're going to go here. We're going to go to Revelation 7. I'm going to start in the ninth verse because I received some insight into this today.

Scott: Bring it.

Steve: "After this, I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God, Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb.'

"All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God saying, 'Amen. Blessing and honor and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.'

"One of the elders addressed me saying, 'Who are these clothed in white robes? Where do they come from?' I said to him, "Sir, you know" and he said, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation." Notice that word "coming." They are still coming.

"They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple, and He who sits on the throne will shelter them with His presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore. The sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

"For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Now I didn't read the verses before that, but the context is in the seventh chapter of Revelation, he starts off in the third verse, "Don't harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of God on their foreheads." I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000 sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.

So first He sealed these 144,000, but then He sees a great multitude. I think about when Scripture talks about the first fruits, I think these 144,000 were the first fruits. They were sealed. They had God's name on their forehead. Then it wasn't limited to them. It included then a great multitude.

What I noticed today that I hadn't ever noticed before is that great tribulation is going to be a great tribulation, and we're going to hunger and thirst. These two anointed ones are going to have the power to bring drought. There's going to be scorching heat, but these people came out of the great tribulation. They came out of it.

They came to Christ in the great tribulation, and then God says, "And guess what? Now there is no more hunger. No more thirst, no more sun striking you, no more scorching heat. We're going to take you to springs of living water. We're going to wipe away every tear from your eye, and I am going to shelter you with My presence."

God's got this whole thing under control. I don't know how to convey it, but somehow, through that great tribulation, there's going to be a lot of unity. There's

going to be a lot of people that are going to learn that God is God, and we're going to worship Him. The Bible says when the judgments of God are in the earth, the inhabitants learn righteousness.

There's going to be a lot of learning going on in those dark times, but when we get into the presence of God, He's going to take away our hunger and our thirst and our sunburns and everything else.

I don't know if that answers your question, but I think God started with those 12 disciples, and then eventually, according to Acts, they turned the world upside down because God's going to start with a group of people, and He's going to turn the world upside down. It's not going to be pretty rough, but it's going to be effective.

Scott: Yeah. I was wondering if you were going towards the persecution as the means of us getting more unified because it doesn't seem like comfort unifies people. We just find things to fight about when we're comfortable, but when we are all getting shot at by a common enemy, it's much easier to unite, and I like that.

Steve: And lay our lives down for one another. Which, again, you said before, is this figurative? Is this we may have to literally lay our life down for one another, but, "A new commandment I give to you that you love one another just as I have loved you. By this, all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have loved one for another." That's in the 13th chapter of John.

15th chapter says, "And greater love has no man than this, and he'll lay down his life for his friend." So we're going to have to do some really self-sacrificing love, but in doing so, we're going to be a witness. Our lives are going to be testifying to the whole world, "Hey, this is the real deal. These people love each other so much, they're willing to lay their lives down for each other."

Scott: I thought Jesus was going to get me a new Corvette and big house on the beach. Isn't that what this whole gospel thing's about?

Steve: Well, it's interesting that you bring that up because I find so much depth in Scripture and purpose and meaning and a desire to know God more, know His word more. Yet, sadly, I think that we've given that impression to people that you just need to get saved and then go get a good job.

We've put a ceiling on the Christian life. Sadly we teach that if you go to church once or twice a week, and pay your tithes, and go to youth camps and all that, but the most important thing is you've got to get a good education because you've got to make a bunch of money. We've mixed together this world's understanding of what success is with Christianity.

By the way, in my Bible reading, I'm in Isaiah and Philippians. I read chunks of Revelation this morning as I prepared. The Bible provides an alternative way of

looking at life. From God's perspective, we see that following Jesus is an alternative universe. This world is not our own. We're just passing through.

Scott: You actually start to see the world through the lens of your faith. It's not just faith. It's a little add-on to your world. You actually start to...Everything looks different when you put it through the lens of the Holy Spirit, I guess. It's the way I would put it.

Steve: Yeah. When you see it through the lens of Scripture. Let me read some more. Because remember, "informed faith," I want to be praying for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. I want to be praying according to His will, 1 John 5. Because if we pray according to His will, we get it.

Daniel prayed according to God's will. He read in scripture, that in 70 years the children of Israel in Babylon were going back to the land. He began praying three times a day. And they went back to the land. That's it right there. That's, in a nutshell, to me, what "informed faith" is.

I want to inform my faith on unity. So first of all, I'm praying, and I have been praying the last couple of years two times a day, my priestly times. I'm praying for God to make us one, but I feel like God is saying, "Let's search the Scriptures to inform our faith some more."

For example, Ephesians 4:11-16. This is the same chapter where we just read from a few minutes ago, "One Lord, one faith, one body," etc. "He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry or building up the body of Christ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God to mature manhood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

"So that we may no longer be children tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness and deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him Who is the head, into Christ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love."

Here is a practical question, "Do we see apostles and prophets and evangelists and shepherds and teachers?" Well if not, then I'm going to start praying for that. I'm going to start praying that God would raise up apostles and prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers because that is part of the body of Christ. I'm also going to pray that the whole body with every joint will be supplying something.

You have head of 20/80? You know what 20/80 is? 20 percent of people do 80 percent of the work. That's what happens in most churches. However in this passage every joint is supplying something.

Of course, when I hear that, I think of my son, John. He is a part of the body of Christ. Is he included? He is, and he supplies something that nobody else can supply in our church, especially in the men's group. It's awesome to watch. He has been counting the days till men's group starts. It started last week, kind of an intro tonight. He heard that we're going to have snacks. He wants to take pizza.

He's going to bless those guys' socks off when he walks in with a couple pizzas tonight because this is what he supplies, but what does an apostle supply? Apostles talk to God, hear from God. Prophets, they supply something. Evangelists, they supply something. Shepherds, teachers, because we need the whole body of Christ, not just one guy that's had some education, another guy that helps him out. He's the assistant, and then you've got the staff.

I'm not looking at most modern day churches. I'm looking to God. That's what it says right there. It says, "Looking unto Him Who is the head unto Christ from whom the whole body."

I'm doing my best to get close to God and get saturated and abide in His word and learn to listen and be led by His spirit. If God wants to make me one of those five things up there, I'm all in. Maybe I even am, and I don't even know it. It doesn't make any difference to me. My eyes are on Him, and I think it'll come forth.

In Galatians, it says, "In Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There's no more Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, no male, no female. You are all one in Christ Jesus." So there you go.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: There's a lot in the Bible about unity. Psalm 133, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The last verse says, "There God commands the blessing, life forevermore." When we're together, then it's blessing. I don't know if you have favorite scriptures from your past, and then you read them again later and you've grown and they don't strike you the same way, but this one, I remember as I read through Chronicles for perhaps the first time.

This is the 5th chapter of 2 Chronicles. "It came to pass when the priests were come out of the Holy Place, for all the priests that were present had sanctified themselves and did not keep their courses. Also, the Levites who were the singers, all of them, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and their sons and their brethren arrayed in fine linen with cymbals and psalteries and harps, and they stood at the east end of the altar, and with them a 120 priests sounding with trumpets.

"It came to pass when the trumpeters and singers were as one to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music and praised Jehovah saying, 'For

He is good, for His loving kindness endures forever,' that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of Jehovah, so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud, for the glory of Jehovah filled the House of God." That's powerful stuff, and this was in a time of reformation too. In context, they had been going through a tough place, and it was all those priests and stuff to do is get their act together and sanctify themselves and figure out what their courses were and get in their places, but when they did, and when they were as one and making one sound in praising and thanking God, eyes focused on Him, then God came down. Whoo! There, to me, is the fruit of unity. Man, I will bet you those people in that tabernacle that day never forgot that. When they got back together for their high school reunions, "Hey, you remember that time when we sanctified ourselves, and we got into the temple, and and we played our instruments, and we worshiped God? You remember that? Wow."

It marked them, and the rest of their life, that's what they hungered for because they got a taste of heaven right there.

Scott: I'm just thinking of where we are as the church today, and I'm not terribly encouraged by the lack of unity. You know? I mean, I've heard many, many sermons on unity, and it never really seems to get much better. I go back to the whole persecution thing, and I think that's what's going to have to happen for us to get united.

Steve: Yeah. I think that's a piece. I think the other piece is we each need to love God with everything in us. John Wesley said, "Give me a hundred men who love nothing but God and hate nothing but sin, and I will shake the whole world for Christ."

I think if you've been listening to these podcasts for the last couple of years, you'll know loving God doesn't stop. Loving God with all of our heart, with all of our mind, with all of our muchness, all of our might, is connected to being loved by God because we love because He first loved us.

As we're taking in His love and loving Him, and then loving others as He has loved us, then we're in sync with Him. I don't think there's anything in there about doctrine that I've mentioned today at all. It's all about the heart loving God and being led by His spirit, but it's also it's informed faith.

So I'm going to pray that God will teach us how to worship like those guys in 2 Chronicles, to find our places in the body of Christ, for apostles to be raised up. I want to have my faith be informed, and I want to simply keep my eyes up because I believe faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Amen.

Scott: Yeah. The closest I've been coming to that is praying for just an outpouring of His spirit because when I see His spirit moving, then I'm encouraged. When you see

people just...Well, when you see revival signs, when you see people confessing their sins and turning to the Lord, that encourages me in the whole unity thing. If His spirit's not moving, we're toast.

Steve: That's right. We love because He first loved us, but the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through His Spirit. It's the Spirit that points us to God. Amen.

Scott: Amen.

Steve: Well, let's exercise our informed faith.

Steve: In Jesus' name, Father, we echo, and we say, amen, to the Son of God's prayers. We know that, Jesus, that you are sitting at the right hand of the Father, and you perhaps are still praying this same prayer, and we say amen. Make us one in Jesus' name.

I pray that You'll help us to understand and pray for, I'm going to pray right now that You'll raise up prophets, apostles, evangelists, shepherds, teachers. Raise them up to the glory of God. I pray that You'll teach us how to include every part of the body of Christ so that those parts that feel like they're on the fringes or not valued, breathe on us, Spirit of God, and equip us to be thriving bodies of Christ all over the place. Primarily, I pray that You'll teach us what it means to be in love with You so much that our eyes are fixed on You, and we love You with all of our mind and all of our heart and all of our muchness. We love Your spirit and we love Your ways, and we say amen. Whatever it takes, make us one so that the world knows here was a 144,000 that You sealed, and they were one.

Then because of their oneness, the whole world heard the gospel, and a countless multitude was coming out of the great tribulation. I pray for, as Scott said, the outpouring of Your spirit before, during, and through the great tribulation so that people will get their eyes on Jesus and find themselves in his presence. In Jesus' name, amen.

Scott: Amen. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at spdemme@gmail.com. If you have a question for me, you can reach me at scott@unsocializedmedia.com. Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.