MINISTÈRE DU PASTEUR CLÉMENT SALOMON · BIBLE STUDY #25

One in Christ: Unity in God's Family

Different languages, different countries, different stories. Can we really be one family? Jesus prayed that we would be — and He told us why.

"Are you family?" the nurse asked. The two women looked at each other. Neither one understood the other's language. But both of them knew the answer.

Manmi Lisette was seventy-two when she came from Haiti to live with her son in Philadelphia. The city was cold. The streets were loud. And on Sabbath, the little church near her son's apartment preached in English — a language she did not speak.

The first week, she sat in the back row, alone. She held her Kreyòl Bible on her lap and tried to follow. She could not. She felt like a guest at someone else's table.

The second week, a woman sat down next to her. Rosa was from Guatemala. She cleaned offices at night. She spoke Spanish — and only Spanish. Rosa smiled, pointed to the hymnbook, and opened it between them.

When the piano started, Lisette knew the melody. She had sung it since she was a girl in Haiti. So she sang — in Kreyòl. And next to her, Rosa sang the same tune — in Spanish. Two languages. One song.

After that, every Sabbath, Rosa saved her a seat. They could not have a conversation. They shared the hymnbook, a smile, and sometimes a mint from Rosa's purse. That was all.

Then one Sabbath, Lisette's seat was empty.

Hold on to that empty seat. Because what Rosa did next is a small picture of something Jesus asked His Father for — on the last night before the cross. And He was praying about *you*.

Why we build walls

Be honest. In a crowded room, where do you sit? Most of us look for people who look like us, talk like us, and come from where we come from. It feels safe.

And little by little, walls go up. Haitian here, American there. Rich and poor. "Educated" and "not educated." Those who were born here and those who just arrived. Even in church.

This is not new. Jesus' own disciples argued about which one of them was the greatest. In the early church, some believers would not even eat at the same table as others. Walls are as old as sin.

But God's dream has always been bigger than our walls. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came, and people from many nations heard the good news. Look at what happened:

> *"...the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language."*
>
> **Acts 2:6 (KJV)**

Notice: God did not make everyone speak one language. He spoke to each one *in his own language*. He did not erase who they were. He brought them together.

The prayer Jesus prayed for you

On the night before He died, Jesus prayed a long prayer for His disciples. Then He did something beautiful. He prayed for all who would believe later — that includes you and me (John 17:20). And this is what He asked:

> *"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."*
>
> **John 17:21 (KJV)**

Read the end again: *that the world may believe*. Our unity is not just nice. It is a message. When people who should be enemies love each other, the world sees something it cannot explain — except by Jesus.

> *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."*

John 13:35 (KJV)

Not by our big buildings. Not by our perfect music. By love — one to another.

One body, many parts

The apostle Paul used a picture everyone understands: your own body.

> *"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."*
>
> **1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (KJV)**

Your hand is not your foot. Your eye is not your ear. They look different. They do different jobs. But they are one body, with one life flowing through them.

That is the church. **Unity is not uniformity.** God does not want a church of copies. He wants a body — Haitian and French, American and Latino, young and old — each one different, each one needed. Paul says, "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee" (1 Corinthians 12:21).

And in a body, pain is shared:

> *"And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."*
>
> **1 Corinthians 12:26 (KJV)**

The walls Jesus broke down

In Paul's day there were deep walls: Jew and Gentile, slave and free, man and woman. People were ranked. Some were worth more than others. Then Paul wrote one of the most revolutionary sentences ever written:

> *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."*

Galatians 3:28 (KJV)

Paul was still a Jew. Men were still men, and women still women. Differences did not disappear. But in Christ, **they no longer rank us and they no longer divide us.** At the foot of the cross, the ground is level. No one is worth more there because of his passport, his diploma, his bank account or the color of his skin.

Peter had to learn this too. When God sent him to the house of a Roman officer — someone he had been taught to avoid — Peter said, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).

How did this happen? Not by a program. By the cross:

> *"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."*
>
> **Ephesians 2:14 (KJV)**

In our last study, we saw Jesus die and rise to bring us back to God. Here we see the second miracle of the cross: **it brings us back to each other.**

A gift we keep

Here is something important. We do not *create* unity. God gives it. But we must *keep* it:

> *"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*
>
> **Ephesians 4:3-6 (KJV)**

Count the word "one" — seven times. One body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. Our unity starts in God Himself: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one. He pulls us into that oneness.

How do we keep it? The verse just before tells us: "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" (Ephesians 4:2). And Paul shows the thread that holds it all together:

> *"And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."*
>
> **Colossians 3:14 (KJV)**

"Charity" in the old English means love — God's kind of love. Love is the bond. It is the stitching that holds different pieces of cloth together in one garment.

Unity does not mean pretending nothing is wrong. Paul tells us to speak "the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15), and to keep "forbearing one another, and forgiving one another" (Colossians 3:13). Real families have hard talks — and then they still sit down at the same table.

So what does keeping unity look like on a normal Sabbath?

- Sit next to someone you do not know yet.
- Learn to say "God bless you" in another member's language.
- When someone is missing, notice — and go find out why.
- Refuse to repeat the story that divides. Forgive quickly.
- Welcome the newcomer the way Christ welcomed you: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God" (Romans 15:7).

The Seventh-day Adventist Church sums up this Bible teaching like this: the church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue and people; in Christ we are a new creation, and differences of race, culture, learning, nationality, social standing or gender must not divide us, for we are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bound us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; this unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God (Fundamental Belief #14, "Unity in the Body of Christ").

A preview of heaven

Where is all this going? John was given a look at the end of the story:

> *"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."*
>
> **Revelation 7:9 (KJV)**

All nations. All tongues. Standing together. Same white robes. Same Lamb. Every time a church full of different people sings together, it is a little rehearsal for that day.

> *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"*
> **Psalm 133:1 (KJV)**

Unity is **God's gift** — one Father, one Lord, one Spirit. It is **Jesus' prayer** — that the world may believe. And it is **our choice** every Sabbath — to keep it with love.

What the nurse saw

That Sabbath, when Lisette's seat was empty, Rosa did not just go home. She asked the deacon. She found out Lisette was in the hospital with pneumonia.

On Sunday afternoon, Rosa walked into Lisette's room with a container of hot chicken soup and her Spanish Bible. Lisette was so surprised that she started to cry.

They still could not talk. So Rosa opened her Bible to John 17 and pointed to verse 21. Lisette opened her Kreyòl Bible to the same place. Rosa read it aloud in Spanish. Lisette read it in Kreyòl. Neither one understood the other's words — but both of them knew exactly what they were reading: *"That they all may be one."*

That was when the nurse came in. She looked at the soup, the two Bibles, the two women holding hands. "Are you family?" she asked.

Rosa answered first: "Sí. Familia."

And Lisette, smiling through her tears, said: "Wi. Fanmi."

The nurse did not understand either language. But she understood what she saw. And maybe — just maybe — she understood a little more about Jesus that day.

That is what Jesus prayed for. Not people who all look the same, but people from every nation who love each other so much that the world has to ask why. You belong in that family. Is there a seat next to you this Sabbath that someone is waiting for?

Before you close this — one question

Have you ever felt like a guest at someone else's table — even in church? Too new, too different, too far from home?

In Christ, you are not a guest. You are family. We would be honored to pray with you, open the Bible with you, and help you find your place in God's family — just as you are.

Would you like to know more about Jesus, study the Bible, or go deeper on this topic? Reach us today:

📞 **903-748-9353** · ✉️ **jils19802012@gmail.com**
Or leave a comment, send us a direct message, and **subscribe + follow** on YouTube and Facebook.

Don't miss what's next. The church is God's big family — but it starts in the small one, at home. What did God really have in mind when He made the first marriage? Our next study: *"Marriage and Family: God's Design for Love."* Subscribe now so it reaches you the moment it's out. If you wait, you'll have to come find it. 🔔

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Viewer Handout

One in Christ: Unity in God's Family — pocket version

5 truths to remember

1. Jesus prayed for all future believers to be one, "that the world may believe" — our love for each other is a message (John 17:20-21; 13:35).
2. The church is one body with many members; unity is not uniformity, and every member is needed (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 21, 26).
3. In Christ, differences of nation, class and gender no longer rank us or divide us; the cross broke down the dividing wall (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14; Acts 10:34).
4. Unity is a gift of the Spirit that we keep with humility, patience, truth spoken in love, forgiveness and love (Ephesians 4:2-6, 15; Colossians 3:13-14).
5. God's family will stand together from every nation, tongue and people before the throne (Revelation 7:9; Psalm 133:1).

Memory verse

> *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."*
>
> **Galatians 3:28 (KJV)**

Think & pray about it

- Where do I usually "sit" — and who have I never really gotten to know in my church?
- Is there a wall in my heart (nationality, class, language, an old hurt) that Jesus wants to break down?
- Who has been missing lately? What one thing can I do this week to show them they are family?

FOR TEACHERS & SMALL GROUPS

Presenter Bullet Sheet

- **Open with the story** (an illustrative story: Manmi Lisette, a Haitian grandmother new in Philadelphia, and Rosa, a Guatemalan office cleaner — no shared language, one shared hymnbook; then Lisette's seat is empty) — ask: "Can people this different really be one family?"
- **Point 1 — Why we build walls:** we naturally sort by language, nation, class; even the disciples argued about who was greatest. At Pentecost God spoke to each "in his own language" (Acts 2:6) — He united without erasing.
- **Point 2 — The prayer Jesus prayed for you:** John 17:20-21; John 13:35. Jesus prayed for future believers; unity's purpose is "that the world may believe."
- **Point 3 — One body, many parts:** 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 21, 26. Unity is not uniformity; every member is needed; pain and joy are shared.
- **Point 4 — The walls Jesus broke down:** Galatians 3:28; Acts 10:34; Ephesians 2:14. Differences remain but no longer rank or divide; link to the previous study — the cross brings us back to God and to each other.
- **Point 5 — A gift we keep:** Ephesians 4:2-6, 15; Colossians 3:13-14; Romans 15:7. Seven "ones"; unity flows from the triune God; love is the bond; practical steps for a normal Sabbath. Reference Fundamental Belief #14 in the Church's own words.
- **Point 6 — A preview of heaven:** Revelation 7:9; Psalm 133:1. Every nation and tongue before the throne; our worship together is a rehearsal.
- **Close the story:** Rosa brings soup to the hospital; the two women read John 17:21 in Spanish and Kreyòl; the nurse asks, "Are you family?" — "Sí. Familia." "Wi. Fanmi."
- **Appeal:** invite each person to receive their place in God's family, to let Jesus break down one wall in their heart, and to reach one person this week who feels like a stranger.
- **Close:** memory verse (Galatians 3:28) + "One Father, one Lord, one Spirit — one family" + tease the next study ("Marriage and Family: God's Design for Love").

EVIDENCE-BASED · FACT-CHECKED

10 Myths vs. Facts

Myth	Fact (with Bible)
1. Unity means everyone must be the same — same language, same culture, same style.	"The body is one, and hath many members" (1 Corinthians 12:12). Heaven's crowd is "of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues" (Revelation 7:9).
2. Some people count more in God's church — the rich, the educated, the ones born here.	"Ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).
3. Unity is something we have to manufacture by our own effort.	It is "the unity of the Spirit" — a gift we are called to keep (Ephesians 4:3); "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13).
4. Whether Christians get along doesn't matter to the outside world.	Jesus prayed for unity "that the world may believe" (John 17:21); "by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples" (John 13:35).
5. My language or culture is a barrier God cannot use.	At Pentecost "every man heard them speak in his own language" (Acts 2:6).
6. Once a brother or sister hurts me, unity is broken for good.	"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another... even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Colossians 3:13).
7. Unity means staying silent about what is wrong.	We grow by "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15) — truth and love together.
8. If another member is suffering, it's not my business.	"Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26).
9. Some walls between people are too old and too deep for God.	Christ "hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Ephesians 2:14).
10. Real unity among believers is only a dream.	John saw "a great multitude... of all nations" standing together "before the throne, and before the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9). "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1).

Where this comes from (Sources)

This study is built on the Bible and reflects the published beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Verify everything for yourself:

- The Bible — passages on unity in the body of Christ: Psalm 133:1; John 13:35; John 17:20-21; Acts 2:6; Acts 10:34; Romans 15:7; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 21, 26; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:14; Ephesians 4:2-6, 15; Colossians 3:13-14; Revelation 7:9 (King James Version, public domain).
- Seventh-day Adventist Fundamental Belief #14, "Unity in the Body of Christ" — official beliefs: https://adventist.org/beliefs (please read the statement there in full, in the Church's own words).
- 28 Fundamental Beliefs (2020 edition, PDF): https://adventist.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ADV-28Beliefs2020.pdf
- General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists: https://gc.adventist.org/
- Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 73, "Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled" (on Christ's prayer in John 17), and *The Acts of the Apostles*, chapters 1 and 4, "God's Purpose for His Church" and "Pentecost," public domain: https://whiteestate.org/ / https://m.egwwritings.org/
- Related studies in this library: *"The Church: God's Family"*, *"Gifted to Serve: Your Place in the Body of Christ"*, *"The Holy Spirit: God With Us"* and *"The Cross and the Empty Tomb"* — https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/resources.html · Questions? https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/faq.html · Faith Journey: https://pasteurclementsalomon.org/journey.html

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