

"A CRY FOR UNITY—FROM WITHIN"

One of the first articles I wrote in this series was entitled, "Living with Connected Hearts". You may recall from that writing that I shared about my own personal struggle with keeping my heart connected. I also shared some of the reasons that this occurs, how we can know it, and what we can do about it. One area that I believe is fundamental in our ability to live with our hearts connected to God and to one another is the degree of unity with which we live.

JESUS' CRY FOR UNITY

On the night before Jesus' death, He shares intimately with His disciples in what is referred to as the "upper room discourse" (John 13:1-17:26). He ends this discourse (chapter 17) with a series of prayers--first for himself, then for the disciples, and finally for all believers—that's us! This is a part of that final prayer: "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 so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:20-23). A cry from the heart of Jesus on the very night that He was betrayed and His closest friends left Him, was that His disciples (see v. 11) and we, His future followers, be one. I believe this is still His cry today.

INDIVIDUAL VERSUS CORPORATE UNITY

When we typically reflect on how important unity was and is to Jesus and the Father, we commonly think about it in a corporate sense—the degree that we are in unity with one another. Though I believe that this is crucial and truly at the heart of the Scriptures, I also believe that there is another form of unity that is vitally important and possibly a prerequisite to true corporate unity—that being a unity within our own souls. According to Webster's, the word "unity" is defined as: "the state of being one; a singleness; in harmony; a whole made up of separate elements." In "The Message," the phrase "that they may be one" (John 17:21) is translated ". . . that all of them become one heart and mind." In order to truly become of "one heart and mind" with one another, I believe that we must be of "one heart and mind" within ourselves. The more we are fragmented in our souls--which consists of our mind, will and emotions (heart)—the more we will live as a fragmented corporate "body."

THE NATURE OF A FRAGMENTED SOUL

I believe that most, if not all of us, are fragmented to some degree. This occurs simply by being born into a fallen world. Yet, this can vary considerably from one individual to another. For example, a person who experienced extreme childhood abuse may have unconsciously "fragmented" or "split" in their mind/heart in order to survive. This extreme form would be what psychologists term, "Dissociative Identity Disorder" (formerly called Multiple Personality Disorder). This type of fragmentation may be more readily understood. However, in situations where there is no overt abuse but yet either a lack of effective nurturing in childhood or parenting that was

negative or critical in nature, an individual's heart/mind can also be fragmented. This condition is not as readily identified or understood by others, yet this individual may function in life (and in their Christian walk) with a great deal of frustration. They truly want to "connect" with others and with God, but they just "can't get there." They may have moments when they sense this level of intimacy or "oneness," but most of the time they live their emotional or spiritual lives "from a distance" or "from the outside looking in." They might say (if only to themselves) "I know that something just isn't right, but I don't know what it is." Another phrase that might be used, particularly in their relation with God, is "I just can't connect, and I know there must be more." When we live with a soul that is divided, fragmented, and our inner being is not unified or whole, the fullness of the Gospel (the "Good News") does not reach every part of our heart. This can exist in even the most conscientious and active Christian, and in many occasions, those around this individual are not aware. Yet, Father God knows, and He does not want us to live this way!

IDENTIFYING AND BRINGING UNITY WITHIN

There is no true and lasting healing apart from that which comes from the Lord Jesus Christ. What we are called to do is to surrender to Him and to "partner" with Him in the revealing and healing of our fragmented souls. If you relate to some of what I've shared in this article, ask the Holy Spirit to show you more about this. For example, He may reveal a time in your life when this sense of "separation or division within" started. He might show you the various defense mechanisms or protections that you learned along the way that keep you from walking in the "internal unity" that He desires for you. If He brings these things forward, He will do it for the purpose of ultimately healing you and making you whole. However, His timing, specific plans and purposes in the restoration process may not follow your own agenda! Give Him access to you and your heart. He longs for this unity in your soul and for the unity that it will ultimately bring to His church and the world! It was His prayer!

PLEASE PRAY WITH ME . . .

Father, I thank You that You sent Your Son Jesus to save me, and the glory that You gave Him resides in me (John 17:22). I want to be whole and I want the fullness of Your glory to shine forth in me. I want to be able to more fully love You with all of my heart, soul, mind and strength and to love my neighbor as myself (Mk 12:30-31). I invite You to show me any areas of my heart, my mind or my emotions that are fragmented and disconnected from You or from others. I welcome Your Holy Spirit to reveal anything that I need to know in this area, and I trust You in this. I, too, want my own body within to be unified, such that the Body of Christ—Your Body—will be unified. In Jesus' Name, Amen.
From the Father's Heart,

Jerry Basel