

HOW TO ACCOMPLISH UNITY

Opening Questions:

- How essential is unity for any group of people trying to accomplish something?
- What is the best source to understand Joshua of Nazareth - himself or others?
- Would it help develop unity if disciples could agree on a way to prioritize Joshua's teachings?
- Did Joshua provide the priority or relative importance of his teachings?
- If disciples don't have unity, what are we saying to the world?

As we have seen, the Bible is an extensive book that contains many thousands of supposed teachings from God.

Please consider this example. Twenty city people with no experience in being out of a city environment were kidnapped and blindfolded and transported to the center of the Canadian wilderness. They were told before they were left that they would be given instructions that would allow them to survive and escape the wilderness.

Ten were in one group, and another ten were in the second group. Group one was given a piece of paper with three instructions. Those three instructions were the keys to successfully getting out of the wilderness.

Group two was given a piece of paper with one-hundred instructions. These hundred instructions were all true but included many less essential and relatively trivial solutions to the things the people would face in trying to escape the wilderness. Things like the best way to boil water and optimal sleeping configurations given the temperature. The instructions included the three critical truths needed to escape the wilderness, but they were buried in the other one-hundred directions.

I ask the reader, which group will more likely find unity in the purpose of escaping the wilderness? Once a leader, leaders or a leadership method occurred, it would then come down to the ten people evaluation the instructions. The group with a hundred directions will have almost ten times the opportunity for disunity as they argue over what is essential or not. The group with only three instructions will have much lower chance for disunity.

In the same way, what should be the baseline common ground of disciples of Joshua to be with one another and work together? This critical question

needs addressing. Listen to the importance of unity in this statement of the Light:

The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. (John 17)

This unity can only have a reasonably good chance of being attained if it is clear and straightforward. As we previously saw in the complexity chapter, each sect making their “statement of faith” (really statement of belief) slightly different than the thousands of others is part of the mechanism that produces the splintered, shattered glass bowl that is the successful failure. It is also extremely noteworthy that virtually none of those statements of belief have "love one another" included in them.

The Bible is a vast book, and it is only too easy to select a set of doctrine or beliefs from the scripture and make a sect/division out of it. Add to that the additional sources of God or spiritual belief looked to in addition to the Bible, for example:

- The writings of the many "prophets" of Christianity like Joseph Smith and the book of Mormon;
- The Vatican's Catchecism;
- Menno Simmon's writings;
- Charles Taze Russel of the Jehovah's witnesses;
- The latest Urantia Book, etc.

And you have what you have on the earth – many thousands of divisions of Christianity. Ultimately, Christianity's lack of unity is due to a lack of faith in Joshua, not making him one's Master, and thus not having his love to empower people.

This author proposes something simple – *to have Joshua of Nazareth as our sole spiritual Leader and Teacher and to know God and Joshua and what they want only through the words and teachings of Joshua of Nazareth contained in the four gospel books*. That is common ground enough to seek very hard to unify with other disciples. And disciples *must* find unity IF we care about the Master's saying/prayer above regarding unity.

One would think this is entirely logical and reasonable. After all, Joshua did say to his followers:

You call me Lord and Master, and you are right, for so I am. (John 13)

How many “lords” and “masters” can a person have? Try to use reason and proper definitions when answering that question.

I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep; I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear *my voice; and they will become ONE flock with ONE shepherd.* (John 10:14-16)

How many flocks? How many Shepherds?

They (religious leaders) love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the religious buildings (what people wrongly call “the churches”), and respectful greetings in the marketplaces, and being called “Pastor, Reverend, Minister, etc. ad nauseum by men. *But do not be called teacher; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, me.* But the greatest among you shall be your servant. (Matt. 23)

How many spiritual/God/human relationship teachers can a follower of the Light have? How many spiritual Fathers can a person have (according to the large sect of Roman Catholicism, many thousands!)? How many spiritual leaders can a person have?

The simple truth has been available for two thousand years, but how many have listened? All it takes is a little bit of faith to hear his voice, so perhaps this is where we are:

When the Son of Man returns, will he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8)

The meaning and answer are apparent—probably not much at all. There will be tons of religion and billions of religious people, but very few with actual faith in the real, historical Son of Man.

Unfortunately, the saying, "that they may be perfected in unity," is one of the greatest mockeries of Christians. With four of their religious organization's building on each quadrant of two streets intersecting in a relatively small town – blessed Baptist, pretentious Pentecostal, everything Evangelical and cathartic Catholic – the lack of unity could not be more obvious. Of course, when confronted with this fact, they will stumble and bumble around with some words about "we are in spiritual unity" or the mysterious “unified body of christ,” which goes to prove the delusional nature of many religious people. Paul's language about the mystical “body of christ” is all that is needed for Christians and Biblians to nullify the simple, evident truth about the *disunity* of Christians and their religion.

For disciples of Joshua, we desperately need to have him and him alone as our only standard to know God and to understand what God wants of us.

Having the right standard for unity is critical. Without agreement on the measure, there can be no unity. Furthermore, the standard selected needs to be clear and ideally simple. This will minimize the potential lack of agreement. If a chosen standard is complex and thereby lacks clarity, it will be harder to find total unity.

Having the real, historical person of Joshua of Nazareth as THE standard to know God and to know how to treat other human beings is an excellent standard for it is The Standard given by our Creator. Compared to the large, complicated book that is the Bible, just having the teachings of Joshua in the four gospels is a far superior standard for several reasons, including the increased clarity and lack of complexity.

Furthermore, we must understand that there is a priority or difference of importance to Joshua's many teachings. For example, his instructions on "love" – what love is and what love means – are THE most critical teaching, far more important than his teachings on, say, how the “last supper remembrance” ought to be observed if at all or the importance of water baptism or the role of the Holy Spirit. *Therefore, if we find ourselves dividing over the lesser things, we are failing at the most important thing.*

Lastly, if we are not experiencing the persecution or rejection from the people of the world, we are unlikely doing well following Joshua, and thus we will not be in the right state of heart/mind to see our need for love and unity. In other words, following Joshua faithfully by ourselves for a time in the world will condition us well to be ready for the love and unity that glorifies God.

Clarification Guidelines for Understanding Joshua

If disciples or students or pupils or followers of the historical Joshua of Nazareth can agree to make him their sole/soul Leader for things about God and human relationships, that is a great place to start!

Back in chapter 28, *Religious Leaders Like Complexity*, I suggested the core beliefs of the followers of Joshua. I offer it again here:

1. Joshua of Nazareth is the unique Son of God (Luke 22:69-70; John 3:16,18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4), the Messenger and Leader sent by God the Creator to humankind to save us from ourselves / our sins (John 3:16). You can best know Joshua of Nazareth and his Good News (or gospel) through his own words and teachings as preserved in the four gospel books. The Bible is not the word of God to humankind; instead the Person and teachings of Joshua of Nazareth in the four “gospel books” is the word of God to humankind. To look to “the Bible” or “the scripture” apart from Joshua's teachings is great error and thus we should look only to Joshua.
2. To begin following Joshua, we must:

- Repent of our sins (see ourselves as guilty, stuck in our cage of self-pride and fear and selfishness, be remorseful and receive our Father's forgiveness for our wrongs, and stop practicing what is wrong)(Matt. 4:17);
 - Be born from above by placing our faith in Joshua and thus transition from spiritual death to eternal Life (John 3:3-7);
 - Turn away from or forsake all we have believed is valuable in this world, especially money, material things, and people who don't want us to follow Joshua (Luke 14:33; John 12:25; Matt. 10:34-39; 12:46-50);
 - Stop working for money as our primary pursuit in life, and start working for Joshua and his kingdom as our primary passion in Life (Matt. 6:24; 4:19; 9:9).
3. While there are many sins we can commit, there are three aspects of our nature of which we must be aware of and seek to be no longer controlled by - self-pride, fear, and selfishness. Self-pride prevents us from learning and having a critical character virtue that we desperately need to learn and be better people - humility (Luke 18:9-14). Fear not only prevents us from learning but also dramatically hinders us from using reason well in our decision making and in seeking what is true (Matt. 10:26, 31; Luke 5:10; 8:25). Selfishness works hard against love, and both self-pride and fear contribute to that as well (John 15:13; Matt. 6:19-21; Mark 8:35).
 4. Joshua refers to this critical term - truth - over a dozen times in the four gospels. For example, he says, "I am the truth" and "all who are of the truth hear my voice" and "the truth will set you free." Furthermore, he says we are to "love the Lord our God with all our mind." Loving God with all our mind can only be reasonably understood to mean to use reason and logic well to find, know and understand God. Therefore, it is *critical* that we as disciples do our best to use reason and logic well and to be willing to "go" where ever those important tools lead us—even if reason or logic lead us to reject some of our most tightly held religious beliefs or practices that we picked up over the years. If someone uses reason or logic well to reveal that we believe something that is erroneous, we ought not to be offended and instead seriously consider if what the person is saying does in fact pass the test of reason as well as line up with all of Joshua's teachings (if he addresses it) in that area/topic/domain. Humility would also drive this reaction.
 5. In Joshua's teachings, he does provide us with how we should treat each other as human beings. In fact, he gives the universal "ethic" in

this saying, "Treat others the way you want to be treated" (Matt. 7:12). If we would keep this in heart/mind and act upon it, we would avoid MANY mistakes and wrongs done to other people. For people raised in religion and in light of that universal ethic, it is especially important to keep in mind things like "do you want to be condemned?"; "do you want to be judged harshly?"; "do you want to have others scouring for sin in your life?"; "do you want people pointing out your faults and weaknesses?"; "do you want people to be quick to forgive you when you do something wrong?", etc. Simply put, that ethic should drive us to concentrate on ourselves first, before we look to other to help in that way (Matt. 7:1-5).

6. To love Joshua means we will want to obey him (John 14:15). To know what to obey, we must first know *him* and *his* teachings and no one else's (John 8:12, 31-32; 12:48; 13:13; 14:6 Matt. 23:8-12; 24:35). His teachings are readily available to us in the four gospel books in any Bible.
7. In order to obey Joshua's new command of "love one another as I have loved you", we must join with other disciples and help them in real, daily life as we all serve God together as manifestations of His Family (Love means to value someone highly and to treat them with compassion and with selfless behavior). Our neighbors often choose not to love us back. What is the disciple's excuse? (Mark 10:28-30) (See also Acts 2:44-45 as an example of the teachings of Joshua about love lived out);
8. Serving God means we follow Joshua our Leader and Master/Teacher together, and we do the Greater Work of proclaiming Joshua's gospel in all manner of ways, making disciples and forming little flocks and cities on hills (groups/Families of people) (Matt. 5:14; 28:18-20; Mark 8:35; Luke 12:32); and we do the lesser work of helping each other with what is needed to live on this earth (providing food, shelter, and clothing)(Matt. 20:8; Luke 3:14). By this Life, we will demonstrate his living Way so that the world may know that we are his followers due to our love for one another and the unity we manifest (John 13:34-35; 17:20-21).
9. Eternal life is a state of being or existence which a person enters into through faith in our Father as revealed by Joshua; and remains in through faithfulness to God as given by Joshua of Nazareth in the four gospel books. (John 3:3-4, 5:24, 8:12, 12:48, 16:6, 17:3, Luke 7:50, Matt. 11:27

I offer this as a suggestion as a set of core beliefs. I would be glad to communicate with other disciples to refine or adjust that set of core beliefs.

To further bring unity and reduce division and conflict, we need one other thing. We need to have some basic guidelines for understanding Joshua's teachings in those four gospels.

I suggest the following. There are six basic types of sayings of Joshua, and I will list them in priority order.

First are his statements about His Father, His Father's character, His Father's ways, and His Father's desires. These statements are of highest priority for they are the primary reason Joshua came...to reveal the Creator of human beings and His desire for them. Since the Creator is a perfect Being that does not change, these statements do not change with time or with circumstance. They are absolute for the Creator is a Perfect Being who does not change His character or His will. None of the sayings of Joshua regarding the Father's nature are affected by time or culture or circumstances or experience.

Second are his statements about himself – who he is/was. Perhaps the most significant statement in this regard is his statement, "I am the way, the truth and the life..."

Third are his "didactic teachings." "Didactic" means, "intended to teach, or to improve morals by teaching." Another way to describe these sayings are general, objective teachings that convey principles or concepts that are not bound by time or circumstances but apply to all people in all times and all circumstances. For example, he says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." In fact, all his teachings in the Matt. 5 and Luke 6 are didactic teachings and thus clearly do not have some circumstantial qualification to them as they are stating ethical rules or value observations for human beings that apply to all people, times and places.

The teachings about his Father and himself and the didactic teachings should be considered primary and of first importance. In other words, the didactic teachings as well as his teachings about the Father ought to be the foundation on which what disciples seek unity.

The other sayings of Joshua – those which do not reveal his Father's nature, who Joshua is nor are didactic teachings - are secondary or of a lower priority and should NOT be used as necessary for unity.

The following three types of sayings should be understood THROUGH the didactic teachings or statements he gave. We will look at some example of applying this guideline below.

Fourth are Instructions that are given in a circumstance but have plain qualifiers in them that what he is saying applies to more than just the specific situation in which they were spoken, or that the instructions or principles he is giving will be relevant in the future.

Fifth are instructions to his disciples to do certain things at the time Joshua was living in Judea in the first century A.D. These instructions do not have application outside of that time or place or circumstance.

Sixth are observations statements about things happened at the time he spoke them. These statements seldom have relevance to us today.

So, to summarize, here is the suggested order of priority for understanding Joshua and His teaching:

1. Statements about His Father – His Father's character or his Father's desires for humanity;
2. Comments about himself – who he was and what his purpose was;
3. Ethical or moral or guidance teachings or principles regarding God to human or human to human relationships. These teachings have no temporal or circumstantial or cultural constraints;
4. Instructions to his followers that are given in a circumstance but have plain qualifiers in them that what he is saying applies to more than just the specific situation or which will be relevant *in the future*;
5. Specific instructions given to his first disciples that are constrained to a time or place or situation, generally to that time and event;
6. Mere circumstantial observations or statements.

Anytime a lesser priority saying that contains an instruction, such as a four or five, is addressed by a priority one or two or three teaching, the priority one or two or three teaching wins. In like manner, anytime a type five saying has one or more type four sayings clarifying it, the type four wins.

Let us provide some examples to clarify this suggested method of having a unified understanding of how to understand Joshua and thus foster and accomplish unity among disciples.

Please consider these sayings:

When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethpage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, “The Lord has need of them,” and immediately he will send them. (Matt. 21)

Here, Joshua gave an explicit instruction to his followers when he said, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me.” Since this instruction only applies to the first disciples who were hearing Joshua say it, it is a type four saying. In other words, while Joshua did give his disciples an explicit instruction, that instruction is not intended to be kept by disciples in the future since its relevance was constrained to that circumstance.

Here is another example:

Then He poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciple’s feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, “Lord, do You wash my feet?” Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will

understand hereafter.” Peter said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” (John 13)

Joshua here nowhere gives a specific didactic teaching like, "disciples should wash one another's feet." Furthermore, the primary reason he was washing their feet was because their feet were dirty and of course to demonstrate humility and love. This is a good example of a type five saying.

Therefore, to say, “oh, Jesus commands that we ought to wash one another's feet” is not reasonable. However, because it is not reasonable does not mean that religious people don't use it to divide from each other. Of course, it *is* reasonable to say, based on that foot washing *example*; disciples ought to help/care for/serve one another. The context of the passage makes that entirely clear. The foot washing experience was merely a practicing of the new command.

Here is another example:

These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. (Matt. 10)

Many religious people would like this instruction of Joshua to apply to all times, but that desire is erroneous.

First of all, after Joshua went back to be with the Father, the racial or religious people group concepts of “Jews or Gentiles or Samaritans” are irrelevant to his followers and thus are no longer relevant in the kingdom of God. People are people and disciples do not view people from flesh perspectives.

Furthermore, he plainly said, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," obviously meaning the King is physically here; so while the King is here, let's do these miraculous works so people can know he is the King!

Therefore, this looks like a good candidate for a type five saying.

Most importantly, Joshua gave a teaching explicitly addressing miraculous healing that clarifies any confusion on this issue. Here is the saying in context:

As He (Joshua) passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world. (John 9)

Here, Joshua tells what will happen in the future when he says, "We must work the works of Him who sent me *as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.*" Thus, this is a type four saying. Therefore, the type four saying needs to take precedence over all the type-five sayings people want to use to justify miraculous healings today.

It is also imperative that the things disciples of the truth believe represent reality. In this case, it is quite apparent given observation of reality that people are not physically healed at this time by the God that Joshua reveals. That is not to say that some unexplained healings do not occur, but inexplicable healings do not equal a "God healed him/her" event. How can I know this for sure? I can recognize this due to all of the many thousands of young children needing physical healings each day who don't get any such healing. Or the many thousands of sincere Christian adults who need physical healing each day to don't get any such healing. In other words, if God could physically heal even one genuinely suffering child/person, then He would heal them all!

In summary, it is vital that disciples find and build unity on type one through four sayings, in that order. We have to be very careful to *not* get dogmatic on type five or six sayings. We indeed would be foolish for insisting that a type-five or six saying needs to be considered essential for unity.

If the disciples cannot agree on a type one through four saying, I would suggest that we be cautious before making it an essential belief. The one test that must be applied is to make sure it represents reality. For example, if a person says, "well, I believe Joshua when he says, "If you ask me anything in My name, I will do it", their needs be a reality check, and the person needs to demonstrate that saying is real.

To ignore these warnings is to head right down the same road that the successful failure has taken—a path of loveless division.

Topical Importance Recognized for Unity

In the previous section, I suggested a way to sort out Joshua's sayings so that disciples could be in unity. It is important also to note that some issues or topics or concepts are more important than others. For example, from our existential viewpoint, entering into eternal Life (and thus avoid destroying myself) would be a top priority if I wanted to preserve my existence after death, whereas exactly how to pray would be a lesser priority.

Joshua made this point about importance and priority here in this saying:

Woe to you, bible teachers and religious leaders, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. (Matt. 23)

As you can see, he taught that some things were more important than others; in this case, essential concepts that very much affect how people treat

each other – "justice and mercy" – are more important than religious practices that don't have – or have minimal – ethical relevance.

Furthermore, he teaches that love (self-less behavior motivated by compassion) is the most important thing/truth/concept with which human beings ought to be concerned. He says the two most important commands from God that the Jews of his time got right are about love. Also, he only labeled one teaching for his disciples a "command," and the new command he gives to his disciples is love one another. He addresses the most critical concept of love over fifty times in the four gospels. If we cannot understand anything else about Joshua, his Father and how we ought to treat one another, other than love, then we are doing well!

So, in addition to unity being based on the Person and teachings of Joshua of Nazareth, this unity must be based on two critical topical areas within Joshua's instructions – God's character and the nature of love.

One of the reasons – perhaps the primary one - there is so much division among Christians is because they do not know God nor do they prioritize love (in fact, most don't have a proper understanding of love due to their not wanting to know). They “know” the contradictory “wrath and love god of the Bible,” but they don't know the Creator/Father who Joshua alone revealed.

As this book has laid out the case, God is a God of love and is *not* a God of vengeance, wrath, bloodthirstiness or other such things as those. The God of love is the character of God that was revealed by The Light of the world. And it is *that* character that will facilitate love among those with faith.

In the next chapter, we will take a look at the concept of “destiny” and how it applies to us. Our love expressed and unity practiced in this life have a significant impact on our eternal destiny.

Chapter Summary:

- For followers of Joshua of Nazareth, the unity *he* asks for must start with our having him as our *only standard* (truly our Master) for knowing God and what God wants for people;
- The words of Joshua in the four “gospel books” of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the *best*, most objective sources for knowing the historical Person of Joshua of Nazareth. Using anything else will increase the likelihood of unnecessary division;
- Disciples should also have a way to prioritize the sayings of Joshua in the four gospel books to further help us find unity and thus avoid division. My suggestion in priority order is:
 - Statements about His Father – His Father's character or his Father's desires for humanity;
 - Statements about himself – who he was and what his purpose was;

- Ethical or moral teachings or principles given in a teaching mode (non-circumstantial like his teachings in Matt. 5) regarding God to human or human to human relationships;
- Instructions to his followers that are given in a circumstance but have plain qualifiers in them or the context that what he is saying applies to more than just the specific situation or which will be relevant *in the future*;
- Specific instructions given to his first disciples that are constrained to a time or place or circumstance, generally to that time and event;
- Mere circumstantial observations or statements.
- It is essential to recognize the relative importance of Joshua's teachings and what is entirely clear is that practicing love is the highest teaching he gives;
- Without love and the unity associated with that love among the disciples, we have no witness to the people of this world and we thus we are failing at the most critical aspect of being disciples.