

Life! *Training*

Name:

Date:

We are One

*Uniting with the
Body of
Christ*

Welcome to this journey through the experiences and teachings of the apostolic church as recorded in the book of Acts and the Letters written by the apostles. As a member of His body, you will discover His treasures for those who take His Name and receive His Spirit.

Come to the Scriptures with a prayer-filled heart and open mind as you uncover truths for your life. Record these in the blanks provide to help keep yourself accountable in your daily growth. Talk to the Lord when you find yourself coming short in an area. Share with others the riches you find in His living Word.

Day 1: embellished Bible story.

Day 2-6: interactive journal devotions.

Day 7: contemporary stories of faith.

Oneness in the Body

The church must _____ in Spirit and Truth.¹

The church unites to _____ the _____.²

The church unites by _____ one _____.³

_____ must _____ at unity to have it.⁴

_____ - _____ believers must be purged out.⁵

The world stands in awe of the _____ of _____.⁶

Unity in the _____ brings _____.⁷

Good _____ prevents _____ in the church.⁸

¹ Acts 4:23-32; 2:1; Psalms 16:3; 42:4; 119:63; Proverbs 13:20; John 4:23-24

² 4:33; 5:14, 42; 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Luke 14:21-23; 24:48

³ 4:34-35; Galatians 6:1-2; Ephesians 5:15; Hebrews 10:25; I Peter 1:22; 3:8; 4:8

⁴ 4:36-37; Isaiah 53:1; Matthew 18:15-35; Romans 12:15; Ephesians 4:2-3, 4

⁵ 5:1-10; 13:11; Numbers 16:26-33; II Kings 2:24; I Corinthians 4:18-21; 5:1-13

⁶ 5:11, 13; 2:43; 4:4, Genesis 35:5; Deuteronomy 11:25; Joshua 2:9-11; 6:13-20

⁷ 5:12, 15-16; Matthew 18:19-20; I Corinthians 11:26-30; James 5:14-16

⁸ 6:1-7; Exodus 18:21-26; Num. 16:16-28; II Chronicles 17:5-12; James 5:9-11

For the Good of the Whole

See Joshua 6, 7

The air shook with excitement at the thought of finally taking the Promised Land. Our army marched around Jericho as one man. We said nothing as we stepped in time to the sound of the seven men playing ram's horn trumpets. When the seventh march ended on the seventh day, we shouted with one voice and watched the walls divide and crumble. As one man, we rushed in to take over.

In the midst of the battle, several of us teamed up to break into houses or fight off their soldiers. In groups of two or three, we slaughtered every one of God's enemies. No one could stand against us. Our army did not lose anyone.

As the ruckus quieted, I found myself alone at one point as we were gathering plunder for the house of the Lord. Although we were burning everything perishable we were saving all the precious metals and things of value for use in the Tabernacle, to benefit the whole community.

I went into one house that must have been owned by an executive of some sort. He had a stylish new outfit—the kind I had been wanting for a long time—it was all the rage in Babylon. I said to myself, *Why burn this good piece of clothing?* and stashed it for myself. In the same house, I found a box of silver coins and a few gold ones, too.

I did not think God would mind blessing me—after all, I had volunteered for this army and most soldiers got paid from the enemy plunder. I think Joshua was being a little too community-focused and not caring about us as individuals. I took the box and the new clothes and hid them in my tent.

The next city we fought in, we lost. A few men died. Everyone was asking, “What happened to our team spirit? What happened to the unity we had?” I shrugged it off—I was just glad to be alive. Then, God tipped Joshua off about someone keeping accursed goods for himself. I wanted to run get rid of my stash, but they called my name too soon. I was surprised to learn I was the only one looking out for himself.

I wonder what they are going to do to me. They are building a big bonfire and my old friends are surrounding me with rocks in their hands. I think I know where this is going.



See Acts 4:36-37; 5:1-11

The air shook with excitement as we all lifted our voices in praise to God. We were entering the Promised Land of the Spirit and nothing could stop us. The prayer meeting we held that day seemed like it would make the walls crumble. With new boldness we headed out to win the world. We marched around Jerusalem taking care of business, feeding our families, and sharing the news about Jesus. We worked as one man.

Several of us teamed up in houses to teach or pray. In small groups, we worshipped the Lord and claimed victory over His enemies. No one could stand against us. We were not losing anyone, only gaining new believers everyday.

When the Spirit filled us, we developed a strong disinterest for the things of the world. We began to see everything as perishable and temporary as we waited for the Lord to return. We gave whatever we had to help out those among us who were lacking things. We no longer spoke of precious metals as we had found something more precious and priceless in the treasure of God's Word. Even when we got together to pray and preach at the Temple, its gold and marble seemed tarnished in comparison to our hope beyond this life.

Bro. Barnabas came among us early on. He was one of the Levites who converted to follow the Way of Truth and he took to heart the words of Jesus to the rich young ruler. He sold a piece of property and gave the money from it to provide for the needs of any of the believers in town. Being our first well-to-do convert, we were all instructed by his generosity and sought to live with the same spirit.

Another wealthy convert came into our midst. He and his wife promised to give a large sum of money. We were all worshipping together when he came in and presented his gift to the apostles. Bro. Peter, however, rebuked him, saying, "Why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep some of the money for yourself?"

His dropping dead did as much for us as any powerful sermon. We realized not to put self above the body.

Unity Brings Boldness

At times, God moves among His people in such a powerful way it seems the ground moves under our feet. Describe a time you were “blown away” by the presence of God.

How did this experience make you feel about God?

How did it make you feel about other people?

How did you feel about the people of God in your church?

The apostles had just gotten back after being threatened by the Sanhedrin and shared with the church how God was working among them in spite of opposition. How did the church respond in Acts 4:24?

As they prayed with one heart, what did they ask for in Acts 4:29?

In Acts 4:31, did they get what they asked for?

If you were to watch the space shuttle take off from Cape Canaveral, you would feel the ground shake under your feet. Big events create big reactions. When a church full of united prayer warriors gets together, the earth moves.

If God is not moving in your church then one of two ingredients are missing:

- 1) The people are not praying.
- 2) The people are not united.

Mark which of these your church needs work on the most. Now, write down what you will do to improve the situation.

How does Acts 4:32 describe this fire-house church of the Apostles?

What effect did it have on the ministry? See 4:33.

What does the description in Acts 4:34-37 seem to indicate about the effects of unity among the believers?

How do you contribute to such a sense of unity?

Read Acts 5:1-2. How does self-interest murder unity?

Dead to Rights

The early church's first funeral helped the church grow. Perhaps Ananias died because he was not dead to his trespasses and sins. Perhaps he died because he was more yielded to the desires of Satan instead of the Spirit. Perhaps he died because he broke apart the unity and trust the first believers enjoyed.

What parallels do you see between the sin of Ananias (Acts 5:1-10) and the sin of Achan (Joshua 7:1-26)?

When a church is thriving in unity with God and each other, the enemy will try to find a way in. Surprisingly, most references to Satan in the New Testament have to do with the church, not unbelievers. Wherever people are joined with one heart and mind for God, the devil will try to break it up. Unity is the devil's worst nightmare. How did Achan's sin break up the unity of God's people? (Joshua 7:4-5)

How could the sin of Ananias and Sapphira destroy the apostolic harmony of the early church?

Once Achan died, how did the unity and victory of the people prosper? See Joshua 7:18-25.

Once Ananias and Sapphira died, how did the unity and power of the believers prosper? See Acts 5:11-12.

Imagine walking into church and seeing an image of brass on the platform. Imagine seeing your brothers and sisters bowing down and worshipping it. How would you feel? What do you think God would think of that? Of course, we would want Him to stop such a thing immediately.

God hates false gods. He does not tolerate man-made worship. Selfish people worship themselves. They do not care about the needs of the church or the good of the body. They only see what the church should do to serve them. They only see what they can do to make life better for themselves. Achan died because his selfishness broke up the selflessness among God's people. Ananias marched to a different rhythm from those who walked in one heart. He wanted recognition, and God struck him dead.

Some people are self-centered about money, time, attitudes, and many other things. How do you struggle with selfishness and what are you doing to stop it?

Achan and Ananias were not the only ones to try to steal God's show. Another A. and his brother did the same many years prior. Who were they, what did they do, and how did God respond, in Leviticus 10:1-2?

In Leviticus 10:3, why did God do something so dramatic?

How does the devil tempt you to "steal the show" or break up the unity in your church?

An Unbroken Body

At His death, Jesus suffered severe treatment. Men beat His body, punctured it with thorns, and nailed it to a cross. Joseph of Arimathaea, however, gently took his body down and wrapped it with perfumed cloth. Today, these two types of people still exist. Some try to inflict injury to the body of Christ, others care for it greatly. What does I Corinthians 12:12 say the body of Christ is today?

Our Lord established a point of reference for everyone in His body. Called communion or “the Lord’s Table,” this time of remembrance helps the church remember that we are all members of one another. What does this commemorate, according to I Corinthians 11:24?

Some, however, began living in selfishness. They would come to a time of remembrance like this and stuff their gut to the point of discomfort. Some would get drunk. Instead of cherishing the body of Christ, what does 11:27 say they were making themselves guilty of?

In 11:29, people were eating and drinking damnation on themselves because they were not discerning what?

What was this causing, in I Corinthians 11:30?

Communion brings together the body of Christ. It is a chance to remember how He was broken so we might be made one. When people disrespect or attempt to destroy the body of Christ, He holds them accountable.

Modern medicine has proven unsatisfactory to many. Allopathic medicine (the common practice of most doctors and hospitals) is known for its ironic use of poisons and procedures that hurt the body while trying to cure it. Doctors prescribe toxic medicines to ailing bodies in hopes of destroying pathogens and diseases. However, the many side effects often prove fatal to the whole, over time.

Naturopathic medicine, however, works to heal the body and help all the organs fight disease together. Rather than target one problem to the detriment of the whole, naturopathy seeks to improve immunity in the entire body until disease organisms can no longer survive.

Selfishness focuses on one's specific needs to the detriment of the whole. Unity sees every need as the job of the whole group.

In Acts 5:15-16, what physical evidence shows up when the spiritual body of Christ unites as one?

What significance do you find in the fact of the church's unity being connected to the working of miracles and people's bodies being healed?

Contrast the death of Ananias and Sapphira with the new life given to those who were dying from illness. What brought about these opposite results?

As the body of Christ becomes whole, what effects do you expect to see in the physical bodies of His people?

Vanishing Colors

Many countries have been divided and conquered by different races and cultures creating conflict. The enemy attempted this with the early church. In Acts 6:1, what two groups of people were at odds?

We do not know exactly why one group had a gripe against the other. Perhaps the Greek-speaking widows had not communicated their need. Perhaps the Hebrews widows were getting special treatment since the predominant group in Jerusalem would have been speaking the ancient language. Although, we do not know the source of this exact conflict, we know the outcome of discrimination, prejudice, and social stereotyping: division.

The apostles acted wisely to prevent a disagreement from becoming a division by having the church appoint men to handle this matter.

In Galatians 3:27, what new “racial” or “cultural” identity have you put on?

So, according to Galatians 3:28, what happens to all the racial differences, gender conflicts, and social classes?

What race are we now a part of, in Galatians 3:29?

What racial or cultural tensions have you seen in a church? What should have been done about it?

Humans excel at spotting differences. Two children may be identical twins, yet we hunt until we find a freckle or dimple slightly different between them. If you have two yellow dogs and one has a small black spot, you do not name them both “Yellar.” You name one “Spot.”

How does the devil abuse our ability to “spot” differences to bring disharmony into the church?

Does the term “race” come from the desire of humans to get ahead of one another? We never come to a point of satisfaction when competing with one another. Minorities demand equality until they get it. Then they drive for control.

In the body of Christ we do not strive to get a step ahead of each other. One person’s spiritual growth is the growth of us all. One person’s blessing is everyone’s blessing. No one should compete for spirituality or gifts. No one should try to prove their power, knowledge, or holiness to put others down.

Race only affects the flesh. When we are in the flesh we notice our differences. In the Spirit, we see our oneness. When have you let your flesh rise up and put you in conflict with a brother or sister in the Lord over racial or cultural issues?

Although people of similar ethnicity often group up together, how can a church avoid becoming polarized into little groups who do not relate to each other?

Rather than refer to one another by race or color, we should refer to one another as “Brother” and “Sister.” This makes us all part of the same family.

Oneness back at Square One

Unity begins at home. A church full of families that argue, bicker, and fuss will never experience pure harmony. How can you help bring unity into your home?

How does Ephesians 5:22-24 help a wife put her relationship with her husband in proper perspective?

How does this concept bring unity?

How does Ephesians 5:25-29 help a man put his relationship with his wife in proper perspective?

Recapping all of this, how does Ephesians 5:30-33 illustrate unity between a husband and wife?

What practical things can you do to bring unity with your spouse?

It takes at least two notes to make harmony in music. It takes at least two harmonized people to have a home. God may play a three or four note chord in your home. Some homes get a whole octave. But just having a lot of notes will not make a song. The notes must all fit their role properly for music to result. How much better a three-note harmony than a quartet of chaos.

The first two notes to be in one accord in the home are the husband and wife. The melody continues with their offspring. How do children add to the harmony in the house? Answer from Ephesians 6:1-3.

While many parents get their children to obey by barking orders and threatening, this is not true harmony any more than a three year old banging on a keyboard. What does Ephesians 6:4 say parents—especially fathers—should not do to cause a cacophony in the home?

Rather than desiring to stir up a ruckus, most dads want harmony in the house. What does 6:4 instruct them to do to achieve this? What is your experience with this?

When parents, spouses, and children all play their part correctly, the home will resound to the glory of God. What will you work on so your home is a house of harmony?

Unity among Pentecostal Pioneers

Witherspoon:

“While in prayer a few days ago, the Lord burdened me with the terrible conditions, not only in the world, but in the Jesus Only church. It seems to me that God is letting enough happen to show the brethren of like precious faith the absolute necessity of getting together, regardless of machinery or offices. No one group can point their fingers at the other. Division is keeping back God’s power. The only division there should be is between righteousness and unrighteousness; holiness and sin.”¹

• • •

Foster:

[It was] a unique fellowship..., because both white and black were members. Doak was a white man and Haywood was black. Haywood had been an influential man for years first among the Trinitarians, and after seeing the light on the Oneness message, he was greatly respected among Oneness people. He pastored one of the largest Pentecostal churches in the world, in Indianapolis, Indiana. Through his ministry, hundreds, both white and black, had been won to the Oneness truth and baptized in Jesus’ name. His influence as one of the top leaders in the church helped to unite the races in this great effort.²

• • •

McClain:

“Throughout the north and east there seemed to be very little, if any, race prejudice. I, being southern born, thought it a miracle that I could sit in a service by a black saint of God and worship, or... forget I was eating beside a black saint...”³

¹ Arthur and Charles Clanton, *United We Stand*, revised, Hazelwood, MO: Pentecostal, 1970, 140.

² Fred Foster, *Their Story: 20th Century Pentecostals*, Hazelwood, MO: Pentecostal, 1965, 125.

³ Ibid.



L. R. Ooton:

“There is no greater need among the Spirit-filled children of God today, than the unity of the Spirit. There are entirely too many divisions or organizations separating Oneness brethren, and the eternal God is viewing this situation today. If we preach Oneness, it is also necessary for us to practice the same.”¹



Goss:

Rarely could one evangelist go into a new field alone, and turn the community upside down for God in a short time. Jesus did not attempt it, far less then should we....

Consistently enough there had to be unity. Anyone who could not keep the unity of the Spirit with every other member of his band was either given a railroad ticket and sent home, or perhaps given another chance in a different band. But, no disunity could be allowed. The power of God would not fall upon such a condition. We often saw it happen that when there was disagreement no one could be prayed through at the altar service. Meetings would be locked tight, finances would fail, and the heavens turn to brass. Husbands and wives sometimes failed through lack of harmony, accord, or unity with each other. Prayers would go unanswered until they acquired unity. Once all was clear, the heavens would open again, the power of God would fall upon the seekers once more, and all would be well. Whenever we struck a snag of any kind we fasted and prayed until it was removed. It could be said that this movement was born, grew, and flourished on the Bible formula: obedience, faith, fasting, and prevailing prayer.²

¹ Clanton, 140.

² Howard Goss, *The Winds of God*, Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 1958, 121-22.

Bibliography

- Bruce, F. F. *The Book of Acts*. Revised. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988.
- Clanton, Arthur and Charles. *United We Stand*. Revised. Hazelwood, MO: Pentecostal, 1970.
- Couch, Mal, ed. *A Bible Handbook to the Acts of the Apostles*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999.
- Dunn, James. *The Acts of the Apostles*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1989.
- Foster, Fred J. *Their Story: 20th Century Pentecostals*. Hazelwood, MO: Pentecostal, 1965.
- Goss, Howard, *The Winds of God*, Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 1958.
- Witherspoon, J. T. *Acts*, Hazelwood, MO: Pentecostal, 1972.

Life! Journal

Acts 4:31-32

And when they had prayed,
the place was shaken
where they were assembled together;
and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,
and they spake the word of God
with boldness.

And the multitude of them that believed
were of one heart and of one soul:
neither said any of them
that ought of the things
which he possessed was his own;
but they had all things common.

© 2011 Daniel J. Koren
15512 Kodiak Rd.,
Neosho, MO 64850

life2o.org