

Union With Christ: Week 1

Enjoying Union With Him

SERIES INTRO

Good Morning. I'm Ant.. Its always a good thing to be about to worship our living God together. Amen, church?

If I can be honest, there are times when I don't really desire God. There are times when I don't want to know Him more. There are times when I don't want to talk to Him. There are times when I don't want to read and meditate on His Word. There are times when so many other things seem to be much more appealing to me than God does.

As you saw from the video, we're starting a new sermon series today entitled, in Christ. And the purpose of this sermon series is very simple. We are doing this sermon series because we as your pastors and as a teaching team, want you to enjoy God and have ever growing affection for Him.

We want you to enjoy:

- the fact that He is yours and that you are His.
- Life with Him
- Knowing Him and being known by Him
- Being with God the same way my children love just being with me

We want your affection for God to grow.

We want you to feel increasing love in your heart for God.

As your pastors and as a teaching team in our family of churches, we don't want any of our members to have a joyless experience as a Christian. We don't want you to just do what you're supposed to do as a Christian because that's just what you're told to do while you're finding no joy or happiness in following Him. We want your life of submission to God to be fueled as much as possible by enjoying and delighting in God.

And the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:3 makes a huge statement and gives us great insight into how we might go about growing our joy in the Lord. And we'll use this verse to set up this sermon series as well.

Ephesians 1:3

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has ***blessed*** us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

The Greek word that's translated "**blessed**" means, among other things, "***to make happy***". So the apostle Paul is saying that The Father has given us EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING, and here's our key phrase, "In Christ" for our happiness and joy. God's desire is that the different

spiritual blessings that He gives us would grant us joy and happiness in Him. And the point of this verse is that every spiritual blessing that exists we now have. And we have them, “In Christ”. That is a key term in this verse and the title of this sermon series. That we now have every spiritual blessing in Him.

And these spiritual blessings that we have are far greater than circumstantial blessings that are often fleeting. These are eternal spiritual blessings that can not be taken away from us like:

- Becoming children of the most high God
- Receiving His righteousness in place of our own
- Being freed from slavery and bondage to sin
- Becoming new creations in Him

These blessings we have in Him are ours because Christ is ours. These are blessings that as Christians, we receive now and will be with us throughout all eternity. And, if you are a follower of Jesus, the Apostle Paul is saying that **God has blessed us with these, meaning they are for your joy and happiness.**

And with this series we are asking God grow our affection for God as we learn to enjoy every spiritual blessing that we have “in Christ”. We want the goodness of God to move from just something that we understand in our minds, to something that we enjoy and savor in our hearts.

As I read Ephesians 1:3, I’m reminded of something a pastor once sent to me in an email. He wrote “**Give Him all He asks. Take all that He offers.**” That phrase stuck with me because oftentimes I think we can hyperfocus on what he demands of us and not remember all of the blessings He has given us for our joy.

And I can’t speak for you family, but if there is joy that God, the creator of the universe, wants to give me, I want it all. I want all of it. If there are blessings that He wants to give me for my happiness that are spiritual that go beyond material blessings of this world, I want to know them and enjoy them to the fullest.

And to pursue that, we’ll be focusing for 7 weeks on some of the spiritual blessings that we have in Christ.

And Ephesians 1:3 the apostle says that we have all of those blessings “In Christ”. **So let’s talk a bit about that phrase because it is a HUGE statement to say that we have all spiritual blessings in Him!** Why does Paul use that phrase?

UNION WITH CHRIST DEFINED

Phrases like “in Christ” or “in Him” or “in the Lord” are used in the New Testament around 200 times when describing the Christian life. **It’s a phrase that speaks to and emphasizes our union with Him.** And for Paul to use that phrase here, points to the fact that we receive and are blessed and made happy by the spiritual blessings that God gives us, because of how united we are with Christ.

Essentially, I would say that the Doctrine of our union with Christ is all about the fact that for believers in Christ, God has bound and united himself to us and us to Him. If you are a Christian, you are more united with Christ than you are with anyone or anything else.

The doctrine of our Union with Christ speaks to the fact that we don't have an adjacent relationship to God, where ultimately, I'm here and God is just somewhere else blessing us with salvation, but rather it describes our lives as being united with His life in an extremely profound way and we receive all of the spiritual blessings because of how united we are with Him.

Quick Example: My Son

When one of my sons was less than a year old, I had to walk outside in the cold rain with him. I had a jacket with a hood on it, but I didn't have an umbrella. So, I pulled him close to my chest where the top of his head was just under my chin. Then I put my jacket on and zipped it up, to the point where the zipper was right up under the back of his head and then I put my hood over my head and put my head down right over His head to protect him from the cold rain. So, **the means of protecting and blessing my child was bringing him closer to me, bringing him to myself.** I had the jacket with the hood on it. I had what would bless him, and because of how closely I brought him to myself, he was protected from the cold and the rain.

Quick Example: Sams Club

Or to look at it another way, you can say that Union with Christ is a lot like, Sams Club - stay with me, church. Was talking to a pastor in our FoC and he said that he's a member at Sams Club, and as a member, since he paid for a membership, all he has to do is flash his card and he can go in. And now he gets to enjoy all of the blessings of being a member. He can get a 90 cent icee. He can get a pretty decent-sized slice of pizza for \$1.50. He can get as many samples as he wants. He gets those benefits b/c he's paid for a membership. Now, me, personally, I'm more of a Costco guy, so I can't go to Sams Club and get all the benefits of having a membership.

But his children, because of their connection with him, because they're his, they get all the blessings he has as if they had paid for them themselves.

And when Paul says that God has blessed us **in Christ**, with every spiritual blessing, he is letting us know that we get all of these spiritual blessings because we are connecting with Him and because we belong to Him.

the way God blesses us spiritually with all the blessings we receive in the Gospel, it is through Christ uniting us to Himself, and bringing us to Him..

BIBLICAL PICTURES FOR UNDERSTANDING UNION WITH CHRIST

To communicate this concept of how closely we are united with Christ, the bible uses a handful of pictures describing just how united we are with God. So, He uses some pictures we're familiar with to help us understand some particular things about this union.

In **1 Corinthians 12** and other places, Christ is described as the head and we are the body. We are all together connected to Him, and He is leading us and guiding us.

In **John 15**, Christ describes Himself as the vine, and He describes us as the branches that are connected to the vine, and through this union, we get what we need for life and flourishing and fruitfulness.

In **Ephesians 5** and **Revelation 21** describes our union with Christ as a marriage where He is the Groom and we are His bride united in our love with Him because He has made us His own.

Over and over again, the bible gives us helpful pictures and metaphors that communicate how united we are with Him. And also the bible shows us that our union with God is extremely profound and spiritual as our lives are **united with and wrapped up in His life in a way that's different from any other type of union or relationship that we can try to compare it to.**

We're gonna look at the way Jesus talks about our union with Him in His Prayer in John 17. And y'all as I read this, I'm just in awe. I'm in awe of how close Jesus wants to be with me and with us!

John 17:21, 23

21... **just as** you, Father, are in me, and I in you,

Aight, that's Jesus talking about the eternal unity that He has with the Father.

that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

He's saying that His desire for us is that we would be in The Father and The Son "just as" the Father is in The Son and The Son is in The Father.

He does it again at the beginning of verse 23

23 **I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.**

Again, He connects our oneness with Him with His oneness with the Father. Christ's wants us to have the kind of unity/oneness with Him that He has with the Father.

Y'all I read this and I'm just in awe of how close He desires to be with us and how He has united our lives with His life. I'm in awe that He'd pray that that would happen in John 17, and then just a few chapters later hang on a cross and give His life so that it would happen.

Paul also brings up our union with Christ in a way that refers to our life being so united with Christ's life, that we are united with Him in His death and resurrection.

Romans 6:5-6

5 For if we have been **united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.** 6 We know that **our old self was crucified with him** in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

So the apostle Paul here is saying that our life has so become one with Christ's life that we have been united with Him in His death such that our old self was crucified with Him, and we have

been united with Him in His resurrection, which he says elsewhere in the passage means we are able to walk in newness of life.

And **Ephesians 2** says that we have been raised up with Him and seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

He's saying that somehow, our union with Christ is so thorough and that our lives are so wrapped up in His life that even though we are here on the earth and Christ is seated in the heavenly places at the right hand of God the Father, we are with Him there. Just like He is in us now even though He is in Heaven.

WAIT, WHAT?

This blows my mind...

I stand in awe at how deeply he has united us to himself

My hope is that, as we consider just how united we are with God, we would just stand in awe of who God is and what He's done, how deeply He has united us with Himself.

Potential Quote:

“It makes sense that our human understanding could never fully encompass our union with Christ. **But the fact that we can't get to the bottom of this ocean doesn't mean we shouldn't put our feet in, or even swim.** So let us strive to understand and experience, taste and enjoy, all we can of this union ~~while remembering that the Christ we experience is always better and more beautiful than our own personal experience of him.~~” - Rankin Wilbourne (Union With Christ)

And if I can borrow a sentiment from that quote by Rankin Wilbourne, I would add that I still can't completely explain to you everything that Union with Christ is or everything it means for me and for us. **But I don't have to know the exact measurements of the ocean or the number of grains of sand underneath my feet to be able to enjoy a day at the beach.**

I can just feel the sun and look out at the ocean and enjoy the fact that I'm there right in the middle of it. So as we go through this series on union with Christ, that's what I want to ask you to do... to look out upon the vast ocean of God's love and goodness and take a few deep breaths and take it all in.

HE DESIRES US

One of the deepest human desires is to be desired. We desire to be desired. We want to be wanted. And one of the biggest themes in the bible and one of the things that the doctrine of Union with Christ teaches us is that God desires to be close with us! God desires to be close with you!

No matter:

- Who you are or what you've gone through
- What you've done
- What anyone has ever said about you.
- If people have deserted you
- How many times you've failed as a friend, parent, child, spouse, employee, etc
- How many times you have sinned

God wants you to be with Him. He wants you to be close with Him. He died to make it so! He desires to be connected to you and He desires for you to know Him and enjoy every spiritual blessing that you have available to you in Christ.

HUG EXAMPLE

In the church I grew up in. We did a lot of hugging to show camaraderie and brotherly and sisterly love. But you know that not all hugs are created equal. You have at least two forms of the church hug. You know what I'm talking about right?

Church Hug No1. **The Front lean in hug.** My feet and your feet are atleast 30 inches apart and we both lean forward and wrap our arms around each other's shoulders. If you're really close with that person there may be some physical contact around the shoulder area. And if you're of the opposite sex, there is absolutely no touching below the shoulders b/c you gotta leave room for the Holy Spirit, amen?

Church Hug No2. **The Christian side-hug.** Where you hug someone from the side. The taller person's arm embraces and hugs at about shoulder level and the shorter person's arm hugs closer to waist. So you are able to really embrace without throwing your hip out of joint trying to stay seperate.

Auntie hug. But I also had a couple of my aunts join the church that I grew up in. And when I saw them then and when I see them today, often times, we go straight in for a full, big, close, almost **like a bear hug**. Its an embrace that says, "Its good to see you. Its good to be with you. I love you."

There are times when I hug someone that I deeply know and love and they pull me to them as close as they can, and in that moment your heart can just take in and remember and receive the love they have for you.

And my hope for this series is that as we consider our union with Christ, we would recall how He has embraced us and pulled us into Himself. That we would see that as an act of love, and that we'd just take in and find joy in all of the spiritual blessings that He gives us by bringing us close to Himself.

Take in and enjoy the fact that because of your union with Christ:

- no matter how much you have sinned against God, you are also always now and forever more bound to Him, and there's no one or no thing that can take you away from Him
- You are now and forevermore united with someone who truly gets you and understands you and has seen everything about you so you don't have to try to watch your words or walk on eggshells with them, and you can just let your guard down and go to Him with all of your joys and celebrations and hopes and fears and pains and disappointments
- Christ loves you so much that He came to rescue you by pursuing you and bringing you to Him and uniting His life to your life.
- His righteousness has become your own and your sin and guilt became His own when He died on the cross
- (Because your life has been joined with Christ's life), His status as a child of God has now become your own, and you will forever be a daughter or a son of God!
- In His death and resurrection, you are no longer enslaved to sin, and God is working in you, freeing you from the power that sin has had over you

Let us take in what we looked at earlier in **Ephesians 1:3**

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has ***blessed*** us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

So, here's what I'd like for you to do this week. **READ EPHESIANS 1:3-14** every day this week, today through Saturday. In this passage the Apostle Paul writes and encourages Christians about some of the different spiritual blessings we have in Him, and as you read this everyday, spend time praying for us. That we'd find much joy and happiness for our souls in these spiritual blessings that God has blessed us with that we're going to examine this series.

TT Thoughts:

Dalisha. Feels like going with joy is the best route. Going the John 14:15 route feels like a different sermon.

Regarding union at the bottom. The 2 ideas are Joy through Union. You describe union with the picture in the rain, and it was kinda off for me, but the scriptures that you use are on point. You can use the example, but maybe just say its just a shadow. But I did think that the scriptures (John text where Jesus says that we're 1 with Him and the Father) maybe can be moved up. When Jesus says it, that feels more tangible to me. There's something final about Jesus saying and praying that. Jesus saying that means something. **Jesus said that and prayed for us, and then goes and dies for us to make that a reality.** So we have to go and live into that.

Adam. I like it as a setup. Thread the language introduced from Ephesians 1 throughout. Think through the if we love him we obey section. Its a different topic that comes as your introducing and it currently feels disorienting. Think through, is there a better place for that. Is there a way to connect the Psalm 90 verse to "every spiritual blessing". We're saying two things and it makes a long sentence.

Bailey. Could let people for the week or series ask people to read/pray every day be Ephesians 1 or Psalms 103. I would get them to do something with a passage that's already mentioned.

Allen. Ephesians 1 also sets you up for the rest of the series.

Adam. Ephesians 1 is the passage we have everyone read everyday. Read it and reflect on it and pray and ask God would help us to experience and enjoy it. Perceive these blessings to be the blessings that they are. That God would grow our affections for Him as we reflect on the spiritual blessings we have in Christ.

Brandon. The metaphor of the beach was very grabable. Maybe put that in the intro. Maybe use "in the ocean" as metaphor for being in Christ. This is so much bigger than me. There is so much here that I don't know.

I don't know that this is doable. One thought I had is to say that some people don't think this way. This doesn't make sense for me b/c we our selves as avocados morse than grapes.

Adam. I think there's ways to communicate more collectivist thoughts. I took my kids to Sams Club because I'm a member. I flash my card, and I walk in. And every blessing I have, my kids now have access to. I get 90 cent icee. I get a reasonable slice of pizza for \$1.50. All of the kids are mine because I'm a part of the group.

If you want to set it up with something silly like that. I think you don't wanna overemphasize the fact that you can't understand it. YOU want to point out that this is a major theme. "You need to understand how big of a deal it is that you're in Christ." This series is about helping us appreciate and understand all that you have b/c you're in CHrist. This is a huge deal and the biblical authors really want to make sure you understand all that it means to be in Christ. "Because I am a part of this, I get all the blessings."

WHY ENJOYING GOD IS SO IMPORTANT

And here's one of the reasons why its so important that we enjoy God and our hearts are made happy in Him.

John 14:15

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

I find this verse to be very insightful for us as those who desire to follow Jesus. Here's why I says that.

Even though obedience does require effort, **He doesn't say**, "if you use a lot of effort, you'll keep my commandments."

Even though obedience does require a lot of sacrifice, **He doesn't say**, "If you are good at sacrificing, you'll keep my commandments."

He says, if you *love me* you will keep my commandments, and the word that's translated "love" is a term that, among other things, means:

- *To have a preference for*
- *to take pleasure in the thing, prize it above other things, be unwilling to abandon it or do without it:*
- *to welcome with desire, long for*

This is immensely insightful. He's letting us know that those that keep His commands will be those that:

- have a preference for Him
- *take pleasure in Him, and prize Him above other things so much so that they'd be unwilling to abandon it or do without Him:*
- *Welcome Him with desire and long for Him*

This shows us that, among the things we consider and focus on as we seek to grow as followers of Jesus, growing our affection for Jesus is extremely important and I would say essential for us.

I'm a preacher's kid. I grew up in church. I remember, especially in High School on many occasions really enjoying time with God. Enjoying times of worship with Him where I just enjoyed time in His presence, whether I was:

- Singing songs of worship, or
- Meditating on who He is, or
- Praising Him for all of His goodness

I'm not saying that I was always very consistent in those disciplines, but I am saying that I remember many times just enjoying being with God.

Then, after I had been in college for a couple years, I started studying theology in a more organized and structured way. I began spending a lot of time focusing on a lot of the nuances of doctrines and different people's theological beliefs.

I began having a lot of discussions with other Christians about our perspectives on theology, where we agreed and disagreed. This was a time where I grew a lot in my understanding about God. I grew a lot in my ability to communicate and articulate truths about God...

This was a very strange time for me because in some ways, I felt like I was growing in the knowledge of God, but I was also decreasing in my enjoyment of God.

As my ability to grasp more intellectual knowledge about God grew stronger, my grasp on delight in God grew weaker.

Don't get me wrong, growing in intellectual knowledge about God is not a bad or negative thing, but I got to a place where I was focusing more on the mechanics of the gospel than I focused on knowing and enjoying the relationship that I have with the God that the Gospel was all about.

I could wax eloquently about justification by faith and by how He gives us His righteousness that we didn't deserve, but I wasn't enjoying the giver of that righteousness in ways I had in the past. I could break down for you the doctrine of adoption, but I wasn't enjoying the fact that God is our Father as much as I once had.

Now, I'm the type of person that loves to think on and even debate different thoughts and ideas. That's just my personality, so I'm probably more prone than most of you to err towards viewing God as conglomeration of theological concepts and truths more so than a person that I get to relate to and know... But even if you aren't like me in that, I believe strongly that every Christian would greatly benefit from enjoying and delighting in God more, and that is what I'm hoping in God to do throughout this sermon series.

I don't know if you've thought about it this way or not, but delighting in God is a vital part of your health as a Christian. As a team of pastors in our family of churches, one of the things we constantly talk about when we talk about what our people are struggling with, is spiritual apathy. A lack of zeal regarding the things of God. A lack of zeal for:

- Fighting sin
- Getting back on the wagon with meditating on God's Word
- Getting back to praying more consistently and intentionally
- Sharing God with others

It make sense that:

- we would be apathetic towards these things if we don't find real delight and joy in God.
- Someone would have to push and prod us over and over again to care about following God
- We wouldn't push past the discomfort of confessing our sins to one another in a deep and transparent and vulnerable way

- Etc...

If we don't find joy and delight in knowing Him. If you don't really think there's joy and happiness to be had in knowing God, then of course you don't want someone rebuking you and urging you to fight against the sin in your heart that keeps you from loving God as we should... because to you, it's not worth the sacrifice. From your perspective, there's not a big enough return for you to invest the necessary effort into fighting sin and denying yourself the fleeting pleasure of sin.

Look at how Jesus talks about obedience to Him.

John 14:15

"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."

Now, I want you to hear this for what it actually is. Jesus is giving us insight that we need to grow in obedience...

And even though obedience does require effort, **He doesn't say**, "if you use a lot of effort, you'll keep my commandments."

And even though obedience does require a lot of sacrifice, **He doesn't say**, "If you are good at sacrificing, you'll keep my commandments."

He says, if you *love me* you will keep my commandments, and the word that's translated "[love](#)" is a term that, among other things, means:

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This is immensely insightful. He's letting us know that those that keep His commands will be those that:

- *have a preference for Him*
- *take pleasure in Him, and prize Him above other things so much so that they'd be unwilling to abandon it or do without Him:*
- *Welcome Him with desire and long for Him*

This shows us that, among the things we consider and focus on as we seek to grow as followers of Jesus, growing our affection for Jesus should be as high as anything else on that list.

Since college, that tendency to focus more on theology than I focus on God, has been an issue for me, but thank God I'm much better about that now than I was years ago in college. And this sermon series is about a reality about God that we find in the bible that has helped me to enjoy and cherish and prefer and take pleasure in and desire and long for God more than any other theological category or concept.

And my request for you, throughout this series is that you'll pray for us as a church and FoC to grow greatly in our love and affection for God. That we would experience more delight and pleasure in God than ever before...

UNION WITH CHRIST

So the aim is to grow in affection and love for God, and the means to that end that we'll be using is diving into the reality of our union with Christ.

The Apostle Paul, the most prolific writer in the NT, uses the phrase 'in Christ' or other similar phrases like 'in him' over 160 times in His writings in the bible. This is a huge theme in the bible, especially the New Testament. One that I would say, once you notice it, the more you read and study the NT the more you'll see it everywhere in the NT.

So how do we understand the concept of our union with Christ? What is this doctrine all about?

Essentially, I would say that the Doctrine of our union with Christ is all about the fact that for believers in Christ, God has bound and united himself to us and us to Him. One aspect of it is that. God the Father's desire was to give His Son to His people that we would be united with Him forever, and that through that union, He would save us from sin.

Union with Christ speaks to the fact that we don't have an adjacent relationship to God, where ultimately, I'm here and God is just somewhere else blessing us with salvation. Union with Christ describes us as being in Christ and Christ in us. And when the bible refers specifically to our union with Christ, it explains it in some somewhat tangible ways and in some ways that are more of an enchanted reality that is so profound that it really can be difficult to wrap our minds around... which is actually one of my favorite things about it this concept.

TANGIBLE WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING UNION WITH CHRIST

Let's start with some of the more tangible ways that the bible talks about our union with Christ.

Our union with Christ, is often portrayed in the scriptures with metaphors and pictures. We see pictures in the bible like:

- Head and body (1 Cor 12)
- Vine and branches (John 15)
- Living stones and chief cornerstone (1 Peter)
- Our bodies being the temple (1 Cor)
- Marriage (Ephesians 5)

All of these are images that give us a sense of what our union with Christ is like.

Its like we're all **parts of the body**, but He's the head that is connected with us such that we aren't fully who we are without Him, and He is our leader and sets direction for us.

Its like **He's the vine and we're the branches** and He is the source of life and flourishing and the only way we can do that is if we're connected to Him.

We're living **stones and He's the chief cornerstone**. Together we are built after His pattern and after His model, and united with Him we are how the presence of God interacts with the world.

And **we**, together, **are His bride united in love with Him** because He has pursued us and made us His own.

None of these metaphors or pictures fully explain the depths and the riches of our union with Him, but they do all shape our understanding of our union with Him. Biblical authors are essentially using things that people already have a framework for, to help us to comprehend something that we're unfamiliar with.

INTANGIBLE/ENCHANTED WAYS OFF TALKING ABOUT UNION WITH CHRIST

But there are also some intangible ways that the bible talks about our union with Christ that I would say show that even though our union with Christ has some similarities to different types of connections that we're familiar with, it is also something altogether different from anything any of us have experienced elsewhere.

And the language in these passages communicate something deeper than just the fact that we are closely connected with Him. They communicate that our very life has become one with Christ's life.

Look at how Jesus, in His prayer for all of His followers, compares the union and oneness He wants for us to have with Him to union and oneness He has with the Father.

John 17:21, 23

21 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.

He's saying that His desire is for us is that we would be in The Father and The Son "just as" the Father is in The Son and The Son is in The Father.

He does it again at the beginning of verse 23

23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Again, He connects our oneness with Him with His oneness with the Father. Christ's wants us to have the kind of unity/oneness with Him that He has with the Father. He's laying out trinitarian oneness as the type of oneness that He wants us to have with Him.

Paul also brings up our union with Christ in a way that refers to our life being one with Christ's life.

Romans 6:5-6

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

So the apostle Paul here is saying that our life has so become one with Christ's life that we have been united with Him in His death such that our old self was crucified with Him, and we have been united with Him in His resurrection, which he says elsewhere in the passage means we are able to walk in newness of life.

We see something similar in Ephesians 2:5,6

Ephesians 2:5b-6

... by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

He's saying that somehow, our union with Christ is so thorough that even though we are here on the earth and Christ is seated in the heavenly places at the right hand of God the Father, we are with Him there. Just like He is in us as He's there and we are right here on earth... We are in Him as He is there in heaven.

WAIT, WHAT?

Alright, hopefully, your mind is blown and you're thinking... "OK, this is too much to take in. I don't know how to understand or grasp this reality of how united I am with Him. I can't comprehend such a union with Christ that I am with Him even in His death and resurrection. I can't fathom that I am united with Christ in the way that Christ is united with God the Father"

If you're feeling that right now, that's a good thing! Its good for you to feel that way. Often times its good for us to come to the end of ourselves and just stand in awe of who God is and what He's done, particularly regarding how united we are with Him.

Potential Quote:

"It makes sense that our human understanding could never fully encompass our union with christ. **But the fact that we can't get to the bottom of this ocean doesn't mean we shouldn't put our feet in, or even swim.** So let us strive to understand and experience, taste and enjoy, all we can of this union while remembering that the Christ we experience is always better and more beautiful than our own personal experience of him." - Rankin Wilbourne (Union With Christ)

Family, I've been studying about union with Christ, off and on for about a couple years now, and I'm honestly still trying wrap my mind around it. It keeps blowing my mind over and over again in some of the best possible ways.

And if I can borrow a sentiment from that quote by Rankin Wilbourne, I would add that I still can't completely explain to you everything that Union with Christ is or everything it means for me

and for us. But **I don't have to know the exact measurements of the ocean or the number of grains of sand underneath my feet to be able to enjoy a day at the beach.**

I can just feel the sun and look out at the ocean and enjoy the fact that I'm there right in the middle of it. So as we go through this series on union with Christ, that's what I want to ask you to do... to look out upon the vast ocean of God's love and goodness and take a few deep breaths and take it all in.

Take in the fact that:

- no matter how much you have sinned against God, if you are a follower of Christ's, you are also always now and forever more bound to Him, and there's no one or no thing that can take you away from Him
- You are now and forevermore united with someone who truly gets you and understands you and has seen everything about you so you don't have to try to watch your words or walk on eggshells with them, and you can just let your guard down and go to Him with all of your joys and celebrations and hopes and fears and pains and disappointments
- Christ loves you so much that He came to rescue you by pursuing you and bringing you to Him and uniting His life to your life.

EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING

Lemme give you my best explanation of why I enjoy our union with Christ so much, and then I'll close.

Ephesians 1:3

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us **in Christ** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,*

All of the blessings of salvation, we receive via our union and connection with Christ. And this truth is what helps me more than anything else, in the middle of all of my theological parsing and nitpicking, to not primarily see the spiritual blessing we have like:

- Justification, sanctification, adoption, etc...

... theological concepts that I understand, and instead to see them as realities of my relationship with God that help me to enjoy my relationship with Him.

Quick Example:

When one of my sons was very little, I had to walk outside in the cold rain with one of them, and I had a jacket with a hood on it, but I didn't have an umbrella. So, I put my child in my jacket and zipped it up, and then I put my hood over my head and put my head down right over His head to protect him from the cold rain. So, the means of protecting my child was bringing Him closer to me, bringing him to myself. He was protected because of his closeness to me.

And when Paul says that God has blessed us **in Christ**, with every spiritual blessing, he is letting us know that the way God blesses us spiritually with all the blessings we receive in the Gospel, it is through Christ bringing us into Himself.

My belief and my prayer is that we would find God to be much more endearing if we saw all facets and aspects of our salvation that way. That they aren't just given to us by Christ as He stands outside of us, but rather as realities of our relationship with the one who we are in and who is in us.

Psalm 90:14 is a request to God written by Moses that I would love for us to echo this week, throughout this sermon series, and beyond.

*Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*

My primary application from this sermon is to ask you to pray for this every day this week. Pray that we'd be satisfied in God's love every day and that because of that we'd find joy and gladness all of our days.

*Other Application Ideas:

Practical applications about enjoying being with God:

- In LGs this week, we'll spend time sharing with each other our favorite things about God just to help us enjoy God
- Spend time beforehand writing down what you love about God
- Pray for this series that God grow our delight in Him
- Series practice

TT Thoughts:

LIZZIE: As believers we are distinct from God but we are never separate from Him.

"Never think of yourself apart from Christ." - John Wesley

We don't delight to be with God often because we don't think He delights to be with us.

BAILEY: If there's a way to push some of this stuff into next week, let's do that. Recommend leading in with Ephesians 1:3. Intro with talking about the blessing.

IN the movie Little Women, there's this aunt who died after accumulating a lot of wealth, a lot of her blessing had become a burden. And that's what I had experienced.

We were meant to enjoy God and have a blessed life with God. In this series I want to help us step into that, and Paul is saying that the key to receiving/experiencing Christ is our union with Christ. Having an anchor text will help streamline content and help people feel like they have something to hold onto. Giving the text helps people know what the big idea is.

BRANDON: I think the biggest thing I'd try to figure out, the hook, and how to keep people engaged with the topic. During personal liturgy, leader in church said, "When I hear you talking about spiritual vitality, I don't know what you mean and I don't know if I've ever experienced that."

A lot of our people are way more familiar with judicial/transactional views of the Gospel.

Some of [Sinclair Ferguson's stuff](#) on being in Christ meaning all what we were when we were “in Adam” being put on Christ for a moment, and **all that He has and is becoming ours forever.**

-

They're displaying that our lives are connected with God's life in a rich and somewhat mysterious way. I mean the way the bible talks about the degree to which our lives are united with the life of Christ are astounding and surprising... sometimes to the point that it can make you want to just skip past it like its not even there.

Romans 6:5

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Galatians 2:20

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

Ephesians 2:5b-6

... by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

The bible speaks of our lives being united with Christ's life. That he has bound Himself with us in a way that is special and unlike anything else... so much so that it says that we've united with Him in His death and resurrection and even in His ascension into the heavenly places.

And our union with Him is so profound that it seems like the biblical authors are struggling to find words to describe it.

On top of the pictures it gives us, the bible sometimes says that we're in Him (give reference), and sometimes it says that He's in us (give reference).

And in fact, these types of phrases are used so much in the bible, that I would say that you can writely define a Christian as someone who is “In Christ” - One who is united with Him. It definitely seems to be the primary way that the apostle Paul thinks about followers of Jesus.

And I want to encourage you with that truth today. That one of the truest things about you, if you are a follower of Jesus, is that God came to earth to unite Himself with you. He came to make Himself one with you.

1 Corinthians 1:17

But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING

And one of the best things about this Union... About the fact that we're In Christ... is the fact that all of our spiritual blessings come through this union we have with Christ.

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

All of the blessings of salvation, we receive via our union and connection with Christ. And this truth is what helps me more than anything else, in the middle of all of my theological parsing and nitpicking, to not primarily see the spiritual blessing we have like:

- Justification, sanctification, adoption, etc...

... to not just be theological concepts that I understand, and instead be realities of my relationship with God that help me to enjoy my relationship with Him.

Some of [Sinclair Ferguson's stuff](#) on being in Christ meaning all what we were when we were “in Adam” being put on Christ for a moment, and **all that He has and is becoming ours forever.**

Quick Example (From Ant): When my children were babies, if I had to walk outside in the cold rain, I would zip them up inside my jacket and put my hood on and lean my head down to protect them from the cold rain. Could I protect them by putting them in a stroller and make sure it has a good cover? Yes, but putting them in my jacket means they were protected because of how close I brought them to me. “I’m bringing you into myself, and that’s how I’m going to make sure you’re protected.” For me, that’s what endears me to the idea of union with Christ so much. He saves me by bringing me as close to Himself as He possibly can.

I believe we would find God to be much more endearing if we saw all facets and tenants of our salvation that way. That they aren’t just given to us by Christ as He stands outside of us, but rather as realities of our relationship with the one who we are in and who is in us.

our union with Christ is like the hub of the wagon wheel of the gospel. The different spokes of the wheel are the different spiritual blessings that we have in the Gospel like, justification, sanctification, adoption, being dead to sin, etc.

APPLICATION -

Practical applications about enjoying being with God

- In LGs this week, we'll spend time sharing with each other our favorite things about God just to help us enjoy God
 - Spend time beforehand writing down what you love about God
- Pray for this series that God grow our delight in Him
- Series practice

Get to **Psalm 90:14** at some point

*Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.*

“New Testament Scholar Constantine Campbell claims that union with CHrist is, if not the center, at least the key to understanding Paul’s writings. A key provides something that is necessary to make sense of the whole. Campbell does an exhaustive study of every use of the phrase “in Christ” in Paul’s letters and draws this conclusion:

‘Union with Christ is the ‘webbing’ that holds it all together. Union with Christ is connected to everything else... Every Pauline theme and pastoral concern ultimately coheres with the whole through their common bond - union with Christ.’

Paul uses the phrase ‘in Christ’ (or ‘in him’ or other closely related phrases) over 160 times in the letter attributed to him. Once you start looking for it you’ll see it everywhere. For example, Paul uses the phrase ‘in Christ’ 11 times in the single greek sentence that corresponds to Ephesians 1:3-14.”

Its a theological reality that I would say is central to every spiritual blessing that we find in the Gospel. And personally for me, this concept helps me to enjoy every spiritual blessing that I have in the Gospel so much more than I would enjoy otherwise. Its a theological concept that is so present and prevalent in the bible that it can begin to feel like white noise to you if you aren't paying attention to it. But once you develop eyes to see it in the bible, many begin to see it "everywhere" in the scriptures... especially in the NT.

In this sermon series, we'll be talking about the concept of our Union with Christ.

So let me first explain what our union with Christ biblically.

Begin sermon with “imagine if you could/would..... (give physical picture of spiritual reality of us being in Christ)”

- Describe it in a way that makes people want it... and then let them know that that’s what we have in Christ
- (Example: Would you like to have your best friend with you every single day?)
 - Think about, “what are people looking for in a relationship or looking for from God but don’t realize that they have?”
- Paint the “wouldn’t it be so great to have this” picture, and then show them that we do.

“Union with Christ is an enchanted reality” I want your interaction with the tenants/aspects of the Gospel to go beyond just the intellectual understanding of the mechanics of the Gospel into an enjoyable union with the one you love the most... and an enjoyment that you carry with you daily.

“IF the spirit is the means by which Christ unites us with himself, then the Spirit should be known and celebrated...”

“Some of this is going to blow your mind, and that’s a good place for you to be.”

- Quote about we don’t need to be able to fully understand the measurements of the ocean to be able to enjoy a day at the beach.

Bring up different pictures in the bible

- Head and body
- Vine and branches
- Living stones and chief cornerstone

Aim: Have people leave thinking, there’s something in God’s Word that’s absolutely everywhere that I’ve missed that will help me enjoy my relationship with God more than I have before.

Dalisha: I cherished those friendships b/c we had the same goals and same mind. If I said a piece of something, they know what I’m talking about. Acceptedness. It didn’t feel like I had to mask up or dress up what I was saying. I could just talk the way I talk without having to sugarcoat. We were being transformed by the Spirit when we were deeply immersed in culture... there was this kinship in the Lord. They got me.

- The older you get, after what you’ve gone through, you don’t want to have to explain everything for people to get it

Week 1 - Enjoying Union With Him

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

We always do what we feel will bring us joy. If you don't experience joy in Christ, you will run to sin to find joy. A large part of the reason many of us don't have zeal about following God is because we don't experience/feel joy in knowing God and being united with Him.

Narrate the series. We always do what we feel will bring us joy. If you don't experience joy in Christ, you will run to sin to find joy. A large part of the reason many of us don't have zeal about following God is because we don't experience/feel joy in knowing God and being united with Him.

If you can find joy in being united with Christ, you have a joy that is rooted in something that will sustain you from now until eternity. Meditating on God accurately will lead you to further enjoying things like prayer because you will be praying in a way that is mindful of His compassion, love mercy power, etc...

Throughout the series, we'll be talking about our union with Christ with the hopes that it will help you grow in understanding the riches of our union with Him and practicing disciplines that will help us enjoy Him more and more.

Wagon Wheel example.

Quick Example (From Ant): When my children were babies, if I had to walk outside in the cold rain, I would zip them up inside my jacket and put my hood on and lean my head down to protect them from the cold rain. Could I protect them by putting them in a stroller and make sure it has a good cover? Yes, but putting them in my jacket means they were protected because of how close I brought them to me. "I'm bringing you into myself, and that's how I'm going to make sure you're protected." For me, that's what endears me to the idea of union with Christ so much. He saves me by bringing me as close to Himself as He possibly can. He brings me into Himself.

