

Why Together?
John 17.20-26

I hope you've been learning a lot about the church in our series, *Why the Church*. In fact, this might be a good time to look back and review our earlier discoveries. What have you learned so far that has popped out to you? As we move toward the end of this series, it's time we begin to look inward and consider our relationships within the church. There are certain things about our life together that have an impact on why we exist as a church.

Pastor Eric

What do you think a church looks like that is totally unified? What is a church like where there are divisions among the people? What do you think causes some churches to enjoy unity while others are divided, marked by infighting and disagreement?

Read John 17.20-26. If you have time, take a few extra minutes to read the whole chapter; if not, make sure you note that our text is at the end of Jesus' lengthy prayer before his arrest in the garden. Who is Jesus praying for in verses 20-26? What jumped out at you from that section?

Notice how close Jesus is with his Father (you may also want to see John 5.19-20 and John 10.30). Does the concept of the Father living in harmonious fellowship with the Son and the Holy Spirit alter your view of God? How? Now notice that Jesus prays that his church will mirror the oneness of the Father and Son (verse 21). What do you think would characterize such a church?

Pay close attention to verse 21 and notice how Jesus desires the church to join in on the fellowship he has with his Father. How is that possible? What can the church do to walk in such close fellowship with God? What might get in the way of that fellowship? Read verse 23 and ponder the first half. How does the Son dwelling "in" the church contribute to making the church one?

The rest of verse 23 includes an additional thought. The Son dwelling in us leads to our unity, and results in something amazing. What is that according to this verse? Just as Jesus has already indicated in verse 21, our oneness with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit results in the world believing. Explore that: How does that work?

What about Community Covenant Church? Do you think our church is unified? What evidence would you point out to back that up? What tangible actions could we take to develop greater unity?

Ultimately, any talk of unity comes down to each person. How are you contributing to the unity of our church? Considering Jesus' prayer, what actions could you take as a member of the church to contribute to our unity? Note: If you really want to dig into the concept of the church as a unified community of disciples, read Dietrich Bonhoeffer's classic, *Life Together*.