

That all of them may be ONE

ONENESS GUIDE #2

TOWARD ONENESS

September 19, 2010

Genesis 3:1-13; Genesis 11:1-9

DESTINED FOR UNITY...
WITH GOD

In Jesus Christ Our Lord

WITH EACH
OTHER
In The Church

WITH EACH
OTHER
In Our Family

*...that all of them may be one,
Father, just as you are in me and
I am in you. May they also be in
us so that the world may believe
that you have sent me.*

- Jesus (John 17:21)

Unity: A Great Loss and Illusive Treasure I

GENESIS 3:1-13

THE FALL OF MAN

3 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'"

² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, ³ but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

⁴ "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. ⁵ "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

⁶ When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig [next page]



Genesis 3 & 11 - Oneness Lost

Genesis 3:1-13 (continued)

leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

⁸ Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. ⁹ But the Lord God called to the man, “Where are you?”

GENESIS 11:1-9

THE TOWER OF BABEL

11 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.

² As men moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there.

³ They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

⁵ But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. ⁶ The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.”

⁸ So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹ That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

¹⁰ He answered, “I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.”

¹¹ And he said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?”

¹² The man said, “The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.”

¹³ Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”



GOD’S ANSWER TO MAN’S “TOWER”

Isaiah 14:13-15

You said in your heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God;

I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain.

I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.

Zephaniah 3:9 (ESV)

For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.

Acts 2:78 (Pentecost!)

Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?”

Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?

Self Study in Oneness for Week Two

YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH. - PSALM 119:105

Look: Read Genesis 3:1-13 - Eve

Day 1 Ask: [Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper] 1. What questions does the serpent ask and what statements does he make? In what sense are they true and how are they false? 2. How do you see Eve slipping away from God? 3. To whom was Eve listening and where was she looking when she made her decision to eat of the forbidden fruit?

Meditate: Think of a time when you did something you knew was wrong. What voice were you listening to and where were you looking when you made that bad decision? To whom can you listen and where can you look today to avoid making similar errors?

Pray: *Each day* - Praise God. Confess your sins. Thank Him for His Word & ask Him to help you understand & apply it. *Today* - Thank God for the insights He has given you about sin and for directing your attention toward Him today.

Day 2 Look: Read Genesis 3:1-13 - Adam

Ask: When his wife gave him the forbidden fruit, what did Adam do? Who was responsible for his decision? 2. How does Adam answer God's "Where are you?" How has their relationship changed? 3. When God asks if he has done wrong, how does Adam respond? How does the vertical alienation (with God) affect the horizontal relationship (with Eve)?

Meditate: What did Adam and Eve lose (for themselves & for their descendants--us!) by their disobedience to God? Think of how sin, whether active (doing what is wrong) or passive (failing to do what is right), alienates us from God and then from each other. What have you lost in your life because of your disobedience to God?

Pray: *Today* - Ask God to show you both the seriousness of your sin and the adequacy of Christ's love for you. Rejoice!

Day 3 Look: Read Genesis 11:1-9 - Mankind

Ask: 1. What motivated people to build the Tower of Babel? Where did God fit into people's plans? 2. How would a "tower to end all towers" help people keep from being scattered? What reality might they have thought they could unify themselves around? 3. When God decided to scatter the people, how successfully were people able to resist what God willed? 4. Whose fault was it that people, collectively, suffered a loss of unity into various languages and locations?

Meditate: How is the name "Babel," which is similar to the Hebrew word for "mix up" and from which we get our word for a "confusion of sounds or voices," reflected in the world you see and the life you live today?

Pray: *Today* - Ask God to show, forgive & correct you in the ways you try to "make a name for yourself" apart from Him.

Day 4 Look: Read Genesis 11:1-9 - The Lord God

Ask: 1. What does God's "coming down" to see what the people were building say about how "big" the Babel Tower Project was from God's perspective? Do people (in the world & in churches) still think much of themselves and little of God? 2. Why did God scatter people and confuse their language? 2. What's the problem with people striving to keep connected? What happens to people who organize themselves *against* God who is the source of life? 3. In light of this what do you suppose motivated God to scatter and confuse the people?

Meditate: If it was God's will to scatter the people (and so they were scattered), what happens when it is God's will to get people back together? Think about what might, then, be our best strategy for bringing the human family and our own families into a closer and lasting oneness?

Pray: *Today* - Thank God for giving you a much better "name for yourself" in Him and with His Son.

Day 5 Look: Read Genesis 3:1-13 and Genesis 11:1-9

Ask: 1. What similarities are there between the stories of Adam & Eve and of the Tower of Babel? 2. What evidence do you see of God's love & mercy in these tragic episodes? Who takes the initiative toward restoration with Adam & Eve? With their descendants at Babel? (Beginning with Genesis ch. 12 who will be the hero of the Story of Redemption?)

Meditate: How have you seen God's love & mercy in the midst of dark times?

Pray: *Today* - Thank God for His unchanging nature & faithful love in the face of our foolish and wandering ways.



Notes

Genesis 3 tells the story of mankind's Fall from unity with God into sin and alienation... The entrance of the serpent (seen as a particularly unclean creature among God's creations) brings an ominous sense to the proceedings, and the questions this symbol of evil brings are shrewd and misleading in the extreme. He uses the more generic name "God" (*Elohim*) instead of the more personal "Lord God" (Yahweh Elohim), and Eve, beginning her descent from God follows suit. *Did God really say...?* seems innocent enough but it begins the process of tempting Eve to see herself as independent from her "untrustworthy" God. *...from any tree in the garden...* This is a malevolent misrepresentation of God's generous character, but Eve trusts the serpent instead of God, and Adam listens to his wife instead of God, and they do the one thing God has forbidden with catastrophic results. *You will not surely die!...* is true in an immediate sense (Adam & Eve continue to live for a while), and the promise that humans will *be like God* will be made true in a make-believe modern secular-humanistic world which denies God's very existence; however, in the deepest sense death has come through man's sin. Adam and Eve have separated themselves, and the whole human family to come after them, from the only source of life and health, and without some sort of extraordinary intervention on their behalf death is all they can look forward to. *Your eyes will be opened...* This is also true in a way, but what their eyes are opened to is their own nakedness/vulnerability now as creatures who stand unfit before their creator with no strategy for redemption to match their impulse to try to blame somebody else (*the woman you put with me... the serpent...*). Having sowed to their own self-centered values what they reap is alienation/disunity from God and from each other.

Genesis 11 - The Tower of Babel story brings to a conclusion the pre-history section of the Old Testament (The story of how we got into this mess that precedes the Story of God's Redemption beginning with Abraham and ends in Jesus). Babel sounds very much like the Hebrew word for "confuse, mix-up." Throughout Scripture, Babylon is seen as the embodiment of human pride and godlessness, and the Tower of Babel still offers a powerful symbol of man's failure when he attempts to go it alone in defiance of his creator. *A tower that reaches to the heavens...* The Babylonians were known for their tower building and their theology of thus building their way up to heaven and becoming like God. Such endeavors were condemned by Israel's prophets (see Isaiah, p.2) and have continued in places far removed from Babylon and no nearer to heaven! *...so that we can make a name for ourselves...* This is the heart of the matter. Humanity is trying to make a name for itself without reference to God rather than letting the Lord God do this for them and with them. Such independence is deadly (as we have seen in ch.3). *...and no be scattered...* Ironically, this is exactly what happens as a result of their efforts! *The Lord came down to see the city and the tower...* Irony again! The big city and high tower intended to reach all the way to heaven? God can't even see them without "coming down!" Gordon Wenham (*Genesis*, Word Biblical Commentary, v.1, p.245) adds this: "But though man's highest achievement was pathetic in God's eyes, the motives that prompted his efforts were horrific. The desire to displace God from heaven, to make a name for oneself rather than allow God to do this, and to scheme without reference to his declared will, prompts one final judgment that will hobble man's attempts at cooperation once and for all." The remedy for these motives we find in Jesus Christ, and the effectiveness of His unfolding plan to undo the curse is powerfully seen in the events of Pentecost (Acts 2).

Small Group Guide



Hearing About Us - What was a favorite song for you when you were in school? How did it make you feel? What message did it have for you? What did it encourage you to do?

Heeding God's Word - 1. In light of this week's Bible readings, think of a song (old or new) that could be called a "Serpent Song" (tempting toward sin), an "Eve Song" (responding poorly to temptation) and/or an "Adam Song" (oblivious to sin's consequences). Then think of a song that could be called a "God Song" (encouraging goodness, love and responsibility). 2. As time permits, share any insights you gained from your Self Study in Oneness for this week (see page 3).

Helping One Another in Prayer to God - Share prayer requests among group members as you are willing & able. Hold hands and go around the circle with each group member praying, out loud or silently for the person on his/her left and squeezing the next person's hand when he/she is done.