“The Power of One”

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4:3-6 NIV

“1b I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

Introduction
There is one in every crowd – that person who laughs at the wrong time, or tells a joke that falls like a lead balloon, or covers up their feelings of self-consciousness with inappropriate behaviour, or . . . the list is endless.

You know people, you know that ONE who stands out, not for positive reasons but for negative ones . . . there is one in every crowd.

And we roll our eyes or shake our heads and walk away . . . kind of embarrassed because we know them, but do not always want to admit it.

Let’s face it.
There could be one in the pew, or in your family, or maybe you have a friend that is one of those people!

One of those people whom others talk about, but for all the wrong reasons!

One often has a negative feeling to it.
It suggests aloneness, separation, isolation, segregation, seclusion or forgotten-ness.
One often gets a bad rap.

Three Dog Night, a rock band of the 60’s and 70’s, wrote the lyrics of a song called “One.”
The opening line of that song goes like this:
“One is the loneliest number that you’ll ever do.” (Three Dog Night, 2004)

It’s a sad song about lost love and the brokenness of relationship, reducing two to one – reducing together to alone.

But one can also be a positive.
Remember the very recent past and all those folks at our Christmas dinner?
That was the power of one.

One person inviting another and another, and one telling someone else – and the result was eighty people who shared a meal and an evening together – a truly community event!

Because of the power of one person asking another.

The power of one!

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There was an ad on TV some time ago. I think it was advertising shampoo or something. Anyway, the gist of the ad was that one told another, who told another, and so on. Do you know that if each of us invited one person to come with us to church, we would double our numbers? We would have to add more chairs!
The power of one!

The power of ‘One’ is emphasized throughout the entire Bible.

“Hear O Israel . . . the Lord is one.” (Deuteronomy 6:4)
“For You are great and do marvellous deeds; You alone are God.” (Psalm 86:10)
“There is no one like you, O LORD, and there is no God but You.” (1 Chronicles 17:20)
“There is one body and one Spirit – one hope – one God, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:5-6)
The very unity of the Godhead, Father, Son and Holy Spirit – co-equal in character, power, and wisdom – suggests a unity of purpose.
And that purpose was connected to a promise.
“For the Lord your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.” (Deuteronomy 20:4)

Often God’s promises link to the calling and empowering of one single person who rises above the rest and obeys Him no matter the cost. Check out list of ‘ones’ in Hebrews 11 sometime.
It was by faith that ordinary folk were ‘commended as righteous’ or as ‘one who pleased God’.

Take Noah, for example.
It was because of his faith, that, when warned [by God] about things not yet seen, in holy fear he built an ark to save his family. You know the story, recorded in Genesis 6-9, of how wicked the world had become. God grieved that He had ever created people, and determined to punish the world for their total disregard of anything morally or ethically pure. But Noah found favour in the eyes of the Lord. He was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God. (Genesis 6:6, 8-9)

Then there is Abraham.
He was called by God to go to a whole new place – uproot his family – and travel to an unknown land, which was later given to him as an inheritance. (Genesis 12ff)

There is Ruth, who became the great-grandmother of David and therefore, part of the family tree through which Christ was born. (Book of Ruth)

Check out John the Baptist.
He was commissioned, even before he was born, to “prepare the way of the Lord, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” (Mark 1:1-4)

The lists of ‘ones’ who were called for very specific reasons to perform very specific tasks, whether it was going before the Pharaoh of Egypt to intercede for the freedom of the people of Israel,
or warning of the wrath of God because of faithlessness or unfaithfulness, or being a missionary to a particular place, or praying to God in spite of a decree to worship the emperor, or leading a few men against a mighty army, or guiding people around a city wall for seven consecutive days – whatever the task was, a parade of the power of one winds its way through the pages of biblical history. And the powerful consequences of those ‘ones’ who followed God and allowed Him to use them as part of God’s plan of salvation are evident.

We have just come through the season of Advent and Christmas. Think about the birth of Jesus. Consider the power of the ‘ones’ involved in this story.

First, there is Mary, a young girl, a virgin, engaged to be married to Joseph, a descendent of David. God sent the angel Gabriel to tell her that she had found favour with God and she would give birth to a son and His name would be Jesus. (Luke 1:26-38)

Her answer proved her willingness to be ‘one’ who would fulfill the prophecies of God: “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May it be to me as you have said.” (Luke 1:38)

Then there is Joseph. According to the cultural traditions of the time, he could have divorced Mary for her seeming adulterous act . . . but, he also was visited by an angel in a dream, who assured him that “what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. Do not be afraid to take her as your wife.” (Matthew 1:20)

God is still calling individuals – one by one by one – to complete His work here on earth. Each of us has a particular place in fulfilling the great Word and work of God and . . . . . in that sense – YOU ARE THE ONE; . . . in that sense – I AM THE ONE.

“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” (Ephesians 4:1-3)

Christians have a unity-keeping responsibility. Walking worthily before the Lord includes attention to preserving the oneness of the Church. The unity of the body of Christ is a creation of the Holy Spirit, bringing unity of an integrated personality to the individual heart and giving a uniting bond of love to the whole fellowship of believers. This unity is both personal and social, and the Holy Spirit is the originating and sustaining Cause. (Taylor, Beacon Bible Commentary: Volume IX (Ephesians), 1965): pp. 202-203)

“There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.” (Ephesians 4:8-7)

There is one body, one Spirit
and one hope – Christ cannot be divided.
One body is vitalized by one Spirit and moves progressively toward one hope. (Taylor, Beacon Bible Commentary: Volume IX (Ephesians), 1965) p. 203)

1. One Body – the Body of Christ, the Church
Paul could not tolerate two bodies of Christ – one Jewish, the other Gentile.
Through the power of the cross, reconciliation with God is for everyone, regardless of ethnicity, status, education, age, gender, or even denomination.
There is ONE body of Christ.
Team work, not 'me and thee' work!

“Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these member do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (Romans 12:5)

“...And God placed all things under [Christ’s] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” (Ephesians 1:22)

From him, as the head, the Church receives light, life, and intelligence.
He especially manifests his power, goodness, and truth; for though he fills the entire world with his presence, yet he fills all the members of his body with wisdom, goodness, truth, and holiness.
Jesus Christ is represented to be the head, and the Church, the body under that head.
Just as it requires a body and members to make a head complete; so it requires a Church, or general assembly of believers, to make up the body of Christ. (Clarke)

2. One Spirit – the Holy Spirit
“Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons [and daughters] of God.
The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now, if we are children, we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.” (Romans 8:16-17)

But there is more!

“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.” (Romans 8:26-27)
The indwelling of the Spirit prevents any view of the church as a mere organization; for the presence of the Spirit constitutes the Church, and is the basis of its unity. The Spirit is the special seal of God upon the members of the Community of Faith. (Taylor, Beacon Bible Commentary: Volume IX (Ephesians), 1965: P. 204)

3. **One Hope . . .**
Hope is dependent on our being part of the body which is sealed by the Spirit. Biblical hope is the anticipation of a favourable outcome under God’s guidance. More specifically, hope is the confidence that what God has done for us in the past guarantees our participation in what God will do in the future. Given the assurance of hope, Christians live in the present with confidence and face the future with courage. They can also meet trials triumphantly because they know “that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance character; and character, hope.” (Romans 5:3-4) (Trent C. Butler, 1991)

The writer to the Hebrews declares that when God made His covenant with Abraham, He swore by Himself that He would “bless [Abraham] and give [him] many descendants.” God wanted to make it very clear that this covenant was forever, unchanging, unbreakable, non-negotiable, so that we, today, in the 21st century, just as did the people of ancient times, can take hold of the hope offered to us so that we may be encouraged. This hope is an anchor for the soul — firm and secure. This hope enables us to enter into the very presence of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Hebrews 6:13-20)

One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism: Loyalty to the one Lord gives birth to the one faith and is signalled by the one act of baptism. (Taylor, Beacon Bible Commentary: Volume IX (Ephesians), 1965 p. 203)

4. **One Lord**
The reference of the Lordship of Christ is in keeping with one of the earliest statements of faith of the Church.

“If [people] will confess with their mouths that Jesus Christ is Lord, and believe in their hearts that God raised Him from the dead, they will be saved. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all, for everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Romans 10:9, 12-13)

Where, what or with whom does your loyalty rest today?
Do you claim one Lord, one faith, one hope, . . . or is your life fractured by the pull of possessions and obligations that demand your time and attention?

5. **One Faith**
“Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” (Hebrews 11:1)

Do you have a deep, unshakeable faith in One Lord?
Or does your faith lie in your own sense that you are the only one who can ‘get things done’? Do you have faith in ‘self-help’ books, or mediums, or the opinions and advice of the rich and famous, or the stars, or anything which removes your focus from one Lord? Does your faith carry you through the crises of life or crumble at the first sign of calamity? Is your faith based on the common joy of forgiveness and adoption which provides a foundation of unity for the Church?

6. One Baptism
Before Christ ascended into heaven, He urged his followers to “wait for the gift my Father promised – you will be baptized by the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 1:5)
The only true unity of the Church is the unity of the Spirit. (Taylor, Beacon Bible Commentary: Volume IX (Ephesians), 1965 p. 206)
The gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was evidence of the new dispensation of the working of the Spirit in our world, the special, ongoing work of the Spirit in the lives of Christians, (Taylor, p. 172) an external seal of incorporation into the body of Christ.

7. One God and Father of all
However, none of this ‘oneness’ is possible without the Root, the Source: “One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4:6)
God is above all – He is sovereign and supreme. He is through all – His power penetrates the whole Church. He is in all – His Spirit abides in worship before the same eternal throne and in Christ we are all the children of the same Divine Father. (Taylor, Beacon Bible Commentary: Volume IX (Ephesians), 1965, p. 206)
God’s answer to the disharmony of the world is ‘oneness’ – unity – of the Church, the Body of Christ, you and me.

Your mission – should you choose to accept it – is to be ‘living object lessons of God’s love’, to make known Christ and His free gift of Salvation, to live worthily before the world, to minister Christ to others, to be ‘one in the bond of love.’

Are you ready to accept the challenge, to be one who is willing and ready to actively participate in this living entity called ‘the Church, the Body of Christ’?

If not, what is blocking your way? What do you need to do to go forward? Why don’t you do that today?
AMEN

Bibliography


