

The Key to God's Redemptive Mission **- Ron Stullenbarger**

"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20-21).

God often speaks of human relationships as a part of His mission to redeem a lost world. *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me" (John 13:20). "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me'" (Matthew 25:40).*

One reason God gives for a husband and wife to live in unity is so they can produce a *"godly seed,"* that is, children who love and obey God, who can be used in God's mission to bring redemption to a lost world. *"But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth" (Malachi 2:15).*

Similarly, the church is the body of Christ. A church cannot be on mission with the Father in our world if its members are waging war with one another. *"For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12). "And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3).* There is a crucial connection between our relationships with others and the salvation of those around us.

We might assume that during Jesus' prayer before His crucifixion, He would have prayed that His disciples would have courage, or would remain faithful, or would remember what they had been taught. Yet He asked that His followers would remain united in their love for one another. Jesus understood that it is spiritually impossible to love God but not love others.

A test of your love for God is to examine your love for others. Our tendency is to say, *"Lord, the problem is not between You and me. I love You with all my heart. I just don't love my brother."* And God says, *"That is impossible. You cannot love Me without loving the ones for whom My Son died."* *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35). "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death" (1 John 3:14). "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).*

Your life will not convince those around you of the reality of Jesus if you cannot live in love and unity with your fellow Christians.