



Faces around the Cross

Study Guide
March 8, 2009

INTRODUCTION

“How come there are so many different churches?” Jeff asked. “You mean denominations?” I clarified. “Yah, whatever you call them. If Christians can’t get it right between themselves, how do you know you’ve got it right?” After thinking about his question, I had to admit to Jeff that some churches get started because people aren’t perfect. Instead of working through their differences and conflict in a healthy way they just leave and move on to start another one. At other times God uses different churches to reach different people. He loves variety and this is reflected in the different kinds of churches. Regardless of our many differences there is one thing that brings all Christians together. Our unity is really found at the Cross. And when we major on the Cross rather than majoring on our differences, we are an answer to prayer.

1. What is one dream that you have these days?

Read John 17:20-25

1. It’s been said that when someone faces death, one’s deepest passions, hopes and dreams are revealed (sort of like *The Bucket List* – if you’ve seen the movie). With His life almost over Jesus reveals what is closest to his heart? What is it?
2. Jesus prays that His believers everywhere and for all times would be marked by the same oneness that exists between Him and the Father. What do you think this means?
3. What does it mean for the church in North America today? What doesn’t it mean?
4. According to Jesus why is this important?
5. In your mind what keeps all Christians, regardless of denomination, from coming together?

MOVING FORWARD

Luther once wrote: *In the essentials (of the Faith) we need unity; in the non-essentials liberty and in all things charity.* For the longest time I was afraid of “weird” Christians (I defined “weird” as anybody who was different from me). Read Philippians 1:15-18. The Apostle Paul taught that some people preached Jesus out of good motives and some out of bad, some with the way Paul liked it preached and some the way that he didn’t. He said, at the end of the day, it didn’t matter because “Christ is preached”. God uses different strokes to reach different folks. What are some ways that would build unity between different churches? Brainstorm a list.

For me, I realized that I had put up a wall against Christians that were different from me. When I took a step towards them I realized that we’re not that different because we all need the Cross. I’ve made a pact with God to learn how to love those in His family that are different from me by, first of all, guarding my attitude and my mouth about other churches. I want to treat them the same way I would want them to treat us. Secondly, I look for opportunities to be stretched by the different ways they worship and serve. Lastly, I’ve decided to pray for different churches. Every time I drive by one, I ask God to grow them, knowing that if they grow, the Kingdom grows, and we all grow.

CHANGE YOUR MIND

How good and pleasant it is when brothers (and sisters) live together in unity. Psalm 133:1