

East Hill Church Sermon Discussion Guide

Till Death Do Us Part: We Are One

Speaker: Pastor Keith Jenkins

Date: February 25th, 2024

Introduction:

In the 3rd sermon of our “Till Death Do Us Part” series titled “We Are One,” Pastor Keith Jenkins explored the concept of unity in relationships. Drawing from biblical texts like Genesis 2:21-25 and John 10:30 he set the stage for discussing how oneness, a profound and intricate union, is an ideal in both human relationships and in relation to God. PK (Pastor Keith) emphasized that achieving oneness is a dynamic and evolving process, rather than a fixed state.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Reflect on Personal Experiences:** Have you ever experienced a moment in your life where you felt a profound sense of oneness with others or with God? Share that experience and how it impacted you.
2. **Understanding Oneness:** What does the concept of oneness mean to you in the context of your personal relationships and your relationship with God? How do you differentiate between unity and uniformity?
3. **Challenges to Oneness:** Can you identify any barriers in your life that might be hindering the achievement of oneness, either in your personal relationships or in your spiritual journey?

Key Verses:

Genesis 2:21-25 (NIV): **21** So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. **22** Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. **23** The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.” **24** That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. **25** Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** These verses describe the creation of woman from man in the Genesis creation story, emphasizing the concept of unity in marriage.
- **Theological Significance:** This passage is foundational in the Judeo-Christian understanding of marriage, highlighting the unique, divinely ordained bond between husband and wife.

- **Application to 'Oneness':** These verses illustrate the ideal of unity and oneness within a marital relationship, a principle that can be extended to understanding deep, spiritual connections in other relationships as well.
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John 10:30 (NIV): 30 "I and the Father are one."

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** This statement by Jesus emphasizes His unique unity with God, a pivotal declaration in the context of Jewish monotheism and early Christian theology.
 - **Theological Significance:** It underscores the doctrine of the Trinity, revealing the profound unity between Jesus and the Father, central to Christian belief.
 - **Application to 'Oneness':** This verse illustrates the perfect model of unity, an aspiration for our relationships to reflect this divine harmony and understanding.
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Psalms 139:14 (NIV): 14 "I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** This Psalm reflects David's awe at God's creative work, particularly in the formation of the human being.
 - **Theological Significance:** It speaks to the inherent value and beauty of each individual created by God.
 - **Application to 'Oneness':** In recognizing our own and others' divine craftsmanship, we foster respect and unity, celebrating the diverse yet unified nature of humanity.
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Ephesians 2:10 (NIV): 10 "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** This verse reflects the early Christian understanding of being created anew through Christ, focusing on the transformation and purpose in the life of believers.
 - **Theological Significance:** It emphasizes the Christian belief in divine purpose and predestination, underscoring the idea that believers are created for a life of good works.
 - **Application to 'Oneness':** This verse encourages unity in purpose and action within the Christian community, underlining the collective calling to fulfill God's work.
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James 3:16 (NIV): 16 "For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice."

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Addressed to early Christian communities, this verse warns against the disruption caused by envy and selfish ambition.
 - **Theological Significance:** It highlights the destructive nature of these vices and their contrast with Christian values.
 - **Application to 'Oneness':** The verse serves as a caution against attitudes that can fracture community unity, emphasizing the need for harmony and selflessness.
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Acts 15:1-2 (NIV): **1** Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." **2** This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Reflects a pivotal moment in the early church, dealing with the integration of Gentile believers and Jewish customs.
 - **Theological Significance:** Marks a significant development in Christian doctrine, addressing the question of adherence to Jewish law.
 - **Application to 'Oneness':** Demonstrates the importance of addressing doctrinal disputes through dialogue and consultation, aiming to maintain unity within the diverse body of believers.
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Proverbs 10:12 (NIV): **12** "Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs."

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Part of the wisdom literature in the Bible, providing guidance on personal conduct and relationships.
 - **Theological Significance:** Contrasts the destructive nature of hatred with the healing power of love.
 - **Application to 'Oneness':** Encourages embracing love and forgiveness in relationships, key for maintaining unity and overcoming differences.
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Philippians 2:3-4 (NIV): **3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Paul's letter to the Philippians emphasizes humility and selflessness in the Christian community.

- **Theological Significance:** Advocates for a Christ-like attitude of humility and concern for others.
- **Application to 'Oneness':** Encourages the cultivation of unity through selflessness and empathy, crucial for fostering oneness in any community.

Ephesians 6:12 (NIV): **12** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Addresses spiritual warfare, emphasizing the Christian's battle against spiritual forces rather than physical enemies.
- **Theological Significance:** Highlights the spiritual dimension of Christian life and the reality of spiritual conflict.
- **Application to 'Oneness':** Reminds that maintaining unity requires recognizing and combating spiritual challenges together, rather than focusing on interpersonal conflicts.

Ephesians 4:2-4 (NIV): **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.

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Paul urges the Ephesian church to foster unity through humility, gentleness, and patience.
- **Theological Significance:** Highlights the virtues essential for maintaining spiritual unity within the Christian community.
- **Application to 'Oneness':** These verses emphasize the importance of cultivating a spirit of humility and patience, key in building and maintaining a sense of oneness in any group or community.

Matthew 18:19-23 (NIV): **19** “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. **20** For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” **21** Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” **22** Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. **23** “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Jesus teaches about the power of agreement in prayer and the importance of forgiveness.

- **Theological Significance:** Emphasizes the principles of unity in prayer and the boundless nature of forgiveness in the Christian faith.
 - **Application to 'Oneness':** These teachings underscore the need for harmonious relationships and continual forgiveness as key components in maintaining unity and oneness within the Christian community.
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Amos 3:3 (NIV): 3 "Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?"

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Amos, a prophet, uses this rhetorical question to illustrate the need for agreement and unity in relationships.
 - **Theological Significance:** Highlights the principle that successful relationships and partnerships require mutual agreement and understanding.
 - **Application to 'Oneness':** This verse serves as a reminder of the importance of consensus and collaboration in building and sustaining unity in any relationship or community.
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Matthew 12:25-28 (NIV): 25 Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be destroyed, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. 26 If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? 27 And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. 28 But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Context and Reflection:

- **Historical/Cultural Context:** Jesus addresses accusations of using demonic powers to cast out demons, using logic to refute the claims.
 - **Theological Significance:** Demonstrates the absurdity of division, emphasizing the strength found in unity.
 - **Application to 'Oneness':** This passage underlines the destructive nature of division, stressing the importance of unity and solidarity in achieving common goals and maintaining strength in a community.
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Oneness is the Goal

Pastor Keith delved into the essence of oneness, highlighting its facets like intimacy, interconnectedness, and mutual respect. He used personal anecdotes, including references to his great grandmother, to illustrate the challenges in adapting to other people's uniqueness in relationships. This part of the sermon stressed the importance of seeing each individual as a distinct and precious gift, as per Psalm 139:14 and Ephesians 2:10. However, failure to

appreciate this uniqueness can lead to ridicule and conflict, diverging from God's intention for harmonious relationships.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Personal Interpretation of Oneness:** What are the key elements that constitute oneness in a relationship for you? Do you think these elements are reflected in your current relationships?
2. **Embracing Uniqueness:** Share a time when recognizing and embracing someone's uniqueness (or your own) led to a deeper relationship. How did this experience change your perspective on relationships?
3. **Overcoming Preconceptions:** Have you ever had to let go of preconceived notions or expectations in a relationship, like Pastor Keith did with his great grandmother's influence? How did this impact your relationship?

We Begin to STRIVE Against One Another

PK addressed the detrimental effects of strife in relationships, citing James 3:16 and Proverbs 10:12. He illustrated how strife, rooted in selfishness and pride, can disrupt harmony and grace in relationships, drawing parallels to biblical examples like Abraham & Lot and Paul & Barnabas. The emphasis was on recognizing and overcoming our inherent self-centered nature to foster a nurturing environment for relationships.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Identifying Strife:** Reflect on a recent conflict or disagreement. Do you see elements of selfishness or pride in how the situation was handled? How could it have been approached differently?
2. **Learning from Biblical Examples:** Considering the examples of Abraham & Lot or Paul & Barnabas, how do you see strife manifesting in modern relationships? What lessons can we learn from these biblical stories?
3. **Personal Growth Through Conflict:** Share a personal story where conflict led to growth or a deeper understanding in a relationship. How did you navigate this conflict to reach a resolution?

Protect your AGREEMENT at all Costs!

In this segment, Pastor Keith highlighted the power of agreement in relationships, referencing Matthew 18:19-23 and Amos 3:3. He emphasized that maintaining a united front in decisions and beliefs is vital for the stability and growth of relationships. This unity, he argued, is essential not just for personal harmony but also as a defense against external and spiritual adversities.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Value of Agreement:** Can you think of a time when agreement (or lack of it) significantly impacted a relationship or a decision? What was the outcome?
2. **Challenges in Agreement:** Discuss a situation where reaching an agreement was challenging. How did you and the other party(s) work towards finding common ground?
3. **Spiritual Agreement:** How do you approach spiritual disagreements within important relationships? Share experiences where spiritual differences were either a source of conflict or an opportunity for growth.

Conclusion

PK reiterated the importance of striving for oneness in our relationships, both with God and with each other. He urged the congregation to actively work towards unity, acknowledging that while it is challenging, it is essential for spiritual growth and fulfillment. He closed with a call to embrace the journey of becoming one, both in marital relationships and in the broader context of community and faith.

Discussion Questions:

1. **Reflecting on the Sermon:** What was the most impactful takeaway for you from Pastor Jenkins' sermon on oneness? How do you plan to apply this insight in your life?
2. **The Journey to Oneness:** In what ways do you think you can actively work towards achieving oneness in your relationships and faith community?
3. **Supporting Each Other:** How can our small group support one another in our individual journeys towards oneness? Are there specific actions or commitments we can make as a group?

Prayer Requests:

[Share any personal prayer requests, and pray over the week ahead]

References:

Primary Sources:

- **"We Are One" Sermon**, East Hill Foursquare Church, 02/25/2024. Provided by Pastor Keith Jenkins.
- **Sermon Discussion Guide**, Provided by Kelly Paxton, and East Hill Church
- **The Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV)**. Biblica, Inc.™, 2011.

Secondary Sources:

- **Contextual and Theological Insights:** Derived from general biblical scholarship and commentaries relevant to the verses from Genesis, John, Psalm, Ephesians, James, Acts, Proverbs, Philippians, Matthew, and Amos.
- **General Sources on Biblical Studies:**
 - Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas Stuart. "How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth." Zondervan, 2014.
 - Keller, Timothy. "The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism." Penguin Books, 2009.

Linguistic and Grammatical Resources:

- **Strong, James.** "The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible." Thomas Nelson, 2010.
- **Mounce, William D.** "Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words." Zondervan, 2006.

Collaborative Contributions:

- **LLM Contributions:** Based on a mixture of licensed data, data created by AI models, and publicly available data, synthesized for the study of the provided biblical verses.
- **LLM Training Data:**
 - LLM Training Data. Includes a diverse range of texts (books, websites, and other publications) up to April 2023.