

BOOK SUMMARY

Meekness and Quietness of Spirit

Matthew Henry



BE UNITED IN CHRIST BOOK SUMMARY

Book Summary: Meekness and Quietness of Spirit
Copyright © 2015 by Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry

Matthew Henry's A Discourse Concerning Meekness and Quietness of Spirit was published in Cambridge, Massachusetts by William Hilliard in 1806. This public domain copy is hosted by the HathiTrust Digital Library (hathitrust.org).

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version, public domain.

*Scripture quotations marked NASB are taken from the New American Standard Bible®.
Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995
by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)*

This book summary was developed and distributed by the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry for use in your personal life and ministry. It is our desire for you to use, reproduce, and distribute this material free of charge. Our only restrictions are that you do not alter the book summary content in any way, that you do not sell the book summary content for profit, and that you attribute the work to the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry.

Please visit BeUnitedinChrist.com for other Bible-based resources.

Be United in Christ

Book Summary

Meekness and Quietness of Spirit

Matthew Henry

beunitedinchrist.com

Author

Matthew Henry (1662–1714) was born on a Welsh farm near the English border. He was educated by his father and private tutors until age eighteen. Afterwards he completed his schooling at Islington before studying law and pursuing theological studies in London. In 1687 he became minister to a congregation in Chester, a position he held until 1712. He died shortly after accepting a pastoral position in Hackney near London.

Henry is best known for his *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, originally published as *Exposition of the Old and New Testaments*. Charles Spurgeon said that every minister should read this work at least once. George Whitefield read it four times, the last time on his knees. Henry's other published works include *Directions for Daily Communion with God*, *The Communicant's Companion*, *A Method for Prayer*, and *A Discourse Concerning Meekness and Quietness of Spirit*.

Overview

Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek" (Matthew 5:5), yet meekness is not an attribute that sinners often value or pursue. Matthew Henry provides a valuable resource about this virtue based upon Peter's instruction to pursue "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4b). Henry develops his work in three parts. First, he defines what a meek and quiet spirit is so that his audience will understand it. Then he praises its excellence so that they will value it. Finally, he provides practical guidance so that his readers may successfully develop it. Only peaceful people produce peaceful communities. Henry's *Meekness and Quietness of Spirit* provides insightful guidance to pacify hearts and thereby pacify relationships.

Introduction

Peter's appeal for a meek and quiet spirit is contained in his address to wives (1 Peter 3:1–6). Henry, however, applies it more generally to all believers, just as Peter himself extended his direction for all Christians to be "humble in spirit" and "harmonious" (1 Peter 3:8). Henry bases his message on 1 Peter 3:4 where the apostle notes the pleasure God finds in a heart clothed in a meek and quiet spirit.

The gracious adornment of a meek and quiet spirit has important implications not only for individuals but also for communities. Henry makes the important observation that holiness and excellent behavior do not occur in isolation but in community (1 Peter 1:15; 2:11). Souls reside in societies, and true righteousness is expressed and exposed through one's relationships. True character is revealed in community. Only by acquiring a meek and quiet spirit can Christians ever Be United in Christ.

Defining a Meek and Quiet Spirit

Henry defines meekness as having a tranquil soul. By this he means that souls hardened by sin are softened by grace to respond more gently to other persons and circumstances. In relation to God, meek spirits trust His Word and submit to His will, even when it is puzzling or painful to do so. In relation to others, meek spirits control their tempers even when others do not. The Holy Spirit produces the sweet fruit of gentleness that enables believers to be gracious in all circumstances (Galatians 5:22). Christians are controlled by reason, not emotion. In conflict they humble their hearts and bridle their tongues, knowing that “a soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).

A soul yielded to God remains peaceful, even when provoked. It remains calm like the sky free from storms, like the sea free from waves, like the land free from battles, and like a child free from want. A meek spirit does not succumb to wrath, malice, or bitterness. A quiet spirit refuses to meditate on offenses and guards against resentful thoughts. A humble heart remains anchored in God while others are tossed about by the waves of adversity.

Valuing a Meek and Quiet Spirit

Having defined meekness and quietness, the author then praises these qualities. A meek and quiet spirit is praiseworthy, pleasant, profitable, and prepares one for any occasion.

The Praiseworthiness of a Meek and Quiet Spirit

A meek and quiet spirit is praiseworthy because it exhibits:

Triumph. The person who masters his soul has achieved a greater victory than any military conqueror. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Proverbs 16:32).

Beauty. The elements and emotions of a peaceful soul are balanced and at peace, and this inner harmony is an essential element and expression of true inner beauty.

Character. Peter refers to meekness as an adornment of the soul. It validates salvation, evidences sanctification, and confirms God’s promises. Physical decorations fade, but this inner ornamentation endures forever.

Courage. The soul that responds graciously when insulted resembles Jesus, “who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:23).

Emulation. Christians imitate the saints of old, and God Himself, with a meek and quiet spirit.

The Pleasantness of a Meek and Quiet Spirit

The meek person is content in all circumstances because he encounters trials with calmness and poise. His friendships are delightful because they are unburdened by unrealistic demands and undisturbed by divisiveness. The humble enjoy God, which makes each day restful, and none of these blessings can be taken away because they are independent of circumstances. In short, the humble are happy because their relationships are healthy, and no enemy can rob them of their happiness.

The Profitability of a Meek and Quiet Spirit

God promises to bless the humble (Matthew 5:5), and because they hear and obey God's Word the humble know how to steward their blessings. Meek and quiet spirits manage their personal and financial resources well. In short, the humble tend to handle their present and future blessings well.

The Preparedness of a Meek and Quiet Spirit

Humble souls are ready for any duty, relationship, or circumstance. No assignment is too menial for the meek, which frees them to enjoy any task. No relationship is too challenging for the gentle, so the self-composed can keep any company. No situation is too chaotic for the quiet, for Christ steadies them. In short, the humble are prepared for anything and everything.

Developing a Meek and Quiet Spirit

Encouragements to Pursue Meekness

The credits, comforts, profits, and preparations of a meek and quiet spirit should prompt God's children to pursue it, yet sadly few do. Those who profess Christ rarely possess Christ's peace. Believers are often anxious, discontent, and quarrelsome; they fret, fuss, and fight just like the world. Those in authority are often harsh. Those under authority are often insubordinate. Peers are often combative. These broken relationships demonstrate the need for a meek and quiet spirit.

Scripture provides specific motivation for Christ's disciples to pursue humility. The Bible commands meekness (Zephaniah 2:3; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:11), even with difficult people (Matthew 5:46; Titus 3:2). God's Word also commends many role models of meekness such as Abraham, Moses, David, and Paul. Jesus Himself is the perfect example, humbly leaving Heaven (Philippians 2:5–8) to go like a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7). How can sheep not follow their Good Shepherd's example?

Occasions When Meekness Is Especially Difficult

Matthew Henry discusses five situations where meekness requires more effort.

Giving correction. Those giving correction must do so gently and should humbly correct their own shortcomings first (Matthew 7:4–5). Only the meek can safely correct others because only they are mindful of their own need for correction, forgiveness, and grace.

Receiving correction. Those receiving correction must make sure to do so meekly and humbly. Every sinner profits from correction (Proverbs 12:1), but few take the distasteful medicine gratefully. God disciplines His children for their good (Hebrews 12:4–11), and those being disciplined should receive their Father’s rebuke quietly, even when it is communicated through their peers or subordinates.

Addressing opposition. Church leaders must face opposition firmly but gently. As Paul instructed Timothy, “The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves” (2 Timothy 2:24–25a).

Proclaiming Christ. Christians must cling to the truth without belittling those who do not know the truth. Evangelists must be gracious even with those who disagree, relying on the Holy Spirit to convict and convert the souls of men.

Suffering for Christ. When those who proclaim Christ suffer for Christ they must do so like Christ, meekly and quietly.

General Truths Leading to a Meek and Quiet Spirit

Henry suggests six principles that foster a meek and quiet spirit. The first is that personal peace and contentment come through self-control. “He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls” (Proverbs 25:28). Second, sinners must be realistic that they will repeatedly irritate and hurt each other. They must therefore be patient and forgiving with others just as God is patient and forgiving with them.

Third, God places trials and trying persons in people’s lives to sanctify them. Unpleasant circumstances and people are the instruments God uses to conform His children into the image of His Son. The fourth principle is closely related. No matter how painful the situation, “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). God uses trying circumstances and people to transform His children.

Fifth, hasty reactions are usually regrettable. It is better to pause and pray in order to respond rightly. Finally, a meek and quiet spirit pleases God: “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Peter 5:5; cf. Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6). This is the greatest encouragement and warning of all.

Steps Leading to a Meek and Quiet Spirit

Henry follows the preceding general principles with nine particular directions:

1. Do not love the world, for this leads to discontentment, anxiety, and conflict.
2. Continually repent of sin, for those who are forgiven often will forgive often.
3. Be slow to anger and avoid anger-provoking situations.
4. Be slow to respond when provoked, for hasty reactions are dangerous.
5. Pray for God to grant and sustain a meek and quiet spirit.
6. Evaluate progress towards meekness regularly.
7. Associate with quiet and humble people, for people tend to imitate their companions.
8. Meditate on the cross of Christ.
9. Meditate on death, for when life ends all struggles end.

Appraisal

C. S. Lewis likened ethics to a convoy of ships. Not only must the boats move as a group towards the same destination, but every individual ship must be in good working order to keep in file with the fleet. Problems within ships produce collisions between ships, so every ship must be shipshape. Matthew Henry's *Meekness and Quietness of Spirit* seeks not only to reconcile conflicts but to prevent them. He confronts readers with the duty and beauty of God's commands for humility and then applies Biblical wisdom to produce it in God's people.

If Christians are to enjoy the unity God intends they must develop the character God commands. Every believer must prayerfully develop and maintain "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:4b). Henry's Biblical, practical book is a largely forgotten but immensely helpful resource to help Christians Be United in Christ.

Connection to Be United in Christ

Pride is the source of sin. The bitter fruit of pride is conflict. Proud people are conflicted within themselves and between themselves. Sadly, pride today is encouraged rather than discouraged, and meekness is looked down upon rather than pursued. A meek and quiet spirit is viewed as a weakness to overcome rather than a virtue to pursue. But the Bible commends and commands this Christlike characteristic, and Matthew Henry's book provides practical guidance to pursue it. As individuals become more peaceful their communities will become more peaceful. The quest for meekness and quietness of spirit is thus indispensable if Christians are to Be United in Christ.

Key Bible Passages (NASB)

“But the humble will inherit the land
And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity.” **(Psalm 37:11)**

“I said, ‘I will guard my ways
That I may not sin with my tongue;
I will guard my mouth as with a muzzle
While the wicked are in my presence.’” **(Psalm 39:1)**

“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city.” **(Proverbs 16:32)**

“Do not associate with a man given to anger;
Or go with a hot-tempered man,
Or you will learn his ways
And find a snare for yourself.” **(Proverbs 22:24–25)**

“Seek righteousness, seek humility.” **(Zephaniah 2:3b)**

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.” **(Matthew 5:5)**

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.” **(Romans 8:28)**

“Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent!” **(2 Corinthians 10:1)**

“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.” **(Galatians 6:1)**

“So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.” **(Colossians 3:12–15)**

“But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more, and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you.” **(1 Thessalonians 4:10b–11)**

“But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.” **(1 Timothy 6:11)**

“Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men.” **(Titus 3:1–2)**

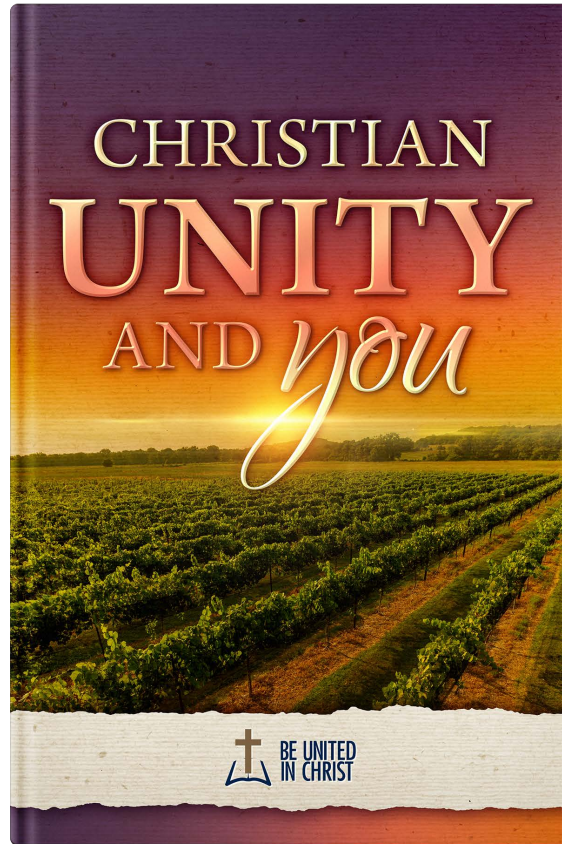
“But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” **(James 1:19b–20)**

“Your adornment must not be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.” **(1 Peter 3:3–4)**

YOU CAN LOVE LIKE JESUS.

Imagine how the world could be transformed if Christians loved each other the way Jesus asked them to. Jesus' life is the greatest example of love that the world has ever seen. He told His disciples to love one another as He loved them. When believers live in visible love and unity as Christ lived—unity based on Biblical truth—we will begin to experience a taste of what Heaven will be like.

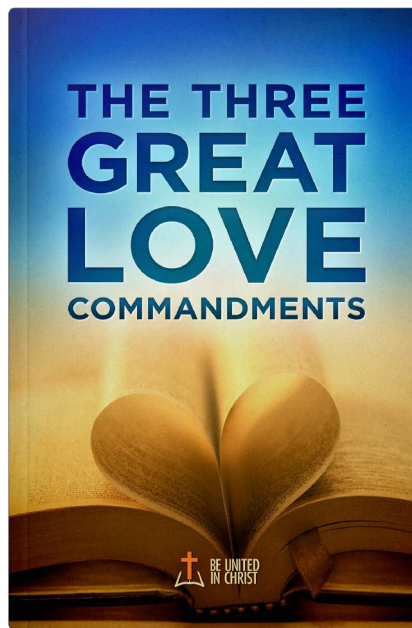
Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.



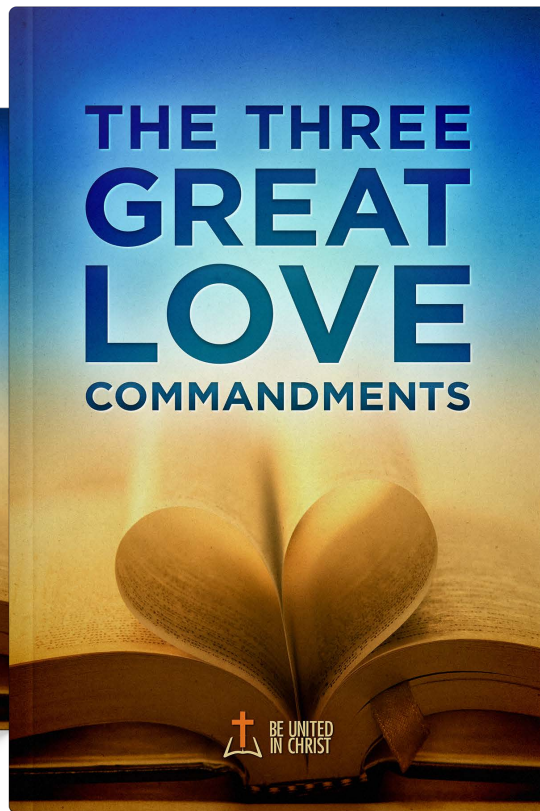
A THIRD GREAT LOVE COMMANDMENT.

Within every human heart is the desire to be loved and to show love. It is the mark of God on our lives—a God who embodies love, who IS love, according to the Bible. In His Word, God gives us three great commandments, rules for operating in love with Him, with others, and with our Christian family. These commands should provide the foundation for everything we say and do.

Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.



Basic Edition



Deluxe Edition



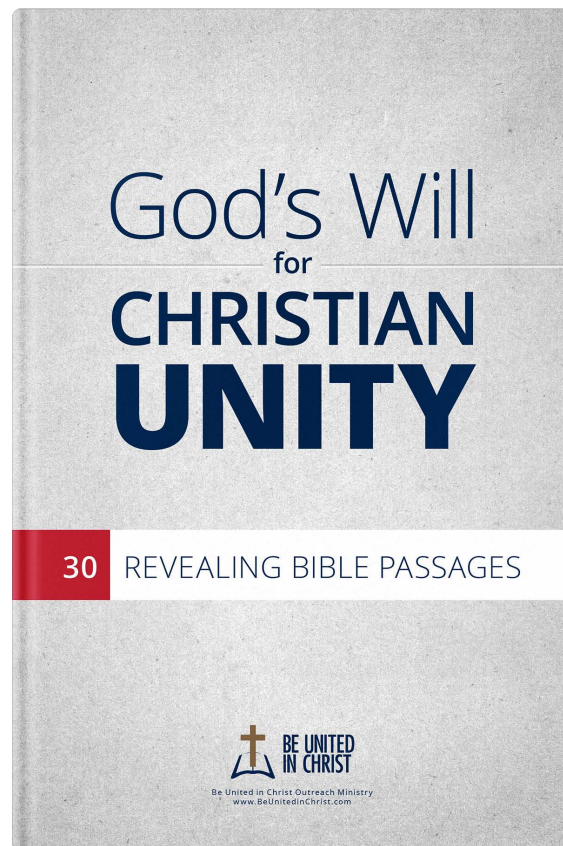
**BE UNITED
IN CHRIST**

www.beunitedinchrist.com

BELIEVE IN GOD? READY TO DO HIS WILL?

The theme of Christian unity is found throughout the Bible. *God's Will for Christian Unity* clearly reveals, in thirty Bible passages, our Lord's passion and instruction on the meaning, importance, and manifestation of Christian unity. Understanding this collection of Bible passages will help you to know how you should think, feel, and act in relation to other believers in accordance with God's will.

Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.



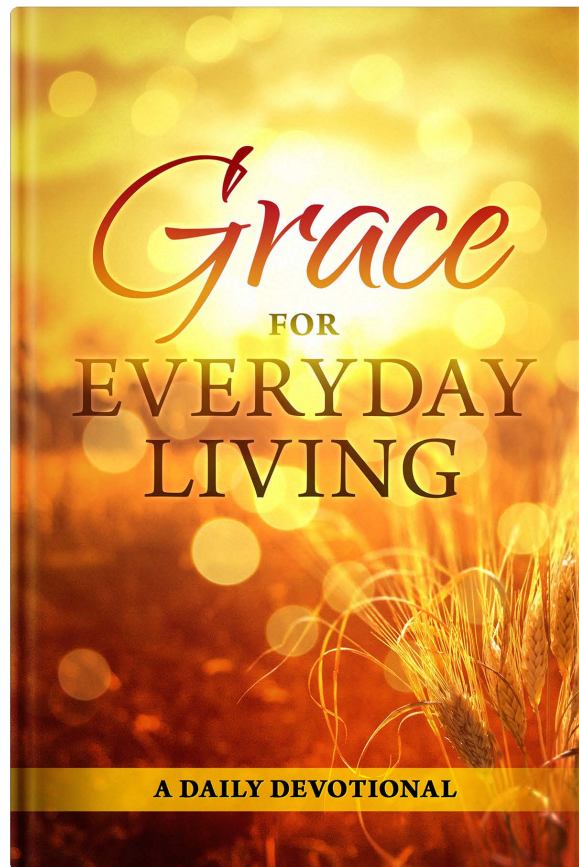
**BE UNITED
IN CHRIST**

www.beunitedinchrist.com

WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH GOD'S GRACE?

God sees you. He loves you. And He wants you to experience a full and blessed life. In the 365-day devotional, *Grace for Everyday Living*, some of Christianity's most respected voices cast light on topics such as how to maintain a peaceful spirit, love others, and freely enjoy God's grace and mercy. Your life will be transformed as you discover the excitement of pleasing God and obeying His Word.

Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.



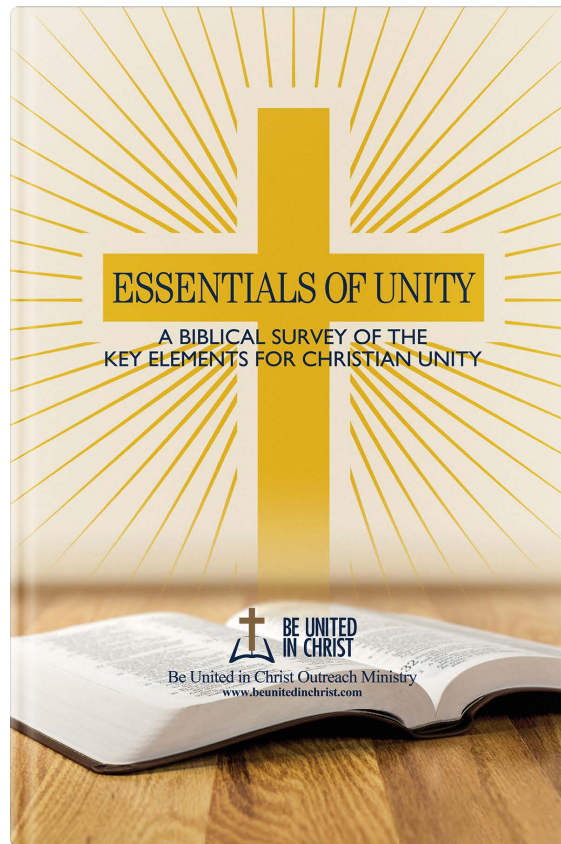
**BE UNITED
IN CHRIST**

www.beunitedinchrist.com

UNITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

The Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry has written *Essentials of Unity* from a great sense of conviction ... to better understand God's will for the unity of His people, how He achieves it, and what He asks of each of us in preserving it. *Essentials of Unity* explains significant Biblical themes for understanding Christian unity and how these Biblical themes connect to one another in the storyline of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.



**BE UNITED
IN CHRIST**

www.beunitedinchrist.com

FEEL THE PASSION OF CHRIST FOR UNITY.

In John 17:20–23, Jesus prayed for His disciples to be one ... united with Him and each other. In His prayer, we hear the passion of Jesus Christ for the union of His people to God and to one another. *One: The Passion and Prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ* was written to help God's people understand the nature of this unity as well as how it is to be accomplished in the body of Christ.

Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.

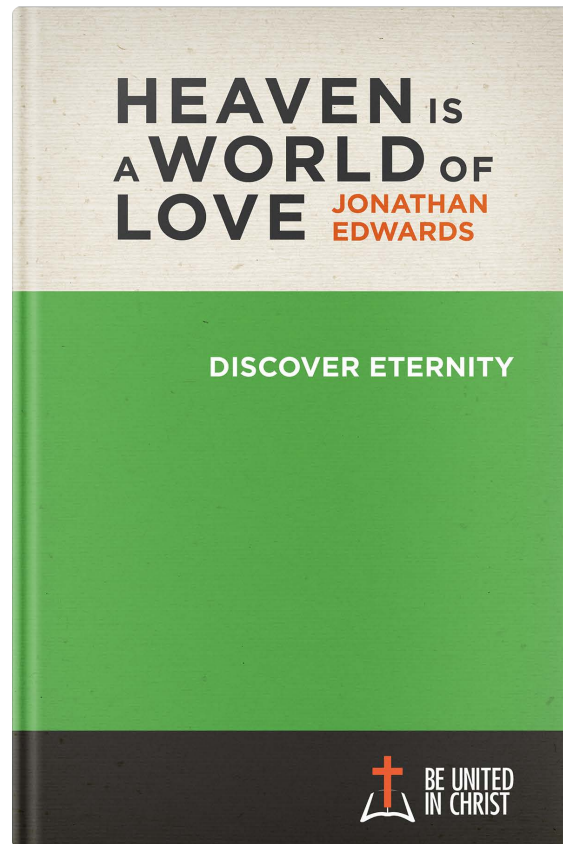


www.beunitedinchrist.com

HOW WILL YOU SPEND ETERNITY?

In the history of Christianity, no one has written as vividly on the subjects of Heaven and Hell as Jonathan Edwards. *Heaven Is a World of Love* combines Edwards' most powerful sermons and presents them in modern-day language. Be encouraged with the hope of Heaven, sobered by the horrors of Hell, and assured that you can spend eternity enjoying God's love.

Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.



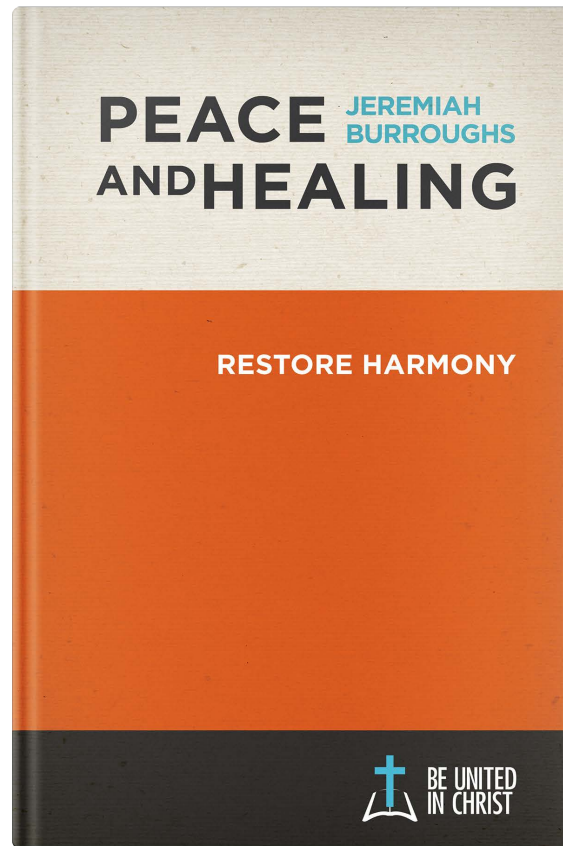
**BE UNITED
IN CHRIST**

www.beunitedinchrist.com

BRING HARMONY TO YOUR CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

What if your church could be conflict-free? Drawn from the wisdom of respected Puritan preacher Jeremiah Burroughs, *Peace and Healing* reveals the sources and dangers of conflict within God's family and recommends God's solutions. Get to the root of disunity and bring love and harmony to the most important relationships in your life.

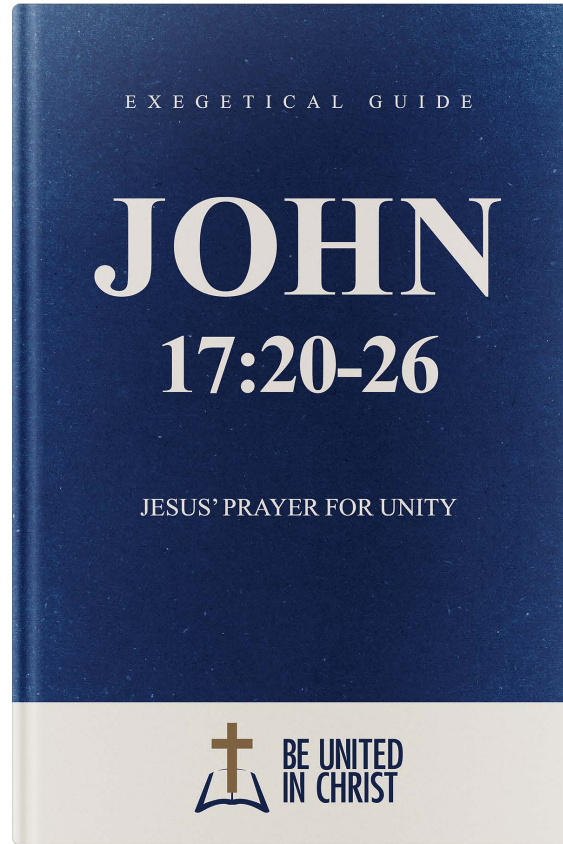
Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.



LEARN WHAT JESUS PRAYED FOR YOU.

In the hours just before He was crucified, Jesus prayed for you. But what did He pray? And why does it matter? With the *John 17:20–26* Exegetical Guide, you will see through Jesus' eyes and be moved by what He prayed for you at this critical time. You will find where you belong. And your desire to draw closer to God and to other believers will grow as you read this inspiring guide.

Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.

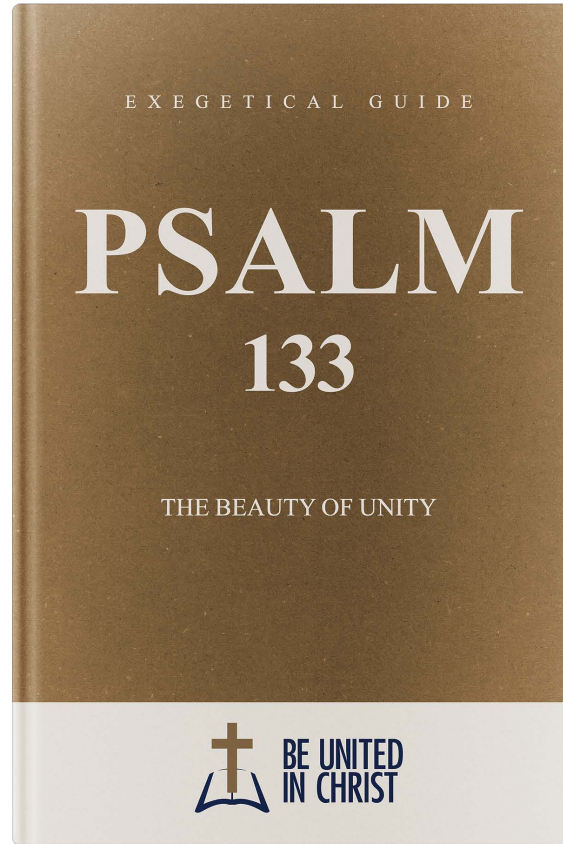


www.beunitedinchrist.com

DEVELOP A RICH CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY.

Blessing. Peace. Eternal life. How can you experience them for yourself? Explore *Psalm 133* and learn King David's song of the goodness and pleasantness of God's children living in harmony. You will discover that unity is not only God's desire but also His design to lead you into the satisfying life He desires for you to experience.

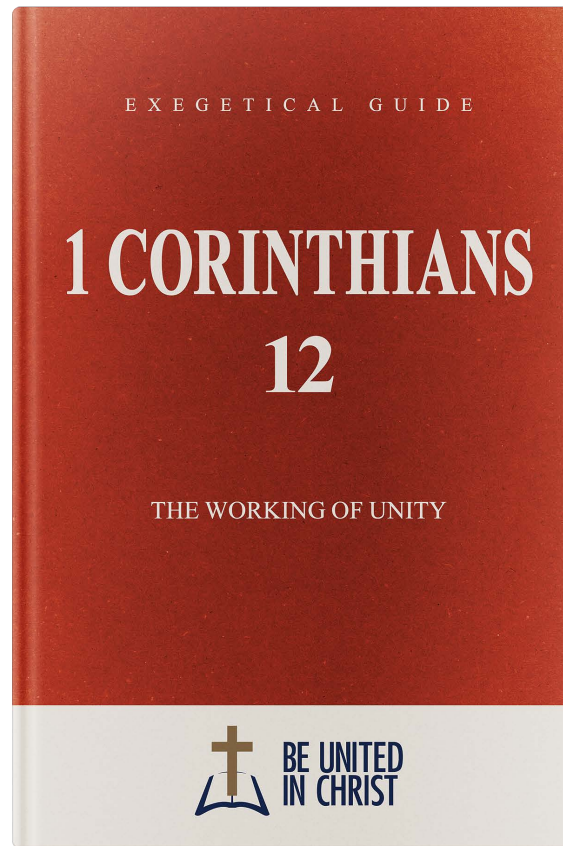
Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.



UNCOVER YOUR PURPOSE IN GOD'S PLAN.

All of us want to belong, to feel connected, to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. For the Christian, these desires find their fulfillment in Christ and in the life He has designed for His church. The *1 Corinthians 12* Exegetical Guide will show you how God intends to fulfill your deep need to belong. You have a reserved position in His plan. You have a unique place, and you have a vital role.

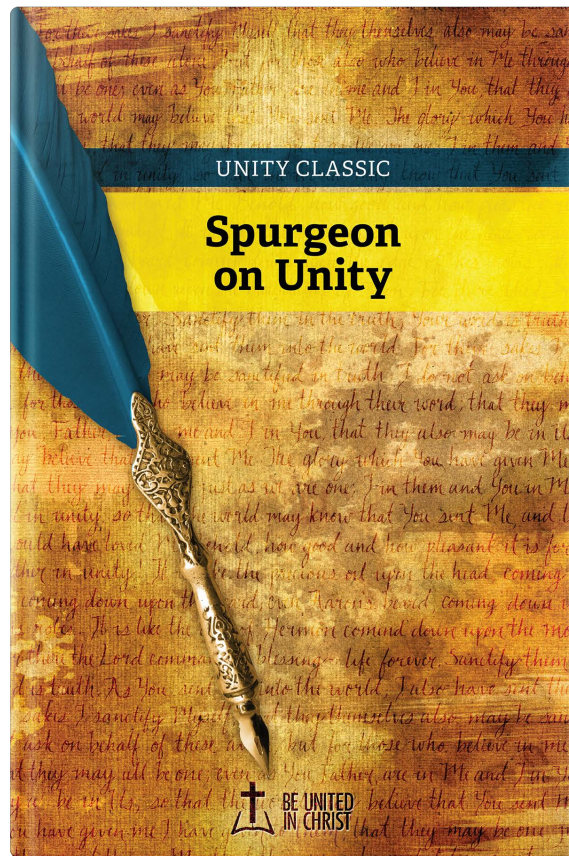
Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.



ENJOY THE LIFE CHRIST INTENDS FOR YOU.

The most prominent preacher of the 19th century, Charles Spurgeon pastored the world's largest mega-church and spoke to millions. Considered one of the greatest preachers in church history, his messages are as inspiring today as when they were first preached. *Spurgeon On Unity* lets you slip into the pew of this "Prince of Preachers" as he applies God's Word to one of your greatest needs.

Our Premium Collection of books may be purchased from the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry at www.beunitedinchrist.com.



**BE UNITED
IN CHRIST**

www.beunitedinchrist.com

JOIN THE BE UNITED IN CHRIST OUTREACH MINISTRY

We encourage you to reproduce, distribute, and share the materials of the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry and to unite with other brothers and sisters in Christ in the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry.

This book summary was developed and distributed by the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry for use in your personal life and ministry. It is our desire for you to use, reproduce, and distribute this material free of charge. Our only restrictions are that you do not alter the book summary content in any way, that you do not sell the book summary content for profit, and that you attribute the work to the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry.

The desire of the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry is to glorify our Lord by helping our brothers and sisters in Christ to have a better understanding of our Lord's passion and prayer for His people to "Be United in Christ."

Please join us in the Be United in Christ Outreach Ministry as we await the glorious return of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



www.beunitedinchrist.com