

## BOOK SUMMARY

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# The Life of God in the Soul of Man

Henry Scougal

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# BE UNITED IN CHRIST BOOK SUMMARY

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# Be United in Christ

Book Summary

*The Life of God in the Soul of Man*

Henry Scougal

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## Author

Henry Scougal (1650–1678) was the second son of Patrick Scougal, the Bishop of Aberdeen. Henry entered the University of Aberdeen at age 15 and became Professor of Philosophy at age 19. After four years teaching he spent a year pastoring in a nearby village before becoming Professor of Divinity at King’s College in Aberdeen. He held this position five years before dying of tuberculosis at age 27.

Scougal is best known for *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*. This book was originally a letter of spiritual counsel to a friend, but Scougal gave permission for its publication. It was a favorite of John Newton’s and played a key role in George Whitefield’s conversion. The great revivalist recorded that, “He [Charles Wesley] let me have another book, entitled—*The Life of God in the Soul of Man*; and though I had fasted, watched, and prayed, and received the sacrament so long, yet I never knew what true religion was ‘till God sent me this excellent treatise.’”<sup>1</sup>

Scougal’s treatment of true religion remains relevant and impactful today. In fact, John Piper remarked, “There are some books whose vision is so deep and clear that truth rings from the page like a large bell, perfectly obvious but rare and precious. They unfold the heart of man and God with such forceful illumination that the truth is not shown to my mind but created in my heart.... So it went as I grazed in the green pasture of this remarkable book.”<sup>2</sup>

## Overview

*The Life of God in the Soul of Man* addresses the questions what is true religion, and why and how should one grow in it? Scougal’s timeless answers apply to Christians of every denomination and tradition. The book is divided into three parts.

Part I clarifies “the nature and properties of religion.” True religion does not lie in mere established rules, activities, or emotions. Rather, it is the life of God in the soul of man. True religion is a divine life where the root of faith bears fruit through the four branches of loving God, loving others, purity, and humility. Scougal first explains these essential elements of religion then displays them in the life of Christ.

Part II reflects on “the excellency and advantages” of true religion in order to motivate believers to grow in its virtues. Scougal addresses each of the four branches in turn, giving special preference to the priority of loving God.

Part III takes a more practical turn. In this final section, Scougal offers encouragement to live the divine life and gives practical directions for loving God, loving others, and becoming more pure and humble. Each section concludes with a prayer and petition for the life of God to be more completely and consistently lived out in the souls of men.

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Philip, *The Life and Times of Reverend George Whitefield, M. A.* (New York, NY: D. Appleton & Co., 1838), 26.

<sup>2</sup> John Piper, *The Pleasures of God* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 1991), 1–2. In his introduction, Piper attributes the inspiration for his book to Scougal.

## **Part I – The Divine Life**

### **False Religion**

In Part I Scougal defines and describes what true religion is. First, however, he addresses three common misconceptions to clarify what true religion is not. “I cannot speak of religion, but I must lament [grieve], that among so many pretenders to it, so few understand what it means.”<sup>3</sup> There are three false premises about religion that can lead to false conclusions about religious piety [devotion].

Some mistake their denomination or Christian tradition with religion. “All the account they can give of their religion is, that they are of this or the other persuasion, and have joined themselves to one of those many sects whereunto Christendom is most unhappily divided.”

Others imagine that external actions are central and therefore concentrate on “a constant course of external duties, and a model of performances.” So long as they get along with their neighbors, regularly attend church and pray, and occasionally help the poor, they believe themselves holy.

Still others feel that feelings are the essential element in religion. They emphasize “rapturous heats [emotions] and ecstatic devotion.” They pray with emotion, long for Heaven, and draw confidence from their loving feelings for God. They mistake emotion for true devotion.

Scougal cautions that true religion does not lie in religious beliefs, activities, or experiences. They are undeniable parts of religion but must not be mistaken for the heart or the whole. “Thus are these things which have any resemblance of piety [religious devotion], and at the best are but means of obtaining it, or particular exercise of it, frequently mistaken for the whole religion.”

Worse still, some sins are even excused under the name of religion.

There are too many Christians who would consecrate [justify] their vices, and hallow [sanctify] their corrupt affections; whose rugged humor, and sullen pride, must pass for Christian severity [strictness]; whose fierce wrath, and bitter rage against their enemies, must be called holy zeal; whose petulancy [rudeness] towards their superiors, or rebellion against their governors, must have the name of Christian courage and resolution.

Christians must not confuse disdain for holiness, righteous anger for righteousness, or insubordination for conviction. Nor can they locate the essence of religion in the understanding, the will, or the emotions—in traditionalism, activism, or emotionalism. These are important aspects of religion, “but certainly religion is quite another thing; and they who are acquainted with it, will entertain far different thoughts, and disdain all those shadows and false imitations of it.”

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<sup>3</sup> Henry Scougal, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* (Boston, MA: Nichols and Noyes, 1868), 4. The text for this summary is taken from the public domain version hosted by the HathiTrust Digital Library ([hathitrust.org](http://hathitrust.org)).

## **True Religion**

Having clarified what religion is not, Scougal defines what it is. “True religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul; or, in the apostle’s phrase, it is Christ formed within us. Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expressed, than by calling it a divine life.” Scougal develops his definition by explaining these terms, “showing first how it is called a life, and then how it is termed divine.”

“I choose to express it by the name of life; first, because of its permanency and stability.” Religion occurs in fits and starts “whereas the motions of holy souls are constant and regular, proceeding from a permanent and lively principle.” Christians may be inconsistent but they are nonetheless persistent. They endure because they are spiritually alive; they have been born again and have the life of God within them.

This leads to Scougal’s second point. “Again, religion may be defined by the name of life, because it is an inward, free, and self-moving principle.” Those indwelt by God do not require external motivations because they are internally “inclined to that which is good, and delight in the performance of it.”

The love which a pious [externally religious] man bears to God and goodness, is not so much by virtue of a command enjoining [directing] him so to do, as by a new nature instructing and prompting him to it; nor does he pay his devotions as an unavoidable tribute, only to appease [pacify] the divine justice, or quiet his clamorous [noisy] conscience; but those religious exercises are the proper emanations [outflowings] of the divine life, the natural employments of the new-born soul.

Christ said that His food was to do God’s will (John 4:34), and Christians likewise have an appetite for the things of God. One who is religious and good from external motivations alone “can no more be accounted a religious person, than a puppet can be called a man.” However, true religion is an enduring and compelling inward principle and is therefore rightly called a life.

Scougal next offers two reasons why he terms true religion a divine life.

And so it may be called, not only in regard to its fountain and original [source], having God for its author, and being wrought [produced] in the souls of men by the power of His Holy Spirit; but also in regard of its nature, religion being a resemblance of the divine perfections, the image of the Almighty shining in the soul of man: nay, it is a real participation of His nature; it is a beam of the eternal light, a drop of that infinite ocean of goodness; and they who are endued [endowed] with it, may be said to have God dwelling in their souls and Christ formed within them.

In other words, Christians have a new life created in them by God—they are born again—and the new life they live is a participation in the life of God Himself who indwells and transforms them.

Those who do not live the divine life are controlled by the natural life, that is “self-love issuing forth and spreading itself into as many branches as men have several appetites and inclinations.” God gives creatures a drive for self-preservation, and they use their senses to seek pleasure and avoid pain. These inclinations are not wrong. However, humans were made for more than this, and must submit the natural life to the divine life.

## **The Divine Life Explained**

After identifying true religion as the divine life and contrasting it with the natural life, Scougal considers the essential aspects of “that life which is hid with Christ in God.”

As the animal life consisteth in that narrow and confined love which is terminated on a man’s self, and in his propension [tendency] towards those things that are pleasing to nature; so the divine life stands in a universal and unbounded affection, and in the mastery over our natural inclinations, that they may never be able to betray us to those things which we know to be blamable. The root of the divine life is faith; the chief branches are, love to God, charity to man, purity and humility.

Scougal describes the Christian life as a root that bears fruit in four branches. Because these categories are critical to the rest of his discussion, he defines what he means by each term.

Faith has the same place in the divine life which sense has in the natural, being indeed nothing else but a kind of sense, or feeling persuasion of spiritual things. It extends itself unto all divine truths: but, in our lapsed [fallen] estate, it has a peculiar relation to the declarations of God’s mercy and reconcilableness to sinners through a Mediator; and therefore, receiving its denomination [name] from that principal object, is ordinarily termed faith in Jesus Christ.

The love of God is a delightful and affectionate sense of the divine perfections, which makes the soul resign and sacrifice itself wholly unto Him, desiring above all things to please Him, and delighting in nothing so much as in fellowship and communion with Him, and being ready to do or suffer anything for His sake, or at His pleasure.

A soul thus possessed with divine love, must ... be enlarged towards all mankind in a sincere and unbounded affection, because of the relation they have to God, being His creatures, and having something of His image stamped upon them. And this is that charity I named as the second branch of religion, and under which all the parts of justice, all the duties we owe to our neighbor, are eminently [notably] comprehended.

By purity, I understand a due abstractedness [separation] from the body, and mastery over the inferior appetites; or such a temper and disposition [state] of mind, as makes a man despise, and abstain from all pleasures and delights of sense or fancy which are sinful in themselves or tend to extinguish or lessen our relish [enjoyment] of more divine and intellectual pleasures; which does also infer a resoluteness [resolution] to undergo all those hardships he may meet within the performance of his duty. So that not only chastity [sexual purity] and temperance [self-control], but also Christian courage and magnanimity [honor] may come under this head.

Humility imports a deep sense of our own weakness, with a hearty and affectionate acknowledgment of our owing all that we are to the divine bounty [generosity]; which is always accompanied with a profound submission to the will of God, and great deadness towards the glory of the world, and applause of men.

To sum up, true religion is a divine life. It is a life because it is an enduring, active principle inside a renewed soul. It is divine because God is the author of and agent in this life. This divine life is expressed “in a universal and unbounded affection” for God and those made in His image and “in the mastery over our natural inclinations.” Faith, the firm belief in divine truths, is the root of the divine life. This root bears fruit in four principal branches: love of God, love of neighbor, purity, and humility. This trusting, devoted, loving, pure, and humble life is the life of God in the soul of man.



## **The Divine Life Modeled**

Words alone cannot express the mysteries of the divine life. “When we have said all that we can, the secret mysteries of a new nature and divine life can never be sufficiently expressed; language and words cannot reach them.” The divine life is better understood by looking at those who live it, especially Christ. Jesus is the perfect model of a divinely loving, holy, and humble life.

Jesus’ love for God is evident in His dedication to performing God’s will, His willingness to sacrifice and suffer, and His life of prayerful communion with His Father. Jesus’ love for others is seen in His mercy to those in need, His accessibility to all who sought Him, and His meek response to those who harmed Him.

Christ modeled purity in His disregard for worldly comforts such as a home or a wife. He gladly worked miracles to bless others but not to relieve His own hunger or thirst. Although He could have lived as a rich man among the wealthy He lived simply among simple people. Christ was also perfectly humble. “He never made use of His miraculous power for vanity or ostentation [show],” nor did He assert His heavenly authority over earthly rulers. When it was necessary for His deeds to be public, He gave all the glory to God.

## **A Prayer**

Scougal closes each of his three sections with a prayer. The first is quoted here to display both the heart of the author and the manner in which he intended his work to be read.

Infinite and eternal Majesty, author and fountain of being and blessedness, how little do we poor sinful creatures know of Thee, or the way to serve and please Thee! We talk of religion, and pretend unto it; but alas! How few are there that know and consider what it means! How easily do we mistake the affections of our nature, and the issues of self-love for those divine graces which alone can render us acceptable in Thy sight! It may justly grieve me, to consider, that I should have wandered so long, and contented myself so often with vain shadows and false images of piety [holiness] and religion: yet I cannot but acknowledge and adore Thy goodness, who hast been pleased in some measure to open mine eyes, and let me see what it is at which I ought to aim. I rejoice to consider what mighty improvements my nature is capable of, and what a divine temper [disposition] of spirit does shine in those whom Thou art pleased to choose, and causest to approach unto Thee. Blessed be Thine infinite mercy, who sent Thine own Son to dwell among men, and to instruct them by His example as well as His laws, giving them a perfect pattern of what they ought to be. Oh, that the holy life of the blessed Jesus may be always in my thoughts, and before mine eyes, till I receive a deep sense and impression of those excellent graces that shined so eminently [notably] in Him; and let me never cease my endeavors [efforts], till that new and divine nature prevail in my soul and Christ be formed within me.



## **Part II – Why Live the Divine Life**

In his second section, Scougal highlights the nobility and the benefits of each of the four branches of religion in order to motivate his reader to pursue the divine life he has just defined and described. “And now, my dear friend, having discovered the nature of true religion, before I proceed any further, it will not perhaps be unfit to fix our meditations a little on the excellency and advantages of it; that we may be excited to the more vigorous and diligent prosecution [pursuit] of those methods whereby we may attain so great a felicity [happiness].”

### **Loving God**

Loving God is the most excellent and advantageous branch of faith. What a person loves demonstrates and determines who that person is, so it is critical to love God above all else.

Love is that powerful and prevalent [dominant] passion, by which all the faculties [abilities] and inclinations of the soul are determined, and on which both its perfection and happiness depend. The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love. He who loveth mean [lowly] and sordid [foul] things, does thereby become base and vile; but a noble and well-placed affection, does advance and improve the spirit into a conformity with the perfections which it loves.

As one adores God one becomes like God. “The true way to improve and ennoble [dignify] our souls, is, by fixing our love on the divine perfections, that we may have them always before us, and derive [obtain] an impression of them on ourselves, and beholding with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory.”

Loving God is also the greatest source of happiness. God is perfect, perfectly loving, and permanently present, so loving God brings joy with no sorrow. The soul will only be satisfied when it yields itself entirely and without reservation to its maker and redeemer.

Never does a soul know what solid joy and substantial pleasure is, till, once being weary of itself, it renounces all property, gives itself up to the author of its being, and feels itself become a hallowed [exalted] and devoted thing; and can say, from an inward sense and feeling, “My beloved is mine (I account all His interest mine own) and I am His: I am content to be anything for Him, and care not for myself, but that I may serve Him.”

### **Loving Others**

The excellence of loving others is universally acknowledged, “for what can be more noble and generous than a heart enlarged to embrace the whole world, whose wishes and designs are leveled at the good and welfare of the universe, which considereth every man’s interest as its own.” The person who freely blesses others benefits personally as well. “Had I my choice of all things that may tend to my present felicity [happiness], I would pitch upon this to have my heart possessed with the greatest kindness and affection towards all men in the world.” Ironically, selflessly loving others is one of the most selfishly beneficial things one can do. “Certainly, next to the love and enjoyment of God, that ardent [passionate] charity and affection wherewith blessed souls do embrace one another, is justly to be reckoned as the greatest felicity [happiness] of those regions above: and did it universally prevail in the world, it would anticipate that blessedness, and make us taste of the joys of Heaven upon earth.”

## **Purity**

Scougal defines purity as contempt [disdain] for fleshly pleasures and resolve to do one's duty no matter the cost. This is a noble virtue that dignifies those who pursue it. "There is no slavery so base [lowly], as that whereby a man becomes a drudge [slave] to his own lusts; nor any victory so glorious, as that which is obtained over them." Purity is also advantageous, because "whatsoever defiles the soul disturbs it too; all impure delights have a sting in them, and leave smart [pain] and trouble behind them." Purity does involve self-denial and sacrifice, but those who love God are happy to abstain and suffer for His sake. "As for the hardships they meet with, they rejoice in them, as opportunities to exercise and testify their affection: and since they are able to do so little for God, they are glad of the honor to suffer for Him."

## **Humility**

"The last branch of religion is humility; and however to vulgar and carnal eyes this may appear an abject, base, and despicable quality, yet really the soul of man is not capable of a higher and more noble endowment." It is the result of being acquainted with great things and consequently being unimpressed with trifles such as riches, beauty, and strength. And humility also is advantageous, for the humble soul is a tranquil soul, undisturbed by others and able to relate rightly, happily with God.

## **Part III – How to Live the Divine Life**

In Part I, Scougal defined the divine life. In Part II, he provided motivations to live the divine life. Now in Part III, he provides specific directions how to live the divine life. First, however, Scougal offers some hope and a caution.

Some Christians feel that they are too sinful and weak to live as God intends. For such discouraged souls, Scougal provides four encouragements. First and foremost is God Himself, whose character, promises, and past faithfulness reassure those who seek Him.

God has a tender regard unto the souls of men, and is infinitely willing to promote their welfare. He has condescended to [taken consideration of] our weakness, and declared with an oath, that He has no pleasure in our destruction. There is no such thing as despite or envy lodged in the bosom of that ever blessed being, whose name and nature is love. He created us at first in a happy condition; and now, when we are fallen from it, He has laid help upon one that is mighty to save, has committed the care of our souls to no meaner [less a] person than the eternal Son of His love. It is He that is the Captain of our salvation; and what enemies can be too strong for us, when we are fighting under His banner?

Second, God sends the Holy Spirit to move His people towards Him. Third, God made man in His image to walk with Him in humility, holiness, and love. Finally, no one has to live the Christian life alone, for the church on earth and angels in Heaven provide strength and support. "Away then with all perplexing fears and desponding [despairing] thoughts."

Though God provides essential assistance, Christians must not be passive in the divine life. God clearly commands believers to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). "We must not expect that this whole work should be done without any concurring endeavors of our own: we must not lie loitering in the ditch, and wait till Omnipotence pull us from thence." Having provided this encouragement and perspective, Scougal now offers six principle directions for growing in God.

## **Six Directions for the Divine Life**

Scougal suggests six directions for living the divine life: fight sin, fight worldiness, do right, meditate on divine truths, pray, and participate in the Lord's Supper.

### **1. Fight Sin**

The first step is to address any areas of disobedience to God, and Scougal offers several ways to do so.

*Fight Sin Ruthlessly.* "If we desire to have our souls molded to this holy frame, to become partakers of the divine nature, and have Christ formed in our hearts, we must seriously resolve, and carefully endeavor to avoid and abandon all vicious and sinful practices. There can be no treaty of peace, till once we lay down these weapons of rebellion wherewith we fight against Heaven: nor can we expect to have our distempers [ailments] cured, if we be daily feeding on poison. Every willful sin gives a mortal wound to the soul, and puts it at a greater distance from God and goodness: and we can never hope to have our hearts purified from corrupt affections, unless we cleanse our hands from vicious actions."

*View Sin Biblically.* "Let us acquaint ourselves with the strict and holy laws of our religion; let us consider the discourses of our blessed Savior, (especially that divine sermon on the mount,) and the writings of His holy apostles, where an ingenuous [innocent] and unbiased mind may clearly discern those limits and bounds by which our actions ought to be confined. And then let us never look upon any sin as light and inconsiderable; but be fully persuaded that the smallest is infinitely heinous [evil] in the sight of God, and prejudicial [harmful] to the souls of men; and that, if we had a right sense of things, we should be as deeply affected with the least irregularities, as now we are with the highest crimes."

*Resist Temptation Soberly.* "Amongst those things which we discover to be sinful, there will be some, unto which, through the disposition [state] of our nature, or long custom, or the endearments [attractions] of pleasure, we are so much wedded, that it will be like cutting off the right hand, or pulling out the right eye, to abandon them." Such besetting [constant] temptations must be met by sober reflection on the fearful consequences of sin both in this life and the life to come.

*Keep Guard Vigilantly.* "It will not suffice to consider these things once and again, nor to form some resolutions of abandoning our sins, unless we maintain a constant guard, and be continually watching against them." Recovering sinners must keep constant watch over their acts, words, and motives lest they relapse into old ways. It is also helpful to remain aware of the omnipresence of God [i.e., that God is present everywhere], for "the sense and remembrance of the divine presence is the most ready and effectual means, both to discover what is unlawful, and to restrain us from it."

*Review Life Regularly.* "This care and watchfulness over our actions, must be seconded by frequent and serious reflections upon them, not only that we may obtain the divine mercy and pardon for our sins, by a humble and sorrowful acknowledgment of them; but also that we may reinforce and strengthen our resolutions, and learn to decline or resist the temptations by which we have been formerly foiled [defeated]." It is wise to review one's victories and failures daily in order to grow in holiness and to plead for God's grace regularly.

## 2. Fight Worldliness

Those seeking to grow in Christ should not only abstain from obvious sins but should also deny themselves permissible pleasures in order to grow in self-control by practicing self-denial.

Thus are we to make the first essay [effort] for recovering the divine life, by restraining the natural inclinations, that they break not out into sinful practices: but now I must add, that Christian prudence [caution] will teach us to abstain from gratifications that are not simply unlawful, and that not only that we may secure our innocence, which would be in continual hazard if we should strain our liberty to the utmost point; but also, that hereby we may weaken the forces of nature, and teach our appetites to obey. We must do with ourselves as prudent parents with their children, who cross their wills in many little indifferent things, to make them manageable and submissive in more considerable instances.

Along with these regular refusals to enjoy the world one should reduce one's love for the world altogether by recalling its emptiness and vanity. "Our next essay [effort] must be to wean our affections from created things, and all the delights and entertainments of the lower life, which sink and depress the souls of men, and retard [hinder] their motions towards God and Heaven; and this we must do by possessing our minds with a deep persuasion of the vanity and emptiness of worldly enjoyments." When one's love for the world decreases, one's love for God can increase accordingly, although the reverse is also true. "The love of the world, and the love of God, are like the scales of a balance; as the one falleth, the other does rise."

## 3. Do Right

The first step in growing in the divine life is to avoid sin. The second is to refrain from worldly pleasures and inclinations. The third step is to be diligent to do the right thing, even if one does not want to.

When we have got our corruptions restrained, and our natural appetites and inclinations towards worldly things in some measure subdued, we must proceed to such exercises as have a more immediate tendency to excite and awaken the divine life: and, first, let us endeavor conscientiously to perform those duties which religion does require, and whereunto it would incline us, if it did prevail in our souls. If we cannot get our inward disposition presently changed, let us study at least to regulate our outward deportment [behavior]: if our hearts be not yet inflamed with divine love, let us, however, own our allegiance to that infinite Majesty, by attending His service, and listening to His word, by speaking reverently of His name, and praising His goodness, and exhorting others to serve and obey Him. If we want that charity, and those bowels [depths] of compassion which we ought to have towards our neighbors, yet must we not omit any occasion of doing them good: if our hearts be haughty and proud, we must nevertheless study a modest and humble deportment [behavior]. These external performances are of little value in themselves, yet they may help us forward to better things.

Such external acts must be accompanied by internal acts such as praise and prayer. Though they may feel half-hearted, the Spirit blesses these efforts "and, after the frequent reiteration of these, we shall find ourselves more inclined unto them, they flowing with greater freedom and ease."

#### 4. Meditate on God's Truths

Christians often affirm Biblical truths without giving them due weight. "The assent which is ordinarily given to divine truths, is very faint and languid [sluggish]; very weak and ineffectual; flowing only from a blind inclination to follow that religion which is in fashion, or a lazy indifference and unconcernedness whether things be so or not." Affirmation without contemplation is inadequate to inspire a Godward life. This being the case, Scougal suggests two meditations for each of the four branches of faith—loving God, loving others, purity, and humility—to make them more fruitful for God.

*Loving God.* The love of God grows as one reflects upon the beauty of His nature and the wonder of His love. "And, first, to inflame our souls with the love of God, let us consider the excellency of His nature, and His love and kindness towards us."

- a. *Meditate on God's Nature.* "Let us therefore endeavor to raise our minds to the clearest conceptions of the divine nature. Let us consider all that His works do declare, or His word does discover of Him unto us; and let us especially contemplate that visible representation of Him which was made in our own nature by His Son, who was the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person; and who appeared in the world to discover at once what God is, and what we ought to be.... Let us fix the eyes of our soul upon it [the gospel], that our eyes may affect our heart, and while we are musing [marveling], the fire will burn."
- b. *Meditate on God's Love.* God's love is demonstrated daily in His provision, displayed powerfully in His gospel, and communicated personally in the gifts and mercies He bestows on each child of God. A person's love for God grows when he reflects on the greatness of God's love shown to him. "To have the love of one who is altogether lovely, to know that the glorious Majesty of Heaven has any regard unto us, how must it astonish and delight us! How must it overcome our spirits, and melt our hearts, and put our whole soul into a flame!"

*Loving others.* "We shall find our hearts enlarged in charity towards men, by considering the relation wherein they stand unto God, and the impress[ions] of His image which are stamped upon them."

- a. *Relation to God.* "The meanest [lowliest] and most contemptible [despicable] person whom we behold is the offspring of Heaven, one of the children of the Most High; and however unworthy he might behave himself of that relation, so long as God has not abdicated [renounced] and disowned him by a final sentence, He will have us to acknowledge him as one of His and, as such, to embrace him with a sincere and cordial [heartfelt] affection."
- b. *Image of God.* "In some this image is more eminent [prominent] and conspicuous [evident], and we can discern the lovely traces of wisdom and goodness; and though in others it is miserably sullied [tainted] and defaced, yet it is not altogether erased, some lineaments [features] at least do still remain.... When we shall consider these evil qualities as the diseases and distempers of a soul, which in itself is capable of all that wisdom and goodness wherewith the best of saints have ever been adorned and which may one day come to be raised unto such heights of perfection as shall render it a fit companion for the holy angels, this will turn our aversion into pity and make us behold him with such resentments as we should have when we look upon a beautiful body that was mangled with wounds or disfigured by some loathsome disease; and however we hate the vices, we shall not cease to love the man."

*Purity.* Personal holiness is encouraged when one considers the dignity of man and the joys of Heaven.

- a. *Human dignity.* “In the next place, for purifying our souls, and disentangling our affections from the pleasures and enjoyments of this lower life, let us frequently ponder the excellency and dignity of our nature, and what a shameful and unworthy thing it is for so noble and divine a creature as the soul of man to be sunk and immersed in brutish [vulgar] and sensual lust, or amused with airy and fantastical delights, and so to lose the relish [enjoyment] of solid and spiritual pleasures; that the beast should be fed and pampered, and the man and the Christian be starved in us.”
- b. *Heavenly joy.* “It will be very effectual to the same purpose, that we frequently raise our minds towards Heaven, and represent to our thoughts the joys that are at God’s right hand, those pleasures that endure forevermore; for every man that has this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. If our heavenly country be much in our thoughts, it will make us, as strangers and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, and keep ourselves unspotted from this world, that we may be fit for the enjoyments and felicities [pleasures] of the other.”

*Humility.* A humble heart is cultivated when one considers one’s own sinfulness and God’s holiness.

- a. *Man’s sinfulness.* “All our wickedness and imperfections, all our follies and our sins, may help to pull down that fond and overweening [prideful] conceit which we are apt to entertain of ourselves. That which makes anybody esteem us, is their knowledge or apprehension of some little good, and their ignorance of a great deal of evil that may be in us; were they thoroughly acquainted with us, they would quickly change their opinion. The thoughts that pass in our heart, in the best and most serious day of our life, being exposed unto public view, would render us either hateful or ridiculous: and now, however we conceal our failings from one another, yet sure we are conscious of them ourselves, and some serious reflections upon them would much qualify and allay [soften] the vanity of our spirits.”
- b. *God’s holiness.* “The deepest and most pure humility does not so much arise from the consideration of our own faults and defects, as from a calm and quiet contemplation of the divine purity and goodness. Our spots never appear so clearly, as when we place them before this infinite light; and we never seem less in our own eyes, than when we look down upon ourselves from on high. Oh how little, how nothing do all those shadows of perfection then appear, for which we are wont to value ourselves!”

The chief means of growing in the divine life is reflection on divine truth. As one considers the doctrinal root of faith, the branches of faith become more fruitful. The love of God increases as one considers His excellent nature and love. The love of others increases as one considers their relation to God and His image in them. Purity is promoted when one contemplates human dignity and Heaven’s joys. Humility is promoted when one contemplates one’s own sinfulness and God’s holiness. These meditations, combined with the steps of abandoning sin, diminishing worldliness, and performing external and internal duties, are essential to true religion.



## 5. Prayer

Prayer places the believer in direct contact with God. As a child of God communicates personally with His heavenly Father he is drawn closer to Him and becomes more like Him. "In prayer we make the nearest approaches to God, and lie open to the influences of Heaven: then it is that the sun of righteousness [i.e., the holy light which comes from God Himself] does visit us with His directest rays, and dissipateth our darkness, and imprinteth His image on our souls."

## 6. Communion

Regular and devotional participation in the Lord's Supper is a final element for growing in the divine life. Christ established this sacrament so that believers would share this sign of the New Covenant and communion honestly, intimately, and worshipfully with their Savior. "Then it is that we make the severest survey of our actions, and lay the strictest obligations on ourselves; then are our minds raised to the highest contempt of the world, and every grace does exercise itself with the greatest activity and vigor; all the subjects of contemplation do there present themselves unto us with the greatest advantage; and then, if ever, does the soul make its most powerful sallies [journeys] towards Heaven, and assault it with a holy and acceptable force. And certainly the neglect or careless performance of this duty, is one of the chief causes that bedwarfs [belittles] our religion, and makes us continue of so low a size."

Scougal concludes by praying through his six directions for living the divine life.

And now, O most gracious God, Father and Fountain of mercy and goodness, who has blessed us with the knowledge of our happiness, and the way that leadeth unto it, excite in our souls such ardent [passionate] desires after the one, as may put us forth to the diligent prosecution [practice] of the other. Let us neither presume on our own strength, nor distrust Thy divine assistance; but while we are doing our utmost endeavors, teach us still to depend on Thee for success. Open our eyes, O God, and teach us out of Thy law. Bless us with an exact and tender sense of our duty, and a knowledge to discern perverse things. Oh, that our ways were directed to keep Thy statutes, then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all Thy commandments. Possess our hearts with a generous and holy disdain of all those poor enjoyments which this world holdeth out to allure us, that they may never be able to inveigle [entangle] our affections, or betray us to any sin: turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken Thou us in Thy law. Fill our souls with such a deep sense and full persuasion of those great truths which Thou hast revealed in the gospel, as may influence and regulate our whole conversation; and that the life which we henceforth live in the flesh, we may live through faith in the Son of God. Oh, that the infinite perfections of Thy blessed nature, and the astonishing expressions of Thy goodness and love, may conquer and overpower our hearts, that they may be constantly rising toward Thee in flames of the devoutest affection, and enlarging themselves in sincere and cordial love towards all the world, for Thy sake; and that we may cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in Thy fear, without which we can never hope to behold and enjoy Thee. Finally, O God, grant that the consideration of what Thou art, and what we ourselves are, may both humble and lay us low before Thee, and also stir up in us the strongest and most ardent aspirations towards Thee. We desire to resign and give up ourselves to the conduct of Thy Holy Spirit; lead us in Thy truth, and teach us, for Thou art the God of our salvation; guide us with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive us unto glory, for the merits and intercession of Thy blessed Son our Savior. Amen.



## **Appraisal**

The first thing one appreciates about Scougal is that he took time to write out so thorough a response to help a friend grow in his relationship with God. The mere act of writing such a response reveals the tender heart that accompanies the love to others that he is preaching. Secondly, Scougal's portrayal of the Christian life is simple and straightforward. The reader clearly understands that true religion is the life of God lived in the soul of man in which faith bears fruit through the four branches of loving God, loving others, personal purity, and humility. The first two branches express a believer's relationships to God and others while the second two branches address one's individual struggle against lust and pride. Scougal's presentation is logical—moving from definition and description to encouragement and instruction—and his writing is compelling. This book deserves to be carefully and repeatedly read.

As with any book outside the Bible, however, there are certain aspects that call for caution and balance. First, one must be careful not to reduce the Christian life to Scougal's four categories. The author makes clear that he does not view his way as the only way of approaching the Christian life, but enthused readers sometimes misinterpret the author's original intent. Second, Scougal overemphasizes self-denial at the expense of enjoying this world as God intends. Third, more could be said about the church, the community of saints, as the context of the Christian life. The work has a decidedly individualistic emphasis that needs a communal component. These qualifications notwithstanding, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man* offers a grand view of God's character, a lofty understanding of human nature, and a rousing call to live the divine life. Scougal's directions are heavenly and practical, challenging and inspiring, and, if taken seriously, will inspire the passive, encourage the struggling, and instruct all who would aspire to live the divine life.

## **Connection to Be United in Christ**

Many mistake true religious beliefs for true religion, but an overemphasis on denominational rules leads to debates and divisions. Likewise an overemphasis on religious emotions and activities easily leads to a sense of superiority that separates the saints. Scougal provides a more balanced and Biblical presentation of the Christian life that promotes faithful, loving, holy, humble unity. A believer who has been formed by this book will exhibit:

A firm *faith* fixed on the revelation of God in the Bible.

A growing *love for God* more interested in extending grace than initiating controversy.

A growing *love for others* that will serve, forgive, and reconcile.

A growing *purity* that contributes to community.

A growing *humility* interested in addressing one's own sins instead of judging the sins of others.

The divine life is a unifying life. When God lives His life in the souls of men, their faith, love, purity, and humility work together to help true believers Be United in Christ.

### **Key Quotations**

“True religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul.”

“[He who] contents himself with those performances whereunto he is prompted by education or custom, by the fear of hell, or carnal notions of Heaven, can no more be accounted a religious person, than a puppet can be called a man.”

“The root of the divine life is faith; the chief branches are, love to God, charity to man, purity and humility: for (as an excellent person has well observed) however these names be common and vulgar, and make no extraordinary sound; yet do they carry such a mighty sense, that the tongue of man or angel can pronounce nothing more weighty or excellent.”

“The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love.”

“Perfect love is a kind of self-dereliction, a wandering out of ourselves; it is a kind of voluntary death, wherein the lover dies to himself, and all his own interest, not thinking of them, nor caring for them any more, and minding nothing but how he may please and gratify the party whom he loves.”

“As charity flows from a noble and excellent temper, so it is accompanied with the greatest satisfaction and pleasure. It delights the soul to feel itself thus enlarged.”

“There is no slavery so base [lowly], as that whereby a man becomes a drudge [slave] to his own lusts; nor any victory so glorious, as that which is obtained over them.”

“They are happy indeed whose souls are awakened unto the divine life, who are thus renewed in the spirit of their minds. But, alas! I am quite of another constitution [nature], and am not able to effect so mighty a change. If outward observances could have done the business, I might have hoped to acquit myself by diligence and care: but since nothing but a new nature can serve the turn, what am I able to do?”

“It is He that is the Captain of our salvation; and what enemies can be too strong for us, when we are fighting under His banner?”

“We must seriously resolve, and carefully endeavor to avoid and abandon all vicious and sinful practices. There can be no treaty of peace, till once we lay down these weapons of rebellion wherewith we fight against Heaven: nor can we expect to have our distempers [ailments] cured, if we be daily feeding on poison.”

“The love of the world, and the love of God, are like the scales of a balance; as the one falleth, the other does rise.”

“We are not a mere piece of organized matter; a curious and well-contrived engine; that there is more in us than flesh and blood and bones; even a divine spark, capable to know and love and enjoy our Maker.”

“Nothing is more powerful to engage our affection than to find that we are beloved.”

“Let us frequently ponder the excellency and dignity of our nature, and what a shameful and unworthy thing it is for so noble and divine a creature as the soul of man to be sunk and immersed in brutish [vulgar] and sensual lust, or amused with airy and fantastical delights, and so to lose the relish [enjoyment] of solid and spiritual pleasures; that the beast should be fed and pampered, and the man and the Christian be starved in us.”

“Our spots never appear so clearly, as when we place them before this infinite light.”

**Key Bible Passages (NASB)**

“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.” **(Deuteronomy 6:4–6)**

“You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not.” **(Deuteronomy 8:2)**

“Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.” **(Deuteronomy 30:6)**

“O LORD, who may abide in Your tent?  
Who may dwell on Your holy hill?  
He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness,  
And speaks truth in his heart.  
He does not slander with his tongue,  
Nor does evil to his neighbor,  
Nor takes up a reproach against his friend.” **(Psalm 15:1–3)**

“When pride comes, then comes dishonor,  
But with the humble is wisdom.  
The integrity of the upright will guide them,  
But the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them.” **(Proverbs 11:2–3)**

“He has brought down rulers from their thrones,  
And has exalted those who were humble.” **(Luke 1:52)**

“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.” **(Luke 6:27–28)**

“And He answered, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’” **(Luke 10:27)**

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.” **(John 15:4)**

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor.” **(Romans 12:9–10)**

“Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” **(Romans 13:10)**

“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.” **(1 Corinthians 13:13)**

“Giving no cause for offense in anything, so that the ministry will not be discredited, but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love.” **(2 Corinthians 6:3–6)**

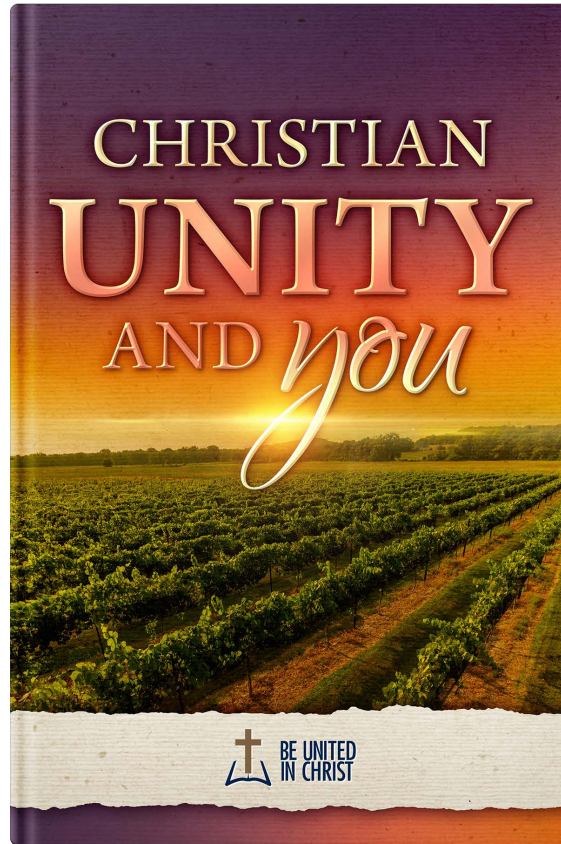
“In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.” **(Titus 2:7–8)**

“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.

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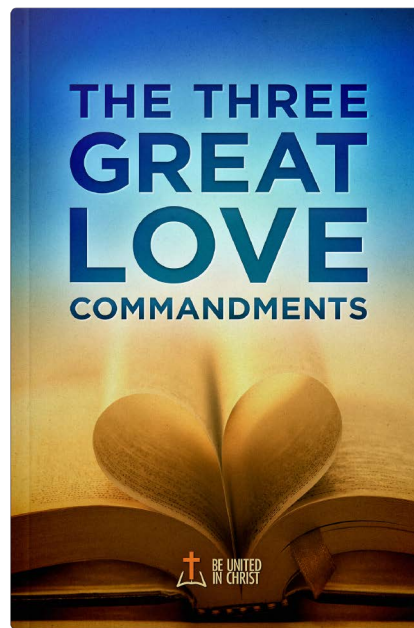


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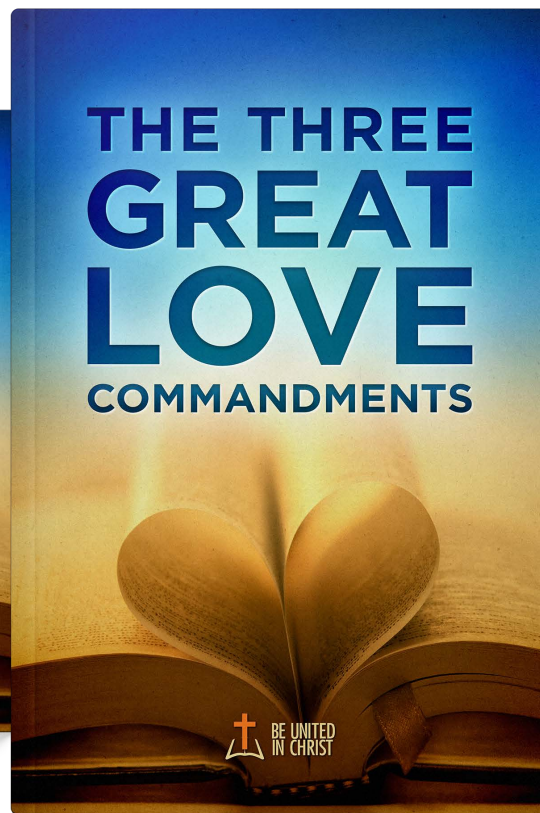
# A **THIRD** GREAT LOVE COMMANDMENT.

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.

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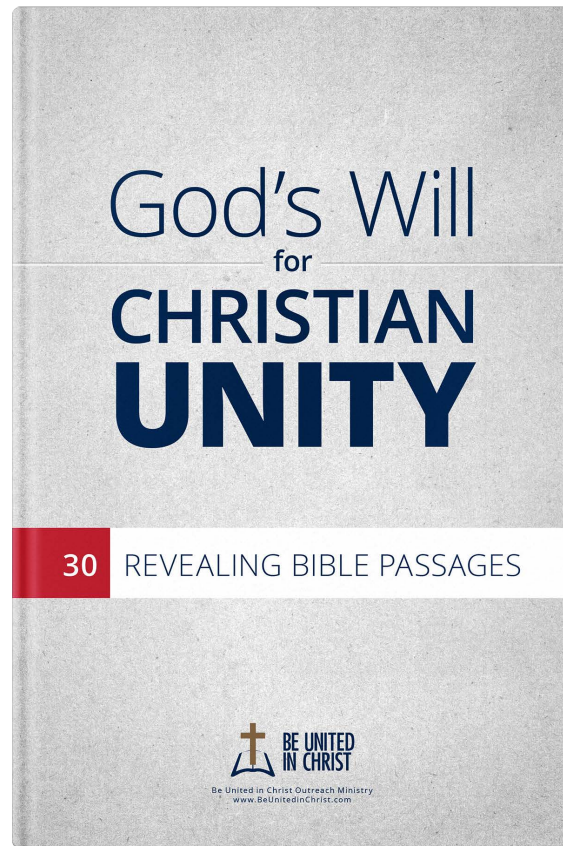
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# BELIEVE IN GOD? READY TO **DO** HIS WILL?

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.

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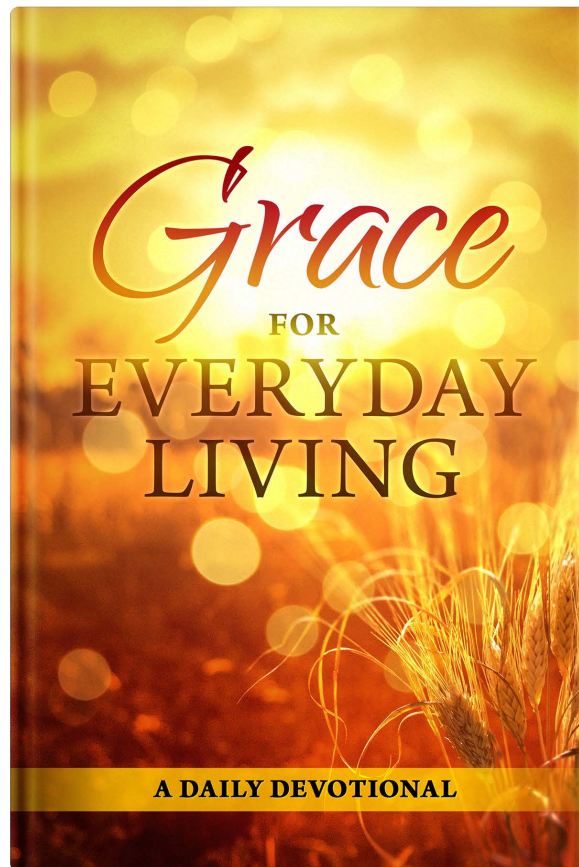
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# WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH GOD'S GRACE?

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.

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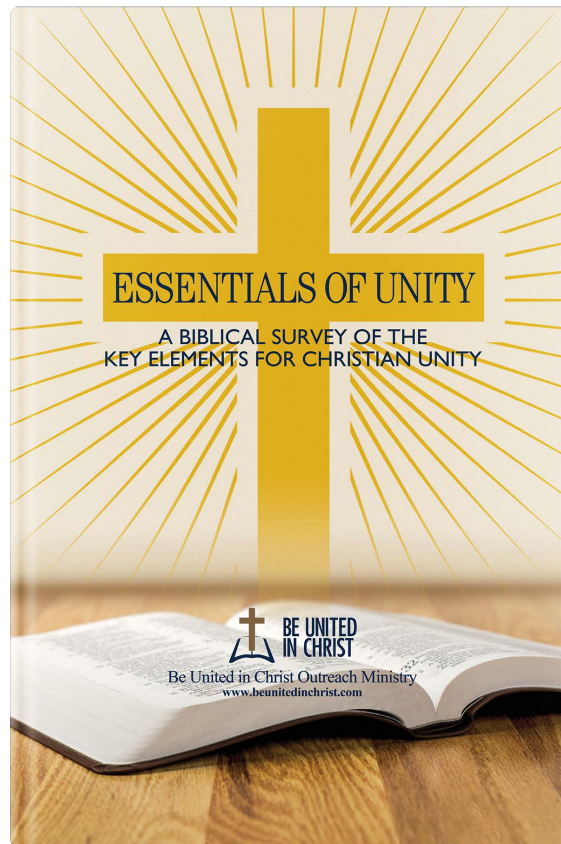
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# UNITY IS ESSENTIAL FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

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.

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# 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.

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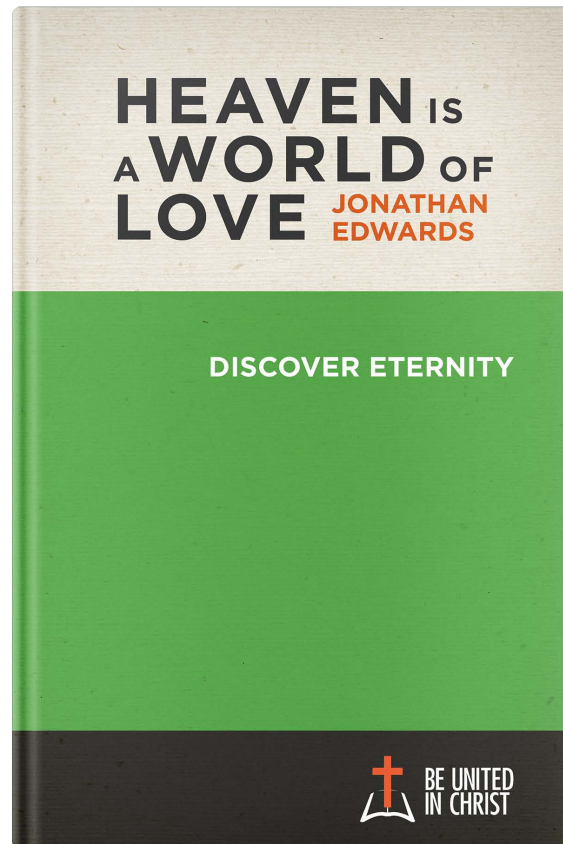


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In the history of Christianity, no one has written as vividly on the subjects of Heaven and Hell as Jonathan Edwards. *Heaven Is a World of Love* combines Edwards' most powerful sermons and presents them in modern-day language. Be encouraged with the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

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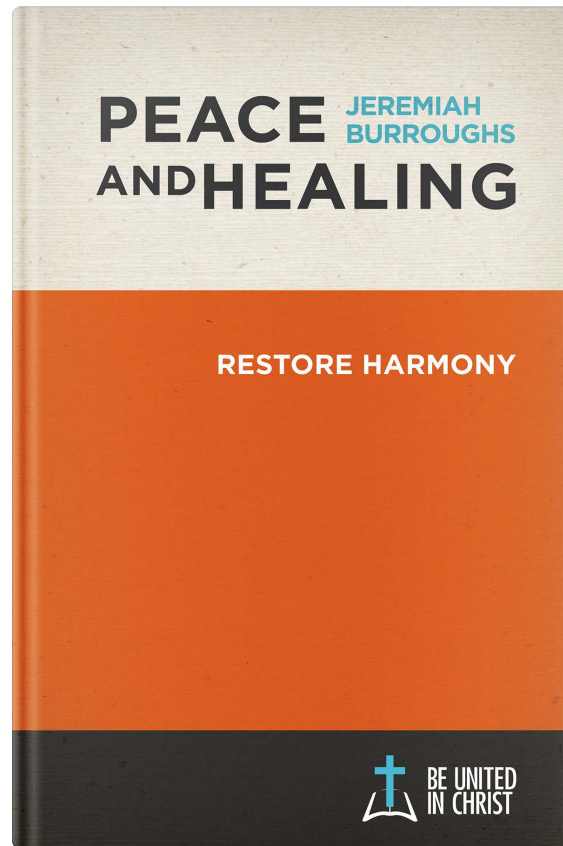


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What if your church could be conflict-free? Drawn from the wisdom of respected Puritan preacher Jeremiah Burroughs, *Peace and Healing* reveals the sources and dangers of conflict within God's family and recommends God's solutions. Get to the root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

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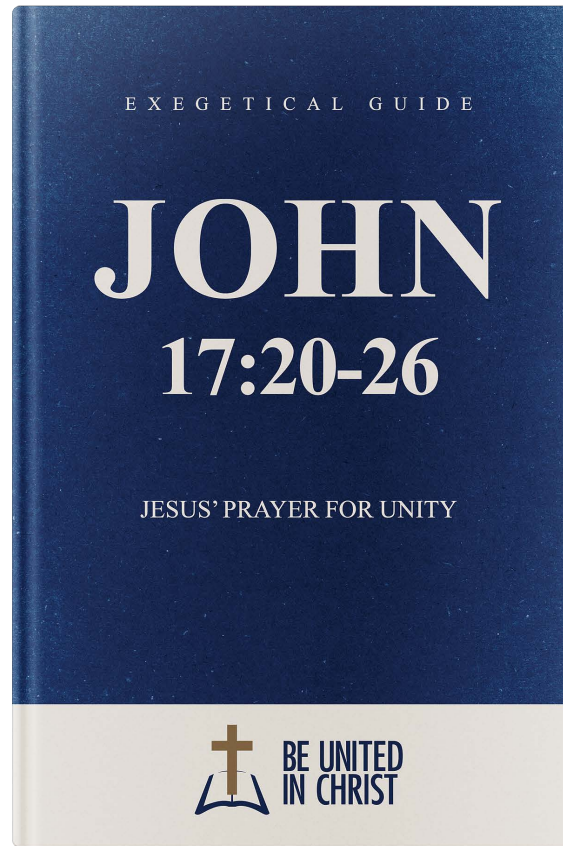


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In the hours just before He was crucified, Jesus prayed for you. But what did He pray? And why does it matter? With the *John 17:20–26* Exegetical Guide, you will see through Jesus' eyes and be moved by what He prayed for you at this critical time. 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.

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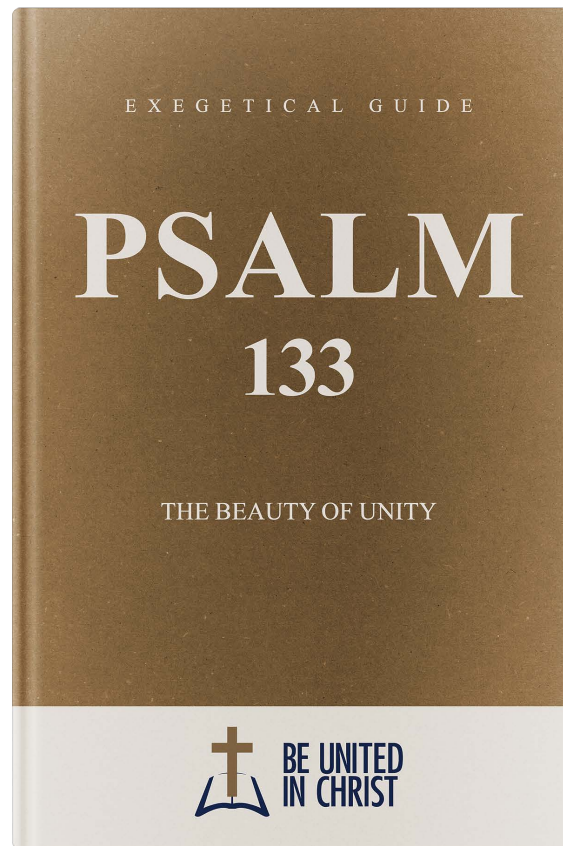
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Blessing. Peace. Eternal life. How can you experience them for yourself? Explore *Psalm 133* and learn King David's song of the goodness and pleasantness of God's children living in harmony. You will discover that unity is not only God's desire but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

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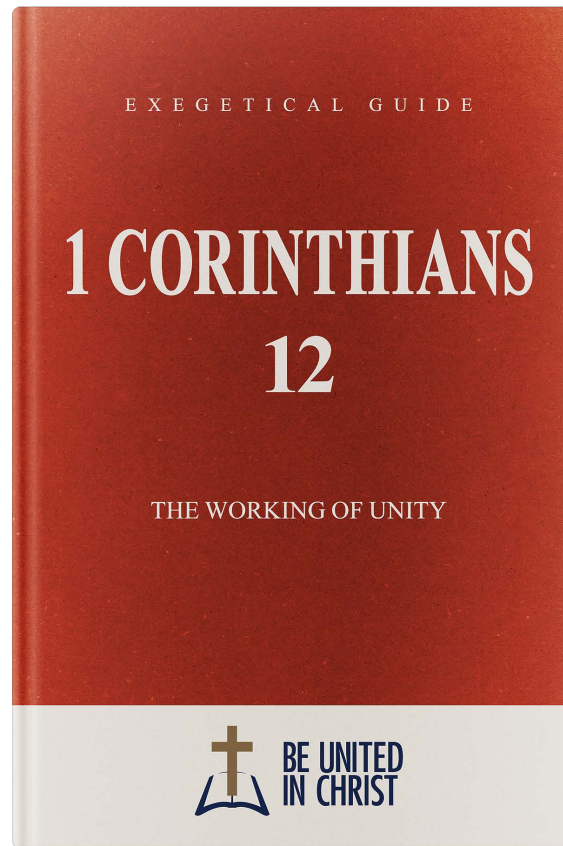


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All of us want to belong, to feel connected, to be a part of something bigger than ourselves. For the Christian, these desires find their fulfillment in Christ and in the life He has designed for His church. The *1 Corinthians 12* Exegetical Guide 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.

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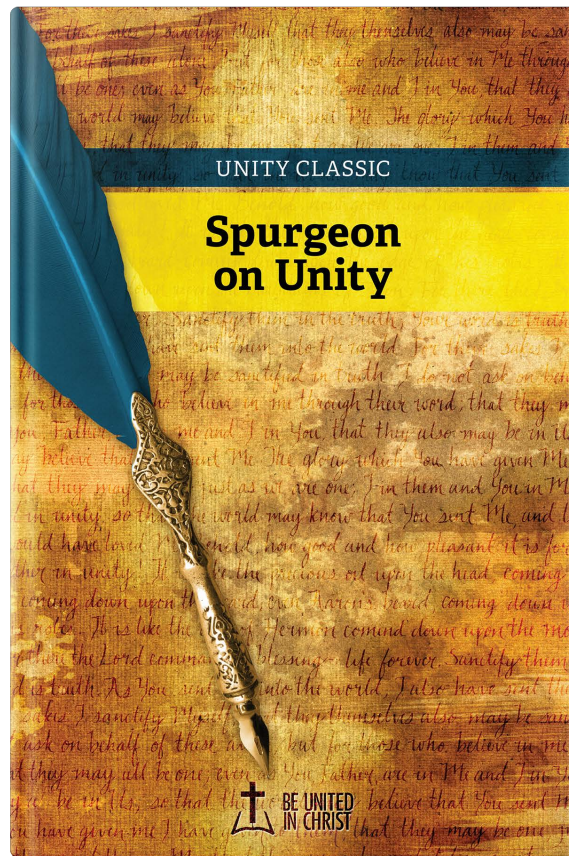
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The most prominent preacher of the 19th century, Charles Spurgeon pastored the world's largest mega-church and spoke to millions. Considered one of the greatest preachers in church history, his messages are as inspiring today as when they were first 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.

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