

Image and Likeness of God (Part 4)

Becoming Like God

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John 4:24 God is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.

This scripture very clearly states that God is Spirit, but the verse does not define what spirit is in reference to God, only that He is Spirit. This verse states nothing at all about form, shape, or composition. It only states a fact, and that one must look elsewhere in the Bible to find information concerning His form and shape.

The word *Spirit* is translated in the Old Testament from the Hebrew *ruach*, pronounced roo-ach, and in the New Testament *pneuma*. Both of these words have the same fundamental meaning and usage. It means, or is used as, "an invisible force or power."

John 3:5-6 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit [a definite article there], he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh [I don't see how He could make it any clearer], and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

The implication of this verse is (in connection with John 4:24, that since God is Spirit) that if one is going to be born of the Spirit they are going to be composed of exactly the same thing as God. Now in order to make it even clearer, Jesus gave an illustration in verse 8 so that nobody would misunderstand His intention here.

John 3:8a "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes:..."

Wind is invisible. When something gets moved by the wind you can see that object moving. You do not see the wind moving. You see the object moving, or you see what the wind is carrying or moving, as with dust. But the wind, composed of air, is invisible to your eyes. That is the illustration of one who is born of the Spirit.

John 3:8b "...so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

So spirit is invisible, but no less real than air. Nobody would argue that air, of which wind is composed, has no substance at all to it. Though it is invisible it is made up of particles too small to be seen by the unaided eye.

There is an episode in II Kings 6:16 which took place during the life of Elisha and his servant Gehazi. Gehazi was frightened because a great army surrounded them, and so it was two against a great army and Gehazi thought the end was near. "I'm going to die." He was frightened by what he was able to see.

II Kings 6:16 So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them."

And I am sure that Gehazi was saying at this time, "Yeah, yeah, where are they? I don't see anybody. There's nobody here with us. It's you and me against the whole crowd, and there's an army out there, and they have shields and they have spears and they have battering rams and they have chariots and they have horses and they have all the things necessary to dispatch you and me in just a moment."

II Kings 6:17 And Elisha prayed, and said, "Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

The point of this is that a spirit being is invisible just like wind, just like air, to the unaided eye. The air is real. Wind is real. Spirit beings are real. They have substance just like wind does. But the unaided eye is not able to pick them up, so the ability to see something that is spirit, which is composed of spirit, is not in us by human nature. It is not there naturally, but the ability to perceive them can be given.

That's what Elisha said. That's what I'm getting at. "Give him the ability to see what is around us." And so he saw, apparently, a tremendous army of spirit beings who were ready to do battle in Elisha's behalf should anything occur. They didn't have to do anything. They were there all the while, invisible, but nonetheless there.

I want you to see that this same situation is carried through into the New Testament as well. This occurred when Paul was on his way to Damascus and he was confronted by Christ and converted..

Acts 9:3-5 As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Then a little bit later in the same chapter, verse 27. This is after Paul's conversion, and Paul went back to Jerusalem and he wanted to be accepted by the disciples that were there but they were afraid of him.

Acts 9:27 But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Paul clearly said that he saw Christ. Let's go to Acts 22: 7-9. Here is a later recounting of the same experience.

Acts 22:7-9 "And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me [Remember, Paul saw him], 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me."

Isn't that interesting? Christ wanted Paul to see Him. He wanted Paul to hear Him. The others who were with him, He did not give them the ability to perceive Christ, nor to perceive what He said. They heard a sound, it later on says, but they did not hear it distinguished as words.

It becomes very clear that something must be done to our senses to enable us to perceive them through the senses. No scripture says that God's image only consists of intellectual and moral powers. Scriptures used to prove God's moral faculties do not say that He does not have a body like men who also have moral powers.

You would have to admit man is capable and has moral powers. The same scriptures and words that describe God's faculties also speak of Him as having the same faculties, yet no one argues that man does not have a body because he has those faculties. I mean, it's a crazy way of arguing, and if we're going to believe the Bible, if it says one thing for man, and then it says the same thing for God, we will believe what it says about men, but we will not believe what it says about God. Isn't that crazy? But that's how perverse human nature is.

Nor does this mean that there are no figures of speech that appear in the Bible and that are used in reference to God. There are figures of speech—and there are many, many figures of speech in reference to God. But they are not at all difficult to discern while you're studying.

Do the figures of speech tell us that God does not have a body? No, they are telling you, they are implying (every time a figure of speech is used) that God indeed does have a body. If God is going to reveal Himself to us, wouldn't it be better if He plainly told us somewhere, "Now these are really figures of speech. I really don't have a body." That would make it clear right off the bat, wouldn't it? But He never says that.

Right from the beginning in Genesis 1 He assures us we are made in His image, and if we look at ourselves we say, Hey, God has hair. God has eyes. God has a forehead. God has ears. He has a nose. He has a mouth. He has teeth. He has a chin. He has a face. He has hands. He has arms. He has shoulders. He has a waist. The Bible even talks about His paps (as it calls them), His loins, His legs, and His feet.

Why do something like that if He doesn't have a body? That's misleading. God does not mislead. He tells us the truth. And when He says that we are made in His image, we are made in His image. We are in the same form and shape, and in addition to that we have intellectual powers.

We are capable of character. We have personality that we can detect and project, even as He does. When He says that we are in His image, He is including the whole person, from what we look like to what we act like.

Hundreds of scriptures say that God does have a body. Now if so many scriptures do not mean what they say, then how do we know that any scripture means what it says? It comes down to something that simple. You could not trust the Bible.

If so many scriptures say that God has parts and feelings, and He does not have them, then it should be shown in at least one place that He does not have them so that we can at least take all statements like that as being figurative, or figures of speech. Otherwise, we have no authority to take all such passages as figures of speech because there cannot be figures of speech of anything that is not real. Remember that. A figure of speech always has something real behind it, at the base of it.

I think that we've seen enough testimony from the Bible to see that God and angels are not universal nothingness floating around in nowhere. God is not universal mind, conscience, or goodness. He is not an abstract power filling the whole space, and except for the vast difference in power and in potential, the only difference between men and God is that mankind is earthly flesh and bone in whose bodies' life is in the blood and we are mortal. God's body is also flesh and bone, but it is spirit, and it is immortal, and it is perfect, and it is self-existent.

This has practical ramifications that must be explored because it means that God cannot be omnipresent in body. He is one place at one time, and everything that we have seen by way of description shows Him at one place at one time participating, working within, and observing his creation. So the Bible shows Him sitting, standing, walking, talking, eating, drinking, commanding, creating, and He is always doing it in a specific location.

As I mentioned in Part 3 of this series, there is absolutely no mention of size anywhere in the Bible. When men saw Him, they didn't exclaim, "Oh, He's as big as a chestnut tree!" No, it didn't say anything like that. It didn't even say, "Why, He's as big as Goliath!" It's entirely possible that Goliath was a great deal larger than God is.

It does say that when God became a man, that there was nothing about Him that we should desire Him. There was nothing outstanding in terms of the way He looked. He was able to pass through crowds, lose Himself amongst Jews; people who looked just like you and me. He didn't glisten. He didn't shine in glory.

He wasn't taller than anybody else like Saul. He wasn't more muscular. He was able to lose Himself in groups of people, and so there was nothing about Him that we should desire Him. The only thing that the Bible does remark is about His character and about His powerful teaching. But no man ever spoke like He did.

Colossians 3:1 If then you were raised [meaning come up out of the waters of baptism], with Christ, seek those things which are above [now look at this], where Christ is [Is this going to show Him in one place at one time?], sitting at the right hand of God.

They are both there. They are both at one place at one time. Twenty-four scriptures declare that this is where Christ is. That's His location.

We have no trouble at all understanding that the President can be in Washington DC or that the Prime Minister is in London. No trouble at all with that. We just have trouble with God saying in His book that He is at the seat of government for the entire creation. But that's where He is. That's where He is working from.

At the beginning of services and at Bible Studies we ask God to be present with us. Now in what sense is God with us in so many gatherings, in so many locations, when He can only be at one place at one time, just like us? Naturally you're going to say, "In Spirit." And that's a correct answer. But it's just a different application of the word spirit.

Now it cannot mean that He is bodily present because He dwells in heaven, and it is from there that the Bible says that He is going to return. Do you know that eighteen times Christ told us to pray to where the Father is located? Where's that?—Heaven. It's just a little bit of reinforcement to this principle.

Christ is telling us that the Father is located at one place at one time. He didn't say, "Pray to your Father in . . . well, where is He right now? I don't know. He just went off somewhere." No, He didn't say anything like that. He said He is in heaven eighteen times.

Did Jesus know what He was saying? Did He know what He was talking about? Again, not even one time does the Bible say that God is bodily everywhere at once. It is a constant theme that He is one place at one time.

Did we not see in the scriptures that God travels even as we do? You get in your four-wheel chariot and you take off for distant points. Isn't it interesting that your chariot has wheels? When we look in Ezekiel 1, we find God riding some kind of a vehicle and that vehicle has wheels within wheels, which is kind of interesting. I have never figured that one out. But it has wheels on it.

Where do you think men got the idea that if they were going to travel from one place to another it would have to have wheels on it? It probably came from the same place that most things come from. There's a pattern somewhere that was established long before. I just do this to help you understand that God travels about.

We're going to see something as we go along here, that God indeed is omnipresent, but He is not omnibody. The two are not the same thing. His presence (Remember we just said earlier that when we pray we ask for Him to be present with us?) can be felt, discerned, by those who have a spirit. We have a spirit.

Here we have to be careful because in one way we're getting into dangerous territory because God is not the only one whose presence can be felt, or discerned, or, we might say, be with us.

And the reason for that is presence is not governed by bodily sight or nearness, though both of these can have a profound effect upon presence. Presence is largely governed by relationship.

We see simple and sincere expressions of this when people who have gone through an experience later say or write that they felt the presence of a close friend, a parent, a spouse, a child, or of God, while they were going through the experience, and it was as though these people were with them. When the body of anyone is not literally present, one cannot say that the body is present, and yet the presence of another may be felt even though there are thousands of miles that separate one from another. The reason for this (experience) is because presence consists of union, relationship, memory, and experiences together. The closer that two are in union to each other in any relationship, the more strongly they feel the presence of the other in their thoughts, and it is the same in our relationship with God.

This section that we are going to go through here serves well in that it will go a long way toward giving a practical and logical and a true explanation of the oneness of God. So read carefully. I'm thinking here about our former association. They have split the oneness of God so that there are now three in one, but in so doing, in buying into this false doctrine, they have closed off the Godhead so that the kind of oneness that Jesus prayed for would not really be possible. So read carefully.

The Bible frequently uses the preposition *in* to express "union with." Be careful because *in* does not always mean "in union with." Sometimes it means "within," and sometimes it means something else.

Philemon 1:1-2 ...to Philemon our beloved friend, and fellow laborer, and to our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

What does *in* mean there? It means "inside of." It means "within." You will find statements from time to time in the Bible like, he went *in* the house. Something like that is fairly easy to determine. It means "inside of."

II Corinthians 5:19 that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Let's read this a different way—"that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself." Here we have two possible meaning or usages of the word "in." I personally feel that the primary usage indicates "by means of"—"that is, that God was, *by means of* Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." Does that make sense? It makes sense to me because it's a true fact that the world is becoming reconciled to God by means of Christ because He is the payment for sin.

The secondary use, if it is intended at all, would mean "in union with"—"that is, that God was *in union with* Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." Whenever this word comes up (this little word "in") you have to think about this and its application.

We're going to concentrate from here on the "in union with" because it is "in union with" that is going to determine oneness and it is "in union with" by which God is able to project Himself into multitudes of situations. And when we ask Him to be present here, we are asking Him to be in union with us by His Spirit, and He can project Himself (even though He is at one place at one time) and be omnipresent by means of this.

Let's go to John 14:10-11. The question had just been asked by Philip, "Show us the Father."

John 14:10-11 "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells *in* Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves."

John 14:19-20 "A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you."

That could serve as quite a puzzle, because if you took that without understanding the "in union with" then we would have God and Christ crawling inside and out of each other. "Whoops, where is He now? He's in me. No, I'm in Him." Or, because we're included there in verse 20, "No, He's in me." "No, He's in you." Or, "No, I'm in Him." We could get all confused. But God is logical.

Here the sense is "in union with." They do not crawl in and out of each other because, as the Bible clearly shows, the Father and Son are two separate Beings who sit side by side in carrying out the responsibilities of providing for and keeping the operation of His creation both physically and spiritually going on. When the Son was here, He was in union with the Father, and while the Son was here, the Father was in union with Him.

You're beginning to see that it is almost as if they were—what? As we would say humanly, in one flesh. When a man and woman marry, are they two different beings? Yes, they are. Are they commanded by God to marry for the purpose of becoming one, in union with each other? Yes.

Do they crawl inside and out of each other? No, they don't. But there is a blending that takes place of mind, personality, and then, what eventually happens? Actually it's beginning to work before the two even become married. No matter where you go, you carry the presence of your loved one with you. Isn't that simple? And no matter where you go, because of the experiences together, the presence is there and you can call up those memories in the blink of an eye. That's what we are talking about here.

II Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Christians are to be in union with Christ. Brethren, can you begin to see why it is so important to study God's word, to meditate on it, to spend time trying to understand it, to communicate with one another with this word and with the Father? What are you doing as you take His word into you? That's part of His mind. It's the way He thinks. It is part of His character. It is part of His personality.

We cannot be in union with somebody that we don't know. We cannot be in union with somebody that we have no relationship with. We cannot be in union with somebody that we never think about.

The more we think about Him, the more we carry His word in our mind. The more experiences that we have with Him, the deeper, stronger, sharper, clearer, and more real becomes the union. It all swirls around, or pivots around what?—the word of God. And Jesus said what?—"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6: 63).

They are an invisible force and power, because if you believe those words they begin to work in your life because you use them. Your life puts them to work, and they begin to produce what God intends that they produce. As we begin to use them, we become more one with Him, because we are becoming like Him, because our lives are being operated by His mind expressed in His word. And the more we use them, the more we become like Him.

This has tremendous effects as we're going to see in just a minute. Turn to Romans 8:10. We just saw in II Corinthians 5 that the Christian is in Christ, and if Christ is in you, well, even as we are in Him, He is in us.

Now, why? Because He knows us. He knows us inside and out. He's observing what we are doing. He is our King. He is our Elder Brother. He is our Savior. And He tells us without Him we can do nothing. So He is in us, even as we are in Him.

Romans 8:10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead [I mean, it's as good as dead], because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.

That invisible power is working and we have the seed of eternal life there, the down payment. The earnest of the spirit is there. And what did Jesus say? "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life." Where are those words? They're in the Bible. The Spirit is life because of righteousness.

Romans 8:9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. [Let's go back and read that. "But you are not in union with the flesh, but in union with the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.] Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

We can see here that a human being can be in union with either human nature or the divine nature. Guess who makes the choice which we're going to be in union with?

II Corinthians 7:3 I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.

Are the Corinthians actually inside of Paul's beating heart in there? Every time it palpitated they bounced up and down? Was not Paul saying that the Corinthians were in union within him, that he felt in union with them? Now, why? Because Paul raised up the church.

Paul knew those people. He preached to them the gospel by which they were converted. He was the one maybe who counseled them for baptism, though he didn't baptize anybody, he said, except for the household of Stephanas.

He saw that congregation from the very beginning and was familiar with them as personalities. He had eaten in their homes with them. He had very likely conducted some wedding ceremonies, maybe even some funeral ceremonies as well. He had preached multitudes of sermons and Bible studies to those people. He had experienced walking in the marketplace with them. He had experienced maybe persecution with those people. He had sung with them, maybe cried with them. He laid hands on them when they were sick.

What are we saying? Paul was in union with these people because he had experienced life together with them. So whether Paul was in Jerusalem, or whether he was in Spain, or if he went up to London, England, wherever Paul went, He carried with him the memories of those associations and those experiences. When somebody's name came to mind because it was mentioned in a letter that somebody said something to him, he immediately could think of the person, and it was almost as if they were right there with them. I am sure that many times it was so real that Paul said, "I wish I could reach out and touch them and help them."

Are you beginning to get the idea of how God can be, as it were, everywhere at once? We're beginning to see it because we carry Him wherever we are. And it doesn't matter where He is; He carries us with Him wherever He is.

Of course His powers are much greater and He can focus those powers on us as an individual personality if He so desires. And even as we can be aware of what's going on inside a small contained area, the powers of His eyes and ears, of His brain, of His mind, of His creative force and energy is so great He can be aware of anything at any time regardless of how far away it is. But what He's really striving for in our lives is for us to be able to be aware of His presence wherever we go, because that's what is important to our salvation. That's what's important to our lives. That's what's important to what is built within our lives. The seed of this union has been conceived within us because God initiated it and we responded to it.

In Philippians 1 we see another example of what we just saw here in II Corinthians. I just bring this up, not because it's similar, but I want you to see that our capabilities, the capabilities that God built within us to experience union with others through presence, or to experience presence because of union with others, is almost limitless.

Tell me something, brethren. Don't you feel a sense of union with people who may be all over this earth? You may know people personally who live in Africa, who live in Britain, who live in Canada (We know some there for sure.), on the South Sea Islands, wherever it might be, and

you are in union with them because of the Spirit of God—maybe because you met them one time at a Feast of Tabernacles. The union of those people may be very limited, but now they are a part of your memory, and I'll bet you anything that if their name is mentioned, you instantly recall an experience together. That's what union is based on

Philippians 1:7 Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

Do you see where the union was built around?—because we are all partakers with one another in the grace of God. That's what has pulled us together. The union, as you can see, will vary from person to person. With some it will be very tenuous because the relationships and experiences together are just not very strong.

On the one end we have those casual acquaintances that we made. We know they are part of the Church of God. We share a spirit with them. We share a hope, a dream, a goal. We're on a pilgrimage with those people. But they are in our minds, and so there is a tenuous union there.

And it goes all the way. On the other extreme would be the union that we have with our mate who also shares with us the same spirit, the same hopes and dreams. And then spiritually that goes to the Father in heaven.

Here was Paul in prison. His fond memories of his experiences with these people together made him feel confident as though he were not alone and that they were with him there giving him encouragement in his, more or less, desperate situation. It was as though he were saying, "I can feel your support."

Let's go to John 13 and we'll put another little bit of a twist on this. Remember I said earlier we have to be careful here because God is not the only one that can project Himself into things because we're seeing now that we, too, can do that. Unfortunately, there are evil spirit beings who can also do this.

John 13:27 Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly."

Here we find what? We find Judas at this time in perfect union with Satan to do Satan's bidding to betray Christ. That's not very pleasant to think about. We wonder how people can turn their back on the truth.

Now we can begin to see a logical progression because as the union with one strengthens, the union with the other weakens. In this case, the union with God is the one that is weakening. I'm talking about Judas here. Why? Because he was entertaining thoughts that were in opposition to the spirit, to the mind, to the words of God. He allowed those things to grow through circumstances that came up in his life and they kept getting stronger and stronger and the union with Satan, who was undoubtedly pumping these things into him or putting perverse

twists on the things that he heard so that he began to feel alienated and separated from Christ in some way, became stronger and stronger and the union with God became weaker and weaker until he betrayed Him.

That can happen to us. It's something that has to be fought against. All of us who are married ought to be able to understand the workings of this because this is what happens when a divorce occurs. Two people who began their union feeling as though they would never separate, really feeling a strong bond between one another, but because the union was not worked at, gradually one or the other begins to come to the place where a union with another begins to become attractive. Everybody has to be on guard.

When you see things in the Bible about guarding, keeping, preserving, enduring, that's what it is talking about. Enduring and preserving the union with God and keeping working at it to make it strong. Again the principle is not hard to understand. How do you make something strong in a relationship? Well, in the same way you worked at it before you were married. In your dating and courtship you did everything you could to please the other in order that a union occur. Simple, isn't it? Hard to do sometimes, but the principle itself is not hard to grasp.

I Corinthians 6:17 But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.

Being in, or being in union with, does not mean to be bodily inside of each other, because as we noted in all of the various verses, that the people who were "in" each other had a body of their own. So being *in* means "joined with" toward the accomplishment of the same purpose, and in our case the accomplishment of the same purpose is God's purpose that we might be totally in union with Him.

In John 17 we have Jesus' prayer just before His crucifixion

John 17:10-11 "And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them. Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep [it means guard, preserve] through Your name those whom You have given Me [Why?], that they may be one as We are."

Now was the Son literally inside of the Father so that they were one? Was the Father and His body inside the Son? No, they were separated by how many miles of distance between where the Son was on earth and where the Father was in heaven. They were in union with one another in mind, in will, in purpose.

What were they doing? They were joined together in the accomplishment of the same purpose, and now He is praying that we might be one with them in the accomplishment of the same purpose, having the same will, the same mind, the same hopes, the same dreams, the same goals, the same end in life.

John 17:12 "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your

name. [He guarded them.] Those whom You gave Me I have kept; and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

John 17:17 "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth."

John 17:20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word";

Now He's talking about you and me. He has shifted the emphasis in the prayer from the disciples who were literally with Him while He was praying, and these are the ones that He kept in the name, that is the one name. That one name was the Father's name — the family name. The family name is God. He kept them in that one family name, preserved their association with it. And so now He is praying for you and me.

John 17:21-22 "That they [meaning us] all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one."

That ought to be awfully encouraging because we can be in union with the Father and the Son to the extent that our experiences, that our knowledge, that our obedience, that our prayers, that our attitudes, that our fellowship within the church, that all of those things will permit. It's our responsibility that once we have been put into the name, that family name is God, and when we baptize you, we baptize you into the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are baptized into the family of God and at that time we are made one with it.

That's not the end of the process. That is actually a beginning. It's a beginning, though, that will end in the kingdom of God when we are born again and we will then have the composition of the Father and of the Son and we will be totally and completely at one.

Now why? It's because, as this same prayer says back in verse 3, "that eternal life is to know the Father and His Son," to have a relationship with them, to have an intimate relationship with them, to have had so many experiences with them, to have listened to their word so intently and then acted upon their word with all kinds of enthusiasm and energy that it could truly be said that if you've seen the Father, you've seen Me. That's a high ideal, but it is certainly something worth striving for, to be so in union with because we have allowed the Father to project Himself into us and we have become His image. Not what He looks like on his face, but how He is in mind and how He would relate to experiences in the way that He would conduct His life.

Central to becoming one with the Father is the reason why Jesus made the reference to truth there in verse 17. Because it is the truth of God that sanctifies us, that sets us apart for this

very purpose, and that makes it possible for us to become one, to become in union with them.

It's interesting that today when some women marry they want to retain their maiden name and so they hyphenate and the last name becomes a combined one. Do you know what that indicates to God?—divided loyalties. They are already beginning to hold their husband away. I don't know what all the reasons might be in any individual case, but it's not a good indication of how that marriage is going to proceed.

Those who do not love the truth, can you understand now why they're going to perish?—because they won't be in union with the Father and with the Son. It's that simple. It's not complicated.

Why did Jesus say to the Jews in John 8 that they were of their father the Devil? He said, "The words that I speak to you, they have no place in you." There was no hope that they would be in union with the Father. The Father could never live in them because they were rejecting what the Son said, and the Son said, "The words that I speak to you they came from My Father. I don't speak anything of Myself."

Maybe this will then mean more to you when you read this in Ephesians 2 of how it is that Satan gets inside of us.

Ephesians 2:1-3 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

From the time that we were born, Satan began to inject us with his mind, with his thoughts, with his ways, with his attitudes, with his purposes of life, and so that by the time that God gets to us (but in God's good time He calls us and begins to convert us), we are in union with Satan because all of our lives he has been broadcasting (as Mr. Armstrong has said) and we are in agreement with him. That's what has to be overcome.

He is in us, not that he necessarily possesses us. But we have got to understand that nobody, not even God, can take away your right of choice as to who it is that we want to be in union with. When God begins to convert us what He does is He makes us very well aware that we have the choice and we can resist and we can determine who we want to be in union with—God or Satan—even as we can determine in our own natural lives who we want to be friends with.

You can choose your friends. You can choose, then, the kind of relationships that you have with them. And you can walk away from them, if indeed they are pulling you down, away from union with God.

Unfortunately, sometimes that has to be done in order that we be in union with, one with, the Father. Hopefully, that doesn't have to happen very often, but sometimes it does, and you know, parents, that you tell your kids, "I don't want you to hang out with certain people." Why?

Because you know that those kids are going to pull your kids down and so you don't want them in union with those kids. Isn't the principle simple? It is.

Now God has put us into the position where we have the opportunity to use our time and energy to make the choices of whether or not we are going to be in union with Him. He leaves the choice to us. It's a wonderful thing that He does do that because it produces wonderful effects. So here we are juxtaposed in between, on the one hand, God on the other hand, Satan. But you are free from Satan because you have the choice of that with which you are going to be in union with.

God can be up on His throne in heaven, but He has the power to inject Himself into a relationship and He is aware of what is going on.