

# The Joy of Being Together

“If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”  
— African Proverb

Maybe you can remember trying to sing a “round” with a group of children when one group joins in at the wrong time. The overlapping lyrics and melodies that were supposed to blend harmoniously were cringe-worthy all because one part was out of sync. If only they would have adjusted! But, on they sang – in their own independent timing - and the **beautiful unity that could have brought joy** was only a dream.

Being together is at the heart of the spiritual practice of unity. Unfortunately, unity is sometimes misrepresented as a kind of spiritual cloning where everyone tries to be all the same, even in thinking and responding. But, biblical unity is not so much about thinking and responding alike as it is about **thinking and responding together** – as a unit. Unity is a **lifestyle of being single hearted, with a shared purpose**. In another historical timeframe Christians called it being “in one accord.”

Growing up in an environment of unity makes it easier for children to live life with God, aware of being in his presence. Being surrounded by an atmosphere where there is joy in being together **nurtures an open heartedness towards God**. When a place of belonging in a loving “we” is offered, self-serving individualism is not enticing and “me first, my own way” is less likely to be a child’s default. When our Christian families, organizations and church communities live in unity, **we echo the oneness of the Trinity, the harmony of Heaven**. Our unity invites others into a place of peace.

In fact, Ephesians 4:3, 4 calls us to **“Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.”** Revelation 5:11-13 gives us a beautiful picture of the future unity when we all stand together around the Throne of God. All of this world’s division and conflict will be reversed. The Bible tells us that **heaven’s choir will be singing one song, in one language, with one voice**. “Worthy is the Lamb!” Even there, we will hear different harmony parts and different tones as we offer up that perfect song of worship together. But we will be together, as one, praising our Lord!

Our children need to be invited to enjoy that heavenly “together” life now. We can nurture them by intentionally giving them environments of unity. And as God transforms us, **unity will overflow in our decisions and our reactions**.



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## INVITATIONS TO ENGAGE

### Start the conversation with your child!

“Come and sit with me a minute. Let’s talk about having part of heaven in the way we live together here on earth.”

#### EARLY CHILDHOOD (2-6 years old)

Draw a picture of your family holding hands. Include grandparents, cousins, or friends-like-family. Talk about what you have in common and about how each person is different. **Talk about what makes these people special to each other and how they give lots of effort to care for each other.**

Now close your eyes and imagine what it would be like to stand before God’s Throne with those people and sing to Jesus. Read the song from Revelation 5:13 and talk to God about the time when you can all sing to him, “You are worthy! You deserve our praise!”

#### ELEMENTARY AGE (5-10 years old)

Make a circle by holding hands and facing outward so that we surround a treasure box in the middle of the circle. One person will try to get into the middle and remove the treasure box for themselves. After a few minutes, take several steps outward so that it’s no longer possible to hold hands and protect the treasure.

**Read Ephesians 4:3 and repeat it together.** Stand quietly in your big circle and consider how much better it is to be joined together for a common purpose. Pray around the circle that God will unify your family. Open the treasure box and together enjoy the fruit or special treat that is inside.

#### PRETEEN/EARLY ADOLESCENT (10-14 years old)

Make a TOGETHER collage. (Tape pieces of paper together so that several people can work on the project.) Adolescents with younger siblings can oversee the project and encourage togetherness in action. Include pictures or drawings of people who show God’s love to your family, including people at church and in your community. **Add words you can use that will strengthen the “we” connections in your family life – even with people in your community.**

Read Ephesians 4:3, 4 together “Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.” Ask God what he wants you to do to help your family be more “together.”

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

*The Little Red Hen*, nursery story

*Victory on the Walls: A Story of Nehemiah*, by Frieda Clark Hyman

*Habits of a Child's Heart: Raising Your Kids with the Spiritual Disciplines*, by Valerie Hess and Marti Watson Garlett