

# The Blessing

## *Living in Unity:*

Psalm 133, Genesis 11:1-9

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I don't golf often because I have this uncanny talent of losing the ball in water traps or tall weeds. Golf balls disappear faster than hens in a fox den. However, one day a friend took me golfing. I remember him crawling down the bank of a drainage ditch, while hanging onto a drain tile. Clutching the drain tile, he teetered over the water to reach my submerged golf ball. Just as his hand touched the water, I moved the drain tile. I just couldn't seem to help myself. You should have seen his body flail as he almost joined the golf ball in the water. He got the golf ball, and scolded me between laughs. Then at the next tee he stopped me before I could hit the ball. There was a river on our right. No retrieving his golf ball there. He was convinced that I would hit the ball so that it would slice into the river. He didn't like my stance. He wanted me angled at 45 degrees away from the river although the fairway was straight ahead alongside the river. He was so distrustful, that he decided to show me how to do it. He turned his body away from the river and smacked his ball right off the tee. It was fast, hard, and straight. However, there was a large oak tree in its path, and it hit it so hard that the ball ricocheted into the river. Every ounce of energy in my limbs was transferred to laughter, and I collapsed to the ground. I can't tell you how much time passed before I could regain enough strength to take my turn.

There is nothing like friendship, is there? We all enjoy companionship. However, friendship goes deeper. It stays with us when the fun ends. The Bible says:

***A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24, NIV)***

Friends stay with us when others abandon ship. They identify with us when others are too embarrassed to own. Friends also offer help in times of need. The Bible says:

***If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! (Ecclesiastes 4:10, NIV)***

Friends are there to lend a helping hand. They are not afraid to be there when you need them.

They don't quit on you when the fun stops. The Bible teaches:

***A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. (Proverbs 17:17, NIV)***

True friendship is thicker than blood. As a result, the Bible counsels:

***Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you — better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away. (Proverbs 27:10, NIV)***

Friendship is God's idea. God designed it to convey love. God designed friendship to convey love that enjoys, love that partners, love that strengthens, love that helps, love that perseveres, and even love that heals.

Friendship is God's means of giving us perspective about many things. The Bible says:

***Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel. (Proverbs 27:9, NIV)***

God blesses us with perspective through the counsel of good friends. I've learned just about every skill from someone who valued me as a friend. God has used friendships to open my eyes to household tasks, fix-it-up projects, use of computers, car maintenance, just about every endeavor.

God even uses friendships to correct us. The Bible counsels:

***Wounds from a friend can be trusted... (Proverbs 27:6, NIV)***

We celebrate friendship because it is God's care network to develop his children. It is a precious gift that God plans for us and uses to bless us. Almost every Christian believer I know was introduced to Jesus through a friend. A couple of my friends took intellectual journeys where their reading led them to Christ. However, for most people, a friendship, a loving relationship brought them to look closely at Jesus. People who loved me and became my friends played key roles in helping me experience reconciliation with God. When that happened, our friendships moved to a new level. We experienced a unity.

In Psalm 133 we read:

***How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!*** (Psalms 133:1, NIV)

When we share a common vision, a common purpose, a common love, we experience a pleasant unity. That unity is not necessarily spiritual. We could say: *How good and pleasant it is when a married couple lives together in unity, when a baseball team lives together in unity, when a family lives together in unity.*

I'm convinced that God has created us human beings to fit together in unity. In the eleventh chapter of Genesis, human beings estranged from God. They were rebelling against God, yet they were living together in unity. They gathered in a place called Shinar, which we think is somewhere in Iraq. They enjoyed one another and wanted to stick together rather than populate the earth. They developed a common vision, a common purpose and a common love. They decided to build a city with a tower so high and impressive that they wouldn't forget one another. They'd always be united. The words of Scripture are so insightful. Let's read them:

***But the Lord came down to look at the city and the tower the people were building. "Look!" he said. "The people are united, and they all speak the same language. After this, nothing they set out to do will be impossible for them!"***

***Come, let's go down and confuse the people with different languages. Then they won't be able to understand each other.***" (Genesis 11:5-7, NLT)

God broke up their communication in judgment. They were to inhabit all the earth, and they refused. Their unity, though rebellious, was powerful.

Unity goes even deeper when it is spiritually renewed by God. I think all unity is spiritual in some sense. However, the Spirit of Christ addresses some of the deepest impulses that separate us from one another. Love and faith overcome dividers like unforgiveness, misunderstanding, impatience, pride and selfish thinking. Imagine what happens when you live with people who:

- Forgive one another,
- Serve one another
- Persevere with one another
- Listen to one another
- Talk truthfully and lovingly with one another

In Psalm 133, such friendship and unity is compared to oil being poured on Aaron the high priest of Israel. That oil readied Aaron to bless a nation and live in God's presence. Our unity does that too. According to the Scriptures, it is the place where God bestows his blessing. It is the place of refreshment, renewal and life.

Today, with whom do you have a common vision, a common purpose and a common affection? Who helps you back up when you fall? Who sticks with you in adversity? Where do you go when you hurt and need a lot of help?

Friendship and unity go together. In friendship we become a unity. In friendship we live for mutual benefit. Are we more than worship companions? Are we friends? Are we more than ministry companions? Are we friends? When God calls you to himself in Christ, he calls you to deep friendship and unity in his family. Do you want that? He wants it for you. It's your choice.