

UNITY OF THE SPIRIT: THE FUNDAMENTALS
TOKYO CHURCH OF CHRIST STAFF
“SOME PERSPECTIVES ON 2003”
Dr. Douglas Jacoby

- One’s perspective depends on one’s position and experience! Everyone has a perspective.

- N.T. churches were of God, but not problem-free. Problems are not necessarily a sign of rejection by God.
 1. Romans—Unity between groups with very different backgrounds and understandings of God
 2. 1 Corinthians—Purity for a church plagued with sin and worldliness
 3. 2 Corinthians—Challenge to authority of genuine leadership
 4. Galatians—Crisis: salvation by works
 5. Ephesians—Church: everyone working together and speaking the truth in love
 6. Philippians—Joy despite suffering, denying self even when it’s hard
 7. Colossians—Resisting short-cuts and sophisticated human philosophy...

- What happened 2001-2003:
 1. For me, 2003 both a good year and a bad year. Charles Dickens (English playwright) said “It was the best of times, the worst of times.” God works through all circumstances (**Romans 8:28**)
 2. Three streams converge:
 - a. Structural change: Increasing frustration among leadership leads to power vacuum.
 - b. Reform efforts. *Many* were working for reform, and with different strategies: grace/family/teaching.
 - c. Membership worldwide reacted to wrong emphases (growth > character, for example).
 3. God opposes the proud. Were we blowing our own trumpet?
 4. Principal effects:
 - a. Decentralization. (Decentralization process has political parallels...)
 - b. Most staff members lost jobs.
 - c. Most members remained with church.
 - d. Intensive time of questioning: leadership, decision-making, even basic doctrines “What’s still true”(!) This is good, provided we follow **1 Thessalonians 5: 21-22**.

- The lessons of 2003 are simply the lessons of church history:
 1. No clergy / laity division. All must be committed (attendance, giving, fellowship).
 2. Church and politics do not mix!
 3. When the Bible is taught, revolutionary things happen!
 4. Unity is worth the struggle!
 5. All of us are responsible to give feedback, and (leaders) seek input!
 6. “Speak where the Bible speaks”! Proper emphasis. **Acts 2:42, 43-47**

(These were the six conclusions I shared with Tokyo staff, July 2000 in a powerpoint church history presentation.)

Further lessons (what people need now):

7. *Patience*. **Ephesians 4:1-2, 39-32**. Unity & gossip.
8. *Time* to mourn, to grieve—significant loss: relationships, goals, accomplishments... **Ecclesiastes 3:4**
9. *Space* to grow, to mature emotionally... **Ephesians 4:15**
10. *Training* in the Bible—members and all leaders. **2 Timothy 2:15; Jeremiah 15:16; Hosea 4:6, 8:12**. We all need to become readers!

UNITY OF THE SPIRIT: THE FUNDAMENTALS
TOKYO CHURCH OF CHRIST • “THE SEVEN BASICS”
Dr. Douglas Jacoby, January 2004

I. Concept: doctrine

- A. Central & peripheral doctrines
 - 1. Central—non-negotiable! Example: the incarnation
 - 2. Peripheral—not essential to salvation. Example: the 6 creation days
- B. Important teachings and unimportant teaching
 - 1. Important—a doctrine may be important without being central. Example: Messianic prophecies
 - 2. Unimportant—no theological or practical impact. Example: the height of Goliath
- C. Severe consequences for abandoning central matters
 - 1. Biblical warnings: 2 Corinthians 11:2+, Galatians 1:6+
 - 2. Implications
 - a. Teachers and preachers need to be biblically trained
 - b. All members are still responsible for own personal study.
 - c. Cannot insist that every doctrine is “equally important.”
 - d. We should emphasize what the Bible emphasizes more than our own agenda.

II. Ephesians 4—“the seven unifying truths of the Christian faith”

Note: 4:4-6 is an explanation of how to preserve the unity of the Spirit (4:3).

- A. One body (Ephesians 1:23, 3:6—also 4x in chapter 4, 3x in chapter 5)
 - 1. One body because one head
 - 2. Both local and global
 - 3. Not an institution
- B. One spirit (Ephesians 1:13 [seal], 2:18, 2:22, 3:5, 3:16, 5:18, 6:17, 6:18)
 - 1. Holiness required if we are to approach God
 - 2. We must not behave in an unholy way and think *this* is the one Spirit!
- C. One hope (Ephesians 1:12, 1:18, 2:12)
 - 1. Future hope of resurrection (Acts 23:6, 24:15, 26:7)
 - 2. Bodily resurrection—all will be made new!
- D. One Lord (22x in Ephesians)
- E. One faith (6x in Ephesians as *personal* faith, “the faith” in 4:5 and 4:13)
 - 1. “The faith once for all delivered to the saints”—Jude 3
 - 2. Restoration movement saying:
 - “In matters of faith, unity.
 - In matters of opinion, liberty,
 - In all things, charity”
- F. One baptism (also Ephesians 5:26)
 - 1. Baptism for forgiveness of sins, preceded by repentance
 - 2. Ask first, not “Who is right?” but “What is right?” Follow the truth.
- G. One God and Father (God 31x in Ephesians, Father (divinity) 8x)

III. Conclusion: perspectives

- A. It is not ungracious or unchristian to take a strong stand.
 - 1. Truth is exclusive by virtue of its nature.
 - 2. Let us be open-minded (but not too open-minded)!
 - 3. Everyone draws the line somewhere.
 - 4. Two types of judgmentalism.
- B. We must have the right attitude:
 - “From cowardice that shrinks from new truth, From laziness that is content with half truth,
 - From arrogance that thinks it knows all truth—Dear God of truth, deliver me.”

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S FIRE: FINDING YOUR CALLING
TOKYO CHURCH OF CHRIST STAFF
Dr. Douglas A. Jacoby
January 2004

I. Leadership selection

A. Worldly criteria

1. Outward appearance (1 Samuel 16:7)
2. "Forceful men"—see Matthew 11:12 paper
3. "Talent"
4. Authority from the leadership position

B. Spiritual criteria

1. Heart
2. Relationship with God
3. Knowledge of scriptures
4. Spiritual influence on others

C. Sense of calling

1. It is hard to be on fire when you are not convinced you are in the right position. Area of service should match your God-given gifts!
2. There is not only a single pathway to spirituality. Diversity characterizes the N. T. church.

II. Doctrine of the gifts of the Spirit

A. 1 Peter 4:11—2 classes of gifts

1. Service gifts
2. Teaching gifts

B. Ephesians 4:11—5 gifts

1. Apostles and (N.T.) prophets = foundational gifts (Eph 2:20)
2. Evangelists, shepherds, teachers = present gifts

C. Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, etc—most gifts are not public, "high-profile" gifts

III. "The New Evangelist"

A Bible knowledge > baptismal ability

B. Central function

1. Preaching and teaching
2. Pastoral care
3. The body does the work of the body (Eph 4)
4. The evangelist leads the fledgling church, not the mature church

C. Education at a premium

1. University credentials
2. Preaching schools

D. Evangelists evangelize

1. They specialize in reaching the lost, because that is their gift.
2. Evangelists are called by God to a specific task—not to lead everything or "overfunction."

E. The New Women's Leader

1. Nurturing qualities v. career qualities (Titus 2, e.g.).
2. Building family. Married women's leader—not "50-50" with husband (esp. with kids)
3. For more on this, see paper at website.

LIVING BY THE SPIRIT
TOKYO CHURCH OF CHRIST
Dr. Douglas Jacoby
January 2004

I. Introduction

- A. The burning bush (Exodus 3:1-3)
- B. History of Moses
 - 1. At 40, he was doing things his way—in the flesh
 - 2. From 40-80, he led a relatively secluded and modest life—depressed?
 - 3. From 80-120, he was walking with God in power!
 - a. His light was shining. (And face glowing!)
 - b. Passion!
 - c. Humility!
 - d. Impact!
 - e. Not perfect, but in the process of being perfected.
 - f. Not just a religious man, but a spiritual man.

II. Meaning of the story

- A. Historical event, of course, but has symbolic meaning
- B. Fuel source
- C. Romans 12:11
- D. Burning out?
 - 1. Lost dreams? Fatigued?
 - a. Job or school?
 - b. Marriage or parenting?
 - c. Physical fitness?
 - d. Church or leadership?
 - 2. Why do we burn out?
 - a. Unrealistic expectations
 - b. Physical exhaustion
 - c. Emotional pain
 - d. Failure to persevere (perseverance→character→hope, Romans 5)
 - e. Ego, self, flesh may take us a long way—but it's just a matter of time (Proverbs 16:18).
 - 3. What is the solution?

III. Living in the Spirit

- A. Realize that there is an inner struggle between flesh and spirit (Galatians 3:1-3, 5:16-17).
- B. Be led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:18).
 - 1. Righteous living, depending on God (Psalm 143:10).
 - 2. How can you tell whether you are led by the Spirit?
 - a. Following the flesh→Galatians 5:19-21.
 - b. Following the Spirit→Galatians 5:22-23.
- C. Feed faith (Romans 10:17); fill yourself with the word (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19). Become a reader!
 - 1. Bible
 - 2. Other books

“... I think we ought to read only books that bite and sting us. If the book we are reading doesn't shake us awake like a blow on the skull, why bother reading in the first place? A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us.”—*Kafka*
- D. Be strengthened inwardly (Ephesians 3:16) and look at things differently (Ephesians 1:18).

IV. Conclusion

We all tend to be like Moses—we have great dreams but our human tendency is to pursue them in our own power, rather than in God's. Going in the Spirit does mean freedom, but it does not mean less commitment to the Lord. In fact, when we are with God, we will accomplish far more than we would have been able to do going in our own strength.

UNDERSTANDING THE HOLY SPIRIT
“Personal study notes on John 14-16”
TOKYO CHURCH OF CHRIST
Dr. Douglas Jacoby, 9 January 2004

I. Introduction

A. It is difficult to comprehend God—he is invisible, and infinitely above our level. The Spirit of Christ, however, enables us to know God.

B. All 4 gospels refer frequently to the Holy Spirit (Matthew—19x, Mark—22x, Luke—35x, John—18x). John 14-16 contains so much on the Spirit that we will focus our study on these 3 chapters only. For more on the Spirit, please see *The Spirit* (DPI, 1998) or visit www.DouglasJacoby.com. Context: Jesus' last words to his chosen apostles before his death and resurrection.

II. Text of John 14-16 (verse numbers in parentheses)

John 14: (1) This is the beginning of a very difficult time for the apostles. Faith was paramount for them, as it is for us. He gives them some words of encouragement: (2) Heaven—“many rooms”. (3) Sequence: Preparation—Return—Heaven.

(4). We know the way! (5-6): The way is not a plan, but a person! (7) Sometimes God may seem abstract; just focus on Jesus! In Jesus we see God: (8-9) An identity of person, words, and (11) actions—in which we participate (12) in Jesus' ministry. This brings glory to God (13). Following Jesus and loving him (14-15) involves obedience. There are many wrong notions of “love” these days.

A. THE SPIRIT IS OUR HELPER

(16) Parakletos (Greek) means helper or intercessor. Jesus is one, the Spirit is another. Of course the world cannot accept the Spirit of truth. It remains in a state of resistance—and thus frustration (17). (18) Jesus Christ says that he will come, and (19) the Spirit will animate us. Again (20), this is a personal relationship; (21) not just a feeling, but a lifestyle. Love is two-way. Some are “loved,” others not. How does the Spirit help us? Holy spirit => we too must be holy (Leviticus 11:44, 1 Peter 1:15-16). Yes, there is a spirit of freedom, but this is not a license for sin (Jude 3). Change comes from the inside out (2 Corinthians 3), in such areas as power, love, and discipline (2 Timothy 1:7). The Spirit grants inner strength (Ephesians 3:16). Good news: We do not need to become perfect before baptism—must teach the correct doctrine of repentance.

B. THE SPIRIT RELATED TO THE APOSTLES IN A UNIQUE AND SPECIAL WAY

(22-25) Two periods in which the Lord spoke: in the flesh, and shortly afterwards through the Spirit. (26) Jesus is addressing the apostles! They will learn everything. The Spirit will remind them of Jesus' words. (27) Return to theme of v.1. Not empty-headed peace, but peace in accord with words and relationship and obedience. A few words about true biblical meditation. (28-29): Jesus is preparing them for his departure. Everything works together so that the whole world is to come to know his true identity (30-31). John 15: In this chapter we find God's law of fruitfulness—our productivity depends wholly on God. Notice the context of opposition (18+). Notice also the connection between the Spirit and truth (26-28). The Spirit always insists on making Christ known!

C. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST FACILITATED THE OUTPOURING

John 16: (1) The Lord's desire is that we not stumble amidst opposition and struggle (2). (3-5): The ascension of Christ is a key biblical doctrine. (6-7): It is connected with the outpouring (Acts 2). The result?

D. THE SPIRIT CONVICTS US OF SIN, RIGHTEOUSNESS, JUDGMENT

(8): The Spirit convicts. As he indwells us, he will (through us) convict others, enabling them to change by God's power. This means there is hope for the world, and our mission as disciples can succeed. This conviction characterizes biblical preaching, and also the power of a Christian life.

E. THE SPIRIT LEADS US (THOUGH NOT IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY AS HE LED THE APOSTLES)

(9-13): Context: the apostles! Spirit relays the message carefully, also prepares them for the future (70 AD, the book of Revelation). Led by spirit => righteous life (Psalm 143:10, Galatians 5, Romans 8). To be “led into all truth” was a promise for the apostles (John 14:26, 16:13). We are led into the truth when we obey the Bible. How does God lead? Through other doors, providence, people, etc. This is not an “inner voice”—too subjective!

(14-19): We all have questions, though we are often reluctant to ask them. The Lord wants to satisfy our spiritual thirst, and provide the help and knowledge we need. (20): Hard times end up as happy times. (21-23): Prayers will be answered, and (24) we will feel closer to God, and he will seem more real. (25): The Spirit of truth speaks sometimes in direct statements, other times in illustrations and analogies. Notice (26-33) the return to the original theme. We will have “*thlipsis*” (Greek) in this world! Sense of victory in our lives.

V. Conclusion

A. It's all about a relationship with God (John 14). Not just an intellectual perspective, but a heart orientation

B. Is the Spirit with us? God is with us when we are with him (Matthew 28:20, 2 Chronicles 15:3). Is the Spirit with our churches? Yes, God is disciplining us (Hebrews 12!)

TEACHER CRITERIA

Often people ask, "What does it take to be a teacher?" This is a version of a lesson I shared with the Australia/ Pacific Region prospective teachers, in January 2000.

1. The teacher must be an excellent student of the Bible. This is the prime criterion! How many times have you read the whole Bible? Do you push yourself? Do you love the Word?
2. The teacher must be ahead of the pack academically. To lead others, he must not be slower than them in his thinking or lagging behind them in his attitude towards learning.
3. A university degree is helpful, and highly advisable. Ultimately, I believe the greater the level of responsibility within the teaching ministry, the higher the degree required. (I.e., a masters instead of a bachelors, a doctorate instead of a masters.)
4. He must be able to lead a group. Whether a family group, sector, region, or church, invaluable lessons are learned through this process. (Note: Not all appointed teachers will serve as church staff members. However, experience on staff does afford a unique perspective on how staff people think. And these are the very people who need most to be moved through the teacher's ministry.)
5. He must enjoy outside reading. The average person in the movement reads only a few books a year. The teacher must have a true appetite for learning. The question is not, "How many books do you read a year?" but "How many books do you read each week?"
6. Knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, while not essential, is desirable. Not reading the original languages puts one- at a disadvantage when it comes to exegesis of biblical texts. By far the best way to learn one of these languages is to enroll in a university level course (with intensive study and examinations).
7. His marriage and family need to be exemplary. Just as in the case of evangelists or elders, family qualifies you to do what you do, and family can also disqualify you from doing what you do.
8. He must be able to organize his thoughts and put them to paper (Ecclesiastes 12:9-10). Whether writing articles, books, on-line columns, or class outlines, the clear thinker will deliver a clear lesson.
9. He must be a reasonably good speaker. Dynamism and authority are essential. His life must back up his message and he must command the respect of those he seeks to influence.
10. He must have deep convictions--a prophetic commitment to biblical principles--and be a man to be reckoned with.
11. Time. Training in the teaching ministry, like training in eldership, involves years of work behind the scenes. A young Christian should not be appointed a teacher. Generally the teachers will be persons who have been in the Lord 10-20 years.

We close with my favorite poem by Longfellow:

**The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight,
But they, while their companions slept
Were toiling upward in the night.**

PERSPECTIVES ON DATING AND MARRIAGE
TOKYO CHURCH OF CHRIST SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON
11 JANUARY 2004

Perspectives on dating

1. The Bible does not talk about dating—nevertheless, there are many passages which help us anyway.

Analogy: there are no scriptures on smoking, but there are nonetheless principles which enable us to intelligently address the issue. One passage helping us with dating is 1 Timothy 5:2 (absolute purity between the sexes). Other great passages: Genesis 2 (God's plan for marriage); Genesis 29 and 34 (contrast between Jacob and Shechem, one waiting for love and the other taking matters into his own hands); and Hebrews 13:4 (sanctity of marriage and the marriage bed).

2. Dating is a relatively modern cultural phenomenon.

Really, if we were going to insist on imitating biblical culture, there would be no dating at all! Do not get sucked in by Hollywood's glamorization of romance etc.

3. Dating may be helpful, though it is not essential, biblically speaking.

Genesis 24—Isaac was looking for a *type* of person, more than searching for the ideal *individual* woman. His servant sought a (a) spiritual and (b) selfless woman. The marriage relationship worked—even though they never met before the day they become husband and wife!

Perspectives on marriage

1. Marriage is not for everyone.

Ecclesiastes 4 is a nice passage to illustrate marriage ("Two are better than one"), but strictly speaking it is not about marriage! (The "cord of three strands" does not mean bigamy!) 1 Corinthians 7:7 is a much neglected passage in modern Christian culture. We do people a disservice by assuming everyone fits into the marriage mold. (Teasing can be especially harmful.)

2. True love can wait.

As we saw in Genesis 29, instant gratification is not the way of spirituality. Also in Song of Songs, "Do not awaken love" until the time is right. (Here I shared about a number of couples whose marriages were contracted in their more mature years—the 40s, 50s, or even 60s.)

3. Marriage is full of trouble and joy.

Let's be honest (1 Corinthians 7:28). Christians should speak the truth. Marriage is a tremendous blessing, but still there is hardship involved, and not all is pleasant or easy.

4. A Christian must marry only another Christian.

Many O.T. passages forbid marrying outside the covenant. Especially read the final chapters of Ezra and of Nehemiah. Likewise, 1 Corinthians 7:39 is very clear. 2 Corinthians 6 (unequal yoking) relates to sharing relationships of idolatry with unbelievers—and by way of extension, to any close alliance with an outsider.

The goal in marriage is perfect unity. This is simply may not be possible in some cases: where one partner is excessively immature; or the husband may travel 11 months of the year; or partners are divided on central matters of the faith (such as how one becomes a Christian).

My position: Marrying outside the faith is a sin. Dating outside the faith, therefore, is a very, very bad idea. Still, if someone (in violation of the scriptures) decides to marry outside the faith, there is no "easy out"—he/she must remain dedicated to the spouse. God can bring good things out of bad choices.