

Jesus calls for unity right before they head to the garden of Gethsemane. The garden is where Jesus' betrayal goes into full swing. At the end of the last supper, he prays a long prayer for his friends. He wants to strengthen them to keep going after he is gone.

In John 17:24-26, Jesus is praying for his friends and talking about the God the Father. *I have made your (God's) very being known to them (disciples), who you are and what you do. And continue to make it known, so that your love for me might be in them exactly as I am in them.* Jesus knows the road ahead will be bumpy and they will need each other every step of the way. They need to choose -- unity with each other...with God's help.

Unity is not getting enough people to agree with a well written WSJ article that you read. Unity is not convincing people to cheer your enlightened perspective. Unity is choosing empathic engagement and always wondering how other people tick.

The biggest obstacle to this curiosity is us. If we learn something about different people, many of us will reflexively make it about ourselves. Someone shares a terrible story about their childhood. We could say, "that sounds terrible," and see what they might need in response. More often, we either think or sometimes say aloud, "that sounds awful, but when I was kid, they did that thing to me that you just said, but they also did something ten times worse." This does not just happen with childhood memories; it shows up in whole societies. [Here](#) is an interesting article about how systemic racism is hard for people of privilege to hear. It says in the article:

In a recent series of studies, psychologists wanted to see whether evidence of white privilege would actually make white people play up the hardships that they've endured in their own lives. After all, if I'm motivated to prove that this privilege doesn't actually explain my good fortune, what else can I do but scrape through my memories for evidence that I haven't had it so easy.

The studies were simple enough: ask a bunch of white people to participate in a study, have half of them read a passage about white privilege and then ask everyone to reflect on any hardships they've felt in their lives. The participants rated how much they agreed with statements like, "My life has been full of hardships," and "I have had many difficulties in life that I could not overcome."

The results were pretty clear: compared to the people who simply answered the hardship questions, the people who first read a passage about white privilege went on to express more personal hardships in their lives. It was as if they were searching for reasons to think that they weren't affected by racial privilege. Interestingly, they didn't end up believing in white privilege any less. They just wanted to convince themselves that they hadn't benefited from it.

Maybe unity is not about *you* but about *y'all*. We can choose to be one, with God's help,

May we all one.

May we all know and celebrate each other.

May we know that love is everything.

Todd