



NHCO Vision 2021

ONE

Jan 2-3

Pastor Mike Palompo

WEEK ONE

Study Notes and Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection.

Happy New Year, everyone! Welcome to the first message on the first weekend of the 2,021st year since Jesus walked the Earth (give or take a few years). Today we're starting a brand new, *original* series designed to take you and our whole Church to a stronger place in our relationship with God and each other. At the beginning of every year, NHCO tries to capsulize our vision from the Lord for the entire year in one word. Does anyone remember our word from last year? That's right. KINGDOM. We celebrated God's Kingdom in Hawaii. We learned about the Coming Kingdom. We were all about Kingdom, Kingdom, Kingdom in 2020. So what is our word for 2021? This one word will unify us around a single theme, a single focus, for the whole year. It will be the common thread through every sermon series and everything we do together as a Church. So what is God's word for us in 2021? ONE. Tell the person next to you, "Our vision in 2021 is ONE."

Any thoughts, comments, or questions about New Hope Central Oahu's one-word vision for 2021? _____

Let's take stock of where we are today after the Great Pandemic of 2020. The pandemic resulted in a global shutdown of the world's economy never before seen in history. It not only cost countless jobs, but entire companies went out of business for good. And Hawaii has one of the highest rates of closure in the country. Tourism, Hawaii's #1 industry, has been decimated. Hotels cannot survive with less than 30% occupancy. Airlines, restaurants, theaters cannot survive less than 50% full. But far worse than the economic loss is the toll on mental health. The pandemic forced us to remain isolated, quarantined, and socially distant. Wearing masks makes it difficult for us to recognize each other. It's hard to tell if a person is smiling or not. Bank

robbers love it because now everyone wears a mask. So while all this was intended to save our lives, according to the Center for Disease Control, anxiety, depression, drinking, and drug abuse have all risen dramatically. Suicide rates have gone up. According to the CDC, before Covid-19, 1 in 10 young people from ages 18-24 contemplated suicide. Now it's 1 in 4. Distancing, quarantine, separation, isolation--all intended to save us from a deadly disease--are killing us in a different way.

*How has the pandemic impacted the world, both by the pandemic itself and our attempts to mitigate the pandemic?*_____

Even Church has become weird. Our Church is known for the "New Hope Hug," made famous by Pastor Wayne. But today when we see each other, do we hug? Shake hands? Pound fists? Pound elbows? Or just wave with a sheepish smile on our faces (which we can't see anyway because of our masks)? At best this is awkward. At worst it is *more* lethal than the pandemic. So God wants to teach us how to reconnect.

*How has the pandemic impacted the Church? It is certainly "awkward," but how could it prove "lethal" to our Spiritual lives?*_____

The pandemic also forced us to stay home, where the ONLY people we could interact with were our family members. A whole year at home with just our family was a real TEST. There was no escape, no running away. We had to be together. Some folks in our Church told me, "Mike, this time at home was the absolute BEST time for us. We had to sit and share meals together. We had to talk. We drew closer to each other than we've ever been. And our faith in Jesus grew stronger." But others said, "The pandemic was the WORST! Stuck at home with just the family was stressful. I couldn't wait to get out and go back to work. All our issues, our unforgiveness, and our anger came out."

*Which one of these two scenarios describes your family experience during the Great Pandemic of 2020? Please explain.*_____

So the world, the Church, and our families are all trying to figure out how to come together, how to unite. In our new original series I want to give you my best shot at explaining Jesus' vision for us in 2021 to be ONE. We will learn WHAT Jesus did exactly to accomplish His vision. And we will learn HOW to become ONE in 2021. Jesus wants His Church to be ONE. Human beings were never intended to live quarantined in isolation. We were born to connect with each other. As soon as we entered this world God placed us in a family. We're not like the Honu (sea turtles) who are on their own the second they're born. If he doesn't make it to the ocean,

he'll cook on the beach. Even if he makes it to the watah, get all kine sharks and birds dey like eat the Honu. So be glad you not one Honu. As soon as you were born, God placed you in a family. And we are designed for relationship. Our eyes were meant to communicate our love for each other. Our voices express how we feel about each other. Our hands welcome each other. Our arms embrace each other. And there are other parts of us that we won't get into right now, but you get my point. We thrive on love, community, friendship, and family.

How are humans different from honu? How did God design us? _____

Why is it important for us to understand how God made us? What happens if we ignore our design? _____

We were made in the image of an intensely relational God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Not three gods, but three persons united as ONE by an eternal bond of love. And you and I were made in the image of this God. There is no other God in any religion on Earth who reveals Himself as 3 in 1. What I'm saying is no human could've come up with this. This is God's own revelation of Himself. And we're all trying to adjust our finite minds to this crazy revelation. Like Vizzini would say (remember him from Princess Bride?), "This is INCONCEIVABLE!" Do you see what I'm trying to say? Humans could never come up with a god like this. WE can't even wrap our heads around it. This is God showing us who He is. The very essence of God is that He is an eternal, loving, perfect relationship. And we were all made in His image.

Do your best to describe the nature of God as the "Trinity." _____

Are there any other religions that describe God as 3-in-1? Why or why not? _____

The God who created us in His image is intensely relational, so that means WE are intensely relational. The result? We long for relationship like we long for air. You cut us off from our friends and family and we start to suffocate emotionally. Leave us in isolation and we will slowly go crazy and die.

Why is it incredibly significant to understand that we were made in the image of God who exists as an eternal bond of love? _____

So our opening series of New Year 2021 is about calling us back together to become ONE. And yes, some of us might have to stay home watching through our fabulous Online Church, New

Hope Spark, while others of us are at the Hope Center meeting in person. Some of us might be from Mililani, Wahiawa, or Haleiwa. It doesn't matter, we are all ONE Church. Amen? God may have many congregations, but He only has ONE CHURCH. We will need to be intentional. Everybody say INTENTIONAL. Because if you want to stay away, stay disconnected, it has NEVER been easier. We will need to be INTENTIONAL in order to be one. You have to do this on purpose, deliberately, thoughtfully, prayerfully. Because it has now become way too easy to just stay home and be lazy. We need to text each other, call one another, reach out! If we don't, our remedies for the pandemic will kill us before the disease. Jesus wants to UNITE us and make us ONE.

What does it mean to be INTENTIONAL? _____

Do you know anyone who has gotten "lazy" about relationships during the pandemic? _____

Why do we need to become INTENTIONAL about our relationships now more than ever? _____

In our new series we'll be going through Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. Full disclosure, as a young believer I used to avoid Ephesians. It was like Paul was talking about a reality so foreign it sounded like he was speaking a different language! Like the man who was introduced to a brother and said, "My name is John, what's yours?" The brother said, "My name is Charles Junior but you can call me Bamanishals." Next day he saw the brother again and said, "Hey, Bamanishals, was sup, my man?" A friend overheard him and asked, "What did you call him?" "Bamanishals. He said call him Bamanishals." The friend laughed and said, "His name is Charles Junior and he wants you to call him CJ, BY HIS INITIALS. CJ." Bamanishals. Ephesians is like that. It's describing a completely different culture from the one you might be used to.

Have you ever tried to study Ephesians before? What was it like? _____

But what Paul is describing for us didn't originate with him. It originated with Jesus. So turn in your Bibles now to John 17. In this remarkable chapter, Jesus is praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. He is just hours away from being arrested, scourged, and crucified. In the Spirit He is fully aware of what is about to happen to Him, and He is crying out to the Father. In this intimate and deeply personal moment, the Gospel of Mark tells us that Jesus addresses God as "Abba." He's having a private heart to heart with His Dad. We are being granted a rare glimpse into the soul of our Messiah. As Jesus faces the end of His life, what is revealed is His raw, naked passion. How the Apostle John received this revelation the Bible doesn't say, because John was asleep when this happened. Was it by the Spirit? Did Jesus tell Him after the resurrection? We don't know. Regardless, here it is written in Scripture, the last words of our Messiah as He faces death. Usually when a person knows he's about to die, he thinks about the most important things in life: God and family. And it's no different for Jesus. His prayer is

completely trained on both God and family. But for Jesus, His family is not what we might think. For Jesus, His brothers and sisters are not His biological family of origin. Jesus is focused on His Spiritual family, the disciples. Jesus reveals that His deepest passion, His most cherished desire, His most earnest prayer--the purpose for His coming to Earth, His life mission--has to do with US. And here it is:

"²¹ I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me" (John 17:11, 21, 22 NLT).

Why is it important to know what was on Jesus' heart in His last hours on Earth? _____

What was on Jesus' heart in His final moments? _____

To us that might sound like a strange prayer from a man on death row. But Jesus prays this three times--in verses 11, 21, and 22--to leave us no doubt of what was on His heart at this critical moment. You see, some of us think that we should believe in Jesus just so we will go to Heaven when we die. But He also died so that we would bring Heaven to Earth. How? BY OUR UNITY. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are ONE. Now because of the cross we are ONE with the Spirit of God. And if His Spirit is in you and the same Spirit is in me, then that makes us what? ONE.

So if God is ONE then what would God's Kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven be like? _____

If you had to give the Church a grade on how we're doing regarding this, what would it be? Explain why you're giving us this grade. 😊 _____

And when we co-exist in the Church together as ONE, Jesus says that the world will--here it is, believe in Jesus. Did you ever stop to think that the way we relate to each other in Church is actually our most powerful witness to the world? We're going to take the entire year to learn how to become ONE with God and one another. Our vision for our Church is not Mike's vision or our leadership team. We didn't read it in a book about vision or a manual on how to do Church. This Church belongs to Jesus. He builds this Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. Jesus is the Head and Chief Shepherd of New Hope Central Oahu. So we need to ask HIM what HIS vision for HIS Church is. Let's read it together again out loud. Ready go:

“²¹ I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me” (John 17:11, 21, 22 NLT).

*As we fulfill God’s vision for us to be ONE, how will this impact the world around us? Explain why you think this happens.*_____

So in one word what is our vision for 2021? ONE. Now memorize that. I’m going to ask you again next week. Now here’s the synopsis of our study in Ephesians for our “One” series:

ONE Series Synopsis

This is **Week 1: ONE**

Today we learned, not Mike’s vision, but God’s vision for us to be ONE in 2021.

Next week, In **Week 2 of our ONE series:**

Remember in the Matrix when Keanu Reeves starts blocking punches with one hand and stopping bullets in mid-air? And everyone said, “He is the one.” Well, today we’re going to tackle Ephesians chapter one, and discover why Paul says that JESUS is... THE ONE.

In Week 3 of our ONE Series:

There’s an ancient Hebrew word that captures exactly the kind of oneness God envisions for us: **אֶחָד (ECHAD)**--perfect unity in diversity. In our study in Ephesians 2 we will discover that through the amazing work of Jesus, who is “The One,” we not only become one with God but we also become one with one another. Jesus, the Messiah, has created us into a new humanity: **THE ONE GENERATION.**

In Week 4 of our ONE Series:

Early on in Ephesians 1, God alluded to a mystery that was revealed. This was God’s secret plan for all peoples that has now become known because of Jesus who is “The One.” What is God’s mysterious secret plan for mankind? Listen closely to this week’s message as we talk about God’s unstoppable, prophetic plan for all humanity: **ONE WORLD.**

In Week 5 of our ONE Series:

In the previous week we learned that the Church is critical to God’s plan to unite the world under the rulership of Christ the King. But how can this happen if the Church itself does not understand how to be one in Christ? Advance warning some might find this message a tough pill to swallow, but it’s time for us to go through some “growing pains.” In this lesson let’s ask the Holy Spirit to do a deep scan of our obedience to God’s command to be **ONE CHURCH.**

In Week 6 of our ONE Series:

From Genesis we see that God's vision for oneness does not actually start in the Church. It starts in the most ancient, fundamental unit of all for fellowship--the family. This week we will discover the SHAPE our families need to be in to overcome division and despair at home. This week we invite the Spirit to teach us to become **ONE FAMILY.**

In Week 7, our final message of our ONE Series:

We might be tempted to think that all this talk of oneness leads to peace, love, joy, and living happily ever after. In a way, it does. But in the final chapter of Ephesians, Paul hits us with a heavy dose of reality. Born-again Christians are actually Spiritual warriors born. As soon as we step out in obedience to God, we are immediately met with forces of darkness who are literally hell-bent to steal, kill, destroy, and divide. In this final message, God calls us to armor up, take up the Sword of the Spirit, and prepare for the fight of your life in **THE WAR FOR ONE.**

Are there any messages you are especially looking forward to? Why? _____

THREE GUIDELINES

How to get the absolute most out of our original series

1. SERVICES. Join us here every weekend either in person or online and listen to every message in our series.

In which service do you plan to participate each week? _____

2. SMALL GROUP. Gather your family together or join one of our many Ohana groups so you can discuss the teaching, find answers to your questions, and practice becoming one Church. I strongly encourage every Ohana Group to hit the pause button on your current study and join us for this important revelation over the next 7 weeks. I will give you a PDF each week to guide your group study. You can also discuss the message with me on Open Mic on Zoom at 11 AM every Sunday.

Which small group will you be part of? _____

What is the date, time, and location of your meeting? _____

3. SELF-STUDY. Take extreme ownership of your own Spiritual growth, and every day read or listen to the entire Letter of Paul to the Ephesians. It takes less than 20 minutes. I recommend the New Living Translation. Also go over the study guide we will provide for you each week.

What is your plan to read/listen to the Letter to the Ephesians every day? _____

אבר (Ivri)

Let me close with this: In the Old Testament the people of God were called “Hebrews.” But since they descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. How did they get that name? Why not “Abrahamites?” or “Isaacites?” or “Jacobites?” That would’ve made for sense. Where did “Hebrew” come from? When the Hebrews crossed the Jordan to enter the Promised Land, the people of the land feared for their lives. “Who are these people,” they asked with fear and trembling, “whose God allows them to CROSS the Jordan River on dry land?” And then others would say, “Aren’t these the same people whose God allowed them to CROSS the Red Sea 40 years ago? And didn’t their God then destroy Egypt, the mightiest army in the world!” The Canaanites were terrified when they realized who these people were. First Egypt was judged, and they knew they were next! From that time on, the people of God were known as the “Ivri,” the people who can achieve impossible CROSSINGS. “Ivri” or “Hebrews” means “the people who cross.” They crossed the Red Sea. They crossed the Jordan River. Impossible, supernatural crossings.

Why were the people of God called “Hebrews?” _____

So when the Messiah of the Ivri, Yeshua, arrived on the scene, John the Baptist baptized Him in the Jordan River. Because the Ivri, the people of God, were about to make yet another impossible crossing. Their Messiah was about to lead them into the true Promised Land, the Heavenly Realm of God’s Presence. And in this Spiritual dimension, Yeshua will unite them with the Father... and make them ONE.

What is the “crossing” that Yeshua our Messiah is leading us in today? _____

Next week we will learn more about this Heavenly Realm and our central figure--Jesus, “The One.” But for now how many of us are willing to follow Jesus and CROSS OVER into a new life together? To let Jesus make us ONE with the Father and then ONE with one another? Brothers and sisters, I believe with all my heart this is what Jesus is doing in the Church right now. How many of us saw the Bethlehem Star on December 21st? The Great Conjunction where Jupiter and Saturn lined up to appear as ONE in the night sky. God is even sending us signs in the Heavens to become ONE! Interestingly the last time this happened was 400 years ago soon after the Pilgrims CROSSED the Atlantic to come here, and we later became the United States of America. God is inviting us to CROSS the Red Sea yet again, cross the Jordan, cross the Atlantic, cross into His will for His Church: Become ONE with Him and with each other. To be ONE is HIS vision for us. To be ONE is His Kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven.

By faith what is God saying to us in 2021? _____

Are you willing to follow Him? How would you describe where you are in your relationship with Jesus today? _____

So how do we start our CROSSING? Where do we begin? I know you're going to say, "With the CROSS, of course!" Yes. We will talk about that next week. Last Thanksgiving as I was preparing this series, I went to bed that night asking the Lord, "How are You going to make New Hope Central Oahu function as ONE? Hawaii is constantly in lock down. We're hopelessly divided between Republicans and Democrats. We have divisions in the Church. Families are at odds with each other. God, how on Earth are you going to do this?" I went to sleep with that hopeless question in my heart. The next morning the Lord gave me the answer. As soon as I woke up I had this powerful phrase in my mind: "I love you and there's nothing you can do about it." Wow! I was blown away by the power of that statement! The only reason I can be one with God is because the Lord loves me and there's nothing I can do about it. Even if I fall short (which is pretty often), He loves me and there's nothing I can do about it! And so now that I have experienced this amazing love from the Father, I love YOU and there's nothing you can do about it! It doesn't matter if we don't agree on everything. And it doesn't matter if you're not perfect. Each week we're going to learn how perfect acceptance before we become perfectly acceptable, makes us ONE. Tell the person next to you, "I love you and there's nothing you can do about it."

Why do you think the Spirit said this to Pastor Mike that morning? _____

What does this statement have to do with becoming ONE? _____

Just hours before His death, Jesus revealed His deepest passion for us, His disciples: "I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me" (John 17:11, 21, 22 NLT). Jesus has answered so many of our prayers. Isn't it time we answered one of His? Our Church's vision in the new year is Jesus' vision for us. If you agree would you pray with me? Father in Heaven (go ahead and pray that out loud), thank you for sending Your Son into our dark and diseased world. Jesus, thank You for dying for me so I could become one with the Father and one with Your Church. I believe in You, Lord, and I will follow You as you teach us to be one with You and one with Your Church, the body of Christ. In Your matchless Name I pray. Amen. Happy New Year, everyone! God is downloading a powerful revelation to our Church! So don't miss next week! See you then! Alooo-ha!

Write your own personal prayer response to God as we begin our series. _____

NHCO Vision 2021: ONE

THE ONE

Jan 9-10

Pastor Mike Palompo

WEEK TWO

Study Notes and Questions for Discussion and Personal Reflection.

After hearing the message by faith, summarize what God said to you _____

Hey everyone, welcome to WEEK 2 of our original series to kick off the new year. Quick! Ask the people next to you, "What is our one-word vision for 2021?" [pause] If they said, "ONE," then give them \$20. Even if they didn't give YOU any money, tell the person next to you, "I love you and there's nothing you can do about it." Go ahead.

What is our one-word vision for 2021? _____

Have you figured out the reason why we're saying to each other, "I love you and there's nothing you can do about it?" Why do you think we're saying this? _____

Last week we learned that to be ONE is not Mike's vision but Jesus' vision for His Church. So in 2021 our vision is to become ONE. Remember in the Matrix when Keanu Reeves starts blocking punches with one hand and stopping bullets in mid-air? Everyone said, "He is the one." Well, today we're going to tackle Ephesians chapter one, and discover why Paul says that JESUS is... THE ONE. To put it mildly we live in divided times. Personally, I can't remember a time when the divisions in our country were more obvious. And at 62 I'm like the "ancient one" in our Church--except for Roy Helepololei who was friends with Kamehameha. America is divided (so we're told) between Blacks and Whites, rich and poor, urban and rural, Democrat and Republican. Let me tell you upfront, the ONLY hope for us now is Jesus and a full-scale Great Awakening. And I can tell you with 100% prophetic certainty that Jesus will come back and make everything right when He returns.

Any thoughts or comments on the divided times we live in? _____

But let's get back to DIVISION. How did we get so DIVIDED? How does DIVISION happen? For the answer to this super important question, you just look at the word, DIVISION.

DIVISION: DI-vision. "Di" means "two:" TWO VISIONS

So DIVISION occurs when you have TWO VISIONS. It's like the book of Judges in the world today: every man did what was right in his own eyes. Everyone has their own vision, and they're doing their own thing. So dis one braddah like go Highway Inn, but da adda braddah he like go Uncle's Fish Market. So one braddah get one nice pitcha in his mind fo eat da ono lau lau at Highway Inn, wit da pipikaula, and poi, and Hawaiian sweet roll, potato-mac salad and da pumpkin haupia shortbread. You see da pitcha? Das da vision right dea. Da broke da mout vision! He like go Waipahu right now! But da adda braddah, he get one different pitcha in his mind. He like make fancy high maka maka kine. He no like go Waipahu--get too many Filipinos. He like go Pearlridge wit da Japani. He like sit down in one fancy reshtaurant whea da lady goin say, "Good evening, welcome to Uncle's Fish Market. How many in your party?" And he like eat da sashimi, wit da deep fried calamari, and drink one Uncle's Mai Tai. You see dat? Dis braddah get one different pitcha in his mind! So one braddah like take his opu to Waipahu but da adda braddah like take his to Pearlridge. TWO VISIONS. How we goin figgah dis out? Jun ken po? Yell and scream at each adda? O mo worse, SCRAP! Trow! Beef! Nah, no need. Cuz one o deez braddahs is da faddah! And da faddah wen tell his son, "Boy, you get money fo eat at Uncle's o wut?" "Uhh, no, dad." "Kden, I treat you Highway Inn den." "We go." And everybody's opu wen live happily evah aftah. If you didn't understand a word I said, go talk to Pastor Earl. Basically, DIVISION happens when you have TWO VISIONS.

What is division? Why does it happen? _____

And here it is,

"UNITY happens when we SUBMIT our visions to the AUTHORITY of GOD the FATHER."
Jesus demonstrated this perfectly last week when we talked about Gethsemane. Of course He didn't want to die. "Take this cup from Me," Jesus prayed. But immediately, without hesitation, in the same breath He prayed, "but let Your will be done not mine." (Luke 22:42) **Jesus was ONE with the Father because Jesus ONLY wanted to do the Father's will, never His own.** No, you didn't catch that. I said, "Jesus was ONE with the Father because Jesus ONLY wanted to do the Father's will, never His own." Can I get an amen? Jesus did this His entire life. He wasn't about to change when He reached the END of His life. How about us? If we continue to insist on doing it our way, we will never be ONE with the Father. AND, we will never be ONE with each other. DIVISION happens when we have TWO VISIONS. **"UNITY happens when we SUBMIT our visions to the AUTHORITY of GOD the FATHER."**

How does God create unity between us? Explain. _____

The Apostle who truly understood this vision and gave us a step by step manual on how to proceed is the Apostle Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians. Let's read this together:

"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ... And the church is his body;

it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself" (Ephesians 1:3, 23 NLT).

Some quick background on Ephesus: Ephesus was a major port city located in modern-day Turkey. Paul planted this Church on his third missionary journey then continued to minister there for over 2 years. Anybody see Wonder Woman 84 yet? Well, for you Wonder Woman fans one legend claims that Ephesus was founded by the Amazons and named after the Amazonian Queen Ephesia. In Ephesus Paul was moving in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. If you touched Paul with a handkerchief then touched a sick person with that handkerchief the person would get healed. Remember the Seven Sons of Sceva? That was in Ephesus. (Read Acts 19.) A full-scale Spiritual Awakening broke out and people were forsaking their pagan idols, piling their books of enchantment in the streets, and setting them on fire. Needless to say this upset the local economy and people started rioting in the streets against the Christians. (Sound familiar?) They finally calmed down when they realized this might upset Rome. Paul and the Ephesian Church were ONE. They truly loved one another, and they were very close, just like us here at New Hope. Paul's deep and loving relationship with them was especially evident when he said his final farewell in one of the most moving passages in all the Bible. They knew in their hearts this would be the last time they would ever see each other this side of Heaven. Then Luke wrote these words:

³⁶When (Paul) had finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with them. ³⁷They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye. ³⁸They were sad most of all because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they escorted him down to the ship" (Acts 20:36-38 NLT).

What happened when Paul planted the Ephesian Church? Describe the relationship Paul had with the saints at Ephesus. _____

The Ephesian Church was not a Jewish Church. This was a Greek city under Roman occupation. The revival brought every kind of person into this fellowship. There were Jews, Greeks, Romans, and likely other ethnicities as well, just like we saw on the Day of Pentecost. Their leaders had names like Gaius and Aristarchus. **The Ephesian Church overcame RACISM in their day.** Let me say that again: The Church at Ephesus overcame RACISM during a very racist time in human history. How did this happen?

Remember how DIVISION happens. TWO VISIONS. But UNITY happens when we all come under the FATHER'S ONE VISION. So BEFORE they believed in Christ, who did the Greeks worship as god? Remember, your basic Greek mythology: Zeus, Ares, Poseidon. How about the Romans? Well, their gods were pretty much the exact same gods as the Greeks with different names: Zeus became Jupiter. Ares is Mars. Poseidon is Neptune. And so forth. And Jews? They worshiped one God, Yahweh. Whether we realize it or not, the most important thing about you is THE GOD YOU WORSHIP. Your god is the highest authority in your life. If your god tells you to do something, you don't want to risk angering him or he won't let it rain, your crops won't grow, and you and your people will starve. So if your god tells you to attack and kill other people, then you better do it or you won't be blessed. You are afraid that your god might smite you. So a person's god is the most important thing about that person. It's no different today.

People today have their own opinions, even their own version of reality. Today people have essentially made themselves into gods. We are dealing with extreme division today because we have billions of gods running around trying to make the world in their own image. Billions of gods roam the Earth today forcing their will on others.

*What caused division in the city of Ephesus? Why is a person's god the most important thing about that person?*_____

What do we mean that "billions of gods" are roaming the world today? Why is that important?

But the Ephesians experienced the supernatural love and power of the God that Paul was talking about. The Holy Spirit in Paul healed them when their pagan gods did nothing. The Holy Spirit delivered them from evil and demonic powers when their pagan gods could not. And when they came to fellowship, the Christians lived as one. They accepted them, loved them, shared what they had with them. And Paul taught them that Jesus was not angry or vengeful or terrifying. Jesus was not flawed or jealous like Zeus. He was not out to destroy them like Mars. Instead Paul taught them that Jesus loved them and that He came in human form to die for their sins so they could become one with the Father. And like I said the Ephesians got so excited about meeting Jesus that a full-scale Spiritual Awakening took place. They completely and totally abandoned their pagan gods and worshiped Jesus now. These Greeks no longer worshiped Zeus. These Romans no longer worshiped Jupiter. And these Jews received a complete picture of the love and graciousness of Yahweh. So Jews, Greeks, and Romans set aside their old beliefs and misconceptions, united with Christ, who united them to the Father. Now they all worshiped GOD together AS ONE.

"UNITY happens when we SUBMIT our visions to the AUTHORITY of GOD the FATHER."

*How did Paul and the Ephesian Church overcome their personal divisions? Explain.*_____

So now they understood that being a Greek or a Roman or a Jew was not EVEN as important as being a CHRISTIAN. So here's the thing about believing in Zeus and Jupiter. Greeks and Romans both believed these gods lived on Mount Olympus. Only gods could live there. So no humans allowed. Not even Percy Jackson and the Olympians. But Paul introduced them to what REALLY happens when we are united with Christ, a completely different kind of relationship with God.

Let's read this:

"¹⁹ I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms... ⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:19-20; 2:6 NLT).

Jews are blown away when they hear this because they knew they were dead meat if they approached the Presence of Yahweh without the proper sacrifice. Greeks and Romans are blown away because they never heard of a God who loved and cared for them, much less wanted to be WITH them in the Heavenly Realm. So why do we say Jesus is THE ONE? Remember the revelation from last week? The people of God are called Hebrews, or IVRI, because our God allows us to achieve IMPOSSIBLE crossings. Against all odds the IVRI CROSSED the Red Sea and escaped certain death. Against all odds the IVRI CROSSED the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Well, the most IMPOSSIBLE CROSSING OF ALL is to enter the Heavenly Realm. No mortal can achieve this. You may have heard all your life that if you believe in Jesus you will know for sure that you will go to Heaven when you die. But what Paul is revealing to the Ephesians is that your SPIRIT is in Heaven RIGHT NOW. How? By the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. God the Father raised the Son from the dead and seated Him at the Father's right hand. And when we believe in Jesus OUR SPIRIT is raised from the dead, and we are seated with the Son at the right hand of the Father. This is why Jesus is THE ONE.

What does "Hebrew" (Ivri) mean again? _____

Why do we say that Jesus the Messiah is "The One?" _____

Describe the "crossing" that we experience when we follow Jesus? _____

Now follow closely and receive this incredible revelation. When Paul first arrived at Ephesus, BEFORE the Spiritual Awakening occurred, he found some believers who were sympathetic to what he was saying. But there was something about them, something incomplete, something missing. Finally Paul asked them:

"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"

"No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

"Then what baptism did you experience?" Paul asked.

And they replied, "The baptism of John."

Paul said, "Oh! Well, John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus. As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all" (Acts 19:1-4 NLT).

Normally when we say “baptism” we think of going down to the beach and getting ceremonially dunked in the water to proclaim that we believe in Jesus. We’re always happy to give people that opportunity. But baptism is SO much more than a ceremony.

“Baptism is a personal, immersive, experience of God.”

When Paul first met these Ephesian believers, into which God experience were they baptized?

Think of how Koreans make Kim Chee. They take ordinary cabbage and put it in a jar with that secret Kim Chee sauce. Then what? They let it MARINATE in there and the cabbage changes into Kim Chee! Which is the best? Well, everybody has their own opinion, of course, but the secret is to let the cabbage MARINATE. Everybody say “marinate.” So in Acts 19 Paul is going to help these believers marinate or immerse themselves in the latest revelation of what God is doing.

In your own words what is baptism? _____

We actually see three baptisms here: the baptism of John (repentance), the baptism of Jesus (redemption), and the baptism of the Spirit (reconciliation). These disciples heard about John the Baptist, who said, “Repent! The Messiah is coming.” So they’ve been marinating in repentance all this time, preparing for the coming of the Messiah. They meet Paul and he says, “The Messiah came already!” And they were like, “What? No way!” Paul said, “Yes way!” And they believed and received Jesus and they marinated in being redeemed by the Father.

What is the baptism of John and what does that mean? _____

What is the baptism of Jesus and what does that mean? _____

But then Paul said, “Wait, there’s more.”

“Really? What could be better than being forgiven by God?” they asked.

Paul said, “God wants to be with us forever! We’re not just forgiven we are perfectly reconciled with God because of Jesus. In fact, He wants to live WITHIN US, INSIDE US right now! He wants us to--here it is--CARRY His Presence on the Earth. Do you want that?”

And they said, “This is too good to be true! Yes! Yes!”

And just then Paul laid his hands on them and they were baptized in the Holy Spirit, filled to overflowing with the Spirit of God. They began to speak in tongues and prophesy. Now they were marinating in the Holy Spirit. They were baptized or immersed in the Spirit.

What is the baptism of the Spirit and what does that mean? _____

The Church has focused so much on tongues and prophecy, we missed the BIG PICTURE. I pray in tongues all the time. **But don't miss the Manifest Presence because we're too enamored by the manifestations present.**

How might the Church be distracted by charismatic gifts? _____

Remember that God is 3 persons, 1 God, right? Father, Son, and Who? Holy Spirit. So if the Holy Spirit is within you, and the Holy Spirit is in the Trinity, then where does that put you? Because of Jesus, now there are human beings in the Godhead. Listen, on Christmas we're so amazed that God became man, but did you get the revelation that now there's a human being within God? No, it doesn't mean you're God, silly. "Make them ONE," Jesus prayed, "as I am ONE with You and You are one with Me, make them ONE IN US." By baptizing us in the Holy Spirit we have become ONE with the Father and the Son. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is WITHIN US, so now we are ONE with God. We can hear God's voice. We can receive revelation. We are not worried or stressed because we are ONE with God. We can co-create the Kingdom of God on Earth as it is in Heaven. All this happened because of Jesus! And that's why we call HIM "THE ONE." When we are united with Jesus, He unites us with the Father. Jesus immerses us in the Spirit so now we are ONE with the Father and ONE with the Son. Isn't that the most amazing thing ever?

What is the MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE of the baptism of the Holy Spirit? _____

Remember all this happened when Paul first arrived at Ephesus. When more and more believers were marinated in the secret sauce of the Holy Spirit, revival broke out! Why? Because the death and resurrection of Jesus made it possible for them to experience the most impossible CROSSING of all. The people of God, the IVRI, had crossed from death into life, from flesh into the Spirit, from hell into the Heavenly Realm, from separation and isolation to perfect union with God. **By the power of the CROSS, the IVRI had CROSSED the ultimate abyss created by our SIN into the ULTIMATE PROMISED LAND--the Presence of God in the Heavenly Realms.**

Summarize why we call Jesus "The One." Describe our crossing today when we follow Him. _____

So now they no longer spoke to each other from their woundedness or pain. Now they spoke from healing and wholeness. They no longer spoke to each other out of their flesh. They spoke from the Spirit. No more self-speak. Only God-speak. For now they were seated next to Jesus who is seated at the right hand of the Father in the throne room of the Heavenly Realms. And from the THRONE OF HEAVEN, they could now cross ANY division. They can cross over hatred. They can cross over unforgiveness. They can cross over jealousy, greed, and lust. They can cross

over racism. They can cross over ANYTHING that used to divide them. Because now they were seated next to Jesus who sits at the right hand of the Father, where NO DIVISION EXISTS. UNITY with the Father DEMOLISHES ALL DIVISION. And as they continued to experience the love of the Father flowing through each of them to one another, their love, respect, and honor for each other grew stronger and stronger and stronger. And the city of Ephesus took notice. And there was revival and a Great Awakening. All this was possible because Jesus is THE ONE.

How does being ONE with the Father and the Son affect all of our relationships? _____

If you want to cross into the Promised Land of God’s Presence, pray with me. Let’s all pause now and give God our undivided attention and seriously respond to Him. Let’s pour out our hearts to God. Father in Heaven, (go ahead and pray that out loud). Father in Heaven, thank you for Jesus. Jesus, thank you for your death and resurrection. You are indeed THE ONE. I believe in You. And I repent of all my selfishness and self-speak. And I make the crossing. I follow You, Jesus, as You take us from death into life, from the gates of hell to the throne of Heaven, from division to unity. Once again You empower Your people to make an impossible crossing--now into the ULTIMATE PROMISED LAND of Your Presence WITHIN US. Transform us now as we marinate in Your Presence. Thank You for making us ONE with YOU so we can be ONE with each other. All glory and honor and praise be to You, our God. For there is none like You. This we pray in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in whom we now dwell in marvelous light. And all the IVRI said, “AMEN!”

Tell the person next to you, “I love you and there’s nothing you can do about it.” We’ll see you next week for even more REVELATION as our ONE SERIES CONTINUES! I love you guys and there’s nothing you can do about it! ALOOO-HA!

Take a moment to write your own personal prayer response to God. Tell how God how you will repent. How will your life change now that you know your place in the Heavenly Realms? How will you relate to your family differently? Be as specific as possible. _____

