

Study Guide

JAYWANT MICHAEL

BY STILL WATERS

Pondering the Psalms

Psalm 133. Wonderful and Beautiful

TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO

My friend Augustus usually asks this question when the topic of “Christian Families” comes up. “Can you give me an example of a ‘perfect’ family found in the Bible?” Till date, I don’t believe anyone has come up with a satisfactory example. The same is the case about brothers and sisters in the church family.

As we reflect today on Psalm 133, we realize how uncommon the words in verse 1 is in reality. “How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along!” Is it not strange that though we worship the same God, follow the same Scriptures, proclaim the same Gospel message and believe we are going to the same destination in the end, we Christians fail to live in unity and get along with each other? Though we all bear the label “Christian” the truth is we allow many things to divide us. Unfortunately, this happens even within denominations and many times within a congregation.

A congregation I am very familiar with personifies the exact opposite of what Psalm 133 v 1 says. To describe them I would have to change the verse to read “How dreadful and unpleasant it is when brothers and sisters can’t get along!”

What causes such disunity that makes them conclude that getting along seems impossible? The one-word answer is “selfishness.” Or as Paul puts it more accurately it is “selfish-ambition” and all the baggage that accompanies it. Paul’s advice to the Philippians on this matter is worth repeating today, “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.*” (Philippians 2:3) Paul goes on to explain this further in the next verse: “*Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.*” (Philippians 2:4)

Sadly, the conflict and turmoil in the dysfunctional congregation, is the handiwork of a handful of self-seeking people with selfish needs, desires, and ambitions. They have no hesitation in causing divisions and factions and no concern about the damage they are causing to the body of Christ.

Such behavior is not in line with those who have the mind of Christ. Worldliness, not godliness, is the hallmark of a church where members cannot get along. They are very similar to the Corinthians who Paul admonishes and says, “*For you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn’t that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren’t you living like worldly people?*” (1 Corinthians 3:3).

So, what is the solution to end disunity and bring harmony? The answer is simple. Members are to consider others’ needs before their own. This is easier said than done, especially when people are driven by their own self-importance, pride and blind ambition. Paul advises us to “*be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love*” (Ephesians 4:2). Not easy at all but worth all the effort because a church filled with such people cannot help but have peace, unity, and harmony.

A truly humble person is able to identify his or her own faults in the light of the perfections of Christ. This creates a more generous attitude that does not focus only on the faults of others. At times when faults that need to be addressed are noticed, they speak the truth in love. The desire is to build the other person instead of tearing them down. Most importantly as Christians, we must see each other based on what Christ did on the cross. Just like for us, Christ lovingly and willingly died a horrifying and excruciating death for these fellow Christians as well. Can we not extend the love, mercy,

and grace we received from Christ to these people, however undeserving they may be?

As followers of Christ our job is not to quarrel and demand the fulfillment only of our needs. We are called to reflect Jesus' grace and love to those who belong to Him. Our job is not to prevent others from serving Christ because of the differences we have with them. The church family of brothers and sisters living in harmony will be one that experiences "the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron's head" (Psalm 133 v2). In other words, it will be a congregation filled with the Holy Spirit.

Harmony will also result in a "refreshing as the dew from Mount Hermon." Dew in the Bible refers to the "life giving Word of God" as we see in Deuteronomy 32:2 "*Let my teaching fall on you like rain, let my speech settle like dew.*" Harmony will result in a church family that regularly experiences the presence of the Holy Spirit and the word of God. This will enable it to witness God's life-giving word in all its ministries and in the lives of its members.

Though, difficult let us all with God's help desire and work to get along and have this kind of unity. Why, because that will result in a church that is wonderful and pleasant and definitely a feast for our Lord's eyes!

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- Ask questions: bystillwaters.always@gmail.com
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This study guide was prepared by Jaywant Michael