



Zambia Training June 28 - July 10, 2023



Unity is a choice...

A friend recently commented that wherever Shepherds' Support goes, "unity seems to be a result". In contrast, when I look around our world today what stands out is divisiveness. Name the area (politics, sports, climate, identity, where you shop....), everything is pushed to be divisive. People speak of being "inclusive", but their actions still divide by defining their own personal standard of who and how this must be done.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, **that all of them may be one**, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you." John 17: 20-21

We don't really "push" the importance of unity, but it seems like it matters a lot to God (the Trinity - Mark 12:29, marriage - Matthew 19:4-6, the body of Christ - 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Psalm 133, John 17:20-21....). We find that unity and togetherness are a genuine result of having a God-centered standard and keeping our eyes fixed upon Jesus.



Unity is a choice... to put Jesus first.

I think that is how I would describe what God taught us at our training in northern Zambia last week. The seeds of unity were planted as 24 Zambian pastoral couples made a choice to step away from other things and focus on their lives, marriages and fellowship with Jesus Christ.

Our frequent times of a cappella worship sprang from the heart and soul of the participants. The rhythms, harmonies and lyrics rose together as a sweet incense of praise to the Father which drew us closer together as brothers and sisters.





The Biblical truths and teachings from 1 Peter and Genesis along with the transparent personal examples shared provided fertile ground for us to better understand God's purposes in the midst of life's challenges and the importance of facing them together. The Spirit of God was deepening our roots of unity.

Unity is a choice... experienced together.

On Wednesday night tragedy struck. The first-born, 15 month old daughter of one of the couples grew quickly ill during the evening. Although care was given, later that night a



Zambian nurse sent the family to the hospital for additional treatment. Sadly, a few hours later, the little child died in the hospital.



Everyone was heartbroken. The themes of suffering and togetherness in Christ became very real. So, on Thursday morning, all of the participants met and we chose to change the schedule, travel one hour to the home of the grieving couple and comfort them by their side. It was a deeply moving experience. Tears were shed, songs were sung, Scripture was shared and hugs lingered long. The young father shared that despite his grief, he saw the grace of God preparing them for this tragedy through the teaching and togetherness of the previous days.

Later in the day, more stories were shared of God's grace and redemptive character in the midst of hardships. In 1 Peter 1:3 we are reminded that we have a living hope and Hebrews 12:1-3 exhorts us to keep our eyes fixed upon Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.



Unity is a choice to put Jesus first and experience together.



Celebrating the Lord's Supper with such a diverse group at the conclusion of an amazing week was a joyful expression of the unity that God had created amongst us in Christ. Yes, unity does seem to be an important "thing" with God, and so it is with us. This past week we saw God bring together the body of Christ to come alongside a grieving couple in a very tangible way that will forever impact their lives and the community around them.

Watch a short video of our July, 2023 training in northern Zambia



Ways you can pray!

1. Thank the Lord with us for His presence throughout the week and for safe travels to and from the training conference.
 2. Praise God for the gift of unity that He models and expresses through the body of Christ.
 3. Please pray for the young couple that lost their baby girl. May the Lord and His church be their comfort and hope! May God use this experience for His glory!
 4. Pray for the Kosovo team that is preparing for our next training conference on August 25 - September 3. Our Eastern European Associate Director, Will Schraven, is leading this team of eight as they serve a group of 30 young pastoral couples
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Thank you! We greatly needed your prayer support through this entire trip. God was present and He honored your prayers.

Together for a lifetime!

Rick and Diana Lowe

And the Shepherds' Support Board:

David and Beth Butler, Jack and Nancy Shirley, Sid and Zane Williams, Daniel and



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Kate Wurzburg