

How to Guard the Treasure of Your Relationship With God

The most precious thing in Jesus' earthly life was His union with His heavenly Father: "I and my father are one [one in essence or nature; also at one, or unified]" (John 10:30). It was everything to Him.

That sacred bond preceded all His other relationships, sustained His rich spiritual life, and empowered His diverse and dynamic teaching, preaching, mentoring, healing, and charity ministries. Every decision Jesus made, every action He undertook, every word He spoke, every new course He chose or declined was motivated by His determination to preserve His union with His Father.

Whatever His Father willed, Jesus agreed with it so He would always be at one with Him: "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29). He maintained that oneness, that mystical connection, that marvelous intertwining of His and His Father's Spirits, minds, and actions, at all costs. The public could criticize or praise Him, His disciples could come or go, but Jesus always nurtured and protected the union—His unique closeness, fellowship, harmony, and alliance with heaven—every day in every situation. It began in Nazareth.

Though Jesus preached no sermons and worked no miracles for thirty years, He nevertheless served, faithfully nourishing, growing, and guarding the union by consistently obeying His Father. After Jesus' stunning debut before the nation's religious leaders at age twelve, rather than start His ministry He opted to return to Nazareth to continue submissively serving Joseph and Mary. Why? It was His Father's will. Years later He did the opposite, refusing to leave His growing ministry to return with His mother and family to Nazareth (Mark 3:21, 31-35). Why? It was His Father's will.

Seeing Jesus' focus, Satan aimed to break it.

In the temptation, he attempted to separate Father and Son by persuading Jesus to change His focus. He offered Him several alluring alternatives—pleasing Himself physically, empowering Himself politically, or promoting Himself religiously—but they all contradicted His Father's will. He sent Jesus not to serve the flesh but the Spirit, not to rule but to be rejected, not to be crowned but to be crucified to redeem the world. When Jesus said no, the union prevailed and tempter failed. But only “for a season” (Luke 4:13).

Persistent, Satan kept trying to disrupt the union and abort God's plan during Jesus' ministry. He moved Jewish nationalists, after seeing Jesus' miracles, to suggest He establish His kingdom immediately by force of arms (John 6:15), but Jesus again said no. When Jesus announced He was going to the cross, His closest disciple strongly objected.

Finally, when Jesus was on the cross, the religious leaders taunted Him to “come down” to save Himself. But again He refused. Why? The union.

Jesus prayed our union with Him would be like His and His Father's: “Father...that they may be one, even as we are one” (John 17:22). He taught our alliance would be like a vine's bond with its branches—a constant vital dependency yielding life, fruit, and honor for the vinedresser (John 15:1-8). He said loving, trusting obedience keeps our connection strong and growing: “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love [union], even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love” (v. 10). If wise, we'll cherish our alliance as He did His.

We'll nourish our union daily with private prayer, Bible reading, and worship. We'll maintain it by constantly following His Spirit's guidance. We'll grow it by living faithfully for Jesus in our home, church, neighborhood, and

workplace. We'll protect it by training ourselves to think scripturally, not secularly; humbly, not haughtily; kindly, not callously; generously, not selfishly. We'll preserve it by forgiving offenders and reconciling with those we offend.

We'll keep it unencumbered by quickly confessing sins to Christ and laying aside burdens of anxiety. We'll strengthen it by loving those Jesus loves most—Christians—by fellowship, patience, and assistance. We'll keep it “first” (Matt. 6:33) by favoring it over any relationship that could hinder or ruin it. When the tempter presses, we'll follow Jesus' example: refusing allurements, though they strongly stir our desires; rejecting distractions, lest they waste our time, energy, or resources; enduring crosses, accepting these negative situations as positive opportunities to obey God and prove our loyalty to Him. Why? The union.

In these last days God is raising a new body of believers like Jesus—a taught, tested, transformed, purified bride church (Eph. 5:25-27). Every choice they make, every word they speak, every action they take or decline, will be decided by one question: Will it help or hinder the union? Be among them. Today, commit yourself unswervingly to the union.

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