

Learning to Ask for Help

Karen Van Schouwen

Dordt University, Karen.VanSchouwen@dordt.edu

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God's fullness, is itself a unity that spans the divide of Jew and Gentile. In the Messiah, we discover that God's reason for dividing up humanity in this way was ultimately to unite the two in Christ, who "himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility" (2:14-16).

Reconciled fellowship in unity with other people, then, is not incidental to my experience of eternal life: it is my experience of eternal life. Salvation means the coming together of all things into unity in the Messiah, by the transforming power of God's grace. Eternal life is an eternal fellowship, a communion of difference gathered into perfect oneness through the working of the blood-bought Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. The very purpose of created difference and diversity is their communion and oneness, and the whole story of Scripture—the story of the human race, of Israel and the nations, ultimately of heaven and earth—is a story of God's costly grace transforming fraught division into fruitful unity. The Creator makes two so that the two may become one. This purpose is rooted in God's own character and identity, as an eternal union and communion of Father and Son in one Holy Spirit.

What does this mean for me, then, as I approach my brothers and sisters in Christ amid our differences? It means that one of my foremost needs is for new eyes to see that our fellowship in God is not an addendum to my individual experience of eternal life. Rather, that fellowship is an experience of eternal life already begun, of the new humanity that God has established in the death and resurrection of his Son.

However long it may take, then, and whatever the difficulty, I *must* seek agreement and unity with my neighbor in Christ, because eternal life cannot be lived without us both, "reconciled to God in one body by the cross."

Although the grace-empowered process of attaining full unity will be complete only in "the fullness of time," it has already begun in the risen Messiah, and we are called to safeguard our mutual share in it, "bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:2-3). For this to happen, we must be "renewed in the spirit of [our] minds" and "put on the new humanity," viewing ourselves and each other in terms of the transcendent reality of our shared identity in the Messiah and acting accordingly (4:23-24). Only when we locate our differences within the shared context of God's will to unite all things in his Son can we start to relate in love, allowing our objective identity in him to exert continual pressure on our relationship.

None of this is to say that doing so is an easy or comfortable process. That is why Paul calls it "*bearing with one another*." Our togetherness in the Messiah will reveal a myriad of obstacles to unity in each of us, and we are called to endure the uncomfortable process of transformation that God promises to carry out in our relationships as he unearths all the things in us that impede our fellowship, passes judgment, and remakes us into people who are truly one. But embracing that process may come more easily if we can recognize that oneness in Christ for what it really is: the foretaste of eternal life.



DR. DAVID WESTFALL,
PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY

LEARNING TO ASK FOR HELP

For many of us, asking for help is as enjoyable as cleaning out our shower drain. A true act of courage and humility, an ask for help often feels more like an act of desperation and defeat. In the face of a difficult task or a challenging situation most of us would rather choose to grit our teeth, roll up our sleeves, and dig deep into our self-reliance.



It's easy for us to believe that our individual successes stand alone, unsupported and unaided by anyone or anything. We take pride in our independence and find satisfaction in our personal accomplishments. And yet, more often than not, we find that our greatest achievements are actually rooted in the help and support of others—in the moments we fall short, when what we have and what we can do alone is simply not enough.

Over the past year, the Dordt University Hope Fund has helped students experiencing financial hardship due to Covid-19. To date, the Hope Fund has raised more than \$900,000 for students and families who have asked for help. Providing students with financial assistance, mental health services, and learning accommodations, the Hope Fund has helped make it possible for every student to attain their degree at Dordt.

The Hope Fund is a beautiful reminder of all that is possible when we are bold enough to ask for help and bold enough to respond.

To learn more about the Hope Fund, visit dordt.edu/hope.



KAREN VAN SCHOUWEN ('01),
DIRECTOR OF ANNUAL GIVING