

Being a Spiritually Minded Christian
Part Twenty-Two
Being in One Accord
Knowing Christ as the Good Shepherd through Fellowship

- *The Greek word ὁμοθυμαδόν (homothymadon) is used 12 times in the New Testament and it is usually translated as “with one accord.”*
- *ὁμοθυμαδόν (homothymadon) means “pertaining to mutual consent or agreement, with one mind, by common consent, unanimously, in togetherness, as one.”*
- *“ὁμοθυμαδόν (homothymadon) is a compound of two words meaning to ‘rush along’ and ‘in unison.’ The image is almost musical; a number of notes are sounded which, while different, harmonize in pitch and tone. As the instruments of a great concert under the direction of a concertmaster, the Holy Spirit blends together the lives of members of Christ's Church.”*
- *Unity is not conformity. Unity is harmony where everyone plays their unique part using their special gifts and blending their hearts and lives together to reveal the person of Christ. “For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.” (1 Corinthians 12:12).*
- *The Greek word for “with one accord” is used seven times in the Book of Acts to describe the early church. Each reference reveals a different purpose, benefit, and aspect of Christians gathering together in fellowship around Christ.*
- *In the Book of Acts, the Church came together seven times “with one accord,” and in the Gospel of John, Jesus made seven statements about being the great “I am.” It appears that these seven “with one accord’s” found in Acts and the seven “I am’s” in John correlate in the same order.*
- *Each of the seven “I am’s” in the Gospel of John reveals a different aspect of who Jesus is and who Jesus is in our relationship with Him.*
- *The first three “I am’s” in the Gospel of John reveal who Jesus is with the main focus or emphasis on what He has done for us and what we have received from Him.*
- *The last three “I am’s” in the Gospel of John reveal who Jesus is with the main focus or emphasis on what He wants to do through us. It provides a challenge for us to respond to who He is, in order that we can see His will not only fulfilled in our lives personally, but to see His will fulfilled on earth as it is already done in Heaven.*
- *The fourth or middle of the seven “I am’s” is the pivotal one where an exchange takes place and our focus and loyalty move from ourselves to Jesus Christ.*

- *The first “I am” is found in John 6, where Jesus identifies Himself as the Bread of Life. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.” (John 6:51a). We can rejoice that Jesus saved us from eternal damnation and has given us eternal life and we no longer need to fear death or Hell because, “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.” (John 5:24).*
- *The second “I am” is found in John 8:12, where Jesus identified Himself as the Light of the world. “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”” We can rejoice that we no longer have to walk in darkness but we can walk in the light of His love and truth.*
- *The third “I am” is found in John 10:9 where Jesus identified Himself as the Door by which He provides protection and security against both the enemy and the uncertainties of life. “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.” We can rejoice and be secure in His love and be confident that He is faithful to protect us and provide for our needs.*
- *Some Christians are content with the most basic “I am” and are happy just to know Christ as the Bread of Life and that they are going to Heaven but they care little of what Christ is offering them and asking them to do.*
- *When I was a very young Christian I was so happy that the Holy Spirit had revealed Jesus to me and that I had eternal life. My main focus was on what He had done for me and not what He wanted to do in other people’s lives.*
- *As Christians we are to move beyond just knowing Christ as the Bread of Life and begin to know Jesus as the Light of the World. Through Christ in us we are to be a light to the world so His life and salvation can be known to those around us. However, if we do not move beyond this second “I am” our motivation can become tainted and we may become more focused on how God is using us than on how the Gospel is impacting the ones with whom we are sharing.*
- *The next step in our spiritual growth is to come to know Jesus as the Door of the Sheep. At this stage we discover the delight of being able to trust Jesus for every need and in every circumstance we face. This provides us with a deep sense of security where we can learn to enter into the rest of faith. “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” (Hebrews 4:9). We can learn to rest in His faithfulness no matter what difficulties or trials we may face.*
- *, some Christians become so content at knowing Christ as the Door that they feel no need to move beyond this point to know further aspects of who He is. The Gospel can then be misinterpreted and become very self-serving. We may falsely believe that the ultimate purpose of the Gospel is all about us living a prosperous and comfortable life*

on this earth, free from trials, losses, sorrows, sickness, and persecution. Such an unrealistic view will cause us to become very frustrated very quickly.

- *However, just because we know Jesus as the Door does not mean our lives will be free from trials, but He does comfort us by saying, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33).*
- *The prosperity message, which was developed because it doesn’t go beyond knowing Christ as the Door, in many ways contains truth and seems to offer fulfillment. However, God is really challenging us as believers and His disciples to go much deeper and find a greater degree of satisfaction and fulfillment by knowing Jesus in other ways.*
- *The stages of our spiritual growth can be compared to how we grow and mature as humans in the natural. We start off as nursing babies totally dependent on our parents and especially our mothers. However, we need to continue to grow to become children and develop into young men and women, then mature adults, and finally wise elders who can disciple others.*
- *1 John 2 provides us with some insights into our spiritual growth. We start off as little children having had our sins forgiven. “I write to you, little children, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake.” (verse 12). At this point not much else is expected from us but to learn to enjoy God’s love and acceptance just as an infant or a very young child can enjoy his mother’s loving embrace and accept being fed and cared for.*
- *However, we are not to remain as infants but to grow into young men and women who are strong and able to serve God and overcome the ploys of the enemy and the traps of the flesh. “I write to you, young men, Because you have overcome the wicked one.” (Verse 13b).*
- *Ultimately, we are to grow into mature men and women of God where we can disciple and train up others. We can share our intimate relationship with God with younger believers to help them grow into mature and strong followers of Jesus. As they mature and grow, they can then disciple others. “I write to you, fathers, Because you have known Him who is from the beginning.” (verse 13a).*
- *Moving from being an infant to a child to a young man, to a mature adult to finally an elder illustrates the entire gamut of our spiritual journey.*
- *Infants are totally self-centered and in their mind the entire universe revolves around them. As long as infants have their tummies full and their bums dry they are happy. This does not mean that the parents do not love or find great joy and satisfaction in their newborns, but the parent’s love is not based on the infant’s behavior, but simply*

because the child is theirs. However, if a teenage maintained the same selfish attitude it would not be appropriate or well received by the parents.

- *As a baby grows from infancy to adulthood there is to be a constant progression and growth from being selfish and self-seeking to seeking to please God and being mindful of the welfare of others.*
- *When we are obedient to God’s Word and the leading of His Holy Spirit it does not mean He accepts us more, for we are fully accepted in Christ already, but it does mean our obedience brings joy to God’s heart.*
- *Apostle Paul described this spiritual progression and growth by describing how he developed and grew into an adult. “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” (1 Corinthians 13:11). Putting away childish ways of thinking does not mean they were wrong when he was a child, but they are inappropriate for one who is a grown and mature adult.*
- *It is normal and healthy for us to start our spiritual journey as spiritual babies, in fact that is the way it always is. However, we need to realize that we need to grow and mature and not remain as spiritual infants. “For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.” (Hebrews 5:12–13). New Christians, like new babies require a lot of feeding and a lot of changes.*
- *Paul’s highest commendation of Timothy is that he had grown into a mature Christian who no longer sought to please only himself but who also was sincerely concerned about the needs and struggles of others, “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:20-21). Timothy had chosen the things most precious to Christ to be his highest priority as he served others.*
- *Jesus described the pinnacle for spiritual maturity, leadership, and authority in His kingdom, as the willingness to care for and serve others. “And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20:27–28).*
- *Apostle John described the great joy he received when he saw his spiritual children growing and maturing and learning to live selfless lives for Jesus. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.” (3 John 4). Living selfless lives for Christ does not mean we cannot enjoy life or God’s blessings, but we have learned to live by this principle: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33).*

- *Some Christians are satisfied just to know Jesus as the Door, while others are willing and greatly desire to know Jesus in all His glory, holiness, and power. They step through the Door to find Jesus as the next “I am” in John 10:11: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”*
- *Knowing Jesus as the Bread of Life satisfies our need for self-perseveration.*
- *Knowing Jesus as the Light of the World satisfies our need for self-expression so we can express Jesus’ light through us to this world.*
- *Knowing Jesus as the Door satisfies our need for security.*
- *Knowing Jesus as the Good Shepherd meets our great need to know that Christ is loyal to us, even to the point of dying for us. We can respond to and reciprocate His loyalty by being fully loyal to Him.*

John 10:11–18 (NKJV)

¹¹**“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.**

¹²**But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.**

¹³**The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.**

- *Jesus contrasted the good shepherd who loves the sheep and lays his life down for the sheep with a hireling who is only motivated by self-interest and will flee at the slightest sign of trouble.*
- *The principle for knowing Jesus as the Good Shepherd is to really be convinced of His unwavering loyalty, love, and faithfulness to us.*
- *Once we are truly convinced of His love for us and that He did not flee from “the wolf” but gave His life for us at Calvary, we will see Him as the Good Shepherd who has promised “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5).*

John 10

¹⁴**I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.**

- *Another important and wonderful attribute of our Good Shepherd is the intimacy, friendship, and personal interest He has for each one of His sheep. “I know My sheep, and am known by My own.”*
- *Jesus as our Good Shepherd is interested in every detail of our lives and attentive to every whisper of our hearts. “But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” (Luke 12:7a). Talk about detail! Not only is each hair counted, they are individually numbered.*

¹⁵**As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.**

- *Jesus' sacrificial suffering and death at Calvary is really a reflection of the Father's love. Jesus knew the heart of the Father and carried out His Father's will to redeem us and restore us back to the Father, "even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."*

¹⁶And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

- *We see the extent of God's love. He is gathering together into one flock His Church, and all who are willing to put their faith in Jesus Christ no matter what their ethnicity, background, failures, weaknesses, or anything else. All one must do is respond to His voice when He calls us to Himself to be part of His flock!*

¹⁷"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

¹⁸No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

- *God the Father's heart is so filled with love that Jesus in response to His Father's love for us and Jesus' own love for us, laid down His life for us.*
- *For us to grasp the enormity of Jesus' love for us is to understand that He willingly suffered the most terrible death in all of history, to be the sin offering for all of mankind. At any point Jesus could have stopped His terrible suffering and pain and escaped death because "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" but He chose to endure the suffering and become sin for us so we could be saved!*
- *After we have grasped the truth that He is the Good Shepherd who suffered fully for our redemption, we can begin to learn to fully trust Him and surrender our lives to Him and allow Him to direct our paths. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6).*
- *A well-known Scripture that encourages us to cast all our worries upon the Lord is 1 Peter 5:7, "casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." What some fail to recognize is that it really is in the context of us learning to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of the Good Shepherd and trusting Him to get us to the correct destination no matter what route He chooses. "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." (1 Peter 5:6).*
- *If you want to be led by the Shepherd you need to follow the Shepherd!*
- *Some Christians complain about the path God is leading them on but they may find that sometimes they have stopped following His lead and have strayed off the path that He has for them. Instead of finding pastureland they find a wilderness.*

- *Other times our Good Shepherd leads us through the wilderness, just as He did with Israel, because the final destination was the Promised Land. However, we need to stick closely to His leading because even in the desert He knows where the watering holes are located.*

Matthew 26:31–33 (NKJV)

³¹Then Jesus said to them, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’

³²But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”

³³Peter answered and said to Him, “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”

- *Jesus described how He was going to lay down His life for the sheep of His flock and be struck down. “I will strike the Shepherd.”*
- *It initially appeared as if all was lost when even His disciples would be scattered. “And the sheep of the flock will be scattered.”*
- *However, ultimately, the final result will be that He will gather together all of His sheep into one flock. “But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.”*
- *Peter’s response is very telling, for He overestimated his own loyalty to Christ and He underestimated the perfection of Jesus’ plan as the Good Shepherd to lead His sheep to a place of safety and salvation. “Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.”*
- *It requires time for us to mature and grow until we can fully grasp that Jesus is our Good Shepherd and that He is fully loyal to us.*
- *It also requires time until the reality of His love and faithfulness permeates every area of our hearts and lives so we can become fully loyal and faithful to Him.*
- *If we are to become faithful sheep we need to grow confident in the perfection of God’s plan for our lives both individually and corporately. “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:32).*
- *We need to be patient with ourselves, even as God is patient with us, as we slowly and step by step grow in our trust, love, commitment, and loyalty to Christ.*
- *In John, Chapter 21, Jesus instructed Peter to feed His sheep and pointed out that Peter’s degree of submission and loyalty needed to continue to develop and deepen.*
- *Peter was grieved when Jesus asked him for the third time if he loved Him. “He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?” Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him,*

“Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus said to him, “Feed My sheep.”” (John 21:17). The memory of Peter’s denial of Jesus three times was still fresh in his mind and he probably wanted to forget his failure and reassure himself that he wouldn’t betray Him another time.

- **However, Jesus in His tenderness and love for Peter wanted to expose areas in his heart where his loyalty to himself superseded his loyalty to Christ so He just said one small thing to Peter. “Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish.” This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, “Follow Me.”” (John 21:18-19).**
- **Peter’s response to Jesus’ revelation that his ministry was going to end in martyrdom was immediate. “Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, “Lord, who is the one who betrays You?” Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, “But Lord, what about this man?”” (John 21:20-21). Peter’s selfish streak was revealed as he pointed to John implying, “Why am I the one who always gets the short end of the stick and will be martyred? What about him?”**
- **Jesus’ words really exposed Peter’s struggle with selfishness and competitiveness. “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me.” (John 21:22). Basically Jesus said, “What I do in other people’s lives is not your concern. Your only concern is to follow Me where I lead you and accept what I want to do in your life.”**
- **Jesus pointed out Peter’s area of weakness not because He was displeased with him, but because He had great plans for him. However, God’s purposes for Peter’s life could only be fully realized if he became fully loyal and submitted to Christ. Jesus could have said, “You are going to be a great apostle and a pillar in the Church,” but that would only have fed Peter’s pride and selfishness. Jesus knows exact what we need to hear to help us grow into His image.**
- **The wonderful and encouraging news is that Peter, even after previously experiencing a number of failures, embraced Jesus’ correction and developed to become the great apostle that he was called to be. In fact, Peter joyfully embraced God’s purposes for his life even when he faced martyrdom, “knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.” (1 Peter 1:14).**
- **However, equally wonderful was Peter’s faithfulness to feed Jesus’ sheep right to the end of his life, reminding them of God’s prophetic Word. “Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you,” “Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.” (1 Peter 1:13,15).**

- *Peter understood what loyalty really looked like: a willingness to put Christ before everything else including his own life. “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” (John 15:13-14). The same man who was afraid of a little servant girl and denied Jesus three times was now the one who boldly faced a martyr’s death because he wanted to glorify Christ with his whole life.*
- *Apostle Paul also reflected that same degree of loyalty and confidence in Jesus. “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21).*
- *To develop total loyalty to Christ is a journey and our Good Shepherd is faithful to lead us on that journey until we arrive and find the joy of living fully for Him. “For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.” (Romans 14:7-8).*
- *Total loyalty to Christ is not a place of bondage but a place of wonderful joy and freedom. It will produce complete rest and satisfaction in our hearts no matter what circumstance we may face because He is always with us. “But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.” (Acts 20:24).*
- *The fourth time that the phrase “with one accord” is used in the Book of Acts in respect to the church is found in Acts, Chapter four. Peter and John had just been threatened by the Jewish religious leaders to no longer preach or teach about Jesus but Peter and John responded with boldness. “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19b).*
- *When Peter and John returned to the Church and reported the threats they had received from the chief priests and the elders the response of the believers was also filled with faith and boldness. “So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them.” “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.” (Acts 4:24, 29-30).*
- *When the believers came together and heard the threats that had been spoken over them by the chief priests and elders because of their faith in Jesus, they did not shrink back but were stirred in their confidence in God’s leading and proclaimed their unwavering loyalty to Jesus with one accord and asked for greater boldness and power to preach the Gospel. Rather than ask God for peace and safety, they asked for boldness and power. They did not ask to be hidden but to be seen so Jesus’ gospel could be proclaimed.*

- *Their loyalty to Jesus led them to seek to be even bolder witnesses. They didn't murmur or even question why opposition had arisen, but simply stayed steadfast in their commitment to God.*
- *God's response was immediate and powerful. "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." (Acts 4:31). As on the Day of Pentecost, their assembly place was shaken, prophetically suggesting how the gospel would shake the world.*
- *A short time later the apostles were beaten by the religious leaders because they continued to preach Jesus Christ, "when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go." (Acts 5:40b).*
- *The response of the apostles being beaten clearly reflected their total loyalty to Christ. "So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." (Acts 5:41).*
- *The apostles didn't complain or ask why God allowed them to be beaten.*
- *They didn't cower and flee the persecution and hide the message of the Gospel.*
- *They lifted their voices and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus. This is what true loyalty looks like: being willing to suffer shame and maltreatment for the sake of a friend!*
- *We need to daily cultivate and spend time meditating and considering how great a price Jesus paid of us by dying for our sins on the cross. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree")." (Galatians 3:13).*
- *One of the key components and purposes of our devotional time with God in reading the Bible and prayer is to have a heart overflowing with thanksgiving and praise for God's awesome love as it was manifest through Jesus' sacrificial death. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16).*
- *To truly know Christ as the Good Shepherd there is a cost we must be willing to pay by learning to lay our lives down for Him. We will never be able to fully grasp His loyalty to us until we learn to be loyal to Him. Our loyalty to Jesus must be motivated by both a deep love for Him but also an unshakable faith and confidence in His goodness and the perfection of His ways and plans. These take time and patience to develop.*

- ***Jesus is our Good Shepherd and He firmly holds us in His hands, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand. I and My Father are one.” (John 10:27-30). What a wonderful example of God’s steadfast faithfulness to us as our Good Shepherd.***