

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 11, Foundations Union, John 17, Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 11, Foundations Union, John 17, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Robert Peterson's teaching, the eleventh session on "**The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ**," focuses on **John 17** as a foundation for understanding believers' union with Christ. The lecture highlights Jesus' **priestly prayer**, emphasizing the **mutual indwelling** of the Father and the Son, and extending this concept to the **indwelling of believers** within them through grace. Peterson explores how this **divine co-adherence** forms the basis for Christian unity and participation in God's eternal life, contrasting John's emphasis with Pauline teachings and underscoring the missional implications of this union. He concludes by urging believers to **worship, rely on Christ, and live out this unity** in fellowship and mission.

2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 11 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Theology → Theology, Peterson → Holy Spirit and Union with Christ).



**Peterson_HolySpirit
_Session 11.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 11, Foundations Union, John 17

Briefing Document: Dr. Robert A. Peterson on Union with Christ in John 17

Overview: This briefing document summarizes the main themes and important ideas presented by Dr. Robert A. Peterson in Session 11 of his teaching series on "The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ." This session specifically delves into John 17, Jesus' high priestly prayer, to establish foundational understandings of the believer's union with Christ, emphasizing the mutual indwelling within the Trinity and between the Trinity and believers.

Main Themes and Important Ideas:

1. **Focus on John 17:** The session centers on John 17, which Peterson identifies as a pivotal passage speaking to the "mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, and the Son and believers." He notes the traditional division of the prayer: Jesus praying for himself (verses 1-5), his disciples (verses 6-19), and future believers (verses 20-26).
2. **Mutual Indwelling as the Foundation of Unity:** A key theme is the mutual indwelling within the Godhead (Father and Son) as the basis for the unity of believers. Peterson highlights John 17:21: "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." He emphasizes that the "mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son is the basis for the unity of those who will believe in Jesus through the Apostle's witness."
3. **Believers in the Trinity:** Peterson stresses the significant point that John's Gospel uniquely speaks of believers being "in the Father and the Son," whereas other passages primarily state believers are "in the Son." He argues that, while John doesn't systematically lay it out, the unity of the Godhead necessitates the conclusion that "we are in the Holy Trinity." He clarifies, "We distinguish the divine persons but never separate them."
4. **Creaturely and Grace-Caused Union:** While affirming believers are "caught up in the mutual indwelling of the Godhead," Peterson maintains the "creator-creature distinction." He clarifies that "the Trinity indwells one another and us in ways we do not indwell the Trinity." Our indwelling is "mysterious and marvelous" and occurs in a "creaturely, grace-caused way, through Christ and the work of the

Spirit." This allows believers to "participate in the divine love and life that the Trinitarian persons have always shared" but as finite, created beings. He explicitly states, "Our indwelling of the Trinity... is by grace. Not by nature."

5. **The Role of the Holy Spirit:** While John's Gospel doesn't explicitly detail the Spirit's role in union with Christ as Paul does, Peterson notes that John provides the foundational elements. He points out that Paul "plainly teaches that the Spirit is the main actor joining us to Christ." He suggests that systematic theology can synthesize John's teachings with Paul's to understand the Spirit's role.
6. **Glory and Unity:** Peterson connects the divine glory given by the Father to the Son as the basis for the unity among believers. Quoting John 17:22, "The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one," he argues that this shared glory facilitates Christian unity, mirroring the unity within the Trinity.
7. **Missionary Implications:** The mutual indwelling and unity have missional implications. Peterson highlights Jesus' words, "God in us and us in God, so that the world may know that you sent me, Jesus says, and that you love the world, even as you loved me." He concludes that "God is a missionary God," and the unity of believers serves as a witness to the world.
8. **Distinctive of John's Gospel:** Peterson contrasts John's approach to union with Christ with Paul's. John focuses on mutual indwelling, the bread of life, the vine and branches, while Paul emphasizes dying, being buried, and raised with Christ, and being blessed in Christ. John's teachings are seen as "complementary truths" to Paul's.
9. **Systematization of John's Teachings:** Peterson acknowledges that John doesn't always explicitly state the Trinitarian nature of the indwelling but argues that it is an "inescapable conclusion" based on the unity of God. He sees the doctrine of the Trinity as unfolding in redemptive history, fully revealed at Pentecost with the sending of the Spirit.
10. **Practical Application ("So What?"):** Peterson concludes with several practical applications of these theological truths:
 - **Wonder and Worship:** Believers should be filled with awe at the reality of being in the Trinity.
 - **Spiritual Sustenance in Christ:** We must "eat and drink the Son of God" (John 6:55-57), relying on him for spiritual life.

- **Focus on Christ for Understanding God:** Studying Christology is essential to know the Father (John 14:9-10).
- **Abiding in Christ as Branches in the Vine:** Maintaining a personal relationship with Jesus, abiding in his love (John 15:9).
- **Motivated to Live Out Unity:** The unity prayed for in John 17:22-23 should motivate believers to overcome divisions and welcome other Christians (Romans 15:7).
- **Participation in God's Mission:** Believers are called to pray and participate in bringing the gospel to the world.

Key Quotes:

- "The mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son is the basis for the unity of those who will believe in Jesus through the Apostle's witness."
- "In fact, though John never says systematically, we conclude that we are in the Holy Trinity. This is an inescapable conclusion, given the unity of the Godhead."
- "We participate in the divine love and life that the Trinitarian persons have always shared in a creaturely way."
- "Our indwelling of the Trinity... is by grace. Not by nature."
- "The glory that you have given me, John 17:22, I have given to them, that they may be one, even as we are one."
- "God in us and us in God, so that the world may know that you sent me, Jesus says, and that you love the world, even as you loved me."
- "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him." (John 6:56)
- "Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you. For the glory of God."

Conclusion:

Dr. Peterson's Session 11 provides a detailed exploration of union with Christ as presented in John 17. He emphasizes the foundational role of the mutual indwelling within the Trinity as the basis for the believer's union with God. While acknowledging John's distinct focus compared to Paul, Peterson argues for a systematized understanding that includes the believer's gracious participation in the divine life through Christ and the Spirit, leading to unity among believers and a call to participate in God's missionary purpose. The session concludes with practical applications, urging believers to worship, find spiritual sustenance in Christ, and live out the unity for which Jesus prayed.

4. Study Guide: Peterson, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 11, Foundations Union, John 17

Study Guide: Foundations for Union with Christ in John 17

Key Concepts

- **Mutual Indwelling:** The concept that the Father and the Son are in each other. In John's Gospel, this mutual indwelling extends to believers, who are said to be in the Father and the Son, and the Father and the Son indwell them.
- **Perichoresis:** A theological term referring to the mutual indwelling and interpenetration of the persons of the Trinity. While John doesn't use this term, the concept of mutual indwelling reflects this idea.
- **Unity of Believers:** Jesus prays for the unity of his followers, mirroring the unity between the Father and the Son. This unity is based on their shared indwelling in God.
- **Grace:** Believers' indwelling in the Trinity is not by nature (as it is for the divine persons) but by grace, through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.
- **Mission of God:** The unity of believers, resulting from their union with God, serves a missional purpose: that the world may believe that the Father sent the Son.
- **Divine Glory:** The glory the Father gave to the Son is the basis for the unity among believers.
- **Eternal Life:** Believers share in God's eternal life through union with Christ.
- **Fellowship with God:** Union with Christ brings believers into fellowship with the Father and the Son.
- **Trinitarian Being:** While John focuses on the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son and their indwelling of believers, the implications point towards believers being in the Holy Trinity due to the unity of the Godhead.
- **Creaturely Participation:** Believers participate in the divine love and life of the Trinity in a way appropriate for creatures, maintaining the creator-creature distinction.

Quiz

1. According to John 17, what is the basis for the unity of those who will believe in Jesus?
2. Explain the concept of mutual indwelling as it relates to the Father, the Son, and believers in John's Gospel.
3. How does Dr. Peterson explain the difference between the Trinitarian persons' indwelling of one another and believers' indwelling of the Trinity?
4. What does Jesus pray for in John 17:21 concerning believers, and what is the intended outcome of this unity?
5. In what specific ways does John's Gospel describe the indwelling of the Father and the Son in believers? Provide an example.
6. Although John doesn't explicitly detail the Spirit's role in union with Christ as Paul does, what does Peterson suggest about John's contribution to this understanding?
7. What is the significance of the divine glory that the Father gave to the Son in relation to believers?
8. Explain how the concept of mutual indwelling should impact the way believers relate to one another, according to the lecture.
9. What are some of the metaphors or images Jesus uses in John's Gospel (besides John 17) to teach about union with him?
10. How does the mutual indwelling of God and believers connect with the mission of God in the world, as discussed in the lecture?

Answer Key

1. The basis for the unity of those who will believe in Jesus is the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, as Jesus prays that believers may be one just as the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father, so that they may also be in them.
2. Mutual indwelling in John's Gospel refers to the Father being in the Son and the Son being in the Father. This concept extends to believers, with Jesus praying that they may be in the Father and the Son, and elsewhere stating that the Father and the Son will make their home with those who love him.
3. Dr. Peterson explains that the mutual indwelling of the Trinitarian persons is by nature, it is who they are as the one God. In contrast, believers' indwelling of the

Trinity is by grace, a creaturely participation in God's life and love made possible through Christ and the Holy Spirit, while maintaining the creator-creature distinction.

4. In John 17:21, Jesus prays that all believers may be one, just as the Father is in him and he is in the Father, so that they may also be in them. The intended outcome of this unity is that the world may believe that the Father sent Jesus.
5. John's Gospel describes the indwelling of the Father and the Son in believers through statements such as, "I in them and you in me, Father" (John 17:23), and Jesus' promise that "we will come to him and make our home with him" for those who love and obey him (John 14:23).
6. Peterson suggests that although John doesn't explicitly correlate the Spirit's work and union with Christ as Paul does, John provides the foundational "raw materials" for systematic theology to connect these concepts, especially considering the unity of the Godhead revealed more fully later in redemptive history at Pentecost.
7. The divine glory that the Father gave to the incarnate Son serves as the basis for believers being unified, mirroring the perfect unity between the Father and the Son. Jesus states, "The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one" (John 17:22).
8. The mutual indwelling of God and believers should motivate believers to live out the unity for which Christ prayed. This means welcoming other true Christians, regardless of denominational differences, recognizing the gospel as the most important basis for fellowship, just as Christ welcomed us.
9. Besides his high priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus uses metaphors such as the bread of life (those who eat his flesh and drink his blood abide in him, and he in them), the good shepherd (implying a close relationship and care), and the vine and the branches (believers must abide in him to bear fruit, and he abides in them).
10. The mutual indwelling of God and believers has a direct connection to the mission of God because Jesus prays for this unity "so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me" (John 17:23). Their unity serves as a testimony to the truth of the Gospel and God's love for the world.

Essay Format Questions

1. Discuss the significance of John 17 in understanding the concept of union with Christ. How does Jesus' prayer in this chapter lay a foundation for comprehending the relationship between believers and the Triune God?
2. Analyze the ways in which John's Gospel presents the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son. How does this divine intimacy serve as a model and basis for the union between Christ and believers, and among believers themselves?
3. Compare and contrast John's presentation of union with Christ with the Pauline emphasis on dying and rising with Christ. What unique contributions does John's perspective offer to a comprehensive understanding of this doctrine?
4. Explore the implications of believers participating in the divine life and love of the Trinity "in a creaturely, grace-caused way," according to the lecture. How does this understanding balance the intimacy of union with Christ with the necessary distinction between Creator and creature?
5. Evaluate the practical applications of the Johannine understanding of union with Christ for the life and unity of the Christian community and its mission in the world. How should the reality of mutual indwelling shape believers' relationships and their engagement with those who do not yet believe?

Glossary of Key Terms

- **Union with Christ:** A central doctrine in Christian theology describing the spiritual and mystical joining of believers with Jesus Christ, resulting in a shared life and participation in his benefits.
- **Mutual Indwelling:** The theological concept, particularly emphasized in John's Gospel regarding the Father and the Son, describing their intimate, reciprocal presence in one another. This concept extends to the relationship between God and believers.
- **Perichoresis:** A Greek term, also known as circumincession, referring to the mutual indwelling and interpenetration of the three persons of the Trinity, signifying their perfect unity and interconnectedness.
- **Trinity:** The Christian doctrine that God is one being in three co-equal and co-eternal persons: the Father, the Son (Jesus Christ), and the Holy Spirit.
- **Grace:** God's unmerited favor and love extended to humanity, enabling salvation and spiritual growth. In the context of union with Christ, it highlights that this union is a gift from God, not something earned by believers.
- **Incarnation:** The theological doctrine that the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, took on human flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.
- **Redemptive History:** The unfolding story of God's plan to save humanity from sin and its consequences, culminating in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.
- **Christology:** The branch of Christian theology concerned with the person, nature, and work of Jesus Christ.
- **Soteriology:** The branch of Christian theology concerned with the doctrine of salvation.
- **Pneumatology:** The branch of Christian theology concerned with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

5. FAQs on Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, The Holy Spirit and Union with Christ, Session 11, Foundations Union, John 17, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

Frequently Asked Questions on Union with Christ in John's Gospel

1. What is the central theme regarding "union with Christ" in John's Gospel, particularly in John 17?

John's Gospel emphasizes the mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, and how this divine unity serves as the foundation and pattern for the unity between the Son and believers, and ultimately believers with the Father and the Son. Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 highlights this interconnectedness, praying that believers "may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us."

2. How does John's portrayal of union with Christ differ from Paul's teachings on the same subject?

While Paul speaks of believers dying, being buried, and raised with Christ, and being blessed in Christ, John's Gospel primarily focuses on the language of mutual indwelling and abiding. Jesus uses first-person discourse, such as the metaphors of the bread of life, the good shepherd, and the vine and branches, along with his prayer in John 17, to convey these complementary truths about our union with him and the Father.

3. Does John explicitly teach that believers are in the Holy Trinity?

While John doesn't systematically state that believers are "in the Holy Trinity," this is presented as an inescapable conclusion based on the unity of the Godhead described in his Gospel. The mutual indwelling of the Father and the Son, and the inclusion of believers in this indwelling, implies participation within the Trinity. The distinction of the divine persons is maintained, but they are never separated.

4. How does the "mutual indwelling" between the Father, Son, and believers occur, and what are its limitations?

The mutual indwelling between the Trinitarian persons is by nature, as they are one God. However, our indwelling of the Trinity is by grace, through Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. While believers participate in the divine love and life, the creator-creature distinction remains. God indwells us in ways we do not indwell God, and our participation is creaturely and grace-caused, not by our inherent nature.

5. What are some practical implications or applications of understanding this "union with Christ" as presented in John's Gospel?

Understanding this union should lead to wonder and worship for God's love. It calls us to spiritually "eat and drink" of the Son, relying on him for spiritual sustenance. It emphasizes focusing on Christ to know the Father, as seeing Jesus is seeing the Father. We are called to abide in Christ as branches in the vine, experiencing his love and bearing fruit. Furthermore, it should motivate us to live out the unity Christ prayed for, welcoming all true believers. Finally, it draws us into God's mission in the world.

6. How does John connect the unity between the Father and the Son with the unity of believers?

Jesus explicitly prays for the unity of believers to mirror the unity between the Father and the Son. He states, "that they may be one, even as we are one," and "I in them and you in me, Father, that they may become perfectly one." The divine glory given to the Son is also given to believers as a basis for this shared unity. This unity is not merely a suggestion but a reflection of the intimate relationship within the Godhead.

7. What role does the Holy Spirit play in John's account of union with Christ, even if not as explicitly as in Paul's writings?

While Paul is presented as the one who plainly teaches the Spirit's role in joining us to Christ and applying salvation, John lays the groundwork. Jesus promises the coming of the Spirit, the "Spirit of truth," who will be with and in believers, enabling them to know that Christ is in the Father, and they are in Christ, and Christ in them. John provides the foundational understanding that allows for the systematic theological connection between the Spirit's work and union with Christ.

8. Why is the concept of believers mutually indwelling the Trinitarian persons considered significant in John's theology of salvation?

David Crump's observation, cited in the source, highlights that this mutual indwelling within the life of God is the "heart and soul of John's understanding of salvation." It signifies every believer's inclusion in the dynamic exchange of divine life and love between the Father and the Son. This participation in the divine nature, in a creaturely way, is presented as the essence of eternal life according to John's Gospel.