

Speaker 1:

It is time for a pause in your day. Welcome to a podcast where we press the pause button on our busy lives for a few moments, and we focus on God's word with Sharon and Nicole. We pray this is a time of refreshing for you. The Sweet Selah Moments Podcast is a cooperative production of Word Radio and Sweet Selah Ministries.

Nicole:

Welcome to Sweet Selah Moments. This is episode 132, United in Christ. At the very beginning of the church, right after Jesus ascended into heaven, and the Holy Spirit filled the disciples with himself, the followers of Christ were united. Sadly, it didn't last long. Human beings are sinful creatures. And Luke, in the Book of Acts, tells us stories of great unity and also division. However, today we're going to look at the beauty of unity in the body of Christ and study it. Sharon, I'm looking forward to learning from the earliest days of the church.

Sharon:

Me too, Nicole. I do like unity. This is going to be a fun lesson. So let's look at what the disciples did that created such unity and learn from it. But before we dive in, let's reflect on some times of real unity that we've experienced in Christian circles from our own personal backgrounds, as it were. It's not all division and hurt feelings, thank the Lord. I've seen incredible unity. Do you know what one of my favorite memories from the Refuge Retreat was? (Nicole: What?) It was after the retreat. I mean, I loved the retreat. I loved the worship. I loved seeing women walking around, praising God and admiring the lake, you know? (Yes) But there was a magic moment. We were all sitting at a restaurant afterwards, all the weary team members, and we were happy but weary (Yes) at the end of it. And everybody was smiling and laughing at each other and, and rejoicing in what God did. And it was like, I almost stepped back and was like looking in on you guys, and I just teared up. (Oh) Because we prayed for that kind of unity. (We did) And when you have that kind of pressured work for a retreat, you can have disunity a little bit. You know what I mean? (Oh, sure) And we did not. We did not. It was so beautiful. I'll never forget it. Isn't that funny? (That's so neat) A little moment at a restaurant where everybody was rejoicing. (Yeah) About you, do you have any, I mean, that was kind of a weird one, but do you have any memories of a time of great unity in the church?

Nicole:

Yeah, actually just recently. Our Sunday school class will take on people in the community that have needs for Christmas, and usually do some Christmas gifts specific to, umm the family might say, oh, we need some snow pants for our daughter. Or, you know, gas cards or whatever. Well, this year the list was kind of odd. It was for paper plates and paper utensils. And so that sparked some questions from our group, and they're asking why do they need the paper? Come to find out, they had trouble with their water that led to, they had trouble with mold, they had trouble with this. And just, their (Sharon: Wow) problems were huge. And they were simply asking for very small things. So our little Sunday school class took it upon themselves to bless this family and get them an air scrubber to help get the mold out of their air, because they were struggling with breathing problems. (No kidding) And it's continuing, like some of the men that work in remodeling and building are asking about, oh, well, what do the cabinets look like? Can we fix up the cabinets? Can we fix up the floor? So it's become this big beautiful project that people were super excited about. And it's fun to see the different people in our group with different expertise asking the different questions. (Wow) Yeah. Like, oh, I worked in HVAC. I know that an air scrubber would be good. Oh, I work with construction, so I know how to fix a floor. And I just was kind of sitting back going, this is really cool. Like, I'll buy the paper plates, but or give money towards something. But the fact that they all came together to bless his family was really cool to see.

Sharon:

That is awesome. That's unity at its best. I had another similar one that happened. One of the women from our home group needed to move apartments, and she was moving from a ground floor apartment to a second floor apartment with, you know, the tiny skinny stairs in old houses.

Nicole:

Oh, those are awful.

Sharon:

Yeah. And the day she needed to move, it was raining, but like 38 degrees. (Nicole: Oh) You know, the worst. (Just gross) The worst. It's almost better to have snow. Right? Well, we have a, you know, a ministry at our church called Labor of Love. Nicole, in that condition, nine people showed up from Labor of Love and they moved everything in an hour and a half. (No kidding) Cheerfully and lovingly.

Nicole:

That's amazing.

Sharon:

She called me, she said, they're done.

Nicole:

They're soggy, but they're done.

Sharon:

Exactly. Those kinds of things are just so beautiful. They really are.

Nicole:

They really are. Yeah.

Sharon:

So, you know, sometimes we sadly focus on the disunity in the church because that's so jarring to us. So it's kind of nice to remember when the body of Christ works the way Jesus asked it to. It is beautiful. It is. So before we read our main passage for the day, let's take a peek at Jesus's desire of unity from his followers. He was really clear on this point. I'm gonna start by reading from John 15:9-17. So listen to Jesus's plea for his disciples to love each other as I read, this is what he says. "I have loved you, even as the Father has loved me, remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love. Just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes. Your joy will overflow. This is my commandment. Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command, I no longer call you slaves 'cause a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends since I have told you everything the Father told me. You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit so that the Father will give you whatever you ask, using my name. This is my command: love each other." So Jesus loved the Father, and the Father loved him. The members of the Trinity, really all one God. And yet that love somehow flowed between them. And that's what he wants for us. That same kind of beautiful love that flows between Father, Son and Spirit. He wants that to flow among us, his followers. I love that he tells them to love each other twice in this passage, and also love each other.

Nicole:

Yeah, in case you missed it.

Sharon:

PS: love each other. He really means it. We are supposed to, that is like the greatest commandment. Love God, then love each other. We can't get away from that even if we want to run away to other things.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

That's the greatest. That's the heart of it.

Nicole:

It is for sure. It's so important, I think, to Jesus, to God for unity. Over in John 17 Jesus prays for unity for us, which I think is super cool. Those that have come to know the Lord by witness of others directly. I love this passage. I'm gonna be reading John 17:20-26. "I am praying not only for these disciples, but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one. Just as you and I are One. As you are in me, Father and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me, I have given them the glory you gave me so they may be one as we are one. I am in them, and you are in me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me. Father, I want these whom you've given to me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began. Oh, righteous Father, the world doesn't know you, but I do. And these disciples know you sent me, I have revealed you to them. And I will continue to do so. Then your love for me will be in them, and I will be in them."

Sharon:

That is so beautiful.

Nicole:

What a beautiful passage.

Sharon:

I know.

Nicole:

There's so much in here.

Sharon:

Yeah. I love the yearning. Oh, Father, the love we have. I want them to have it. I mean, it's just so cool, right?

Nicole:

Yes. And he repeats those things again, how he repeated before, love each other. And here you are in me and I am in them. There's such a closeness, a oneness that can only happen through God.

Sharon:

It's so amazing because we all still maintain our own personality. It's not like one of the Hinduism beliefs is that nirvana is the end goal, sort of, you're sort of all one together, but without an individual personality.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

And that is not Christianity.

Nicole:

No.

Sharon:

God loves uniqueness. He made flamingos and elephants.

Nicole:

Right. Very different things.

Sharon:

You know, I mean, come on. So, he specializes in us being unique. And yet the thread that weaves through it that ties us all together is Holy Spirit in us, love shining out of us. I mean, have you ever met someone that, even though you don't know it, you're pretty sure they're a Christian?

Nicole:

Oh, yes. That happens quite a bit. It's really neat. You're kind of like, wait a minute, there's something there about you. I kind of love you and I don't know why but,

Sharon:

There's like a joy in their eyes.

Nicole:

Yes, there is.

Sharon:

That's the only way to say it. I can remember meeting a woman a long time ago named Vicki in the woods, just walking my dog. And the way she said, hello, no kidding. So we start talking and I'm like, are you by any chance, I mean, do you go to church? You know, you kind of start with do you go to church.

Nicole:

Yeah, your gonna hedge into it.

Sharon:

She's like, yes, I love Jesus. I'm like, I knew it. I just knew it. And she became a member of our prayer group. It was just so sweet.

Nicole:

Oh, how fun. That's so neat. I just love that.

Sharon:

Yeah. So, so, so good. All right. Well, unity. Yay. That's our basic theme so far, is that it's possible. And that's what the Lord wants for us. Unity and love is what Jesus wants. So now we're actually gonna go to Acts, which is where we're supposed to be and we're gonna see how the disciples showed it. Last week we talked about John and Peter's arrest and how they were told not to speak about Jesus again. They're don't do it. And they had declared that they would obey God rather than men and then they'd been released. So we're now gonna see what happens next. Because basically they didn't say, okay, we won't talk about Jesus.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

So, alright, Acts 4, starting at 23. And Nicole, why don't you read a verse and then I'll read a verse and let's study to the end of the chapter there.

Nicole:

All right. So starting in at 23, "As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said"

Sharon:

"When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God. Oh, sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and Earth, the sea and everything in them,"

Nicole:

"You spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor, David, your servant, saying, why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans?"

Sharon:

"The kings of the earth prepared for battle. The rulers gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah."

Nicole:

"In fact, this has happened here in this very city, for Herod Antipas and Pontius Pilate, the governor, the Gentiles and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant whom you anointed."

Sharon:

"But everything they did was determined beforehand, according to your will."

Nicole:

"And now, oh Lord, hear their threats and give us your servants great boldness in preaching your word."

Sharon:

"Stretch out your hand with healing power. May miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

Nicole:

"After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness."

Sharon:

"All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own. So they shared everything they had."

Nicole:

"The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's great blessing was upon them all."

Sharon:

"There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them"

Nicole:

"And bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need."

Sharon:

"For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas, which means son of encouragement. He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus."

Nicole:

"He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles."

Sharon:

There's our passage. It kind of divides into two sections pretty easily. First they prayed. Then we see their actions after that prayer. So let's start with the pray part. (Nicole: Yeah) You know, Peter and John come back and they say, they told us not to talk about Jesus. First response, they go to prayer. (Yes) Right. Which is pretty good. It was quite a prayer.

Nicole:

It was.

Sharon:

What stood out to you the most about that prayer?

Nicole:

I love that first of all, Peter and John went right back to work. They just went right back to the gathering and said, Hey guys, they told us not to talk, but we're gonna talk about Jesus. (Sharon: We're gonna talk,

yep) So here we go. But they asked for help. They got right down to it, and they started to pray and ask for help. So the thing that kind of stood out was, it's interesting, the Holy Spirit came upon them after they prayed. And I was thinking, 'cause I know that in the very beginning of this passage, the Holy Spirit had come upon the believers. There was a really big moment. (Right) Right? (The mighty wind) Yeah. So, I don't know if the Holy Spirit was in all of the believers at that moment, or if he was still coming in waves as they were kind of sitting down and submitting to him. Because here they sat down to pray and the Holy Spirit filled them. So I don't know if this was a first filling or just a refreshing?

Sharon:

Maybe a refreshing.

Nicole:

That's kind of interesting.

Sharon:

Yeah. But it was fascinating. I think, I don't know. But I think that, you know, if they were normal humans, there's a little bit of fear now.

Nicole:

Oh, sure.

Sharon:

They've been told not to do it. So they're going to God in prayer and saying, okay. Help us. Help us. Help us. Help the miracles to continue so we can show that the name of Jesus has power. (Nicole: Right) Help us, help us. Help us to declare his resurrection. (Yeah) You know, and the Holy Spirit kind of visibly was there again going, oh, I'm still here.

Nicole:

I'm still here, guys. So I was wondering, was it like a recharge or a refresh (Sharon: Yeah) because, well, and also like back in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit would come upon people for a time (Right) and then would leave again. (Right) So, I'm just wondering if he almost kind of recharged them in the way they had heard about from old, kind of in a way they knew.

Sharon:

I think a recharge. Yeah, 'cause once we accept Christ, the Spirit lives within us. (Nicole: Right) But we can grieve the Spirit (Right) by ignoring him, we can stifle (Yes) what he wants to do. Or, he can come in like a roaring flame.

Nicole:

You just feel him so powerfully.

Sharon:

I think that's revival. Right?

Nicole:

Oh, sure. Right.

Sharon:

Revive us again, Oh Lord. Jazz us up. (Nicole: Right) Right? (Right, restore us) We can get kind of plodding, you know, doing the things, but really just, you know, kinda watching our TV and, you know, having picnics.

Nicole:

Getting distracted and dulled. Yeah. We can get really dulled to him.

Sharon:

Dull, we can get dull. Yeah.

Nicole:

So this is kind of neat, and I love that when they asked, they weren't asking for protection. They weren't asking for curses on the people hurting them. They weren't asking for this miracle for their benefit. They were asking for boldness to preach his word, his message.

Sharon:

Give us boldness. Yes.

Nicole:

What a cool prayer. That shook me. I'm like, oh, they weren't even praying for their own safety.

Sharon:

No, No, no, no, boldness. (Nicole: Yeah) So if there was some timidity, they're like, get rid of it. Get rid of it. (Yeah) I do not need to be afraid. (Yep) Give me the courage to speak. Paul does that a lot in his epistles when he writes his letters. (Yes) He says, pray for me to preach it boldly, because every time Paul preached it, well, not every time, a whole lot of the time when Paul preached it, they stoned him, they flogged him, they put him in prison. And then he'd go to the next town and he'd be like, could you pray that I still preach this boldly? 'cause I know what's coming. (Wow). I'm gonna get hurt again.

Nicole:

And not to avoid a stoning this time, but for boldness. So that just really struck me as these people did have courage.

Sharon:

Yes.

Nicole:

They knew the message they had was worth the risk.

Sharon:

It was worth it.

Nicole:

And they were praying for boldness. Lord give us boldness to tell this.

Sharon:

Yeah, yeah. So they knew it, and yet they knew they needed him.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

And that's so beautiful and so perfect. They were united in, okay, so could you help us here.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

And bam, the Holy Spirit, whoosh, rushed in again.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

And then out they went, preaching the word with boldness. And also we don't always get to feel God. You know? Our emotions can get in the way. You know, if somebody dies, we're gonna have a time of mourning and we may not feel a rush of joy (Nicole: Right) for a season. But, I feel like the Lord gave him that rush of joy and that assurance. I am so here with you. Go for it. You know? And that, that is what they needed at the beginning of this ministry to keep on keeping on, even though now they've been told not to. (Right) There's a difference from just doing it and then doing it despite being told not to.

Nicole:

Despite severe opposition. Yeah. It's

Sharon:

Yes. Pretty severe.

Nicole:

And threats and yeah.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So I have never reached that point of persecution yet where I've been told not to.

Nicole:

Oh, that's true. We really haven't.

Sharon:

I hope, oh Lord Jesus, I hope I can do this.

Nicole:

I know. But to remember to pray for boldness.

Sharon:

Yes. Yes. Yes. Oh my goodness. Okay. Well, the second part of it is what happens after the boldness. And it kind of, it moves away from, I mean, it's been established that they were gonna continue preaching and doing the things. And there's still gonna be miracles and all that. But now we're kind of turning to the internal life, not the preaching to other people life. (Nicole: Right) But turning to the internal life of the church. And because our third question, when we ask our questions every time directly relates to that, we're gonna kind of linger on that third question and discover what they did as a local body of believers that created that unity. But let's ask the first two questions first, and then we'll go. So Nicole, what was your favorite verse out of all the verses and why?

Nicole:

I already said it earlier, I forgot I was gonna say it later, but I was just so excited. I love verse 29. "Oh, and now, oh Lord, hear their threats and give us your servants great boldness in preaching your word." Hear their threats, Lord, you hear the problem. But again, they didn't pray for deliverance. They didn't pray for them to have condemnation on the bad guys. They just prayed for boldness, for courage. And I love that. They prayed for what they needed and what they knew they were lacking, 'cause they can only control themselves.

Sharon:

Right. Right.

Nicole:

We can't fix what the Pharisees are telling them to do or not to do. We can't stop the threats. But God, I need boldness to do what you have called me to do.

Sharon:

Yes. Yes. Help me. Help me. (Nicole: Yes). Yeah. I love that. It reminds me of King Hezekiah, when (I think it was Hezekiah. I'll write something in the show notes if I'm wrong) I think it was Hezekiah, who gets this letter from the enemy that they're gonna overtake Jerusalem. And they're gonna cream 'em all and they better surrender or else. And what does Hezekiah do? He goes, he takes the letter, he lays it on the altar and he goes, here's the letter, to God, help. In fact, he said, we do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.

Nicole:

Oh, that's so good.

Sharon:

And it's just, that's such a beautiful line that I have, I love that when you know scripture, you can use it. 'Cause I'll be in situations where I'm like, I do not know what to do. Keep my, I don't say but my eyes, 'cause my eyes aren't always on him. So that would not be true. I say keep my eyes on you. Bring my eyes to focus on you. When I look at the problem, it looks so big, Lord. And it looks so scary. So, you know, I don't know what to do. My eyes are gonna stay on you because you do.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

And you will bail me out again.

Nicole:

It's so true.

Sharon:

Which he does.

Nicole:

He does.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

That's the place that he wants us, that humble heart looking to him because it builds that relationship with him. God, I cannot do this. I need you to help me. And he's so ready to come in and help us.

Sharon:

He is. I love that.

Nicole:

He loves that. 'Cause it builds that foundation with him.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah. And I'm lingering on your verse because it was my verse.

Nicole:

Oh! What? That never happens.

Sharon:

Well, I mean, there's so much power in that.

Nicole:

There's a lot.

Sharon:

And there's so much teaching in that.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

That in our confusion in our, I don't know what to do next, you heard what's going on, Lord. You actually know their hearts better than we do. (Nicole: Right) You know the future. You've told us that we have a mission and that is to go and preach the gospel to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world. I mean, they know their mission. (Right) Right, right. So help us do it.

Nicole:

Help us do it. Right. They didn't need direction. They just needed a dose of confidence.

Sharon:

Yeah. It's a real challenge to me. If there comes a time, Nicole, in this country where, you know, we're forbidden to talk of Jesus. (Yeah) Okay. We're gonna have to get in a prayer meeting together and unified say, you heard what they told us. (Yes) Give us boldness.

Nicole:

And this verse is a great format for that prayer. Lord, here's the problem. Like that, like Hezekiah, we think, and the letter. Here's the problem. You see it, God, we need help. Help us, God. Tell us.

Sharon:

Help us do it. Yeah. And they were unified in their decision making, which is good. It wasn't like all of them said, no, no, let's not. And one guy had to go by himself to the temple. Because they really sought the Lord, I believe the Lord gave them the answer together. And, so they at least had strength in numbers.

Nicole:

That's good. And that is so encouraging when you're not the only person praying.

Sharon:

It really is. And that's why we have to gather together. We have to, because we get strength from each other. And we get the Holy Spirit power. And another one strengthening us when we're weak and vice versa. So, so important. So, okay. That was question one. Question two is, what did I learn about God from this passage? So I'll start with that one, and then you can tell me what you learned about God from the passage. Well, I was reminded again, of just how powerful he is. The Spirit shook the room.

Nicole:

That's pretty cool.

Sharon:

Whoazers, you know, I mean, people didn't come running, so there must not have been the noise there was the first time. But God is big and God is powerful. And who are we to be afraid of mere men? God can shake a room and do way more than that. So, and then also God works miracles. And when he chooses he can make blind men see and lame (that was lame and blind) and lame men walk. He can do whatever he wants. God in a miracle can go over, oh, what's the word? Instead of letting the natural law (Nicole: Yes) he can kind of go over the natural law (Supersede it. Yeah. Yeah) Supersede, thank you for the word. And do what he wants.

Nicole:

That's so cool.

Sharon:

Bam!

Nicole:

I love it.

Sharon:

I do too. What did you learn about God from this passage?

Nicole:

Oh, he hears our prayers and he answers. He does, he hears our prayers and I love that. And he answers, it said later, in verse 30, what verse was it? His great blessing. He said he poured out his great blessing upon them. And I can't find it because I'm on the wrong page, but I love that he gave them more than they asked for. He poured out his great blessing on them.

Sharon:

Isn't that sweet.

Nicole:

He gives us more than we ask sometimes.

Sharon:

That is so true. I have learned, you know, when I'm in a season of giving and serving that feels exhausting, he has so many times poured back into me so much at the end of that season. I'll never forget the time he gave me a free week at Camp of the Woods. I've talked about that before.

Nicole:

Yes. I love that.

Sharon:

Where, you know, I'd done this big retreat and I was really tired and I had kind of just said, oh Lord, it'd be so nice to come back here. But it's way too expensive, you know. And then lo and behold, first time ever, some guy that had been going to Camp of the Woods for years decided to give three scholarships, not just to a person, but to their whole family (Nicole: Oh wow) to spend a week at Camp of the Woods. And the director of the camp remembered me from six months ago. (Oh my word) And Mary and Angel, and Ray and I, and little Gabriel, there was just one baby at that point, (Oh) and Katherine was overseas, so she couldn't, (Yeah) we got a week at Camp of the Woods.

Nicole:

That's really neat.

Sharon:

I'm like, oh, wow, Lord. So anyways, yes.

Nicole:

He does.

Sharon:

He pours out more than you can imagine. So.

Nicole:

Yep. And then I love that he's faithful. They mentioned David in verse 25, like from our ancestors, they know the stories of God and he's faithful. He's been faithful to their ancestors. And he's faithful now in that moment too.

Sharon:

He is. He is. I love that too. So much. Okay, so now we're getting to the second part of the passage we read where all the believers are united in heart and mind. They felt that what they owned was not their own. So they shared everything they had, that part.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

What did you learn, Nicole, (I'll let you go first) about the early church and how do we apply it? Today?

Nicole:

Yeah. I put that they were committed, back to verse 23, Peter and John returned to the believers as soon as they were out of jail and getting yelled at. They were very committed to what they were doing, committed to the message, willing to risk public scorn, imprisonment, death, all of the scary things to get this message out. They weren't afraid. They weren't afraid, they were probably afraid, they weren't afraid to ask for help. They were quick to ask for help because I'm sure they were very afraid. If you're praying for boldness, you're afraid. And I love that they were focused on others' needs, above their own, the way that they were selling things and trying to make sure that there were no needy among them.

Sharon:

Wasn't that beautiful?

Nicole:

Yeah. That's really powerful. Because I think that can be a huge, if we're so concerned with eating and clothing and shelter, we're not free. Our minds, our bodies aren't free to be, Hey, God, how can you use me today?

Sharon:

Right.

Nicole:

Like, oh my word. How am I gonna feed my kids today? I have no clothes. Those immediate needs can feel so consuming (Sharon: Yes, that's true) that we're not as free. So for them to take care of the needs in their community, (Uhhuh) so that they were all free to serve the Lord. Like, wow!

Sharon:

Beautiful.

Nicole:

So powerful.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And it wasn't forced. They chose to do this. They wanted to do it. So it says they felt that what they owned was not their own. So that was their own thing. This is not mine.

Nicole:

Conviction from the Holy Spirit.

Sharon:

You know, God gave me what I've got and I need to share with others. Oh, that's so neat.

Nicole:

I love that.

Sharon:

I love it. And of course, your Sunday school class and our Labor of Love are examples of that. Seeing the need of another and joyfully meeting it.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

It's kind of fun.

Nicole:

If it was forced it'd be weird.

Sharon:

Yeah. Yeah. It would not be the same thing at all.

Nicole:

But they came to this completely on their own. And they joyfully gave, and I just think this is a beautiful model that they all kind of came together.

Sharon:

It is. It so is. Well, I learned that they were united in heart and mind. In heart, they loved; in their mind their theology. They knew that God had called them to do something. And they did it. And I think we need to have both. We need to have heart and mind united. They willingly shared, which you had said they wanted to be generous when they saw the needs. And their focus always, you know, and that's not just in this last section, this was throughout the whole section we read was the resurrection of Jesus.

(Nicole: Yes) Peter's talking about the resurrection of Jesus. That is the big deal, because that's the linchpin of our faith. (Right) If Jesus, what does Paul say in 1 Corinthians something? He says if Jesus was not raised from the dead (Right) we should be pitied. Because we're getting flogged, we're getting killed. We have no money anymore. Everybody hates us except the ones that joined us. If Jesus did not

raise from the dead, then this hope we have that we're gonna be with him forever, and whatever happens here who cares, we're going to heaven, is kinda stupid. Right?

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

So the linchpin of our faith is a resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that has got to stay in our churches too. It really does.

Nicole:

Absolutely.

Sharon:

We cannot just be self-help ish, you know?

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

When you're having trouble in your marriage, try these five easy steps, you know? Sometimes they're biblical steps and they're good. But the heart of the Christian faith is a dead man rose again, conquered death and is able to forgive sins and make us someday step out of our corroding bodies into immortal bodies to live in this new way, cool place. It has some kind of river running through it and leaves on trees. And I mean, you read about heaven and you're like, oh, I cannot wait.

Nicole:

I know. It's so exciting. And back in John, we read that in the very beginning, I remember just reading that he was talking about how he's excited to be with us.

Sharon:

Yeah.

Nicole:

'Cause he loves us so much he can't wait to be with us forever. I'm like, what? That's really cool.

Sharon:

Isn't that the best?

Nicole:

Like, you really wanna spend forever with me?

Sharon:

Yeah, are you sure?

Nicole:

I don't know if I wanna spend forever with me.

Sharon:

I know. And the first part of that whole discourse is, I'm going to prepare a place for you. I mean, I think he was, he was not looking forward to the cross, 'cause it says it was for the joy set before him that he endured the cross.

Nicole:

Right.

Sharon:

But the joy set before him was, wait till you get here, right?

Nicole:

Oh. That's so fun.

Sharon:

So that is the linchpin of our faith. If it's just self-help, when troubles come, we're gonna flit away. (Nicole Yeah) But if we know that the resurrection is true and we will be resurrected someday, and we're united in that as a church, we will stick out that persecution.

Nicole:

Yes.

Sharon:

Because we know good things are coming.

Nicole:

Right. And then we'll have the courage to ask for boldness in our faith 'cause the message we'll want to tell 'cause we believe it.

Sharon:

Yes. Yes. Yes. Especially as the days get short. Yeah. Yeah. Well, I gotta pray. Oh my goodness. Oh, heavenly Father, thank you. Thank you for your invitation to come to you to receive forgiveness of sins and life everlasting in your presence in a beautiful place you have prepared for us. Oh, this is the good news. Lord. Help us never to forget it or weary of talking about it. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Nicole:

Amen. Thanks for joining us as we unpacked all the goodness from this week's lesson. God truly wants us to love each other and be united in our fellowship as we worship him together. Have you experienced that beautiful unity in your own church? We hope so. If not, take heart. We all can grow in that area. And none of us is yet perfect at unity or love. But this study made me want to really commit myself to doing my best with the help of the Holy Spirit to walk in love and unity with fellow believers. We'd love to hear your thoughts on this. Write us anytime at sharon@sweetselah.org. Consider writing a review of this podcast so more people can find us. That would be a great gift to us. We also gladly accept donations. You can donate at sweetselah.org/donations. Please consider helping us share the word with others. As

always, we hope you'll come back next week for episode 133, Deadly Deception. Uh oh. Looks like we might be reading about a break in the unity of that early church. Thanks so much for listening and have a great week.

Speaker 1:

We are so glad you stopped for a while with us. The Sweet Selah Moments Podcast is a cooperative production of Word Radio and Sweet Selah Ministries. More information about this podcast can be found [@sweetselah.org](https://www.sweetselah.org). Thank you for joining us.