

## Lord, Is My Heart Tender? Part Two

### A.B. Simpson:

Several leaders from a mission field I was visiting approached me with the urgent request to help them make peace between two co-workers. I agreed to talk with both men. The interesting thing was that neither one was willing to give in and admit any wrong. I realized that, technically, the brother who was the leader was absolutely right in what he had said and done. If he took his case to a court of law anywhere in the world, he would be vindicated as innocent. But if he was so right, why was the other brother so hurt? Why did he continue to insist he had been wronged?

Finally I spoke to the leader.

"I understand what you said to this brother," I told him. "But tell me, in what spirit did you speak those words?"

There was dead silence. Then he responded: "I understand what you mean."

Even truth can divide and destroy if it is not soaked and covered in love, grace and mercy-and presented with a tender heart.

If that tenderness of heart is missing in our relationships with our brothers and sisters, God's work is greatly hindered. For Jesus said, "If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). With these words the Lord clearly identified the foundation of prayer: oneness in relationship with each other.

Before going to the cross, Jesus prayed His incredible prayer on our behalf recorded in the Gospel of John. His main petition was ". . . that they all may be one" (John 17:21). But how is this oneness possible? Will it happen if we all think the same thoughts and, as a result, respond to one another with great kindness, love and understanding? And can we achieve these same thoughts by some deeper-level education that eliminates all differences between us and causes us to live above such things?

You already know the answer.

Humanly speaking, it is impossible. Even in a small local fellowship, the believers come from different family backgrounds and upbringings. All have different personalities, behavior patterns, levels of education and spiritual understanding.

However, one key to love, unity and following the Lord is my willingness to take responsibility for my sin. When my heart is tender before God, I will no longer accuse my brother or sister for my failure.

Instead, I will say, like the prodigal son, "Father, I have sinned." And that attitude will open the way for God to unite us as His people and fulfill His promises. Blaming others became part of our human nature with the fall of man. Imagine this: While Adam and Eve were sinless, they daily walked hand in hand with the Almighty, who dwells in light no man can approach.

But when they sinned, everything changed. God came to Adam and asked, "What on earth have you done?" and Adam answered, "Me? I didn't do it. If You want to know the real problem, it's this woman You gave me."

And when God questioned Eve, she responded, "Well, what can I say? The serpent beguiled me." There will never be unity-and never will rivers of living water begin to flow through our lives-until we come to a place where we take responsibility for our sin.

The thief on the cross experienced this truth in the last minutes of his life when he said, "I deserve this punishment for what I have done." And Jesus immediately responded, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).

Unity only happens when we yield our rights and admit our failures. If we desire the oneness with our brothers and sisters for which Jesus prayed, then keeping a tender heart is not simply an option-it must be our highest priority.