



Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church

By J. Todd Billings

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An accomplished theologian recovers the biblical theme of union with Christ, showing how it affects current theological and ministry issues.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

"What does the doctrine of adoption have to say to a 'moralistic, therapeutic, deistic' teenager? How does the Reformed understanding of sin actually underscore human freedom? Are we getting too loose in our talk about 'incarnational ministry'? Can we talk about a relationship with Christ without descending into sentimentalism? How does Christ's work for us connect with his work in us by his Word and Spirit? Only after reading this book will you see just how related are all of these themes. And the integrating framework is union with Christ. In this fresh, winsome, learned yet down-to-earth exploration, Billings displays the research of a scholar and the heart of a pastor. This is one of the best books available on the heart of the gospel and its relevance for our lives."

--**Michael Horton**, Westminster Seminary California

"The beautiful, mystical, and biblical idea of Christ's union with the body of Christ--considered both ecclesially and individually--had nearly evaporated from the religious consciousness of evangelical and Reformed Christians for a while. That is no longer the case with Billings's new book. The doctrines of adoption and incarnation receive a fresh treatment in this book to open up the wide vista of application for the Christian life. Billings has done a wonderful job of weaving together a robust presentation of the heart of the gospel and the corresponding ecclesial praxis."

--**Paul C. H. Lim**, Vanderbilt University

"Drawing upon the likes of Augustine, Calvin, Bavinck, and others, Todd Billings ably demonstrates why the biblical truth of union and communion with God has had such historical and theological significance. Thankfully, he doesn't leave us out of the story. Along the way he highlights why union with Christ continues to matter for our understanding of the Christian life, making insightful connections between adoption and participation, incomprehensibility and accommodation, justice and Eucharist, grace and action. Let Billings take you into a deeper appreciation of what it means to be united to Christ--you won't regret it."

--**Kelly M. Kopic**, Covenant College

"Billings has been at the forefront of academic debates over the concept of union with Christ. With this book he shows all of us why union with Christ matters for our Christian lives and ministries and worship. Drawing on contexts as diverse as sixteenth-century Europe and contemporary Africa, Billings explores a theme that takes us to the heart of the gospel in a way that enriches and corrects our faith, our understanding, and our practices."

--**Suzanne McDonald**, Calvin College

"In *Union with Christ*, Todd Billings expounds upon an important New Testament doctrine by exploring its contemporary ramifications in light of careful historical and exegetical reflection. This is a thought-provoking book that will ignite fresh conversations about the nature of our participation in Christ."

--**Trevin Wax**, coauthor of *Counterfeit Gospels* and *Holy Subversion*

From the Back Cover

"This is an important book on an important topic. Billings brings his expertise regarding Calvin to bear not only on misconceptions about the great Reformer but also on contemporary misconceptions of Christ and

Christian ministry. Drawing on rich personal experiences, he offers an accessible and rewarding study, demonstrating that the centrality of union with Christ can solve many theological problems in a way that has direct practical significance for today."

--**George Hunsinger**, Princeton Theological Seminary

"If Reformed theology is going to make the comeback that many of us have been praying for, this marvelous book offers the kind of careful thinking that will make it happen. Todd Billings illuminates concepts such as adoption, divine incomprehensibility, and incarnation in a way that has profound implications for ministry in the twenty-first century."

--**Richard J. Mouw**, Fuller Theological Seminary

"J. Todd Billings has a wonderful grasp of theological reflection, old and new, brought into conversation with contemporary issues. He has written a breathtaking book that theologians and pastors will find provocative and instructive."

--**Andrew Purves**, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

"This meditation on union with Christ is a beautiful example of how careful study of the Bible, history, and theology work together to support faithful and vital ministry and life. Featuring both brief and lucid explanations of key concepts and provocative descriptions of the countercultural implications of this scriptural theme, this volume will be useful to both beginning students of theology and ministry as well as seasoned veterans."

--**John D. Witvliet**, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship; Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary

"With a keen sense of contemporary Christianity, a deep love of Scripture, and an exceptional theological mind, Billings has written a book that retrieves the past, engages the present, and helps us to more faithfully face the future in light of the reality of our communion with Christ."

--**Kristen Deede Johnson**, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, Michigan

About the Author

J. Todd Billings (ThD, Harvard University Divinity School) is Gordon H. Girod Research Professor of Reformed Theology at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, and an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America. He is the author of sev

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