

UNION COMMUNION PARTNERSHIP

John 17 | Acts 2 | Ephesians 4

Unity: The Soil in Which Unity Grows

Icebreaker: Think about the last encouragement you gave someone and/or the last encouragement someone gave you. Begin Lifegroup night by encouraging one another. Give everyone time to listen to the Holy Spirit. Who does He want you to encourage? Have each person encourage someone else. As the leader, give direction to this exercise so that everyone receives an encouragement.

Worship:

Fresh Wind | *Hillsong Worship*, Brooke Ligertwood

Make Room | *Community Music*

From the Inside Out | *Hillsong United*

Read: Ephesians 4:1-3 (additional passages will be available below if needed)

Discussion:

1. How are humility and gentleness related to unity? (*Ephesians 4:2*) What about pride?
2. What does it mean to live a life of humility? (*Philippians 2:1-11*)
3. What does unity in the Body of Christ really mean? (*Ephesians 4:3; Romans 12:18*)
4. What are other passages that describe the Body of Christ?
 - a. Break into groups and find scripture that talks about the Body of Christ. Get back together as a group and discuss the passages you found.
5. There is much conversation about unity in modern secular culture. How does God's definition of unity (Biblical) differ from the current secular cultural understanding/definition of unity?
6. As a Lifegroup, how can we promote unity in our families, our Lifegroup, our church, our community? Take some time to discuss each of these (or select a few that will promote healthy discussion in your group).

Prayer:

Break into small groups and share with one another any areas of Ephesians 4:1-3 that are difficult for you right now (*humility, gentleness, patience, love*). After listening to each person, pray over each other. Then read Isaiah 33 in your small group. Ask the Holy Spirit what He wants to say to you through these verses. Share one reflection with your small group.

Close: End your Lifegroup night by taking communion together.

Suggested Resources: [Alone with God](#) - Available for purchase in the church lobby
[Until Unity](#), Francis Chan

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The Doctrine of Unity

Icebreaker:

Get in groups of two or three and share about your funniest/strangest childhood injury.

Worship:

Goodness of God | *Bethel Music & Jenn Johnson*

Abba | *Jonathan David Helser*

O Come to the Altar | *Elevation Worship*

Read: Ephesians 4:4-6

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

John 17

Discussion:

1. According to Ephesians 4:4-6, what are the elements that form a biblical basis for unity? What is biblical unity? What other scriptures do you know of that talk about unity vs disunity?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Discuss what these verses teach us about differences in the body. How does that impact unity? How should we respond to differences in a way that promotes unity?
3. In John 17:6-18 Jesus prays for His disciples. What does He ask the Father to do (v11, 15)? Why (v11)? Jesus asks the Father to do something else in verse 17. What does He ask? How is the protection of God connected to unity? How is sanctification connected to unity?
4. In John 17:20-26 Jesus prays for all believers. Which verses reference unity (“be one”)? Why does Jesus say that unity is important to Him? Why is it important to believers?

Prayer:

Let's end by breaking up into groups of 2-3 and pray for unity within the Lifegroup, our church and the Body of Christ world-wide. Read Ephesians 4:4-6 again in small groups. How is God speaking to you individually through these verses? Share one reflection with your small group.

Close: Close Lifegroup night by taking communion together.

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John 17 | Acts 2 | Ephesians 4

Unity of the Spirit & the Bond of Peace

Icebreaker: Pick one person in the group to answer quick, random questions (e.g., beach or mountains, hamburger or pizza, etc.) and set a timer for 1 minute. Have the rest of the group quickly ask questions one at a time of the chosen person. After the time is up, pick a new person to answer questions and restart the timer.

Worship:

Fear is not my Future | *Maverick City Music*
Too Good To Not Believe | *Cody Carnes & Brandon Lake*
Is He Worthy? | *Chris Tomlin*

Read: Acts 2:42-47

Matthew 22:37

Discussion:

1. According to Acts 2:42-47, to what were believers devoted? What was the outcome of the unity described in this passage (for believers, for their community, for unbelievers)? How does this impact what we are devoted to as a Lifegroup community?
2. Read Matthew 22:37. What impact does my affection for Jesus have on unity in my relationships? What impact does our affection for Jesus have on unity in our Lifegroup? What about the impact on the church, our community, unbelievers?
3. What other scripture passages tell us that our relationship with God (intimacy) will directly impact our relationships with others (unity)? Some suggestions: John 15, story of Job, story of Joseph (brothers, Potipher's wife)
4. What is one truth we have discussed tonight that you can apply this week?

Prayer:

End this time together by breaking up into groups for men and women (or other small groups) to pray for any personal relationships where someone is experiencing disunity. As you pray, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any relationships where you have contributed to disunity. 1. Confess – agree with the Holy Spirit. 2. Repent – to God first; then to others. 3. Reconcile – make a plan, and move toward reconciliation this week.

Close: Close Lifegroup night by taking communion together.

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Unity: According to the Measure of Christ's Gift

Icebreaker:

In groups of two or three, share one way you have been challenged to live in unity during the past three weeks.

Worship:

Lord Send Revival | *Hillsong Young & Free*

The Blessing | *Kari Jobe, Cody Carnes & Elevation Worship*

Come and Take Over | *Antioch Music*

Read: Ephesians 4:7-8

Psalm 68:18

Discussion:

1. Read Ephesians 4:7-8. What does verse 7 mean?
2. Read verse 8 from the NIV. How should we respond to the gifts we have been given? How should we respond to those who have been given different gifts? What will be the impact on unity, of rightly viewing our gifts and the gifts of others?
3. How does comparison impact unity? In what ways are you tempted to compare your gifts to someone else's gifts? Pray for each other.
4. Break into small groups. Read the following verses to find encouragement/strength to defend against comparison. What does each verse tell us? Which one will you meditate on this week?
Ephesians 4:7
Galatians 6:4
Romans 12:6

Prayer:

Break up into groups and pray for unity over each other. Pray for unity in your relationship with Jesus, spouse, kids, friends, coworkers, and church body.

Close: Close Lifegroup night by taking communion together.

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Unity: Five-Fold Ministry

Icebreaker:

What is something you want to know more about God?

Worship:

Thank You Jesus for the Blood | *Charity Gayle*

Highest Praise (We Get Low) | *MBL Worship*

Holy Spirit | *Bryan & Katie Torwalt*

Read: Ephesians 4:7-14

Discussion:

1. What does this passage say about God?
2. What does this passage say about us as disciples?
3. This passage lists 5 different gifts given to the church. Discuss what each one means, utilizing the scripture references below.
 - a. Apostle – Romans 1:1-5, Romans 15:18-20
 - b. Prophet – 1 Corinthians 14:3, Acts 11:27-28
 - c. Evangelist – 1 Corinthians 9:16, Acts 8:4-14
 - d. Pastor – 1 Peter 5:2-3, Acts 20:28
 - e. Teacher – 2 Timothy 4:2, Jeremiah 3:15
4. Discuss what it would look like to have each of the 5 gifts consistently exercised in Lifegroup.
5. How would consistently exercising the gifts impact our workplace or families?
6. Verse 14 begins with the phrase “As a result...” and then tells us about some wonderful things that will occur if we do what is described in verses 11-13. What are the wonderful things described in verses 14-16? What are the things described in verses 11-13 that must happen in order for us to receive that wonderful result?
7. What are 1-3 practical steps we can take toward implementing verses 11-13 in our lives, families, Lifegroups, church?

Prayer: Let's end by breaking up into groups of 2-3, and discuss which of the 5-fold gifts you may feel inclined to grow in. Come up with a plan for how you'll pursue that gift, and how you'll use it to build up your Lifegroup. Pray for each other to be baptized in the Holy Spirit to see growth in that gifting.

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John 17 | Acts 2 | Ephesians 4

Unity: Speaking the Truth in Love

Icebreaker:

What is a goal you're wanting to accomplish in the near future and why?

Worship:

Here I Am to Worship | *Maverick City Music*

Jesus is the Lord (Spontaneous) | *Antioch Music*

New Wine | *Hillsong Worship*

Read: Ephesians 4:15-16, Matthew 18:15-17, Hebrews 3:13

Discussion:

1. What does this passage say about God?
2. What does this passage say about us as disciples?
3. What scripture passages help us understand what it means to speak the truth in love? How do we practically speak the truth in love?
4. As a Lifegroup, do you think we promote a culture in which we can “speak the truth in love?” How do you think we, as a Lifegroup, can grow more mature in that area?
5. Our relationship with God should impact how you speak to or about others. Give your group some time to ask the Holy Spirit to remind them of any relationship they have where they are not speaking the truth in love. Give the group time to ask the Holy Spirit for direction on how they can begin speaking the truth in love. Ask the question: Is there a scripture you can meditate on this week, as you mature in learning to “speak the truth in love”?

Prayer: Let's end by breaking up into groups of 2-3. Share more about what the Holy Spirit revealed during the last exercise (Q#5). Pray for one another to respond to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in that relationship.

UNION COMMUNION PARTNERSHIP

John 17 | Acts 2 | Ephesians 4

Unity: Old Way, New Way

Icebreaker: If you had to pick 2 historical people to have lunch with, who would they be?

Worship:

Unchanging | *Antioch Music*

Make Room | *Community Music*

I Speak Jesus | *Charity Gale*

Read: Ephesians 4:17-24

Discussion:

1. What does “futility of their thinking” mean (v17)? How does the truth of what Jesus taught impact your thinking (v20-24)? How has God exchanged futile ways of thinking in you for righteous and holy ways of thinking? What is the fruit of that exchange?
2. Ephesians 4:22 says, “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desire.” How do we do that?

Then Ephesians 4:24 says to “put on the new self.” How do we put on the new self? What other scriptures help us understand how to put off *old self* (old nature) and put on *new self* (new nature)? How will operating in the *new self* have an impact on unity in the body?

3. Sometimes we can feel the need to try harder to be better, but the reality is that the old has already gone and the new has already come (2 Corinthians 5:17). What is the balance of resting in the supernatural work of Jesus through salvation while actively partnering with God in the process of sanctification?
4. 1 John 4:13 says that we know Him because we’ve been filled with His Spirit. What does it look like for the Holy Spirit to renew the attitude of your mind? What other scriptures talk about the Holy Spirit’s role in our sanctification?

Prayer: Let’s end by breaking up into groups of 2-3. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal ways in which you are hanging on to the old self, and the deeds of the flesh (see Galatians 5:19-25). Then ask the Holy Spirit to show you what He wants to make “new in the attitude of your minds” (Ephesians 4:23) so you can see the righteousness and holiness of God displayed in your life. Share one revelation from this exercise with your small group, then pray for each other.

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John 17 | Acts 2 | Ephesians 4

Unity: Members of One Body

Icebreaker: What is your favorite dish in the fall season?

Worship:

When you walk into the room | *Bryan & Katie Torwalt*

Worthy | *Elevation*

Goodness of God | *Bethel Music*

Read: Ephesians 4:25-32

Discussion:

1. This passage deals with a lot of issues that have a root of anger. Verse 26 says to be angry and not sin, and Jesus says in Matthew 5:22 we are liable of murder if we are angry with a brother. How is anger a sin, and how can it lead to sin? How do we avoid sinning when we are angry?
2. Paul shares a couple of thoughts about anger in this passage. Read verse 26. Then read verse 31. What do you understand Paul to be saying about anger?
3. Anger triggers our bodies to fight, flight, or freeze. How would this natural response impact how we operate as one body if not dealt with? See verses 25 and 32 for reference.
4. What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit? What are some of the ways we can do that? How do you think the command in verse 29 (*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth*) is connected to the command in verse 30 (*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit*)?
5. Verse 32 hinges on the fact that Christ has already forgiven us. How would meditating on this truth empower us to obey all of verse 32? How can we grow to reflect the nature of Christ in our relationship with others? How will this impact unity in the body?

Prayer: Let's end by breaking up into groups of 2-3 and discuss practical ways you can be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to someone who needs it. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any way you've been grieving Him in your response to others – examples referenced in this passage of scripture: unwholesome talk, bitterness, rage, anger, slander, malice. Pray for one another.

UNION COMMUNION PARTNERSHIP

John 17 | Acts 2 | Ephesians 4

Unity: Walk in the Way of Love

Icebreaker: What is the best gift you have ever received? Why was it so meaningful?

Worship: [Worship Playlist 9](#) from [LifegroupLeaders.com](#)

Read: Ephesians 5:1-14

Discussion:

1. What is the command Paul gives in Ephesians 5:1-2? Whose example are we following? What kind of example is God setting for us?
2. Refer to Ephesians 4:1-3. Our calling is to follow Jesus. Verses 2-3 give us an idea of what that looks like. To “live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (v1), what does Paul challenge the Ephesians to do in verses 2-3?
3. Ephesians 5:2 says that Christ “loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Let’s see where the same language is used at other places in the New Testament. Read Romans 12:1-2. What does Paul urge followers of Jesus to do in these verses? Now read 2 Corinthians 2:15. What does Paul say we are **to God?** Look back at 2 Corinthians 2:14. Who leads us? Why? What connection do you see between the verses in Ephesians, Romans and 2 Corinthians?
4. Ephesians 5:3-7 describes a way of living that is contrary to what is proper *for God’s holy people*. What kinds of things are included in Paul’s description? As followers of Jesus, we are on a journey of sanctification (the process of becoming holy, pure). Beyond the obvious actions mentioned in these verses, how can we work out our salvation in these specific areas so we may live a life worthy of the calling we have received? Think about the motives of your heart. 1 Samuel 16:7 says, “People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”
5. According to Ephesians 5:8-11, what is the fruit that comes from living as children of light? What are we to do with fruitless deeds of darkness? What exactly do you think Paul is telling us to do when he says “expose them” in verse 11? What should this look like in your Lifegroup?
6. How does the truth we have discussed relate to unity? In light of our discussion, what can we do as a Lifegroup to promote unity in our homes and community?

Prayer:

Let’s end by breaking up into groups of 2-3. Ephesians 5:13 says, “But everything exposed by the light becomes visible – and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.” Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything in your life that you are keeping in the dark; that He wants you to bring into the light (listen). Share with your small group of 2-3 anything the Holy Spirit is asking you to bring into the light. Pray for each other to walk in the way of love, following the example of Jesus.

UNION COMMUNION PARTNERSHIP

John 17 | Acts 2 | Ephesians 4

Unity: The Days are Evil

Icebreaker: What is the best advice you have received, and why has it been so impactful?

Worship: [Worship Playlist 7](#) from [LifegroupLeaders.com](#)

Read: Ephesians 5:15-21

This section of Ephesians 5 picks up in the middle of Paul's encouragement to "live a life worthy of calling you have received." He reminds the Ephesians to follow the example of Jesus: walking in the way of love and living as children of the light. Refer to the discussion guide from last week, if you need more context for what precedes this passage.

Discussion:

1. As a reminder, let's revisit the context of the book of Ephesians. Who wrote the letter? When and where was it written? Who were the intended recipients and what was their culture? What is the main point (or purpose) of the letter? How might this information affect how we interpret and apply the letter of Ephesians to our contemporary lives?

For contextual information, review the following sources and share with your group as well:

- a. [The Gospel Coalition: Ephesians Introduction](#)
- b. [Insight Resources: Ephesians](#)

2. We pick up in verse 15, where Paul cautions the Ephesians to "Be very careful, then, how you live". Why does Paul say this is important (see verse 16)? What do you think "because the days are evil" means? What do you think it means to make "the most of every opportunity"?
3. In verses 15-17, there is more explanation of what it means to live carefully. Read those verses together. What counsel/warning does Paul give in verse 15-16? He restates the warning again in verse 17. What is the counsel/warning in verse 17?
4. It is almost as if Paul is turning a sharp corner, giving instruction on how to live as wise disciples, who understand the Lord's will. Read verses 18-20. What is the impact of living filled with the Spirit, according to these verses? How does this relate to unity?

5. Finally, Paul states that followers of Jesus should “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (verse 21). We might call this mutual submission. What does mutual submission look like practically? What aspects of God’s nature are needed for us to submit? How will mutual submission impact unity? According to verse 21, what is the motivation for submitting to one another? Where do you find mutual submission challenging in your daily walk with people? How does reverence for Christ impact your motivation for submitting to one another?

Prayer:

Let's end by breaking up into groups of 2-3 to discuss how we can apply these truths. What is one way you can live as wise, making “the most of every opportunity”. Share with your group and pray for each other. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal how you can live “submitted to one another” in your community. What next step can you take personally to promote mutual submission among believers in your community?

UNION COMMUNION PARTNERSHIP

John 17 | Acts 2 | Ephesians 4

Unity: How to be a Disciple in your Work

Icebreaker: If you could write a book about anything, what would you write?

Worship: [Worship Playlist 4](#) from [LifegroupLeaders.com](#)

Read: Ephesians 6:5-9

The obvious difficulty in this passage is most certainly the use of the word “slave.” Be sensitive to the emotions this word may trigger while acknowledging that this passage is included in the Bible so it must have some benefit for our lives.

We could do an exhaustive study of slavery in the Bible but that is not the purpose of this discussion guide. So, let’s build our discussion on the premise that the Bible does NOT, in any way, encourage or condone slavery. Rather, it places dignity and value on every single human being as a created and desired child of God. (For a deeper dive into what the Bible says about slavery, watch this video [Desiring God: Does the New Testament Legitimize Slavery?](#))

For most Bible scholars, the primary application of this passage to us, in modern America, is probably what we can ascertain about Kingdom values in the employee/employer work relationship. Therefore, let’s approach this passage from that perspective.

Discussion:

1. Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17. According to this passage, do you think Ephesians 6:5-9 has value to us even though it seems to be addressed directly to slaves (v.5)? Why or why not?
2. In which area(s) of modern life do you think Ephesians 6:5-9 could be “useful”? Why and how? (hopefully someone will say “work” or “job” but if they do not, ask your Lifegroup if they think that could be a reasonable application area for us).
3. The first part of this passage (v.5-8) gives directional principles to the employee and the second part (v.9) gives directional principles to the employer. First, let’s list the principles/direction that this passage gives to employees. Next, let’s list the principles that this passage gives to employers. What principles do the two lists have in common? What does this have to do with our current theme of “unity”?

4. Read v.5-6. According to these verses, how should you relate with your co-workers and/or managers? Read 1 Samuel 12:24 (from NASB). Does there seem to be a contradiction between these two verses? (NOTE: the verse in 1 Samuel says “Only fear the Lord” but verse 5 seems to be telling us to fear our “masters” or managers). Do you think that Paul might be telling us to do the same thing that Samuel was telling people to do (“fear God and serve him with all your heart”)? In other words, is Paul telling us to be faithful workers out of reverence for God, not fear of man? What are your thoughts about this scriptural comparison and application?
5. Read v.7 again and then read Colossians 3:23. According to these passages, what should be the motivation for your performance at work? If our motivation is consistent with these passages, how should that impact our job performance? How can this be applied outside of traditional work situations? For example, if you are supporting your child’s teacher at school, how should these verses impact your response to the teacher as the authority in this context? In what other contexts does this apply to your life?
6. Let’s pause here and listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit for a few minutes. Take a piece of paper and write this question (for God) on the top of the page – God, what do you want me to see, hear, understand, and apply from this passage? – Now, let’s be quiet and listen, as you hear God speak, write down what you hear.

Prayer:

Let’s end by breaking up into groups of 2-3, share what you heard God say about the application of this passage. What are you going to do differently this next week as a result of applying this passage to your work relationships?