

PREPARATION:

This lesson attempts to arrive at a definition of Christian unity which can be applied to our relationships with other believers. We will be getting our direction from the beginning of the second chapter of Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Help the group see that unity does not mean sameness or uniformity. We come to know Christ as individuals. We always have an individual relationship with Him. On the other hand, we need to learn to live out our Christianity in community with other believers, "being one in spirit and purpose."

Date

Notes:

PURPOSES:

1. To define and discuss the characteristics of Christian unity
 2. To show that unity does not require uniformity
 3. To try to apply the characteristics of unity to our Christian relationships
- Your job is to enable your group to start achieving the proper balance, each person looking "to the interest of others."

DIGGING DEEPER:

Jeremiah 32:38-40, John 17:20-23, Romans 12:9-16, 15:5-7, I Peter 5:5-7

SOME IDEAS TO HELP YOU LEAD THE GROUP:

Swap Night

Have everyone bring a Christian book or magazine article they have recently read. Take turns sharing with the group insights they have gained. Encourage everyone to bring extra magazines, books or children's materials to cell group. Swap materials. Ask members to regularly bring materials they wouldn't mind sharing or giving away. Pass them around.

Prayer Walk

Take periodic walks through the neighborhood where your cell meets. Pray for each family, in each house, as you walk by.

Happy Birthday To You

Once a month, a cell member brings a cake and everyone celebrates all the birthdays during that month.

Do Lunch

Cell members pack a lunch after a Sunday morning service and picnic together at a local park. You could also pick a restaurant to visit together. It should be one everyone can afford.

Starting Off Right

Cook an awesome farmer-style breakfast together. Pancakes and eggs are quick and easy to do. Everyone could bring something, such as bacon or cooked potatoes for hash browns. People could do this before an evangelistic outreach or just get together for brunch.

Categories

At a cell meeting break into groups (according to age, gender, similar birthday month, etc.) and pray for each other.

The Great Swap

All the men in the group go for an outing together, the women baby-sit the children. Then swap! All the women get together and do something fun while the men baby-sit the kids.

OPENING PRAYER/WORSHIP (10 minutes)

*"Lord God: We come to You with thanksgiving and praise, bonded in our common union with Your Son. We ask continued comfort, love, and fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Help us to in humility consider others better than ourselves as we learn to unite in spirit and purpose (Special prayer requests and/or thanksgivings may be added here.) _____
In Jesus' name. Amen."*

ANNOUNCEMENTS/SPECIAL OFFERINGS (5 minutes)

GETTING STARTED (20 minutes)

Open the discussion by asking, "What is your favorite food?" Let *everybody* answer. Then divide into smaller groups of three to four people who like different foods. Have each one try to convince the others to agree with their choice. Did anyone really change their choices? (Why or why not?) Point out that while we might not agree on favorite foods, most of us like to eat! Then ask, "Must Christians agree on all things to live in unity?"

HEARING THE WORD (10 minutes)

Let's hear what Paul said to the Philippians about Christian unity: *"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others."* Philippians 2:1-4

"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not the body," is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be? But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor, and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually." I Corinthians 12:11-27 Please read also, **I Corinthians. 1:11-17**

DOING THE WORD (10 minutes)

While doing the word, discuss why Paul gives this picture of the body and how it relates to the Body of Christ. What does it mean to you personally, as well as to each member of the group?

Ask the group to discuss as many of the following questions as time allows:

1. What does "encouragement from being united in Christ" mean to you? (Salvation is our greatest encouragement!)
2. How are we comforted by His love? (Since this has a large variety of answers, try to encourage the more timid members of the group.)

SHARING PRAYER CONCERNS/ANSWERS (5 minutes)

GROUP PRAYER (15 minutes)