



OTHERS SERIES – PART 1: UNITY

Brian Coles
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WORSHIP

Begin your group with a time of worship. If someone in your group can lead worship, invite them to lead two or three songs. Alternatively, consider using one or more of these songs from our Sunday morning worship time:

- **So So Good** (*Phil Wickham*)
- **How Awesome (Live)** (*The Belonging Co.*)
- **We Fall Down** (*Bethel Worship*)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- John 17:20-23
- Philippians 1:9-27
- Philippians 2:1-11
- Colossians 3:13

OPENING PRAYER

Begin by praying together for a fresh revelation of God's holiness and worthiness.

OVERVIEW

This week Pastor Brian opened a new series called "Others," exploring how God calls us to move beyond self-interest and toward genuine unity with one another. Beginning in Genesis 3, sin has fractured human relationships at every level. But God's redemptive work restores us — first to the Father, then to each other. This guide will help your group dig deeper into what biblical unity looks like and how to pursue it practically in everyday life.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Sin is the great disunifier. Since the fall, selfishness has cut us off from God and from one another.
- Jesus prayed specifically for the unity of all believers — not just the disciples, but everyone who would come to faith through their message (John 17:20-23).
- Paul's instruction to the Philippian church gives us a practical road map for unity rooted in humility, love, and the example of Christ.
- Church community is social, but it is not only social. We are united around a mission — bringing Jesus' love, healing, and hope to the world.
- Unity does not mean agreement on everything. Understanding the difference between essential doctrines and non-essential matters is part of walking in healthy community.
- The mind of Christ — marked by humility, selflessness, and servant-heartedness — is the foundation of genuine unity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening Question — Start Here

1. Think about a time when you experienced genuine unity with a group of people — a team, a family moment, a church community. What made that unity feel real? What contributed to it?

Section 1: The Problem — Sin as the Great Disunifier

2. Pastor Brian said, "Sin is the great disunifier. Since Genesis 3, we've been fractured even from our own spouses. Selfishness is so deep and expansive that it cuts us off from each other. We mistrust, use, and abuse." Where do you see this fracturing most clearly in your own relationships or in the world around you?
3. Pastor Brian asked: How do we view the other person — someone so different from us — through God's eyes rather than through the lens of self-interest, self-protection, or mistrust? What makes that genuinely difficult for you personally?

Section 2: Jesus' Prayer for Unity (John 17:20-23)

4. In John 17:20-23, Jesus prays that all believers would be brought into complete unity, and that this unity would be a witness to the world. Why do you think Jesus connected the church's unity directly to the world believing that God sent Him? What does that say about the stakes involved?

5. If the unity of the church is meant to be a sign to the watching world, what does disunity communicate? How have you seen disunity affect a church's witness?

Section 3: Paul's Prayer and Instructions (Philippians 1:9-11, 1:27)

6. In Philippians 1:9-11, Paul prays that love would grow in knowledge and depth of insight so that believers can discern what is best. How does growing in love and growing in wisdom work together? Can you have one without the other?
7. Philippians 1:27 calls us to stand firm in one Spirit and strive together as one for the faith of the gospel. Pastor Brian drew a distinction between church being social and church being on mission. How do you personally hold both of those in balance? Which one comes more naturally to you?

Section 4: The Road Map for Unity (Philippians 2:1-11)

8. Philippians 2:3-4 instructs us to do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility to consider others better than ourselves and to look out for the interests of others. Be honest — where is this hardest for you? At home? At work? At church?
9. Philippians 2:5-8 holds up Jesus as the ultimate model of humility — He did not cling to His equality with God but took on the form of a servant and became obedient to the point of death. What does it look like practically to "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" in your day-to-day relationships?
10. Colossians 3:13 describes bearing with one another and forgiving as the Lord has forgiven us. Is there a relationship in your life right now where you are withholding forgiveness or operating in disunity? What would it look like to take a step toward reconciliation this week?

Section 5: Reflection and Application

11. Pastor Brian encouraged the group to ask: "Who am I not in unity with?" Take a moment to sit with that question. Who came to mind?
12. First Peter 3:8 calls believers to be like-minded, sympathetic, loving, compassionate, and humble. Which of those five qualities do you feel strongest in? Which one do you most need to grow in right now?

13. Second Chronicles 30:12 describes God giving His people one heart to obey. What role does dependence on God play in achieving unity? Is unity ultimately something we produce, or something He produces in us?

PRACTICAL APPLICATION (10 Mins)

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again:

Daily time with Jesus. Pastor Brian challenged the group to make time with Jesus a priority this fall — in the Word, in worship, and in prayer. Commit to a specific time and place this week and share it with someone in your group for accountability.

Memorize and meditate on Philippians 2:3-4. Pastor Brian suggested saying these verses each morning as a way of building new habits of mind. Try it for one week and bring back what you noticed.

Name one relationship. Identify one person you are not currently in unity with. Pray for them by name every day this week. Consider whether God is calling you to take a step toward reconciliation.

Learn your relational style. Pastor Brian referenced different ways people tend to relate — avoiding, pleasing, vacillating, controlling, chaotic. Reflect honestly on your default patterns. How might those patterns be affecting your ability to pursue unity with others?

Engage with your church community. If you are not yet in a small group, serving in a ministry, or connected to others beyond Sunday morning, take one concrete step this week to move toward community.

Closing Prayer

Close your group time by praying together. Consider praying through the following:

- Ask God to reveal any selfishness or pride that is creating division in your relationships.
- Pray for the unity of your small group and your church family.
- Ask for the mind of Christ — humility, servant-heartedness, and genuine love for others.
- Pray for any specific relationships where reconciliation or forgiveness is needed.