

## **Beyond Sunday: Experiencing God's Design for the Church**

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### **Week 4: The Church is Communal**

**Introduction:** Unity in the Christian church has been a challenging thing since the earliest days of Christianity. The importance of getting Christian belief and behavior right, coupled with the open-to-interpretation nature of much of Scripture, leads to VERY strong feelings and uncompromising convictions on all manner of Christian theology and praxis.

Another challenge to unity is geographical and cultural diversity. Unlike other more regional religions which are buttressed by shared geographical or cultural identity, Christianity has since the beginning been global and transcultural. This means that local cultures and contexts create a multiplicity of Christian identities and permutations. The shape of Christian practice in a Korean megachurch, thus, looks different than a Pentecostal church in Appalachia. Unity amidst such diversity is one of the most brilliant and yet challenging things about Christianity.

But it's a challenge we must continually take up.

**The Big Picture:** God who made everything—including the diversity of nations—is reconciling all of creation back to Himself. The church should reflect that powerful work in every way.

#### **Discussion:**

##### **Share:**

- Describe a time when you experienced a difficulty because someone was different from you. How did you work through the differences? Did this encounter make you more willing or less willing to engage with people different from you?

##### **Discuss:**

##### **Sermon Review:**

- Review the sermon together using the website or the app. Write down any questions or thoughts that stand out to you as you review the sermon together. Discuss them as a group.
- What is your immediate response to the being a place of “diverse-unity”?
- How do you think “diverse-unity” tells others about God?
- Why do you think unity is hard to maintain in a church?
- How do you see Gospel practices bring different kinds of people together?
- Can diverse-unity be fully expressed with only one kind of engagement (Worship-Word-Witness)?

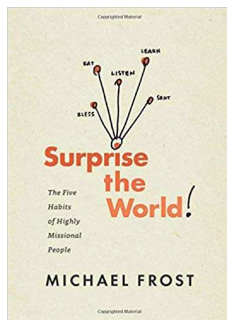
- How do you see diverse-unity playing out in your own life? In Cornerstone's future?

### **Unsettled or Uncertain:**

- What questions, concerns or doubts do you still have as this discussion wraps up?

### **Now That You Know:**

The early Christians defied cultural norms. They were a diverse group of people not conforming to the ways of the world. The church was being built, not on a social agenda, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must live a similar philosophy today.



### **Further Exploration on this Topic:**

*Uncomfortable: The Awkward and Essential Challenge of Christian Community* by Brett McCracken

**From the Publisher:** Does your church make you uncomfortable?

It's easy to dream about the "perfect" church—a church that sings just the right songs set to just the right music before the pastor preaches just the right sermon to a room filled with just the right mix of people who happen to agree with you on just

about everything.

Chances are your church doesn't quite look like that. But what if instead of searching for a church that makes us comfortable, we learned to love our church, even when it's challenging? What if some of the discomfort that we often experience is actually good for us?

This book is a call to embrace the uncomfortable aspects of Christian community, whether that means believing difficult truths, pursuing difficult holiness, or loving difficult people—all for the sake of the gospel, God's glory, and our joy.

Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Uncomfortable-Essential-Challenge-Christian-Community/dp/1433554259>