



We were made for more in our relationship than what we often settle for. God created and wired us to have deep, meaningful relationships with others that grow us as followers of Jesus. We were made to live in a biblical community and build relationships that build disciples.

WEEK THREE

Made for More Community: One with His People

Passage: John 17:20-23

OPENING DISCUSSION

When have you experienced a group or team that felt truly united? What made it work?

What usually makes it hard for people to stay connected over time?

TEACHING AND VIDEO NOTES

CONTEXT REMINDER: Jesus is hours from the cross. As we learned last week, He prayed for Himself as He went to the cross, and he prayed that His disciples would be one with God as they grow to know Him. Now, He expands His prayer. This is where you and I enter the prayer.

JOHN 17:20 “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message,

- **THEM** - the disciples
- **THOSE WHO WILL BELIEVE** - across all generations and times, Jesus is praying for every believer
- **THROUGH THEIR MESSAGE** - same Gospel saves all who believe; message never changes

Have you believed in Jesus for eternal life? Then, Jesus is praying for you! What is He praying for? What does Jesus want every believer to know and to experience?

JOHN 17:21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

He prays that we would be one.

“One” (Greek: *hen*)

- Not uniform, not the same
- But **unified** (one Savior, one Faith, one Spirit, one Purpose)

Just as Jesus and God are one, we are called to be one with other believers. To understand the call of the Biblical community, you have to understand the relationship between the Father and the Son.

- **3 Persons One God:** Father, Son, Holy Spirit
- **Perfect Relationship:** United in Love
- **Different Roles:** Same Mission

When Jesus prays that believers will be one, He is praying that:

- **Different but Same:** Different people will form one body, His church.
- **Relationally Connected:** The church will be united in love.
- **On Mission:** The church will be united in mission, with each person playing their role

Jesus is praying that we move past convenient connections toward the Biblical community. This community isn't because of our commitment to one another alone. It's because we are in Christ, and He unites us.

- The Biblical community sees the benefit of different people: People different than me can help me know God in different ways.
- The Biblical community invites us to respond in love as we live united. This is the love that forgives freely and supports fully. It is also the love that speaks the truth in love because love requires truth.
- The Biblical community compels us to be united in our mission, with each one of us playing our part on God's team. None is on the sidelines. We are all engaged in making disciples.

Right now, as your group is forming, you may be wondering:

Do I fit in this group? Remember what unites us. It's not our age or life stage; it's our Savior. Don't give up! Keep coming. Get to know the group. Be known by the group. And watch God work.

What's my role in this group? Even if you aren't the leader of the group, each person in the group has a role. Maybe you are the encourager who gives a helpful word at the right time. Maybe you are the Bible student who helps others understand and apply truth. Maybe you are the organizer who will help the group connect outside of group time and serve together. Remember, in a Biblical community, we all have a role to play based on our gifts and the group's needs. My hope is that over the next few weeks, you will know your role in the group and that God will use you!

What difference will this group make in my life? As we learned last week, God's big goal for each of us is that we would know Him, not just know more about Him. This group will help you know how to live your faith by living in a relationship with God.

This almost sounds too good to be true. Is God really building His people to be united, loving, and making a difference together? This is exactly what Jesus prayed for. But how is it possible?

JOHN 17:22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—

“Glory” (Greek: *doxa*)

- Not fame or spotlight
- But **life, character, and the presence of God**

Everything Jesus did on earth was because of His relationship with God. And get this, Jesus says here that He has given us the same relationship with God.

We can be one with each other, because we are one with Him. Unity is not something we create. It is something we live out because of what we've been given.

Here's the challenge: if you struggle relationally with other believers, don't start with your relationship with them; get to work on your relationship with God. Learn from Him. Listen to Him and then love others as He has loved you!

JOHN 17:23 I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Unity among believers is one of the distinguishing marks and powerful displays of the Gospel. That's why, in John 17:23, Jesus invites us into a different level of relationship with each other. He invites us to move from casual connection to a united Biblical community. Here's what I mean: you will make friends in the group or deepen friendships, but you are building more than just friendships. You are building your place in the body of Christ. You are building brothers and sisters who are deeply committed to one another and to the mission of Jesus.

You were made for more than just friendships. You were made to live in oneness with other believers in Jesus, and this group is a part of that.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What role do you naturally play in a group (encourager, organizer, teacher, leader, listener)?

Read: John 17:20-23

2. Vs 21. Why do you think Jesus made unity among believers such a big priority that he prayed for it specifically?

Leader Note: It may help to remind the group that John 17 is Jesus' prayer right before he is taken captive. His time left on earth is drawing to a close. This means that what He chooses to pray for should be viewed as of utmost importance.

3. Vs 23. Jesus prayed that we would not only be unified but have a "complete unity" that reflected God's love and unity. What makes unity difficult in real life? What things most hinder us from experiencing the kind of "complete unity" Jesus envisioned for us?

4. Where have you seen division hurt relationships or churches?

Leader Note: It is healthy to be open and honest with past church hurt and divisions. Give people room to do just that. That being said, it may be best to avoid church names and people's names. This helps keep the conversation productive and away from drifting towards gossip.

5. How is it possible to have genuine unity with other people when you don't agree about everything?
6. Vs 23. Jesus stated in verse twenty-three that when unity defines the church, "the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." The world, those who do not know Christ, will know that Christ was sent by God and loves the church in large part by our unity.

Leader Note: Jesus taught directly on this topic in John 13:34-35. There he boldly proclaimed that the world will know the (Christians) by how they love one another. When the love of God is lived out in the true Biblical community, the world notices. This teaching was fulfilled/lived out beautifully in Acts 2:42-47.

7. What would it look like for this group to move from connection to true community? What commitments do we need to make to each other to make that happen?

PRAYER TIME

Spend time praying together. Ask for prayer requests and pray for the group's current needs. Also, pray for the group to grow deeper in their relationships with one another. Ask God to grow this group in their commitment to one another as we meet together. Ask God to help each group member take risks to trust one another.

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