



## Small Group Work Sheet

John 17 - Profane Church

August 4, 2013

### Part 1 - Ice Breaker

1. In this passage, Jesus prays for his apostles as well as the future church. In both cases, he prays for unity. Unity is a hot-button topic in our society today, but oftentimes we operate with different definitions of unity. What do you mean when you speak of unity? What is our culture's understanding of unity today? Are these different?

**In today's society, unity seems to be another way of promoting their false tolerance, where to be united means that you can't disagree about anything. This is an unbiblical understanding of unity, which is discussed more in question 3.**

**Emphasize that Jesus is praying for us as his church. Sometimes we don't realize the weight of what Jesus is doing here—praying for all believers throughout all time.**

### Part 2 - Sermon Review

2. Read John 17:9-11, 18-19. What is the purpose of unity in this passage?

**Unity in this passage for the purpose of continuing the mission of God. Ask your Life Group what that means for our specific context as a church. How does our unity as a church further our mission as Faith Church? Individually?**

- a. Do you have any examples of divisions in the church that were counter-productive to the mission of God through his church?

**As a Life Group leader, you know your group better than most. You know if this question will turn into a time of gossip or complaining about the direction that we are going as a church. If you sense this kind of response, you may want to skip the question.**

**Alternatively, it might be good to have someone share an example of division and then address how to remain united as a church in the midst of that division. That conversation may bring much fruit and healing.**

- b. Unity is most beautiful in the midst of diversity. From your own experience or the experience of those you know, what are some examples of unity in the midst of diversity that has resulted in much fruit for the kingdom of God?

**This question may be difficult for people to answer, but that doesn't mean you should skip over it. We as a society tend to split over minor things, so we have frequent examples of division, but not many of deep-seated unity in the midst of diversity of opinion or thought.**

**Have your group try hard to think of examples. If they are unable to do so, ask them how they would keep the spirit of unity in the church if they had philosophical disagreements with the direction of the church (notice that I didn't say theological or spiritual, but just practical approaches to ministry).**

3. Read 1 John 4:7-20. Unity necessitates being united around a certain cause or person. How does this passage enlighten what we should be united around? How does our understanding of God as love impact our understanding of unity in the church in the midst of disagreement and diversity?

**This question ties into the ice breaker. If we are really united to one another, we are united in something we hold in common. This passage in 1 John does a good job of describing that because unity is found in love, but John is also exclusive in saying who is a part of the united Christian community.**

**Example: It is impossible for us to be in 'unity' with Muslims because of their understanding of who Jesus is. This doesn't mean that we can't be cordial or friendly toward them, but the world's understanding of unity is impossible with them. In contrast, a Bible-believing, evangelical Reformed, Lutheran, Presbyterian, or Pentecostal church would be possible for unity.**

**Unity is most crucial in the local body of believers. As Faith church, what are the things that unite us? Are these in line with what God would have unite us?**

4. Read Eph. 4:1-6. Paul lists several different points that are to unite us as Christians. What are they? Do you have a tendency to divide rather than unite on any of these areas? Which area? How can we cultivate a spirit of unity at Faith Church through emphasizing these different areas?

**All of the things that Paul mentions that you have been called to in vv. 4-6 are those areas that unite us.**

**Be sure to draw this to the specific context of the believers in your small group. If you are comfortable being vulnerable with your small group, it may be wise to share a struggle in keeping unity from one of these areas in your own life. This will give the people a specific example and help them work through it as a group.**

- a.

5. Read 1 Cor. 12:12-26. One of the purposes of spiritual gifts in the church is for the unity of believers. How can we use the spiritual gifts that God has given us to promote unity in the church?

**Think of your own personal context and specific examples. The general answer: that your weaknesses are covered by another's strengths, is good, but we want to go deeper here.**

**If you have the gift of mercy, how does that help promote unity in the church? How does the gift of administration? Of teaching? Of wisdom and discernment? This will look different for each person, and will give them the opportunity to explore how God will use them.**

**To go the opposite direction, you might want to address divisions that can be caused by spiritual gifts. How do you remain unified when you are jealous of someone else's gift? How do you remain unified if you do not believe that someone is practicing their gift in the most effective way?**

6. Read John 17:20-23. Why is unity so crucial for the church?

**Thomas Manton, a Puritan pastor from the 1600's, has an excellent quote that may be worth discussing in your Life Group: "Divisions in the church breed atheism in the world."**

**Jesus' emphasis on unity in his prayer for us affirms this statement by Manton; when we are divided within our walls, then our message is that much more undesirable to the people who do not believe.**

**Think of our specific context: do you have any examples of this being true? Are there any specific ways that you can remain unified for the sake of the mission of God going forward?**

**While there are a lot of questions for this study, it is important that you spend a fair amount of time on this question (feel free to skip those questions above that your group may not address).**

**It is important for us to address this question on the small group level because we are in the midst of a large, slow transition of identity as a church: from one church in one location to one church in two locations.**

**Our ultimate desire is for people from Spirit Lake and Spencer to not have an 'us and them' mentality, but to think of the two campuses as 'we.' Having this conversation in your Life Group will begin the transition to this mindset. There are no wrong answers for this question; in fact, I would love it if you were able to record your group's response to this question and email me your group's responses at [jordan.gowing@icloud.com](mailto:jordan.gowing@icloud.com). That would help us as pastors promote this unity in the future. Thanks!**

7. As we transition from being one church in one location to one church in two locations, unity is more important than ever before. What are ways that we (both corporately and individually) can be intentional to cultivate this unity?