



# Life Group Practices

## Title of Series

United: In Jesus We Trust

## Timing

October 25-November 29

## Big Idea

We live in the United States of America. But especially right now, we feel anything but united. It seems as if more divides us than unites us. For some of you, it may feel like you can't say anything, do anything, or share anything without someone objecting to it or being offended by it. How can we find unity in a country so divided by politics, opinions, and historical scars?

In his letters to the Christians in Ephesus, Paul addresses many of these issues. He wanted to encourage the Ephesians to find their unity in Christ. He believed that the kingdom of Jesus had the power to break down the ethnic and social barriers to create a whole new humanity.

The Gospel of Jesus has the same power today to break down ethnic, social, and political barriers so that we can be a unified family of believers.

## Series Breakdown

### United in Christ

**October 24/25, 2020**

No matter who is in the White House, Christians pledge their ultimate allegiance to King Jesus. Paul tells us that Jesus is seated at the right hand of God, ruling over all things for the good of the Church. He did this to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

### **Read Ephesians 1:7-10**

1. Paul says that in Christ we have the forgiveness of sins through God's grace that has been lavished on us. When do you feel God's grace most vividly: During the *Forgive us, Renew us, Lead us*, section of worship, during the sermon, during communion, during a great music song, or some other time?
2. Paul says that God is doing everything to "bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth and under Christ". What parts of your life still need to be *brought under Christ*? How could you submit your finances, entertainment, health, or something else under the Lordship of Jesus?
3. What parts of society still need to come "under Christ" so that we can all be unified by him?

### **Read Ephesians 1:17**

4. Paul prays that we would have wisdom to know Jesus better. Do you feel like you are growing in wisdom so that you can know Jesus? Why or why not?

### **Read Ephesians 1:18-23**

5. This is basically two long, run-on sentences. Look especially at what Paul says about Jesus' position of power right now. Jesus is exalted over all things and is ruling over all things for the good of the church. In what ways do you see Jesus still ruling over everything for the good of the church?

### **This week's practice: Daily prayer for wisdom to see Jesus exalted as king.**

Paul prays that we would have wisdom to know Jesus. He says that Jesus is exalted and ruling. James 1:5 says that if we pray for wisdom, God will give it to us. Let's daily pray for wisdom to see and believe Jesus as king. Then let's send emails/text messages to our Life Group to encourage each other to keep praying this prayer.

Here is a suggested way to pray:

*Lord, there are so many institutions, people, and voices that are trying to rule over my life. Lord Jesus, give me the wisdom to see that you are king. Then lead me to live in your kingdom and serve and love others as you did. Amen.*

# United In Humanity

**September 30/October 1, 2020**

The Ephesians were divided based on race. There was a deep divide between Jews and Gentiles. Those divisions led to real hostility. But Jesus came to make the two groups one, breaking down the walls that divided them. Our society seems to be divided into at least two groups politically, racially, and socially. But Christ came to remove those barriers and make us all one. In Christ, we all become the one household of God in which God dwells with his Spirit.

## **Read Ephesians 2:11-13**

1. Paul says that the Gentiles were separated from Israel. List all the ways that we might separate from each other.

## **Read Ephesians 2:14-16**

2. Paul says that Jesus is our peace. Give an example how Jesus could bring peace between you and someone that is your enemy.
3. How could Jesus bring peace between people of different classes, races, or political parties?
4. If you feel comfortable, share with the group a relationship that needs to be reconciled with the help of Jesus.

## **This week's practice: Be reconciled with someone.**

Consider a relationship that you have that has unresolved conflict. Consider how you might invite Jesus into the relationship for healing and peace through the blood of his sacrifice. (Warning: Do not put yourself in a situation with someone who is unrepentant and abusive or a manipulator. True reconciliation will take work from both people. Feel free to consult with your pastors if you need extra support and guidance.)

## **United Through Prayer**

**November 7/8, 2020**

Because God has made us the unified children of God, we can now approach our Father with freedom and confidence. We ask God to help us all grasp the height, depth, length, and width of his love so that we can grow even closer to God and one another.

### **Read Ephesians 3:6**

1. Paul says that he knows a mystery, namely that God wants to unite all people into one family through Jesus Christ. How could we share and live out this “mystery” in our families and communities?

### **Read Epheisians 3:14-19**

2. Paul prays that his church would be able to grasp God’s love. Why is this prayer so important for us and for others?

### **Read Ephesians 3:20-21**

3. Paul says that God can accomplish anything, even Paul’s prayer for our faith. Who is someone in your life that needs to know the height and depth of God’s love?

**This week’s practice: Pray for someone you know to comprehend the love of God.**

List the people in your life who don’t know that God loves them. Maybe that’s a friend or neighbor. Pray for them everyday, and encourage your Life Group to pray for them as well.

## **United in Our Diversity**

**November 14/15, 2020**

Our unity in Christ does not mean uniformity. The Church is the body of Christ and we are all unique members of his body. We all play a unique role in his kingdom. Our diverse gifts and callings allow us to complement each other so that we might all mature together.

### **Read Ephesians 4:1-3**

1. Paul encourages us to be humble and gentle and to bear with each other. In what areas of your life do you need more humility?

### **Read Ephesians 4:4-6**

2. List all things that unite us together as a group of believers.

### **Read Ephesians 4:7-10**

3. Note that Jesus ascended and rules over all things, but he has also distributed gifts to his church. Why is it so important that we recognize that our gifts and talents come from Jesus?

### **Read Ephesians 4:11-16**

4. What are the different gifts that you bring to God's kingdom? Are you a leader? Teacher? Encourager? Counselor? Peacemaker? Helper? Or something else?
5. How might you use your unique gifts to unify God's people?

**This week's practice:** Identify your unique personality/gifts and use it in a tangible way for God's kingdom.

## **United in Purpose**

**November 21/22, 2020**

God united to live new lives of love and service. We no longer live for our own personal and individual gain. Instead we are to live as "children of the light". Our old life of sin and selfishness leads to division and pain. But when we live for the good of others, we become a united family of love.

### **Read Ephesians 4:17-28**

1. In what ways do our own sinful actions create division? Can you think of a specific example?
2. Paul says that we should work so that we have something to give to those in need. Who could you give a gift to today in order to bless them and unify your relationship?

### **Read Ephesians 4:29-32**

3. Paul gives many helpful tips of how we can be Christians who don't divide but unite. Which piece of advice is most helpful and needed in your life? How can you put it into practice today?

### **Read Ephesians 5:15-20**

4. Explain how worship and singing and praising God unites all together.

### **This week's practice: Take a personal inventory of your life. Eliminate destructive practices.**

As forgiven children of God, Paul wants us to put away the deeds of darkness because they create division. Take a personal inventory of your life. Are you practicing any of these division-causing behaviors: Greed, anger, coarse joking, gossip, drunkenness, or something else?

## **United Against One Enemy**

### **November 28/29, 2020**

We are not to fight against human beings. That just leads to more division and hostility. Our true enemy is the devil and all his dark forces that are at work behind all that is evil. We are to work together to find our common spiritual enemy with spiritual weapons.

### **Read Ephesians 6:10-12**

1. How would your interactions change if you recognized that the devil is your real enemy, not human beings?

### **Read Ephesians 6:13-17**

2. Explain the habits and practices that we need to have to "put on God's armor".

### **Read Ephesians 6:18-20**

3. What are the spiritual battles that you are fighting right now? What do you need this group to pray about in your life?

### **This week's practice: Engage in Spiritual warfare through prayer.**

Pray for each other. pray for your family. prayer for your pastors. pray for your country. Fight against the Devil's schemes by engaging in prayer for the unity and strength of

God's Church.