

WEEK 5: IF CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE ONE, WHY ARE THERE SO MANY DENOMINATIONS?

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

PREPARE

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MAIN POINT

Jesus prayed that we'd be one, yet there are thousands of Christian denominations worldwide. What happened? We'll trace how one church became many, sometimes for good reasons like holding to the Scripture, sometimes over cordial disagreements, and sometimes for foolish reasons. We will see that what unites followers of Jesus is greater than what divides. We will give a framework that helps you discern the difference between primary, secondary, and tertiary beliefs—so you know what to hold tightly and what to hold loosely with great charity.

LEAN IN BREAK THE ICE

What is your controversial, unpopular opinion about something that isn't really important (e.g. if pineapple belongs on pizza)?

LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Read John 17:20-23. As you sit with Jesus' prayer, what strikes you about what He longs for among His followers, and why do you think unity matters so much to Him in this moment?

Read Ephesians 4:1-6. What do you notice about the posture Paul calls believers to adopt, and how do these verses deepen your understanding of what true unity looks like according to Scripture?

When you hold these two passages together, what do you learn about the kind of unity God desires for His people and the character traits needed to live it out?

**LOOK OUT
IDENTIFY THE
RELEVANCE OF GOD'S
WORD IN THE WORLD**

Different denominations often emphasize different aspects of Christian belief and practice. How do you think this variety can help the larger body of Christ, and what are some potential challenges it creates?

What is an example of a theological view or “doctrine” that Christians should hold tightly? What about one we should hold more loosely?

**LOOK IN
APPLY GOD'S WORD
TO YOUR LIFE**

How do you feel when you encounter Christians who love Jesus but practice their faith differently than you do, and what does that reaction reveal about your own assumptions or values?

As you reflect on your own beliefs, is there an area where you sense God inviting you to hold something more firmly or with more humility and openness? What is shaping that sense in you?

Leader Notes

This section helps you grasp the key themes and intended outcomes of the discussion before you lead your group. These notes are not the group questions; they simply guide your preparation so you can lead with clarity and shepherd the conversation well. You may also find them helpful at the end of your discussion to wrap up your time together.

Think About It

Take a moment to reflect on the goodness of God who unites His people through Christ even when our expressions of faith differ. How might remembering God's character, patience, and faithfulness shape the way you view Christian unity, diversity, and your place within the larger family of God?

What Will You Do?

What is one intentional way you can pursue unity this week, whether through practicing humility, seeking understanding, extending grace, or learning from a believer who worships differently than you?

Changing Your Mind

...making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:3)