

Community Group Guide

@ our core – Unbreakable Unity

The Gathering

Paul Jenkins

March 4, 2012

Ephesians 4:1-3

Community Groups are the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering. It is through the interaction that takes place in each of these groups around our area that will enable people to begin to move from being drawn to God to a life that is being deepened by God. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word through His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

HEY!

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Greet each other—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Week in review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time. Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to revisit the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Opening prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

SAY!

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications in our lives:

Message Summary

Week 4 of the "@ our core" series began the section of our UNBREAKABLE values, and dealt specifically with unbreakable unity: we value **Unbreakable Unity** and expect each member to defend our family, our vision, and our leaders with tenacity, truth, and grace. With a topic like unity, it's important to understand what it isn't, what it is, and what it does.

1. **What unity isn't:** Unity isn't something that happens because of something external. It isn't a cult, a dictatorship, a pact, a feeling or a goal. It also is not possible apart from our hearts being 100% surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Everything Paul urges the Ephesians to do in his letter to them – including keeping the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:3) – hinges on them being "in Christ."
2. **What unity is:** Unity comes from within. It is a by-product of the saving grace we've all experienced in Christ. He is the bond of peace that secures each of us together as one body. We're not like Mr. Potato Head who's parts are simply stuck on, but rather are more like foosball men who have a steel rod running through them holding them as one. Unity is a powerful testimony to the world that Jesus makes it possible for very different people to truly love one another. Sure, it's hard, because Satan wants to do everything he can to push us apart, but the testimony to the world makes it worth the fight!

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3. **What unity does:** *Unity makes our prayers more powerful (Matt. 18:19), it creates a safety net for growing in the ministry gifts God has given each of us (Eph. 4:11-16), it creates a fierce loyalty toward one another (Gal. 6:2), and, most importantly, it validates the mission of Jesus (John 17:21).*

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- In Ephesians 4:1, Paul urges the believers to “live a life worthy of the calling” they had received. How do the characteristics mentioned in verse 2 help us do that?
- Of the qualities Paul mentioned (humble, gentle, patient, bearing with each other in love), which is the most difficult for you to live out on a consistent basis?
- Read Ephesians 2:14. How does being fused together by Jesus help unity feel less restrictive and more free?
- Have someone read Ephesians 4:11-16 to the group. Discuss the difference between a consumer-driven church (where the ministers mentioned in verse 11 do all the work for the members) and a servant-driven church (where the ministers mentioned in verse 11 train the members in gift-oriented ministry). How does working together help the body grow in unity?
- How can your community group grow more mature in the faith (v. 13)? How can you use the gifts God has given you to help your group – and our church – “keep the unity of the Spirit” that Paul mentioned in verse 3?

PRAY!

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of the message. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from the message?
- According to the truths from the message, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your desires/values need to change to align with His desires/values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this message?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength in the application of these truths and for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel.