The Call to Unity

SESSION GOALS

The point of every session is a main idea with the goal of informing our knowing, feeling and doing.

MAIN IDEA: The world sees Jesus more clearly when Christians are unified.

Head Change: To know the essential tenets of faith uniting all followers of Jesus.
Heart Change: To celebrate the diverse expressions of the global church.
Life Change: To respond to different church cultures or denominations with kindness not criticism, and curiosity not animosity.

OPEN

Describe your most embarrassing moment.

Have you ever been embarrassed to be a Christian? What kind of behaviour, carried out in the name of Christianity, makes you cringe, or makes you angry?

When Jesus' people are unified, His cause is made clear and credible to a sceptical world. Unity is at the core of our faith, exemplified in our triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In contrast, disunity has been the curse of humankind ever since Adam and Eve fell into sin. In this session, Nicky makes a compelling case for the absolute necessity of unity amongst believers, if we're to have a powerful and transformative influence in the world Jesus died to save.

VIEW

As you watch, write down how Nicky answers these questions.

What did Jesus pray for all who believed, and *would* believe (that's us!), in Him?

Which nations, tribes, people groups, and languages will be represented before God's throne in heaven?

Does unity eliminate diversity?

Show SESSION #2: *The Call to Unity* (9 minutes)

REVIEW

In the last session, Nicky and Bobby discussed how, in our current cultural moment, the church has an unprecedented opportunity to reach the lost. **Is the unity of the global church relevant to the work of local churches across the planet? Why or why not? Is unity the same as uniformity?**

Nicky tells the story of an unbelieving friend who has rejected Christianity because of the centuries-old divisions between different church traditions. **Do you know someone who has been put off the claims of Christ because of the pettiness or in-fighting they've witnessed amongst Christians? How might you respond to an unbelieving friend or colleague who says, 'If you Christians can't even agree on what's true, how do you expect me to believe any of it?'**

We need to consider *what* unites us as believers. For example, your church may be largely united by shared race, denomination, social class, language, or location. But these also create divisions because people who are *not* like you may be excluded. Jesus calls us to be united by the vast, overarching power of the gospel. **If someone were to visit your church for the first time, what might they experience to be the unifying factor of your church? Do you think a person of any race, nationality or socio-economic bracket would feel welcome and comfortable in your church? Are you aware of any barriers separating you from other Christians or other kinds of churches in your city or community? What might God be calling you to do about it?**

When people from different church traditions or denominations keep on trying to convince one another of their points of view, unity is seldom achieved. But if those same people turn their attention outwards, to a desperate and dying world, it's far easier to link arms on common ground. Our shared mission changes our perspective, because we understand that unless we're united, the world won't believe. **Which of your friends or family members do you tend to disagree with, theologically? What are the things you *do* agree on?**

What do you think the global church needs to repent of?

BIBLE EXPLORATION

John 17 gives us the astonishing privilege of being privy to Jesus talking to His Father. John 17:20–23 reads, 'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, 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. I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one—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.'

There are many things Jesus *could* have focused on, in His prayer. Yet He prayed primarily for the unity of all believers, specifically so that the watching world would believe the good news. **Reflect on John 13:34–35 as another example of Jesus**

prioritising unity.

Genesis 1:1—the very first verse of the Bible—reads, 'In the beginning, God created…' The Hebrew word for 'God' in this verse is *elohim*, which is plural. The Hebrew word for 'created' is *bara*, which is singular. So really, God's Word begins with a grammar mistake, and gloriously exhibits, from the get-go, that our three-in-one God is all about unity. **God existed in perfect relationship, before He made the world. How does this inform our priorities? Should we be primarily task-oriented or people-oriented?**

In Ephesians 3:10 Paul writes, 'His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms…' Nicky points out that the Greek word for 'manifold' is only used once in the New Testament. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it's the same word used to describe Joseph's coat of many colours. It carries the idea of kaleidoscopic beauty and variety. **Read Revelation 7:9. What would it take to create a church that looks like this—on Earth as it is in heaven? What might it look like for us to work towards unity, not by eliminating differences but by celebrating them?**

LAST WORD

As followers of Jesus Christ—who was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died a sinner's death, was raised to life, and reigns in glory—let's spur one another on towards greater and greater unity, celebrating and supporting those from who we may differ stylistically or culturally. Let's love one another in such a way that we'll be the resounding 'Yes!' to the world's question, 'Is Jesus for real?'

DEEPER WALK

Select at least one activity below to complete before watching the next session.

Read: Read 1 Corinthians 1:10, Philippians 2:2, Colossians 3:14, and 1 Peter 3:8. How would you paraphrase these truths to explain to someone that we're called to unity?

Write: Do you need to make right with another believer you've maligned, because of a theological disagreement or some other difference? Write to them. Ask their forgiveness. Do all you can to establish harmony in that relationship.

Pray: Follow Jesus' example and write out your own prayer for the unity of believers all over the world.