



HOW CAN WE SEEK UNITY AND BE A BLESSING TO OUR CITY?

This October and November, we're starting a new preaching series on unity called United We Stand.

As a Church, unity is one of our defining values. Without unity, we are unlikely to see our city transformed. In practice, there can be a 'drag' away from unity into parochial mindsets and divisions. As a body of believers, we want to actively seek to be unified, and in doing so, see positive transformation.

We'll be examining a variety of scripture during this series. For instance, Jesus prayed for our unity in John 17. It's His priority for His Church, but key to seeing the mission accomplished is shared in John 13: 35.

Our preaching topics during this series are:

Body Image | Welcome & Inclusion | A House Divided | Put It On | Equipping the Saints

Ways to use these Study Notes:

Simply listen to the message at our 11am or 7pm service on Sundays. We have different voices sharing on the same topic each week, to give our church family the chance to hear two perspectives. To help you to go deeper with each topic, re-visit the scriptures and then consider the questions on your own or with friends, family or in your midweek group.

Watch all the talks on our website here:

www.woodlandchurch.net/latesttalks



BODY IMAGE

Services on 11th October 2020

INTRODUCTION | Read 1 Corinthians 11-14

The apostle Paul loves to compare the Church with the human body made up of different parts. In 1 Corinthians, he challenges the Church which is 'the body of Christ' about its disunity. He reflects on the physical sickness among the Church as a sign of its spiritual sickness because of disunity, especially when it meets to share communion which should be a sign of unity (11:17-34). He says 'your meetings do more harm than good' and calls the Church to recognise how the different parts need one another. He challenges disunity on the basis of personalities, race and socio-economic factors.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. In the individualistic culture of the C21 what attitudes to Church and community would Paul challenge if he was speaking directly to us today?
2. In what ways do you think your attitudes and lifestyle contribute to the health or sickness of the whole Church?
3. How important is our unity to God (John 17). Why? How does it affect the mission and message of the Church?
4. It's one thing for a local Church to be united, it's another thing for a group of Churches or the Church in a city or region to be united. How would you assess our unity as Church in the City? Is there competition and rivalry? Is competition among churches ever healthy?

This Sunday, we celebrate 25 years of Woodlands Central Church as a place of worship. A core value of Woodlands is 'unity' both as a group of Churches and within the City. How would you assess the legacy of Woodies and what would your prayer be for the future?



WELCOME & INCLUSION

Services on 18th October 2020

INTRODUCTION | Read Acts 15

Much of the New Testament wrestles with issues around inclusion- of the Gentiles becoming part of the (Jewish heritage) people of God.

Acts 15 is a key chapter exploring how the early Church managed to incorporate the Gentiles into the Christian family and how they were willing to modify deeply held and cherished practices in the light of what God was doing and deeper revelation and understanding of their mission and calling.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between 'welcome' and 'inclusion'?
2. What inclusion issues are there for the Church today?
3. What principles guided practices towards inclusion in Chapter 15 of Acts?
4. How do we in our small groups make space for and include people? What is our strategy for this? How central to our purpose is growth, welcome and inclusion?
5. What biblical guidelines are there for inclusion while holding on to key non negotiables? What might 'non-negotiables' be in your understanding?



A HOUSE DIVIDED

Services on 25th October 2020

INTRODUCTION | Read Luke 11:17

Jesus taught that division weakens and destroys a 'household' or organisation, and that it will lose power through division. Has today's Church lost power through its divisions? Historically the Church has divided over apparently trivial things, and theological niceties (e.g. Do we baptise in the name of the Father Son and Holy Spirit, or in the name of Jesus?). Churches divide most over passionately held beliefs- which is a challenge to zealous Christians!

STUDY QUESTIONS

How can Church celebrate diversity and mutual respect of others, especially when people believe passionately on a particular issue?

1. What things do Churches divide on? Which of these are vulnerabilities for us? (Check out 3 John 1:9, 1 Corinthians 3, 1 Cor 11:22, James 2, Galatians 2:11, Acts 6:1)
2. Why do you think it is said 'the biggest enemy of revival is the revival that preceded it'? How open are we to the new and fresh?
3. What are the particular problems that Churches face as they grow large around divisions?
4. What does Luke 9:48/Luke 22:24 tell us about division and how to avoid it?
5. How much was the power of the early Church in Acts 4 onwards linked to their unity?



PUT IT ON

Services on 1st November 2020

INTRODUCTION | Read Ephesians 4:24-26 and Colossians 3:10-15

Unity begins at home! It's also not a passive thing, it is an active way of life that needs to be embraced and pursued, particularly in our closest relationships. New testament teaching often lands on household relationships. It encourages pro-active Christian living (so pro-active it might feel we are just 'putting it on').

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. These bible passages emphasis the power of speech in guarding unity or creating disunity. What part does speech and other communication (like social media) have in guarding or hurting unity?
2. What are the tensions between being 'real' and living with integrity, and the choices to speak well of others, even when you have felt hurt by them or critical of them?
3. What particular discipleship challenges are there for you in your household or family?
4. How do you define the kind of 'love' that you 'put on'?
5. Greg Boyd said 'It's more important to treat people right than be right' What does he mean? Do you agree?



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

Services on 8th November 2020

INTRODUCTION | Read Ephesians 4:1-13 and 1 Corinthians 14

A mature Church has mature people, with diverse gifts equipped by a diverse team. Ephesians 4 gives us a template of a 'five-fold ministry', a team that equips a Church. The missiologist Alan Hirsch has invested heavily into the five-fold ministry (or APEST) with his 5Q teaching where he suggests this model is for everyone.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. If we are one part of a body to use Paul's image how do we discover our part, our gift and calling?
2. How would you identify five-fold ministry in Woodlands Church? How much do you feel people who carry a strong gift and calling in one area are able to equip someone like you?
3. Woodlands has a mantra 'everyone a minister'. Do you think this is a real and possible practice, or just a slogan? How would you define your ministry?
4. How do you feel you need to be 'equipped'? What methods would suit your personality? If this isn't happening how could you feedback that to those charged with the task of 'equipping the saints'?
5. Is there someone you are seeking to 'equip for ministry' right now? Who and how?