

Behind the Curtain—Week 2

- Describe an experience where you were part of a team. Maybe it was a sports team, dance team, debate team, educational team or a team at work. What did that experience teach you about working together?
- What was your team able to accomplish together that they could not have accomplished alone?

"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. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

John 17:20-23 (NIV)

- In John 17:20-23, Jesus prayed that the disciples would be one. Would you say Christians are united or divided? Explain.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope when you were called- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:3-6(NIV)

- Do you think it is more common for communities of believers to work together or compete against one another? Why?
- We can do more for the Kingdom of God together than we can apart. In what ways have you seen communities of believers come together and work together? What were some of the things these groups were able to accomplish when they worked together?

Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.

Luke 11:17 (NIV)

- One way to unify the Church is for communities of believers to share their resources with each other. Describe a time when you gave sacrificially of your resources to someone else? How did it make you feel? How did it affect your relationship with the recipient of your gift?

I thank my God every time I remember you.... because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Philippians 1: 3,5 (NIV)

- Another way the Church can come together is to partner together through a network to reach others for Christ. What type of global impact do you think the Church as a whole could have by joining together through networks?

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV)

- If you could be part of uniting ministries around the world to help accomplish one thing, what would that one thing be?
- What are some things you and your group can do to partner with other communities of believers in your neighborhood?

Final thought: We can do more for the Kingdom of God together than we can apart. While Satan loves for believers to compete against each other, God loves for us to complete one another. With your group, pray for believers all over the world that they would come together to make a difference in our world. Ask God to remove any critical hearts in your group and look for ways to partner with other Christ followers outside of your group and community.

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For Further Study

To use this resource, simply select one or two questions from each category below that you think will help your group discussion. Alternatively, you can use these questions and Scriptures in your own personal devotions during the week.

Open

- What do you think are some of things that keep sports teams unified?

Explore

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

- What did Paul urge the Ephesians to do? (4:1)
- What three virtues foster unity among Christians? (4:2)
- How should Christians conduct themselves toward each other? Why? (4:2-6)
- What are the seven elements of Christian unity? (4:4-6)
- How is Christian unity related to the nature of God? (4:4-6)
- How are we enabled to live at peace with each other? (4:7)
- Who gives grace to each believer? (4:7)
- With what kind of people does God fill the church? (4:11)
- What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? (4:12-13)
- What results from gifted believers equipping the church? (4:14-16)

Reflect

- How well do you get along with other Christians?
- What do you think is God's prescription for unity among believers?
- What is your responsibility to help others in the body of Christ?
- How unified is your group?

Apply

- What service can you offer another Christ follower to help build up the body of Christ?

Here are some suggestions you may want to use for your time with God this week:

Day 1: Read John 17:20-23. Spend time in prayer asking God to help unify His Church all over the world. Pray that your group will do its part in bringing unity to the Church.

Day 2: Read Ephesians 4:1-16. Pray for believers to stop competing each other. Ask God what you can do to help bring unity to His Church.

Day 3: Read Luke 11:17. Ask God to show you any areas where you are trying to compete with other believers and help you see their hearts through His eyes.

Day 4: Read Philippians 1:3-5. Pray that God will enable the Church to find ways to work together through such things as networks.

Day 5: Read Ephesians 3:20-21. Ask God to show you what your group can do to partner with groups from other communities of believers.