



Collegiate Quarterly

## Teacher's Guide

# Causes of Disunity

## Surveying the Source

John 4:23

## Plotting the Course

### The students will:

- ▶ Understand what unity is and why it is good.
- ▶ Identify some of the causes and effects of disunity.

- ▶ Commit to pursuing unity with the fellow believers in your local context.

## Preparing to Lead

Disunity exists everywhere. Be it in a large corporation, a sports team, local church, or even just amongst friends. Everyone has differences, right? Differences in opinion, ideas, and ways of working, to name a few. However, disunity does not just exist because of differ-

ences, but begins in the heart.

In this lesson, we will look at some of the reasons for disunity amongst believers and begin to think about some of the ways in which we can pursue unity in our local contexts.

## Getting Started

**A.** *Ask:* “How do you think God feels about unity amongst believers?” *Read:* Psalm 133. *Ask:* “Why do you think it’s ‘good’ and ‘pleasant’ for people to be in unity with each other?” Briefly discuss the two images in the Psalm and think about what they mean for God’s delight in Christian unity.

*Say:* “David sees unity as a divine gift; something that is excellent and wonderful. It is to be desired, delighted in, and intentionally pursued in our contexts. However, more often than not, disunity can be the norm.”

**B.** Get the class to think of examples of times when people were united and the results of this unity. Then get them to repeat the same exercise, but with examples of disunity. The examples can be personal, organizational, or societal.

*Ask:* “What were the causes of unity/disunity in these examples? What was the difference between the results of the two?” *Say:* “Disunity can have destructive consequences, in relationships, organizations, and in society. Yet unity was something that Jesus explicitly desired for His people (John 17:21). We’ll now look into some of the consequences of disunity described in the Bible.”

## Materials

Bibles, pen, notebook, Reproducible Activity

## Delving Into the Word

**A. Read:** 1 Corinthians 1:10–16; 3:1–9. *Ask* the following questions:

- How was disunity manifesting itself in the Corinthian church (1:10, 11; 3:4)?
- How was this damaging?
- What were some of the reasons for this (1:10–12)?
- Was this cerebrally doctrinal disunity or do you think there were other heart reasons? What do you think these might have been?
- Ephesians 4:12–16 speaks about growing up in Christian maturity as essential to maintaining unity. How can this concept be seen in 1 Corinthians 3:1–4?
- Read Galatians 6:10; Romans 12:10; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8. How could these characteristics have helped the situation in the church in Corinth? Why?

**B. Read:** Genesis 3:1–16. *Ask* the following questions:

- What do you think unity looked like in Eden before the fall? Think of the relationships between God, Adam, and Eve (Gen. 2:22, 23).
- What was the root of Adam and Eve’s disagreement with one another? Was it theological, relational, or something else?
- What did they start to do to one another? Why (Gen. 3:12, 13)?
- How did it affect their unity, both with each other and God (Gen. 3:8–13)?
- Romans 16:17–20 warns specifically about divisions within the church that have their root in similar situations to Adam and Eve. How can we avoid falling into the same patterns of behavior and disunity that they did (Eph. 4:1–3, 25–29)?

## Discussing the Ideas

1. How can disunity express itself in the family of Christ today?
2. Unity is not just manifested in doctrinal agreement, but also in our behavior towards others. Can we both love people and love truth? How?
3. How can we be aware of the reasons behind our disunity and what can we do about it?
4. If we do not achieve the aim of unity, what should we do?
5. How can we be motivated to pursue unity (Phil 2:1, 2)?
6. What steps can you take this week to personally and proactively pursue and participate in a deeper unity within the body of Christ?

## Closing the Activity

Share the following quote: “The significance which is in unity is an eternal wonder” (Rabindranth Tagore)

Say: “Disunity is often not just a singular event, but can leave a legacy. Jesus knew the kind of problems that could create. As a result, He prayed for unity amongst believers. Jesus desired unity

not just for His disciples, but also for ‘those that will believe in Me through their word’ (John 17:20)—namely us! Unity, then, is something we should deeply desire and disunity something we should intentionally resist.”

Use the Reproducible Activity to end the lesson with prayer.

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Divide into small groups and allocate each group one of the following passages on unity. Read it out loud together and then use specific texts and ideas from the passage as the subject of your prayer. As a group, ask God to manifest the unity you see displayed in the passages in both your local church and in your own character.

John 17:1–26

Ephesians 4:1–12

Ephesians 4:12–16

Psalm 133

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