



Collegiate Quarterly

Teacher's Guide

Images of Unity

Surveying the Source

Ps. 23; John 10:1–11; 1 Cor. 12:12–26; Rom. 12:9–21; 1 Pet. 2:4, 5

Plotting the Course

The students will:

- ▶ See themselves in the Bible's metaphors for the church.
- ▶ Realize the importance of unity in the church.

- ▶ Evaluate the large and small threats to church unity.

Preparing to Lead

Before Jesus came to earth, a person's nation, tribe, or family made up the most important part of their identity. The tribe a person was born into even determined what God they would worship. But Jesus proposed something new: He would create a new tribe—a new social unit—out

of those who followed Him. Before He established His church, blood held people together in purpose. Now faith would hold people together. In this lesson we look at the images that Jesus used to describe this new and powerful social unit.

Getting Started

A. Show a video about sheep such as *The Good Shepherd & His Sheep* on YouTube (www.youtube.com/watch?v=Coq_grSFfNs). Ask the class members if anyone has spent time around sheep. If so, invite them to describe some characteristics of sheep. Encourage other members to share their observations as you list traits on the board. Then *discuss*: How do you feel about being compared to sheep? Why do you think Jesus used that metaphor? What are some ways that a church could or should be like a flock of sheep? Who is the shepherd? What is the pastor's role and responsibility?

B. Read 1 Peter 2:4, 5. Place a small Lego kit in front of the class the pieces of. Invite each member to choose a Lego piece. Keep the box hidden, as well as the identity of the product. Then ask the class to guess what the final design is supposed to be. *Say*: "Why did you choose your piece? How can we find our purpose in the world and in the church? Can we ever see what piece we are in the big picture, like the picture on the Lego box? How can the church community help or hurt in discovering our greater purpose?"

Materials

Bibles, Reproducible Activity; Lego kit; chalkboard, whiteboard, or flipchart; marker.

Delving Into the Word

A. Invite members of the class to read 1 Corinthians 12:12–26. Ask for reactions to the text, encouraging class members to point out parts that caught their attention. *Ask:* “Do you think any people in your church feel undervalued as a part of the body of Christ? What can help a person feel better about their place in the church? What particular segments of the church might feel disposable (youth, women, the elderly, the sick, etc.)? Why might they feel this way? What story or texts from the Bible could you use to encourage them?”

Ask: “Is it ever necessary to ‘cut off’ part of the body of Christ? If so, under what circumstances? What should be our attitude toward every child of God?”

B. Read: Romans 12:9–21. Assign one verse to each student or small group. If the class is smaller than thirteen, you can give each member several verses. If the class is large, you can assign several groups the same verse. Ask each individual or group to read their assigned verse and then think of a practical way to apply the verse to a current situation. Encourage the groups to think of situations (imagined or real) in a church or with fellow Christians. Then have the groups (or individuals) share their verse and a practical application of it. For instance, for verse 1 they might talk about choosing to listen to only good reports of the pastor rather than critical gossip.

After all groups have shared, *discuss:* How would practicing the principles in these verses contribute to unity? Which verse or verses do you consider most important? Why?

Discussing the Ideas

1. Is a person more likely to discover their gifts in a secular work environment or in a church community?

2. What factors make it hard to move away from a church family? What makes it easy?

3. What contributes to a person feeling unneeded by a church family?

4. Churches can split over things as trivial as the carpet color. What kind of

issues would you consider important enough that you would remove yourself from church membership?

5. What biblical metaphor of the church do you like best? Why? What other metaphors can you think of that might describe God’s church today?

6. Read Galatians 3:26–28. What does this verse say about diversity and unity? How do these concepts work together?

Closing the Activity

Pass out copies of the Reproducible Activity or draw a human shape on the white board. Ask class members to think for a few moments about someone they appreciate in the church. Encourage them to come up with names that are not often in the church bulletin. Write the names on the sheet or white board. Then have

them try to describe the part of the body that each person might represent in the church community. For example, a helpful person could be thought of as the hands of the church. You might choose to share your sheet with some of the individuals named.

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The Church Body

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Part _____

Name _____

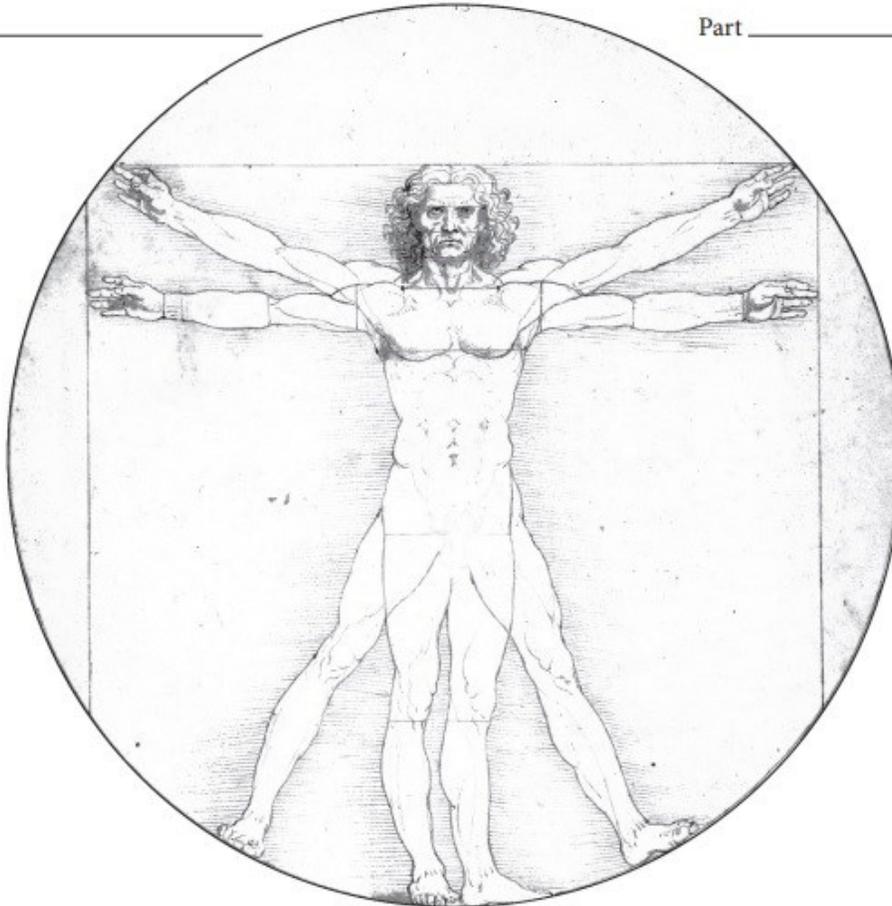
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