

## Session 10 Power of Community

### Key Scriptures:

John 17:20-23	Our unity is based on the unity of God
Ephesians 4:3-6	Maintaining the unity of the Spirit
1 Corinthians 1:10	No divisions
Ephesians 4:15-16	Body building in love as each part works
Psalms 133	How good it is!
Acts 4:32-35	Unity in action
Ecclesiastes 4:9-12	Cord of three strands
Romans 12:4-10	Diverse gifts functioning together
1 Peter 4:8-10	Each part doing its work in love
Ephesians 4:11-16	Growing together in love
Ephesians 5:1-2	Imitating God
Hebrews 10:24-25	Spurring one another on

Objective: 

- to understand how God has designed the church to be a community where we grow together in Him, and not simply grow alone

### The Big Picture

In the unit on “Being in Relationship with God” we discussed how the church exists as both a “redeemed” and “redemptive” community. As a redeemed community, we are people who have been purchased by the blood of Christ—forgiven of sin and set free to live lives pleasing to God.

We are baptized by the Holy Spirit at salvation and placed into the church—the “Body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:13). We form a spiritual organism, so-to-speak,—a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). Together, we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18-20).

As a redemptive community, the church is God’s chosen people to share the message of Christ’s salvation with the world. As a redemptive community the church is also working out the effects of Christ’s redemption, which are all the changes characterized as spiritual growth. The church grows to maturity in Christ as each of our lives touches the lives of others (Ephesians 4:15-16).

In this session within the unit, “Changing to Be Like Christ,” we once again turn our attention to the church as a community—not from the perspective of who we are, but from the perspective of how the church helps facilitates spiritual growth individually and corporately.

We are a redeemed and redemptive community, which grows to maturity through God’s power. Putting it another way, God’s power is released within the

community of the church so that the whole church grows in maturity as each one of us does our part.

Our Christian growth was not intended to happen solely as an individual experience. He did not intend for us to grow in isolation. We need each other to grow. Paul clearly tells the Ephesians that “we will in all things grow up into him... in love, as each part does its work” (Ephesians 4:15-16).

In other words, it takes the church to grow healthy believers. That’s how God intended it to be. It’s not simply going to church, but being the church that we are talking about—and even at that, it’s not simply being the church by passively claiming our identity as God’s people. Rather we have an active role within the church as community. As our lives touch others—“as each part does its work”—we all grow.

### Teaching Points:

#### I. Growing together—The Power of One

##### A. We are a “unity community.”

1. (John 17:20-23) God has made the church one, as a united community of people.
2. (Psalm 133:1) How good it is to live together in unity.

##### B. The oneness of the church is a reflection of the oneness found in the Godhead and the oneness displayed in marriage.

1. The church reflects the unity of the Godhead (John 17:21). We are one as the Son is with the Father.
2. As a “unity community” the church is intimately related to God in a way similar to the unity found in marriage (Gen. 2:24).

<sup>20</sup> “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: <sup>23</sup> 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)

<sup>24</sup> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

(Genesis 2:24)

...How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!

(Psalm 133:1)

## II. Growing up together—The Power of the Many

A. We are united in love, allowing each of us to do our part and to grow in the process. (Eph. 4:15-16)

1. interdependence
2. deepening relationships
3. working together

B. Our spiritual gifts work in harmony—unity in diversity.

1. (Ephesians 4:11-16)  
Unity brings strength to the whole church community as we grow together.

<sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

(Ephesians 4:15-16)

<sup>9</sup> Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: <sup>10</sup> If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! <sup>11</sup> Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? <sup>12</sup> Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

(Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

<sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

(Ephesians 4:11-16)

2. Unity in action—The unity of the early church resulted in the love and care for one another. (Acts 4:32-35)

<sup>32</sup> All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. <sup>33</sup> With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. <sup>34</sup> There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales <sup>35</sup> and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

(Acts 4:32-35)

3. Our diverse gifts function together in such a way as to allow the character of Christ to be produced within us. (Rom. 12:4-10; 1 Peter 4:8-10)

<sup>4</sup> Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. <sup>6</sup> We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. <sup>7</sup> If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; <sup>8</sup> if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully. <sup>9</sup> Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

(Romans 12:4-10)

<sup>8</sup> Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. <sup>9</sup> Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. <sup>10</sup> Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

(1 Peter 4:8-10)

4. We spur one another on to growth. (Heb. 10:24-25)

<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. <sup>25</sup> Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of

5. We are to maintain that community so that we can grow in Christ. (Eph 4:3-6; 1Co. 1:10)

<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(Ephesians 4:3-6)

<sup>10</sup> I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

(1 Corinthians 1:10)

6. The whole community grows to become like Christ—as imitators of God. (Ephesians 5:1-20)

a) Dealing with sin (Ephesians 5)

- (1) Confession (1 John 1:9)
- (2) Choices (Titus 2:11-12)
- (3) Repentance (2 Cor. 7:8-9)
- (4) Reconciliation (Mat. 5:23-24)
- (5) Restitution
- (6) Restoration (Gal. 6:1)

b) Dealing with personal woundings and past choices

- (1) E.g. Woman at the well (John 4)
- (2) “weak conscience” (1 Cor. 8:12)

c) Dealing with suffering (Philippians 3:10)

Group Discussion:	
	<u>Warm-up Question:</u> ?
	<u>Discussion #1:</u> Power of the One—What keeps us from living out God’s united nature in our relationships with one another (in church relationships and in marriage).
	<u>Discussion #2:</u> Power of the One—Have you experienced growth through unity? What keeps us from unity? How do we foster and environment of unity?
	<u>Discussion #3:</u> Power of the Many—Why is it often easier for us to experience God individually than together?
The Bottom Line:	God has designed the church as a community where we grow together, not simply alone. When each one of us, in love, uses our spiritual gifts in service to others, we all grow to maturity in Jesus Christ.