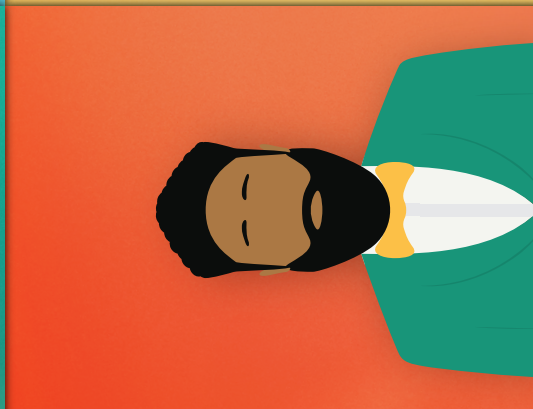
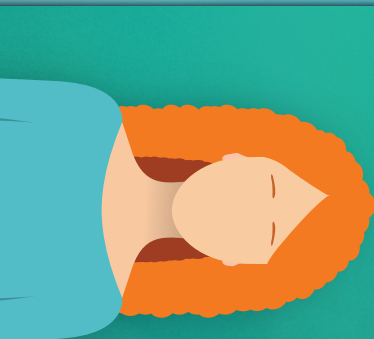
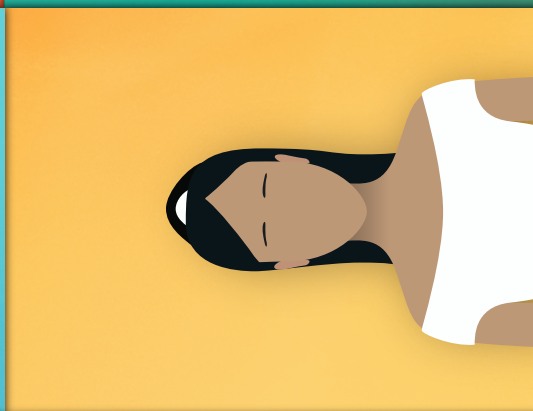
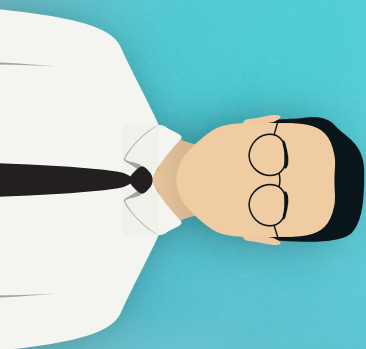




# ONE PEOPLE

BIBLICAL UNITY IN DIVERSITY





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# INTRODUCTION

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Each part of this guide is made up of four sections:

**1. LEARN**

Each part starts with a “learn” section, including a biblical perspective to guide your understanding of the discussion topic.

**2. REFLECT**

These prompts help to process the “learn” section by connecting it to your life. You can reflect on your own, with family, friends, or your Small Group.

**3. FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS**

This section was created specifically with families in mind and is applicable for all ages. These prompts are designed to facilitate discussion—maybe around the dinner table or during a family devotional time.

**4. RESPOND**

At the end of each part of this guide, we suggest some next steps. As you and your family seek to obey God’s Word, these steps offer ideas for intentional life application.

**LEARN**

“Why did God create us?” This may seem like an elementary question to ask, yet it’s one that many adults falsely resolve. “God created us because he was lonely.” Is this true? Was the sovereign, almighty God lonely and therefore in need of mankind to be fulfilled? We emphatically say, “No!” Before any being was created, God existed in perfect unity with himself. He wasn’t lonely, and he wasn’t in need of us. God was completely content because he co-existed eternally in the person of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God’s existence as the omnipotent Almighty means he is self-sufficient and therefore, doesn’t need anyone (Acts 17:24-25). The doctrine of the Trinity helps us understand the unique nature of God. Within the Trinity, God is three in one, existing in perfect unity. We see this demonstrated when Jesus talks about the pre-incarnate relationship he had with the Father (John 17:5) and when the Spirit does the will of the Son (John 16:7). We also see the Trinity expressed as the Father blesses the Son because of his work (Psalm 2:7-8).

The triune nature of God isn’t just something to be admired. Jesus prayed that the church would be one as he and the Father are one (John 17:22-23). It was the will of the Father for the Son to achieve this by his own blood, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we are to look at the unity in the Godhead as the biblical basis for unity in a diverse church (Eph. 4:1-6). When we, as the Church, are not in unity, it denies the unified nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**REFLECT**

1. Read John 17:22-23. According to this passage, what does the oneness of believers communicate to the world?
2. How well does the church achieve the oneness that Christ describes?
3. What are some barriers that prevent this oneness?
4. Does biblical unity mean the church must agree on everything? Why or why not?

5. Can you think of a time when you personally benefited from being unified with someone who was different from you? What were the challenges?
6. What are some fears that keep you from engaging with people of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds?

## **FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS**

1. How is God's unity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) reflected in our family?
2. Can you think of a time you chose not to talk or play with someone who seemed different than you? Why did you do that? In light of God's call to unity, how might you act differently today than you did in the past?
3. How can we reflect the unity of God by loving others who are different than us?

## **RESPOND**

- Listen to or read at least one of the resources in the Resource Guide. After you've done this, journal some thoughts you had as you explored the material. Then, discuss your thoughts with another believer and find practical ways to implement, this week, what you've learned.



## PART TWO     WHO ARE WE?

### LEARN

As humans, we were created in the likeness of our Creator. The triune God chose to make mankind in his image, as the crown of creation (Gen. 1:26-27). Whether male or female, black or white, rich or poor, conservative or liberal, Christian or non-Christian; every human being has innate value, dignity, and worth, because they are made in the image of God (*Imago Dei*). This means we should never attempt to devalue a fellow image-bearer by the way we treat them (Gen. 9:5-6). Instead, we should fight to protect the God-given rights and dignity of everyone.

In Psalm 8, as the psalmist gazes upon the beautiful vastness of the night sky, he wonders why God chose to make mankind the climax of his creation. He then answers the question by pointing our attention to the majestic name of God across the earth. Mankind is uniquely commissioned by God to display his glory throughout creation. God calls us to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” with his glory (Gen 1:28).

Jesus said the two greatest commandments are, (1) to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and, (2) to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:36-40). In other words, the greatest commandments are to glorify God and treat every person as a fellow image-bearer of God. Scripture condemns partiality (James 2:1-9) and injustice (Isaiah 10:1-3) because they violate these commandments. God is a good judge (Psalm 7:11) who is impartial to our ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, and culture—and he commands that we love our neighbors with this same impartial standard (Acts 10:34).

### REFLECT

1. Read Luke 10:25-37. In this story, we read about a Samaritan man helping a Jew. How did Jews view Samaritans? Do you understand the irony of Jesus choosing a Samaritan to be the good neighbor? In verse 29, the lawyer seeks to justify himself by asking, “Who is my neighbor?” What are some common excuses we use to justify not loving our neighbors?
2. Think about someone you know who isn’t a believer in Christ. How do you still see the image of God in their life?

3. Think about some of your favorite books, movies, and speakers. How would you rate the diversity of this list, ethnically and culturally? Is the diversity of this list important? Why?
4. Think about your circle of friends and mentors. How would you rate the diversity of this list, ethnically and culturally? Is the diversity of this list important? Why?
5. Are there people groups the church is prone to not perceive as fellow image-bearers? Why do you think this is the case? Similarly, are there groups you struggle to perceive as image bearers? Why?

## **FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS**

1. What are some ways we can better love those who are different from us?
2. How is God's beauty displayed in the diversity of his creation (both mankind and nature in general)?
3. Why is the diversity of God's creation beautiful? What does it ultimately point to?

## **RESPOND**

- Reach out to someone who is different than you this week. Invite them to coffee or dinner, simply with the goal of getting to know them. Consider trying to meet regularly over the next few months in order to develop a relationship and learn from one another.
- Listen to or read at least one of the resources from the Resource Guide.

## **LEARN**

Every human being is made in the image of God. Without distinction, all humanity has God-given worth and dignity regardless of the differences that divide us. However, there is a distinction that matters in the sight of God. Have you believed in Jesus as the Christ and Lord of all, or are you still at war with God because of your sin (John 3:16-17)? This distinction does not deny the command that we should love our neighbors—both the believer and non-believer. Yet, this distinction does have significance in the life we experience now, and the one we'll experience for eternity. We are told that those in Christ have abundant life (John 10:10). This leaves us with two questions: What does it mean to be “in Christ,” and how does biblical unity in diversity contribute to us having life abundantly?

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). The fall of Adam and Eve brought sin and death upon all humanity (Rom. 5:12). Yet, Jesus came to redeem men and women from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev. 5:9). Those who have been purchased by Christ's blood have a new identity in Christ. They are “in Christ” and have life only because of him.

Does that mean that believers lose their other identities? A quick glance at Galatians 3 might cause you to think the answer is yes. However, when Paul says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek ... there is no male and female,” he doesn't mean that our ethnic and gender identities are erased when we trust in Christ. Instead, he is saying our earthly identities do not count for any type of righteousness before God. In other words, our rightness before God isn't based on earthly identities, but on our faith in Jesus who paid the price for our sin. Those other identities still exist, but our nature as children of God is underneath everything. It is the foundation.

How does biblical unity in diversity contribute to an abundant life in Christ? The Apostle Paul answers this by pointing us to the diverse body of Christ, made up of many different, necessary members (1 Corinthians 12:12-27). This diversity demands that men and women from different ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, and cultures come together around



Jesus, whose glory transcends their differences. The abundance we receive in Christ can only be attained in the context of a unified church.

This is why the Christian life does not finish with your personal salvation. The reason Jesus saved you is because you are a part of a bigger story. That story is the kingdom of God. In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus says our individual stories should be used to further Christ's kingdom. This is why we should all ask: "Who am I and why did God place me in this family, this culture, and this context?" God saved you so that you, as a part of Christ's kingdom, will spread his glory across the whole earth (Isaiah 11:9-10). Therefore, your story should be embraced and used for this greater purpose.

## **REFLECT**

1. Aside from being a Christian, what other identities do you claim (geographic, vocational, parental, ethnic, interest group, etc.)? As Christ-followers should we renounce these other identities?
2. Should we not see color when looking at other people? Why is it a good thing that God created us all different?
3. Think about the unique way God created you. How can you use your story to advance the kingdom of God?
4. What are some things that you appreciate about another culture (Ex. values, ideas, food)?
5. What are some cultural beliefs that fight against our oneness in Christ (Ex. racism, ethnocentrism, partiality)? How can you help uproot those false ideas?
6. How can you begin learning about another ethnicity and the value it brings?

## **FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS**

1. What does it mean that we are all one in Christ?
2. Do you have a Christian friend who is different than you, but you still enjoy their friendship? Why do you enjoy them?
3. What are some things that make you special? How can you honor God with those characteristics?
4. How can you honor the unique things that make other people special?

## **RESPOND**

- Pray that God will lead you to areas where you can serve him with the unique identities and gifts he has given you.
- Listen to or read at least one of the resources in the Resource Guide.

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## RESOURCE GUIDE

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### MESSAGES

“Don’t Lose Heart”

**Eric Mason** | April 3, 2018

“Ethnicity, Authority, and the Gospel”

**Mark Vroegop** | August 26, 2016

“Equipping the Next Generation to Embrace Gospel Diversity”

**Jackie Hill Perry** | April 12, 2018

“Let Justice Roll Down Like Waters”

**David Platt** | April 21, 2018

“Prayer”

**Matt Chandler** | January 13, 2015

“Social Justice Q&A Session”

**Al Mohler** | September 13, 2018

“The Idolatry of Race”

**Jarvis Williams** | September 21, 2016

“The New Community”

**Tom Skinner** | June 1973

“The Whole in Our Holiness”

**Ligon Duncan** | April 21, 2018

“Woke Church”

**Eric Mason** | December 7, 2016

## **BOOKS**

*Letters to a Birmingham Jail*

**Edited by Bryan Loritts**

*Removing the Stain of Racism from the Southern Baptist Convention*

**Jarvis Williams & Kevin Jones**

*Just Mercy*

**Bryan Stevenson**

*Bloodlines*

**John Piper**

*United*

**Trillia Newbell**

*One Blood*

**John Perkins & Karen Waddles**

*Woke Church*

**Eric Mason**

*Prejudice and the People of God*

**Charles Ware**

*Oneness Embraced*

**Tony Evans**

*Divided by Faith*

**Christian Smith & Michael O. Emerson**

## **ARTICLES**

“More Christian Than Black or White”

**Isaac Adams**

“My Confession”

**Paul Tripp**

“What Can I Do? / What Do You Want?”

**Thabiti Anyabwile**

“Why Christians Love Diversity”

**John Piper**

“Why I’m Standing on the Shoulders of Frederick Douglass”

**Jasmine Holmes**

## **ADDITIONAL COLLEGE PARK RESOURCES**

For more sermons on this topic visit:

**[yourchurch.com/onepeople](http://yourchurch.com/onepeople)**

For more resources on this topic visit:

**[cpcresources.net/race](http://cpcresources.net/race)**





