

# Small Group Discussion Guide

*True Oneness in Relationships: For the week of September 19 - 25, 2021*

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## Main Thought and Scriptures:

*(Break into groups of 3-4. Discuss for 30-40 minutes)*

In a highly polarized and divided world, God calls His Church to be a force for unity, reconciliation, and healing. It is much easier to take sides and to perpetuate divisiveness than it is to be agents of unity and reconciliation, yet this is exactly what God calls His people the Church to be. He even calls our ministry to the world the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). The Bible gives us 4 resolves that we must have to help bring unity and peace to our relationships and to the world.

### 1. Resolve to listen before speaking.

*"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."*

*(James 1:19-20 ESV)*

- Genuinely listen by letting others fully express themselves.
- Actively listen. Be able to restate accurately what was said. Ensure people feel heard and felt.
- Listen with empathy. Put ourselves in their shoes and listen for how they feel, realizing that there is a reason for how they feel.
- Remember, we cannot talk and listen at the same time. Refuse to let emotion hijack reason.

### 2. Resolve to hear the other side: respect what they have to say.

*"A fool takes no pleasure in understanding but only in expressing his opinion... <sup>12</sup>humility comes before honor. <sup>13</sup>If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame..."*

*<sup>17</sup>The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him."*  
*(Proverbs 18:2, 12-17 ESV)*

- Accept that what may not be valid for us is valid to them because of what they've gone through. Contexts of past experiences shape our soul.
- Refrain from being condescending and determine to be respectful.

### 3. Resolve to do everything possible to preserve peace.

*"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. <sup>17</sup>Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all."* *(Romans 12:16-18 ESV)*

*"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."*  
*(Ephesians 4: 2-3 NIV)*

- Tension can be healthy and calm debate enlarging.
- The synergy of "both/and" thinking unites; the ultimatum of "either/or" thinking divides.
- Find common ground to connect on first. During gridlock, graciously agree to disagree.
- Don't let the issue become the person; distinguish the issue from the person.

#### **4. Resolve to be patient because perspectives can change with the passage of time.**

*"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven... <sup>6</sup>a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; <sup>7</sup>a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak..." (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 6, 7 ESV)*

*"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-5 ESV)*

- Situations and circumstances change. What we know and perceive evolves. People change because new experiences shape new perspectives.
- Many viewpoints are "points in time" and will change over time.
- Sadly sometimes, impasses are unresolvable and we must "boundary" once dear relationships.

#### **Discussion Questions:** *(select those that best apply)*

- As you reflect on the weekend sermon and the main thought and scriptures above, what is the Lord highlighting to you and why?
- Have you applied any of the points listed above to a challenging relationship? What happened? What did you learn through that?
- What challenges are you facing today in your relationships? How can you apply the points above to that situation?

#### **Prayer:** *(Break into groups of 2-3 to pray for 10 Minutes)*

- Pray for one another in the challenging relationships they are facing. Pray that God would use us to be agents of reconciliation and healing in those relationships.
- Pray for one unreached friend or family member who needs to be reconciled to Christ.