

BY THIS ALL MEN WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU HAVE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.
JOHN 13:15

Week 5

GET ALONG

START

Welcome to session 5 of Kingdom Men Rising.

Share one key takeaway from last session's group or personal studies.

Last week we talked about how idols keep us stuck in place and stagnant in God's kingdom. This week we will tackle barriers that keep us from working together for our shared kingdom agenda.

What would happen if the players on a football team tried to run different plays at the same time? Why is unity essential for a team?

Why is maintaining unity of approach and purpose critical for life in the body of Christ?

True unity does not mean sameness. It does not mean we are to all like the same things, listen to the same music, talk the same way, or eat the same food. True unity is about something much bigger. Unity is about oneness of purpose. There is no better way I know to describe what true unity looks like other than sports. Anytime a sports team, in any sport, is not unified on a shared goal, they will suffer as a result. Unity matters.

While we realize this intrinsically about athletic competitions, we seem to forget that the same principle applies to kingdom disciples following Christ. Much of the chaos and defeat we are experiencing today is a result of illegitimate division in the church. Because we have failed to unify under the goal of advancing God's kingdom agenda on earth. The division in our culture, and in our church, racially, politically, and socially needs a group of kingdom men who will rise to dispel it while insisting on unity through all we say and do.

WATCH

Use this space to take notes during the video teaching.

MAN UP

Use the following questions to discuss the video teaching.

Read John 13:35 and John 17:20-21 together.

*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.
John 13:35*

*I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.
John 17:20-21*

Why do you think demonstrating “love for one another” reveals to onlookers that we are Christ’s kingdom disciples?

Christ prayed the verses in John 17 right before He was arrested and put on trial. Why would this have been so important to Jesus in His final earthly moments?

In a world of chaos and confusion, of disconnectedness and disunity, we’re needing kingdom men to rise up and bring harmony where there’s conflict, and peace where there is chaos. Now is the time to get along. God’s men bear a unique responsibility to set the stage for a comeback and a healing in our lives and in our land. One of the things we must begin to grasp at a greater level is that God is a God of unity and togetherness. God does not hang out in atmospheres of division. He cannot. It goes against the nature of His being and essence.

Describe some ways men can “rise up and bring harmony” in the area of division and disunity in our land.

Ephesians 4:3 urges Christians to be “diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” What does it mean to “preserve” unity as opposed to “create” it?

Why do you think it is our role as believers to “preserve” unity?

Whose role is it to originate or create the unity we are to preserve?

In cooking and baking, eggs often act as an emulsifier—an ingredient that brings two other ingredients together. God has called His people to become the emulsifiers in the culture. We have the opportunity to set the

temperature on issues like racial relationships, family life, and increasing political division. We do this based on God's standard, not based on how we were raised, the color of our skin, or the class that we are. Before and beyond all those designations, we are primarily men of God.

What are some of the challenges we may face, or have faced, in seeking to unify relationships across racial, social, or political divides?

God has a standard. It's a high standard that involves living in love and unity. He is calling each of us—as much as it depends on us—to live at peace with everyone (Rom. 12:18). Unity requires intentional effort and calls us out of our comfort zone. But God never said that living as a kingdom man was easy. Nothing worthwhile comes easy. But it will be worth it as we impact our broken and chaotic culture with the healing balm of oneness. [Tony Evans (2021). (p. 79). Kingdom Men Rising - Bible Study eBook. Lifeway Press. Retrieved from <https://read.lifeway.com>].

Share one practical action you can put in place this week to intentionally preserve unity where disunity has taken hold. Make it personal It could be something you do at work, home, on social media, or in your church and community.

PRAYER

Father, in a culture that consistently promotes disunity, division, distrust, anger and blame—help us to be kingdom men who honor and reflect You through all we say and do. Grant us the wisdom and courage necessary to stand strong as men of unity in a world of hate. Bring unity where there is division and help us to be men of peace who accomplish much for your kingdom. In Christ's name, amen.

HIT THE STREETS

IDENTIFYING YOUR IDENTITY

We didn't get to experience the 2020 Olympics due to the difficulties in our world at the time. But if you have seen the Olympics at any other point in history, you know that one thing remains the same. When an athlete wins a competition, they do not ask the athlete what his or her favorite song is, and then play it. No, the song that plays when an athlete wins a competition is the song of the nation he or she represents. This is because his or her identity with their nation supersedes all else at that point in time.

Unfortunately, far too many Christians allow anything and everything to define them these days rather than the One who died for them, and lives in them: Jesus Christ. Because of this, we have identity confusion breeding illegitimate division everywhere. My favorite verse in the Bible, and a great verse on unity, is Galatians 2:20.

Read this verse and examine the following principles taken from it.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. -Galatians 2:20

1

DEFINE YOUR HUMANITY BY YOUR CHRISTIANITY

In English, the job of the adjective is to modify the noun. The adjective describes the noun. As a kingdom man, Christian is to be the adjective which defines you. Not your race, creed, culture, background, perspectives, or preferences. Whenever these things conflict with the living God as the modifier of who you are, you must adjust and align yourself once again under Him.

2

LAY DOWN YOUR OWN DESIRES.

Make God's standards and His rules your overarching desires. When Paul writes that "it is no longer I who live," he is stating that Christ now lives in him. Similarly, Christ now lives in each of us. We are His servants, and we are to honor Him by living according to His desires, not our own.

3

LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD.

Find friends who will hold you accountable to living a life of faith according to Christ's standards and His rule of love. Take time to assess your relationships and if there is consistent disunity in any of them, seek to address it. Surround yourself with like-minded individuals who will also seek to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Christ.

Which of these principles do you need to take hold of most today? Spend a few minutes praying to God.

BIBLE STUDY 1

GOD DID IT

When things go wrong in your life, where do you look first? Do you try and find how you may have contributed to what went wrong or are you quick to blame someone or something else?

Oftentimes it feels easier to blame something outside of ourselves when we go through troubles in life. But there is someone we rarely think to blame, who may actually be behind the issues we are facing. God Himself. To be clear, God is never responsible for evil or suffering. He cannot sin or cause sin, it is against His holy nature. However, God will often allow us to sit in the disorder of our lives in order that we might return to Him and experience refreshing and revival.

God doesn't stir up issues for us to deal with just for the fun of it. But He does allow negative consequences in our lives to crop up when He is trying to get our attention. Rather than pointing fingers at everyone else when difficulties arise, we might want to take a moment to focus on the One who is really in charge. When we do, we will find that the way to solve life's challenging situations is sometimes easier than we had once thought.

In the history of Israel and Judah, Asa was one of the better kings, particularly during the first part of his reign. In 2 Chronicles 15, the Spirit of God came upon the prophet Azariah to encourage Asa in his religious reforms and remind him what happens when people forsake God.

Read 2 Chronicles 15:3-6 and answer the following questions.

For many days Israel was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law. But in their distress they turned to the Lord God of Israel, and they sought Him, and He let them find Him. In those times there was no peace to him who went out or to him who came in, for many disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. Nation was crushed by nation, and city by city, for God troubled them with every kind of distress. But you, be strong and do not lose courage, for there is reward for your work. -2 Chronicles 15:3-6

Why would God trouble the Israelites "with every kind of distress?"

Do you believe that God still does that toward groups of people, congregations or nations today? Can you think of any examples that you feel may be from God's hand?

Can you identify a time in your life when you can see God allowed troubles in order to draw you back to Him and His rule over you?

Like the Israelites, in what ways does our distress have a way of making us turn back to God?

During the season that I wrote this Bible study and the book that goes with it, we as a nation and the world were in the middle of multiple simultaneous pandemics. We were facing dual pandemics: a medical pandemic and a cultural pandemic. Yet, deeper still and at the root of both of these sat a spiritual pandemic.

What I noticed as I observed all that took place during the onset of this unusual time, is that we had wandered far from the value system established by God for how human beings are to live, act, and relate to one another. What's more—our wandering had gone on for far too long. Across racial and class lines we had come up with our own standards for how we should treat each other, and it had not done us any good.

As we saw in the passage we just read, God will occasionally allow unrest in order to urge His people to a heartfelt call on Him for help. He has to let His people hit rock bottom in order that we might discover He truly is the Rock at the bottom. Sometimes it takes a mess to make a miracle.

What are some ways God purges us as individuals, as well as collectively in the body of Christ, of sinful toxins permeating this world?

List three sins or cultural problems that need to be purged from our culture today, in order to be replaced by God's rule:

1.

2.

3.

What can be done in order to help remove these problems and replace them with the truth of God's Word and healing power of His love?

Problems abound in our culture today. We certainly have plenty for God to say, "Enough is enough!" But if we miss the reality that God has allowed disorder in order to bring about a correction and a cleaning, then we will just move from one symptom to another symptom. We will miss the opportunity to address the root that has produced the fruit that has led to the confusion of hopelessness on display.

The root of the problems we face in our churches, culture, and country today are clearly spiritual. To repair and restore our culture we must understand the spiritual components behind our problems before proposing pragmatic solutions to these crises.

To briefly examine one problem among many, over the past several years our national conversation has returned again and again to race and racism. Racism isn't a bad habit. It isn't a mistake. It is sin. The answer is not sociology, it's theology. Kingdom men need to be just as bold in speaking out against the sin of racism as other sins when they confront it in others. Kingdom men must also be willing to examine their own hearts for areas of racism, resentment, anger, and division.

In what ways have we learned to dismiss racism rather than confront it (whether in conversations, jokes, exclusionary choices, etc)?

List some practical things that can be done in order to be proactive about ridding our culture from racism?

Do you think God wants us to be proactive about ridding our culture of racism? Why or why not?

In addition to racism, what other cultural problems do we need to take a spiritual driven approach to resolving? List the problem and a few steps to resolve them.

Pray about your personal perspective on racism, and the division of the races or ethnicities in our nation. Ask God to reveal to you any areas where you may hold prejudice or pride in your heart, and then ask His forgiveness if He does reveal any. Take a moment to think about the purpose and power of unity and then ask the Spirit to show you how you can be more intentional about combating and overturning disunity in your spheres of influence.

BIBLE STUDY 2

THE GOSPEL AND THE RACE

When the subject of race relations came to a boiling point in our culture in the midst of 2020, I heard from a number of my white friends concerning both their confusion and personal conviction. While none of them considered themselves racist, there was new insight into what it meant to oppose racism. It didn't involve merely not being racist yourself. Rather, this time the conversation included topics of what people were willing to do in order to combat racism in our society at large.

There are two types of sin in Scripture. But most of us examine our actions based on only one type. When we do that, we fail to take account of our whole experience and become less able to deal with the root issues.

The first type of sin is called sins of commission. This is when you or I do something that is inherently wrong. I won't go into a lot of details on this because most of us are aware of what this is. But there is another type of sin which goes largely ignored. It's called the sin of omission.

Read James 4:17 and answer the following questions.

Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin. -James 4:17

On a scale of 1-10, how aware were you of this type of sin (omission)?

Why do you think there is less emphasis on the sin found in James 4:17 by spiritual leaders than other, more actively apparent sins?

In your experience, how aware are most people about sins of omission? Why are these sins easier to ignore?

Read Micah 6:8 and circle what the prophet Micah wrote the Lord calls us to do.

*He has told you, O man, what is good;
And what does the Lord require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness,
And to walk humbly with your God?
Micah 6:8*

How does failing to do what the Lord requires here a sin of omission? List a few examples.

Most of us know the right things to do. Sin here isn't a knowledge problem, but an action problem. To use racism as an example, when someone says to me, "I'm not racist," I am glad to hear they feel that way and I do hope it's true. But Micah 6:8 isn't about "not doing injustice." It isn't about not being a racist, either, to put it in context with our contemporary conversation.

Micah 6:8 doesn't call us to "love justice." Neither does it call us to "affirm justice." This passage specifically calls us to do justice. In Hebrew, this word could be translated "make" or "manufacture." God is asking us to take action.

According to the Word of God, we are to actively "do justice." What are some ways we can actively "do justice?"

What tangible step can you take this week to "do justice?"

How is doing justice, related to loving mercy and walking humbly with God?

God has spoken on the issues at hand, and He has not stuttered. He has spoken about racism. He has spoken about systemic and individual injustices. He has spoken about classism. He has spoken about culturalism. He has spoken about equity, elitism, empathy, and more. Just read the Book of James. That's a great place to start to learn. God has spoken about all of these subjects, but until we align our hearts, thoughts, words, and actions underneath His overarching rule, we are living in sin.

Righteousness and justice can be defined in the following ways:

- Righteousness is the moral standard of right and wrong to which God holds people accountable based on His divine standard.
- Justice is the equitable and impartial application of God's moral law in society.

*Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Lovingkindness and truth go before You.
-Psalm 89:14*

Based on those definitions and these words from the psalmist, answer the following questions.

Why is it important to balance both righteousness and justice?

Do you naturally give more attention to one or the other? Explain.

Can you name a contemporary example of pursuing righteousness and justice simultaneously?

Who are some role models for you who have lived committed to both righteousness and justice?

God desires that we live our lives embracing both righteousness and justice. We are to do what is right but we are also to stand up and speak out for others in need. These actions promote an atmosphere of justice for everyone. Far too often, we confuse “justice” as that which gives someone who has done wrong what he or she deserves. But when God refers to “justice” in this particular passage, He is speaking about ensuring that all people are treated fairly and equitably.

When men decide to stand together for what is right and just in society, we can make a difference. We can change the trajectory of our culture. We can influence others for good by advancing God’s kingdom agenda on earth. We do this primarily through the spread of the gospel.

Unity isn’t just about getting along; it’s about getting things done. We’ll never experience a movement of kingdom men rising in our nation until we have kingdom men relating to each other in the body of Christ in an authentic, mutually honoring manner. Racial reconciliation isn’t about playing a video of an ethnic preacher to your white church on Sunday, or vice versa, reading books on racism, or posing online. While those things are good, they—in and of themselves—are not unity. Unity takes place when people join together with oneness of purpose. It is working together in harmony toward a shared vision and goal. Unity involves doing justice together, not just talking about it.

Pray for open doors to share the gospel with others. Also take time to ask God for ways that you can be more proactive in “doing justice” within your spheres of influence. Pray for your small group and ask for insight from the Holy Spirit on ways your small group can tear down the walls of racism in order to advance the love of God through the gospel of Christ to a world in need.