

LESSON 6

ONE

LESSON SUMMARY

God's overarching goal for His delegated authority is to lead His church into being one.

We see this unity at work in the very first days of the church when Peter uses a lottery to elect an apostle. If this would have happened today, we would probably have had a church split. Instead, Scripture tells us they were all gathered in one accord, unified behind Peter, despite all the reasons why they could've doubted his leadership.

In 35 years of traveling to churches all over the world, I've seen churches split over the most ridiculous things—how to take the offering, how long the sermon should be, how the pastor dresses, and all sorts of other things that don't really matter. This is not the example we see in Scripture.

What we do see in Scripture is that the Holy Spirit works differently in and through different parts of the church just as the American military has different branches. It would be ridiculous for someone who specializes in ground combat to an airman how to fly his plane or a sailor how to navigate his ship. Yet this is exactly what so many Christians do when they come from one church into another and begin telling leadership how they think things should be done.

I'm not talking about issues of core truth—that's different. But in issues of preference or culture, we must adapt. When we choose unity, God commands His blessing (Psalm 133:1–3).

REFLECT

- Why do you think God holds back His glory until we are unified?
- In what ways is the example of how the early church followed Peter different from how you've seen churches function today?
- How would you approach church differently if you thought of different churches as different branches of the military?
- Why is it appropriate to compare attending a new church to being a guest in someone's house?

SCRIPTURES & PRAYER

- "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one." (John 17:22)
- Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity . . . there the Lord commanded the blessing. (Psalm 133:1-3)
- Fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. (Philippians 2:2)

ADDITIONAL READING:

- Mark 16:7
- Acts 1:20
- Acts 1:26
- 1 Corinthians 15:8
- Acts 2:1
- Philippians 1:27
- 1 Corinthians 12:6

PRAYER: *Father God, Jesus prayed that we would be one so that the world would know You, so I pray the same thing. Please help me to be part of making that happen, not allowing myself to become offended or selfish. I don't want to just seek my own interests in my local church and beyond. Instead, I want to serve you and live out Your heart for Your body: that we would be one.*

DECLARATIONS

- I play a necessary part in bringing unity to God's church. I do my part by supporting my leaders, honoring other churches that are different from mine, and encouraging others to do the same.
- I do not look for ways to disagree with my leaders or things they have done that aren't completely right. Instead, I cover them and rally around them to add strength to what God is doing through them.
- Today, I will honor my brothers and sisters in Christ for how God uniquely works in and through them.

TAKE ACTION

Make a list of the churches in your city that believe Jesus is the Son of God. Choose four days this month on which you will pray for them, declaring a blessing over them. Ask God to strengthen and unify them as they build His kingdom.

LIVING UNDER COVER

- God's overarching purpose for His delegated authority is oneness in the church. He is working to create a unified church that can display His glory to the world.
- The modern church often splits over ridiculous issues, but the early

church united behind their leaders, even when divisive issues arose. Their unity was a key to their rapid growth.

- God gives different assignments and works uniquely in and through different churches. We must come to each church as learners, looking to understand how God's Spirit works there, rather than asserting our opinions of how that church should function.

Under Cover: Course Guide

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