

## John 17:20–26 (NASB)

**20** “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;  
**21** 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.  
**22** “The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;  
**23** I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.  
**24** “Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.  
**25** “O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me;  
**26** and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”

## United We Stand, Divided We Fall

My Notes

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### Small Group Study Questions

As you reflect on the message from this week, was there anything you heard for the first time? Was there something said that challenged you or confused you?

#### Getting to Know You

1. What is your favorite meal of the day and why?

#### Digging Deeper

As Jesus prayed for his future followers who would comprise the church, he asked his Father to keep his people unified. He knew that they would come from cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives that are not only varied, but also competing. However, believers were enfolded into the oneness of God the Father and the Son, and that bond is stronger and more significant than anything that could possibly divide his family.

While God creates Christian unity, it is each believer's responsibility to keep that unity. The Apostle Paul recognized that unity was fundamental to the life and mission of the church living in a divided world, and he called the Ephesian believers to pursue it with all diligence. Read **Ephesians 4:1–6** carefully and prayerfully as you answer the following questions.

2. Verse 1 begins with “therefore” (NIV: “then”), which should cause you to ask, “What is it *there for*?” Look at Ephesians 3:14–21 and summarize in one sentence what this calling is all about that ought to affect the way Christians behave toward one another. How do you believe all these blessings should motivate Christian unity in the church?
3. Paul lists some character qualities in verses 2–3 that are vital to experiencing unity. Why do you think these qualities are so important for unity? Which quality stands out to you the most toward contributing to unity?
4. The believers were commanded to “make every effort” (eager) to keep their unity, which implies that it can be easily lost or abandoned. Why is unity so difficult to maintain?
5. Paul doesn't just call the believers to maintain unity, but to keep “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (v. 3). What does the presence of the Spirit in the heart of every believer do to contribute to unity? How does peace bond God's people together?

6. Believers are called to maintain unity, but God creates it. Paul lists all the significant truths that Christians share in common in verses 4–6. Why is it important to remember that what unites believers is bigger than anything that could divide them?

### **Live It Out**

Christian unity was the top request for Jesus as he prayed for his people who would comprise his church in the future. Christ knew that **united we stand, divided we fall**. The effectiveness of God’s people living in an increasingly divided world is tied directly to their effort to protect and maintain their unity. Believers do not create unity, God does. However, it is the responsibility and privilege for every Christian to focus on what unities us through the gospel rather than allow lesser matters to divide us.

7. Our culture is becoming increasingly fractured and divided for so many different reasons—political, social, economic, and racial. What does Jesus’ prayer for unity and Paul’s call for believers to maintain that unity teach you about how important this is for God’s people as they live in a splintering world?
8. Not only are we to pray for unity, every believer is responsible to eagerly protect and maintain our unity in the church. What current threats do you see to our unity at Valley Bible Church? What are some new steps you could take to do your part to keep the unity God has created for us? Is there someone from whom you need to ask for forgiveness or offer forgiveness? Take some time right now praying that our unity would be protected and increase at Valley Bible.

### **Prayer Requests**

One of the most significant ways we grow spiritually together is to pray for one another each week. Use this section to write down the requests of those in your group so you can remember to pray for them throughout the week. Remember: *what is shared in your group should stay in your group.*

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