



THE UNITY COURSE

SESSION 5

UNIFYING AND PEACE-MAKING

Learning to disagree Christianly

1 > Opening prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
You call us to know your Father,
And be sanctified by your truth.
As we consider the reality of disagreement
And the call to live in loving unity,
Help us to work for that complete unity
Through which you say the world will know you.
Give us grace as we face moments of difficulty;
Remind us to hope that no situation is beyond your love;
And inspire our words through the work of your Holy Spirit.
In your name we pray,
Amen.

2 > Video track

Watch the video and discuss your response

OR

Book-group track

Review chapters 5 and 10 of Loving Disagreement



3 > Some suggested questions to prompt discussion

How easy is it to live out the call of Colossians 3:12-14?

[‘Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity’]

What does it mean to ‘speak the truth in love’, and how challenging is it to do this in a way that means the other person feels loved?

What is the role for the Holy Spirit in inspiring loving disagreement and fostering unity among Christians?

How might unity among Christians be built in your local area?

4 > Bible Study

Galatians 5:13-26

What does Paul’s encouragement to ‘serve one another humbly in love’ mean within the life of the church, and the context of disagreement? How are we to understand Paul’s contrast between ‘flesh’ and ‘spirit’?

Some of the ‘acts of the flesh’ relate particularly to disagreement: hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions. How much do these present a challenge to fostering loving unity among Christians?

How helpful is it to use the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control - as a list of characteristics we aspire to in loving disagreement? Which specific fruit are most difficult to live out?

What does it mean to invite the Holy Spirit to inspire our words and actions, particularly in the context of disagreement?



5 > Personal reflection

The final pages of chapter 10 consider what it is to examine 'the anatomy of a disagreement' and seek to become someone who builds unity and is a peace-maker.

What has challenged you about your own approach to disagreement during these sessions?

What would it look like for you to seek to apply the fruit of the Spirit to the way you disagree?

Is there anything from your past conduct that now you wish to bring before God and hand over to him, trusting in his power to forgive and renew?

What positive steps might you take to build unity within your own church or Christian context, or more widely?

6 > An opportunity to share

Members of the group may wish to share how the course has challenged or changed their thinking about disagreement.

Questions prompting discussion along these lines may be helpful:

The book's title, Loving Disagreement, describes the problem of enjoying disagreement too much, and the solution, learning to face disagreement in loving ways. How much have these sessions prompted participants to appreciate the need for a loving approach to disagreement?

How helpful are the four 'rules' for loving disagreement? (As listed in the Personal Reflection section of session one)

How easy is it to apply the fruit of the Spirit to our inevitable occasions of disagreement?

How will participants seek to love their neighbour with whom they disagree in future?



7 > Closing Prayer

The group may like to pray openly together; this may be a good time to recall John 13:35 as a foundational text for the book and course; and/or the Chemin Neuf community prayer for unity can be used:

Lord Jesus, who prayed that we might all be one,
we pray to you for the unity of Christians,
according to your will,
according to your means.
May your Spirit enable us
to experience the suffering caused by division,
to see our sin
and to hope beyond all hope.
Amen.

