



# THE UNITY COURSE

## SESSION 1

### THINKING

**The central Christian call to love your neighbour – even in church**

#### **1 > Opening prayer**

based on Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17

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 1 and 6 of Loving Disagreement



### **3 > Some suggested questions to prompt discussion**

How much, in your view, does disagreement have a negative impact on the life of the church?

How much do you think that the quality of relationships within the church has an impact on how those outside the church view it?

John 13:35 links love within the church to its attractiveness for outsiders. How significant is this verse for your understanding of the church's mission? Does it matter if church communities are full of damaging disagreements?

How much of a challenge is your own interior thought world when it comes to disagreement?

How easy do you find it to think charitably about those with opposing views in the midst of a disagreement?

### **4 > Bible Study**

Read John 15:1-17.

How do you respond to the image of the vine as a picture of Christian unity?

What do you make of Jesus being the vine, and the Father being the gardener? How do you fit in to this picture as a branch of the vine?

Does this image prompt you to think differently about your relationships with other Christians, particularly those with views that differ from your own on subjects close to your heart?

How much do you identify with a tendency to regard other Christians as belonging to a different plant, rather than being on the same vine?



## 5 > Personal reflection

'Loving Disagreement' proposes four rules for the effective facing of disagreement in the Christian life. They are as follows:

1. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone. (Colossians 4.6)
2. Pursue Godly speech, inspired by the Spirit. (Matthew 10.19-20; Luke 12.12; Acts 4.31)
3. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (Romans 12.18)
4. Cultivate the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5.22-3)

Reflect personally on these four rules.

How do you respond to them? Is there one that seems particularly difficult?

How easy would you find it to ensure your speech was 'always gracious'?  
Do you hope to 'live peaceably with all'?

## 6 > An opportunity to share

Members of the group are encouraged to share some of their own personal reflections at this point.

Questions prompting discussion along these lines may be helpful:

What am I reflecting on particularly about the place of disagreement in my own life, and/or the life of my church or other Christian community?

Where might I need to change?

How might I be praying about disagreement in the week ahead?



## 7 > Closing Prayer

The group may like to pray openly together; 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.

