

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS 7 & 8 AUGUST 2021

UNITY IN THE CHURCH

Scripture: Romans 14:1-15:7

1. Read Romans 14:1-15:7. Recap the flow of this passage and the two different groups addressed, as shown in the diagram below.
 - If you have *personally encountered first-hand* (not second-hand) modern-day parallels of either the Eaters or the Abstainers, share your own past experience and your own past response with the group. If you have not had such first-hand encounters, you should skip this question.
 - What aspects of your past response would you change, following this week's sermon?

14:1 You all must receive the weak
14:3a Eaters, don't despise Abstainers;
14:3b Abstainers, don't judge Eaters
14:4-9 Abstainers: who are you to pass judgment?
14:10a Abstainers, why do you pass judgment on Eaters?
14:10b-12 Eaters, why despise Abstainers?
14:13 Abstainers, let us not pass judgement;
Eaters, you all must not cause stumbling
14:14-15:3 Eaters, don't let your right actions result in
ruin; please your neighbour and not yourselves
15:7 You all must receive one another

2. Christian Unity means valuing our brothers and sisters, by actively listening to them.
 - What are some concrete, day-to-day steps we can take in order to more deeply and actively listen to one another? As a group, make a list of such steps. Your list may include points from the sermon as well as from elsewhere. At the end of the session, pray for one another, that God would give everyone opportunity to put these steps into practice in the week ahead.

3. Unity is not uniformity, but unity in diversity. The principle is:

In essentials, unity

In non-essentials, diversity

In all things, charity (i.e., love)

- How do we differentiate between essentials and non-essentials?
- Share with one another: What practical steps could we take to value Christian brothers and sisters and build unity in diversity, even when we don't come to full agreement on the non-essentials?

“Surely, that each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the Divine beauty better than any other creature can. Why else were individuals created, but that God, loving all infinitely, should love each differently? And this difference, so far from impairing, floods with meaning the love of all blessed creatures for one another, the communion of the saints. If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note. [..] Heaven is a city, and a Body, because the blessed remain eternally different: a society, because each has something to tell all the others—fresh and ever fresh news of the ‘My God’ whom each finds in Him whom all praise as ‘Our God’.”

- C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

4. Christian Unity can exist only when we recognise that God is in charge, and that we are all but his servants.

- Jesus calls all Christians to surrender and submit every part of our lives to Him. Are there parts of your life – your desires, your hopes, your disappointments, your fears, your thinking, your activity – that you find difficult to submit unto Jesus?
 - You should reflect on this question for yourself. And if you feel comfortable, share your response aloud in your group.
 - If someone in your group is sharing, practice your deep listening skills now!
- Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to empower you (and your group members) to fully surrender and submit to Christ. Remember, “it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose” (Philippians 2:13).