

INTERACTIVE STUDENT BOOK



THIS BOOK BELONGS TO:

A large, empty rectangular box with a light blue border, intended for a student's name.

Community: Beyond our Preference to Christ's Purpose

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ISBN-13: 978-1-939031-36-5

ISBN-10: 1-939031-36-2

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Published by LeaderTreks

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WELCOME TO COMMUNITY

Have you noticed that ads are getting weirder and weirder? Companies spend tons of money on marketing as everyone tries to figure out the next clever way to shout, “THIS IS WHAT I’M ALL ABOUT!” Honestly, we’re no different. We want people to think of us in certain ways: the fun one, the goofy one, or the smart one. It turns out that Jesus wants the world to think of Christians in a certain way too.

“BY THIS ALL PEOPLE WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE MY DISCIPLES, IF YOU HAVE LOVE FOR ONE ANOTHER.”
JOHN 13:35

Here are some things you need to know as you go through this study:

1. **God wants to connect with you.** In fact, he’s looking forward to it. But how ready are you to connect with him? As you go in and out of the sessions and devotional times, make sure you are willing to listen to him and learn from him. He promises that he will come near to you if you come near to him (James 4:8). Try it!
2. **What you put into this study is what you’ll get out of it.** There are people all around you who have spent a lot of time praying for you and getting ready to invest in you. You’ll probably meet some new people, hear some new speakers, and get a chance to spend some quality time with God and with friends. Take advantage of it! Ask hard questions. Commit to being authentic and honest. God wants to use this time and these people in your life.

SESSION ONE INTRO

THE PROBLEM

It doesn't take much more than a quick browse on Facebook, the news, or a YouTube comment section to learn that our world really struggles to get along. Each of us can think of at least one or two opinions or beliefs we hold that another person would strongly disagree with. Not only does this describe the world at large, it is just as true inside our churches!

Jesus knew this was going to be the case. He's not surprised by our fighting. But still, he commands us to love one another.

This may be the one thing that almost everyone can agree on: we should love each other. However, anyone who has spent more than 10 minutes with another human can attest that this is harder than it sounds. Jesus doesn't tell us to love each other—to live in unity—because it's comfortable for us, but because he has a purpose for community, no matter how hard it is. Our unity is supposed to tell the world about the God that holds us together as his people.



SESSION ONE LARGE GROUP

THE PROBLEM

These two pages are designed so you can take note of anything that stands out to you and that you think is worth remembering during the large group talk. This talk will set the stage for the rest of the session. Consider writing down main points, quotes, Bible verses, and any questions that pop into your head.



Think of a group of people that should be unified but are not.
What are some words you would use to describe them?

What are some words you would use
to describe your own Christian communities?

A SECOND LOOK

SMALL GROUP SESSION ONE: THE PROBLEM

You don't have to look very hard for examples of disunity in the world—the music industry is full of them. Even when things appear to be going right on the outside, with world tours, fame, and millions of dollars being made, it seems like band mates just can't seem to get along for more than a couple of years. It's rare for a group of musicians to keep it going for more than a decade.

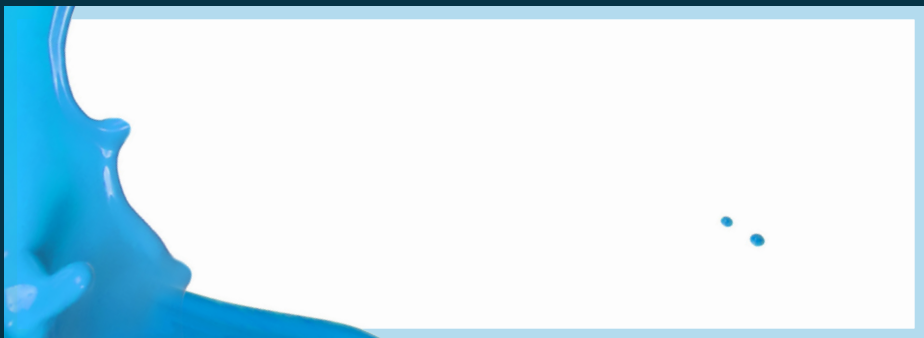
A great example of this is The Police, a band that had the potential to be one of the greatest bands of all time (just ask your parents). In fact, despite breaking up after just a few years, many hits by The Police are still recognized and enjoyed around the world today.

Started and headlined by a schoolteacher, Gordon “Sting” Sumner, The Police took the musical world by storm and were rock's next big thing within a year of forming. As often happens, though, tensions rose when Sting tried to take control of the band. During the recording of their second album, things went south. Names were called, artistic differences surfaced, egos took over, and the band called it quits at a time when, from the outside, it seemed like they should have been more united than ever over their success as a band.

Describe a situation when you've been a part of a group that seemed to be successful from the outside, but, on the inside, was full of difficulty and disunity.



What are things that you see contributing to disunity among Christ-followers?



What step could you take toward unity in these situations, whether you're directly a part of them or not?



A LITTLE DEEPER

TAKE A LOOK AT EACH OF THESE BIBLE PASSAGES AND GET READY TO TALK THROUGH THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WITH YOUR GROUP.

John 17:14: I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

Do you find it easy or difficult to be “not of the world”?

What are some ways you’ve experienced “not fitting in” because you’ve chosen to not be “of the world”?

James 4:1-2: What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.

Describe a time when selfishness (either your own or someone else’s) led to a major disagreement between you and a friend, a parent, a sibling, etc.

Why is selfishness linked to a lack of unity with other Christ-followers?

Matthew 12:30: Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

What are the actions and attitudes of someone who is “with Jesus” vs. those who are “against Jesus”?

How does uniting with Jesus allow us to have unity with each other?

APPLY IT

What is one thing you can do this week to grow a sense of Christ’s unity with your friends and family?

BE SPECIFIC:



WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?



WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO DO IT?



IS THERE SOMEONE WHO CAN KEEP YOU ACCOUNTABLE?

NOTES:
