



THE UNITY COURSE

SESSION 3

WORSHIPPING

Facing disagreement well

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 3 and 8 of Loving Disagreement



3 > Some suggested questions to prompt discussion

“My hope is that I would be willing to kneel at a communion table with my bitterest enemy in these debates” – to what extent do you agree with the Harvard professor?

Have you found your attitudes to a disagreement shifting within the context of worship?

How helpful do you find the compromise reached at the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 in thinking about how disagreements might be faced effectively in church?

Paul and Barnabas go their separate ways, but the mission of the church continues. What can we learn from this disagreement?

Have you known examples where disagreement has been faced well in church contexts?

4 > Bible Study

Read John 13:1-17

What do we learn from Jesus’ decision to wash his disciples’ feet?

How significant do you think it is that Judas is included, even though Jesus knows he will later betray him?

Why do you think the church has generally been so reluctant to respond positively to Jesus’ encouragement in verse 14?

Could the practice of footwashing help the facing of disagreement within a church community?

Is there something about the inherent unpredictability and intimacy of footwashing that forces participants to consider what it is to be brothers and sisters in Christ?



5 > Personal reflection

In Matthew 7:5, Jesus says, 'you hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.'

How easy do you find it first to consider your own contribution to a disagreement, rather than focusing on the problems you perceive in the other party?

Do you think it is ever possible fully to 'take the plank out of your own eye'? Is this something which is somehow dependent on God?

Given the Christian teaching not to judge others, how easy do you find it to 'remove the speck from your brother's eye'?

To what extent do you bring problems in relationships before God in the context of worship?

6 > An opportunity to share

Members of the group may wish to share something of their own personal reflection at this point.

Questions prompting discussion along these lines may be helpful:

What does it mean to face disagreement well?

How easy is it to avoid first judging others?

What am I learning in this session that might help transform the way I approach disagreement?

7 > Closing Prayer

Given this week's focus on worship, you may wish to play a recording of a hymn or song as part of the time of 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.

