

# Union | Communion | Partnership

John 17 | Acts 2 | Ephesians 4

## Union with God

As you have been hearing on Sunday mornings for the past few weeks, the leaders of our church believe that God has given us a “Word” for 2023 and that word is UNITY. You may hear it referred to as the “Word of the Lord”. That phrase, “Word of the Lord,” was used often in the Bible (examples: 1 Kings 6:11, Jer. 2:1, Ez. 12:1) to describe a message that God spoke to an individual or to a group of people. The message would often include a call to action. In other words, God told His people something He wanted them to do. When we say that our Word of the Lord for 2023 is UNITY, that means God wants us to take action toward UNITY. We believe the action He wants us to take can be summed up as follows:

**UNION** with God, **COMMUNION** with the saints and **PARTNERSHIP** together in His mission.

**Icebreaker:** If you could pick only one restaurant in Waco to go to for a year, which one would it be?

**Worship:** Check out the worship resources we have available on [Lifegroupleaders.com](https://lifegroupleaders.com). You will find playlists available on Spotify, YouTube and Vimeo.

Goodness of God | Bethel Music

Build My Life | Pat Barrett

Way Maker | Leeland



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**Read:** John 15:4-11 (NASB)

<sup>4</sup>Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. <sup>5</sup>I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup>If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. <sup>7</sup>If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup>My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. <sup>9</sup>Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup>If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. <sup>11</sup>These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

## Discussion:

1. What does *abiding in God* mean and what does it look like in your life?
2. What does *God abiding in us* look like?
3. How do our lifestyles and our culture impact our ability to abide?
4. A branch appears to bear fruit in an effortless manner. Share examples of how abiding has born fruit in your life.
5. What does it mean to abide in love?

## Prayer:

Please break up into small groups to pray for one another. Ask the Holy Spirit to prompt you to abide with Him throughout each day this week. Pray also for the grace to respond when the Spirit initiates with you.

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## Communion with the Trinity & the Saints

**Icebreaker:** If you could explore the depths of space or the depths of the oceans, which would you do?

**Worship:** Check out the worship resources we have available on [Lifegroupleaders.com](http://Lifegroupleaders.com). You will find playlists available on Spotify, YouTube and Vimeo.

Graves Into Gardens | *Brandon Lake*

Great Are You Lord | *All Sons & Daughters*

What a Beautiful Name | *Hillsong Worship*

Last week, we looked at union with God and with others. This week we are going to discuss communion, which is a natural result of being in union/unity with someone. There is no better example of union and communion than the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – distinct, yet one, always honoring and loving one another.

They invite us into that intimate communion. There is a famous 15<sup>th</sup> century painting of the Trinity by Russian Andre Rublev, in which they are seated around a table and there is an empty space. That place is for you.

[The Trinity](#) (You may print this image, cast it to a TV or have everyone look it up on their own device.)

*\*Using your divine imagination, picture yourself seated at this table with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Take some time to stay there and hear what they want to tell you. After a few minutes, consider sharing your thoughts with the group.*



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Theologian Dustin Bengtson says this about the Trinity and the church:

*"The church—which was created by God, bought by Jesus, and empowered by the Holy Spirit—exists to be a reflection of God's indescribable love."*

## **Discussion:**

Share thoughts on these 3 questions.

1. How would you define what church is? (Romans 12:4-5; Ephesians 2:19-22; I Peter 2:5)
2. How does your definition align with your lived experience? (Colossians 3:13; James 5:16; Ephesians 4:31-32)
3. What blocks people from experiencing communion (intimate fellowship) within the church?

## **Prayer & Communion:**

End this discussion time by praying for Christ's Body, the Church!

Take communion together and then pray this scripture over the group as a benediction blessing.

*"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all."*

- II Corinthians 13:14

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## Partnering Together in His Mission

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**UNION** with God, **COMMUNION** with the saints and **PARTNERSHIP** together in His mission.

**Icebreaker:** If someone paid for you to go to either the Sahara Desert or to Antarctica, which would you choose?

**Worship:** Check out the worship resources we have available on [Lifegroupleaders.com](https://lifegroupleaders.com). You will find playlists available on Spotify, YouTube and Vimeo.

Living Hope | Phil Wickham

No Longer Slaves | Bethel Music

King of Kings | Hillsong Worship

**Read:** 2 Cor 5:16-21 (NIV)

<sup>16</sup>So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! <sup>18</sup>All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup>that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup>God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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For additional perspective, it could be interesting to read this passage from *The Passion Translation*. Keep in mind, and communicate to your Lifegroup, that *The Passion Translation* is not so much a direct translation from the original languages as it is a paraphrase into modern English. It can be helpful but should probably not be the only version we read.

<sup>16</sup>So, from now on, we refuse to evaluate people merely by their outward appearances. For that's how we once viewed the Anointed One, but no longer do we see him with limited human insight. <sup>17</sup>Now, if anyone is enfolded into Christ, he has become an entirely new person. All that is related to the old order has vanished. Behold, everything is fresh and new. <sup>18</sup>And God has made all things new, and reconciled us to himself, and given us the ministry of reconciling others to God. <sup>19</sup>In other words, it was through the Anointed One that God was shepherding the world, not even keeping records of their transgressions, and he has entrusted to us the ministry of opening the door of reconciliation to God. <sup>20</sup>*We are ambassadors of the Anointed One who carry the message of Christ to the world, as though God were tenderly pleading with them directly through our lips. So we tenderly plead with you on Christ's behalf, "Turn back to God and be reconciled to him."* <sup>21</sup>For God made the only one who did not know sin to become sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God through our union with him.

## Discussion:

1. What action are we being called to do in verse 16? What do you think that should look like in your daily life?
2. According to verse 18 & 19, we have been called to the ministry and message of reconciliation. What does that mean? What action are we being called to do? What do you think that should look like in your daily life?
3. Read verse 20 (out loud) from *The Passion Translation*. What thoughts, emotions, and conviction does reading this verse illicit from you? What action are we being called to do in this verse? What do you think that should look like in your daily life?
4. What do you think is meant by the phrase "Partnership Together in His Mission" and how does it connect with the Word of the Lord (UNITY)?
5. Practically, how can we, as a Lifegroup, partner together in His mission? What are the next steps to accomplish that action?

**Prayer:** Let's conclude by asking God for any more specific direction that He might have for us as individuals or as a Lifegroup and then listening to His voice. Share with one another what you hear and any action that you feel you need to take in response.