



Unity and Diversity in the Local Church

Lesson 4: God's Purposes for Similarity in the Church

I. Introduction: Why Explore Similarity in the Church?

- A. Two dangers we need to avoid in this lesson series:
 1. Befriending only those who are similar to us.
 2. Feeling guilty for any relationship where we have more than Christ in common.
- B. Problems with thinking that similarity in the church is always bad:
 1. It's not how we're made.
 2. It's short-sighted.
 3. It's paralyzing.

II. The Value of Similarity.

- A. People who understand you can instruct you better (Titus 2).
- B. People who understand you can encourage you in your struggles (2 Cor. 1:4; Heb. 4:15).
- C. Understanding builds trust (1 Pet. 3:6-7).
- D. Understanding gives grace in exhortation (Gal. 2:11-21).

III. Pursuing the Right Balance.

- A. Recognize that you need multiple types of friendships.
- B. Be honest about what kind of church culture we have.
- C. Learn how to build understanding without similarity.
- D. Recognize that some people need more similarity than others.
- E. Aspire to relationships where similarity isn't necessary.
- F. See similarity as a special, and potentially dangerous, stewardship.

Lesson Schedule

Lesson 1: Diversity? Unity? For God's Sake!
 Lesson 2: How God Builds Unity and Diversity
 Lesson 3: The Image of God in Our Unity and Diversity
Lesson 4: God's Purposes for Similarity in the Church
 Lesson 5: Working Through Disunity
 Lesson 6: Counsel for Christians in the Majority
 Lesson 7: Counsel for Christians in the Minority