



## 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