



WE ARE ONE

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL SERIES
VINEYARD YOUTH CURRICULUM

vineyardyouth

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL LIVING

| WE ARE ONE |

WELCOME!

to Vineyard Youth USA Curriculum

Hello, friends. What you hold in your hands is the product of lots of people, lots of prayer, and lots of purpose. The Vineyard movement is at a crucial place, and we believe that the work we do with students will have massive influence on what the movement will look like over the next 10-20 years. We set out to design a curriculum that communicates and reinforces the biblical and kingdom values of the Vineyard while inviting students to embrace the reality that they are part of something bigger than themselves.

Understanding the diversity within the Vineyard movement, we purposefully designed curriculum that can be utilized by groups of differing sizes led by either paid or volunteer leaders in any geographical setting or location. Easy, right? We believe we accomplish this by offering a buffet of activities that allow you – the in-the-trenches leader – to choose what works for you and your group. We're pretty sure no one will use all of the material proposed, but we're confident some of it will be a good fit for your group.

Each lesson will include:

- Experiential, hands-on activities that reflect a variety of learning styles.
- Large group questions to frame a conversation (I.E., not a lecture).
- Application suggestions to live and reveal the kingdom of God.
- Small group questions with age- and gender-specific items.
- Chances for you as the leader to tune into what God is doing in you and your students' lives.
- Space for students to hear from God for themselves.

This curriculum is written by youth leaders for youth leaders. If you would like to join the team and contribute your voice to the conversation, we would love to hear from you.

You may not hear this enough, but thank you for what you do. It's important, it's needed, and it's laying the foundation for a new generation of leaders to continue the good things God has already done in the Vineyard movement. Keep up the good work!

Why This Topic?

In the Vineyard we believe that God cares equally about every race, ethnicity, and gender. We believe that every individual is equal in His sight. But a question that many of us still ask is a simple but important one: How do we do life with people who are different from us? How do we interact with those who have different cultures, perspectives, and values than we do? The way that most of us will answer these questions largely has to do with our current values, the way that we were raised, and our life experiences. Our goal in this series is to explore questions like these on a deeper, more personal level. Our hope is that this series will challenge your teens and give them the tools and passion necessary to better embrace those around them that are different from them so that the love of Jesus may be put on display through their lives. Isn't that what we all want—for our lives to be a picture of the passionate love of Jesus? God created a world filled with diversity so that we may all be an expression of His nature, His beauty, His creativity, His personality, and His love. We all bring something special to the table. Christ charges us to value one another's differences, all while viewing each other as holding equal value in Him. ***We are One.***

Connecting to Vineyard Values

We intentionally connect our curriculum to Vineyard Values and Distinctives. *We Are One* connects with the Vineyard Core Value of Reconciling people with God and all Creation. It is God's intent that His most valued and precious creation (us) lives in unity with one another. We believe that as sons and daughters of God we are called to the ministry of reconciliation.

"That is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation."

2 Corinthians 5:19

You can read more about our core values and beliefs here:

<http://www.vineyardresources.com/CoreValuesAndBeliefs.pdf>

Helpful Reminders For You, the Youth Leader

In working with this curriculum there are a few ideas we'd like to keep in front of you:

Plug in your stories wherever you can. These are bare bones here. You add the meat!

Experiential learning lasts. We've tried to make this as experiential as possible, rather than just providing head knowledge. We encourage you the leader to try it out—take some risks!

Humor is key. It's hard for us to artificially add this from a distance, but we encourage you to find all chances you can to connect through humor.

Context matters. We don't know what's going on in your group right now, but you do. We encourage you to pray and think about how this message applies to the new ones in your group, the veterans, and the seekers. How does this tie into the message of salvation through Jesus?

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WE ARE ONE /// IT'S GOD'S IDEA



BIG IDEA

**Diversity wasn't man's idea;
it was heaven's idea!**

YOUTH LEADER SOUL CARE

Before beginning your prep for this week's lesson read Psalm 139. After reading the entire psalm, write out one verse or short passage that stood out to you. Next, answer these questions:

How does this verse or passage affect the way that I see myself?

What does this verse or passage say about God?

Sometimes in our work with students we can feel inadequate and even alone. In those moments remember that you were wonderfully made for such a time as this, and the One who knitted you in your mother's womb is still with you. He is for you, forever.

STARTER

STORY TIME

Share with the group a time when you were in a really uncomfortable situation. For example, you could share about when you first met your spouse's parents, gave a speech in front of your class for the first time, sang in front of a large crowd, had your pants accidentally rip, and so forth. Use humor to break the ice.

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TRANSITION

If we're honest with ourselves, we typically don't enjoy being uncomfortable. Like this story that I just shared about an uncomfortable situation, meeting and interacting with people from different cultures, ethnicities, and backgrounds can be uncomfortable too. Or we worry that the situation will be uncomfortable. So we ask ourselves questions like these: What should I say? What shouldn't I say? How can I relate to them?

START VIDEO

A great feature of the We Are One series is that you have a choice! You can either teach this yourself from the notes below, or you can sit back and relax and watch the videos! To access the videos go to <http://www.vineyardyouthusa.com/portfolio/we-are-one>.

Enjoy!

MAIN VERSE

Acts 10:1–20

The Story of Peter & Cornelius.

Read with your group if you want to!

POINT 1

**DIVERSITY WASN'T MAN'S IDEA;
IT WAS GOD'S**

DISCUSS

A good question to ask is, "Is diversity really that important?" Another great question is, "What does God have to say about it?" He actually says more about it than you might think!

WE ARE ONE /// IT'S GOD'S IDEA

TEACH

In the book of Acts, for example, we get a glimpse into His heart on the topic. In Acts 10 we meet a man named Cornelius, who is a centurion (a commander in the Roman army). This is what the Bible has to say about him (have a student read Acts 10:1–2, if desired):

“At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.” (Acts 10:1-2,ESV).

We see that Cornelius was a genuinely good man who loved God, gave to the poor, and prayed regularly, but Cornelius was a Gentile (a non-Jewish person). Do you think that Cornelius being a Gentile affected his relationship with God?

God is known for doing what is seemingly strange in order to move us into deeper relationship with Him. He begins to work out His plans for our lives sometimes without us even realizing it! As we read on in Acts, we see that God sends an angel to Cornelius in a vision and says this to him:

“And he said to him ‘Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa and bring one Simon who is called Peter.’” (Acts 10:4–5, ESV)

Why do you think that the angel told Cornelius to send for the Apostle Peter?

While this is happening with Cornelius, the Apostle Peter has his own experience with God. After this experience with God, the Holy Spirit tells Peter:

WE ARE ONE /// IT'S GOD'S IDEA

"Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them." (Acts 10:19–20, ESV)

In this passage we see that it was God drawing Cornelius, a Gentile, and Peter, a Jew, together for a purpose. It wasn't Cornelius or Peter that initiated relationship with one another; it was God. These two individuals were from completely different social statuses, cultures, and countries, yet their Creator was bringing them together. Diversity is God's idea and it's up to us to be open to who the Holy Spirit wants us to build relationship with. Like Peter, it may be a person or people group that you wouldn't normally consider talking to or befriending.

POINT 2

DIVERSITY ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

DISCUSS

Have you ever wondered what heaven will be like? Let's discuss some characteristics of heaven as a group. What do you think heaven will be like?

Write down the qualities of heaven that the group comes up with.

Here are a few qualities to get things rolling:
Glorified (or perfect) bodies
Free from the presence of sin
No pain and suffering
Fully experience the presence of God
Heaven is full of joy and peace

WE ARE ONE /// IT'S GOD'S IDEA

TEACH

All of these qualities of heaven are definitely true, but one that I want to highlight is that heaven is filled with a diversity of people. It's full of people from different cultures, languages, and ethnicities (see Revelation 7:9-10). Why? Because just as we saw with Cornelius, Jesus draws all people to Himself (see John 12:32). When we embrace those around us who are different than us, we bring heaven to earth through our obedience, and we experience a preview of what we have to look forward to in eternity.

"Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matthew 6:10, ESV)

RESPONSE

You will probably have great ideas for response because you know your group. Our hope is that we can help you as much as possible, without getting in your way. Below are some response ideas - use what works and throw out the rest! Our main hope is that we will make this as experiential as possible for the teens.

HOLY SPIRIT// MINISTRY TIME

This is new territory for many of us, and if we're honest, this can sound kind of intimidating. Offer to pray for any students who feel crippled by fear or past experience as it relates to bonding and building a connection with those who are different from them. Pray against the spirit of fear and rejection. Ask the Holy Spirit to come and release fresh boldness in their lives. And pray that just as the Holy Spirit drew Peter and Cornelius together, that this group of students would be drawn into diverse Kingdom relationships that further God's will on the earth.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- ① Have you always thought of diversity as being originally God's idea?
- ② What's your biggest fear when it relates to connecting with different groups of people?
- ③ Is there anyone of a different background, ethnicity, or status that you feel God wants you to reach out to?
- ④ Is it easy or difficult to believe that Jesus draws all kinds of people to Himself? In other words, is it easy or difficult to believe that Jesus wants to have a relationship with everyone on the earth?

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL LIVING

WE ARE ONE /// EQUAL & ONE



BIG IDEA

Before we can embrace diversity the same way God does, we must see one another as equal

YOUTH LEADER SOUL CARE

Take the next 15 minutes and put on your favorite worship song. Spend this time soaking in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Shift your affections and inward attention to Jesus and off of the many tasks that you have on your plate. Welcome the person of the Holy Spirit to rest upon you through thanksgiving for His faithfulness and goodness in your life.

Remember that you live from a place of Presence, meaning that it is the Holy Spirit who wants to empower and influence every area of your life.

STARTER

GAME TIME

Will It Taco

Supplies Needed:

Hard taco shells

Whipped cream

Gummy bears

M&M's

Nacho cheese

WE ARE ONE /// EQUAL & ONE

Chocolate syrup
Flamin' Hot Cheetos

Directions:

Choose your desired number of participants. (Our suggestion is anywhere between two and four students.) Using the different items listed above (feel free to use any other items that would be an odd combination with a taco shell) have the participants create a taco. After each participant creates their taco, have them tell the group exactly what their taco is made up of. After that have each student take a bite out of their taco, then ask them, "Did it taco?" To which they'll respond yes or no. Continue this for three or four rounds.

Alternate Directions:

Select six teams of two, and two to four adult judges. After the teams and judges are selected, each team has two minutes to create the ultimate taco out of your crazy ingredients. After the two-minute mark, the judges will take a bite of each and declare a winner.

TRANSITION

If God told you to eat something weird, would you do it? If he asked you to eat some sort of reptile or wild bird how would you respond?

START VIDEO

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Enjoy!

WE ARE ONE /// EQUAL & ONE

MAIN VERSE

Genesis 1:27 (NLT): "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

POINT 1

WE ALL CARRY HIS IMAGE

DISCUSS

Why do we see division and distinctions made among people in the world today? (Have students yell out some reasons or use a white board and brainstorm as a group.)

Some examples:

Where you were raised

The color of your skin

How much money you have

Your gender

Your sexuality

Your education level

Whether or not you were/are raised in a two-parent home

The country you were born in

It was God's original plan to make all of mankind in His image. Both men and women are created equal in His image. In God's eyes it doesn't matter how good your grades are (no, that's not an excuse to not try your best in school), where you live, how much money your family has, or the color of your skin. Your value comes from the fact that you're made in His image.

Believe it or not, we even see these kinds of distinctions made in the Bible. Ancient Jews, such as the Apostle Peter, would not enter a Gentile's (a non-Jew's) house, or sit on the same couch, or eat or drink out of the same cup. Ancient Jews viewed all other

WE ARE ONE /// EQUAL & ONE

people as being unclean, impure, and not special. By today's standards the ancient Jews would have been considered intolerant, bigoted, or even racist.

Acts 10:27–28 (ESV) says, “And as he [Peter] talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered. And he [Peter] said to them, ‘You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.’”

In Acts 10, God gives the Apostle Peter a vivid vision in a trance (see Acts 10:9–16; read to group if desired) where God commands him to eat all kinds of animals, but Peter refuses, claiming that these animals were unclean.

In this vision God tells Peter, “What God has made clean, do not call common (or unclean).” It wasn't until Peter met Cornelius, an Italian man, that he understood what the vision from God meant.

Peter finally understood that because God has sent His Son Jesus to die for all humanity's sin, there is no one on earth that was “common” or “unclean,” so everyone, even a Gentile, deserved to be treated as an image-bearer of God. Everyone deserves an open door to receive the Father's love because of what Jesus has done!

When we fall into the trap of thinking that we are better than a person or people group, we are devaluing the fact that Jesus died for that person, gender, or people group.

When you value those around you, you are displaying how much Jesus values those around you.

TEACH

WE ARE ONE /// EQUAL & ONE

APPLICATION

Like Peter, God wants us to change the way we look at others so that we can be more like Him at school, at home, and on the job.

How do we begin to see others the way that Jesus sees them? One way is to be aware of the messages that the world sends us that contradict the truth that we are all equal and all made in His image. Common places these messages are presented:

Social media (Question to ask yourself:

Am I posting/tweeting things that supports the fact that we're all equal in Christ or am I posting/tweeting things that contradict it?)

School/Friends (Question to ask yourself:

Do I participate in jokes about other people, genders, or people groups that tear them down?)

Home

Media

RESPONSE

You will probably have great ideas for response because you know your group. Our hope is that we can help you as much as possible, without getting in your way. Below are some response ideas - use what works and throw out the rest! Our main hope is that we will make this as experiential as possible for the teens.

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HOLY SPIRIT// MINISTRY TIME

One idea:

Hand out cards to everyone and give them some time to pray and be quiet. Give them these instructions: Ask the Lord to help you see one group you might have judgment toward in your heart. Write down that group on the card, and spend some time repenting and asking God to give you a heart for them. Take it a step further if you want, and find a partner and confess to each other and pray for each other.

Another idea:

Open up a time for prayer ministry for people who have ever felt discriminated against, bullied, or mistreated. This could get deep, so have several adults on hand. Maybe have worship going on so the prayer ministry is optional.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- ① Have you ever seen kids in your school/community treated poorly because they were different?
- ② Are you open to building friendships with those who are different in gender, sexuality, ethnicity, or ability/disability?
- ③ How have you celebrated someone's differences this week or how can you do that in the future?
- ④ Give an example of when you have offended someone because of their differences and what you would do differently now.

WE ARE ONE /// EQUAL & ONE

OUTREACH APPLICATION

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you His eyes to see others the same way that he does. Offer a complement to someone you see as different than yourself as a sign that you value them.

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WE ARE ONE /// YOU HAVE SOMETHING I NEED



BIG IDEA

When our hearts are open to diversity, God uses us in the ministry of reconciliation, giving us the chance to share the love and grace of Christ that we've been given.

YOUTH LEADER SOUL CARE

As youth leaders there are always a ton of tasks competing for our attention. There's always something to be done. If we're not careful, we can find ourselves in a state of complaint, forgetting about the many blessings that the Father has poured out on us through His Son Jesus Christ. Psalm 95:2 (ESV) says, "Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!"

A thankful heart attracts the presence of the Lord!

Take the next five minutes and write out a list of things that you are thankful for. After writing your list begin praying the list back to God, thanking Him for each specific thing on your list. Worship and thank Him for His faithfulness and goodness in your life.

WE ARE ONE /// YOU HAVE SOMETHING I NEED

STARTER

GAME TIME

Have You Ever?

This is an active, fun way to explore and celebrate the rich diversity of experiences that different people bring to any group.

Instructions:

The instructor explains: I'm going to call out different things that may or may not apply to each person. If the item does apply to you, then run into the middle, jump in the air, and do a high-five with anyone else who runs in.

A list of about 20 items should be tailored to the particular group, setting, and program goals, but some suggestions are below. Usually the items follow the form of "Have You Ever...?", but you can feel free to ad lib; for example, "Does Anyone Have...?" Items should be carefully considered in order to prevent embarrassment or ridicule. The motivation to participate often needs some encouragement. Try to do some other warm-ups first. The rest is down to the leader's skill in demonstrating and encouraging.

List of Possible "Have Your Ever?" Items:

1. Have you ever climbed to the highest point in your country of birth?
2. Have you ever lived overseas?
3. Have you ever sung karaoke?
4. Have you ever been without a shower for more than two weeks?
5. Do you have both a brother and a sister?
6. Have you ever ridden a horse?
7. Have you ever eaten frog legs?
8. Can you speak two or more languages?
9. Have you been swimming in three or more different oceans?
10. Have you ever flown in an airplane?
11. Have you broken two or more bones in your body?

WE ARE ONE /// YOU HAVE SOMETHING I NEED

12. Have you done volunteer work sometime in the last month?
13. Have you ever free-climbed a tree or rockface more than 10 meters vertically?
14. Do you have a close relative who lived to over 100?
15. Have you ever cooked a meal by yourself for more than 10 people?
16. Can you not snap your fingers on your non-dominant hand?
17. Have you ever seen a polar bear?

START VIDEO

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Enjoy!

MAIN VERSE

Acts 10:33 (ESV): "So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here in the presence of God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

WE ARE ONE /// YOU HAVE SOMETHING I NEED

POINT 1

THERE'S SOMETHING FOR ALL OF US TO LAY DOWN

DISCUSS

Pick four students to help with an illustration. Have two of the students hold three basketballs each. Then, have the remaining two students gently toss a football toward the other students to catch. They must try to catch the football without dropping the basketballs in their hands.

Next, allow the students holding the basketballs to put them down. Now have the same students attempt to catch the footballs.

TEACH

Sometimes the very things that we hold onto keep us from receiving what God wants to give us. They prevent God from using us the way that we were created to be used.

Hebrews 12:1 (NIV) says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Jesus requires us to lay down any pride, arrogance, hatred, fear, and judgment as it relates to those who are different than us. We'll never run the race well holding these things. We all have something that we can lay down. For the Apostle Peter as we've previously read, it was his perception of Gentiles. After Peter lays down his own opinions and feelings toward Gentiles because of the Holy Spirit's leading, Peter says this: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right." (Acts 10:34-35, NIV)

WE ARE ONE /// YOU HAVE SOMETHING I NEED

POINT 2

YOU OPEN THE DOOR TO JESUS

DISCUSS

Maybe you're asking yourself, "What's the big deal? If I want to hold onto my opinions and feelings toward people groups or individuals that are different than me, so what?" Well, let me answer your question with a question.

Jesus famously said to His disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18–20, ESV)

How effective would we be in following this commission from Jesus if we were unwilling to see other people the way that He sees them?

Without a change in our thinking we unconsciously close the door to Jesus. We unconsciously judge who deserves to receive the love, grace, and gospel of Christ from us and who doesn't based on our own opinion.

TEACH

You in a sense are a "gatekeeper" to the gospel and love of Christ. One of the reasons that we interact with those who have different cultures, worldviews, ethnicities, and economic statuses is because the Holy Spirit wants to encounter them through you.

Because of the Apostle Peter, Cornelius and all of his family and close friends were able to receive the

WE ARE ONE /// YOU HAVE SOMETHING I NEED

Gospel of Jesus Christ and the baptism of the Holy Spirit! "While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word." (Acts 10:44, ESV)

Just like Peter had what Cornelius needed, there are people around you that maybe you wouldn't normally notice but need to hear about the love of Christ and have an authentic encounter with the Holy Spirit.

RESPONSE

You will probably have great ideas for response because you know your group. Our hope is that we can help you as much as possible, without getting in your way. Below are some response ideas - use what works and throw out the rest! Our main hope is that we will make this as experiential as possible for the teens.

HOLY SPIRIT// MINISTRY TIME

Ministry Stations

Instructions:

Assign adult leaders to different stations around the room, and for each station designate specific prayer topics relating to diversity and unity. For example, one station can be assigned to pray for the Latino community. Another station can be assigned to pray for the poor. Another station can be for those who want an increased passion and understanding of diversity. Ultimately, you'll want to select prayer topics that you feel would be the most powerful for your group. Students can choose which station they'd like to go to, but have each student go to at least two different stations. To set the atmosphere have photos that respectfully represent each station's prayer topic.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- ① After reading Hebrews 12:1 what things in your life (ideas, practices, beliefs, etc.) do you think you have to “throw off”?
- ② What are some of the ways that you can live out the Great Commission found in Matthew 28:18–20?
- ③ How have you celebrated someone’s differences this week or how can you do that in the future?
- ④ Have you ever thought of yourself as a “gatekeeper” to the love of Christ? If so, do you consider it to be a burden or a gift from God?

NATURALLY SUPERNATURAL LIVING

WE ARE ONE /// DIVERSE & ONE



BIG IDEA

God's plan for diversity is for our lives to be enriched by those different than us, and for our individual qualities, skills, cultures, and ethnicities to collectively be an expression of who Jesus is.

YOUTH LEADER SOUL CARE

Our work with students can sometimes feel like an uphill battle. It can feel tough, as if we have to fight for every single breakthrough (big and small) in our ministries. It can seem like the work and effort that we put in doesn't equal the results we get in return.

2 Peter 1:3 (NKJV) says, "His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue."

And Ephesians 1:3 (ESV) says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

WE ARE ONE /// DIVERSE & ONE

In God's Kingdom we don't fight for victory, we fight from victory! Our King Jesus has risen and is seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven. We can rest in the accomplishment of the cross and in the fact that Jesus wants to see transformation in the lives of our students more than we ever could. This understanding takes the pressure off to perform. Our only responsibility is to steward what we've been given, and look for ways to partner with the Spirit. There's no need to strive. Thank the Father today for the fact that He's given you what you need to complete the assignment you've been given.

STARTER

Using a knife set from home as a visual aid and pulling them out individually as you speak, ask: Have you ever thought about how many different knives there are in a knife set? There is a diversity of knives in one set. Some are longer, some are shorter, some are thin, and some are thick. Every knife in the set has a specific purpose. One knife cuts steak, another one cuts veggies and fruit, and another is used for peeling. Even though the knives are so different, they are still a part of the one set and they all have one job—to cut! This is a picture of how God created humans. There is so much diversity among us, yet we were all created to be His sons and daughters. Embracing one another's uniqueness is what unifies us.

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MAIN VERSE

Galatians 3:28 (ESV): "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

POINT 1

ONE BODY WITH MANY PARTS

DISCUSS

Just as we've been discussing over the last few weeks, from heaven's point of view it doesn't matter what designations or labels the world puts on you, we are all equal in Christ. Galatians 3:28 (ESV) says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This verse isn't saying that we aren't special or unique. This verse isn't saying that we just ignore our cultural, ethnic, or gender-specific uniqueness.

If this verse isn't saying that we aren't special or unique, what do you think this verse means?

TEACH

In 1 Corinthians 12:12–21 we see that God created each one of us with uniqueness so that we can learn from each other and be expressions of who He is. We all contribute to the Kingdom of God in a special way.

Just like our physical bodies are made up of many parts, God created a variety of people that bring unique skills, talents, perspectives, and cultures to the Body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:12-21 (NLT)

12 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.

13 Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit. 14 Yes, the body has many different parts, not just

WE ARE ONE /// DIVERSE & ONE

one part. 15 If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? 18 But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. 19 How strange a body would be if it had only one part! 20 Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. 21 The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

Just as our physical body needs all of its parts and organs, the same is true for the Body of Christ. Whether you are white, black, Latino, Asian, rich, poor, male, or female, you add significance to Christ's Body. We need your uniqueness.

POINT 2

DIVERSITY ADDS TO HOW WE RELATE TO JESUS AND OTHERS

DISCUSS

God loves diversity because it adds significance to how we relate to Jesus and how we relate to others.

What are some of the ways that diversity adds significance to our lives? (Have students shout out some examples. Use a whiteboard if desired.)

What are some of the ways that diversity adds to our relationship with Jesus? (Have students shout out some examples. Use a whiteboard if desired.)

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TEACH

Christianity is about being Christ-like, which is what we're called to be. Diversity reminds us to make our relationship with Jesus the centerpiece of our lives, rather than putting our cultural preferences in that position (see Galatians 2:11–14).

How does diversity add to us?

Diversity helps us to have a broader perspective of who Jesus is, and who He isn't.

Diversity models unity - when diverse people work together as one.

Diversity, when coupled with the right heart, can break down prejudice because it gives first-hand interactions with different cultures and people groups.

Diversity provides ideas, skills, gifts, and talents that would otherwise be absent.

Diversity gives us a "global" perspective and heart that allows us to care beyond our immediate cultural context.

RESPONSE

You will probably have great ideas for response because you know your group. Our hope is that we can help you as much as possible, without getting in your way. Below are some response ideas - use what works and throw out the rest! Our main hope is that we will make this as experiential as possible for the teens.

APPLICATION

How do we practically apply what we've been discussing over the past four weeks? What does it look like to value others and value diversity the same way that God does?

When interacting with those who are different from you, avoid the following:

Cruel Joking

Ephesians 5:4 (ESV) says, "Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving."

Jokes about the way another person looks, speaks, or dresses is unloving and ultimately hurtful. Don't do it.

Making Assumptions

Acting more informed about a person's culture and life experiences than you actually are only makes building a real relationship with them more difficult. Instead, humility is the way to go. Ask questions instead of making assumptions.

Being Exclusive

Not being friendly and welcoming can be very alienating. It's pretty difficult to have a diverse community or group of friends when everyone doesn't feel welcomed.

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Being Closed-Minded

Not being open to new ideas, different ways to see situations, and new information will make the process of building diverse relationships impossible.

When interacting with those who are different than you, do the following:

Be Jesus

Jesus broke down all of the cultural barriers of His time because He understood that His Father in heaven was furiously in love with every person in humanity! Let that truth lead you.

Be Inclusive

Be friendly and welcoming. Remember, we were all at one time outside of God's circle, but He opened His arms and welcomed us in. Let's pass along what God extended to us.

Be Honoring

Honor says, "How can I show this person that I value them?"

Be Open-Minded

Be willing to see situations and new ideas from the other person's perspective. Be willing to listen. Being open-minded will establish trust, and trust is the foundation of every friendship.

I challenge you to put this into practice. Over the next school year I want you to get to know someone who is different than you.

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HOLY SPIRIT// MINISTRY TIME

Break into small groups. This will take some time. Go around the group and finish this sentence: "The greatness I see in you is..." The idea is to go around and share what value we see each person bringing to the world, to our group, and to our church. Then lay hands on each person and pray for encouragement and empowerment by the Spirit for the gifts you see in them.

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

- ① What's one thing that is unique about you?
- ② Have you ever seen examples of diversity and unity working together at the same time?
- ③ Why do you think we can be intimidated by people's differences? Explain.
- ④ How does God demonstrate his love for differences?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brandon Henderson

Brandon and his wife, Sharon, live in Urbana, Illinois, along with their beautiful daughter, Zoe. Brandon currently serves as the high school pastor at the Urbana Campus of the Vineyard Church of Central Illinois. He is a gifted communicator who desires to see this generation equipped in the power of the Holy Spirit and the identity that is theirs in Christ. Brandon also is a talented rapper, frequently appearing in worship at his church, contributing a spoken word or rap verse. His most recent project is called The Prognosis EP and it is available for streaming everywhere.

WELCOME TO VINEYARD YOUTH USA CURRICULUM

Hello friends. What you hold in your hands is the product of lots of people, lots of prayer, and lots of purpose. The Vineyard movement is at a crucial place, and we believe that the work we do with students will have much influence on what the movement will look like over the next 10-20 years. We set out to design a curriculum that communicates and reinforces the biblical and kingdom values of the Vineyard while inviting students to embrace the reality that they are part of something bigger than themselves.

Understanding the diversity within the Vineyard movement, we purposefully designed curriculum that can be utilized by groups of differing sizes led by either paid or volunteer leaders in any geographical setting or location. Easy, right? We believe we accomplish this by offering a buffet of activities that allow you – the in-the-trenches leader – to choose what works for you and your group. We're pretty sure no one will use all of the material proposed, but we're confident some of it will be a good fit for your group.

Each lesson includes:

- Experiential, hands-on activities that reflect a variety of learning styles.
- Large group questions to frame a conversation (I.E., not a lecture).
- Application suggestions to reveal and experience the kingdom of God.
- Small group questions with age and gender specific items.
- A devotional for the leader to help them grow in this area.
- Planned activities to help students hear God for themselves.

We Are One

In the Vineyard we believe that God cares equally about every race, ethnicity, and gender. We believe that every individual is equal in His sight. But a question that many of us still ask is a simple but important one: How do we “do life” with people who are different from us? How do we interact with those who have different cultures, perspectives, and values than we do? Our goal in this series is to explore questions like these on a deeper, more personal level. Our hope is that this series will challenge your teens and give them the tools and passion necessary to better embrace those around them that are different from them, so that the love of Jesus may be put on display through their lives. God created a world filled with diversity. We all bring something special to the table. Christ charges us to value one another's differences, all while viewing each other as holding equal value in Him. *We are One.*

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