

Session 5

GOSPEL COMMUNITY /

THIS STAGE OF THE SPECTRUM IS A DIRECT RESULT OF INTENTIONALITY AND DISCIPLESHIP.

The **depth of relationship** established consistently across cross-cultural relationships produces transparency and a bearing of one another's burdens. This stage is characterized by **serving, honoring and loving one another** and **weeping, mourning and rejoicing together**. Relationships that reflect true gospel community have surpassed surface level pleasantries to real, specific, meaningful interactions. We learn how to disagree without dishonoring one another. This stage doesn't reflect arrival; rather, it's reflective of assuming the best, even when we miss the mark.

SCRIPTURE READING: ACTS 10:44-48

⁴⁴ While Peter was still saying these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. ⁴⁵ And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. ⁴⁶ For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, ⁴⁷ “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” ⁴⁸ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

PETER EXPERIENCES GOSPEL COMMUNITY

As Peter humbly presents the gospel to Cornelius’ household, the Holy Spirit finishes the work He previously started in Cornelius and saves Cornelius’ entire household. The Jews with Peter had a stunning revelation—the Gentiles didn’t need to assimilate to their Jewish customs to be saved! This is an important dynamic to put into practice when different ethnicities come together. There will always be cultural differences and preferences. We should submit to one another culturally as we submit our culture to the lordship of Christ.

Immediately, we see Peter baptize the new believers. Then something amazing results from Peter’s intentionality. Cornelius asked the man, who had just admitted he was partial, to stay in his home for a few days. Peter went from ignorantly being partial, to abruptly being made aware of God’s work in Cornelius, to intentionally engaging Cornelius and his home, to now living with his new family for a few days!

Be encouraged, and pursue multiethnic relationships. Just like Peter, you have spiritual family you haven't met yet, and what unites us far outweighs what separates us. Jesus has already torn down everything that separates us, and God is determined to see His children unite as one family. It can be messy, but it is worth it. God is not bringing together perfect people; He is perfecting us by bringing us together. Continue to be open to the work of the Holy Spirit.

In John 17:20-23, Jesus prophetically prays,

“I DO NOT ASK FOR THESE ONLY, BUT ALSO FOR THOSE WHO WILL BELIEVE IN ME THROUGH THEIR WORD, THAT THEY MAY ALL BE ONE, JUST AS YOU, FATHER, ARE IN ME, AND I IN YOU, THAT THEY ALSO MAY BE IN US, SO THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE SENT ME. THE GLORY THAT YOU HAVE GIVEN ME I HAVE GIVEN TO THEM, THAT THEY MAY BE ONE EVEN AS WE ARE ONE, I IN THEM AND YOU IN ME, THAT THEY MAY BECOME PERFECTLY ONE, SO THAT THE WORLD MAY KNOW THAT YOU SENT ME AND LOVED THEM EVEN AS YOU LOVED ME.”

Church, we often pray and make our requests known to God. We expect God to hear us and answer our prayers. This time, let's be the answer to Jesus' prayer request. Instead of asking for answers, we can actually show the answer to a broken, divided world through our unity. Jesus desperately wants us to reflect the oneness between Him, the Father and the Spirit. **Our unity across ethnic barriers also testifies to a broken world that Jesus is real and His love can save. We are undivided.**

? DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ▶ **How often do you spend time with (share meals/travel/hang out/text/call) people of other cultures? How often do you pray for or get prayed over by people of other cultures? Are you submitted to the authority of or do you seek godly counsel from a person or persons of another culture? What is that experience like? What have you learned?**
- ▶ **Reconciliation is not assimilation. Reconciliation can't take place until we believe we are all created in the image of God and have absolute value and worth. What are ways you can communicate and demonstrate value or worth to ethnicities besides your own?**

↓ DIG DEEPER

- ▶ **Practice active listening with someone you probably would not agree with about racial issues. Active listening provides the opportunity to demonstrate Christlike behavior during dialogues on race. The goal of active listening is to understand the speaker, even when disagreement arises. Active listening is not listening to merely respond with opposing viewpoints. Read the active listening guide at undivided.net to help you get started.**