



Paul's Meeting with Church Leaders - Unity in the Gospel

By Ariel Presswood

Galatians 2:9 – "James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me."

Setting the Scene

Key Concept:

Paul's meeting with church leaders emphasizes the importance of unity in the Gospel. Despite differences in their backgrounds and callings, Paul, James, Cephas (Peter), and John recognized that they were all working toward the same mission—to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Their fellowship reminds us that unity in the Gospel strengthens our ability to glorify God and share His love with the world. As members of God's family, we are called to focus on what unites us rather than what divides us, celebrating our shared mission and purpose.

Unity in Christ does not mean we all think, act, or serve in the same way, but rather that we recognize the same source of grace and truth—Jesus. The church, just like the early believers, thrives when different people bring their gifts together in faith and fellowship.

Engaging Analogy:

"Unity in the Gospel is like a puzzle. Each piece is unique, with its own shape, colors, and design, but when the pieces come together, they create a beautiful and complete picture. In the same way, God's people bring different gifts, perspectives, and strengths, but when we work together, we reflect His glory and share His truth more powerfully. Just as a puzzle is incomplete without all its pieces, the church flourishes when every believer works together in love and faith."

Invitation:

Invite participants to reflect on the value of unity in the Gospel and how they can build fellowship with others to share God's love and truth. Encourage them to see differences not as obstacles but as opportunities to grow in faith. Through these activities, participants will explore the beauty of working together as one body in Christ and discover ways to foster unity in their communities, families, and churches.

Section 1: Reflect and Discuss

Reflection Questions

1. Why was it important for Paul to meet with church leaders and ensure they were united in the Gospel?
2. How does unity in the Gospel strengthen our ability to share God's message with the world?
3. What are some ways we can celebrate our differences while remaining united in Christ?
4. How can you work with others to share God's love and truth in your community?
5. How does unity in the church reflect God's character to the world?
6. What can you do to promote unity in your family, church, or friendships?
7. What happens when there is division among believers, and how can we work to prevent it?

Family or Group Discussion

- **Biblical Examples of Unity:** Discuss moments of unity in the Bible, such as:
 - Paul and Barnabas working together to spread the Gospel (Acts 13:2-3).
 - The early church sharing everything in common (Acts 2:44-47).
 - Jesus' prayer for unity among believers (John 17:20-23).
 - Moses and Aaron leading God's people (Exodus 4:14-16).

Reflect on how these examples encourage us to focus on our shared faith and mission rather than our differences. Discuss how unity strengthens the body of Christ and allows us to accomplish more for God's kingdom.

- **Living in Unity:** Discuss practical ways to build unity within families, churches, and communities. Examples include praying together, serving others, encouraging one another, and resolving conflicts with love and grace. Share personal stories about times when working together made a difference. Consider reading testimonies of missionaries, pastors, or community leaders who have seen the power of unity in spreading the Gospel.

Section 2: Hands-On Activities

Activity 1: Unity Puzzle Craft

Objective: Create a puzzle symbolizing how each person's unique gifts and roles contribute to the unity of the Gospel.

Materials Needed:

- Large paper or cardstock
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Decorative items like stickers or glitter

Instructions:

1. Cut out puzzle pieces from paper or cardstock. Each piece should be large enough to write or draw on.
2. Write a gift, talent, or way to serve on each piece (e.g., "Kindness," "Teaching," "Encouragement").
3. Decorate each puzzle piece with colors, designs, or symbols that represent its contribution to God's work.
4. Assemble the puzzle, showing how everyone's contributions come together to build unity in God's work.
5. Reflect on how the puzzle represents the body of Christ, where each member plays an important role.

Extension Idea: Display the completed puzzle in a shared space as a reminder of the importance of working together. Encourage participants to add new pieces over time as they discover more ways to serve and contribute. Create a "Church Body" puzzle with each member's name written on a piece, symbolizing that everyone plays a vital role in God's family.

Activity 2: Gospel Fellowship Chain

Objective: Create a paper chain representing fellowship and unity in the Gospel.

Materials Needed:

- Colored paper
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Glue or tape

Instructions:

1. Cut strips of paper and write a way to encourage unity or serve others on each strip (e.g., "Pray for one another," "Share the Gospel," "Forgive").
2. Link the strips together to form a chain.
3. Reflect on how each act strengthens the bond of fellowship in Christ.
4. Display the chain as a visual reminder of the strength we have when we work together in unity.

Extension Idea: Encourage participants to add to the chain throughout the week, writing new ways they've built unity or served others. Use the chain as a group project to symbolize ongoing growth in fellowship. Consider creating a "Unity Chain" that circles an entire room, representing how Christ's love connects all believers.

Activity 3: Path of Unity Map

Objective: Create a map illustrating how believers can work together to share the Gospel.

Materials Needed:

- Large paper or poster board
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Stickers or decorative items
- Optional: Small toy figures or objects to represent travelers on the path

Instructions:

1. Draw a path labeled "Path of Unity."
2. Add stepping stones with actions like "Pray Together," "Serve Others," and "Encourage One Another."
3. Include stops along the path where the Gospel is shared and lives are transformed (e.g., "Sharing the Gospel," "Helping the Poor," "Worship Together").
4. Decorate the map with symbols like crosses, doves, and hearts to represent God's love and guidance.

Extension Idea: Personalize the map by adding specific goals or prayers for unity. Use the map as a guide for family devotions or group discussions, reflecting on the importance of each step along the way. Consider turning the map into a class or family project where each member adds their journey of unity and faith.