

**Group Gathering Question:**

What is missing in community for you today and how have you had community even while staying at home?

1. We see the practice of anointing people and objects with oil in both the Old and New Testaments (Psalm 133:2). Oil often signified prosperity, blessings, and stability and anointing with oil signified that the person or object was set apart and blessed by the Lord. Imagine what it might feel like to have oil pouring over you. When you consider these things, does it enhance the meaning of verse 2? If so, how?
2. Why is it so good and pleasant for brothers and sisters to live together in unity? What makes being together pleasing to God?
3. We claim to be the *United States*. We often are aware of what divides us, but what unites us?
4. With whom do you feel united and why? What helps you to be united to another person?
5. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in his book *Life Together* says, "He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial." What does this mean to you? Why is this an important point to wrestle with?
6. As an application of "living together in unity" while being apart, who is one person you can pray for this week? Who is one person you can reach out to this week by phone, personal note, or another way?

**prayer requests**

- > Prayers of healing for Carly Bias, Gabrielle Carnell, Carver McGriff, Robert Neal, Nanette Ritter, and Mike Witter.
- > Prayers for health care workers, truck drivers, grocery stores workers, and others taking risks to provide service and care.
- > Prayers for Food Pantry volunteers and clients as well as those who have lost their jobs.

Leaders, you may be settling in for a longer "stay at home" time now. In our sermons and in our Home Groups, we are moving back to the Psalms for their inspiration and the comfort they bring. Psalm 133 is one of the simpler, shorter Psalms. Read the entire Psalm (3 verses!) before you begin. It talks about how good it is to be together in unity. Think creatively how we can accomplish that while being physically apart.

1. The writer of Psalm 133 was intentional about providing a sensory illustration. You could ask group members to close their eyes and imagine what an anointing with so much oil might be like. Verse 2 suggests an abundance of oil being poured over Aaron's head. When we consider what oil represents (prosperity, holiness, blessing), some parallels we might draw are: the abundance of oil signifying God's desire for unity both with us and with him, the abundance with which God seems to approach everything, or God's faith in us being able to live in unity. What else?
2. God is a God of relationships. From Deuteronomy and Leviticus to Jesus' greatest commandment in the gospels, we are called to love God with all that we can, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is pleasing to God to be in healthy relationships, living together with others. Jesus lived in real relationship with his disciples for 3 years.
3. Politics divide us. Media divides us. People take sides on almost every public issue, including how to fix the economy and cure the corona virus. Discuss what unites us. Perhaps our unity is in our faith and serving, respecting and loving one another despite our differences.
4. We often feel united to a spouse, a parent or a child, or a really trusted friend. What makes those relationships as special as they are? Family bonds are strong. Vows we take are strong. And when someone has served us or cared for us going beyond what was expected, that unites us in friendship.
5. When we go into Christian community thinking it's going to be perfect we will inevitably be disappointed and will more than likely end up leaving the community because of this disappointment. Thus, ironically enough, we will not be a part of the Christian community of which we so desired to be. Wrestle with staying in community despite its imperfections.
6. Go for it! Pray for people by name. Make that phone call. Write that thank you note. Affirm or encourage someone creatively. In the movie, "A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood," the real Mr. Rogers often authentically cares for and encourages others and prays for people by name.