

## Psalm 133: A Song of Unity

**Thesis:** Unity is not uniformity, its community, Everyone sharing a common purpose, striving toward a common goal.

### Psalm 133

<sup>1</sup> How delightfully good when brothers live together in harmony!  
<sup>2</sup> It is like fine oil on the head, running down on the beard,  
running down Aaron's beard onto his robes.  
<sup>3</sup> It is like the dew of Hermon falling on the mountains of Zion.  
For there the LORD has appointed the blessing— life forevermore.

**Icebreaker:** Have each member of the group answer the following questions. These questions allow the conversation to start off in safety and fun.

- How many siblings do you have? Where are you in the birth order?
- How would you describe your relationship (past and present) with your siblings? (if they are an only child, consider either close family or lifelong friends)
- Share a time when you were living together in harmony/unity?

**Opening Quote:** Living together in a way that evokes the glad song of Psalm 133 is one of the great and arduous tasks before Christ's people. Nothing requires more attention and energy. (Eugene Peterson)

### Opening Prayer:

*Heavenly Father, Lord Almighty, help us to understand this week's psalm. Not simply to understand it in our head, but to feel in our heart and to live in in our lives. May it reframe our story and reshape our perspective as we walk with you and ascend to your house. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.*

### Opening Meditation: Listening Prayer

At the start of the session, you will read through Psalm 133 three times. You can use the version above (Christian Standard Bible), another version, or three different versions.

Have your group sit and listen. Invite them to listen for a theme in this Psalm. Listen for repeated phases that are echoed in this psalm. Listen for words or ideas that resonate with them. Listen for God to speak to you through this psalm.

### Discuss:

- What was something that you heard, felt, or experienced while listening to this psalm?
- Were there any word or phrase that resonated with you in this Psalm?
- What do you think is the central theme or message from this psalm?
- Did you sense any connection between this psalm and other scripture?
- What questions about this psalm came to mind as you listened?

**Sermon Discussion:** This past Sunday we explored Psalm 133 in worship. Take some time to review the sermon, discussing the themes, application, and questions.

- What were some of lessons of Psalm 133 that were discussed during the sermon?
- How did these lessons connect with you and your spiritual life?
- How were you encouraged to apply the lessons from this psalm to your life?
- Share any questions of concerns that came to you from this week's sermon?
- How can the lessons from this Psalm help you on your spiritual journey?
- How can being a part of Christian community help discover unity with those your might not be in complete agreement with?

**Read Psalm 133, again.**

**Quote:** Living together in a way that evokes the glad song of Psalm 133 is one of the great and arduous tasks before Christ's people. Nothing requires more attention and energy. It is easier to do almost anything else. It is far easier to deal with people as problems to be solved than to have anything to do with them in community. (Eugene Peterson).

**Discuss:**

- On a scale of 1-10, how unified would you say is the Christian Church (Universal) today? (1- No Unity, 10 – Completely divided)
- What are some of the issues that cause division between fellow Christians?
- Do you agree or disagree with Peterson that unity is “one of the great and arduous tasks before Christ's people?”

**Quote from Shane Claiborne:** Unity does not mean uniformity. You don't want an orchestra made up of only tubas. It's all about harmonizing not homogenizing.

**Discuss:**

- Do you agree or disagree with this quote?
- How have you seen uniformity cause division?
- How can our differences create unity and harmony in Christian church?
- How might you struggle with unity, not uniformity in your faith journey?

**Metaphors for Unity:** The Psalmist offers two illustrations for unity, oil poured on Aaron and the dew on Mount Hermon. These analogies are rooted in early Jewish culture and can be difficult for us to understand in our modern world.

**Oil poured on Aaron:** Oil, throughout Scripture, is a sign of God's presence, a symbol of the Spirit of God. Oil glistens, picks up the warmth of sunlight, softens the skin, perfumes the person. The oil is an anointing oil, marking the person as a priest. The picture comes from when instructions are given for the ordination of Aaron and other priests. (see Exodus 29:7-9) Living together means seeing the oil flow over the head, down the face, through the beard, onto the shoulders of the other-and when I see that I know that my brother, my sister, is my priest. When we see the other as God's anointed, our relationships are profoundly affected. (Eugene Peterson)

**Dew on Mt. Hermon:** Hermon is the highest mountain in that part of the world/ When you wake in the morning, you are drenched because of the heavy dew at such altitudes. This heavy dew, which was characteristic of each new dawn on the high slopes of Hermon, and communicates a sense of morning freshness, a feeling of fertility, a clean anticipation of growth, an ever-renewed expectation in what God is doing with our brothers and sisters in the faith. Each person in the community is unique; each is specially loved and particularly led by the Spirit of God. (Eugene Peterson)

**Additional Peterson Quote:** The oil flowing down Aaron's beard communicates warm, priestly relationship. The dew descending down Hermon's slopes communicates fresh and expectant newness. Oil and dew. The two things that make life together delightful.

**Discuss:**

- After reading these interpretations of the psalmist's metaphors by Peterson, describe in your own words what you think these two analogies mean?
- How do they symbolize unity, but not uniformity?
- Do these analogies help you understand God's desire for unity with his people better? Why or why not?
- Is there an analogy you think would work better for you?

**Another Metaphor:** *The Body of Christ. (1 Corinthians 12)*

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-18. *For deeper insight into this metaphor, read the entire chapter.*

*For just as the body is one and has many parts, and all the parts of that body, though many, are one body—so also is Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink. Indeed, the body is not one part but many. If the foot should say, “Because I’m not a hand, I don’t belong to the body,” it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I’m not an eye, I don’t belong to the body,” it is not for that reason any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God has arranged each one of the parts in the body just as he wanted.*

**Discuss:**

- How does the metaphor of the body of Christ symbolize unity, but not uniformity?
- According to this metaphor, how does uniformity damage the body?
- How can uniformity create tension in Christian community? How can it be a bad witness for Christ?

**Quote from Eugene Peterson:**

Christians are a community of people who are visibly together at worship but who remain in relationship through the week in witness and service. Christian community—a place where each person is taken seriously, learns to trust others, depend on others, be compassionate with others, rejoice with others.

**Discuss:**

- Why must our Christian communities exist outside of weekly worship services?
- What are some ways that your group and our congregation can meet in witness and service?

- How has your small group gathering helped you grow in unity?
- How can you continue to help each other grow in unity, not uniformity?

**Quote from Eugene Peterson:**

A community of faith flourishes when we view each other as unique (specially loved and particularly led by the Spirit of God), wondering what God will do today in this one, in that one. When we are in a community with those Christ loves and redeems, we are constantly finding out new things about them. They are new persons each morning, endless in their possibilities. We explore the fascinating depths of their friendship, share the secrets of their quest. It is impossible to be bored in such a community, impossible to feel alienated among such people.

**Discuss:**

- What does a flourishing community of faith look like?
- Why is it difficult for faith communities to truly flourish in this way?
- How can we help our faith community to value unity without uniformity?

**Optional Musical Interlude:** Listen to Psalm 133 by Poor Bishop Hooper, reflecting on the words and music, allowing God to speak through this psalm into your heart.

<https://youtu.be/Uq5-QCv49rY>

**Final Thoughts:** From Timothy Keller's *The Songs of Jesus* (pg 340)

**Unity.** The unity of God's people brings opposites together, symbolized by tall Hermon in the rural north and the little hill of Zion in the urban south. For Hermon's dew to fall on Zion would be a miracle—and so is the super natural bond that brings people far divergent in culture, race and class together in the Lord. The unity and love he gives us is like precious oil, making people fragrant and attractive to us who otherwise we would dismiss or reject. So, "Be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:2-3)"

**Application:** Take some time as a group and pray for our church and the churches in our area to flourish in community and unity without uniformity. Then pray for the Christian Church universal, that we will be the true body of Christ, caring for each other and modeling the love of Christ to the world. May we be like oil running down Aaron's beard, dew on Mt. Hermon, and the Body of Christ

**Closing Prayer:** Invite the group to share any prayer requests for the week ahead. Then have one person close in prayer or invite the group to pray for each other.

**Prayer** (by Tim Keller)

Lord, the world will know us by our love for one another across the racial, political, and cultural barriers that divide the rest of the human race. Yet the church is often too much like the world in this. Teach us how to help the church by the body it was meant to be. Amen.