



GOD'S ANSWERS: Session Seven

What does this mean? The role of God's truths and our culture's worldviews in shaping our thoughts.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God, Your Word is truth. Keep us steadfast in Your Word even as the evil one seeks to whispers his lies into our ears. Keep us with Your Son who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Amen.

God's revealed truth – Augsburg Confession Article Seven

Read Aloud:

"It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among who the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word. It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places. It is as Paul says in Eph. 4:4, 5, 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism.'"

Q: How is this Truth undercut in our world?

A: Allow for some discussion about this question if general, then focus the thoughts on the fact that the world seeks to teach us that unity is not a desired or achievable goal. Diversity in every area is seen as more to be desired than unity. This ignores the fact that God brings true unity among His people through the pure proclamation of the Word and the proper use of the Sacraments. This can even result in some in the Church dismissing the biblical emphasis on unity, preferring to remain separate from all other Christians. Others who value at least the appearance of unity will try to fake such unity by ignoring differences. Still others will suggest that the requirement of shared specific rituals is the key to unity leading them to deemphasize the biblical teaching that unity is worked through the Word. Choose one or more of the examples on the next sheet entitled "Cultural Attempts to undermine this truth" to help show how these lies continue to deceive. Then return here to finish this session.

Q: How is this truth revealed in the Scriptures. Why does it matter?

A: Read the following verses that speak about how Christ desires unity in His church and how the Spirit's work in Word and Sacrament is the only true source of unity the Body of Christ can know. Remind participants that practically speaking, we must engage other Christians in discussion about the Word and Christ's teachings about the Sacraments. Remind them that not taking Christ's Words seriously about desiring unity is sinful. Just as sinful is pretending that unity exists when it clearly does not.

- *John 17:17-21: “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. “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.”*
- *Ephesians 4:4-6: “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*

Closing Prayer

Almighty God, Jesus prayed to you that those who believed in Him might be one just as You and He are one. Grant us such unity as Your Spirit works it through Your Word and Your Gifts. Amen.

Cultural Attempts to undermine this truth:

Example 1:

Play the clip from the movie Hail Caesar! which can be found at <https://youtu.be/KJEiDRi4Itc>. Note how this film suggests that theological differences while they may be discussed with some level of conviction in the end should be yielded. There is an assumption that holding to one's convictions may not be practically useful. This basic idea has been embraced not only in the culture but within the Church. Many suggest that theological differences should be ignored in order that the church can give the appearance of unity. While desiring unity, we ought to work toward true unity around the Word rather than acting like there is unity where it does not exist.

Example 2:

Play the clip from the movie the Matrix that can be found at <https://youtu.be/zE7PKRjrid4>. Note how it is suggested that one may in good conscience either pursue truth or simply live in ignorance of it. Both ways are presented as valid ways to live one's life. Again, this idea ignores the fact that God reveals truth precisely to bring unity among His people. We are not to ignore what He has revealed.

Example 3:

Play the clip of the song Be Yourself by Audioslave that can be found <https://youtu.be/XC6URZ-cCB0>. Note how this song again suggests that unity is not a goal which should be sought after. Each person should trust their own feelings, experiences, and opinions. The suggestion is that there is no objective truth to know so any pursuit of such truth is useless. Again, this idea can often be embraced in the Church as well as culture.

Example 4:

Speak about how the idea of American individualism often tells us that diversity and not unity is to be preferred. While this may be true in some contexts of life, it is never true when dealing with the things Jesus has revealed to us. There we must be unified around His Word and His Sacraments alone. There is no value in false teaching or false understanding of God's gifts.