

A large flock of birds, possibly starlings, is captured in mid-flight against a vibrant sunset sky. The birds are silhouetted against the orange and yellow hues of the setting sun, forming a large, sweeping V-shape that dominates the center of the image. The sky is filled with soft, horizontal clouds, and the overall atmosphere is serene and majestic. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of trees and foliage are visible, providing a stark contrast to the bright sky.

DISCOVER GOD'S PASSION FOR UNITY

FIVE DAY READING PLAN

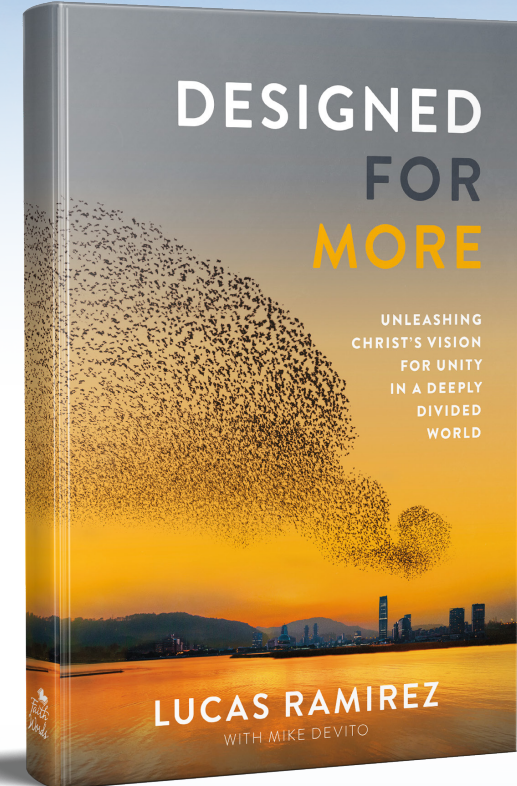
By Lucas Ramirez and Mike DeVito

Discovering God's Passion For Unity is a 5 day reading plan based on the book **DESIGNED FOR MORE: UNLEASHING CHRIST'S VISION FOR UNITY IN A DEEPLY DIVIDED WORLD.**

Division and fragmentation have hindered the Church's power to influence and transform the world. Our very mission is in the balance if Christ's followers fail to become one. Using research from the power of collective movements, Lucas Ramirez and Mike DeVito unveil principles that call Christians to come together for the glory of God. We invite you to join God's great vision for changing the world through Christ!

AVAILABLE FORMATS:

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DAY 1: JESUS PRAYS FOR UNITY

READ: JOHN 17:20-23 (NIV)

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. **Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**”

REFLECT:

Consider the radical nature of what Jesus asks the Father: he asks that we would be included into the oneness of the nature of the Trinity. And then he hinges the very mission of the Church on unity. Jesus’ prayer was not for a distant future heavenly existence; it is for the here and now. In Christ, there is a transformation that occurs in us individually and then **also** through participation in a collective community, we have purpose and mission. Stepping into this fellowship is about being **and** doing.

People have a difficult time believing in Christ when we **don’t** work together as one. The world needs and wants to see God’s love made visible through our **community**. When we offer forgiveness and reconciliation, even when others don’t deserve it, God’s love speaks powerfully without words. People begin to believe God may truly love them too and hearts begin to open.

What is your Christian community like? Be honest. Do any of your relationships actually **prevent** others from moving closer to Christ? Ask God to help you see what attitudes and actions of yours are helpful or hurtful. Do you have relationships with others who are diverse from you? What is the next “one thing” that could help move your relationships toward the unity Jesus prayed for?

PRAYER:

Lord, grant me today a deeper understanding about your heart for unity and what this looks like for me to be **one** in you and **one** with my brothers and sisters in every day life. I need your courage, wisdom, and love in my relationships today. I confess that my judgmental, prideful, jealous and critical attitudes often move others away from being unified. Forgive me for any role I played in keeping your body divided! Help me to love like you. Amen.

DAY 2: WE NEED EACH OTHER

READ: 1 COR 12:12-13; 25-27 (MSG)

“... Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you’re still one body. It’s exactly the same with Christ. By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which **he** has the final say in everything. . . Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain—his Spirit—where we all come to drink. The old labels we once used to identify ourselves—labels like Jew or Greek, slave or free—are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive.

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don’t, the parts we see and the parts we don’t. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance. You are Christ’s body—that’s who you are! You must never forget this. Only as you accept your part of that body does your “part” mean anything.”

REFLECT:

There is no misinterpreting Paul’s message here. You might want to read it again. As believers, we **need** each another. Yet today we have not truly bought into this for the global Church. Yes, we may believe we need each other in local congregations, yet that is not the **whole** body of Christ. We need each other in order to **be** the love that draws the whole world to Christ.

Understanding our deep need for one another is the same driving force behind I Corinthians 12:21 when Paul famously says, “The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!”. The pride of thinking you can stand alone is comical. Let’s get ahold of one thing: we need each other. You will miss out on so many blessings from God if you stay in your comfortable silo. You are Christ’s body—that’s who you are!

Ask God to help you give unique dignity and honor to each part of the body, just as it is, without comparisons. Take a moment and give God thanks for the gifts He has given you and for the gifts He’s given to others you know and serve with. How are you each dependent on one another? How can you bless others by asking for their support? How can you bless others by giving your support?

PRAYER:

Lord, give me a one-body mindset for your larger, more comprehensive identity of the Church. O Lord, renew our hearts and minds to live who we are! Help me celebrate when others win and remember that I need others and they need me.

DAY 3: BE OF THE SAME MIND

READ: PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4 (NIV)

“So if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship from the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

REFLECT:

When thinking about unity, the big question that remains for many of us is: *“How can I work with or be of the same mind with someone who has such different perspectives from mine?”* This is a valid and quite common question.

We must change our common belief that becoming one means everyone thinks the same way. Unity is not dependent on uniformity, but rather mutual respect, compassion and honor, even if we disagree. This means that it *is* possible to be in fellowship with other believers and disagree on various issues. That’s ok and we should be grown up enough not to panic with diversity.

Don’t misunderstand this as a reason to go soft on truth. The whole point is that the Biblical call for unity has much more to do with how we treat one another instead of being right about everything. At the end of the day if we fight for our perspective and lose unity and love in the process, we have defeated ourselves and God’s ultimate goal for us to be a community saturated by love and grace.

As you pause today, is there someone specific who comes to mind? How might this relationship be different or change if you have the same mind as Christ Jesus - respectful, honoring, humble, compassionate? How might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to count another to be more significant than yourself? What perspectives or opinions have become idols that hinder unity?

PRAYER:

Lord, this is so different from the way I usually live. I’m asking you to form my heart and mind to be like yours. Loving God, fill my heart with love, humility and respect for each person I meet today. Help me see them as the valuable person they are. May I desire to be unified more than to prove my point or get my own way. I choose to trust that you are able to accomplish your greater story, even when you call me to lay my perspective down. May my actions and change of attitude contribute to a united Church. Amen.

DAY 4: DIVIDED WE FALL

READ: LUKE 11:14-18; 20 (NLT)

“One day Jesus cast a demon out from a man who couldn’t speak, and when the demon was gone, the man began to speak. The crowds were amazed, but some of them said, “No wonder he can cast out demons. He gets his power from Satan, the prince of demons!” Others, trying to test Jesus, demanded that he show them a miraculous sign from heaven to prove his authority.

He knew their thoughts, so he said, “Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A family splintered by feuding will fall apart. You say I am empowered by Satan. But if Satan is divided and fighting against himself, how can his kingdom survive? . . . But if I am casting out demons by the power of God, then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.”

REFLECT:

You’ve heard it said, “*United we stand. Divided we fall.*” The impact of division is everywhere in our society and the Church has an opportunity to stand apart. Followers of Jesus need to be keenly focused on our unity; how can we be credible messengers of God’s message of reconciliation if we ourselves are not reconciled? When we ignore Christ’s command to be one, all of our power is diminished - how can that kingdom survive?

Seek to unite yourself with others today around the things that matter to Christ. Look for creative ways to work together with others in order to be a powerful force of love and compassion in your community. Choose and promote projects that are collaborative. Put on permanent lenses that change your perspective to always look for opportunities for unity. Notice where you have become part of the *fighting against ourselves*, and quickly repent.

PRAYER:

O God, open my heart today to consider how the body of Christ is divided against itself. Show me places where your Kingdom is strong and united. Lord, you have offered me so much power to change the world if I would fix my eyes on You and on loving each other. So often my judgements and criticisms doom my words and actions to nothing more than obnoxious, destructive noise. My witness falls apart. Lord, you are the only one who can transform and unite your Church. Give me eyes to see where you are at work and are inviting me to join you. For the sake of your Kingdom. Amen.

DAY 5: BETTER TOGETHER

READ: ECCLESIASTES 4: 9, 10,12 (NLT)

“Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back to back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”

REFLECT:

We are hardwired for connection. Not only does unity with others feed our minds and souls, it helps with practical life. The Ecclesiastes passage show us that unity gives us: empowerment, provision, warmth, protection or strength.

Today, think how you can add value to someone else. It's not often we get a call from someone who is simply asking to help us. Most times, people ask something *from* us. Of course we do the same thing in our phone calls, but what if we intentionally flipped the script and began seeing relationships as opportunities to serve others? What if at times we called others simply to ask how we might help?

What are *your* God-given gifts and how could they become more fruitful for your community and world by working with others rather than on your own? Is there someone today that comes to mind that you could simply call and offer your help? This might send you on an interesting adventure! What would keep you from making a call like this? Share your thoughts with God. Also, share your story on social media and tag #DesignedForMore or share on our site: www.DesignedForMoreBook.com so we can hear your story!

Slowly re-read the benefits of working with someone from the Ecclesiastes passage above. Is there one or two benefits that you especially need in *your* life right now? Or maybe you know of someone who is in need of empowerment, provision, warmth, protection or strength today and the Holy Spirit is inviting you to respond to that need. Be the gift of *better together* to someone and allow someone to be that gift for you. Be the body of Christ. It's likely your contributions will be multiplied one-hundredfold!

PRAYER:

Lord, once again I hear your heart for unity. May I not treat this lightly, Lord. Give me eyes to see that we are better together. Would you show me the people that I need to work with to advance your kingdom? Show me what personal agendas I need to set aside so that I can work with my brothers and sisters for a greater harvest. Amen.