

The GlobalChurch Project

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Norberto Saracco – How the Spirit Creates Visible Unity in the Church

Small Group Study Guide

This resource is designed to help your small group discussion. It's shaped to inspire you to consider new ways for understanding the mission of the church. You don't need to cover all the questions. Allow for a time of response.

Materials

1. Video: Norberto Saracco, 49 minutes.
2. Theme: How the Spirit Creates Visible Unity in the Church

Preliminary discussion

Consider the questions suggested below to start the conversation for your small group. They'll consolidate the content of the video, after you've viewed it.

1. What were the major themes in Saracco's responses?
2. How does Saracco describe visible unity?
3. Discuss the difficulties of the content. What was difficult to understand? Was there anything you would like to clarify with the group?
4. Theological method: How is Saracco's theology informed and shaped by his practical ministry and context? What approaches does he take in understanding God in the context of his day-to-day experiences and discipling?

Explore and apply

Explore the major themes raised in the video. Critically engage with Saracco's theology. Consider the questions that respond to the issues raised in your preliminary discussion. Apply the answers to these questions in your own setting. Ensure the discussion is specifically drawing on your local setting. Make sure the discussion is relevant to the lives of faith for your small group. Encourage relevant and thoughtful examples from each participant.

1. Consider isolating a particular theme of interest for your classroom discussion. You might allocate topics for questions to particular groups or pairs. Or, raise particular questions in a forum style for group responses. Apply the answers to these questions in your own setting.
2. Norberto Saracco is the senior pastor of a very large church in Buenos Aires, the president of a seminary with 8,000 students, and a leader in the Lausanne Movement. How did he end up in pastoral ministry and seminary leadership?
3. He has been active in the Lausanne Catholic-Evangelical Conversation. When did he begin to get involved in ecumenical conversations, and why?
4. In the last 15 years, he has started new relations with Catholics in Buenos Aires. How does he describe what happened in 2001 and after that?
5. How did the meetings between Catholics, charismatics, and evangelicals transform their relationships?
6. How did the meetings affect Cardinal Bergoglio, who is now Pope Francis?
7. How is the ecumenical and interdenominational cooperation he has seen in Argentina being repeated in other parts of Latin America?
8. How is the Lausanne Catholic-Evangelical Conversation helping with such ecumenical cooperation?
9. How has Pope Francis shown support for Catholic-Evangelical conversations and relationships?
10. What opportunities and challenges does he see for Catholic-Evangelical conversations and relationships?
11. In 2012, he spoke about "Understanding the Needs, Hopes, and Goals of Effective Partnerships" at the 2012 Lausanne Consultation on Global Theological Education. What are the key features of effective partnerships between churches, groups, and denominations?
12. How do we strengthen visible unity in the church today?
13. He said that for Evangelical churches, unity comes out of their faithfulness to the Word of God and out of mission. How does he explain this?
14. The old way of doing ecumenism relied on recognition of hierarchies, on dogmas, on theological agreements, on alliances between institutions. But that way of doing ecumenism has gone as far as it can go. What does ecumenical cooperation need to look like in the future?
15. How do we get better at regarding one another honestly with mutual respect and appreciation?

16. He says that the religious map of the world has changed, and that the map of Christianity has changed. There has been a shift from the North to the South. How does this open up opportunities for new understandings, mission, and cooperation?
17. What does it mean to accept our diversity as an expression of the grace of God that itself takes many forms?
18. We have used oceans of ink and tons of paper in writing about unity. But what would happen if we were to give the Spirit a chance? What would a new Pentecost look like, where racial, sexual, economic, and ecclesiastical barriers were broken down?
19. What is the biggest misconception about ecumenical and interdenominational cooperation and unity?

Informing Community

Facilitate the space for your group to respond to the discussion. You might consider this section as a personal time of written journal responses to the following questions.

1. What is God encouraging our small group and me, to do?
2. In response to the issues raised in the video, what are areas I want to ask God for forgiveness in? How do I need to change? What does God want me to stand up for?
3. How do I need God to minister to me and my community, for us to better engage with the contextual issues of our community?
4. How can I gain a better understanding of Christian unity in the Spirit? What do we ask that God would do in our hearts?

Prayer

Spend time in prayer over what you've learnt.

Invite the ministry of the Holy Spirit to clarify, heal, and inspire change for your participants and communities.

Links

Website: www.theglobalchurchproject.com

Book: Graham Hill, *GlobalChurch: Reshaping Our Conversations, Renewing Our Mission, Revitalizing Our Churches* (IVP Academic, 2016)