

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

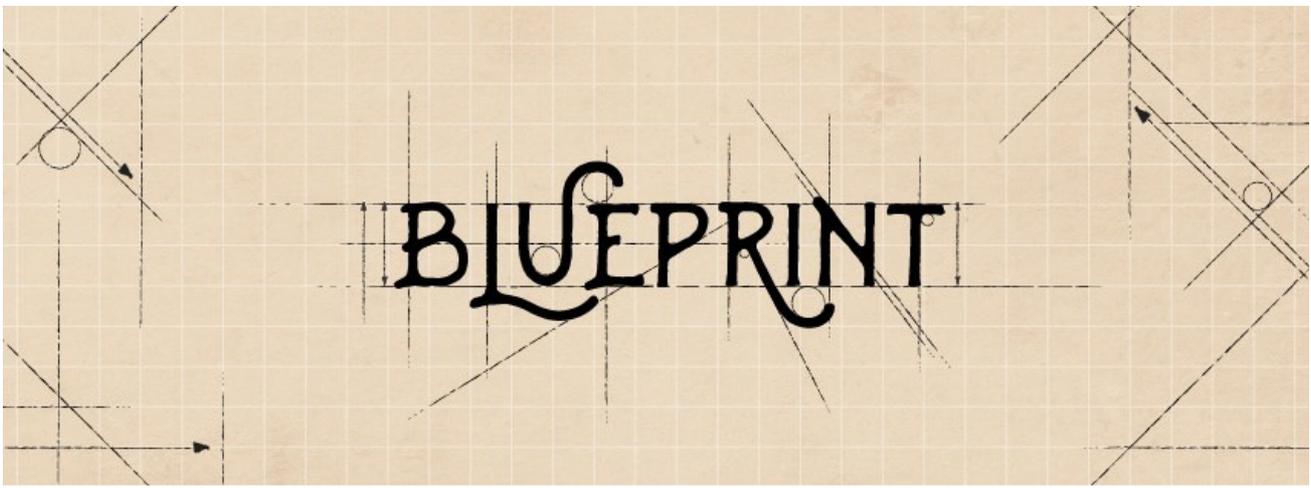
Firstly, you will notice that at the start of each lesson there are three important bits of information. These will be the basic tools you need to lead the study.

All Scripture will appear in this BLUE colour. All Scripture references are taken from the NIV version of the Bible unless otherwise stated.

All discussion questions are in this GREEN colour. These discussion questions are meant to help open up times of sharing in your group.

Occasionally you will see text in RED. Red text are some ideas and thoughts that you may want to use for your group.

The bulk of the text will be in BLACK. This is the script and information for your lesson. However, please do not stick to the script word for word. The information is there just to serve as a guideline. Please feel free to lead or facilitate the discussion in the way which GOD is leading you.



Community Group Study

Blueprint: Ruling in Peace - Colossians 3:15-17

Pastor Andrew Gardener

25 March 2018

Have you even seen a mosaic? A mosaic is a piece of art or a pattern that is usually made up of different small stones, ceramic pieces and glass. All these pieces are unique, however when you put them together in the right way, it forms a beautiful picture.

Sometimes I wonder if God had a mosaic in mind when He created human beings?

There are so many different types of culture, food, languages, music and skin colour. Yet, there is nothing quite as beautiful as when a diverse group of people gather together.

What are your feelings when it comes to diversity? Perhaps if we are honest with ourselves, sometimes diversity might be hard for us to accept. We tend to be more comfortable with people who are similar to us and we can fear those who are different. In fact, history shows us that many conflicts between people have occurred because people were unwilling to embrace diversity. Before you lead today's lesson, take some time to reflect on how you feel about diversity.

Don't be afraid to be honest about how you feel, at the same time, we must also not be afraid to allow God to change how we feel if it is not aligned with His heart.

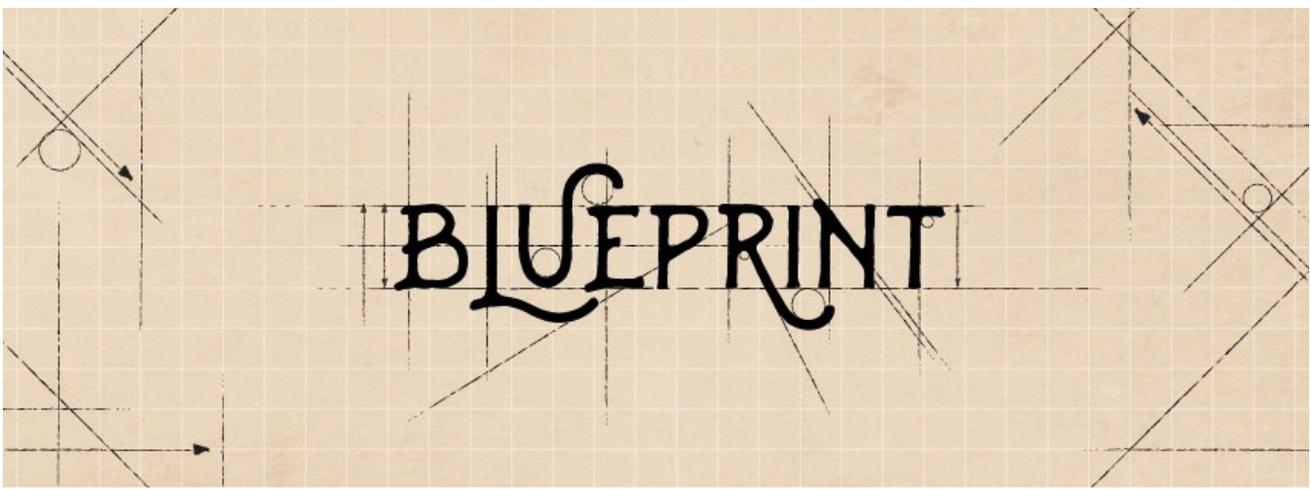
What does God think about diversity? The Bible tells us in [Revelation 7:9-10](#)

⁹ After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰ And they cried out in a loud voice:

Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.'

This is a picture of peace and beauty. People from EVERY nation, tribe and language gathered together to worship God. This is the beautiful mosaic we were talking about earlier. I think God loves diversity.

We live in a time where people are becoming increasingly divided. These divisions are leading to a lot of misunderstanding and even hatred between people. Wouldn't it be amazing if we as a community could demonstrate to the world just how beautiful it can be? Despite our differences, diversity can create a beautiful picture where God, the creator of all things, is glorified.



Opening Discussion Questions:

- What does the word 'diversity' make you think about?

How diverse is your group? Is everyone from your group similar or is it made up of a variety of people? If your group is quite diverse I think this is something that should be celebrated. If your group seems to be made up of people that are just like you, perhaps this would be a good chance to ask yourself and ask your group, why that is?

There may not be anything inherently wrong with people who are similar getting together; sometimes this is even good and necessary. For example, your group may be made up of 'new mums' who want to support each other.

However, we also need to make sure that we have not set up any boundaries within our group that are discriminatory in nature. Sometimes this can happen even when we didn't intend for it.

If your group is diverse, then you may already know that helping a diverse group of people to get along with each other can be very challenging. There may be some people in your group who have suffered in the past from hurtful cases of discrimination.

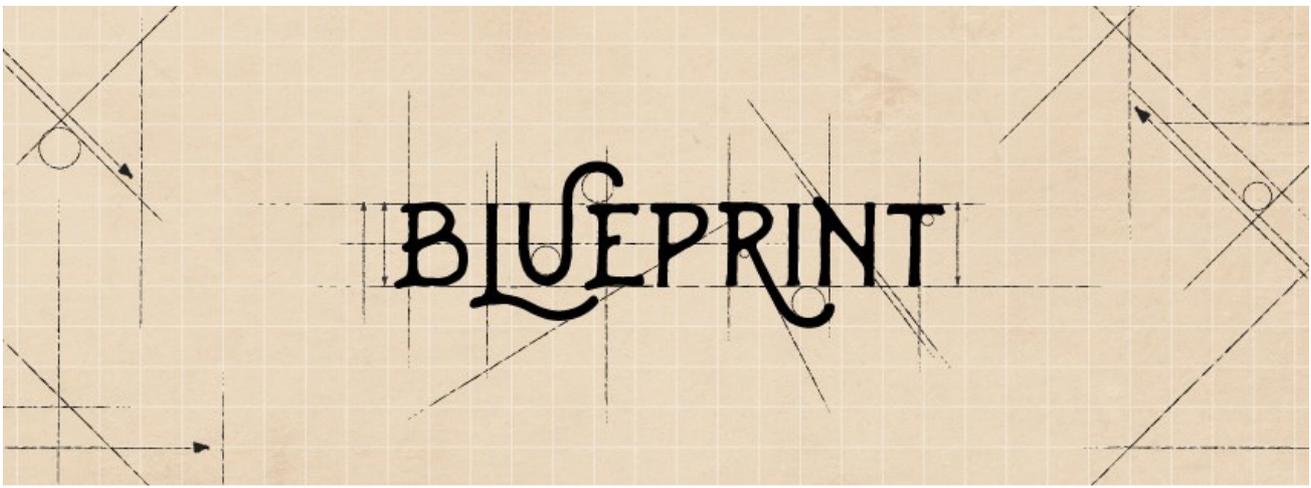
Either way, please be especially sensitive to the way God is leading and guiding this session. God's heart is always for the unity of His children, so our hearts should also be the same.

In his sermon, Pastor Andrew reminded us of how diverse the community of The Vine is. In case you missed the facts, here are a few statistics;

- Fifty-five different native language groups.
- Twenty-three percent of people are under twenty years old.
- Twenty different industries of work.
- A wide range of incomes levels, from less than five thousand per month (five percent of congregation) to more than one hundred thousand a month (ten percent of congregation)
- How well do you feel your group reflects the diversity of The Vine?
- Do you think your group is diverse enough?

When we come across people who are different from us, we can be afraid and send them away, or we can hold our arms wide open and be welcoming towards them.

- Be honest! How do you feel around people who are different from you?
- When have you felt like you were the one who was different and people were afraid of you?



With The Vine (and maybe even your group) being such a diverse community, one of the biggest threats we will face is disunity. These differences can cause us to stay apart from each other. However, diversity can be something that unifies us. We can learn to celebrate the differences in each other because this is in fact how God made us to be. We can have unity in diversity.

- What does the phrase 'unity in diversity' mean to you?
- Describe where have you seen 'unity in diversity' at work?

As Ps Andrew said, unity doesn't mean that everyone suddenly has the same opinion. It doesn't mean that we get rid of everything that makes us different from each other. It means working (hard) to discover how God wants to us to love each other despite our differences.

Let's remind ourselves of the theme verse for this series.

[Read Colossians 3:15-17](#)

¹⁵ Let the peace of Christ **rule** in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

If you have noticed, we have been focusing of different key words during this series. The word for this session is **RULE**.

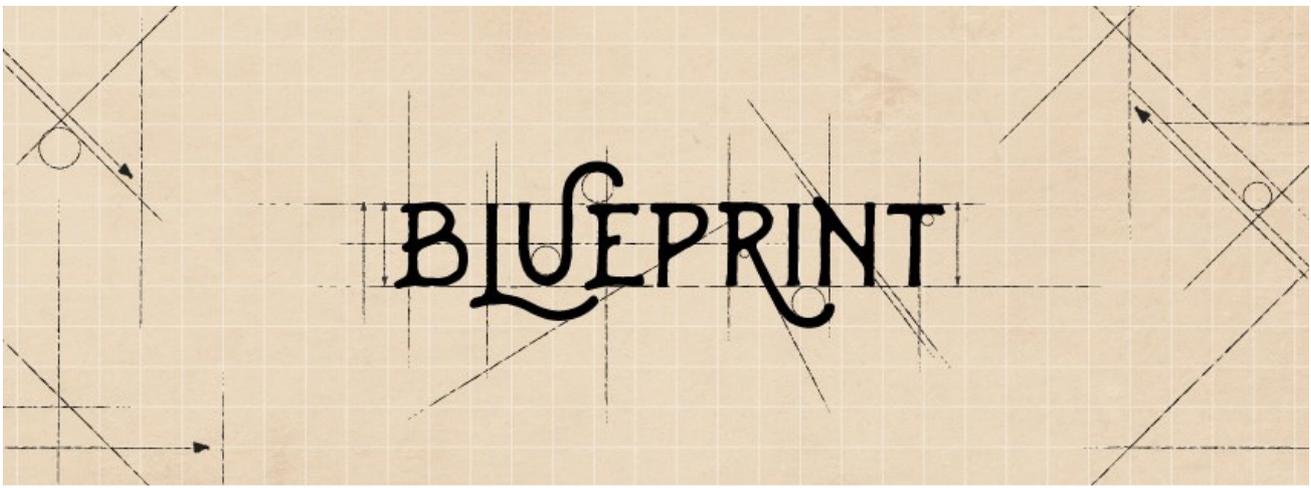
- What are some rules of life that you live by?

We might feel that rules can be constricting. When you were younger, you might have felt that rules were there to control and limit your freedom. But could you imagine a society with no rules whatsoever? There would be complete chaos!

In a diverse community, there needs to be a common bond that ties everyone together. The Colossian church that Paul was writing to was beginning to become fractured. False teachers had come in and people begun to follow them instead. Paul therefore is reminding them of what the truth is and how they are supposed to live.

Think now about The Vine and your own Community Group. We have mentioned some of the cultural differences that can keep us divided. But there are other things that can make us even more divided.

- What are some theological differences that can keep us divided?
- What are some stylistic differences that can divide our community?



Within the church and your group there will probably be a wide range of beliefs about many different things. A few examples of this could be:

- Do all Christians need to be baptised?
- Should we pray in tongues?
- How much money should you give to the church?

There may even be disagreements about the style of how we run a Sunday service, for example:

- We need to sing more songs
- We need to have longer sermons
- The music is too loud

The point of this session is **not** to start a theological debate or to argue about how to run a Sunday service. If the conversation starts heading that direction, steer it back to the main point. The main point is to highlight the differences in belief, but show people that the thing that binds us together is greater than these differences.

What Paul tells us in this passage is, the one thing that should RULE over all is “the peace of Christ.”

What is the peace of Christ? The peace of Christ is recognising that you were once a sinner, but now, through Jesus’ death and resurrection, you have been forgiven. The peace of Christ knows that you have been reconciled with God. The peace of Christ knows that for those who accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour, He will give them mercy and grace.

Remember Paul writes this letter not to an individual, but to the entire community. Let the [peace of Christ](#) rule in **y’alls** hearts!

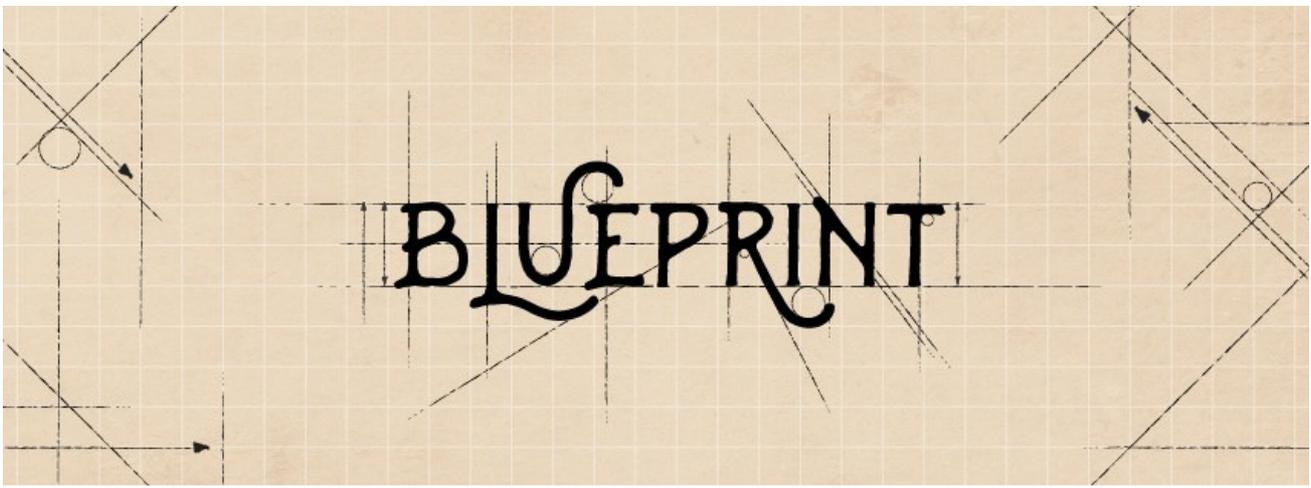
Can you see how this would transform and unify a community? If everyone approached each other with the peace of Christ in their hearts, there would be forgiveness, patience, compassion, kindness, humility and love.

This of course doesn’t mean that our opinions, preferences and beliefs are not important. What this means is that we can talk and even debate these issues in a good, healthy and respectable way, which doesn’t cause division.

We have a great opportunity here to model to the rest of the world how God wants us to live. As we look at the world around us we can see that there is a lot of division.

- Can you give some examples of where you have seen division destroying a community?
- How has disunity affected you personally?

Ps Andrew said this in his message:



“The reconciling work of Jesus does not just restore our broken relationship with God, it also restores our broken relationships with one another.”

Let’s end this session praying that the peace of Christ would rule in our hearts and through that, we can show the communities around us that there is a beautiful way that we can live where diversity is celebrated.

Have your group break off into pairs. Ask the pairs to make a list of three different areas in their lives where they are asking for peace. The pairs should then pray for each other in the different areas they listed.

GET INTERACTIVE

There could be many different tools you can use to highlight the main point of unity in diversity in this message. Try and incorporate an activity of some sort into this session. It should be an activity where people need to work/interact with each other.

Here are a few suggestions, but feel free to think about your own:

- Pot luck dinner: Have everyone prepare a dish from a different part of the world and have this session over a delicious feast! If you have the space, you could even turn this into a cooking lesson.
- Putting a puzzle together: Jigsaw puzzles are all uniquely different in the shapes and colours, but when you put them together, it forms a beautiful picture.
- Share a song in your own language: If your group has people who speak different languages why not ask them to teach the rest of the group how to sing a song in their language.

I hope you all really find that diversity is a beautiful gift from God and it is really something that we can celebrate!