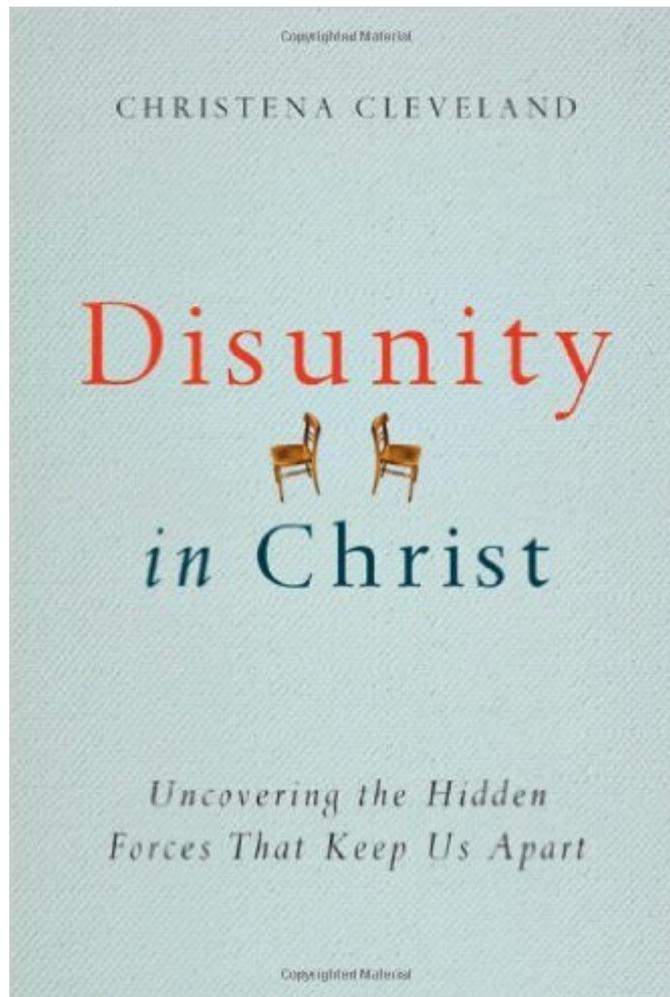


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# Disunity In Christ: Uncovering The Hidden Forces That Keep Us Apart



## Synopsis

Winner of a 2013 Leadership Journal Book Award ("Our Very Short List" in "The Leader's Outer Life" category) 2014 Readers' Choice Awards Honorable Mention Despite Jesus' prayer that all Christians "be one," divisions have been epidemic in the body of Christ from the beginning to the present. We cluster in theological groups, gender groups, age groups, ethnic groups, educational and economic groups. We criticize freely those who disagree with us, don't look like us, don't act like us and don't even like what we like. Though we may think we know why this happens, Christena Cleveland says we probably don't. In this eye-opening book, learn the hidden reasons behind conflict and divisions. Learn: Why I think all my friends are unique but those in other groups are all the same Why little differences often become big sources of conflict Why categorizing others is often automatic and helpful but can also have sinister side effects Why we are so often victims of groupthink and how we can avoid it Why women think men are judging them more negatively than men actually are, and vice versa Why choices of language can actually affect unity With a personal touch and the trained eye of a social psychologist, Cleveland brings to bear the latest studies and research on the unseen dynamics at work that tend to separate us from others. Learn why Christians who have a heart for unity have such a hard time actually uniting. The author provides real insight for ministry leaders who have attempted to build bridges across boundaries. Here are the tools we need to understand how we can overcome the hidden forces that divide us.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This book should be mandatory reading. In a day of binary oppositional language such as black/white, you're with us or against us, male female, sacred secular, private public - Cleveland seeks to explain the challenges humans face in truly appreciating and valuing differences. Cleveland systematically walks us through robust discussions on: \* Categorizing - and the resultant distortions \* Categorizing - and its affect on our interactions with others \* Group tendency towards identity and self esteem protection and the implications of this protection \* The role of bias in boosting self-esteem \* Cultural threats leading to hostile conflict \* How culture clouds our judgment Cleveland introduces the theoretical discussion in an accessible way and then supports her discussion with examples that most can relate to. No trite easy answers are provided. Instead, Cleveland recognized the difficulty: "The work of reconciliation is often excruciating. . . we must do the difficult work of addressing our biases and blind spots" (pp. 156, 157). She proposes Four elements as needed for "positive crosscultural interaction: 1) working toward a larger goal; 2) creating equal status; 3) engaging in personal interaction; and 4) providing leadership." (p. 158). Cleveland offers an explanation and an opportunity for us to individually and collectively reflect, understand our habitual ways of behaving, and possibilities for a positive way forward. A truly wonderful book! Critiques: I would have titled this Disunity and then scoped it as a case study using the Christian community as a lens from which to illustrate. My fear is that this worthwhile, informative read will be dismissed by some due to the words "in Christ."

I think about Christian unity a lot. I'm convinced that unity is one of the first implications of the Gospel though it is often the first implication to be overlooked, reduced, or explained away. As much as I'm theologically convinced about the priority of unity I'm even more convinced emotionally. Belonging to multi-ethnic congregations for the past five years and finding identity within a diverse community of Christians has been enough to convince my heart that unity is far more of a benefit than it is a goal. It's true that unity involves hard work but it is also a profound joy. The challenge and joy of Christian unity is tied up in our belief that unity involves those who are incredibly different than myself. Unity is Christian when the community is made up of diverse others, individuals who were once them but are now us. Most Christians in my experience are great with the idea of diverse unity. We believe our churches to be hospitable to all kinds of people regardless of a person's race, ethnicity, culture, history, etc. So why aren't our churches more diverse? The answers generally given to this question just barely acknowledge the real challenges to unity. Instead we default to cliches about cultural preferences and styles of worship. Experiencing the robust unity we read about in the New Testament requires setting aside simplistic answers and

acknowledging the real hurdles that keep us from experiencing the formational and joyful community that is meant to define us. Christena Cleveland has written a book that does exactly this. Professor Cleveland teaches social psychology at St Catherine University and is fluent in the norms and challenges facing churches that strive for diverse unity.

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