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SPIDER-MAN: INTO THE SPIDER-VERSE (2018) | *Connection Within Diversity* | BIBLE STUDY

Facilitator Note: We encourage facilitators to take this Bible study and expound on it throughout the week, allowing it to be a springboard for deeper conversation and personal meditation.

PRESS START

Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse swings in with an incredibly distinct animated look and a multitude of characters from across the often-strange histories of Spider-Man. It's likely the most unique take we have and will ever see of Spidey for some time.

Which of the Spider-Verse characters pulled into the movie did you like the most? With a seemingly limitless number of directions any potential sequel could go, are there other characters or ideas you'd like to see play out on-screen?

EQUIP

While the story of this film belongs mainly to young Miles Morales, the central conflict revolves around a bending of reality and the space-time continuum itself. That's a lot for any kid to handle, especially one who just got his own superpowers. He is joined by the spatially misplaced Peter B. Parker and Gwen Stacy for much of the film, as well as Spider-Man Noir, Peni Parker, and even Spider-Ham. Each of these characters had their own individual backstories related to us, the audience, and often, it was done at a rapid pace.

One thing that came across in these montages and also directly from the characters themselves is they have a lot in common with each other, even as they maintain their distinctions. This is a film where a teenager, middle-aged man, and an anthropomorphic pig have plenty of common ground. Their circumstances and source of their powers draws them together, and being brought together by means beyond their understanding also provides an opportunity to build relationships where it was impossible to think otherwise. All of this grants *Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse* an incredibly entertaining palette to work with, but if we look to the Bible, it can also give us an avenue into understanding how to better relate to our actual (or potential) church family that consists of a diverse group of people with different ages, backgrounds, and experiences.

LEVEL UP

The Bible doesn't leave us unprepared for the fact there are a variety of different types of people on this planet. By no means is this all, but we see some of this in these two verses:

Mark 10:6 (NKJV) *But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.'*

Genesis 11:9 (NKJV) *Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth.*

Men and women are different physiologically, yes, but mix those aspects with where a person was born, how they were raised, the languages they speak, opportunities (or lack thereof) natural to their upbringing, cultural traditions of their region/people groups, or even the time period they exist

in...well, you get the picture! There is a nearly limitless array of traits and influences that contribute in forming who a person is.

Now, it's easy to see there can be many things that seem to naturally separate us from others. We may even feel prone to shutting out those we perceive we have nothing in common with; worse yet, there are many who actively hurt and mistreat those who they see as different or somehow inferior. History inside and outside of the Biblical record shows how this plays out; while in our minds diversity could give us a reason to turn away from others, God can use diversity in powerful ways, and He achieves unity through Jesus Christ that cuts across the lines we draw up.

Ephesians 4:1-6 (NKJV) *I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

Galatians 3:26-28 (NKJV) *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

1 Corinthians 12:4-6 (NKJV) *There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all.*

That may be a lot to take in, but focusing in on each shows us a relationship with Jesus grants us common ground with our brothers and sisters in faith. It doesn't matter what our race, background, gender, or whatever else we want to make a big deal out of is. Jesus connects us, and amidst that connection, in the process of making us holier and better followers of Him, He utilizes those unique things that have always been there within us to reach others in unique and dynamic ways. Yes, we turn from sin and work through our issues individually, but we have a vast collection of people around us in the same boat as we are. They may look, talk, and act differently, but if we take the time, we can see how we are connected to them through Christ. That's the work of a powerful God, indeed, and He has a name: Jesus!

MOD

Over time, Miles has powers manifest that are different in comparison to the others he teams up with. It's likely we have traits that make us who we are and able to be used by Jesus.

Can you name any you currently know or that could potentially be areas for you to use for Jesus? Do you have any you recognize in another person joining you in the study?

Generational lines are blurred by the team in the film, and likely, your local church has a variety of ages and interests.

What are steps you can take to bring groups closer so people can work together in new and exciting ways?

Do you actively take time to step outside of your comfort zone and reach out to other believers that may initially seem different from you? Is that fairly difficult to do for you?

Many of the film's characters, hero and villain alike, make their choices for personal and understandable reasons. Conflicts often start between people lacking mutual understanding, so with that in mind, **do you see yourself as a person who tries to see other points-of-view?**

PRAY

Does anyone have any prayer needs outside of what we discussed here?

There is no limit to what God can do amongst His people, and yes, that group is a diverse collection of people with stories and experiences all their own. It even may seem like another believer exists in a world all their own, apart from yours, but if we slow down and take time to build relationships with fellow believers, we might be surprised at how much we have in common with others of a different gender, race, age, or background. Let us pray for God to open up new relationships in our lives with fellow believers; maybe they are current acquaintances or individuals we just met, but let's pray God will allow us to connect with other believers outside of our usual expectations.

THE NEXT LEVEL

John 17:20-23 (NKJV) *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who [j]will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*

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