

EPHESIANS 2:11-22

Two Made One: Breaking the Dividing Wall

Memory Verse

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Ephesians 2:13

Real-life Problems

In North American culture, loyalty is rewarded. But with loyalty often comes rivalry. We are loyal to our favorite sports team and, in turn, we secretly hope all others will lose. We are loyal to our school, and we will fight anyone who says theirs is better. In our loyalty, it is natural for us to create an "us versus them" mentality. We love dogs, so we hate cats. And we do this in many areas of our lives, even at church. We believe our way is the best way and we separate ourselves from those who do not agree. Yet, Christ did not come for one type of person. Instead, He came to unite all of us to Him.

The Good News

Through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, He not only preached peace, but made peace. Christ offered a way for all mankind to be brought into His family. He broke down the very thing that divided us and made us a new family in Him. God has made a way for all nations to be made one through Christ.

I. Introduction

OPENING QUESTIONS

Idea #1: If someone wrote a book about your life, what would the title be?

Idea #2: If you could experience any other culture in the world, what culture would you choose?

PRAY

Open your time together in prayer.

REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

What does gospel mean?

Good news

What's the good news?

Jesus died for my sins

Why did He die for your sins?

So that I can have abundant life in relationship with Him now and forever

What is grace?

God's love for undeserving sinners

REVIEW

1) What were the two reasons Paul wrote this letter?

1) To remind the church of the power of the gospel 2) To encourage believers to live in light of their new identity as the church

2) Who was the original audience of this letter?

The church, or followers of Jesus Christ, in Ephesus

3) Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

Paul was in prison for his work in spreading the gospel.

What's going on?

REMIND

In the previous passage, we were reminded of who we were without Christ. We were all once dead in our sins and followers of the world. Yet, because of God's love for us and in an act of grace to us, He has made us alive with Christ. Now, through Christ, those who have faith in Him are given a purpose.

TODAY WE'LL LEARN

- 1) Because of who we once were, we were without hope.
- 2) Because of who Christ is, we have peace.
- 3) Because of who we now are, we have a new identity.

Read

Read **Ephesians 2:11-22** aloud in your group.

II. Questions for Discussion

A. WHAT?

1) Can you list the five descriptions Paul gives in verse 12 about who we once were without Christ?

1) We were separated from Christ. 2) We were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel. 3) We were strangers of the covenants of promise. 4) We had no hope. 5) We were without God in the world.

2) This passage is similar to the passage right before it (2:1-10) in many ways. Can you identify some of the ways they are alike?

Paul first begins with reminding the Ephesians of who they once were without Christ (vv. 1-3, 11-12). He makes the turn to hope of the gospel with a "but" statement (vv. 4, 13). Paul then explains how Christ has changed everything for us and what that means for how we live (vv. 5-10, 14-22).

3) According to verse 13, what was it that brought near those who were far off from God?

The blood of Christ Jesus

4) Can you name the ways Christ made peace, according to verses 14-16?

1) He created one new man in place of the two. 2) He broke down the dividing wall of hostility. 3) He abolished the law of commandments expressed in the ordinances. 5) He reconciled us to God. 6) He killed the hostility.

5) According to verses 19-22, what physical images does Paul use to describe the new people of God?

1) Household of God 2) Holy temple 3) Dwelling place for God

6) According to verse 18, what do we now have access to through Christ?

The Spirit

B. SO WHAT?

1) Why would Paul spend time reminding the Ephesians of who they once were before Christ?

Paul is leveling the ground between the two people, the Jews and the gentiles. The Jews were those who had grown up in the faith. They had been a part of God's people since birth. The gentiles had not grown up in the faith, but they were now coming to faith because of Christ's sacrifice. The hostility came because the Jews often gave the gentiles expectations that God did not have for them. The Jews had forgotten that they too were once not a part of God's people, but were also brought in by God's grace. In order for them to remember what God has done for them, Paul needed to first remind the Jews of their own separation from God. It's only when we actually understand what we are saved from that we are truly amazed by grace.

2) Compare verses 12 and 19. What do you think Paul is communicating through these two parallel verses?

Paul is using verses 12 and 19 to show a clear picture of the transformation that has happened for God's people because of Christ's work on the cross. He uses the repeating images of strangers, aliens, and citizens to show that God has taken what we once were and restored it all through Christ.

3) What does it mean to say the household of God was "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets?"(v.20) Why is that an important foundation?

The apostles and the prophets were the people who taught others the Word of God and His promises (v. 12), and proclaimed the good news of the savior. Our identity as the children of God stands only because of God's faithfulness to His own Word that was given through these people. What the prophets and the apostles proclaimed was fulfilled in Christ (the cornerstone). The foundation they laid is what we stand on as God's people.

4) How did Christ create in Himself a "new man" in order to bring peace (vv. 15-16)?

It was through the sacrifice of one man, Christ Jesus, all men were reconciled to God. This means it was not our own bodies (or actions) that saved us. Only through the Christ's body does our salvation come. Our life is now found in His, the new and better life.

Family Resemblance

Watch from second 55 to minute 1:20: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwJWW6UKnIc&app=desktop>

In the movie *Remember the Titans*, two high school football teams are brought together as one when their schools decided to combine. Yet, these two teams come from different backgrounds and cultures that did not like each other at the time.

During their summer camp tryouts for the new team, even though the players all wanted the same thing, their deep-seeded distrust toward one another kept them from coming together as a team.

Yet, Coach Boone will not let the boys continue separating themselves, so he forced them to get to know one another. Through this, they learn that were not that different after all. And they realized their team was stronger together.

In this clip, we see Gary and Julius—who first fought to stay separate from each other—calling one another family.

This is a beautiful picture for us as the church. Christ has taken what was once many cultures and made us one family through Him. We are brothers and sisters not because of how we look, but because we share the same Father.

C. NOW WHAT?**1) As the household of God, we are family—brothers and sisters in Christ. How should being family change the way we interact with the church?**

Keep in mind that the word family will not mean the same thing to all of your students. This is an opportunity to help your students understand the term family in light of God as a good Father. Family is something that we do not choose, but that we belong to because we were born into it. If we see our church as family, then we will have a deeper sense of commitment and love.

2) What does this passage mean for us when we are upset or do not agree with a fellow Christian?**3) The temple and household of God is made up of people from all around the world—from all countries, cities, and languages. How does this change the way you worship with someone from another culture or church?**

Answers will vary. This question is trying to get at the heart of the global church. While there is deep value and beauty of the local church, do students consider Christians from other countries, cities, or churches with a "they" mentality or an "us" mentality. How does it change our mindset of worshiping in a different culture or language when we remember we are all part of one family?

Main takeaway

We were once without hope, but, because of Christ, we now have peace and a new identity as His people.

III. Closing

REMEMBERING THE GOOD NEWS

Through Christ's sacrifice on the cross, He not only preached peace, but made peace. Christ offered a way for all mankind to be brought into His family. He broke down the very thing that divided us, and made us a new family in Him. God has made a way for all nations to be made one through Christ.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

God, thank You for being a good father to Your children. Thank You for giving us a family in Your church. We ask that You would help us to remember our new identity as Your household and temple and allow that to change the way we live. Help us to love one another as family. In Christ's name. Amen.

Supporting resources

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1) How did your view of the church change after reading this passage?
- 2) In what ways can you start treating the members of your church more like family than friends?
- 3) How does this passage encourage or challenge you when you're angry with a fellow Christian?
- 4) How might your prayer life need to change?

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- 1) What challenged you most about this passage?
- 2) How do you feel when you think about all you once were before Christ? What about your new identity in Christ excites you?
- 3) Does the image of family change the way you think about the church? How might that look for us to treat the church as our family?