



## **Week Five: Unity in the Gospel** Building Community Rooted in Reconciliation

### **Problem & Solution: (for leaders)**

*\*Because of our generally self-serving nature, we hold grudges and bitterness toward one another causing disunity and hostility in the body of Christ. We dislike those who are different from ourselves and prefer comfort to unity. – In the gospel we not only have reconciliation with God, but an invitation to be a part of his people, his community. In that community there is unity because all have been saved by grace through faith in Christ and are therefore reconciled both to God and one another. True gospel community is rooted in grace, values honesty, and strives for unity.*

### **Introduction:**

Can you think of a time in your life when you felt like an outsider? How would you describe that experience? [Examples might include being cut from an athletic team or not included in a social group.]

**The Biblical Text:** Ephesians 2:11-22

### **Made near to God in Christ (read verses 11-13):**

\*From these verses and what you might know already, how would you describe the relationship between the “circumcised” Jews and “uncircumcised” Gentiles? [*The Jews and Gentiles were opposed to one another; they were separated by racial, religious, cultural and social barriers. Gentiles were any non-Jewish person.*]

\*What does Paul say was true of the Gentiles before they came to know Christ and after they came to know Christ?

\*Why might it be important to remember that we were far from God at one time?

### **Made peace with His people in Christ (read verses 14-18):**

\*How did hostility end and peace brought between the Jews and Gentiles?

\*What barriers have you allowed to remain between yourself and other Christians?

\*What are ways that your life could reflect that Christ destroyed all barriers between believers?

### **Made a dwelling of God in Christ (read verses 19-22):**

\*What are some of the images that God uses to describe this new entity encompassing Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians? [*Gentiles are not only citizens of God’s community. They are even members “of God’s household” - i.e.- family members. Paul also describes them as stones of a temple in which God lives.*]

\*Paul concludes this section by turning the household (19) into the temple of God (22). Where are the believers in that temple and where are the apostles? Where is Christ?

[*Believers fit together and make up the walls. Apostles serve as the foundation, and Christ is the cornerstone. The cornerstone is the perfectly cut stone from which the foundation and all other stones are measured.*]

### **Conclusion:**

\*How does this passage make you personally respond to believers of different cultures?

\*As a member of God’s household, you have lots of brothers and sisters. What would a church (a community of Christians) look like that was truly living out the vision of this passage?

\*Is there anyone with whom you need to reconcile? What would keep you from doing so? ourselves daily?

# G o i n g      D e e p e r

## **Additional Discussion Questions:**

\*Is there anyone with whom you need to reconcile? What would keep you from doing so?

\*What are a few implications of this passage for how Christians of different races relate?

\*This passage clearly addresses cultural pride. When is cultural pride appropriate and when is it not? Can you name a few examples? In what ways have you experienced the positive or negative effects of cultural pride?

*[Cultural pride is any pride associated with a group of people. Examples of appropriate cultural pride might include a favorite football team or school tradition. That pride can become inappropriate though, if it demeans others. One example of clearly inappropriate pride is racism.]*

\*Have you ever been ticked off by or bitter toward your Bible study, your church, CRU, or Christians as a whole? How do these verses speak to this? How has having a grudge or bitterness affected your connectedness to the body of Christ?

## **Cross-Referencing**

\*In verse 15 Paul mentioned the Old Testament Law. Have someone read Romans 2:11-12 and 8:1-4. What do you learn about that Law and the work of Christ? *[The Old Testament Law had two purposes. It brought great blessings to Israel, but it also brought judgment because it exposed their sin. No-one besides Christ has ever fulfilled the law completely. Through the cross, Christ paid the debt for all of our transgressions.]*

\*In verse 13 Paul mentions the blood of Christ. Look up Hebrews 9:22, 10:3-4, and 10:10. What do you learn from those passages about the blood of Christ? *[Hebrews 9:22 reminds us that God has always required blood as payment for sin. Hebrews 10:4 shows us that Old Testament sacrifices served as reminders of sin. They anticipated the sacrifice of Christ. Hebrews 10:10 shows us that Christ's death is the final and complete payment for sin, ]*

## **Getting Artsy**

\*If you were to take a pen and paper and draw a picture based on these verses, what are some possible components of it? *[Background: Apostles witnessed the resurrected Jesus and carried His message, for example Jesus' disciples and Paul. Prophets were primarily New Testament teachers of Jesus, in addition to foretellers of God's purposes. In ancient buildings, cornerstones were foundation stones; they were the load-bearing stones and determined the lines/ shape of the structure. This cornerstone picture is applied here to Jesus, as in Isaiah 28:16, Matthew 21:42, 1 Peter 2:4-7. From Jesus, the foundation and the rest of the building is constructed.]'*

## **How do other's teach this text?**

\*Check out this sermon transcript from John Stott on the text:

<http://thegospelcoalition.org/resources/a/Gods-New-Society>

or just check the Resource Library at [www.thegospelcoalition.org](http://www.thegospelcoalition.org) and search by passage if you don't want to type in the whole address.