

That all of them may be ONE

ONENESS GUIDE #5

TOWARD ONENESS

October 10, 2010

Ephesians 2:11-22

DESTINED FOR UNITY...
WITH GOD
In Jesus Christ Our Lord
WITH EACH OTHER
In The Church
WITH EACH OTHER
In Our Family

Unity: Practical Help Toward Oneness II

*...that all of them may be one,
Father, just as you are in me and
I am in you. May they also be in
us so that the world may believe
that you have sent me.*

- Jesus (John 17:21)

EPHESIANS 2:11-22

ONE IN CHRIST

2 ¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)— ¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their



Ephesians 2:11-22 - A new and shared identity in the shadow of the cross

Ephesians 2:11-22:1-17 (continued)

hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.



Ephesus and Other Key 1st-Century Mediterranean Cities

Self Study in Oneness for Week Five

YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH. - PSALM 119:105

Day **Look:** Read Ephesians 2:11-22 (especially v.11) & Acts 19-20

- 1 Ask:**
1. What two types of people does Paul refer to here? How are these two groups different from one another? (v. 11-12)
 2. What physical mark does Paul mention that showed one group as different from the other? Whose idea was this symbolic "sign of the covenant" (see Genesis 17)?
 3. How does Paul seem to feel about this physical mark done "by the hands of men" that gives one group a sense of religious pride over and against the other?
 4. How important is this sign now? Does it keep these people apart any longer? Why not? How has this "old covenant" been changed by Jesus?

Meditate: What are some claims that people make about themselves to say they are "better" or "higher" or "more important" or "more blessed" than others? What kinds of claims do Christian groups make to say they are "better" etc. than others? How are such claims like the old sign of circumcision? How do they work against the oneness Christ brings?

Pray: *Each day* - Thank Jesus for making you a part of His Eternal Family through His "law-abolishing" sacrifice? Confess the ways you think and behave as though you could save yourself through your own good behavior and good work. Thank God for His Word & ask Him to help you understand & apply it this week.

Today - Pray for God's help to see that just as it is Jesus alone (and not our right beliefs or good works or privileged births) that saves us, so it is Jesus who is bringing us together as His wall-breaking family.

Day 2 **Look:** Read Ephesians 2:11-22 (esp. vv.11-13)

Ask: 1. How would you summarize this passage?

2. What are the five liabilities that once characterized the Gentiles? (v. 12) What does each mean?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.
- e.

3. How did Jesus change this? Where are the Gentiles now? (v.13)

Meditate: Think about the situation people are in without Christ. How far has Christ brought you? How grateful are you?

Pray: *Today* - Pray something like this - *"Jesus, before You came into my life I was..... but now, with You, I am..... Thank You."*

Day 3 **Look:** Read Ephesians 2:11-22 (esp. vv.14-18)

Ask: 1. If Jews are the "chosen people" of God, what does that make Gentiles? What has Jesus done with these two groups through His death and resurrection? (v.15)

2. How is the relationship between Jews and Gentiles made different by Jesus? (vv. 14, 17-18)

Meditate: If Jesus brought back together two groups separated by God's choice (Jews & Gentiles), what keeps Him from uniting groups of people separated by the choices of men? What does it mean that "He Himself is our peace?"

Pray: *Today* - Think about people from whom you are distant and divided, people you dislike or disagree with? Now pray something like this - *"Jesus, before You came into their lives they were..... but now, with You, they are..... Thank You"* or else *"Jesus, without You in their life they are..... but if they would trust in You they would be..... Help them."*

Day 4 **Look:** Read Ephesians 2:11-22 (esp. vv.15-16)

Ask: 1. What do these things that Jesus accomplished on the cross mean to you?

- a. Abolishing the Law
- b. Creating One New People
- c. Reconciling Both of Them to God
- d. Putting to Death Their Hostility

Meditate: Which of the above phrases means the most to you? Why?

Pray: *Today* - Name the things you understand Jesus accomplished for you on the Cross. Thank Him for each one.

Day 5 **Look:** Read Ephesians 2:11-22 (esp. vv.19-22) and Revelation 1:9-2:7

Ask: 1. Paul says the Gentiles are no longer "foreigners and aliens" but "fellow citizens." What does this mean to you?

2. He says they are "members of God's household." What does this mean?

3. He likens them now to a "dwelling" where "God lives by His Spirit" that is like His "temple." What does this mean?

Meditate: How do these phrases encourage you to work with God toward unity with others?

Pray: *Today* - Pray for God's help to see how your faith in Christ makes the above phrases true for you.



Notes

Ephesus was the most important city of the Roman province of Asia (what is now the country of Turkey). With its fine harbor on the Cayster River and its location at the end of the Asiatic caravan route, Ephesus was a major trade center of the Roman Empire. The city featured a magnificent column-lined road through its center and along its paved streets one would find a grand theater, public baths, a library and a magnificent agora (marketplace), but its great claim to fame was its temple. The Temple of Artemis (Latin “Diana”) was the largest building in the Greek world and one of the Seven Wonders of the World (until its destruction by the Goths in AD 263). It housed the “image of the goddess which had fallen from the sky” (many believe this was a meteorite). With this and its other two temples, Ephesus was also an acclaimed religious center given the title “*neokoros*” (temple warden of the emperors) because of its promotion of emperor worship. The city also had a large Jewish community which enjoyed some measure of privilege under Roman rule. Paul visited Ephesus briefly during his 2nd Missionary Journey (Acts 18:18ff), left his friends Aquila & Priscilla there, and then made a nearly three year stop there on his 3rd Missionary Journey. Paul’s effective and volatile ministry in Ephesus, where the conflicts between the new life in Christ and the old life of the Jews and between the freeing truth of Jesus and the enslaving deceptions of the city’s revered false gods (like “The Great Artemis of the Ephesians”), is chronicled in Acts 19 and 20. Upon his departure, Paul left Timothy to guide the Ephesian church (1 Timothy 1:3), and later the Apostle John made this place his home and headquarters as did, according to tradition, Mary the mother of Jesus. In the Book of Revelation, Ephesus is the first of the Seven Churches to whom John is instructed to write (Revelation 2:1 ff.), and they are praised for their faithfulness but also warned that they have “forsaken their first love” (Rev. 2:4).

The Ephesian Letter is called “The Queen of the Epistles” by Bible Scholar William Barclay. It offers a majestic and comprehensive presentation of the deep truths and important implications of the Christian Faith as it proclaims the reconciling work of God in Christ which makes all peoples on earth part of the same family, disarms every hostile cosmic power and creates nothing less than a new humanity in a new and eternal relationship with the Living God.

Because Ephesians is written in a style uniquely impersonal among the letters of Paul, featuring no personal greetings or appeals to shared experiences, it is generally agreed that it is a “circular letter” directed not merely to the Ephesian believers but to all the churches in the region who are to read it, absorb it, and then pass it on. It was written when Paul was (again) in prison, and the letters of Colossians and Philemon were produced at about the same time. Ephesians is divided into two main sections. Chapters 1-3 present the Theological Foundations of the Christian Faith and then Chapters 4-6 offer the Ethical Implications and Practical Directions for Right Living.

Ephesians 2:11-22 focuses on the new unity all people have with each other after vv. 1-10 have proclaimed the new life we have in a new unity with Jesus by God’s grace.



Small Group Guide

Hearing About Us - 1. What country did your ancestors come from? How important has this national or cultural identity been to your family? 2. At your High School, how did people get into the “in” group? the “out” group?

Heeding God’s Word - 1. What was the problem for the Gentiles? How did Jesus change their situation? 2. What seems to be the problem for the “circumcised” Jews? How could Jesus change their perspective? 3. How do you see the claims Christians make (about themselves and/or about Jesus) helping or hindering unity among people? 4. As time permits share what you learned and experienced in your personal Bible Study this week.

Helping One Another in Prayer to God - Share prayer requests among group members. Decide who will start and who will end your prayer time and then pray silently or out loud for one another as members are willing and able to do so.