



Week 3: Who We Are (Eph. 2:11-22)

This guide, as well as all the guides to follow, will prepare you for the text to be preached the upcoming Sunday.

Monday: The Big Picture—What is happening in this passage? (10/5)

Pray to begin this intentional time with the Lord.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, grow in me Your heart's desire for reconciliation—not only between You and humankind but also between all people, of every ethnicity.

Read Ephesians 2:11-22.

Where Have We Been?

Ephesians 1 reveals that salvation consists of multiple blessings, all of which were given at the beginning of time in order to bring God glory through Christ Jesus. The blessings come to believers through their union with Christ, experienced through faith, which is a gift from God. **Ephesians 2:1–10** explains that believers have no cause for boasting in this process because they were wrath-bound sinners who had no inclination toward God. It was God alone who interrupted our dead lives by giving the gift of grace through Jesus Christ, making us alive with Him.

Where Are We Headed?

This week, in **Ephesians 2:11–22**, Paul shows how this work of Christ creates one united identity among believers, foreshadowing the fullness of the union believers will share with God and one another for all of eternity. This passage explains *reconciliation* and its implications for the common identity of Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ for the present and future ages.

Read through **Ephesians 2:11-21** again. Make note of words and concepts that seem important or stand out to you.

Listen to **this four-minute message** from Tim from The Bible Project, where he shares more background on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles, why this new way of living was so countercultural then, and how Christ might be calling us to live this out in these divisive times.

Tuesday: Reflection and Discussion (10/6)

Pray to begin this intentional time with the Lord.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, grow in me Your heart's desire for reconciliation—not only between You and humankind but also between all people, of every ethnicity.

Read through the complete passage for this week's study, **Ephesians 2:11–22**. Then review the following questions concerning this section of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus and write notes on them.

Remembering Separation (Eph. 2:11–13)

1. The transition word “Therefore” indicates that *on the basis of God's gracious work* (Eph. 2:1–10), Paul is exhorting the Gentile believers in Ephesus to remember the depth of their separation from God. What is the significance of the references to Old Testament ideas like “uncircumcised” and “excluded from citizenship”?
2. In Christ's work of salvation, unbelieving Gentiles have been “brought near” to those who were circumcised “in the flesh by hands” (e.g., Israel). What is one effect the death of Christ had on the ethnic relations of Jews and Gentiles?
3. In what sense(s) were Gentiles “far off”? In what sense(s) are they now “near”?

Taking it Personally

Whether you are ethnically Jew or Gentile, we all at one time were far from God. List ways that God has “brought you near” to Himself. How has your life changed because of Christ’s blood?

Wednesday Reflection and Discussion (10/7)

Pray to begin this intentional time with the Lord.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, grow in me Your heart’s desire for reconciliation—not only between You and humankind but also between all people, of every ethnicity.

Today we will look in depth at **Ephesians 2:14-18**

First, **read** through Ephesians 2:11-22 again for context.

Christ Made Peace (**Eph. 2:14–18**)

Definition: Peace

In modern use, the absence of tension or conflict. In biblical use, a condition of well-being or wholeness that God grants his people, which also results in harmony with God and others.

1. In **Ephesians 2:14**, “in his flesh” is a reference to the death of Christ on the cross. By dying on the cross, Christ achieved peace between Jews and Gentiles and so removed the source of their hostility with one another. What was the source of this hostility, and what does it mean for it to be abolished? In what sense are Jewish and Gentile believers “one new humanity”?

Thursday: Reflection and Discussion (10/8)

Pray to begin this intentional time with the Lord.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, grow in me Your heart's desire for reconciliation—not only between You and humankind but also between all people, of every ethnicity.

Read Through Ephesians 2:11-22 for context.

The Church as God's Temple (Eph. 2:19–22)

1. Christ's work of peace removes the believing Gentiles' status as "strangers and aliens." When Paul includes the Jewish believers in the new status of "no longer strangers and aliens," what does he reveal about the spiritual status of those who had the "covenants of promise"?
2. The Ephesians' secular citizenship provided them with the responsibilities, rights, and benefits of the Roman city. Paul borrows this political language to describe the church as a new community formed by Christ—as a new citizenry and a new household. How does the language of **Ephesians 2:19** emphasize the corporate nature of this new community? What does such language intend to communicate about relationships between members of the body of Christ?
3. What would Jewish and Gentile believers in Ephesus have understood about the gospel's effect on race relationships, nationalism, and individualism?

Friday: Personal Implications (10/9)

Pray to begin this intentional time with the Lord.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, grow in me Your heart's desire for reconciliation—not only between You and humankind but also between all people, of every ethnicity.

Read through **Ephesians 2:11-22** one final time this week.

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he speaks to Jews and non-Jews, two groups that were formerly divided by so many factors it truly would have taken an act of God to unite them. In the first three chapters, Paul teaches about the great measures God took in order to make these two groups into one new humanity in Jesus. Then in the last three chapters, Paul shows them how Jesus' unifying work should impact every relationship and aspect of their lives.

In this week's Reflection Guide we have looked at Paul's letter, specifically chapter 2, where we see the Christian church in Ephesus—a diverse group of Jews and non-Jews from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. The Ephesians didn't have much in common, yet Paul is very clear that in the family of God, all are equal recipients of God's grace through Jesus. Societies have always categorized people into different hierarchies of value, but Jesus came to create a new humanity that is unified across all dividing lines.

Before you answer the questions below, re-listen to **the video** you listened to on Monday now that you have personally studied Ephesians 2.

Answer the Questions Below:

1. What does it mean to be a new unified humanity in a culture where followers of Jesus can be found on both sides of many controversial issues? How can our allegiance to Jesus compel us to have patient and meaningful dialogue with those whose views differ from our own?
2. Reread Ephesians 1:9-10 and 2:11-22 and note all the words that communicate unity (*both, all, together, etc...*).
3. What are two groups in your community that disagree with one another about a current issue? Growth in Jesus requires speaking the truth in love (see Ephesians 4:15). What happens in these groups when truth is not spoken in love or when love is spoken without truth?

