



Going Deeper Questions

- Week Five -

Before you begin, read our scripture for the week out loud: Ephesians 2:11-22.

1. In this section, Paul is addressing a problem that existed in the early church. Some of those who have come to follow Christ were from a Jewish background, they have always known they were God's chosen people, and they already had a covenant relationship with God. They have simply accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Others were Gentiles. They are new to everything and wrestled to understand how their faith in Christ relates to the covenant and promises in the Old Testament and struggled to see themselves as God's chosen people. Paul addresses this by saying, **Ephesians 2:11-13 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands) - 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 by the blood of Christ.** Verse 12 and 13 remind us of where we were before Christ and where we are now in Christ. Do you remember being without hope and without God? What do you think it means to be brought near?

2. Please read **Ephesians 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.** Paul now describes the solution for the tension and division between the Jewish and Gentile believers: Christ has destroyed the barrier. It applies in our day as well; between Christians, all racial and ethnic barriers have been removed. Nothing should separate us from each other. Do you see that? What do you think about these four verses?

What we have instead of hostility is peace. Not only did Jesus come and **preach peace**, Paul says, "**he himself is our peace.**" We know peace in this case is describing peace between two groups of people. But Jesus also provides us with a deep inner peace. Discuss a time when you needed the peace of God and you received it. Is this a common occurrence for you?



3. Verse 18 reminds us of a timeless truth in **Ephesians 2:18: For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.** Paul is saying unity comes as we realize all of us, despite background or ethnicity, are in a relationship with Christ, and we all have access to God the Father through the Holy Spirit. Also, note how Paul beautifully weaves all three members of the trinity into this verse. What do you think it means that we have access to God? How often do you utilize this access and approach God with confidence and expectation? How might it change your relationship with God if you really believed this verse and began approaching God confidently sharing your needs and casting your cares on Him knowing he cares for you?

4. Paul ends this section by saying in **Ephesians 2:19: Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his 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.** In this amazing section, Paul weaves together three metaphors that remind us we are included and part of something amazing. We are fellow citizens in God's kingdom and part of the family of God. The third metaphor is about a new temple. This new temple is built with Jesus as the cornerstone and on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, but then it rises as all the believers of all time are, as Paul says, built together. So, in effect, you are a stone in this temple. Just below you are those who influenced you and helped you grow. There will also be stones built on top of you. That means you are called to influence and support the next generation of believers. In the lobby of our church, there is a stone with our church's vision on it: building generations for Jesus Christ, and then these verses are referenced. We exist to build generations for Christ, that next group of stones that will be built on top of us in this new temple. Who specifically are you influencing and helping grow in Christ? Do you feel good about these relationships, or do they need to become more intentional? Does it enrich your life to influence others for Christ? What action should you take based on this study?