



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Eph. 2:14-19

1. Humanity Apart from Christ

- a. All created from Adam, but divided due to the fall
- b. Divided, separated (Eph. 2:11-12)
 - a. by ethnicity, culture, race, tribe, language, economic & social classes, politics, religion, theology, personality...
 - b. by our fallen nature we divide from each other
- c. Hostile – toward each other & God – easy to criticize, put down, feel superior
- d. Yet longing for peace according to creation

2. A New Humanity in Christ (Eph. 2:14-15; Rev. 5:9-10)

- a. Based on the Mission of God
 - a. Relationship within the Trinity–Fellowship, harmony, mutuality, absence of self interest
 - b. “The mission of God...is to bring people from the realm of sin, death, & alienation...governed by anti-God powers into the realm of forgiveness, resurrection life, & peace ruled by Jesus...Messiah & Lord.” [Gorman, Apostle, p 592]
- b. The new humanity ('new man') displays the same relationship
 - a. “The gospel is good news for men & women individually, but...the purpose if [it] all [is] that there should be a Church...The church is part & parcel of the economy...The coming-to-be of the church is an event in the drama of redemption. The sending of the Spirit at Pentecost to create the church is [a] key divine mission. Something new happens 'in Christ' through Pentecost. [In Eph. 2:12-15] we see...that the whole purpose of the cross was not only to reconcile sinners to God, but also to create a new humanity. The church is...a living demonstration of what is in Christ.” [Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Theology & the Mirror of Scripture*, pp. 75-76]
 - b. “The reconciliation of the world to God, begun at the cross, is being continued in the church, & particularly in the making of peace between Jew & Gentile [Eph. 2:14-18]. The mission of the church is to participate, along with the apostle Paul, & with the Spirit's help, in Christ's ministry of reconciliation. The mission of the church is to join in the triune mission.” [Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, p. 72]
- c. Made up of diverse people Rev. 5:9-10

- a. "They sang a new song: You are worthy...because you were slaughtered, & you purchased people for God by your blood from every tribe and language and people and nation. You made them a kingdom & priests to our God, & they will reign on the earth." (Rev. 5:9-10)
 - d. Christ himself is their peace (Eph. 2:14)
 - a. "Christ is our peace, our shalom [Heb.]. He is God's peace in person—in the flesh. He...is the one who restores right relations between people & God, [&] among peoples." [Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, p. 193]
 - b. he himself is our peace. Christ not only brings peace & reconciliation but is the embodiment & personification of peace (Is. 9:6; Mic. 5:5). The focus here is the peace between Jewish & Gentile believers ("2 groups"); however Eph. 2:16-18 shows...the 'vertical peace' that believers have with God is foundational for this 'horizontal peace.' This 'horizontal peace' isn't just the absence of hostility; it involves mutual acceptance & love [NIV Zondervan St. Bible]
 - e. Unity in diversity—Differences not eliminated, but transcended 'in Christ'
 - a. "Paul uses 'in Christ' to mark the identity of...members of the new [Jesus] community...In Paul's teaching people... 'in Christ' had the same identity that transcended ethnic, status, economic & gender differences...[Their] new...identity did not erase...status differences of people, but...people were to relate to each other according to [their common] overarching status...'in Christ.'" [A. Sue Russell, *In the World but Not of the World*, pp. 146-147]
 - b. "The Spirit is the common possession of all Christ's followers & the common identity marker for the new [Jesus] community in which...barriers were eliminated...Only in the Spirit is it possible to dismantle national, and social barriers, group interests, caste systems & domination of one sex over another...The people of God, the church as [Christ's] Body, is a social reality. Paul used several analogies based on their common...identity...'in Christ' & being marked by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate the unity & solidarity that transcended but did not eliminate ethnic, social, economic, & gender differences, including Body, sibling [God's family/household] & Temple." [A. Sue Russell, "Gal. 3:28 Beyond Status & Role," in D. L. Matson (ed.) *One in Christ Jesus: Essays*, pp. 10-11]
 - f. This new humanity – God's masterpiece (Eph. 2:10)
 - a. "We are God's masterpiece, created in the Messiah Jesus to perform good actions that God prepared long ago."
 - b. "A masterpiece is 'an outstanding piece of artistry or workmanship; a person's best work.' The church is the best work of 3 persons: Father, Son & Holy Spirit. It is a triune masterpiece, an outstanding piece of creative artistry. 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works'." [K. J. Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, p. 457]
3. Removing Hostility Through the Cross (Eph 2:16)
- a. Reconciling both to God
 - b. In one body, one unit/entity
 - c. The cross put hostility to death
 - a. Distinctions between Jews & non-Jews produced hostility
 - b. Distinctions: circumcision, Sabbath, festivals, diet, physical separation in eating Reconcile: Bring 2 estranged parties into a peaceful relationship (Col. 1:22). Christ not only reconciles Jewish & Gentile believers 'in one body' (the church), he also reconciles 'both of them to God.' The cross destroys not only the 'hostility' between Jewish & Gentile believers but also...between humanity & God. NIV Zondervan Study Bible setting aside...the law. Christ sets aside the old covenant with its Mosaic law & replaces it with a new covenant for all believers. Consequently, Moses' law cannot serve as a barrier between Jewish & Gentile believers. Although new covenant believers are not under Moses' law, they are under 'Christ's law' (1 Cor. 9:21). NIV Zondervan Study Bible
4. Proclaiming Peace (Eph. 2:17)
- a. Peace with God & peace with all people – evidence of our peace with God is our peace with others
 - b. The gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15)
 - c. The current situation
 - a. "For many Christian congregations today it is not altogether evident that persons from different ethnic, linguistic, cultural & economic backgrounds are being united in the bond of Christian fellowship by common access to the Father in & through the Holy Spirit." [James L. Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, V.2, 2nded., p. 200]
 - d. Our challenge –to Preach & display this gospel
 - a. "[We] face, quite urgently, the questions which Paul [views] as a major priority. If our churches are still divided in any way along racial or cultural lines, he would say that our gospel, our very grasp of the meaning of Jesus' death, is called into question. How long will it be before those who claim to follow Jesus, not least those who claim also to love Paul's thinking, come to terms with the demands he actually makes? [Tom Wright, *Paul for Everyone*, p. 29]
 - b. When we turn from the ideal portrayed in Scripture to the concrete realities experienced in the church today, it is very different & a very tragic story. For even in the church there is often alienation, disunity & discord. Now Christians erect new barriers in place of the old which Christ has demolished: now racism; now personal animosities engineered by

pride, prejudice, jealousy & the unforgiving spirit; now a divisive system of caste or class; now a separation of clergy from laity, as if they were separate breeds of human being, and now a denominationalism, which turns churches into sect & contradicts the unity of Christ's church." [John Stott, Ephesians: Building a Community in Christ, p. 26]

5. Reconciling Peace produces new Identities & new Relationships (Eph. 2:18-19)

- a. "Through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So, then, you are no longer foreigners & strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, & members of God's household." (Eph. 2:18-19)
- b. New Identities—No longer 'Aliens, Strangers, Gentiles;' but God's Kingdom-Citizens & Family-Members
 - a. "I say... & testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thoughts." (E 4:17)
 - b. "Paul can speak of non-Jewish Christ-believing readers as 'formerly [the Gentiles, Greek:] ta ethne' or 'no longer [Gentiles]' (1 Cor. 5:1; 12:2)...Note Eph. 4:17: 'You should no longer walk [live] as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thoughts. They...' The [readers] could once have been called ethne ['Gentiles'], but are no longer labeled simply as ['Gentiles']...[In] Ephesians 4:17 ['the Gentiles'—'they'] live in a certain futile way, but the [readers—'You'] are no longer ['Gentiles'], no longer 'outsiders' to [God's] community, & so must not live this way...[There's been] a transfer... from outsider to insider such that while they had been ['the Gentiles'], they are no longer...They are 'no longer Gentiles,' but have now taken on a new identity." [P. Trebilco, Outsider Designations...in...NT, pp. 158-160]
- c. Both have access in one spirit to the Father (Eph. 2:18)
- d. Accepted into God's kingdom equally & together
 - a. Ephesians "narrat[es]...how God has acted powerfully to call into being a new people—the church—and how that renewed people are to embody the reality of the kingdom of God." [Tim. Gombis, Paul: Guide for Perplexed, p. 37]
 - a. Fellow citizens
 - b. Gospel is to go to all nations, overcoming racial-, ethnic-, tribal-, language-, national-, economic-barriers, etc.
 - c. Bible most translated book, to overcome language barrier
- e. Members of God's family, God's household
 - a. Relationships as sisters & brothers
 - b. The church as sisters & brothers in God's family
 - a. "The local church...is the reality of the new creation in the midst of the old [creation]. The church...is now the house where God lives, & where God's will is done. The church is the God-ordained means of realizing his plan to 'unite all things in Christ' (Eph. 1:10) & thus create 'God's dwelling in the Spirit' (Eph. 2:22). Far from being an accident or appendix to God's plan of salvation...the church is at its apex. It is through the church that 'God's multi-faceted wisdom [is] made known...to the rulers & authorities in the heavens...according to his eternal purpose' (Eph. 3:10-11)." [K. J. Vanhoozer, D. J. Treier, Theology & the Mirror of Scripture, p. 77]