

Jesus and the New Community of God

September 24, 2023 ▪ Brad Manley

Apart from Jesus we live in _____. (11-12)

In Jesus we experience _____ into the new community of God. (13-22)

Ephesians 2:11-22

¹¹ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵ by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. ¹⁷ And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²² In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (ESV)

Personal Reflection or Group Discussion Questions

Open: What things make it difficult to relate to other Christians who are unlike you?

Read and Discuss: Ephesians 2:11-22.

1. Verses 11 and 12 describe the spiritual condition of these Ephesian Gentiles (people who are not Jewish) before they became followers of Jesus. How might you attempt to communicate these truths to someone with whom you were sharing the gospel? Why would you say it is important to understand who we are apart from Christ?
2. Beginning at verse 13, Paul delineates the “now” condition of these Ephesian believers. How does verse 19 contrast with verse 12? Paul uses descriptors such as “strangers” and “aliens” versus “citizens” and “members” to describe their change in status. Are there any similar illustrations that you think could be helpful to our modern culture? Why is understanding this change in status important for followers of Jesus?
3. As you read through verses 13-22, note ways Jesus is the center of our transformation. How should these truths shape our choices and the direction of our lives? How does this passage of Scripture call us to ensure that our practice of Christian community is centered on Jesus?
4. In this passage Paul says the sacrifice of Jesus had a very specific purpose. Based on verses 13-16, how would you describe that purpose? According to verses 14 and 16, how did Christ accomplish this purpose? How does the bond we have in the blood (death) of Christ mentioned in verse 13 supersede all that would divide us from other Christians?
5. Throughout verses 14-18 Paul repeatedly uses the words “both,” “two,” “peace” and “one.” Through this repetition, what do you think he is establishing as a critical characteristic about the new community Jesus has created? How do you see this characteristic evident in our NCAC family? From your perspective where might we need to develop more consistency in this critical characteristic?
6. The saving work of Jesus overcomes barriers of every kind that exist between people. How have you experienced the power of the Gospel in helping you build Christian community with others who are not at all like you? How does this exalt the Christ-centered Gospel?

Apply: In what ways will this passage change the way you approach community with other believers?

Pray: Pray for an increase in the health of community within Neighborhood Church—beginning in you and extending throughout our church.