

October 1 - Ephesians 2:11-22

Opening

What is one low (negative thing) that happened to you this past week? What is one high (positive thing)? Write them down. If you're meeting with a group, take turns sharing them with one another.

Where have you seen the Holy Spirit at work in your life over the past week?

Name a time when you felt like an "outsider."

Prepare

Spend 1 minute in silence to center yourself and prepare to hear God's Word.

Read

Read Ephesians 2:11-22 twice. If you are in a group, have two people read it, one after the other, with a brief silence in between. As you read and/or listen, look for a word or a phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart. Circle it or jot it down. Linger over it and give it your attention. If you are in a group, take turns sharing your word or phrase and what it means to you.

Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us. So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

Reflect

Who are the “insiders” and “outsiders” of God’s people today?

Where do you experience peace in your attitudes towards others (individuals or groups)? Where is there lingering hostility?

Dwell on the imagery of God’s people together becoming a holy temple. Where do you fit in?

Pray

Spend time in prayer for yourself and others. Consider praying especially for those you know who are “without God and without hope.” If you are meeting in a group, share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Practice

Christ himself has brought peace to us...

Each day this week, look for the peace of Christ. Here are some ideas to try:

Memorize Philippians 4:4-7 - Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

In the evening, look back through your day, beginning to end. When did you feel most at peace? Why?

“As far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone” (Romans 12:18). Think of a conflicted relationship you have. Ask the Lord to show you where peace depends on you - and where it does not - in your relationship with that person.

Closing blessing

You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.