

The Essentials: Ephesians

Session 4

Opening Collect

Together: Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Watch Video

Read: Ephesians 2:11-22

Discussion Questions (30-40 minutes)

1. In our last session (vv. 1-10), Paul described his fellow Jews as “dead in their trespasses” (v. 1). Now he describes his Gentile (non-Jewish) audience as “without hope” (v. 12). What do you think about this strong language? Why does he single out both groups?
2. What are other ways he describes the Gentiles? Underline the language that describes Gentiles. Not the difference between the beginning of the passage and the end.
3. In the video David mentions that inclusion into the Covenant people of Israel constitutes our salvation. Discuss this idea based on what you’ve just read in the passage.
4. Read vv. 13 and 14. How does Jesus reconcile Gentiles and Jews?
5. God does more than “draw us near,” he makes us “members of the household of God” (v. 19). This household is described as being built on “the apostles and prophets,” with “Christ himself being the cornerstone” (v. 20). What could it mean that we are a household built on the prophets, apostles, and Christ? And what does that say about being a Christian?
6. The progressive description of Christ bringing the Gentiles “near” to God culminates in both groups (Jews and Gentiles) becoming a “dwelling place for God” (v. 22). In other words, Christ reconciles humanity with itself and with God. How does that change your understanding about the importance of Christian community?

Ephesians 2:11-22

¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth,^[b] called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—¹² remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens 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 is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. ¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body^[c] through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.^[d] ¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; ¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, ²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.^[e] ²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; ²² in whom you also are built together spiritually^[f] into a dwelling place for God.