

L O V E

l n c o r r u p t i b l e

Introduction:

Before you dig into this week's lesson, take a moment to reflect on how you think about the people that you meet as you go about your day. What categories would you use to describe them? Successful or unsuccessful? Rich or poor? Trendy or unfashionable?

We all make unconscious decisions about who we consider "insiders" and who we consider "outsiders." But the Bible tells us that apart from Jesus, we're all "outsiders" to God — from the most rebellious to the most religious. Our sin has separated us from God and from one another and Jesus is the only one who can reconcile us to God and to one another.

Reconciliation with God was the primary focus of our study last week. Our passage this week teaches that Jesus breaks down the walls of division and hostility that divide us through the reconciliation we have in his blood. He gathers together people of all nations into a beautiful, unified body of people that we call the church.

This Week's Main Focus:

Jesus is the only one who can reconcile us to God and to one another.

Our passage this week starts off with "Therefore, remember." The "therefore" refers back to Ephesians 2:1-10. "Remember" (don't forget!) that God is making alive us who were dead. Remembering what God has done for believers in salvation enables us to understand what God is doing in verses 11-22. God has broken down the dividing wall(s) between believers in the church *because* he has broken down the wall between us and himself. Any walls of division (race, class, politics, sports teams, essential oils) that remain in the church have been built by us. Think about that: Jesus tore down the lines of division with his blood, and we recreate them. Jesus deconstructed the old walls of division in order to construct a new building - the church, his holy temple.

When you look in from the outside, the church looks *weird*. That's because people who would ordinarily *never* come together for anything come together to worship the one who holds the whole church together: Jesus, the cornerstone. It is Jesus himself who reconciles us — as Paul writes, "he himself is our peace."

As people who have been saved by God's grace and invited into his family, it is our joy to follow in Paul's footsteps and to invite others to experience the peace of Jesus made known in the church.

This week's:

- Scripture Passage: [Ephesians 2:11-3:13](#)
- RightNow Media Video: [Session 4](#)

RightNow Media Video Recap:

In this video, Pastor J.D. says "Most of us have things in our minds that separate the good people from bad people. Religious/non-religious. Generally moral/immoral. Educated/illiterate. Successful/unsuccessful. And we see ourselves and others like us as on the inside of the wall of good people, and others on the outside."

1) Do you agree? Disagree? How would you describe the human tendency to divide ourselves into groups?

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Bible Study Questions: (Read Ephesians 2:11-22)

- 2) As a group, summarize verses 11 through 22 in your own words.

- 3) What four things has Jesus done to bring us peace?

- 4) What do verses 20-22 tell us about the foundation of Christ's new community?

- 5) What "dividing walls of hostility" exist in our culture today? What does this passage say to them?

- 6) Who all does this passage say are brought from being far from one another to near to one another?

- 7) Look ahead to Ephesians 3:10-11. What is God's plan to make known his wisdom and work in the world?

Group Application Questions:

- 8) What are aspects of your background - nationality, ethnicity, social class, education, etc. - that create barriers that divide you from other Christians (perhaps subconsciously), because you overvalue these things as being more central to your identity than Jesus?

- 9) Think about the diversity of our church. God, through the blood of Jesus, *has already* reconciled all of us to each other. How can you live more in the new reality of what God has built in the church?

Prayer:

- Read and pray Ephesians 3:14-21.
- You could pray through the passage by going around and having one person pray one verse at a time.