That they may be one series: Study 2 united in christ (Ephesians 4:11-22)

## BEFORE THE LESSON

Paul is writing to the Ephesians about their new identity in Christ. Part of taking on that new identity is unity. The passage we’re looking at in this study is specifically talking about unity between Jews and Gentiles who have made a commitment to follow Jesus. Though they are different, Paul emphasizes that they are now to be reconciled with each other and live under the authority of Jesus Christ.

## STARTING THE LESSON

The passage that will be examined in this study is Ephesians 4:11-22.

## starter question

**TIPS TO SHARE WITH LEADERS**

If you are meeting online, your meeting should probably only last an hour. Choose a few questions to ask during your time together and make sure you leave time to pray at the end.

* Have you ever participated in a college or professional sports rivalry? What teams do you cheer for or against? We’re talking about the opposite of those rivalries tonight! We’re talking about unity.

## Opening PrAyer

May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

## Discussion questions

### Question 1

* In Ephesians 2:11, who are the two groups of people being addressed? How are they identified?

The two groups of people are the Jews and the Gentiles. Jews are called “the circumcision” and the Gentiles are called “the uncircumcised” by the Jews.

**Ephesians 2:11-22**

**11**Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— **12**remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the

### Question 2

**BIBLE PASSAGE REFERENCE**

**(continued)**

world. **13**But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

**14**For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, **15**by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, **16**and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. **17**He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. **18**For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

**19**Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, **20**built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **21**In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22**And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

* Why do you think Paul mentions how the Gentiles are addressed by the Jews?

Answers may vary. Paul is pointing out that Jews and Gentiles have highlighted differences between them, but they need to start highlighting similarities. Circumcision was done to all Jewish male babies – a physical mark of distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Jewish people took pride in this that they were God’s chose people.

### Question 3

* Can you see how this differentiation between the circumcised and uncircumcised could be a source of spiritual pride? What do we use today that could be or are used as spiritual pride?

Answers will vary. People may demonstrate spiritual pride through the church they attend, the Bible knowledge of their children, their financial success, etc.

### Question 4

* From verse 12, list 5 things that were true of the Gentiles before they trusted in Christ. Have you ever felt this way?

Separate from Christ  
Excluded from citizenship in Israel  
Foreigners to the covenants of the promise  
Without hope  
Without God in the world

### Question 5

* In verse 13 “But now” indicates something is different. What is different for the Gentiles who are in Christ? How did Christ do this?

The Gentiles have been brought near to God through the blood of Christ.

### Question 6

* Read verses 14-18. What has Jesus done for both groups – the Jews and the Gentiles?

He brought peace. He destroyed the dividing wall. He brings reconciliation.

### Question 7

* When we read in verses 14-18, we are reminded that Jesus brings reconciliation to people. What are areas in our world where there needs to be reconciliation, peace and unity?

Answers will vary. Some of the answers will be the issue of racism, political division, civil unrest.

### Question 8

* Our church is going through the biggest transition of its 33 year history. Where do you think unity is needed in our church during this transition?

*Answers will vary. Our church needs unity in following the leadership and vision of Eric and Julia as we move forward. We need to continue to move forward in building deeper unity among the beautifully diverse multiethnic and multiracial community God is gathering here.*

### Question 9

* In verses 15-16 Paul uses 3 verbs to describe how Christ broke down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles by his death on the cross.

Create, reconcile, setting aside

### Question 10

* Read verses 19-20. What is the foundation upon which God’s household, the church, is built? What does the word “foundation” mean to you when you hear it?

The foundation is the apostles and prophets, with Jesus as the cornerstone. Answers will vary regarding the use of the word ”foundation.”

### Question 11

* Read verses 21-22. Paul states that God’s household, the church, is joined together in Christ and is to be a holy temple to the Lord. In verse 22, who is included in this process? What are they becoming?

Gentiles are included in this process. They are becoming a holy temple in the Lord.

### Question 12

* When you consider that you are part of that holy temple in the Lord, how does that make you feel?

Answers will vary.

## Prayer ministry

* If possible, break into smaller groups to share and pray for each other’s requests together.
* Pray together to ask for unity for our country and our church during this time of crisis, then spend a few minutes quietly listening to the Lord. Share any words of encouragement for each other and the church.

**Note: This study was written as an act of service by Denise Birkhoff.**