

# Multigenerational/Multiethnic

## Welcome

Good Morning!, If you are new, Mens Breakfast, Celebration Groups

## Introduction

I've had the great honor of traveling all over the world, From India, To Haiti, Dubai, to Peru, England, Bahrain... and almost everywhere I've been—or I should say, in fact, everywhere I've been, I've noticed a trend, and that is there are at least two groups of people that really don't like each other, and they build huge walls between them.

Never experienced anything quite like india...

What is interesting is that physical realities often illustrate spiritual realities, and when we see barriers between people, they represent spiritual barriers as well. So as we get into Ephesians 2:11–22 today, you are going to hear this word from the Apostle Paul: “A dividing wall of hostility.” A “dividing wall of hostility” is what he is speaking of, it's a spiritual wall of hostility, and was often also a physical wall of hostility. It was a dividing wall.

## Ephesians 2:11-22

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.

## Context/Story

What he's saying is there is a conflict, there is hostility, there is animosity between two people groups: those who are Jewish, called the circumcision, and those who are Gentile, called the uncircumcised. And this may even have been a bit of a pejorative slang term. When one group doesn't like another group, we tend to nickname them negatively. Uncircumcised Philistine...

This is not unlike our culture today. There is conflict, hostility, animosity between two people groups. I believe that there are 3 truths that we can pull out of Ephesians 2.

1. The problem is sin, 2. The solution is God, 3. The goal is Peace

## The Problem is Sin (vs 11-12)

### 1. Explain

- a. As this relates to our study this morning, I want us to remember... if you idolize, you demonize. So, if you idolize your race, you demonize other races; if you idolize your culture, you demonize other cultures; if you idolize your nation, you demonize other nations; if you idolize your gender, you demonize other genders; if you idolize your political party, you demonize other political parties. When we idolize, we are finding our identity in our tribe, and then we declare war on their tribe, and that's identity idolatry, and that was, assuredly, some of what was going on here in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, and this reality is why there is racism, classism, sexism, and the like.
- b. Human Solutions have all fallen short
  - i. Have you heard of The Origin of the Species? This is the underpinning of the evolutionary worldview. Have you heard of the book The Origin of the Species? Have you heard of that? Here's the original title: On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life, by Charles Darwin. They cut the second half off because it's a little controversial.
  - ii. A purely evolutionary worldview says that we are animals. And In our nation's history, this meant that for governmental purposes and representational purposes, some people were considered less valuable three-fifths human. This was the case for those who were African American, or sometimes Native American, or Hispanic, or Asian, various groupings. If we misunderstand the problem we will never reach the correct solution.
  - iii. Critical Race Theory
    1. Systemic Racism
      - a. Repent for your invisible bag of privilege.
      - b. Power structures need to be replaced
        - i. Black community chained for too long, Now it's time to chain the white community so the black community can catch up.
        - ii. Racism Cannot be the solution to Racism
    2. Microaggressions
      - a. You don't know when you're sinning, but I do.
    3. Shifting the sin to others
      - a. It's not my fault... (father, Uncle, Abusive relationships, Hereditary)
    4. Our sin is our own, because the Bible says so.
- c. let me be so bold and controversial as to say that apart from what I will call a biblical worldview, racial/cultural equality is inconsistent if not hypocritical
  - i. We cannot hope to solve sin on our own!

### 2. Prove

- a. Ephesians 2:1-3 - and you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body[a] and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
3. Apply
- a. Ethnicity
- i. All mankind is in sin. There is no race that is more in sin than any other.
  - ii. The Bible says that no matter what group you're in, we all actually descend from one man and one woman. So, we're actually all part of one big family. In addition, the Bible teaches that God made animals who don't bear his image and likeness, and people who do, and there's nothing in the middle. So, all people equally bear the image and likeness of God, are worthy of equal dignity, value, and equality. That's what it says, that's what it means. And again, we're not talking about issues of sin, but issues of style. It doesn't mean that everything everybody always does is okay in God's sight, but it does mean that everybody is equal because they equally bear the image and likeness of God.
- b. Age
- i. For decades, churches have geared themselves to reach particular demographics, instead of seeking to faithfully reach people of all generations.
    1. This strategy is found NOWHERE in the Bible! Instead it says that the older generation is full of wisdom and must teach and help the younger! If we have no seniors in our congregation we have no wisdom! We are just pooling ignorance! And if we have no youth in our congregation, we are just waiting to fizzle out!
- c. Wealth
- i. One of the primary purposes of the Church is to care for the poor, the orphan and the widow. Most churches have ignored this reality.
    1. The government has taken over this responsibility, to the detriment of all involved.

We agree that there is a problem in this world. The world calls it injustice, we call it sin. They try to legislate it away, but we know that the solution will require something much deeper than the world can offer.

### **The Solution is God (vs 13-16)**

1. Explain
  - a. Now, here's what's mind-bending. You look at all the history, and the complexity, and the acrimony between the Jews and the Gentiles and say, "That's pretty amazing that God could reconcile them." Here's what's even more amazing: not only does God in Christ reconcile Jew and Gentile, God in Christ reconciles God

and sinner. You think about the differences between us and God: Creator, created; holy, sinner; infinite, finite; and we've sinned against God, and the result is there is hostility between us and God.

- b. Jesus crossed the greatest wall of all, He who made man, became man. Friends, you're a sinner, I'm a sinner, we're all sinners by nature and choice. God becomes a man. The Creator enters creation. The Spirit God who made all adds to his spirit human flesh and he goes from heaven to earth. He goes from being worshiped to being hated. He goes from a life of affluence to a life of poverty. He goes from a life of notoriety to a life of hostility. Jesus is God coming over that wall that we have built. It is God coming to seek, and to save, and to serve us. It's a rescue mission.
  - c. He cared not how wealthy people were, and even spoke to them as if they had a greater disadvantage
  - d. He never looked down on the young, but told people that in order to get into His kingdom people would need to be more like children
  - e. Christ is the great Leveler, The ground is level at the foot of the cross
2. Prove
- a. Job 34:19 - who shows no partiality to princes, nor regards the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands
  - b. James 2:1 - My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.
  - c. Galatians 3:28 - There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.
3. Apply
- a. What Paul says is something that had never been said. And we live in a day that really wants cultural diversity, but God provides an answer that you will only find in Christianity. He uses this language: "One new man in place of the two."
    - i. You see the fight? The Gentiles are, "No, no, no, you guys need to be Gentiles." The Jewish people are like, "No, no, no, you need to be Jewish." Paul comes along and says, "No, no, no, no, no, you all need to be in Christ, a new man."
    - ii. This, friends, is an issue of identity. Their identity is no longer uncircumcised Gentile or circumcised Jew, it is in Christ, reconciled together as a new man. So, there's this new group, there's this new category, there's this new people called Christian.
  - b. Old things may explain us, but they no longer define us in Christ. So, perhaps your previous, primary identity was, "I'm American, or this is my race, or this is my culture, or this is my gender, this is my family, this is our history, this is our tradition." That might explain you, but it no longer defines you. No longer defines you. Your primary identity is in Christ, which means your primary allegiance is to those who are in Christ.

### **The Goal is Peace (vs 17-22)**

1. Explain
  - a. The Bad news is that there is enmity with God, and Enmity with each other. There are dividing walls even today. But the good news is that Jesus Christ came to flatten the walls, and place everyone on the same playing field. He destroys our former identities and gives us a new shared one.
    - i. The good news of the gospel is that the Messiah, Jesus, died so that he would put an end to the dividing wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles, so that he would reconcile Jews and Gentiles to God and to each other, and so that he would create Jews and Gentiles into one new man into one body through the cross. By means of Jesus' death, resurrection and exaltation, God recreated Jews and Gentiles into one dwelling place of God, in whom the Spirit dwells
    - ii. WE NOW HAVE PEACE WITH GOD THROUGH JESUS! The spiritual barrier of Sin has been removed and now God dwells in us, and with us!
    - iii. But wait... There's more.
      1. WE NOW HAVE PEACE WITH ONE ANOTHER AS WELL!
      2. We are not strangers and aliens anymore.
        - a. We are fellow citizens (Identity)
        - b. Members of the Household of God (community)
2. Prove
  - a. Mark 3:25 - And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand
3. Apply
  - a. Ethnicity
    - i. We must not allow Celebration Church to be a place of exclusivity or perceived superiority, Every person is welcome. We all need the blood of Christ to cover our sins.
  - b. Age
    - i. Older reaching the younger
    - ii. Mature giving up their preferences to reach the immature
  - c. Wealth
    - i. No one who walks through these doors has more or less sway based off their pocketbook.
    - ii. I heard a story this week about a church, whenever there was a need, had a special meeting and invited only the wealthiest people in the church to attend...

## Conclusion

What that means is that there is no front of the bus, back of the bus, first- and second-class for Christianity, that God's a Father who loves all of his kids, black, white, asian, hispanic, rich, poor, young, old, male, female. He loves all his kids equally, and he places the Holy Spirit in each of them, and they each have equal access to their father. There's no wall of hostility. That is Good News!

So what do we do? We sing. We praise. The Holy Spirit is not just with you, he's with us; and it's not just your life and your body that are the temple of the Holy Spirit, it's also our church and our collective family together, which is a "dwelling place for God by the Spirit." We are "a holy temple in the Lord." That's our new identity, that's our new activity, because together in Christ, God's made us a new community. This is why there's nothing like the church. There's nothing like it.

**Invitation**

Pray with Someone

Respond to God (stand, sit, come to the altar,

Do whatever you need to do in this time

**Pray**