

## Small Group Guide

**\*\*Ephesians 2:11-22 | Week 6: The Prison Epistles\*\***

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**## Opening Prayer & Icebreaker (10 minutes)**

**\*\*Icebreaker Question:\*\***

Have you ever felt like an outsider—whether in a new school, workplace, church, or social setting? What was that experience like, and what helped you feel like you belonged?

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**Sermon Summary (5 minutes)**

Paul reminds the Ephesian believers that Christ has demolished the barriers that separated us from God and from each other. Through His death on the cross, Jesus created "one new humanity"—the Church—where former outsiders become family members and living stones in God's temple.

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**Discussion Questions**

**\*\*Part 1: We All Were Once Far Off (Ephesians 2:11-13)\*\***

1. **\*\*Understanding Our Past:\*\***

- Paul tells the Gentile believers to "remember" what they once were. Why is it important to remember where we came from spiritually?

- How does remembering our "outsider" status help us relate to others who feel far from God?

2. **\*\*Modern-Day Fences:\*\***

- The sermon mentioned fences like race, economics, education, social status, age, and religion. Which of these "fences" do you see most prominently in our culture today?

- Have you ever used one of these "fences" to distance yourself from others? Be honest with the group.

### 3. **\*\*Brought Near:\*\***

- What does it mean practically that we've been "brought near by the blood of Christ"? How should this truth change how we view ourselves and others?

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### **\*\*Part 2: We Become One New Man (Ephesians 2:14-18)\*\***

### 4. **\*\*Christ Is Our Peace:\*\***

- Paul says Christ "IS our peace," not just that He "gives us peace." What's the difference, and why does it matter?

- How does Jesus' death reconcile us both to God AND to each other?

### 5. **\*\*The Wall Comes Down:\*\***

- The sermon referenced the literal wall in the Jerusalem temple that separated Jews and Gentiles. What are some "walls" that exist in the Church today that shouldn't be there?

- Share an example of when you've witnessed the Church successfully breaking down barriers between different groups of people.

### 6. **\*\*Hostility Put to Death:\*\***

- Verse 16 says our "hostility toward each other was put to death." If that's true, why do Christians still struggle with division and conflict?

- What would it look like for our group/church to live out this "one new humanity" more fully?

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**\*\*Part 3: Built Together as Temple (Ephesians 2:19-22)\*\***

7. **\*\*From Strangers to Family:\*\***

- You've gone from being a stranger to being a "member of God's family" and a "citizen" in His kingdom. How does this identity shift affect your daily life?

- How can we help newcomers to our church feel like family rather than just tolerated guests?

8. **\*\*Living Stones:\*\***

- The sermon emphasized that each of us is a unique "stone" in God's temple with a specific calling. What do you think your unique role might be in the body of Christ?

- The sermon listed several examples: mentor, worship prep, intercessor, nursery worker, caring for the sick. Which of these resonates with you, or what other role might God be calling you to?

9. **\*\*Ongoing Construction:\*\***

- Paul uses present-tense language—we are "being built" together. What does it mean that God's house is still under construction?

- How can we be more patient with each other, knowing we're all "works in progress"?

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Key Takeaways

**\*\*Write these down or share which one speaks most to you:\*\***

1. **\*\*We were all once outsiders\*\*** separated from God—our common ground is our need for grace.

2. **Christ broke down every dividing wall** through His death, creating one new humanity in the Church.

3. **We are living stones** being built into God's temple—each person has a unique and important role.

4. **Unity is not man-made**—it's created by the Holy Spirit and should be protected and celebrated.

5. **Salvation reconciles us to God AND to each other**—we can't claim to love God while maintaining hostile divisions with our brothers and sisters.

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## ## Practical Applications

### **This Week's Challenge:**

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

#### **Option 1: Bridge Building**

- Identify someone in your church or community who is different from you (different age, race, economic status, background, etc.). Intentionally reach out to them this week—invite them for coffee, ask about their story, or simply sit with them on Sunday.

#### **Option 2: Fence Inspection**

- Do a personal inventory: What "fences" have you built in your life? Are there people you've been keeping at a distance? Pray and ask God to reveal any prejudices or barriers in your heart, then take one step to tear them down.

**\*\*Option 3: Find Your Stone\*\***

- If you haven't discovered your role as a "living stone" in God's temple, commit to exploring your calling this week. Talk to a church leader, take a spiritual gifts assessment, or volunteer in a new area of ministry.

**\*\*Option 4: Gratitude Practice\*\***

- Each day this week, thank God for bringing you "near" through Christ's blood. Journal about what your life would be like if you were still "far off" from God.

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Prayer Requests & Closing Prayer (10-15 minutes)

**\*\*Group Prayer Focus:\*\***

- Pray for unity in our church and in the global Church
- Pray for those who still feel like outsiders—that they would experience the welcoming love of Christ
- Pray for wisdom to identify and tear down any walls of hostility in our own hearts
- Pray for each person to discover and fulfill their unique calling as a "living stone"

**\*\*Closing Prayer:\*\***

"Lord Jesus, You are our peace. Thank You for tearing down every wall that separated us from You and from each other. Help us to live as one new humanity—Your Church—built together as a holy temple where Your Spirit dwells. Show us the fences we've built and give us courage to tear them down. May we be bridge builders, not wall builders. In Your name, Amen."\*

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Before Next Week

- Read Ephesians 3:1-13

- Reflect on this question: How has understanding God's "mystery" (the inclusion of Gentiles) changed your view of the Gospel?

- Follow through on your chosen practical application

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**\*\*Group Leader Note:\*\*** Be sensitive to the fact that discussions about division, race, and social barriers can be emotionally charged. Create a safe space where people can be honest without judgment. Remind the group that we're all "under construction" and extend grace to one another.