

Inductive Study - Ephesians 2:11-22 ESV

Ice breaker: Have you ever been in a situation where you felt alienated, like you didn't belong? How did it resolve?

Before being united in Christ, the hostile relationship that previously existed between the Jews and the Gentiles has no specific bible reference. However, there are many cultural things we know that would have set them against each other: the Jews served one God, while the Gentiles served many gods, the Jews were the chosen people descended from Abraham, while the Gentiles were everyone else with no special promises, the Jews had access to God, while the Gentiles were not allowed in the temple, and the Jews even had laws prohibiting their association with members of other nations. These are certainly not friendly groups, let alone unified. To help us understand the animosity between the two groups look at the parable of The Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37. Jesus tells it as an example to love your neighbour, but it also indirectly highlights the hostility between the two groups. Both the priest and the Levite were Jewish, dedicated to the temple of God even. However, it is the Samaritan who has mercy on the beaten man (who is implied to be Jewish). The Samaritan helping the Jew is supposed to be surprising and counter-cultural for the time, to emphasize the command Jesus made to love your neighbour. From this we can deduce that there would have been no reason other than Christ's command for a Samaritan to love a Jew and vice-versa.

This section of Ephesians is specifically addressing the Gentiles who are now in Christ. The specificity of Paul's address indicates that the Gentiles were experiencing discrimination from the Jews as equals in Christianity. He affirms their unity with the body of Christ and their equality with the Jews in their salvation. Out with the old covenant and in with the new! The new life found in Christ is the same free gift for all! Read Acts 10-11 for the revealing of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Question Legend: Ob. → observation Int. → interpretive App. → application
Before you look up the references for the interpretive questions, challenge yourself by answering them mentally to check your understanding of the bible.

V. 11

Ob. Who is Paul addressing? What does "in the flesh" indicate?

Int. What are the spiritual definitions of "the circumcision" vs. "the uncircumcision"? Can a person belong to both categories at the same time, physically and spiritually? Look up the following passages to help enforce your answer. Jer. 9: 25-26, Rom. 2: 25-29, 3:29-30, 4: 9-12.

Int. Why is Paul reminding us that physical circumcision is “made in the flesh by hands”? What are the spiritual implications of circumcision being a “matter of the heart, by the Spirit” (Rom. 2:29)?

V.12

Ob. Who is the “you”? What is “at that time” referring to?

Int. Define these words:

- alienated:

- commonwealth:

Int. What are the “covenants of promise”? Gen. 9:8-17, 17:1-14, Ex. 19:4-6, 2 Sam. 7:9-29. Why is it significant that the Gentiles were strangers to the covenants?

App. We were all at one time without hope and without God in the world, how do you see the world now that you have both, being a part of the new covenant? Luke 22:20

V. 13

Ob. Who is the “you”?

Ob. How have the Gentiles been brought near?

Int. And near to what? Eph. 1:7, Rom. 3:25, Col. 1:20

V. 14

Ob. Who is our peace? What does “made us both one” refer to? There is now peace between both God and sinner, as well as between Jew and Gentile believers. Rom. 5:1, Eph. 2:15.

Ob. What was broken down? How? Social and religious practices often divided the Jews from the Gentiles. A low wall around the temple in Jerusalem marked the boundary beyond which the Gentiles were not allowed to step. (NLT study bible)

V. 15

Ob. How did Christ break down the dividing wall of hostility?

Int. What were the demands of “the law of commandments expressed in the ordinances”?

Lev. 20-22 (skim it) Why are these not applicable anymore? John 1:16-17, Rom. 3:19-20, 6:14, 10:4, Col. 2:13-14

Ob. Who is the HE _____ and who is the HIMSELF _____

Ob. Who is the “new man”?

Int. Who were the “two” referred to? How were they made one? Rom. 15:7-12, Gal. 3:28
(The NLT version of Eph. 2:15 is more clear)

V. 16/17

Ob. Define reconcile:

Ob. Who is reconciled to God when it refers to “both”? How?

Int. The hostility was killed, what took its place? Rom. 5:1

Ob. Who is the HE _____

Ob. What did He preach to those who were far off and to those who were near? This is possibly an allusion to Isa. 57:19.

App. People around the world and even in our city are vastly different, ethnically, religiously, culturally, morally, economically, mentally, spiritually... Knowing that God grants the same peace and the same inheritance to all of us who have been given the faith to believe, regardless of worldly status, how ought we approach evangelism? Does this apply to our enemies, the homeless, the system abusers, the unapproachable... ?

V. 18

Ob. Who is the HIM _____ Who is the WE _____ How do we access the Father?

Int. How do we have access to the Holy Spirit? Why is the Spirit necessary? Gal. 3:14, John 3:5, 14:26, 15:26, Rom 8:5-6

V. 19

Note the repetition of the words “stranger” and “alien” from v. 12.

Ob. Who is the YOU _____ Who are the SAINTS _____

Int. What does it mean to be “members of the household of God”? John 1:12-13, Eph. 1:5, Gal. 3:26, Heb. 2:11.

V. 20

Ob. What is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets? Who is the cornerstone?

Int. What is a cornerstone? Google it. How does the definition apply to Christ? Isa. 28:16, Acts 4:11-12, 1 Pet. 2:6-7.

V. 21

Ob. What is “the whole structure”?

Ob. In whom is it being joined together?

Int. What is growing into a holy temple for the Lord? It can be understood as both the church collectively and the believer individually.

App. What are our responsibilities as building blocks of the temple? 1 Cor. 3:5-17, 1 Pet. 2:4-5.

V. 22

Ob. Who is the HIM_____ Who is the YOU_____

Ob. Who is doing the building of the dwelling place?

Int. Where does God dwell? Paul is enforcing the fact that God dwells equally in believing Jews and believing Gentiles. Compare OT, NT and prophetic verses about God's dwelling places.

Ex. 29: 42-46, 1 Kin. 9:3, John 1:14, 14:16-17, 1 Cor. 6:19, 1 Pet. 2:5, Rev. 21:22, 22:1-5

App. In Christ and by the Spirit we are being built into a dwelling place for God. What an honour! How can we show those yet unsaved that we are dwelling places of God?