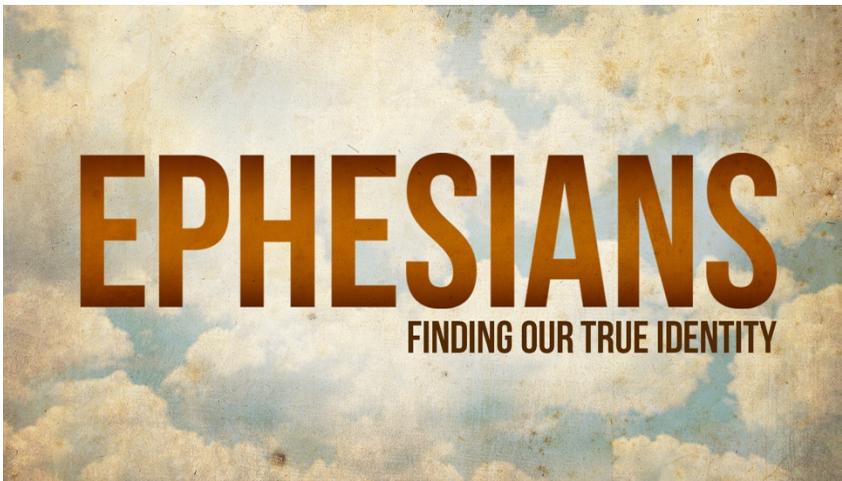


**BIBLE STUDY
QUESTIONS**



Ephesians 2: 14 - 18

If you were asked what our world most needs to bring about an end to war, violence, injustice and hostility, what are the things you would list? John Lennon in his famous song put forward:

Imagine there's no countries; It isn't hard to do.

Nothing to kill or die for, and no religion too.

Imagine all the people, Living life in peace.

Others have argued for Nuclear deterrent, or a liberal secular democracy. In other places around the world it has been a one party state, or the prohibition of arms.

- **What significance does peace have in the message of Jesus Christ?**
- **Look at the following verses and think through what a Gospel of Peace might look like: Luke 2: 8 – 14; Luke 19: 41 – 44; John 14: 27; John 16:33.**

Read chapter 2, verses 14 to 18

This very short section helps us think about the wonder of what Jesus has done, but also makes a huge claim about the significance of this. Let's take time to explore this in detail.

- **In verse 14 we read Jesus is our peace. This picks up the imagery of the Old Testament (Isaiah 9:6 & Micah 5:5). What has he done to bring this peace about?**
- **Given the nature of the church in Ephesus, why is it so important that Jesus "abolished the law of commandments"?**
- **In what ways do we need to apply that in our church today?**

In verse 17 we read that not only is he our Peace, but that he preaches Peace as well – to those both near and far.

- **Why does Jesus need to preach peace? What do you think Paul is referring to?**
- **What is the significance of "near and far"? Was Paul talking about geography, time, or their spiritual state?**
- **How does this work today? What enables Jesus' preaching of peace to be heard today?**
- **What does it mean today to be preaching to those who are far? Who might those people be today?**

JEW AND GENTILE

Central to chapter two is the distinction between Jews and Gentiles. Consider the Jewish perspective of themselves as the people of God. Their identity is that they are chosen and called by God. This is reflected on their history – the calling of Abram, the Exodus from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. They are also the recipients of God’s Law, set apart for living to the glory of God. His Shekinah Glory dwells in the Temple of Jerusalem, where Priests are set apart to serve him. Their identity and history makes them distinct from the surrounding nations, with a unique place in God’s heart.

This distinctiveness is reflected in their practice of circumcision, which marks them out, and the structure of the temple where enquirers could not go beyond the court of the gentiles – the very outer court where there was trading but no worship. Their sense of being special is seen in the way there were so many zealots who tried to overthrow the ruling Greeks and Romans, convinced that God was on their side.

Imagine the horror then for those early Jewish believers in Christ at what Paul was doing when he began to bring in gentile believers. They were uncircumcised, had no idea of ritual purity and all the ceremonies needed at home and in worship that made things acceptable to God. They even wanted bacon sandwiches at the church prayer breakfast!

We know how much the church struggled with this, from what we read in Acts 15 and the council in Jerusalem and also in the letter to the Galatian churches. The danger in reading Ephesians 2 is to think that question is resolved now, none of us are concerned with it. Yet this issue is still very present in today’s church, even if it looks slightly different and is asked in different ways.

Do we think that Jesus is just for us, for those of us who like that kind of thing, or is faith in Jesus for everyone? The passionate belief of the need for faith in Jesus 200 years ago drove people to the corners of the earth as they sought to make Jesus known to all nations and ethnic groups. Do we share that view today, that people from all nations need to be sent to all nations and ethnic groups, and that people of whatever faith or none need to hear of the saving work of Jesus on the cross? What would our churches be like if we did?

The middle part of this section, verses 15 & 16 help us understand what Jesus does to bring about this peace. If barriers and dividing walls are broken down, then new possibilities are made possible. These new possibilities are crucial to our understand of the Kingdom of Heaven and what it means to be church.

- **What do you think it means to be reconciled to God?**
- **Why is this necessary, and how did Jesus achieve this for us?**
- **How does our experience of being reconciled to God help us in our dealings with other people?**

Jesus' purpose is to create in himself a new humanity. But the effect of Jesus' work is more than homogenisation (making the two alike) but renewal (making them both new and better).

- **In what ways are you new and better because of what Jesus has done for you? How do you live this out in church?**
- **It would be so much easier if everyone were alike (i.e. like me). Yet the challenge of the church is to be united and one with those who are not alike. Why is it important that we try and do this?**
- **What are some of the ways in which you need to grow in this area?**
- **What are some of the ways in which we need to grow in this area as a church? How might you contribute to this happening?**

When we read these passages, it would be very easy to get despondent with the church. It isn't being what it should be. Or we can be downcast that our best efforts aren't achieving what we hoped they would.

- **Paul ends this section by saying that because of the work of Jesus, we have access to the Father. Why is this reminder so important? What will it mean in practice for you?**
- **We are also reminded that there is access through the one Spirit, reminding us that prayer isn't about getting God on to our side. Why is it important to have unity in mind when praying to the Father?**