

Teaching Tool Text: Ephesians 2:11-22
Series: Every Tribe, Language, People, and Nation
Weekend Sermon: Do you need a special vision from God?
Date: 05.09.10



LEADER NOTE

This is a discussion guide that is based on the same topic of the Sunday night sermon at Joshua House. It has been created to be a *tool* to help you teach and facilitate discussion in your group, not a *rule* to constrict you. So feel free to adapt it to fit your personality and discussion style as you see fit. You may want to add verses or skip questions as you adapt it to fit what your needs are. Make it your own.

Grounds Rules for Discussion

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic that is being addressed this week, we have created some ground rules to help your small group engage in deep, honest, and edifying discussion. As the leader of the small group, we want to ask you to be particularly vigilant about encouraging everyone to abide by these ground rules. So, before the discussion begins, please read these ground rules out loud to your group:

1. Listen respectfully, without interrupting.
2. Respect one another's views.
3. Criticize ideas, not individuals.
4. Commit to learning, not debating.
5. Avoid blame and speculation.
6. Avoid inflammatory language.

SUNDAY NIGHT SYNOPSIS

[Leader: this section is here to remind you of the direction of the weekend message.]

Rich Mendola was a guest teacher on Sunday night who preached a message on how we can pursue diversity for the sake of Jesus. Rich works with international students on an ongoing basis and has come to understand more fully how learning to love our international neighbors expands our experience with God. He preached on Acts 10, which describes the story of Peter and Cornelius. Peter was a devout Jew and Cornelius was a Gentile, and it was true at that time that Jews did not even associate with Gentiles. Peter had to be willing to leave his ethnic (religious, racial, cultural) biases in order to encounter God more fully and to obediently follow God's plan for his life.

If you needed to give a brief description about the book of Ephesians it would be one of unity—unity with God and unity of the church. God is able to bring diverse things together in unity. We hear this idea of unity with diversity, of 'oneness', throughout Scripture—the unity of the trinity (One God, yet Three Persons), experienced in marriage (two becoming one), and in the church (one body, yet many different body parts; one family, yet different members).

TONIGHT'S BIG IDEA

This unity, this oneness, this communion is something that is constantly on the heart of God. God's ideas about unity included ethnic unity—in other words, diverse people groups becoming one unified community in Jesus. We are going to talk more about this idea tonight. How do we pursue interracial unity and how does our experience of Jesus deepen as a result.



GETTING STARTED

INTRO KEY IDEA: [Leader: guide discussion toward this thought]

Read John 17:21-23

What is Jesus' Prayer for Us? (*unity with the Father and unity with Himself*
>*complete unity*)

What is the result of this unity? (*The world will believe in Jesus—that He was sent by the Father and that He loves them*)

So what is unity? What does it look like? (*Think of unity in relationships like marriage and deep friendships if that helps*)

GETTING INTO THE TEXT

Context: If you needed to give a brief description about the book of Ephesians it would be one of unity--unity with God and unity of the church. God is able to bring diverse things together in unity. We hear this idea of unity with diversity, of 'oneness', throughout Scripture—the unity of the trinity (One God, yet Three Persons), experienced in marriage (two becoming one), and in the church (one body, yet many different body parts; one family, yet different members).

In these opening chapters of Ephesians, Paul is explaining the reasons for the death of Jesus: to bring us back into relationship with God and (in these next verses that we will take a look at) to reconcile our relationships with each other.

Text: Ephesians 2:11-22

1. Who are the two people groups that are mentioned here in this text? Why is this significant? In other words, what was the history of Jews and Gentiles? (*Jews and Gentiles were enemies and there was hostility between them for generations*)
 2. What are some of the differences between these people that are mentioned in verses 11-12?
 3. *Reflection: (It may be good to pose this as a rhetorical question for people to ponder, so they engage with the text) Can you relate to what is going on here at all? Think about this for a second: Have you ever had hostility or disunity with a group of people because of what you grew up around and/or because of your family? Are any of them directed at a specific race? What cultural biases have you noticed you have (or have had in the past)? Have you ever viewed another group as weird or inferior because they were different than you (maybe because of their socioeconomic status or racial background or intellectual level)? Think about when you were a child growing up and trying to fit in...this may help you see some of your biases.*
 4. What is the reason that verses 13-14 give for unity and peace between these groups of people, even with a "hostile" history? In other words, how in the world could enemies become peaceful toward each other after years of history?
 5. In verses 14-18 we see this idea of unity and diversity.
What is God's purpose mentioned in verse 15? (*One New Humanity*)
What does this mean? (*God is making us a new creation, a new people. He is not extracting all of our differences, but bringing them together in unity in Him*).
- Key: So, God is creating a new people, by uniting all people in his Kingdom.



6. In Revelation, John gives us a picture of citizens of God’s Kingdom. In Revelation 5:9-10 it says,

“You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased for God
members of every tribe and language and people and nation.
You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,
And they will reign on the earth.”

7. Briefly Flip to Acts 13, which briefly describes the early church at Antioch. This is the first place that people were called “Christians”—what did even the earliest Christians (those that represented Christ and His Kingdom) look like?

Read verse 1 and describe what the church looked like? What types of people were in community together? *(Note: Barnabas was a Jewish Christian from the Greek island of Cyprus, Simeon is assumed to be a black man from Africa because the name “Niger” means “black”. Lucius is from Cyrene, which is in North Africa. Manaen was brought up in an upper-class Jewish context and Saul was a leader of the Jewish Pharisees)*

KEY: God calls people from every tribe, language, people and nation in His Kingdom and God wants us to experience His Kingdom NOW, in the present...this means, as we experience every tribe, nation, people and language coming together in our community, our experience of God intensifies.

8. What are some of the ways that you have seen God change the way you view people that are different than you? What are some things that you have learned from them? How has it expanded your experience of God?

9. Read verses 19-22.

What is the imagery that Paul is using in these verses to describe this *bringing together of God’s people?* *(He describes us as God’s household and he paints the picture of a building being built for the Presence of God to dwell).*

10. Where is the place where God’s presence dwells as described in verse 22? *(We are his dwelling place. As we become unified we are his temple, where God lives and dwells by His Spirit)*

KEY: So, we experience more of God’s presence and power when we are pursuing unity. Let’s go into ministry time talking about ways that we can pursue unity, so that we can encounter God’s Spirit in a more powerful way (Leaders feel free to decide which direction to go with the options below):

Dealing with our disunity: Are there ways that you distance yourself from a certain group of people? Or experience Fear? *(Ex. Maybe you fear men because of the way you have been hurt by male relationships; Maybe you have generalized a race because of your upbringing or because of interactions you have had with a few people; Maybe you are hesitant to interact with people who are from different racial backgrounds because you have never had friends like this before).* How do you feel like God wants you to respond? Spend time confessing these things in smaller groups and pray for each other.

Living as Reconcilers: In 2 Corinthians 5 we are said to be “ministers of reconciliation”. How do you feel that God wants you to be a minister of reconciliation? *(Ex. Maybe you want to see him bring healing to your family. Maybe you have a heart to love and learn from internationals. Maybe you need to deal with bitterness toward a person or a group of people. Maybe you have seen injustice toward a people group and you want God to use you to bring justice).*