

Discussion Guide on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians
Our New Position Corporately (Ephesians 2:11-22)

1. This passage effectively follows the same formula as 2:1-10. The first few verses highlight our helpless plight and the need for redemption while verses 13-22 shows God's marvelous mercy and grace offered to us in Christ Jesus (note the turning point in Paul's thought in 2:4 and 2:13 using the contrastive "But"). In what way(s) might Romans 2:25-29 shed light on Eph. 2:11?
2. Paul uses a present tense imperative when telling the Ephesians to "remember" in 2:11 and it is often the case that a present tense imperative suggests ongoing activity. What benefit is there in "remembering" our former life without God (see especially 1 Cor. 11:24-26)?
3. In 2:11 Paul makes it clear that before salvation, Gentiles were not part of God's promise made to Jews alone (Note: The Bible often divides humanity into two parts, Gentiles and Jews. Gentiles are all those from the known world including Egypt, Greece, Rome, China, etc., that were not Jewish by birth or by conversion. God had uniquely dealt with the Jews in ways he had not dealt with others. See Ps. 147:20; Rom. 9:4-5). The effect of that exclusion meant we were without hope and without God. Is Paul suggesting that unbelievers have no relationship with God? Why or why not (back your response with Scripture)?
4. List the five features of being an unbeliever from Eph. 2:12. What does this suggest about referring to unbelievers as "seekers" (see also Rom. 3:11)?
5. Read 2:13. Presumably the distance for Gentiles to travel toward God was greater than the distance for the Jews. Does this indicate that the Gentile plight was worse than that of the Jews? Why (cf., Rom. 3:1-2; 9:1-5)? On the other hand, with more knowledge comes greater responsibility. What does Luke 12:47-48 suggest about the Jews' accountability before God?
6. To be "in Christ Jesus" changes everything (2:13)! The way of entering into the realm of Christ Jesus is "by his blood," which is not only our means of redemption but our means of reconciliation (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:20-22). Through the cross of Christ our vertical relationship to God is established and our horizontal relationships with other believers are at peace. Read Galatians 3:28-29 and 1 Cor. 10:32. Rather than having two divisions in humanity, there is now a third, which is the C _ _ _ _ _ C _ _ _ .
7. More often than not the barrier between races and cultures is psychological rather than physical. Consequently, these barriers yield an attitude of superiority over others (See Acts 21:27-36 for an example where Gentiles were not allowed into the inner courts of the temple area). After meditating on Eph. 2:14, how should being in the family of God affect how you view believers across the world? Across your city? Across your street?
8. Read Eph. 2:15, then read Rom. 3:31, 8:3-4, and 10:1-4. How can these passages be reconciled (see 2 Cor. 3:6-15)? The old covenant was never intended to impart life, since it assumed that a relationship with God was already in place (see Rom. 4:13-16). Instead the function of the old covenant/law was intended to maintain a relationship that was already established by God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:6).
9. Although divisions between Jew and Gentile may not be relevant to us in our day, what other divisions in humanity breed hostility and how can the Church be a vehicle of peace (see John 4:21-24 for insight)?
10. Compare Eph. 2:19 with Rom. 9:25-26 and 1 Peter 2:9-10. As full members of God's household, Gentile believers share in the riches of God's promises to Israel. In what ways does this adoption into Abraham's blessing magnify God's grace in salvation?
11. One of the primary symbols of Judaism is taken up in 2:19-22: the Temple. Because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection a new Temple has been erected. As a place where God's presence dwells its material is composed of two parts: the Message (Christ Jesus as the cornerstone) and the messengers (apostles and prophets). Read 1 Cor. 3:9, 16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16. Whether

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individually or corporately, believers are the new Temple where God takes up residence by His Spirit. What steps will you take to live as "God's residence?" How is your place of worship manifesting the presence of God's Spirit?

12. What racial and cultural differences in your community must be overcome so God's new temple displays his glory and grace to the world?