

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE BETTER WHEN YOU COME TO GROUP HAVING PREPARED WITH THIS GUIDE!!

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

In Week 5 of our study in Ephesians, we looked at the passage of Scripture that birthed the name and mission behind The Gathering! In Ephesians 2:11-22, we find that God's plan from the beginning was that we would be relational beings and live in relationships with him and others. The problem was that there was a barrier to those relationships, and God sent Jesus to destroy it. The sacrifice of Jesus to make a way for us to be near God and man proves that God not only desires it, but did something about it.

1. **What God desires:** There is so much in Scripture about the desire God has for fellowship with us and between us. Even before sin entered the world, he said it wasn't good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18), and after sin entered the world he sent Jesus to reconcile us back to himself (2 Corinthians 5:18-19). There is no doubt that God's desire for us is that we live near God, near man, and making disciples so that the chain of close relationships in his body continues past us.
2. **What God did:** Of course, anytime we talk about what God desires we have to talk about how we messed it up, right? Over time, the sin in our hearts built walls between us and God and us and others, and because God desires closeness with us and between us, he did something about those barriers. He sent Jesus, and Jesus blew them up. It may sound oversimplified, but anything that divides us from God or each other isn't from God. He is in the business of building us together, not barricading us apart.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- As you've thought back through this week's message, what one thing – if any – inspired you or maybe even confused you?
- Have you ever had a desire for something but you had no power to do anything about it? Describe the frustration and other emotions that we often feel when we want something we can't have (especially when what we want is a good thing).
- Thankfully, what God desires he also has the power to do, and he showed that in Jesus' death and resurrection. How did Jesus wreck the walls that keep us divided from God and one another?
- Have you ever experienced seeing Jesus breaking down walls between yourself and someone else? If you're willing, take the time to share with your group that story of reconciliation.
- Read Ephesians 2:14 again and notice the past tense of what Jesus HAS done. If God has done everything possible to destroy the things that divide us, why do you think we still keep ourselves walled in from others? How can the fact that Ephesians 2:17 says Jesus preached peace help us live without walls?
- Matthew 12:30 says that it isn't enough to be with Jesus if we aren't also working with Jesus. What's Jesus' (and our) job? How can you intentionally help gather people together for Jesus?