

STUDY GUIDE

USF BCM
QUICK STUDY
CONNECTING TO CHRIST WITH OTHERS
EPHESIANS 2:19-22; 4:12-16
10/02/2017



MAIN POINT

A vertical relationship with God always leads to a horizontal relationship with others.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Other than your family, who are some of the most important relationships in your life right now?

How did you first get connected to that person?

Through Jesus' sacrifice we become connected in ways and with people that we might never have otherwise been invested in. Thanks to His work, we are not only connected to God, but also connected to others because a vertical relationship with God always leads to a horizontal relationship with others. Though we may come to Christ alone, we connect to Christ with others.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 2:19-22.

What three metaphors does Paul use to describe what it means to be a Christian? What is significant about each of them?

Paul uses three metaphors to describe what it means to be a Christ-follower, and all three of them speak to the importance of our relationship to other Christians. In verse 19, he states that Christians are "citizens with the saints." In the same way that one might identify with others from the same country or state, so Paul says Christians relate to one another. The second metaphor in verse 19 intensifies the relationship: we are "members of God's household." We are to view our relationship with other Christians as we do our closest family members. Verses 20-22 drive the point home even further, pointing out that believers in Christ are "put together" or "built together" by God. Christians are not only citizens of the same country and members of the same family: they are "mortared" together permanently by God for His purpose and glory. The only question is whether we live like it.

Do you feel the same way about your relationships in the church and in your group the way Paul says you should? Why or why not?

What kinds of things make the family of God different from any other family? What sorts of barriers are crossed in the family of God that might keep people apart in other situations?

The family of God is not dependent on race, gender, or any other natural factor. While these things might separate people in other situations, our differences in the family of God only serve to highlight the greatness of what we have in common.

How is the building described here different than a physical structure built by men?

How do individuals in the church show they are part of this spiritual building?

In this passage, Paul emphasized the ongoing process by which Jesus is building His church. God dwells in each believer by His Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20) and collectively in the church as the assembly of all believers (1 Cor. 3:16). Nothing gives more significance to the church than the fact of God's residing in His people. He does not dwell in buildings; rather, His people are His temple. We display the Spirit of God living in us through the way we live in community with each other and how we treat the rest of the world.

What are some hallmarks of the church built by God according to these verses? How do you see these characteristics displayed at our church?

In what ways can you see God's earthly church being fitted together and growing in the Lord? What role does our group gathering play in God working this way?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 4:12-16.

What is Christ's intention in giving spiritual gifts to His people? In what ways are we each important to the life and growth of other Christians (vv. 15-16)?

Using the gifts God has equipped us with, we should help each other grow in Christ—speaking the truth in love and supporting each other. For ministry to be effective we need the gifts of others and others need us to use our gifts. That's the beauty of the church body God created. Each person is gifted to benefit those around them. Strength is created within the body when each part works in conjunction with the others.

How can being a faithful member of a small group help bring about the unity this passage emphasizes and protects from the chaos mentioned in v. 14?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How have you seen Christian community suffer when certain parts are too weak or missing? On the other hand, how have you seen it thrive when everyone is using their gifts and serving one another?

What steps can you take to minimize unresolved differences in your community?

How can we help each other understand our individual functions within the body of Christ? What opportunities are you aware of at our church that would give people in our group the opportunities to exercise their specific gifts?

PRAY

Close in prayer, asking God to press this truth on the hearts of all church members—that a vertical relationship with God leads to horizontal relationships with others.

COMMENTARY

EPHESIANS 2:19–22

2:19. The “you” language throughout this passage refers to those born as Gentiles. Such believers are no longer what they were. The word foreigners was a reminder of their previous deprivation as those “excluded from the citizenship of Israel” (2:12). The term strangers was a reminder that Gentiles had no knowledge of “the covenants of the promise” (2:12). By contrast, in the new humanity Jews and Gentiles together are fellow citizens with one another in the kingdom of God. The saints may refer either to Old Testament people or to all believers in the church (1:1). If the term citizens suggests that Jewish and Gentile believers are part of the same kingdom, then members of God’s household means that both groups belong equally to God’s one true family.

2:20. The architectural language compares the new humanity to a magnificent temple under construction. The foundation for this divine building is the apostles and prophets. Jesus’ designated representatives were the apostles, whose preaching and writings are foundational to the church. The term prophets refers to inspired men who proclaimed the Word of God alongside the apostles. Churches today stand only when they depend on the foundational truths God revealed to the apostles and prophets, now preserved in the Scriptures. The cornerstone is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.

2:21. Individual believers are compared to the stones being added to the whole building. The words holy sanctuary (traditionally, temple) imply this building was set apart for God’s use. The Ephesians were well acquainted with the unholy temples in their city. They knew well that the whole idea of a temple was to serve as a house or dwelling place for a god (Acts 19:23–34).

2:22. Paul’s return to “you” language reminded his readers again that they had been included in God’s plan. They were being built together with Jewish Christians to become God’s dwelling place on earth. It wasn’t the stone-and-gold temple in Jerusalem but instead God’s new people—the church—in which the Spirit was present. God’s new humanity, scattered around the world but meeting in local congregations, is His home. What He is building through the ages, as more and more people believe and are added to His body, will one day be complete (Rev. 21:5).

EPHESIANS 4:12–16

4:12 To what end has the Lord given congregations gifted leaders? The goal is that they will train the saints in the work of the ministry. It’s not that the leaders do all the ministry; rather the ministry is to be done by all believers working together.

4:13 In 4:3 Paul had urged believers to be “diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit.” Now the term unity occurs as one goal toward which believers (with diverse gifts) are working together. This unity is both doctrinal (in the faith) and relational (in the knowledge of God’s son).

4:14 Paul noted two illustrations of what happens when believers work together. The first is drawn from human development. Individual believers grow from infancy (little children) to adulthood (“a mature man,” 4:13). The second illustration is from sea life. Believers who work together will not be like a storm-tossed boat, upset by the waves and blown around by every wind. To be sure, there will always be false teaching to confront. There will be human cunning with cleverness. There will be techniques of deceit trying to lead believers astray. But Christians who have worked together to develop a clear understanding of the faith and who know Christ intimately will survive such attacks.

4:15 The cure for immaturity and instability is speaking the truth. Yet this truth is to be expressed in love—with compassion and understanding. Truth without love can be cold and harsh; love without truth can be mushy and weak.

4:16 Paul returned to the illustration of human development, but with a twist. This time he thought of a single body (rather than of many little children). It has a Head (Jesus Christ; see 4:15 and 5:23), who directs all the operations (from Him). At the same time, the body (the local congregation) has many parts that need to work together. An individual church member is a supporting ligament or an individual part (see also 1 Cor. 12:14–21). Each part has been fitted and knit together by the Lord with all the other parts. With the proper working of each part, the body will do what it’s supposed to do.