



THIS IS US, PART 1: JOINING TOGETHER

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Pastor Randy Remington

BIBLICAL TEXT(S)

"People who gather together over things they share in common, like education, ethnicity, or political views, don't present us with a miracle. The Church, as diverse as it is, gathered around the Person and Presence of Jesus, is miraculous."

–Pastor Randy

Main:

"Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit." (Ephesians 11:11-22)

"As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (1 Peter 2:4-6)

MESSAGE SUMMARY

The Church is the embodiment of everything that Jesus Christ came for—continuing the work of his Kingdom, bringing forth everything he began. Jesus would use the Greek word "ecclesia," which means a called out group of people. Jesus loves his church - the people whom he has called to himself. The German word we get the word "church" from speaks to a location, and the idea was that if you controlled that region, you could control the form of worship. However, the church is not a locality, or building. Jesus says the church is a group of people gathered together with him at the center. We are the house of God; the building is not the house of God.

The Jews had been given circumcision as a sign of being set apart, however, they used it source of exclusivity, superiority, and separation that resulted in hostility. Jesus took that hostility upon himself and put hostility to death on the cross, making a grave for sin and all its hateful fruit. Jesus absorbed the things that separated us from God and gave back to us something new. His purpose was to create one new humanity, thus making peace. When we lose sight of the purpose of the church, we reduce it to moving parts to just keep something going. But the church is more than that. And salvation is so much more encompassing than going to heaven... following Jesus completely reforms our identity and therefore our relationship with other people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage and the speaker's message, helping them understand and apply the teaching.

LEAN IN

These are icebreaker/warm up questions, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What example or story stood out to you in Sunday's sermon?
Why was it significant to you?
2. Last time we met, we talked about applying what we learned? Has anyone had a chance to put that lesson into practice? How has it impacted your life?
3. What is one thing that you're looking forward to this week?
What's one that you are dreading?

LOOK DOWN

These are questions on the passage and observations about what's been read.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Go through the passages and identify which phrases/verses talk about being reconciled to God. By what means are we reconciled?
2. Find phrases in the passage that describe reconciliation between people.
How is it that Jesus reconciles us to one another?
3. From verse 12, look at the ways in which Gentiles are described before knowing Jesus. Then, verse 13, "But now" indicates that something has changed. What has changed for Gentiles who are in Christ?
4. What does it mean to be a citizen? What were Gentiles living with the Jews called previously?
5. Note the use of the word "one" in verses 14-18. What does this word describe through this passage?
6. How is the church described in verses 19-22? What stands out to you, surprises you, or challenges you?

LOOK OUT

These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Ephesians 2:11 compares the uncircumcised with the group of circumcision (which is done by human hands). The Jewish people had been given circumcision as a sign of being set apart, yet they used it as a dividing wall between themselves and Gentiles. In what other ways (besides circumcision) do we distinguish between people by what is done by human hands?
2. What elements of our identity might we define ourselves by, group together by, or exclude others by?
3. The early church called themselves a third race because following Jesus became their primary identity. (I.e. Rather than being a husband who was a Christian, one was a Christian who was a husband). How would your identity alter if following Jesus became primary?
4. Verses 19-22 say that the result of Jesus's reconciliation is living that out by God's Spirit. How have your relationship with others changed as you have followed Jesus and allowed His Spirit to operate in your life?
5. What are a few implications of how people of different races, socio-economic backgrounds, schools of thought, etc. can relate to one another?

cont.,

**DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS,
CONT.****LOOK IN**

These are questions that help you consider personal application.

Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max

1. Jesus took the hostility between God and humans upon himself and took it to the cross. In the process, he also reconciled two hostile groups into one new community—the church. Who have you been joined together with in the body of Christ whom you otherwise would not have been connected with?
2. What does it mean for those in the church to belong to one another?
3. What could be done at B4 to embody unity?
4. In what ways might you have had an air of religious (or otherwise) superiority? In what ways might you have assumed you were automatically qualified or included?
5. As members of God house, you have many brothers and sisters. What would the church look like if we were to truly live out the vision of this passage?

LIVE IT OUT

These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life.

Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.

1. What walls of hostility are still standing in your home, church, community, or at work? How can the peace of Christ allow you to start breaking down those walls today?
2. Can you identify specific relationships in which you need to extend forgiveness and grace?