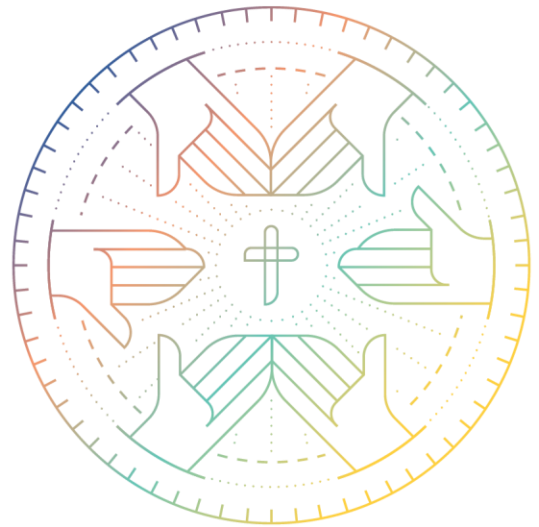


Group Life.

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER



MEETING AGENDA

WELCOME (10 MINUTES)

Important Context: One of the factors at play in the churches in the region of Ephesus was the tension between Jewish believers and their gentile counterparts. Gentiles were seen as anyone who was not of Jewish descent. Jews often saw Gentiles as pagans who did not know the true God. They were seen as unclean and enemies to be shunned. Because they were perceived as second-class citizens, there was tension in the church about whether they needed to take on all of the customs of their Jewish counterparts to be saved. Below is an article that dives deeper into what a Gentile was.

[What is a Gentile](#)

Make sure to take attendance via the attendance reminder email.

ICEBREAKER (10 MINUTES)

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

INTRODUCTION (5-10 MINUTES)

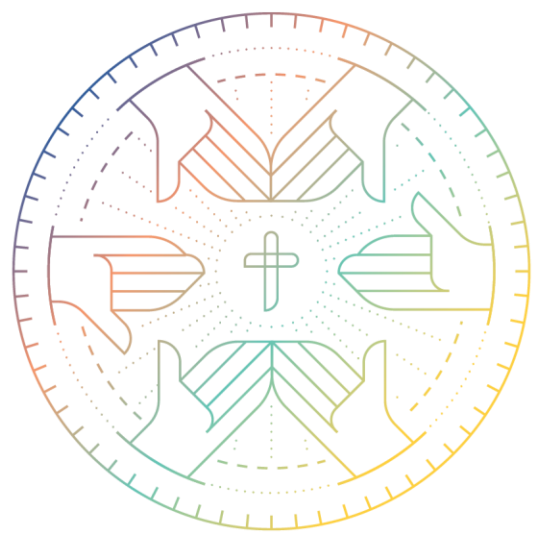
In the world today we see an emphasis on the “us versus them” mentality. However, in the church, we are called to unity. In the second half of Ephesians 2, Paul speaks to the Gentiles about who they were before and after Christ. Gentiles were different from their Jewish counterparts in that they were once separated and alienated from God. For us today, like the Jews, our self-righteousness can serve as a barrier to experiencing what God wants to do. Thankfully, because of Jesus’ death on the cross, the “wall of hostility” has been destroyed and everyone in Christ – both Jew and Gentile- or in our case, those perceived worthy and unworthy, have complete access to God.

INTO THE WORD (25 MINUTES)

1. Read Ephesians 2:11-12. Paul tells the Gentile believers about how they were historically separated from their Jewish counterparts. From what he describes what sticks out to you in verse 12?

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H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[Answers will vary. Note: Gentiles were non-Jewish peoples. Most likely your group participants would have been considered Gentiles in Paul's context. Key attributes listed: separated from Christ, alienated from the nation of Israel, strangers to the covenant of promise (This promise consisted of God giving his people land, priesthood, a people, a nation, a kingdom, and a king), no hope, without God in the world.]

2. **Read Ephesians 2:14-15. We see that first Jesus is our peace in verse 14 and then see that He makes peace in verse 15. Why do you think it is important that we have peace with God before we can have peace with others? Is there an area of your life where you aren't experiencing peace?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[We have seen throughout Ephesians that it is only in Christ that we receive the blessings associated with God. Paul adds to this by making it clear that Jesus alone is the believer's source of peace. Answers will vary. During this question be willing to listen and is a great opportunity to pray over those areas during your closing prayer.]

3. **Read Ephesians 2:14-16 and 2 Corinthians 5:14-21. After revisiting 2 Corinthians 5 in the context of verses 14-16 of Ephesians what makes reconciliation such an important part of being in Christ?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[To reconcile means to bring together two estranged parts. Reconciliation is only possible when common ground is able to be found. As followers of Christ, we have seen Jesus model reconciliation with us. Since we have experienced ourselves, we get the opportunity to mirror that in our relationships with others.]

APPLICATION (25 MINUTES)

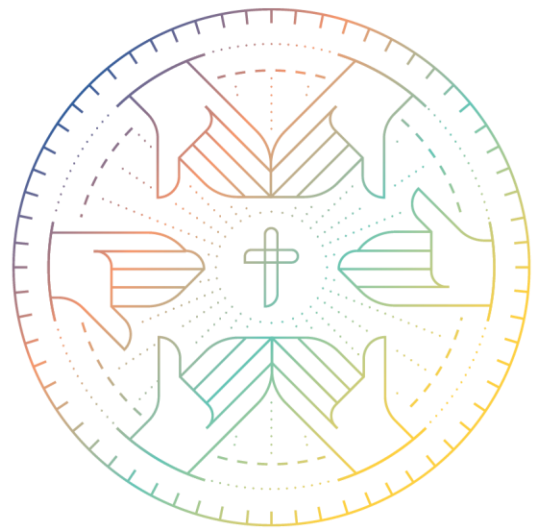
1. **Read Hebrews 4:14-16. God has a desire to be near to each of us. Do you know anyone in your life who needs to know this truth in a deeper way? What would it look like for you to live out this truth this week?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[Easter is coming up in three weeks. This is a great opportunity to identify and invite someone who needs to hear this truth to one of those services. If you can't think of anyone begin praying that God would lay someone on your heart to ask. Living out this truth could look like by being present with people or creating opportunities to listen and ask questions.]

Group Life.

WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER



2. **What divisions or hostility do you see in the church at large today and how might Paul's words in this passage help shape how we respond to these divisions?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[Answers will vary. It is important to note the difference in finding unity with other believers while at the same time not endorsing views you don't agree with. The Gentiles and Jews did not stop holding their individual customs or practices but were able to come to a common understanding of how in spite of their differences they were one in Christ]

3. **There are several ways in which we can individually seek to build unity. Some of the ways include: giving each other the benefit of the doubt, understanding before being understood, encouraging and affirming each other, confronting in person and refusing to judge. Of the list above which one do you personally find the hardest to do?**

H.O.S.T. GUIDANCE

[Answers will vary. Look to ask clarifying questions such as why did you choose that one. What about that do you find difficult? Follow up with looking for how we can encourage each other this week to work on that aspect.

There is a prayer attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi that is great to reflect and dwell on this week. Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.]

PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Dear heavenly Father, thank you that we no longer are strangers without hope. Thank you for bringing us near to you by Jesus's sacrifice on the cross. May we as a church cultivate a spirit of unity so that we can be your hands and feet in our communities. Thank you that we find true peace through reconciliation with you. May we seek to reconcile and build unity with those we come in contact with. This week may we find true rest in you. Amen.