

WEEK 4

MADE **ALIVE**

The Book of Ephesians



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The Book of Ephesians

WEEK 4
JANUARY 29, 2024



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A **PASSAGE** TO READ,
... SOME **COMMENTS** TO CONSIDER,
... THREE **QUESTIONS** TO ASK,
... A **PRAYER** TO PRAY.



WEEK 4

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DAY 1

JESUS DRAWS NEAR

First read Ephesians 2:11-12.

Human history begins with harmony. Our first parents were united without shame and shared the mandate to **“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion”** (Genesis 1:28). They were one--body and soul. However, when sin enters the story, division, rather than harmony, colors humanity’s relationship with God and one another (see Genesis 3). Isaiah told his listeners their sins **“made a separation between you and your God”** (Isaiah 59:2). What the Creator made one, sin breaks in two.

In Paul’s day, Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews) were particularly divided. The nations were **“alienated from the commonwealth of Israel”** (v.12). That means they didn’t share in the blessings and promises of God. They were **“separated from Christ”** and strangers to God’s hope and love (v.12). That’s why they’re called **“the uncircumcision”** (v.11). Circumcision was “the outward sign of membership of [God’s] covenant people” (Stott, 94). To this day, humanity isn’t one with God and each other.

Whenever we lack intimacy in a relationship, we can either ignore it or name it. Keeping quiet is tempting. But Paul chooses to name the separation sin has caused. But not to shame his readers. He’s being honest about their alienation and hopelessness so they can see and understand the gospel better. Every crack sin causes becomes a window into the redeeming power of grace. Whatever sin breaks, divides, and separates, Jesus heals, unites, and restores.

Sin separates, but Jesus draws near.



DAY 1
JESUS DRAWS
NEAR

1. Have you ever experienced distance from God?
What was that like?
2. What divisions is sin causing in your relationships with your spouse, friends, or family?
3. How does the grace and mercy of Jesus bring healing or restore intimacy with the Father and others?

Heavenly Father ...

Forgive my sin. Wash me clean of a guilty conscience. Restore our intimacy lost by my foolishness, disregard, and rebellious spirit. Thank you that your Son willingly drew near me on the cross and continues to draw near me by your Spirit.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 2

JESUS BRINGS NEAR

First read Ephesians 2:13.

In the ancient world, gods were cold and distant. The major Greek pantheon was called the Olympians because they lived on Mount Olympus, far removed from mere mortals. While they were attracted to people and may even have sex with them, “sooner or later (mostly sooner) they would abandon their human partner” (*Greek Gods, Human Lives*, Lefkowitz). They drew near until it was no longer exciting or became too costly. They always returned to their mountain.

The Bible tells us that God is holy. Hannah confessed that no one is **“holy like the Lord; for there is none besides you”** (1 Samuel 2:2). God is distinct and set apart from all creation morally, spatially, and authoritatively. However, Moses asks, **“What great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?”** (Deuteronomy 4:7). God is set apart. Yet he’s so close he can hear us.

This paradox is embodied beautifully in Christ. You see, though we were **“once far off”** from the holy God, we have **“been brought near by the blood of Christ”** (v.13). We’re brought near to God because God drew near to us. While the Son of God was far removed from mortality, out of obedience to his Father and love for us, he took on **“human form, [and] humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”** (Philippians 2:8). Unlike other gods, Jesus’ condensation is costly and it brings us to God forever.



DAY 2

JESUS BRINGS NEAR

1. Do you sense God's closeness? Why or why not?
2. How should Jesus' willingness to draw near us shape how we relate to those we're separated from?
3. How does the costly and eternal nature of salvation demonstrate our value?

Heavenly Father ...

You are holy and far above all other gods. You are close and love me like no god can. Please help me to walk in these truths today. May your holiness make me humble. May your intimacy keep me safe.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 3

ANTIQUATED WALLS

First read Ephesians 2:14-16.

A wall surrounded the Jewish temple in Jerusalem until 70 A.D. It physically blocked Gentiles (the nations) from entering into the sanctuary. While “the Court of the Gentiles” remained a place of curiosity and discovery, only Jews could enter fellowship with God.

Paul wrote Ephesians in 60 A.D. That means the wall was still standing. However, because of Christ, the wall “was already antiquated, obsolete, out of date ... The sign still stood: but the thing signified was broken down” (*Robinson*, 60). You see, Jesus broke down **“the dividing wall of hostility”** between God and all of humanity and the wall between different groups of people (v.14).

Specifically, Jesus abolished **“the law of commandments expressed in ordinances”** (v.15). That doesn’t mean he made morality relative. The Jewish ceremonial laws comprised the rules and regulations around circumcision. Peace with God once came through rites and rituals marked out in the Old Testament; now Jesus **“is our peace”** (v.14). Therefore, that law and that wall are no longer there.

We build walls, too. The neighborhoods we live in, the work we do, the schools we attend, the partners we choose, and the churches we join are often surrounded by walls of culture, privilege, and prejudice. Fear and shame have taught us to seek peace in isolation and sameness. Sin causes relational separation, but Jesus **“has made us both one”** (v.14). Jesus tore down the spiritual wall and we, therefore, should be encouraged to tear down every earthly one. Because of Christ, they’re all antiquated.



DAY 3
ANTIQUATED
WALLS

1. Why was there a wall between us and God?
2. What walls do you see in your context and community? Why do you think God cares about these walls?
3. How does the cross tear down spiritual and earthly walls?

Heavenly Father ...

Thank you that every wall of division is antiquated and out of date. Forgive me for ignoring them too often. Forgive me for building them. Tear them down by your grace and empower me to live at peace with you and others.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 4

SINNERS BECOME CHILDREN

First read Ephesians 2:17-21.

In our fallenness, there's no peace with God. While his "common grace" persists in the form of beautiful beaches, warm embraces, and the laughter of friends (see Matthew 5:45), our relationship with God is hostile. In that sense, **"the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness"** (Romans 1:18). God's holiness is in direct conflict with our sinfulness. And it's isolating.

Jesus came to change all that. **"He came and preached peace"** to both Jews (near) and Gentiles (far) to give us all **"access in one Spirit to the Father"** (v.17,18). Hostility is about isolation. Peace is about intimacy. Jesus brings us into the very presence of the Heavenly Father because he alone has peace with the Father. Because of Jesus, we have peace with God (see Romans 5:1-2). But we also have peace with each other. Notice that when drawn to the Father, we become **"members of the household of God"** (v.19).

Sinners become children.
Strangers become siblings.

Every family is built on stories and values. God's family is built on Jesus—his story and his value. His nature and character are infused into us, establishing us, holding us together, and growing us up according to his purposes (v.v.20,21). While many of our early families burden us with impossible narratives or disregard us through neglect, the power of Jesus' family brings us deep and lasting peace.



DAY 4

SINNERS BECOME CHILDREN

1. What does it mean to have peace with God?
2. What's making you anxious right now? How might the Lord be guiding you toward his peace?
3. How ought Jesus' peace shape the way we live?

Heavenly Father ...

Anxiety often grounds my heart in fear. It tells me I'm not your child. Settle my soul today with your presence, your peace, and your Fatherly love.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 5

A WORTHY DWELLING PLACE

First read Ephesians 2:22.

One of Christian life's most spectacular yet mysterious realities is that God's Spirit lives in us. Our new life in Christ is actually defined by the fact that the presence of the Spirit has given life to our **"mortal bodies"** (Romans 8:11). Through the power of the resurrection, our character is being formed, our minds are being renewed, and our hearts are being renovated to make us a more fitting **"dwelling place for God by the Spirit"** (v.22). Our bodies are holy dwelling places.

Through the Spirit's power and presence, we learn to put to death **"the desires of the flesh"** and nurture **"the fruit of the Spirit"** (Galatians 5:17,22). This is an ongoing process, a daily grind. Regularly, we're tempted to indulge the impulses of sensuality, anger, and envy and struggle to embody love, joy, and self-control. Yet the Spirit graciously reminds us of all that Jesus taught and accomplished (see John 14:26-31).

However, the Spirit's work in us is not his greatest gift to us. Theologian Micahel Reeves points out that the Spirit's supreme offering is "his very self, that we might know and enjoy him and so enjoy his fellowship with the Father and the Son" (*Delighting in the Trinity*, 87). The greatest gift of the Spirit is himself. This is good news. It means that it's not our performance or righteousness that makes us a worthy dwelling place. It's his love.



DAY 5

A WORTHY DWELLING PLACE

1. Why does God's Spirit live in you?
2. How does the Spirit's presence in your life bring conviction? How does it bring comfort?
3. How does Jesus make us a worthy dwelling place for the Spirit?

Heavenly Father ...

*Thank you for your Spirit. In him I'm loved, secure,
and becoming more like your Son.*

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



FAMILY GUIDE

CONVERSATIONS STARTERS

DAY 1

Ephesians 2:13

But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Jesus is far off (because he's holy), but he comes close (because he's love).

How is Jesus far (or holy)? How is Jesus close (or loving)?

DAY 2

Ephesians 2:14

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

Jesus is our peace.

What's making you worried today?

DAY 3

Ephesians 2:18

For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Jesus makes us a family.

What does it mean to be part of Jesus' family?

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The Book of Ephesians

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