

November 12, 2017

(Foreign to Familiar Series) Ephesians 1-3

“Diversity”, Ephesians 2: 11-22

The Apostle Paul, in **Ephesians 2:11-22**, uses pictures of buildings to show us the change in status of the world’s relationship with God from “before Jesus” to “after Jesus”. In the Old Testament, only the Israelites, were able to enter God’s presence and have access to His Spirit in the inner Jewish Temple. In the New Testament, because of Christ’s death, God canceled the Jewish law and its hostility so that we (both Jews and Gentiles) could become one body, a “new humanity” of all believers, His “holy temple” in the hearts of His people, with Jesus as the cornerstone, where all can access God through His Spirit.

Just as Paul had to instruct the Church in diversity: how to move Christians from considering Gentiles as “foreigners” without God to “fellow citizens with God’s people”/family. We as a church, Christians, followers, believers need to open our hearts to accepting and loving the diversity of God’s people in all cultures, ethnicities, socio-economic classes, political views, backgrounds, spiritual gifts, even theology in secondary issues, etc.

Principles of Diversity (Unity) in His Church: (Ephesians 2:11-22)

- A. **God has always desired diversity in His Church.** (Acts, Romans 14, I Corinthians)
- B. **Diversity is difficult.** Diversity brings the tough possibility of conflict for sinful people like ourselves, but as Christians we can continually confess the shortcomings of ourselves and others, and be grateful for His grace.
- C. **God desires diversity anyway.** Christ died for our brokenness from the world, the flesh, and Satan; He calls us to be one new person in one “household” - the Church.
- D. **The key to unity is the Gospel.** Jesus nullified the law and our hostility by His death, and reconciles us through His Cross. This gives us a starting point for loving each other as we are all on the same footing: all equally lost (dead, dominated, doomed). The gospel promotes unity by killing self righteousness/judgmentalism through faith and humility in God, and by enabling us to forgive others freely because God has forgiven us.

We have unified diversity through the Gospel. As we live out the Gospel, we are growing into becoming the temple of God (Eph. 2:21) where people will experience God’s glory (Eph.2:22) in our relationships with ALL His people. May we live out and share the hope of the Gospel with All others. Our intentional diversity here at Perry Creek Church causes us to ask different questions of Scripture...and it’s beautiful!

Discussion Questions:

1. Is unity in diversity really possible in our present country filled with angry rhetoric toward others who differ from us?
2. Is there a difference between the world’s view of inclusion & diversity, and God’s desire for diversity?
3. Have you ever seen or participated in divisions that impact the ministry or effectiveness of a church?
4. What specific thoughts, attitudes, or actions might help keep us united as we grow as a church? How is difficult?
5. Is diversity in our small groups desirable or distracting?

6. How do we as Christians overcome backgrounds that either give us too much experience with judging others different from ourselves, or absolutely no experience with others different from ourselves?