

March 12, 2023

OPENING QUESTION

What is an activity or job that you cannot do alone?

In the Bible we read about communities of faith – from the family of Abraham (which grew into a whole nation!), to the apostles and the early church. The New Testament often refers to believers in communal terms, calling us brothers and sisters, inviting us to unity in diversity, and considering how to serve one another in faith and love. Our surrounding culture today prizes values of individualism and self-reliance. What would it look like to live counterculturally by moving Toward Christ Together?

When have you been a part of a healthy, beneficial community in the past?

- What do you enjoy about being a part of a group?
- Is there anything that you find difficult or challenging about being part of a group?

READ Romans 12:3-13

What do these verses note about the nature and state of people being together in a group?

- How would you rephrase the ideas in 12:3-8 into just one or two sentences?
- After this description, Paul delivers many short directives in 9-13. How might his description of community in 3-8 and these instructions in 9-13 be related?
- How is the group described here uniquely Christ-centered?
- What about these verses is encouraging? What about these verses is challenging to you?

READ Ephesians 2:11-22

The first part of this passage (2:11-18) describes two relationships healed through the peace brought by Jesus. Paraphrase the passage in your own words, and discuss how Jesus is able to create peace in these relationships.

- How would you describe or define “peace?”
 - How does the context in these verses expand or add to that understanding?
- Paul is describing the peace that Christ has made for relationships *within* the church or the body of Christ. Can you think of any examples of the need for peace *among* the church (or churches)?

The rest of the passage (2:19-22) expands a metaphor that likens belonging to God’s family to being built into a building. How does this metaphor add to your understanding of what it means to be a Christ-centered community?

- What does this passage consider the purpose or goal of this unified group?
 - How is this purpose important and beneficial to the lives of those in this community?
 - How is this purpose important and beneficial to those who are currently **outside** of this community?
- Where else in the Bible can you find passages about God “dwelling” (or God’s dwelling) to enrich your understanding of this passage?

FROM THE MESSAGE

DAILY TIME

Galatians 1
Galatians 2
Galatians 3
Galatians 4
Galatians 5
Galatians 6

As you read each day, consider:

- How would I say this in my own words?
- What does this show me about God and His character?
- How should I respond? (Thanksgiving, confession, asking, praise, etc)

Kids Food Basket!

Head to the link to read more about donations, items to bring next week (March 19), and plan to pack Sack Suppers together after worship!
<https://www.encounterchurch.org/doinggood>

NOTES AND QUOTES

Tricky Terms in Ephesians 2:11-22

Gentiles

A descriptor for people who did not belong to the bloodline of Abraham; during the time of Jesus, the Jewish people treated Gentiles with aversion, scorn and hatred; Paul will begin to use the term for Gentile *Christians*: those who were not of the family of Abraham, but have come to faith in Jesus Christ and therefore become part of the family of God.

Uncircumcised

Circumcision was the sign of the covenant made with Abraham and his descendants. “Uncircumcised” becomes a description of being *outside* of the requirements of Jewish faith according to Old Testament law (however, adherence to the law was not considered essential for Christian belief, even during New Testament times)

Peace

An essential concept in the Hebrew scriptures (*shalom*), this term carries the idea of completeness and wholeness; when it is restored in relationships, it doesn’t mean simply an end to fighting, but also a beginning of working together toward one another’s benefit

[BibleProject](#)
[Video: Peace](#)



In this message, Dirk shared the 2023 vision for Encounter: Toward Christ Together. As we strive to run the race of faith with perseverance (Hebrews 12:1-2), the community we are surrounded by encourages us on the way.

A community growing toward Christ together was described as unwaveringly Jesus centered, deeply committed and courageously unified. Discuss these together to remember what they mean.

- Which of these is the most challenging for you?
- Which of these do you recognize as something you need more of in your relationships?
- Discuss in your group what steps you might take toward any one of these three characteristics in our Encounter community.

EXTRA Read Hebrews 10:19-25, noting the similarities to the Ephesians passage. Focus on 10:24-25

What does this passage highlight about the purposes of meeting together as community?

- What would these actions look like practically in your community – both your small group, and within the larger church community at Encounter?

CLOSE WITH PRAYER

Spend time in prayer for one another, if possible, about the things you have discussed here.

PRAYER AND CARE

Reminders for the week ahead:

Romans 12:3-13

3For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Marks of the True Christian

9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

Ephesians 2:11-22

11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the

Verses about God's dwelling

Exodus 25:8 And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.

Exodus 29:45 I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. 46 And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the Lord their God.

1 King 6:13 And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel."

Ezekiel 37: 26 I will make a covenant of peace with them. It shall be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will set them in their land and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in their midst forevermore. 27 My dwelling place shall be with them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 28 Then the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when my sanctuary is in their midst forevermore."

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

blood of Christ. 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 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Hebrews 10:19-25

19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.