

Connection Group Discussion Questions

For the week of September 6, 2015

Ephesians 2:11-22

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—¹² remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens 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 blood of Christ.¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.¹⁵ He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,¹⁶ and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.¹⁷ So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near;¹⁸ for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,²⁰ built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.²¹ In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;²² in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Common English Bible (CEB)

¹¹ So remember that once you were Gentiles by physical descent, who were called “uncircumcised” by Jews who are physically circumcised.¹² At that time you were without Christ. You were aliens rather than citizens of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of God’s promise. In this world you had no hope and no God.¹³ But now, thanks to Christ Jesus, you who once were so far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us.¹⁵ He canceled the detailed rules of the Law so that he could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace.¹⁶ He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God.

¹⁷ When he came, he announced the good news of peace to you who were far away from God and to those who were near. ¹⁸ We both have access to the Father through Christ by the one Spirit. ¹⁹ So now you are no longer strangers and aliens. Rather, you are fellow citizens with God's people, and you belong to God's household. ²⁰ As God's household, you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ The whole building is joined together in him, and it grows up into a temple that is dedicated to the Lord. ²² Christ is building you into a place where God lives through the Spirit.

Connection Questions:

1. Bishop Cho, our United Methodist bishop, called on United Methodist Churches to address the issue of racism that still exists in our culture. Where do you see racism in our culture?
2. Define racism in your own words.
3. In Rev. Adkins' sermon, he says "that there tends to be something within our human psyche that has a need to separate and elevate oneself over another usually in an attempt to build self-esteem." Discuss how this relates to racism.

4. We discover in our biblical drama a religious institution that separates people by religious beliefs, gender, and social classes to name a few. Discuss ways that the Jewish faith perpetuated a system for racism to take place.

5. Also in the same Jewish faith we see tension even within the law to be accepting of the aliens, the poor, women, and Gentiles. Discuss how the Jewish faith perpetuated an exclusive culture while within the same faith be inclusive.

6. The writer of Ephesians says that Christ breaks down the walls that divide us from other human beings. Discuss how the message of Jesus addresses this issue in the Jewish faith.

7. As many read the definition of racism they are against the idea and even abhor the idea of seeing one race being superior to another. Yet the idea of racism can happen in subtle ways that can make it difficult to acknowledge. In what subtle ways does racism exist in our culture?

8. How can today's church be more intentional in confronting the issue of racism?