

Week #4: Breaking Down Barriers

CHECK-IN	Last week, we were reminded that "grace changes everything." Has this fact affected you recently?
BIG IDEA	God reconciles us to Himself and one another through Jesus Christ. In turn, the church serves as a beacon of God's reconciling power to the rest of the world.
DISCUSS	<p>Read Ephesians 2:11–22.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Walls (or barriers) separate one side from another, both literally and figuratively. What are some well-known walls (or barriers) and what do they separate?2. The "dividing wall of hostility" between God and humanity was torn down by God through Jesus. What does this say about God's character? (Since God took the first step, what does this say about humanity?)3. Paul commands the Ephesians to remember their life before Christ. What was your life like?
APPLY How do we respond to God's teaching in meaningful ways? What might God ask of us in mind, spirit, or actions?	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Christians are described as a "new humanity" (v. 15) and a "holy temple" (v. 21) where God dwells. Yet Christians did not earn this status. How does this change how you view non-Christians?2. Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In God's eyes, Christians are not defined by ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nor by gender. Rather, Christians are exclusively marked by faith in Jesus. How does this affect how you view other Christians?3. Is our church a visible sign of God's reconciling power to the world? What do we do well? Where do we fall short?

PRAYER PRACTICE

(15 minutes)

Pray the following prayer with your LifeGroup:

*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 of St. Francis of Assisi