

# together

a four-week study in Ephesians

## Together (Ephesians) (Week 2/4) Together as Community

### Small Group Discussion Questions

**Connect** *If our lives are to be “for the praise of God’s glory”, what is one area (e.g., relationships, work, time, money, use of technology) in which that purpose could become more visible?*

### Warm-Up

1. What communities or groups do you belong to? What do you have in common with the people there?

### Read Ephesians 2:11-12

2. Who are Gentiles - both generally and specifically in this letter?
3. Why were Gentiles considered outsiders? Are we in the same position - why or why not?
4. Why does Paul encourage them to *remember* they are Gentiles?
5. What benefit is there for us in remembering where we were before Christ?
6. How should remembering where we came from inform who we are to welcome and treat others in Christian community?

### Read Ephesians 2:13-18

7. Who brings us near? How can that be both liberating and challenging?
8. In bringing us near, what does Jesus create in himself?
9. How does Jesus do this? How does it underline the significance of the hostility between us and God?
10. How have you seen Christians identify themselves apart from others (e.g., we are Christians who ...)? What is the real identity of the church, created in Jesus?
11. How should being made into *one new humanity* change your relationships in Christian community and on your frontlines?
12. Why should unity in the church be an important consequence of Christ’s death for us?

### Read Ephesians 2:19-22

13. What is the new status we now have in Christ? What do the images of being citizens, members of God’s household, and a temple represent?
14. Do you ever underestimate the significance of belonging to God’s family? What helps remind you of the reality we *are* joined together in Christ?
15. When have you seen God at work through his family? Share an example.
16. What is a cornerstone? Why does it matter that Jesus is the cornerstone of community?
17. How are you currently committed to a local church? What would you like this to look like this year?

**Apply** *This year - how will you be committed to the people Jesus has joined you together with (i.e., the church)?*

**Pray** *Gracious Father, by your Spirit help us to grow in our understanding and delight of how Jesus has joined us together, by his blood. Help us to love one another, as you have loved us. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.*

# GOING DEEPER

## **Together (Ephesians) (Week 2/4) Together as Community**

### Small Group Discussion Questions

#### **On Your Front Line this Week**

*Where are the places you will spend the most time each week, this new year? Pray about how you can best serve the Lord there.*



#### **For Families**

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: [stbartskids.org](http://stbartskids.org)

#### **Listen, Watch, and Read**

- *Listen (sermon):* "Reconciliation in Christ" by Stephen Nicols:  
[https://www.allsouls.org/Groups/363778/G070\\_Ephesians\\_Glimpsing\\_Gods\\_Vision.aspx?show\\_media=275911&show\\_file=300143](https://www.allsouls.org/Groups/363778/G070_Ephesians_Glimpsing_Gods_Vision.aspx?show_media=275911&show_file=300143)
- *Listen (sermon):* "Community-Joined to God's Family" by Josh Skidmore:  
<https://stebbes.org/sermons/community-joined-to-gods-family-2/#sermons>
- *Listen (sermon):* "A New Humanity" by Tim Keller:  
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/a-new-humanity/>
- *Listen (sermon):* "Reconciling Enemies" by William Taylor:  
<https://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/5716/>

#### **Series Resources**

- *Read:* "The Message of Ephesians" by John Stott. 
- *Read:* "The Vision of Ephesians" by N. T. Wright.
- *Read:* "Gathered Together" by Karl Deenick. 
- *Watch:* "Ephesians" by the Bible Project:  
<https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-ephesians/>
- *Previous Series* from St Bart's (including Children's Resources):  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/ephesians>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart's Library (Toowoomba): [stbarts.com.au/library](http://stbarts.com.au/library)

## TOGETHER

*Week 2/4 "Together as Community"*  
*by Amy Norman (11/01/2026)*

함께하는 공동체 | Wuō dhää kē wō yēē Akutthöm | 同为一群体

*Bible Passage: Ephesians 2:1-22*

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*Gracious Father, by your Spirit help us to see and grow in our delight  
of how Jesus has joined us together. In his name we pray, Amen.*

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- Almost every community or group we belong to is either because we *have the same interests* or we're *in the same demographic*.
- What brings people together for Parkrun - is running!  
You're part of the school community, if you have school-aged children.  
You're in a book club - because you like reading.  
You're in an a cappella men's choir - because you are a man who likes to sing.
- But the church - the only community that lasts forever - is altogether different!  
Our ultimate point of unity *is not* from shared interests or even a common demographic.
- We can see that right here - just look around.  
Even in our little part of God's worldwide church,  
here we have people from different generations, with different hobbies, who grew up in different parts of the world, both men and women, both young and old.
- The question isn't really *what* binds us together - but *who*.  
*We are joined together in Christ.*  
It is God who has formed us into a community.
- Today in the letter to the Ephesians we are going to look at how we are *together as community*. In chapter 2, we see how we were:  
**Formerly Outsiders;** but now in Christ we are  
**Created into One New Humanity;** and are  
**Joined Together.**

## FORMERLY OUTSIDERS | VERSES 11-12

이전에 외인되었던 우리 | Wǎkëë yëë Kǎc bii yīic | 从前是外人

*First*, as we think about being together as community, we are told to remember that we were **formerly outsiders**. *Verse 11 ...*

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Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. *Ephesians 2:11-12*

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Paul, who is writing to the Ephesians, wants them to *remember* what they were:

- They were separate, excluded, and foreigners.
- In the Old Testament, there are essentially two categories of people:  
God’s chosen nation of Israel (the Jews) *and* Gentiles (which was everyone else).
- Here Paul explains why the Gentiles were outsiders:  
They were not part of God’s chosen people.  
They were not part of the then nation Israel.  
They did not know the promises of God.  
They were not waiting for God’s promised King.

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- They were unaware of what God was doing.  
And ultimately they were without hope *because* they were without God.
- They were not without beliefs - most of the Gentiles followed all sorts of gods.  
But because they didn’t trust in the true and living God,  
then they didn’t have a true and living hope.
- Without Christ, we’d be in the same boat as the Gentiles.  
Without Christ, we are all outsiders.
- Today you might be able to earn citizenship of a different country - through time,  
acquiring valuable skills, marrying someone, or paying the fee.  
*But we can’t earn our way into God’s family.*  
On our own we have no rightful claim to be included in God’s people or in God’s promises.
- Without Christ, we are on the outside.  
Without Christ, it is like you are standing outside someone else’s home. You can look  
through the window into the house, and catch a glimpse of a loving family.  
You might be able to see the *real, lasting hope* God promises both now and after death.  
You might hear about God’s love and his delight in his people.  
But these are realities *you can’t access* when you are an outsider.  
You don’t get to *experience* them, unless you are welcomed in.

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- And we know from what Paul writes earlier in chapter two, that it is ultimately our sin that separates us from God, and keeps us on the outside, without hope.  
Without Christ, we were dead in our transgressions and sins. //
- Paul is writing largely to Gentiles, but God's people still needed to be reconciled. Their sin still separated them from God.  
They had in many ways failed to be the people whom God longed and commanded them to be.
- But the extraordinary news is that God's Messiah was going to the cross in order to overcome sin, that *both* Jew and Gentile could be reconciled to him.
- Twice Paul reminds the Ephesians *to remember* they were outsiders. Before he gets to *who* joins us together and what that looks like, how we understand ourselves as a community *is to be informed by where we began*.
- Remembering we were once *all* outsiders should have two effects:
- *First*: We shouldn't look down on anyone who is currently on the outside, for that is what we once were!  
We didn't earn our place, and so we have no reason to think we're better than anyone else. Rather, we should long and strive that other people would look to Jesus too!

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- *Second*: We should enjoy that we now belong to God's family.  
We belong *only* because Jesus welcomes us in.  
That should continue to give us confidence, and be the source of immense delight in the blessing of being chosen in him.
- Sadly people still come to church and feel like they are outsiders.  
If that has been your experience I'm so sorry.  
As God's people, we all have a responsibility to look out and welcome everyone who God brings along - for we are not in this community on our own merit, but *only* because Jesus has brought us in.

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## CREATED INTO ONE NEW HUMANITY | VERSE 13-18

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Being together as community is not just being welcomed by Jesus,  
but he **creates us into one new humanity**. Verse 13 ..

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

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. Verses 13-17

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- We have been brought near by the blood of Christ.  
But notice that Jesus does more than just *bring us near*,  
but he creates in himself *one new humanity*.
- How does Jesus do this?  
We are not together as community because we received a letter or membership card from Jesus, but we are created *into* a new humanity *by his blood*.
- To achieve this - see what Jesus needed to do.  
He had to destroy the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. >

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- The ultimate barrier is *our hostility*, our sin, that separates us from him.
- What it took to make us one and to reconcile us with God was *the blood of Christ*.  
In Jesus' own body through the cross, we were reconciled to God.
- Being made one new humanity was not cheap.
- Extraordinarily, as the barrier of our sin was broken through Jesus' death,  
the hostilities between Jew and Gentile were also destroyed.
- Deep hostility was present between Jews and Gentiles.  
At that time, it would have seen an insurmountable difference.  
Even in the Temple, there were reminders - a literal dividing wall built out of stone, that divided Gentile and Jew.
- And yet *through his blood* Jesus brought peace to those who were far away,  
and he brought peace to those who were near.
- The outcome of Jesus' death is that he created *in himself* one new humanity.  
In Christ, we are reconciled *to each other* and *to God*.
- If you have ever felt like an outsider, or alienated from others,  
don't miss what Jesus *has already done* on the cross. >

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- Because of his blood, together we are now made one. As Karel Deenick puts it:

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The church's identity as the new humanity in Christ, the family of God in Christ, transcends any other identity that we might have, whether age, ethnicity, gender, class, education, interests, favourite sports, or anything else.

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- We are not *one as community* because we are naturally friends, rather we were enemies that needed to be reconciled.
- We are only made *one* because of what Jesus has done.
- As the new humanity in Christ, we now have extraordinary privileges. Have a look at *verse 18*:

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For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. *verse 18*

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- As the new humanity *in Christ*, together we have access to the Father, by the Spirit, in the Son.
- Being created into a *new humanity* implies that everything is changed, that everything has a *new perspective to it*.  
If you've followed Jesus for a while, you have probably experienced this. >

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By the Spirit's work, you might have a new found love for people you previously ignored, or a growing patience for people who are different to you.

- As we are made a *new humanity through Christ's work of reconciliation*, we should expect there to be a positive shift in how we relate to each other. We know this is not fully realised yet - we still hurt each other, but because *we are already made one* - we don't work towards unity because it sounds nice, but because it is already a reality in Christ.

## JOINED TOGETHER | VERSES 19-20

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Finally, Paul uses multiple images to explain *how* we are **joined together**. Verse 19 ...

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Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. Verses 19-20

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- In Christ, *you have* a new status.  
You are no longer a foreigner or stranger,  
but you belong to *God's people* and are *members of God's household*.
- This is what *we now are* - not what we might get to or might hope to achieve,  
but what we have now become.
- And notice how the outcome of being made a new humanity *is not an individual future*.  
Paul doesn't say now you are in Christ, go and live your life, and make your own way.  
Instead *because* you are in Christ, you belong with God's people and his household.
- Being citizens of God's people means we are rightful citizens of God's kingdom.  
Being members of God's household means we are part of his family.
- Being *together as community* is an essential and unchangeable consequence of being in Christ. >

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- The foundation of being together as community is *Jesus himself*.
- Foundations are essential to any building,  
and a cornerstone is a part of the foundation in which *everything* is anchored to.
- Our cornerstone is Jesus Christ himself.  
Our position in God's family and in his kingdom is based not on our effort or on our merit,  
but anchored to Jesus alone.
- How important we evaluate the church is not based on what we get out of it,  
but because Jesus Christ himself is the cornerstone.
- He is the *foundation of our life together* and the one who *anchors* our life together.  
We are only *joined together* because of Jesus.  
All we do then, should flow out from him.
- How then should we *express* being joined together as community? Jesus said:

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"Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." John 13:34b-35

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- Loving each other is one way Jesus tells us how to be together.  
It's not surprising really, for loving each other is how we show the world God's love.
- When the church together fails to love one another, we miss the opportunity to show how

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Jesus *has already* reconciled us.

When we don't love each other, we can present the false impression that there are *things other than faith in Jesus* which really make you part of God's family. /

- Now of course we will not get this right all the time.  
There are things we will disagree on, and need to work through.  
But we can do this with love.
- Ultimately the church is a group of sinners and outsiders,  
who have been welcomed by Jesus.  
And so we also need to be realistic about our expectations of Christian community.
- The church will be imperfect until Jesus returns.
- And yet *because Jesus thought it so critical to join us together,  
that he has died for us so that we could be together,*  
we should not dismiss the church, even with all its imperfections.
- Rather, part of following Jesus is prioritising this community that he died to build together.
- That means *committing* to a local church - wherever you are.  
Not letting fear of being an outsider withhold you from making an effort to be known,  
for you already belong.  
Commitment to being together might begin by simply sharing *who you are*.

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Here at St Bart's that might mean completing a next step card,  
sending an email to say hello,  
or shaping your Sunday so you can stay and connect with others  
(who you don't yet know) over morning tea.

- Prioritising the community Jesus brought together,  
means when you move towns - making it a priority to find and commit to another local  
church, a community of Christians to love, to serve, and to worship God together.  
For this is what we were made for and what our future will be.

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## CONCLUSION | VERSES 21-22

The ultimate image Paul has in mind of being joined together reflects our future. *Verse 21...*

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In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. *Verse 21-22*

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- In Christ, we are joined together to become a temple.  
We no longer need to *go to the temple* to be in God's presence,  
but as God's people we are being made into a temple - where God indwells us by his Spirit.
- The whole story of the Bible is the story of God making a way to dwell with his people.  
And that is what he is doing *with us as a community*.
- This is an ongoing process, as the Lord is still bringing people in.
- But how we are joined together *now as a community* is a *foretaste* of what God is doing.  
Because of Jesus' blood, God's people include everyone who is found in Jesus.  
Our future in new creation is being gathered with all those Jesus has welcomed in,  
and *together* worshipping him as our Lord,  
and *delighting* in the Lord's permanent presence with us.
- How we are together *now* as God's community is a foretaste of our future.

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*Heavenly Father, how we thank you that you didn't leave us as outsiders,  
but through your Son we have been welcomed into your family.*

*We pray for anyone here today who doesn't yet know you - that they would look to Jesus,  
and know your welcome into your family.*

*Lord, please by your Spirit, help us to embrace the beauty of how you've joined us together,  
and help us love each other - that anyone who looks at us, would get a glimpse of your love.*

*In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

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