

RECONCILING CHRISTIANS IN A TIME OF DIVISION

LEADER'S GUIDE

BIG IDEA

Through Jesus, all believers of all backgrounds now have peace with God and with each other. But the problem is that we all still carry hostility toward others, even if it's subtle. The goal of the discussion is not to condemn ourselves or others, but to identify where we have set up our own dividing walls with God and other believers, and how we can look to Christ and move toward reconciliation.

CREATE A SAFE SPACE

"Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.... Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Ephesians 4:29, 32

Set these discussion norms in your group:

- Agree to believe the best in each other.
- Seek to be a learner. Ask "help me understand" questions.
- If something offensive is said, agree to speak into it with grace and truth.
- Keep yourself from jumping to conclusions and from making generalizations.
- Strive to advocate for people and against stereotypes.
- Pray with each other before you start discussing.

DISCUSSION

"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone." Colossians 4:6

1. Think of a time you felt misunderstood or misrepresented. What happened? How did you react or respond?
2. In the past year especially, what have you noticed about division and hostility prevalent in our culture and country? How has it affected you personally?
3. Read Ephesians 2:11-22

(Background: Ephesians is attributed to Paul, who wrote it as a general letter to Gentile believers. The book is

known for its relevance to the church today. In the letter, Paul communicates God's redemptive story—from before creation, to the Fall, to salvation through Christ, to unity of the church, and how to live according to the Gospel. In 2:11-22, Paul explains that through the cross, Gentiles, who were once far from God, have now been reconciled to God and one another and have been brought into God's household, with Christ as cornerstone.)

4. In verses 11-13, what are Gentile believers to “remember” and understand about their lives prior to Christ?
5. In verses 13-18, what verbs does Paul use to show Christ's role in reconciliation of the Gentiles?
6. In verse 14, Paul mentions the “dividing wall of hostility.” Where do you see walls in your own life? If you don't see any, consider praying that God would show these walls to you. Consider asking someone who knows you well to point out walls you may not be aware exist.

(There is evidence that Jews posted signs in the temple to keep Gentiles out of the inner courts, under penalty of death. It also shows the division between Jews and Gentiles caused by the manmade Jewish law.)

7. What do you think Paul means when he says that “he [Christ] is our peace” in verse 14 and when he says that “Christ preached peace” in verse 17?

(There are several meanings for the word Greek word for “peace” [eirene]. Harmony between men; Between nations; Friendliness; Order in the state and in churches; Harmony between God and man, because of the Gospel; Rest and contentment.)

8. What does Paul want these believers to understand about what Christ accomplished for them and what this means for their new lives in Christ?

APPLY

1. How have you experienced “hostility” in your relationship with God or felt “separation” in your relationships with others?
2. In what ways does Christ's death on the cross break down those barriers of hostility in your life?
3. Knowing and trusting in what Christ has accomplished for you, what small steps can you take (today, this week, this month) to reconcile broken relationships or move toward other believers?

