

COMMUNITY GROUP WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDE
WEEK OF MAY 25, 2009

THIS WEEK'S FOCUS
Radical Reconciliation

"I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, and every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight; 'and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together.'..."

With this faith, we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith, we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

And this will be the day – this will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning..."

–Martin Luther King Jr.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

THIS WEEK'S TEXT
Ephesians 2:11-22

RELATED TEXTS TO EXPLORE

Gen 17, Rom 2, 5 & 11, 1 Cor 7, 2 Cor 5, Galatians, Heb 9, 1 Pet 1, John 14:27, Acts 10, Col 1

STUDY GUIDE

- **What observations can be made about:**
 - The people who call themselves "the circumcision"? Who are those people?
 - The theme of birth (or rebirth) in Eph 2?
 - The "covenants of the promise"? What is Paul referring to?
 - The spatial language used to describe the Ephesians. (e.g. separate, far, etc.)?
 - The "law, commandments and regulations"?
 - The relationship of these "two men" before Christ? After Christ?
 - The nature of conflict and reconciliation?
 - The role of the cross in reconciliation?
 - Man's access to the Father? (see also 3:12)
 - The "household" metaphor used for God's people? How and on what is it built?
- **What does each of these things mean? What did they mean for the church at Ephesus then, what do they mean for us now?**

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Use any or as many of these questions as will be helpful for your discussion.

- What has God spoken to you about this week regarding the sermon or passage?
- What is the main point of this passage?
- What does this passage reveal to us about Jesus?
- How does this passage enhance our understanding of the Gospel?
- What does this text mean for us as a community? Individually? How does it free us to be the people God intends for us to be?
- How do we need to live out the meaning of this text in our city?
- What areas in your life are not reflecting the radical reconciliation (spiritual, cultural, racial, etc.) that Jesus died to bring about? Where do you need to pursue this reconciliation?
- Who in your life is revealing your prejudice as you relate to them as “that kind” of person? How will you seek reconciliation with that person?
- How can you move from “observer” to “participant” in the church?

“The number one problem in our world is alienation: rich versus poor, black versus white, labor versus management, conservative versus liberal, East versus West...But Christ came to bring about reconciliation and peace.”

- Billy Graham

MEMORY VERSES

Last Week: Eph 2:8-10

This Week: Eph 2:19-20

PRAYER FOCUS

For the Vision and Direction of the church (May):

Apostles Church wants to be a people who intentionally connect others to Jesus. We will authentically, compassionately and intelligently dialogue with the culture about the Gospel of Jesus.

In Response to the Text:

- Thanking God that those who are in Christ are included in the “covenants of the promise” and given hope
- Thanking Jesus for shedding his blood on the cross which has brought us who were far away close and given us access to the Father by his Spirit
- That we would not only embrace the peace and reconciliation of Jesus, but pursue it in our relationships with others in the city
- That we as the church – the dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit – would behave like those who have received reconciliation in our attitudes, assumptions, language and pursuits
- That God would strengthen us to boldly proclaim the gospel of reconciliation to our city and that many would be brought near to God by trusting in Jesus’ work on the cross
- That we would be a church that models racial, cultural, political and social reconciliation in this city. That God would grant us humility, love, and peace as we live as a “community on mission”
- For racial, political and social reconciliation in our city, country and world. Specifically for areas that are experiencing or have experienced oppression, war and genocide.

FURTHER RESOURCES FOR STUDY AND PREPARATION

- *To Live In Peace*– Mark Gornik
- *Let Justice Roll Down*– John M. Perkins
- *A Theology As Big As The City*– Ray Bakke
- *The Gospel In Black And White*– Dennis L. Okholm
- *The Church Enslaved: A Theology of Racial Reconciliation*– Tony Campolo
- *I Have A Dream*– Martin Luther King Jr

NEXT WEEK’S TEXT

Ephesians 3:1-13