

# The Church as God's Plan in Evangelism and Missions

By John Massey

## Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

### Assignment One

Read the comments related to Ephesians 2:11–12 in the section **It's In the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How does Paul describe life apart from Christ?

### Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Ephesians 2:13–18 in the section **It's In the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: How does Christ accomplish the uniting of both Jews and Gentiles into one body, the church?

### Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Ephesians 2:19–22 in the section **It's In the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following question: What are the different analogies and metaphors Paul uses for the church?

### Scripture to Memorize

*But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* Ephesians 2:13

### Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand that the church is God's eternal plan to show His purpose and grace in Jesus Christ to a lost world.

**John Massey** is associate professor of Missions at Southwestern Seminary. John and his wife, Vanessa, served for ten years in Singapore as missionaries with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

## It's in the Book

30 minutes

### Real-Life Scenario

Imagine that you live in a town where the population is increasingly Hispanic and a growing number of people from across Asia. The school you attend reflects the diversity of your neighborhood. You notice that your church is largely made up of people with your same race and ethnicity.

Should your church start reflecting the diversity in your neighborhood? How does Scripture speak to this issue?

### The Church as God's Plan in Missions and Evangelism

**Read** Ephesians 2:11–22 out loud.

God's plan from the beginning has been to form His church from people of all races and backgrounds. The command of Christ to His people is to make disciples of all nations. This is the essence of evangelism and missions. The result of God using His people to bring the gospel to all nations is the formation of churches worldwide. He calls His people to join Him in making disciples and starting churches.

### Studying the Passage

**Verse 11. you Gentiles.** Paul wrote specifically to the Gentiles in these verses. The Greek word for Gentiles means "nations." He commanded them to remember who they once were so they might understand where they now fit within God's overall plan. **Circumcision.** This term refers to the Jews. In the eyes of the Jews of Paul's day, circumcision was required in order to be a part of God's family. **Uncircumcision.** This is what the Jews called Gentiles they considered to be nonbelieving. Paul wanted the Gentile believers to remember that they were far from God before they came to Christ.

**Verse 12. separated from Christ . . . having no hope.** Before the Ephesians came to know Jesus, they were in a hopeless situation.

### Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: How does Paul describe life apart from Christ?

### Discussion Question

Why does Paul remind the non-Jewish members of the congregation to remember who they once were before they came to faith in Jesus Christ?

### On Your Own

Take time to reflect on your life before you believed on Jesus Christ for salvation. Consider what a difference Christ has made in your life. In the space below, write a description of what you probably would be like today if no one had ever brought you the gospel.

### **Studying the Passage**

**Verse 13. brought near by the blood of Christ.** Paul reminded the Ephesians that Christ had made the difference in their lives. Christ has created a new body, the church, made up of people from all backgrounds. **blood of Christ.** Christ's death on the cross had drawn them near to God. Before, they were dead in trespasses and sins, but now they were in Christ Jesus.

**Verse 14. He Himself is our peace.** Paul was primarily referring to peace among believing Jews and Gentiles, who once hated and despised each other. Paul said Christ has made both groups (believing Jews and Gentiles) into one. **Dividing wall of hostility.** The temple of the Jews in Jerusalem had an outer wall that kept Gentiles from entering further into the temple and therefore into the presence of God. Paul was probably using this symbol of separation to speak of what Christ had done in eliminating all barriers between believing Jews and Gentiles through His cross. Christ has torn down the wall of separation and created one church made up of people whom He has saved from all nations.

**Verse 15. in Himself.** This is another reference to Christ's death. He made the two warring groups into one. The words **new man** could also be interpreted as "one new humanity."

**Verse 16. one body.** God has reconciled Christian Jews and Gentiles through the cross of Jesus Christ.

**Verse 17. preached peace.** Christ even preached peace to both Jews and Gentiles.

**Verse 18. one Spirit.** The Holy Spirit gives both groups equal access to the Father.

### **Assignment Two Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to the following question: How does Christ accomplish the uniting of both Jews and Gentiles into one body, the church?

### **Discussion Question**

What can Christ followers in the church do to show the reconciliation Christ has accomplished between people of different backgrounds?

### **On Your Own**

In the space below, list a concrete step you can take to make people of all backgrounds feel welcome in your church.

### **Studying the Passage**

**Verse 19. fellow citizens . . . household of God.** Paul described the changed status of the Gentiles in light of what Christ had done for them. God's plan from the beginning was to save both Jews and Gentiles and create the church. Paul described the church as continuing to grow.

**Verse 20. apostles and prophets.** The foundation is the inspired Word of God, made up of the Old Testament and eventually the New Testament. **the cornerstone.** The cornerstone is Christ Jesus Himself. The cornerstone is the most important part of construction for any new building, giving the building stability and direction.

**Verse 21. holy temple.** Paul used the analogy of the temple to describe what God is doing in creating the church. In the Old Testament, the temple was the place where God chose to demonstrate His presence among His people. Now God has chosen to dwell in the church. **grows.** Paul described this living temple made of believing Jews and Gentiles as growing by God's hand.

**Verse 22. dwelling place for God by the Spirit.** Paul said God is building this temple, the church, as His dwelling.

### **Assignment Three Feedback**

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to the following question: What are the different analogies and metaphors Paul uses for the church?

### **Discussion Question**

What are the essential components of the living temple, the church, that God is building today?

### **On Your Own**

As you sit in worship on Sunday morning, do you see people there who came to know Christ in part through your witness? A year from now, would you want your answer to be different? In the space below, write some of your thoughts on this subject as a prayer to Jesus.

### **Heart and Hands**

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

**Since Last Week**

5 minutes

**Grace-Filled Accountability**

5 minutes

**Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service**

5 minutes

**Prayer**

7 minutes

## **At Home: Nail It Down**

God's eternal plan has been to create the church out of all nations. Christ commands His church to make disciples of all the people groups on planet earth. The church can faithfully carry out this command by evangelizing the lost, discipling converts and starting new churches.

According to the New Testament, the church is a diverse body made up of people from different backgrounds. Jesus Christ, through His death on the cross, has created unity out of diversity. Each person, regardless of background, is equal in the eyes of God. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

Paul describes the church as a growing and living temple that is still under construction. The church finds its purpose in the unfinished nature of God's building project. Each believer has a responsibility to assist the church to grow through making disciples of all nations and bringing them into this "temple" that is now under construction.

### **Follow up Question**

*How has your understanding of the church changed after reading Ephesians 2:11–22?*

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.