**Life Group Bible Study**

Ministry Year Theme: “Jump In!”

Series: Let’s Go Swimming in Ephesians

Message: Brought Near

Week of Sunday, January 26, 2020

**Ephesians 2:11-22**

*11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

*14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*

*19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by [in] the Spirit.*

1. Opening.
   1. Share about an experience where you felt like an outsider or a stranger.
      1. Was there anyone who helped you through that experience or helped you become an insider?
   2. In our culture, do you see any “dividing walls of hostility” between people?
2. Scripture.
   1. Because this passage is so theologically rich, this study is separated into three (3) sections.
   2. Section 1 – Ephesians 2:11-13.
      1. Are you a Jewish person or a Gentile person?
      2. How are the Gentiles described in this section?
         1. Why do you think Paul wants them to remember this?
         2. Do you think Gentiles (that is, all of us who are not Jewish) really have “no hope” as it says in verse 12? Why or why not?
      3. Paul says that in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. What have you been brought near to?
   3. Section 2 – Ephesians 2:14-18.
      1. Christ broke down the dividing wall of hostility between the Jewish people and the Gentile people. What does he create?
      2. Where do you see hostility in the world or in your own life?
      3. Why do you think there is so much hostility and walls of division in our world?
      4. Do you believe Jesus can break down these walls of hostility that you see?
         1. Why or why not?
   4. Section 3 – Ephesians 2:19-22.
      1. How does Paul describe these followers of Jesus in Ephesus who received this letter?
      2. Do you think these words also describe you?
      3. Imagine that these words do in fact describe you and other followers of Jesus. How does this make you feel?
      4. What does it mean that you are of the household of God?
3. Our Lives.
   1. How has Jesus brought you near?
      1. Has there been a particular time in your life when you felt near to God? Please share.
   2. Are there times or situations where you feel hostility towards others?
      1. Are you in a broken relationship, where you are divided by a wall of hostility?
      2. Sunday’s messaged talked about the attitude of needing to be right or needing to be in control that contributes to us feeling and creating hostility towards others.
         1. What do you think creates hostility?
      3. How do you get past the dividing wall of hostility?
         1. How can remembering Jesus (and remembering that we were once far off until Jesus brought us near) help us to let go of our feelings of hostility towards others?
   3. What do you envision for your life over the next 50 years?
      1. Paul says in verse 22, that we are being “built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”
         1. Do you believe this, that you and others are being built together into a dwelling place for God?
      2. If you believe this, how does this change your perspective around hostility and the walls that divide us from each other?
4. Prayer
   1. Share one thing that God is speaking to you about today.
   2. Pray for each other.
5. Jump In - Your Discipleship Relationship.
   1. Check in with the person you are discipling or who is discipling you.
   2. Spend time reading Ephesians 2:11-22 together.
   3. What do you find confusing?
   4. What do you find hopeful?