

**Welcome to Week 1 of Pixelated!** This series will be a little different than the previous sermon series we have worked through together. Pixelated is all about getting perspective on fuzzy concepts in the Bible by looking to Jesus. You might notice that this guide is a little different-- we hope it will give you extra support as you lead your group into some challenging conversations this week!

## BIG IDEA

**The cross focuses God's goodness over the blur of pride and fear.**

## WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO KNOW?

Reflect on the well-known expression "They can't see the forest for the trees." Have you ever been guilty of this? What happened?

**Read Ephesians 2:11-22.** What is the focus or big idea of this passage? Support your answer. On the cross, Jesus reconciled us to the Father. He made it possible for us to be in right, harmonious relationship with God in the here and now. He also made it possible for us to experience peace, reconciliation and unity with one another! Ephesians 2:11-22 teaches us that Jesus died for every kind of person—including Gentiles, who were not a part of Israel. The love of Jesus demonstrated on the cross is the kind of love that brings people together, crossing cultural, religious and socioeconomic barriers.

Based on this passage, what is your understanding of the word "reconcile"? The context in Ephesians 2:11-22 can teach us that reconciling is about being brought into relationship. When we are reconciled, hostility that use to exist within a relationship is removed, creating space for healing and wholeness in the way we relate to God and others.

How is this passage good news for you, specifically? No matter how we may see ourselves, or how the world chooses to categorize us, Jesus has created a whole new category for us to belong within. Through Jesus, we can take on a new identity as saints and members of God's household. This is true for you no matter what you've done or who you may have been in the past.

**This question is a great one to ask those who have recently come to faith. They might not have learned that following Jesus comes with a new identity and a sense of belonging.**

How is this passage good news for people who are different than you? This passage is good news for anyone who could be considered "far off" or "alien." At the time Ephesians was written, the world was divided into two groups: Jew and Gentile. God-fearing Jews were shocked to find out that God was drawing even the *Gentiles* to himself through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. This should help us to realize that God is currently at work in people who we think are on the outside and that he is drawing people who are different than us (American, Christian, etc) to himself.



## WHAT IS MY INITIAL REACTION?

What emotions does **Ephesians 2:11-22** stir in you?

Is there a person (or group of people) you would be surprised to see in heaven? Does your heart toward this person (or group of people) reflect God's heart?

**This question is a great way to make sure your group discussion gets down to real application.**

Is it easy for you to develop meaningful relationships with people who are different than you? Why or why not?

**Read Galatians 3:26-29.** How do you make sense of this passage?

What do you think causes people to "label" themselves and others?

## WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21.** How did Jesus model the ministry of reconciliation for us?

Jesus is the ultimate example of reconciliation. This passage tells us that Jesus did not count the sins of people against them; he even *became* sin for our sake, so that we could become the righteousness of God. Operating in the ministry of reconciliation means that we give up our right to hold people's sin against them. We choose instead to show others the love of God because we believe that God can make them righteous.

What "walls of hostility" are still in your heart? What are some ways you could address these areas?

Ephesians 2 says that Jesus broke down the wall of hostility that existed between Jews and Gentiles. Some of us may hold resentment in our hearts toward someone or some group of people, based on their beliefs or behavior (Muslims, LGBT Community, Republicans, Democrats, etc). Challenge your group to see how these walls of hostility can keep those other people from experiencing the transformational love of God.

**If we don't love the people who we disagree with or dislike, who will?**

Where have fear and pride kept you from reconciling broken relationships?

Have you been counting sins against the people God has placed in your life? Based on this passage, what is God asking you to do in these relationships?

**This question is helpful for people at any stage of their journey with Jesus. We tend to treat the people closest to us with the least amount of patience and forgiveness. Help you group members to discover ways they be reconcilers in their homes, school, and places of work.**

