

## Lesson Two

# Christ makes us one

*Chosen in Christ*

# Ephesians

---

### Introduction

Captain Gerald Coffee was a POW in Hanoi for seven years during the Vietnam Conflict. The prisoners were all kept in isolation, as the North Vietnamese recognized that their spirits could be broken more easily if the prisoners had no contact with or support from each other. Realizing this same truth, Captain Coffee and his fellow prisoners developed a code by which they could communicate, tapping out their messages on the stone walls of the cell blocks. Even though there were severe punishments for attempting to communicate, the prisoners would risk torture in order to be sure that the new captives became aware of the communication system and would be able to take advantage of the support being offered. Getting a new man into the group was necessary for him to survive. The other prisoners were willing to put their concern for him ahead of their own needs.

We Christians face enemies who want to divide and conquer us. Let's consider what it means to join together in Christ to withstand these attacks on our faith.

### Search the Scriptures

#### *Jesus destroys barriers*

**Read Ephesians 2:11-22, 3:6.** As you read through the section, note the emphasis on oneness and peace instead of division.

- What was the Old Testament sign of the covenant between God and his people?
- According to Ephesians, how are Gentiles now brought into the family of God in the New Testament?
- What did Christ abolish?
- What is the foundation for God's household?
- Who makes up the "holy temple in the Lord"?

Many Jews took pride in their circumcision, in being God's chosen people. Some became arrogant and self-assured; some put more value on the outward act than on faithfulness. How do we need to guard against self-righteousness in our faith-lives?

Perhaps you've heard the saying, "Sin divides, Jesus heals."

- What personal sins cause us to build dividing walls?
- How does the love of Jesus tear those walls down and bring healing?

Think about the term household of God. Consider a family's interaction with each other.

- What may cause friction or division in a family? What may cause friction or division in a family of believers?
- How must those issues be resolved?
- Who do you interact as family with your fellow believers?

Ephesians tells us that we as a body of believers are the temple of God, a dwelling built by the Holy Spirit, in which he lives.

- How important is the physical building in which believers meet to worship?
- What attachment might we feel to a certain location or a certain building?

## ***Christ unites us***

**Read Ephesians 4:1-13.** Paul urges us to live in harmony. Make a list of some of the attributes needed to maintain Christian unity:

Note that people are given different gifts and fill different roles in the church. Why are these gifts given to God's people?

We use the term *Christian fellowship* frequently. Go around the room and express your understanding of what that term means.

Do you think people value church membership today as highly as the early New Testament Christians did? Explain your answer.

We who make up the church are still human, still flawed and sinful. It will take more than just assembling us together to make a caring community. What else is needed? See **Philippians 2:4,5; Colossians 3:12-14; and Romans 12:3.**

## **Summary**

Thinking back to our introductory story, the prisoners forged a community of support based upon beliefs and circumstances. It's doubtful they would have been that close (or even have become friends) had they not been brought together by a common need. Consider:

- What needs do Christians have in common?
- How can we use God's gifts to the church to work at developing unity among people of diverse backgrounds with different lifestyles?

## **Your walk with God**

For this section you may wish to mark your calendar for the upcoming week. That way you can get into the habit of taking time out of your schedule for a personal walk with the Lord.

### ***Day one—Devotion***

God told his people of the Old Testament that he wanted "circumcision of the heart" (Deuteronomy 30:6). David expresses a similar thought in Psalm 51:16,17, and Paul delivers this same message in Romans 2:29. How can a changed heart show itself in your day-to-day life?

### ***Day three—Forgiveness***

One barrier to unity is lack of forgiveness. A story is told about Clara Barton, who was reminded of a particularly cruel deed someone had done to her years before. When asked whether she remembered the incident, Barton replied, "No, I distinctly remember forgetting it." Read Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:21-35 and consider how our heavenly Father forgives us. (See also Isaiah 43:25.) Are you holding any grudges today? Ask the Lord to help you to forget.

### ***Day five—Encouragement***

Read Romans 15:1,7. Think of someone in your life who could use some encouragement. Make a list of things you could do to build up that person. Carry out those acts of love this week.