



grow groups



## Week 1: Jews and Gentiles Ephesians 2:11-22

### GOAL:

Connect with your group members and preview the semester

### CHECKLIST

- Reach out individually to all group members (new or returning) to welcome them and to give them details for your first meeting.
- Prepare for your group meeting by praying for yourself and your group (feel free to use the prayer below) and reading through this Leader's Guide.
- Spend time catching up with your group and meeting any new members
- Discuss any logistics for your group (snack signup, social get togethers, etc.)
- Take attendance in Planning Center, including guests/new members

### PREPARING THROUGH PRAYER:

*Heavenly Father, thank you for the beginning of a new Grow Group semester. I'm so grateful that we don't have to follow Jesus alone, but that you have given us a spiritual family to support and encourage us along the way. As we embark on the journey of this new semester together, I pray that you would strengthen us through the power of your Holy Spirit and through the encouragement we receive from one another. May we end this semester more like Jesus than we began. In his beautiful name we pray, Amen.*

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*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10:24-25*

## CONNECT

Begin by introducing new members and catching up with returning members.

**If you have new members:** To help new members connect with the group, take time to let ALL members, both new and returning, introduce themselves. You can ask them to share basic info, like telling about their family or what they do during the day (work, school, etc.), or you can make it creative, like what their dream job would be, their favorite restaurant, etc.

**All Groups:** Since this is the first time your group will have been together in a month, spend some time checking in to find out how each person's break was. We suggest you do this in two sections:

### CATCH UP

Give each group member the opportunity to share what's been happening in their lives over the last few weeks. You might use "highs/lows" or just ask them to share a thing or two about their break.

In addition to asking about what's been happening in their family, job, health, etc., specifically ask about how the last few weeks were for them spiritually. You can phrase this in multiple ways, including, "Where did you see God at work over the last month?" or "How were things in your spiritual life this month?" or "Is there anything you think God has been teaching you recently?" We know these questions can be difficult to ask (and answer!) but it's worth it! We want to see our groups continue to grow in their ability to talk openly about spiritual things so that we can serve as an encouragement and inspiration to each other as we follow Jesus together.

### LIFT UP

After hearing from each person, spend time lifting each other up in prayer, focusing on thanking God for his blessings over the last month and asking him to move in all of the situations shared.

## PREVIEW

Spend a few minutes previewing the semester in three areas:

**Schedule:** Go over any specific schedule notes (weeks when you'll do something different, etc.)

**Scripture Engagement:** Encourage the group to participate in the daily devotions contained in the *Growth Guide*. In the life of a disciple, there is no substitute for spending regular time in Scripture and prayer! Take a few minutes to make sure everyone has a copy of the *Growth Guide* and that they understand how to use it. Let them know that each week, one of the questions will be about the readings from that week.

**Roles:** This is a great time to invite people to serve in the group. You might ask some people to plan a social event, others to coordinate snacks, and someone else to reach out to people who miss a week or two. Also, please be thinking about who in your group you'd like to ask to facilitate one week. (we'll talk more about this soon)

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## DISCUSS

**Leader's Note:** *Since we'll be spending time together in the Worship Center for the Grow Group Kickoff, you may end up spending all of your time catching up and previewing the semester. If so, that's great! But, if you end up with a few extra minutes, here are a couple of sermon-related questions you might want to discuss:*

- As you listened to Larry's sermon on Ephesians 2:11-22 this week, what are some of the things that stood out? How might God be speaking to you through the Scripture and the message?
- Why do you think it's sometimes difficult for people from different backgrounds to get along?
- How might the death of Jesus make it possible for people who are different from one another to experience unity? Have you ever had an experience where you found common ground with another follower of Jesus who was from a significantly different background from you? What was this like for you?

**Leader's Note:** *In today's passage, Paul says that on the cross, Jesus broke down "the dividing wall of hostility" that existed between Jews and Gentiles and "made the two groups one." He goes on to say that we have all become "members of his household."*

*On the cross, Jesus conquered our sin. And it is our sinful elevation of our own backgrounds, personalities, and preferences over our love for others that has led to the lack of unity so prevalent in our culture. So when Jesus defeated sin, he made it possible for us to experience the life God had in mind for us all along...a life filled with love for all people as we extend the same grace to others that God has extended to us.*

*Spend a few minutes sharing stories of times group members experienced this kind of supernatural unity that transcends cultural, ethnic, political, age, and personality differences. Perhaps it was on a mission trip, in a church service, or even in your own Grow Group!*

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