

Life-lessons 4: When God tears down and builds anew...

Ephesians 2:11-22

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Pastor Bill Hybels of Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago says these words with passion: “The local church is the hope of the world.” There is something attractive about safe, honest, and welcoming places. And the church can and should be that kind of place!

Jesus was a relationship builder. He knew the importance of meaningful relationships and He gave the early church a model for true community: “Love your neighbour . . . love your enemies . . . give to the needy . . . forgive one another . . . do not judge . . .” Take a look through the Gospels, and time after time you will see Christ demonstrating biblical community to the sick, the poor, the rich, the outcast, the religious, and the non-christian. It was attractive then and it is attractive now to a generation who is searching for something of substance.

Quoting Bill Hybels again, “There is nothing like the local church when the local church is working right.”

In John Ortbergs book on community, “Everybody’s Normal Till You Get To Know Them”, he writes, “Community—living in vital connectedness with others—is essential to human life. God wants to tear down certain man-built walls and hinders so that He can build something amazing and something new.

In our text from Ephesians 2, Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus was to give them a life-lesson regarding that the priorities of Jesus Christ need to be developed into our priorities. In the verses we’re looking at today we can see at least three illustrations of what Christ expects the church to be.

Priority 1: Peace (Ephesians 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.).

If we want our hearts and our churches to align with the priorities of Christ, then we must pray:

- 1) That our churches would be places of mutual respect, of one mind, and of one mission
- 2) If He really is the “God of all peace,” then our lives need to reflect it.
- 3) That the message of peace would be clear to those who are searching.

Priority 2: Intimacy (Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.).

Priority 3: Belonging (Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household).

Let’s not build walls when God has torn them down once and for all so that something beautiful can emerge.

God, tear down any walls I may have in my life so that you can build something amazing, something exciting, something new!”