



THE WIN

The win for this week is to celebrate the new team that God has given us and to encourage group members to pursue diversity in our groups to reflect our unity in Christ alone.

SERMON RECAP: WHAT DID THE TEXT MEAN? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

3-5 minutes In the sermon this week, we learned that God has given us one new unified team through Christ. Our new team is vastly different in identity and activity than our old teams. It is characterized by an exhilarating mission and an uncommon unity.

- What truths grabbed your attention from the sermon today that you would like to discuss with the group?

WARM UP

5-10 minutes **Icebreaker:**

Discuss how your group came together in its formation.

What led you to choose this particular LifeGroup? What do each of you share in common that led you to form this particular "team"?

THE TEXT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

20-30 minutes Our passage this week was Ephesians 2:11-22. Re-read this passage together as a group.

Ask the group to read go through and identify the characteristics of our "old team" and then those of our "new team."

Old Team	New Team
Uncircumcised	Circumcised
Without the Messiah	In Christ
Aliens	Citizens
Strangers	Saints
No Hope	With Hope
Without God	With God
Hostility	Peace

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- What is your favorite characteristic of your new team and why?

Despite our diversity, we have one united team in Christ. However, as human beings, we have a tendency towards being attracted to people who are just like us. It's very easy for us to drift towards people who look like us, talk like us, and value the same things as we do. You likely identified some of these commonalities within your group when discussing the warm-up question.

This is not a new development: a bent towards separation has been going on throughout history including during biblical times. Although this is not always a negative, the gospel calls us to so much more now that we are part of God's family. Let's read another example of this in the New Testament where even some of the most devoted followers of Christ fell prey to this.

Read Acts 11:1-18

- From the passage, why did Peter (Cephas) originally start eating with Gentiles or "uncircumcised men"?

Leaders: be sure to emphasize the importance of table fellowship in the Jewish culture. It was one thing to be nice to a person in public, but to invite a person to eat with you was a big deal. Here's a quote from Timothy George's commentary on Galatians to elaborate:

"In the fast-food culture of modern Western civilization, it is difficult to appreciate the religious significance ancient peoples associated with the simple act of eating. This was especially characteristic of Judaism...In Judaism table-fellowship means fellowship before God, for the eating of a piece of broken bread by everyone who shares in the meal brings out the fact that they all have a share in the blessing which the master of the house has spoken over the unbroken bread."¹

Now read **Galatians 2:11-15** and discuss as a group:

- What led Peter to stop eating with Gentiles (v.12b)?
- What do you think Paul meant when he said that Peter was "deviating from the truth of the gospel (v.14)?"
- Why was Peter acting "hypocritical" in his attitude towards Gentile believers?
- How is nationalism not in line with the gospel? What difference does it make that Paul takes this approach rather than just saying that it is wrong?
- Finally, how can we make the same kind of mistake when evaluating who we want to be in LifeGroup with? What non-essentials do we sometimes focus on? How can we fail to "eat" with other Christians?

3-5
minutes

DIGGING DEEPER

At Rush Creek, our LifeGroup philosophy is centered on "open groups." We encourage groups to seek growth and to multiply into new groups over time. This is a direct link to our vision to "become more like Jesus so that we can be Jesus to the overwhelmed, under-resourced, and far away."

We see Jesus' heart revealed in Luke 14:

"When you give a lunch or a dinner, don't invite your friends, your brothers, your relatives, or your rich neighbors, because they might invite you back, and you would be repaid. On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:12-14)

- As a group, how can we become more like Jesus by opening our group to dine with others who are not like us?

¹ Timothy George, Galatians, vol. 30, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 172.

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- Pray and formulate a specific strategy for your group to take a step in faith by acting in obedience.

CLOSING THOUGHT

Dietrich Bonhoeffer with a great quote on our new community in Christ:

"Christian community is not an ideal we have to realize, but rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate. The more clearly we learn to recognize that the ground and strength and promise of all our community is in Jesus Christ alone, the more calmly we will learn to think about our community and pray and hope for it." (from *Life Together*)