



INTRODUCTION

What is the hardest thing about building relationships? What about keeping relationships?

TAKE A LOOK AT THE BOOK

Read Ephesians 2:11-18

In Paul's time the church had two basic people groups, Jews and Gentiles (anyone who wasn't a Jew). If you read the first few chapters of Acts and the whole book of Galatians you start to see these two groups often didn't see eye to eye. The Jewish believers often wanted to impose the old religious regulations and laws that they were used to following on the Gentiles and the Gentiles sometimes wanted to flirt with how much they could stay in the old religious system they were saved out of and Paul is trying to help them both see that they are wrong! The church, following Jesus was an entirely new thing, by the blood of Jesus He brought unity to these two groups that were culturally, religiously and ethnically on opposite starting points with Jesus.

Think about your conversion experience, does verse 12 help put words to your life before Jesus? How?

What does Paul mean by "brought near by the blood of Christ"? Can we talk about reconciliation back to God by the blood of Christ without sounding like a weird cult? Is it even possible? How?

In Paul's day ethnicity, religion, and tribes were things that divided people in the church and community. What are some "walls of hostility" in our day in the church and in the community?

In essence what the cross did was say to the Jews "You've been living like you are close to God, but following rules can't get you favor with God (hint hint, they were never meant

to), you need Jesus to save you.” and to the Gentiles he says “You’ve been living completely separate from God and you need Jesus to save you.” He is saying both have different starting points and pasts, but both need the saving message of the Gospel.

In a culture today where everyone’s worldview is valid and truth is whatever you say it is, is the Gospel even still relevant for restoring relationships with God and man? Why or why not?

If Jesus’ blood united us, why are relationships still hard, even with our brothers and sisters in Christ?

TAKE IT HOME

How does this message today change how you engage your religious friends who are trying to earn their relationship with God? How does it change how you engage your unreligious friends?

Do you think the church has done a good job in reconciling broken relationships in the community? Why or why not?

The passage tells us that it is the work of God that broke down the walls of separation, so if they are already torn down (figuratively) in what ways does the Gospel motivate us to cross those broken down walls in the church? In the community?