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## ARTICLE

### Session 11: Union with Christ

#### PREPARATION

Read Scripture and background information. Reflect on the questions in the participant book. Review links suggested in the lesson outline below.

#### Train of Thought

The ever-changing world in which the church exists is exactly as God intends it to be. God remains God, regardless of how powerfully paradigms shift. Congregations that learn to ride the massive waves of change offer the gospel to a world hungry for good news.

#### Desired Outcomes

As a result of this session, participants should be able to:

- Recognize the universal nature of the church.
- See the church as a center for unity and reconciliation.
- Understand that God calls us to lifelong learning.

#### Lesson Supplies

- [Poster](#)
- Candle and matches, a worship center with globe and pictures showing the global nature of the church suggested in this session
- Review information about Ephesus — [historical and geographic, modern photos](#)
- Decide whether to lead inductive or theological Bible study (see choices below)

#### EXPLORATION AT GROUP SESSION

*Total time: 50 minutes*

Light the candle and read Genesis 1:1 and Revelation 22:13. Call attention to the worship center. Pray together the prayer from this week's Bible reading.

#### Bible Study Focus Verses: Ephesians 2:11-22

Introduce the multi-cultural, multi-religious city of Ephesus in Paul's time from your background reading. Study Ephesians 2:11-22 using one of the two methods described here.

#### *Discovery (Inductive) Study* (one study choice)

This is a method for interpreting and applying the passage. Have several translations of the Bible available. A modern translation, such as the Contemporary English Version, is helpful for interpreting Pauline theology. This Bible study method has three parts. Begin by reading Ephesians 2:11-22 aloud.

1. Observation: Examine the passage, gathering facts before attempting to draw conclusions. Ask, "Who wrote Ephesians (page 96, *FaithQuest* Bible Study)? When was it written? What do you notice about the way it is written? What is the comparison in these verses, and how are the two things compared?"
2. Interpretation: Explore the meaning of the passage and the purpose of the original writers. What does it mean to be an "alien" or a "stranger" to the

covenants of promise (verse 12)? How is the notion of "one in Christ," which is described on page 97 of the participant's book, described in these verses? How do you define "peace" (verse 14)? What does "Christ is our peace" mean? What is the structure of the temple of God? How would you summarize this passage?

3. Application: These questions help integrate the meaning and relevance of the passage into our own lives. What issues in this passage are contemporary? How does this passage challenge our contemporary values and lifestyle? What behavior does this passage elicit? How do we put into practice what we are learning?

#### *Theological Study* (a second method for this passage)

This method, introduced in Session 7, is called "theological" because theology means thinking and talking about God and all that God does. Read the verses aloud while others follow along in their Bibles. Ask, "What does the passage tell us about God?" After several responses are discussed, ask, "What does the passage tell us about men and women?" Finally, ask, "What does this passage tell us about the relationship between God and humans?"

The fictional book *Paul*, by Walter Wangerin, offers a glimpse of the first century from Paul's point of view.

#### **Transition to Our Time**

The Reflective Moment Along the Way on page 97 encourages participants to reflect on life "united in Christ." Look at pictures people have made and respond to questions on page 97. Look at pictures in the worship center and ask, "How can our congregation be united in Christ with all God's creation?"

### **DISCOVERY — APPLYING IDEAS TO THE CONGREGATION**

*Total time: 45 minutes*

#### **Discussion Questions** (30 minutes)

Nurturing the three kinds of knowledge is a vital leadership function within the congregation. Make copies of the [poster](#) for participants' quick reference. Ask how the congregation could develop new means of nurturing the three kinds of knowledge. Complete the exercise on page 100. How could this exercise help identify new leaders in the congregation? How does this exercise release people from lengthy or inappropriate leadership?

#### **Feedback & Evaluation** (5 minutes)

Ask what the participants have learned in this session.

#### **Sending Forth** (10 minutes)

This *FaithQuest* session encourages self-examination of what we know in the light of understanding God and the church. Divide into pairs and ask, "How are you personally feeling challenged by *FaithQuest* sessions and discussions?" Allow time for prayer partners to talk together and pray for each other. Close by singing "Spirit of the Living God" and this benediction: "May God bless each person we encounter this week."



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# THREE KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE

Spiritual Knowledge	Professional Knowledge	Improvement Knowledge
<p>God builds spiritual knowledge in the hearts of men and women.</p> <p>This knowledge is intuitive and centered in the heart.</p> <p>We increase spiritual knowledge by a discipline of paying attention to the Spirit of God.</p>	<p>This is the data, facts, and information we learn to do our jobs better and to function in the world.</p> <p>Professional knowledge is highly valued in our culture.</p> <p>We often increase this knowledge in classrooms.</p>	<p>This is systems knowledge. This is an understanding of interrelationships.</p> <p>This knowledge is a combination of intuitive and academic knowledge.</p> <p>This knowledge is the way we see the world. It becomes “improvement” when we are open to new ways of seeing.</p>

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