

Study Guide for the Central Church of Christ

July 14, 2019

To Adult Teachers:

July 14, the sermon will reference several diverse texts. For the Bible class, we will study an extended passage (Ephesians 2:11-22) that focuses on one of the central thoughts of the sermon. Lesson outline follows:

Warm-Up/Icebreaker

1. Without being insulting, who is the “oddest couple” you know (married couples who are most opposite to one another in personality, temperament, etc.)? What do you think makes their marriage work despite their differences?
2. Who is the best “peacemaker” you know? What makes them effective in bringing together antagonistic people?

Scripture Reflection

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

1. Are we Jews or Gentiles? From verses 11-13, what would our spiritual status as Gentiles be had it not been for Jesus? How has Jesus changed our status?
2. Verse 14 refers to two groups that have been made one. What are the two groups?
3. What groups in today’s world are separated by a “dividing wall of hostility?”
4. What has God done through Christ to make peace between hostile groups of people?
5. What asset does verse 18 say we have in working toward the unity that God desires? Why is that asset important?
6. In verses 19-22, what words can you find that describe our new identity as members of the group that has been brought together in Christ?

Application

1. Do you know any examples of groups of people who might be expected to be hostile toward each other who came together in peace as believers in Jesus? Share that story with the group.
2. What groups of people who are unlike us would you like to see Central reach out to and include in our fellowship? Why?

Sermon: *The Community of the Spirit*

Two houses are built side by side. Both builders are skilled at their trade. Both use quality materials. Both have the same number of rooms and the same square footage. But one house is being built from a floor plan out of *Better Homes and Gardens*. The other has been designed by a world-renowned architect, and he is personally overseeing the construction. Do you think you will be able to tell the difference?

One is a perfectly good home. You might even call it a nice home. But the other one has something more: the distinctive features that come from the creative mind and expertise of the architect. When the first one is done, people will admire it and compliment it. When the second one is done, people will know immediately that it’s no ordinary house. Knowledgeable people will look at its features and know exactly whose work it is.

We can build a church by modeling ourselves after other churches—either the one we grew up with or the popular churches of our time. We can develop an organizational structure, appoint leaders, set up committees. We can put together nice songs and pictures and have a worship service. And what we make

might be nice, even attractive. But...we can do all of that without consulting the architect even once! But Scripture makes it clear that we can only be the Lord's house by allowing God to build it.

Psalm 127:1 says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain."

Read Ephesians 2:19-22.

What do we need if we are to allow God to build his house?

1. Absolute dependence on God. Desperate dependence. As long as we think we can do it ourselves, the Holy Spirit will stand aside. When we admit our own powerlessness and cluelessness, HS has opportunity to work. (2 Corinthians 3:5-6a) Central has a long history and has faced some desperate times in the past. Always an occasion for God's power to come through. We must develop dependence on God.
 - a. Greatest danger: after a great victory (Jericho and Ai, Joshua 6-7)
 - b. Greatest opportunity: after a great defeat or humbling (Ai second time, Joshua 8)
 - c. Greatest hindrance to God's mighty action: failure of the people to seek His guidance at every turn. (cf. Joshua 9:14-15)
2. We need to understand how the Holy Spirit works; wait on the Holy Spirit and be patient with Him, work in harmony with his ways, his timing, and his rhythms. The value of Bible stories. God's people were often waiting, questioning, confused, scared, sometimes even feeling abandoned. If our anxiety level gets too high, "we gotta do something," we strike out on our own w/o waiting for God. *Read Psalm 27:14.*
 - a. Moses on the mountain: golden calf. (Exodus 32)
 - b. Saul offering sacrifice when Samuel was delayed. (1 Samuel 10:8, 13:7-14)
 - c. Following HS: God's apparent delays. We must become accustomed to coming to the point of desperation/hopelessness before God comes through.
3. Why does the HS work this way? His task is to bring glory to Jesus (John 16). He involves himself in ways that ensure the praise goes to God and not us. Gideon. 32,000 to 300 men. Why? So God would get the glory. (*read Judges 7:2*) Get used to his pattern. Times of apparent hopelessness do two things: drive us to knees, and ensure that when a good result is achieved, God gets the glory: everyone knows it is only by the hand of God.

Central needs to be the body of Christ, assembled by the Spirit. Our quest is not just to find a great preacher. Our quest is to allow the Holy Spirit to mold us and make us and bring to our side a man who can be his instrument in what he is doing. That can only happen if we understand the Spirit and consciously desire to work in harmony with him.