

SPRING 2023

FACILITATOR GUIDE



The logo for the 'together' series is located on the left side of the page. It consists of a stylized icon of two interlocking loops above the word 'together' in a lowercase, sans-serif font. The background behind the logo is a collage of various images showing people in different settings, such as a church service, a family, and a group of people.

THE HOUSE WE BUILD

together

introduction to the series

In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Ephesians 2:21-22

That “building” is you. And me. And it’s the people who aren’t here yet. It’s the people who have gone before us, and the people who will come after us. It’s all of us together in the grace of Jesus Christ and the presence of God’s Spirit. That’s the church that God is building, and it’s the church God calls us to build together with him.

I am praying that God will use this critical season of our life together to draw each of us closer to Christ and all of us closer together. I am praying that God will empower us to Accomplish the vision he has given us. And I ask you to join me in prayer, asking God for your next steps Of growth in Christ and for the part he wants you to play in building the house together.

-Pastor Steve Turnbull

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how to use the facilitator guide

This is meant to be a resource to help you guide your group through a Bible-based discussion and into your prayer response time. You'll begin with a brief introduction to the topic, followed by a warmup question, often somewhat related to the topic of the study ahead. From there watch the weekly video from together.ualc.org/small-group-resources where you will hear the passage read and a brief reflection on that passage. You will then explore questions in an open conversation (remembering to practice good listening and encourage dialogue), and close with a time of prayer with each other. We end with prayer prompts that may help you tie these passages to the needs or desires of your group, and to bless what the Lord has done in your time together.

There are typically more questions that your group will get through. This is by design. We would rather you have more questions than you need than too few. We advise that the facilitator review the lesson ahead of the meeting and choose a few questions they'd most like to ask, so that you can skip over some questions for the sake of time. Remember, you're meeting routinely, so there will be time to circle back on these conversations again.

Please allot appropriate time for prayer at the end of your meeting. Prayer is an essential and irreplaceable part of small group. We'd rather you abbreviate the discussion and move on to prayer rather than have a long discussion and speed through prayer. That doesn't mean you can't pray efficiently (Mat 6:7), but we believe that God hears and responds to our prayers, and that we are knitted together when we pray with each other.

For more small group resources, including facilitator training, visit ualc.org/smallgroups

Special thanks to our authors: Katie Borden, Becki Bork, Brian Chandler, and Elaine Pierce.

the cornerstone

EPHESIANS 2:12-22

FACILITATORS:

WEEK 1

This is our first week in the *House We Build Together* small group series. Each week we will begin with an introduction of the week's theme, a topic-priming question, and an opening prayer. At that point, you can begin the Together video for the week. You will find these videos at together.ualc.org/small-group-resources. Each video is about 5 minutes long, and begins with a reading of the passage for the week. You can choose to re-read the passage with your group after the video.

Our hope is that everyone in your group will have and use the guidebook we have provided at our church buildings. Each week of the guidebook has a few questions for your members to reflect on (either before, during, or after your group meetings—your choice). We've included those questions in our facilitator guide so that you can ask and answer them with your group in the course of your discussion. These questions are in **ORANGE** so that you can easily locate them.

We likely have more questions below than you will get to in your group, so prepare a few of your favorite questions ahead of time.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP:

This is the first week of our new small group series, *The House We Build Together*. Throughout this series, we will be anchored to, and meditating on, the passage we will hear together today, Ephesians 2:12-22. In this passage, and over the course of these weeks, we will hear Paul's remarkable vision for the Church—built together, unified by Christ, our Cornerstone—that we would be all, together, be a dwelling place for God's Spirit.

OPENING QUESTION:

- What would be your dream home? Where would it be located? What features are most important to you about a dream home?

OPENING PRAYER:

Pray something like: *Gracious God, we thank you for the opportunity to gather as brothers and sisters in Christ to hear your Word and go where you are calling and leading us to go. Lead and guide this time together, allowing us to experience your presence with us as we seek to draw nearer to you. Amen.*

VIDEO & SCRIPTURE:

Have your group watch the Week 1 small group video from together.ualc.org/small-group-resources
Prepare your group to read along from Ephesians 2:12-22.

DISCUSSION:

Paul wrote this to the Ephesians from prison. Surely he was lonely and missing his family and his home as he wrote this. Often when we think of our family home, we remember special times spent there, memories and traditions that we experienced in that space. Think about the impact your home, either the home you grew up in or your current family home, had or has on you.

- Has there ever been a time when you were homesick?
 - Take a few moments to share about those experiences and what it felt like. Explore together what was at the heart of missing home. What about home or your family did you miss?

At one point, we were all far away from God; not part of his family. We didn't have access to God's house, but the Scripture says we **"have been brought near by the blood of Christ."** The sacrifice made on the cross made us part of the family, part of God's family, and the Lord has given us access to his house. He is our peace. In this passage, 'peace' means tranquility, serenity, calm. He made peace between us and the Father *and* he made a way for those who were separated from one another to become a new body, a new family.

Paul goes on to say, that the Church is like a household, the whole of which is unified to be the Lord's holy temple—with Christ as the cornerstone. A cornerstone is the first stone laid in a building, preceding all other stones that will go into the building. It also geographically orients the direction of the building, even before it is built.

- **In what ways has Jesus been the cornerstone for our church? How have you seen the church follow and be directed by Christ?**
 - Receive all answers. Share instances where you've seen our church community centralize Jesus, and devote ourselves to him.
 - The cornerstone is an essential part of our foundation. The prophet, Isaiah, wrote, *"The Sovereign Lord says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who relies on it will never be stricken with panic." (28:16)*

If we are indeed a family, that means we've lived together in unity and harmony, right? Unfortunately, that is not the case and can lead to difficult, painful divisions, a lack of unity, within families. Every family faces these challenges at one point or another.

- **How does a healthy, mutually loving family deal with conflict or disagreement?**
 - By engaging in loving ways with each other. By listening and hearing one another, respecting, and caring for each other, and finding ways to compromise. When we sin against or offend each other, we tell the truth about it (confession) and ask for, and grant, forgiveness.
- **In what ways has Jesus unified us together?**
 - Jesus dealt with our divisions by by tearing down the walls that divide us. He tears down anything that separates us so that we can all be together. He offers us salvation, becomes our family, and leads us home. Consider with your group how our community has found unity in our diversity.
- **What might be at risk if we—the church—were not unified, stabilized, and directed by Christ the Cornerstone?**

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household” Our Father doesn’t just ask us to live with him, he is a home *for* us. In Acts 17:28 Paul wrote *“For in him we live and move and have our being.”*

Every week we have the opportunity to come into the Lord’s home, joined together in the community we know as UALC, and together, we worship Christ, our Cornerstone.

- **How does worshipping together shape you, individually? How does worshipping Jesus shape us collectively?**
 - As a church, our vision for this family is a place where we love one another, generations care for each other, pray together, serve alongside one another. It’s a place where we hear the Gospel proclaimed and we gather for the greatest of all meals – the body and blood of our Savior.
 - Our home is a place where people are welcomed and embraced where they are in their journey – life-long believers, new believers, those exploring. It can be the place we come to feel at home, where we’re with people we love and who love us. We’re part of the family. It’s the kind of “home-life” that we want to share with others.
 - It’s a place that is rooted in the Word of God; a place where people experience forgiveness and healing from God.
- **What draws you to come and worship with the family of God, and keeps you coming back?**
 - Receive all answers.
- **How might the Lord be using you, or calling you, to be a part of making that vision of family and home a reality?**
 - Receive some answers, then allow this reflective question to move us into prayer and ministry time for further, prayerful response.

PRAYER AND MINISTRY:

As we move into the Together campaign, invite your group to prayerfully think about God's family and house, the family and house that he is calling us to build together. Take some time for quiet reflection, time to listen for God and what he may be saying to you about your role in this campaign and in the work of the vision he has given us for this congregation.

Allow group members to share their experiences of life in God's family and household. Or experiences and thoughts about the vision that God has given us and where he is calling us as a church, and individual members of the family.

Close by praying over what has been shared. Give thanks to God for being the cornerstone holding us together. Pray for the Together campaign and the vision work before us.

for groups not meeting this week

Consider emailing your group the introduction to this series, (first page of the guide) so that they are ready and informed about this series. Have your group members independently watch the week 1 video at together.ualc.org/small-group-resources.

Have the group read the questions provided in the guidebook for week 1, and encourage them to share with the group anything that stood out to them. You might consider picking one question from the list to begin with in your next meeting.

Since this is the introductory week of the series, when you gather next week, spend some time introducing the theme of the series, and consider reading Ephesians 2:12-22 with one another before you begin your discussion for week 2.

the foundation

2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17

FACILITATORS:

WEEK 2

The questions in **ORANGE** appear in the Together guidebook. These questions might be good for deeper reflection. You might have your group read and think on these questions ahead of your group meeting, or encourage them to think about them over the week to come.

In our “Together” campaign series, we are continuing to consider what our life looks like that we build together as the family of God, even as we are being built together as the house of God. While we look today at a passage from 2 Timothy, we will also bear in mind our theme passage from Ephesians 2. The focus this week is on the role of personal and group study, so building in some time for reflection on how this group has benefited members may be a worthy use of time. Thus, you may not get to all of the questions provided.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP:

In this series, we are looking at the *House We Build Together*. As we consider both the literal and metaphorical house of God—the buildings we are renovating for God’s glory, as well as our community life that we are building together—we are focusing on one aspect of the home each week. This week, with our passage from 2 Timothy, we are focusing on some of the more invisible aspects of the home that are crucial to its sturdiness—the foundation.

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- If you’ve ever worked any sort of construction job, whether as part of your career or as unpaid work, whether as a volunteer, personal home renovation, or other situation, what is one of your “renovation horror stories”?
- Think back to something you built. It could even be something you built in shop class or pottery class in school. What was the process of building like? How was your final design?

OPENING PRAYER:

Pray something like this, *Jesus, our Cornerstone, we ask that you would be with us in this time of study and fellowship. Through the written word and through your presence, would you continue to build us up and bind us together in your love and wisdom through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

VIDEO & SCRIPTURE:

If your group did not meet last week, begin by reading Ephesians 2:12-22 before you watch the video.

Have your group watch the Week 2 small group video from together.ualc.org/small-group-resources
Prepare your group to read along from 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

DISCUSSION:

- Looking back at Ephesians 2:19-20, what do you think it means to be built together “on the foundation of the apostles and prophets?”
 - *This is likely referring to the words and events described in Scripture. In Paul’s day, that would be the Hebrew Bible, that is, the Old Testament. Notice that he also includes the apostles—likely, Paul is including the apostles’ witness to the resurrection as foundational to the faith as well as the Old Testament Scriptures.*

Returning to 2 Timothy 3, for context on the comparison Paul is drawing, read from the beginning of the chapter.

Facilitator note: you may wish to invite someone to read 2 Timothy 3:1-13 out loud, or you may invite group members to read silently.

- What do you notice about the character of the false teachers?
 - Answers will vary, but most descriptions will not likely be favorable.
- In verse 14, who might Paul be referencing when he says “you know those from whom you have learned?”
 - Answers may vary; it could be that Timothy is encouraged to recall personal examples.
- How does our relationship with others influence our approach to learning? How does our relationship with Jesus influence our approach to learning?

Ephesians 2:20 tells us that we are building our church community together on the foundation of those saints in the Lord who have gone before us, particularly the apostles and prophets.

- Who are the people who have laid the foundation of your faith? Which parts of church-life have been foundational?
- How might that word from Ephesians influence our approach to Christian discipling and instruction? How might that word influence our approach to those who come after us, who are being “built” into the house of God on our shoulders?

- In v. 16, there is a list of “functions” of Scripture. How have you seen Scripture at work in your life in these ways?
 - Receive all answers.
- Bearing in mind the verses we read from Ephesians 2, how might we understand the analogy of Scripture as the foundation of the house? What role does Scripture play in building our lives together?
 - Answers will vary, but the focus should be on the foundation of the wisdom of God that helps shape and inform our lives.
- In what ways do we see Jesus teaching others throughout the Gospels? How is this received by those who encounter him?
 - Jesus teaches in a myriad of ways—by quoting prophets, in parables, in sermons, and in probing questions. He also teaches by example. Likewise, people who encounter his teachings respond in many ways, but some of them, moved by the Holy Spirit, are healed, restored, forgiven, and follow Jesus because of his instructions.

In v. 17, Paul describes Scripture as equipping us for our work.

- How have you been equipped by Scripture? How do you wish to see God through the written word continue to equip you for life with him?
 - Receive all answers. This could be an informative question for discussion with your small group facilitator partners or with the small group director.

PRAYER AND MINISTRY:

As mentioned in the beginning facilitator notes, it may be fruitful for members to discuss how this small group has enhanced their Christian life. Consider making time for that.

Paul reminds Timothy in verse 14 that he is to continue in what he has learned because he knows those from whom he learned it. This is a great reminder to us that the Christian life is lived in community. We sharpen each other, we help each other interpret and understand Scripture, and we live life together. If you are comfortable sharing, how has this small group enhanced your understanding of the Scriptures, the Christian life, and/or your life personally?

Leave time for group members’ testimony.

Let’s pray together and thank God for the ways that he has worked in and through both his Scriptures and each other to build up our lives. Spend time praying and thanking God for this group.

for groups not meeting this week

Have your group members independently watch the week 2 video at together.ualc.org/small-group-resources.

Have the group read the questions provided in the guidebook for week 2, and encourage them to share with the group anything that stood out to them. You might consider picking one question from the list to begin with in your next meeting.

the family room & kitchen

EPHESIANS 3:14-19

FACILITATORS:

WEEK 3

The questions in **ORANGE** appear in the Together guidebook. These questions might be good for deeper reflection. You might have your group read and think on these questions ahead of your group meeting, or encourage them to think about them over the week to come.

In this discussion we're speaking about how our church community experiences and practices belonging with each other, and how we minister to each other across generations. If you'd like to help your group members pursue different ministries of belonging in our church, have them contact Dan Kidd (dkidd@ualc.org) for small and medium sized groups or Becki Bork (bbork@ualc.org) for care ministries. If they'd like to pursue ministering to kids and youth, they can contact our Next Gen Director, Kelsey Bacon (kbacon@ualc.org).

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP:

The central passage of our *The House we Build Together* series is Ephesians 2:13-22, and we're exploring how the Church is constructed, stone-for-stone, unified by Christ, to be the dwelling place of the Lord. In v.19 (Eph 2), Paul writes, "Consequently, you [Christians] are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household." In this discussion, we will consider how it is that we are and will be fellow members of a household—a true family of God. Much like a living room, we are being built into a community where the whole family, every generation, gathers to sit together, talk with one another, and find comfort together. As Christ unifies us, we want to be a community where everyone has "refrigerator privileges," that is, we feel so at home between us that we can simply go the fridge and help ourselves to drink or snack. We live out of generosity, trust, and in service to one another.

In today's passage from Ephesians 3 we will hear how together, as God's family—his holy people, we can know and enjoy the profound width, length, height, and depth of the Lord's love.

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What is the best team you've ever been a part of? What made this team so great?
 - When was the last time you helped yourself to something from someone else's fridge? What did you help yourself to?
-

OPENING PRAYER:

Pray something like this: *Lord, we ask that you continue to draw us together today—as your family, your Church, the body of Christ. Teach us love one another, serve one another, and to be unified by your Spirit. We come to encounter you and to receive your love and Spirit, that we might love one another.*

VIDEO & SCRIPTURE:

Have your group watch the Week 3 small group video from together.ualc.org/small-group-resources
Prepare your group to read along from Ephesians 3:14-19.

DISCUSSION:

Our passage begins with Paul stating that he kneels and prays these things for his family members in Christ.

- Have you ever had someone surprise you by sharing that they have been praying for you? How did it make you feel to hear that?
- **When you think of genuinely belonging in a community or family, what comes to mind? What things might lead you to say “I belong here”?**

One of the many remarkable benefits available to us as the family of God is that every generation is joined together in mutual care and growth. At our best, we look not to our own interests but to the interests of others, and we build one another up in love. The older generations ask, “Does this reach and disciple the next generation?” Younger generations ask, “Are we honoring and serving our elders?” Likewise, kids and teenagers are not only the future of the church but are presently known and treated as part of the whole family of God. All throughout our church life, we empower younger people to participate and make meaningful contributions.

- **What are some of your favorite memories from your childhood? How have good memories like these shaped who you are now?**
 - Have your group consider how important their childhood has been in shaping who they are today. It’s because of how important our childhood is that we devote ourselves to caring for our younger generation.
- What responsibilities do we have to serve the younger generations in our church community?
- What responsibilities do we have to serve the older generations in our church?
- In what ways might parents and grandparents in our church need encouragement and support? How can we offer our help to them?

In Ephesians 3:17-18 we hear Paul praying that the church “*being rooted and established in love may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.*”

- How is it that when we are empowered by being rooted and established in love? How does a community like this grasp the width, length, height, and depth of Christ’s love?
 - Receive all answers.
- In what ways has Jesus rooted and established our church in love?
- How else might we continue our legacy of practicing love for one another? Who might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to love, and how?
 - Answers will vary; some regular rituals and practices in the life of our UALC community include weekly worship, daily Bible reading, routines of prayer, meeting regularly as a small group (!), and observing the seasons of the church year such as Lent and Advent. These are the types of rituals that have blessed the Church for generations. Our hope and prayer as a community is that these practices draw us closer to God.

PRAYER AND MINISTRY:

Encourage your group to prayerfully ask this last question again, “Who might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to love, and how?” Ask the Lord to bring to mind a way you might express or practice love for someone in your church family (or your neighbor) this week.

Who among your group has a need today? How might your group pray for each other today?

for groups not meeting this week

Have your group members independently watch the week 3 video at together.ualc.org/small-group-resources.

Have the group read the questions provided in the guidebook for week 3, and encourage them to share with the group anything that stood out to them. You might consider picking one question from the list to begin with in your next meeting.

the attic

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31

FACILITATORS:

WEEK 4

The questions in **ORANGE** appear in the Together guidebook. These questions might be good for deeper reflection. You might have your group read and think on these questions ahead of your group meeting, or encourage them to think about them over the week to come.

As has been true in previous weeks, this week's video will include a reading of the passage from 1 Corinthians 12. This passage is relatively long, so you may want to prepare your group to follow along in their Bibles and mark anything that stands out to them as they hear it read. You may not want to re-read the whole passage as a group, but you might re-read a verse here and there to help in your discussion.

We will later mention 1 Corinthians 13, a chapter about Christian love. You might want to take some time in preparation determining what of chapter 13 you might want to read or paraphrase for your group.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP:

Our central passage for this series is Ephesians 2:13-22, and we're reflecting on how we, the Church, are God's dwelling place—the house built together—unified by Christ the Cornerstone. In this lesson, we will consider how God is constantly at work behind the scenes, and using his people in discrete but essential ways. Much like the attic of a house, the church depends on the often-unseen, interconnected, cooperative parts. You probably don't pay much attention to the pipes or wiring in your house, until they aren't functioning as they're meant to. But when something goes wrong in the attic, the house is often in real trouble.

Today's passage comes from Paul's letter to the Corinthian church. This is a church community that is clearly struggling to love and appreciate one another. They are fractured, prone to favoritism (and exclusion), and in real need of God's unity among them. Paul writes to them to emphasize how crucial it is that each member of the community is loved, cared for, appreciated, and valued for the gift that they are.

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- Name an invention that, when you first used it, you were amazed at its design.

OPENING PRAYER:

Pray something like this: *Thank you again for this time together as we study your word. Give us wisdom and encouragement as we read and study your word. Guide us today so we can be better equipped to carry out your vision for us.*

VIDEO & SCRIPTURE:

Have your group watch the Week 4 small group video from together.ualc.org/small-group-resources
Prepare your group to read along from 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

DISCUSSION:

The first century Corinthians had manufactured divisions amongst themselves (i.e. Greek, Jew, slave, free), but Paul proclaims that we are all part of the dynamic body of Christ.

- What manufactured divisions do we see in the modern church today?
 - Receive all answers. Consider together what members of the church might be treated with reverence or importance relative to others who are treated as unimportant.
- Why do you think we might be tempted to appreciate, notice, and commend the work of some parts of the Christian body and not others?
- What is the danger in the church valuing or appreciating one part of its body over another?
How does underappreciating a body part harm the Church?
 - There are no “less important” parts of the body of the Church. When we overlook or undervalue some individuals, and their unique gifts, we not only undermine God’s glory at work in God’s creation, we simply cannot love each other as we should. Love builds others up, and we cannot build up others when we ignore how important they are.
 - When we neglect certain members of the body, those members may doubt their own worth, their place in the community, and we cheapen God’s priceless gifts to us. The Kingdom mission of the Church depends on each individual—gifted, empowered, and led by the Holy Spirit—and we undermine God’s intentions for us when we don’t love each other well.
 - You might consider with your group some of the practical ways a church community is worse off when certain individuals aren’t appreciated and encouraged.
- What might it look like if each person in our church were operating in the ways they are called, gifted, and equipped? How might the Lord make that happen?

In verse 18 Paul writes, “But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as *he wanted* them to be.” God, the designer, has given every person some gifts and purposes but no one person has *every* gift and purpose.

- In what ways is this the ultimate design plan?
 - We were created for the mutual benefit of one another, to the glory of the Lord. We are meant to love and cooperate together in God’s will. This should humble us whenever we’re tempted to be prideful, and it should lead us to marvel at God’s giftedness in one another. There’s a lot of work to

do in the flourishing of the world and its creatures, and if we don't do this work together, we will God's work poorly.

The next chapter in Corinthians is Paul's famous passage on love. (Facilitator, you might consider reading all or part of Chapter 13 if you suspect your group is unfamiliar with it, or if you'd like a reminder.)

- How does 1 Corinthians 13 follow logically from the arguments Paul lays out in chapter 12?
 - Because the life of the Church, the body of Christ, is meant to be entirely interdependent, it follows that we would come to appreciate how valuable we are to each other. What you truly value, you attend to. We love each other in these practical ways because we recognize how much we need each other and how much God loves each of us.
- In what ways might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to practical acts of love in our church?

PRAYER AND MINISTRY:

Take time this week to pray for each other. Consider pairing up to pray for each other one-on-one.

Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you recognize your spiritual gifts and how you are being led to serve in the body of Christ. Invite the Lord to bring to mind someone in our church community and how God has gifted them. Consider sharing some words of encouragement with them this week.

for groups not meeting this week

Have your group members independently watch the week 4 video at together.ualc.org/small-group-resources.

Have the group read the questions provided in the guidebook for week 4, and encourage them to share with the group anything that stood out to them. You might consider picking one question from the list to begin with in your next meeting.

the front porch

2 Corinthians 5:11-21

FACILITATORS:

WEEK 5

The questions in **ORANGE** appear in the Together guidebook. These questions might be good for deeper reflection. You might have your group read and think on these questions ahead of your group meeting, or encourage them to think about them over the week to come.

Paul's two letters to the Corinthian church are proof that the early church was not perfect! Corinth was a large, bustling, wealthy city, and it was a center for art, philosophy, and all types of religion. It contained many pagan temples including two large ones to Apollo and Aphrodite. Paul's first visit to Corinth lasted 18 months, and he established the church in Corinth during that time, his second missionary journey. (see Acts 18:1-18). 1 Corinthians was written 3 or 4 years after that visit, when Paul heard of the many problems the new church was having. Paul promised to visit again (see 1 Corinthians 16:5-6), and this visit resulted in severe conflict with the 'false apostles.' Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to prepare them for his third visit. This letter helps us to see inside Paul: his passion for the Gospel, his deep love for his churches, the pain he felt over misunderstanding, rejection and attack, and the cost of his sufferings.

INTRODUCTION FOR THE GROUP:

Our The House We Build Together series is centered in Ephesians 2:13-22 where we hear that we are being created together into one Church, one body, one family, and *"in him [we] are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."* Today we will hear from Paul's second letter to the Corinthian church, a rather fractured community of new Christians. We will hear Paul's love for, and devotion to, the Gospel of Jesus, and how this Gospel will reconcile humanity to God, each other, and all of God's creation. Like our front porch, this is where the church interfaces with our neighbors and invites people to come and join us.

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- If the president appointed you a US ambassador, to what country would you like to be sent and why?

OPENING PRAYER:

Pray something like this: *Father, thank you for this time together. As we dig into your word, send your Holy Spirit to guide us. Help us learn and grow together to be more like you, Amen.*

VIDEO & SCRIPTURE:

Have your group watch the small group video from together.ualc.org/small-group-resources
Prepare your group to read along from 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

DISCUSSION:

- What is Paul’s motivation to share Jesus with others? (v. 14) Compare that with v. 10 – how do they complement each other?
 - Receive all answers. In v. 10, Paul points to the fact that all will be judged. In verse 14, he talks about how Jesus’ love compels him to share the good news.

In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 we hear that we, the church, are compelled by Christ’s love, because we are convinced that Jesus died for all, that they may live for him, “who died and was raised again.”

- What does it look like for a person and community to live compelled by Jesus’ love? How might others know that about them?
- What does it mean to love someone from a worldly point of view? (v. 16) How does Christian love operate differently from worldly love?
 - Hollywood and social media gives us lots of examples of worldly love. Worldly love is often selfish—looking for how someone else makes us feel or how we are attracted to them. Worldly love is only reciprocated love (it never loves enemies) and it is all too often fleeting. This kind of love is more concerned with how we feel than what we do for another.
- What does reconciliation mean?
 - The biblical definition of reconciliation is the end of estrangement, caused by sin and the enemy, between God, humanity, and all of creation.
 - Paul uses the term 5 times, including in 2 Cor. 5:18-20. See Romans 5:10-11, Romans 11:15, Ephesians 2:14-17, Colossians 1:19-22.
 - Biblical examples of reconciliation include Joseph and his brothers, the father and the prodigal son, and Jesus and Peter.
- What prevents humanity from being reconciled to God? Why are we so prone to distance ourselves from the Lord?
 - In the earliest pages of the Bible we see humanity choosing to do what is right in our own eyes, choosing to discern what is good and bad on our own, rather than relying on the wisdom, will, and way of the Lord. For so many reasons, we reject and rebel against the inheritance our Father offers us so generously. But the Lord is gracious and beckons us to return to him, to be received into his arms, if only we would “come to ourselves” as it was said of the prodigal son.

- In v. 18, what does God do through Christ? In v. 20, what does God do through us? And in vv. 17-18, what does God do for us?
 - **How might the church be equipped to be reconciling ambassadors? What does the church need in order to respond to this commission?**
 - Receive all answers. Reflect and rejoice that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! (v 17) As new creatures in Christ, how can we be effective ambassadors for him? How do we represent him best at UALC, and how can each of us, from our own front porches, become beacons of hope and light for a weary world in desperate need of the truth?
 - This can be a time for your group to talk about how we effectively ‘persuade’ others to know and love Jesus. How do we respond to visitors at church? How do we interact with our neighbors? How can we bring others into saving faith – to welcome them into God’s kingdom? The Corinthian church was part of a pagan, disbelieving culture. Like that church, we have the best news ever, and we come together to support one another as we love and care for our neighbors.
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PRAYER AND MINISTRY:

Begin by giving your group a few moments to prayerfully focus on someone in your life who you would love to be reconciled to the Lord. Then, spend time praying for them, that they would hear God’s gospel of reconciliation and know his love. Thank him for each person you are praying for. Remember that God works in his timing, and we are his ambassadors for his good works.

Depending on the size of your group, you might want to consider praying in twos.

for groups not meeting this week

Have your group members independently watch the week 5 video at together.ualc.org/small-group-resources.

Have the group read the questions provided in the guidebook for week 5, and encourage them to share with the group anything that stood out to them. You might consider picking one question from the list to begin with in your next meeting.