

ENEMIES NO MORE

SESSION 2

Knocking Down the Dividing Walls of Hostility
Racial

Sharing Life

(20 minutes)

Gather: Re-introduce yourselves as you gather. Welcome any new Life Group members and invite them to introduce themselves and share basic information. Add names to your roster and group email as necessary.

Discuss: Your *Personal* Life Application Challenge for the past week was to establish the discipline of Daily Devotions and Prayer. How did you do? Did you complete all six daily readings and take time for reflection and prayer? What time of the day worked best for you? Did you have your devotions alone or with someone else? How did God speak to you?

If you were not as successful as you had hoped, try to identify what got in your way? Don't give up! This "good habit" takes time and effort to develop. You will be rewarded with tremendous blessings in the Lord! What might be some of the benefits of developing this discipline of a daily devotional time in God's Word and prayer?

Your *Group* Life Application Challenge included getting to know each other's names. Why are names so important? You are encouraged to keep working at it by adding the names of your Life Group member's children to your memory as well. Add them to the list right now!

Your *City-Transformation* Life Application Challenge was to read the whole book of Ephesians. Did you accomplish this reading assignment? What are your overall impressions of Paul's message? Are there any burning questions to put before your Life Group for future discussion?

Pray Together: Dear God, thank you for bringing our Life Group back together today. Thank you for the opportunity to grow together in our Christian faith and apply the truth of your Word to our daily lives. Thank you that through your Son, Jesus, you have knocked down the greatest wall of all, the *“dividing wall”* of sin. As we study together, please open our hearts and minds to hear the voice of your Holy Spirit. Give us special sensitivity regarding the difficult topic of racism. We invite you to be at the center of all that we say and do. We long for the day when the *“dividing walls of hostility”* will come down and all people will live as your children with love for one another. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Transformed Thinking

(30 minutes)

Read: Unity in Christ is not some lofty religious or philosophical notion that can remain in our heads. It must reach our hearts and impact our daily actions. Greater unity in the Church and in the world will require that transformed followers of Jesus break down the barriers that have divided people in the past. We must claim our authority in Jesus Christ and allow the power of the Holy Spirit to work through us to proclaim peace in a world filled with conflict.

In *Ephesians 2:11-22*, Paul challenges the Gentile believers in Ephesus to live in the full reality of their new relationship with Christ. He reminds them of their former lives... separated from Christ, without hope and without God in the world. But now, because of Jesus, Paul declares that they (the Gentiles) are fellow citizens with God's people (the Jews) and members of God's household.

In the key statement of the entire letter, Paul declares:

“For he himself (Jesus) is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.”
Eph. 2:14-16

In its original context, the phrase “**both of them**” refers specifically to Jews and Gentiles and the barrier that had existed between them for centuries. The “**dividing wall of hostility**” refers historically to the “middle wall of partition” which divided the “inner court” of the Jewish temple, which was open only to Jews, from the “outer court” to which Gentile visitors were admitted. Bilingual inscriptions in Greek and Latin warned Gentiles not to enter the inner court under the threat of death.

An excavation of the temple site in 1871 unearthed the following inscription: “No man of another race is to proceed within the partition and enclosing wall about the sanctuary; and anyone arrested there will have himself to blame for the penalty of death which will be imposed as a consequence.” (Interpreter's Bible, Volume 10, Parthenon Press, Nashville, 1978, p. 655.)

Paul declares that now through Christ ANY walls of separation have been knocked down. He continues:

“He (Jesus) came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household...” Ephesians 2:17-19

Through these Holy Spirit inspired words, Paul declares the universal nature of the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus, every person, regardless of their religious or cultural background, is welcomed into the family of God. This teaching represented a “paradigm shift” of major proportions in the life of the early Christian Church.

Discuss: Describe a time in your life when you experienced a barrier that kept you out of a place you wanted to go. Was this barrier physical, legal, cultural, spiritual? If so, how were you able to overcome it? If not, why not?

Read: In the book, “Prayer Evangelism,” (Regal Books, 2000) Ed Silviso provides the framework for this Enemies No More Life Group Series. His outline, often described as the “Ephesians Grid,” identifies various gaps or divisions that the Church must challenge before it can effectively confront the ***“rulers, authorities, powers and spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”*** (Eph. 6:12 paraphrased)

Dr. Silviso contends that by allowing these gaps to continue to exist, even within the Church, Christians have had the unintentional effect of rendering the Church and the message of Christ powerless to bring down the invisible spiritual forces that hold our cities and nations in bondage.

We will see that throughout his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul provides very compelling and practical examples of how the cross of Christ has the power to destroy all of these ***“dividing walls of hostility”*** that plague our world today. These include walls that are:

individual, racial, denominational, relational, generational, societal, spiritual

The **individual** wall of sin that separated God and humankind was destroyed by Jesus’ death and resurrection. That’s why we began this study in Session #1 by talking about the need for personal transformation that moves us from religion to relationship with Jesus and with others.

Just as Paul encouraged the Ephesians to implement the full reality of their new relationship with Christ, Christians today are called to be on the front-lines of knocking down these other ***“dividing walls of hostility.”*** Only then will transformation come to our cities and nations.

Below is a modified version of the “Ephesians Grid” that will serve as the chapter outline for this Enemies No More Life Group series. Take a moment and review it as a group.

Ephesians Grid - Enemies No More

	Session #1	Session #2	Session #3	Session #4	Session #5	Session #6	Session #7	Session #8
Dividing Walls	Individual	Racial	Denomina-tional	Relational	Genera-tional	Societal	Spiritual	Unity
	God (holy)	Jew (insider)	Clergy (professional)	Husbands (men)	Parents (older)	Masters (owners)	God (powerful)	
Gaps or Divisions between People and Groups	Satan — Sin	<i>"Knocking Down the Dividing Walls of Hostility"</i>					Satan — Spiritual Forces of Evil	ENEMIES NO MORE
		Ephesians 2:14						
		Human-kind (sinful)	Gentile (outsider)	Laity (amateur)	Wives (women)	Children (younger)		

Discuss: Which of the divisions outlined in the “Ephesians Grid” would you identify as having the greatest negative impact in the world today?

Read: The root of these age-old divisions is always sin. Sin involves pride and rebellion against the will of God. A classic example is found in *Genesis 11*, the story of the Tower of Babel. The following quotes provide the overview:

“Now the whole world had one language and a common speech.” (vs.1)

“Then they said, ‘Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.” (vs.4)

“The Lord said, ‘If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.’” (vs.6-7)

Discuss: What was the motivation of these people for wanting to build a tower that would reach to heaven? In what ways were they demonstrating pride and rebellion against the will of God? How does the division and confusion that exists in our world today relate similarly to pride and rebellion against God?

Read: Standing in sharp contrast to the story of the Tower of Babel, is God’s covenant promise to Abraham. In *Genesis 12:1-3* we read:

“The Lord had said to Abram, ‘Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Just as the sins of pride and rebellion lead to division and confusion, faith and obedience to God will lead to blessings and unity. This is true both in our personal and corporate life.

Discuss: What are the key elements of God’s covenant promise to Abraham? What kind of faith and obedience was required in response? Are you willing to go to the places and people that God *“will show you”* in order that they might *“be blessed through you?”*

Quote:

“To deal effectively with the tension between competency and commitment, you need to know that God has called you to do something for the Church and for the city and that you should do it, regardless of whether you stand to reap any personal or ministerial benefits. This requires an extraordinary change in thinking, as it goes against everything we have been trained to do and have done in the past.”

(Silvoso, Prayer Evangelism, p.224)

Transformation Church Insights:

- Transformed Thinking requires that the truth of God’s Word moves from our heads to our hearts.
- Through faith in Jesus, every person, regardless of their religious or cultural background, is welcomed into the family of God.
- The walls that divide us today often keep us from experiencing a greater level of spiritual authority and effectiveness to impact our cities and nations.
- As sinful human beings we are good at building walls between God and one another. Jesus came to knock them down!

Transformed Living

(40 minutes)

Read: In spite of God’s desire for all things to come together in unity under the headship of Jesus Christ, we live in a world of great conflict. There are approximately 40 wars being fought today. There is the ever-present threat of terrorism. There is political conflict. There is religious conflict. There is racial conflict. There is conflict among socio-economic classes. There is conflict related to marriage, family and sexuality. Everywhere we look, people are divided and living in conflict!

Discuss: Take a couple of minutes to individually reflect upon and then write down some thoughts about the people, groups or organizations in your city/region that are currently divided and experiencing some level of conflict with one another. Then share your observations with your Life Group and briefly discuss some of the dynamics involved.

People, Groups, Organizations	Type of Conflict	Reason for Conflict

Read: The biblical conflict between Jews and Gentiles continues yet today and is representative of a host of racial and ethnic conflicts that continue to fester in the world. Indeed, one of the greatest “*dividing walls of hostility*” is race. Carefully read and reflect on the following definitions:

Race refers to a group of persons related by common descent or heredity. Today, race is an arbitrary classification of humans often based on a combination of physical characteristics such as skin color, facial form, eye shape, and recently, various genetic markers.

Ethnicity refers to social groups who share a common cultural heritage often including language, values, religion, customs, behaviors and attitudes.

Prejudice is the result of preconceived opinions or feelings about a person based on superficial or unsubstantiated judgments.

Racism occurs when prejudice combines with power and leads to any attitude, action or institutional structure which subordinates a person because of color, race or ethnic difference.

(These definitions are a composite of key elements gleaned from a number of sources and are certainly subject to debate.)

Discuss: Why is the subject of racism so “emotionally charged” in society today? Give an example of racism that still exists in your city, region or nation.

Read: Jesus challenged the racial and cultural barriers of his day. Let’s briefly consider two striking examples; his encounter with the “Woman at the Well” and the “Parable of the Good Samaritan.”

Have someone in your Life Group open their Bible and read *John 4:1-42* while the others listen carefully.

Discuss: In his encounter with the “Woman at the Well,” in what ways did Jesus break down the “*dividing walls of hostility*” related to race, gender and religion?” Review the following summary verses and hints.

“The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?’” John 4:9 (Hint: Jews did not associate with Samaritans who were considered a mixed-race and ungodly. Also, a Jewish man would never start a conversation with a foreign woman in a public place.)

“Jesus declared, ‘Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.’” John 4:23 (Hint: Jesus points to the day when everyone will be welcomed to worship the Father on the basis of the heart, not religious laws and rituals.)

“The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’ Then Jesus declared, ‘I who speak to you am he.’” John 4:25-26 (Hint: Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah to a Samaritan woman even before many of his own disciples had come to understand this truth.)

“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him (Jesus) because of the woman’s testimony, ‘He told me everything I ever did.’ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.” John 4:39-41 (Hint: Love that reaches beyond the “*dividing walls of hostility*” will lead others to Christ and have a great impact for the kingdom of God.)

Discuss: What racial and cultural barriers still need to be challenged in our world today? Where can you start in your own church, school, workplace or community?

Read: Samaritans were a mixed race. They were considered half-breeds, outcasts, neither Jew nor Gentile. They were thought to have strange beliefs. That's why it's ironic that Jesus would choose a Samaritan to be the hero of one of the most famous stories in the Bible. Have a Life Group member turn to *Luke 10:25-37* and read out loud the "Parable of the Good Samaritan."

Discuss: How does the "Parable of the Good Samaritan" illustrate the truth of the Great Commandment in *Luke 10:27*?

"He (Jesus) answered: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,' and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Read: The Priest and the Levite were not willing to overcome the religious and racial boundaries or the personal inconvenience required to care for the wounded man so they "*passed by on the other side?*" Jesus concluded the story:

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?' The expert in the law replied, 'The one who had mercy on him.' Jesus told them, 'Go and do likewise.'" Luke 10:36-37

Discuss: If you were to "*Go and do likewise,*" what societal and religious norms might you have to overcome?

Read: One of the best ways to break down the "*dividing walls of hostility*" in our world today is to implement a lifestyle of Prayer Evangelism. This teaching is pioneered by Ed Silvoso in his groundbreaking book, *Prayer Evangelism*." (Regal Books, 2000) Prayer Evangelism describes the strategy taught by Jesus to his disciples in *Luke 10:1-9* as he sent them out two by two. Read this passage together as a Life Group.

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ² He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³ Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴ Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

⁵ When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' ⁶ If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not it will return to you. ⁷ Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. ⁸ When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. ⁹ Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'"

Discuss: (*verses 1-4*) How many disciples were sent? Why two-by-two? What was their mission? Were they going to friendly territory? Why do you think the Lord was so emphatic about the harvest being plentiful in those “towns and places?” How were they to travel? Why? In what ways is the “harvest plentiful” today?

Read: (*verses 5-9*) There are four key steps to Prayer Evangelism. They are interconnected, and to be most effective, must be applied in the order that they are given as we reach-out to others. They are:

Bless: speak peace to people and systems in your sphere of influence. (*vs.5-6*)

Fellowship: build relationships with those outside the kingdom of God. (*vs.7-8*)

Minister: respond to their felt needs in the name of Jesus. (*vs.9a*)

Proclaim: announce that the kingdom of God has come near and is available to them through Jesus Christ. (*vs.9b*)

Discuss: It is stated that the steps of Prayer Evangelism are interconnected – they progressively relate to one another. Why might it be important to Bless, Fellowship and Minister to another person before we Proclaim the Good News of Christ?

Read: In the Great Commission of *Matthew 28:18-20*, Jesus says,

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.”

Discuss: If the Great Commission of *Matthew 28* is the big “GO,” in what way is *Luke 10* the little “go?” In other words, how does Prayer Evangelism help us implement the Great Commission on a personal level?

Read: Consider the following “Top 10” list as some practical strategies to apply Prayer Evangelism and knock down racial “*dividing walls of hostility*” in your city, region and nation.

1. Speak peace rather than curse those of another race. This approach will give you the heart of God and open your eyes to see real people.
2. Speak-up and express your feelings when someone tells an ethnic joke, engages in stereotyping, or makes racial slurs.
3. Build personal relationships with people from other races. Getting to know someone as a friend breaks down all kinds of barriers.
4. Learn about other races and appreciate the variety of history and gifts that exist among God’s people in the world.

5. Worship and pray with people from other races and ethnic groups. Shared worship and prayer always leads to repentance and reconciliation.
6. Respond to the “felt needs” of others. In doing so, God will open both their heart and yours to see the deeper needs.
7. Be an “ambassador for Christ” as you share the Gospel message. Appeal to others to be reconciled to Christ and to one another.
8. Take the lead in breaking through institutional and social barriers that have contributed to racism in your church, schools, businesses, law enforcement and government.
9. Model “Prayer Evangelism” as a lifestyle that provides a living example for the next generation of children and youth.
10. “Go” in Jesus’ name and fulfill the Great Commission with the awareness that God has provided the way through Christ for every person in the world to be welcomed into the family of God.

Discuss: Tell about a friend you have that has a different color skin than yours. What have you learned about racial “*dividing walls of hostility*” by having this friend?

Quote:

“Race is transferred by genes; ethnicity is transferred via culture... fully integrated cannot mean simply giving permission to people of different races to come into our circle to adopt our lifestyle... such ethnocentrism is no better than the attitude of the Judaizers with whom Paul had so much trouble... they believed that Gentiles could be saved, as long as they became *culturally* Jewish.”
(selections from Silvano, Prayer Evangelism, pp.141-142)

Transformation Church Insights:

- Conflict and division is a reality in our world.
- The biblical conflict between Jews and Gentiles is representative of the many racial and ethnic walls that separate us.
- Jesus boldly challenged the racial and cultural barriers of his day.
- Prayer Evangelism represents a practical approach for responding to issues of race with the love of Christ.
- The best way to knock down the racial “*dividing walls of hostility*” in our world is to build a strong personal relationship with someone of a different race or ethnic background.

Life Application Challenges

(10 minutes)

Read: Take a few minutes to read this section as a Life Group and discuss any questions that may need clarification. All three of your Life Application Challenges this week are to be completed throughout the week rather than during group time.

Your *Personal* Life Application Challenge this week is to identify your top three Circles of Influence and any racial or ethnic divisions that may exist within them.

Your Circles of Influence are those places where God has you most connected in relationship or activities with others right now. Examples may include: family, church group, workplace, community organization, sports team or hobby, extended family, service organization, classmates, neighborhood association, political action group etc.

Some of these groups may only include a few people. Others may be quite sizeable. They all represent natural “connecting points” for implementing a lifestyle of Prayer Evangelism. Start by identifying as many as you can and then prioritize your top 3.

My current Circles of Influence are:

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

My top three Circles of Influence are:

- | | | |
|----|----|----|
| 1. | 2. | 3. |
|----|----|----|

Racial Divisions:

Racial Divisions:

Racial Divisions:

Now, take some time and thought to reflect on potential **racial “dividing walls of hostility”** within your top 3 Circles of Influence, with a special focus on racial and ethnic divisions. Pray about this and ask the Holy Spirit to help highlight any issues that may need attention. Write them down and begin to pray about them.

For example, maybe the attitude in your family towards people of other races has been less than Christ-like. What things are said over the dinner table? What jokes are made? Are there prejudices that have been perpetuated in your family history? Perhaps it’s time for a “family talk” about these things.

Racial tension is often present in the workplace. This can lead to racial slurs, stereotyping and hostile relationships. Pray about how you can implement the steps of Prayer Evangelism and begin to break down these **racial “dividing walls.”**

Sunday mornings have been called the most segregated time of the week. Why? Because very few congregations reflect the diversity of their local communities in their worship services and Sunday morning activities. Consider your own local congregation and ask, “How welcoming are we of people who are different than the majority?” “What can we do to reach-out more effectively?” “Are there past or present sins for which we need to repent and work towards reconciliation and healing?”

So, your *Personal* Life Application Challenge is to take the truth of God’s Word from this week’s session and hold it up against your most important Circles of Influence. That’s where we all need to start!

Your *Group* Life Application Challenge is to acquire and begin to read Ed Silvoso’s book, “Prayer Evangelism.” (Regal Books, 2000) This book may be available through your local congregation, bookstore or Life Group Leader. The principles of Prayer Evangelism and City-Reaching described by Dr. Silvoso are foundational to our Enemies No More 8-week study. By reading this book during the series you will be inspired and encouraged even more. Touch base on details with your Life Group Leader.

Your *City-Transformation* Life Application Challenge is to take one of the strategies from the previous “Top-10” list and apply it in your workplace, school, church or community. By doing so you will begin to knock down **racial “dividing walls of hostility.”**

Prayer Support

(15 minutes)

Every week you will be encouraged to take a few moments to share personal prayer requests within your group. Go ahead and do that now. You may write them down here:

Now, close with a group prayer for these needs and continue to include them in your prayers throughout the week.

Details

(5 minutes)

Finalize any details with your Host/Leader and Life Group members. Remember to share responsibilities, especially refreshments and childcare as needed.

Our next Life Group Session is:

Date:

Location:

Time:

Remember to bring:

Memory Verse Challenge

Ephesians 2:14

*“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one
and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...”*

Daily Devotions

Read: You are encouraged to build on your devotional discipline from Week One. Ask the Lord to help you overcome obstacles that may have kept you from cultivating a daily routine of Bible study, reflection and prayer. Below you will again find some passages of scripture for each day of the coming week, starting with Day One tomorrow. Read the scripture. Reflect on the questions. Pray as God leads you. Strive for consistency. Be blessed!

Day One – Titus 3:3-11

Reflect on a time in your life when you were foolish and disobedient. How did you experience God's mercy? Salvation? Paul describes life before Christ: "We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." vs.3 How is this still descriptive of the "*dividing walls in our world today?*"

Day Two – II Timothy 4:9-22

Sometimes people do damage to our reputations and no one comes to our defense. Paul always knew that the Lord was at his side. How did God do it on this occasion?

Day Three – I Peter 2:4-10

Reflect on the differences in heart, attitude and actions between "living stones" in the Church and "dead stones."

Day Four – I Corinthians 12:12-31

Why is it important for every "person and part" to work together if the Church is going to function properly? In vs. 25, Paul says that showing concern for each other is a key factor. Why?

Day Five – Matthew 3:13-17

Do you see the "Trinity" in this story? What role is played by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Why might it have been important for Jesus to hear this voice of affirmation from his Father right at the beginning of his public ministry? How important is verbal affirmation to you?

Day Six – I John 4:7-21

Why is loving others so intimately connected to loving God? vs.7 In what way does God's love drive out our fears? vs.18 Why can't love and hate live together in the same heart? vs.20

Day Seven – Your Life Group meets today!

