

Ephesians 2:11-13

Once Far, Now Family

Main idea: God loves to bring those who are far from Him into His family, so He did.

I read a story about a boy named Dwight whose dad could do nothing, and yet got everything done.¹

- Dwight's dad would say: "It's not what you know; it's who you know."²
- Of course, this is true for us as well. Interpersonal connections with others makes life so much easier.

But the bigger question related to this is this: **Is there a God, and can we know Him?**

- How we answer that question will determine how we live our lives.²
- When we read the Bible, we find that God is not only out there somewhere, but that He's near to us.³
- In fact, God brings us into His own family by grace through faith in Jesus.⁴

Read Ephesians 2:11-13

As I was preparing this week, I learned an interesting fact about adoption in Japan. [fact]⁵

- The adopted sons are extremely blessed!⁶
- When God adopts us into His family, we're also extremely blessed. [John 1:12] [Ephesians 1:3-5]

For the next four weeks, we're going to be talking about being a part of the family of God.⁷

- It's a big family, including both Jews as well as Gentiles, which together, makes up everybody.⁸
- And this is a big deal for us, because we're Gentiles. [word study]⁹
- Very early in history, we all sinned against God. [Romans 5:12]
 - But then God, out of His grace, chose one family to be His chosen people: the Jews.¹⁰
 - But by doing so, God wasn't turning His back on the rest of the world. [Genesis 12:1-3]
 - Through the Jews, and through Jesus specifically, God displayed His love for all the world.¹¹
 - And yet, it's easy to miss what God is doing, how God is making us one big family in Jesus.¹²

Even the earliest believers needed to be reminded of God's plan to unite all things in Jesus. (v. 11)

- It was no secret that Jews often looked down on Gentiles.¹³
 - Many Rabbis even insisted that it was not lawful to help a Gentile woman in childbirth, for that would be to bring another Gentile into the world.¹⁴
 - In many Jewish families, if a Jew married a Gentile, a symbolic funeral of that Jew was carried out.¹⁵
- And yet, Paul points out that the thing that Jews most boasted in was not done by God, but themselves.¹⁶
 - We tend to exclude people based on all kinds of criteria that we make up.¹⁷
 - We exclude people based on different politics, different sins that we consider acceptable, and even a different way of following the same God.¹⁸
- How often do we boast not in God, but in ourselves? [Galatians 6:14-15]
- We need to always remember that our standing before God is not by our works, but His grace.¹⁹

Even still, it's true that the Gentiles did not believe in or follow God. (v. 12)

- Without Jesus, we're outside of the family of God. (v. 12a)
 - Gentiles were obviously outside of the citizenship of Israel, but they were actually supposed to be invited in! [Isaiah 49:6]
 - Being a citizen of the kingdom of heaven gives us hope today.²⁰
- Without Jesus, we have no claim to the promises of God's people. (v. 12b)

- Without Jesus, we have no hope, since we've turned our backs on the God of hope. (v. 12c)

But God was not content with us being far from Him. (v. 13)

- God loves to bring those who are far from Him into His family, so through Jesus, He did.²¹
- Jesus described the kingdom of God as a little leaven introduced into a lot of flour. [Matthew 13:33]
- God will not stop until all people are reconciled to Himself through Jesus. [2 Corinthians 5:19]

Endnotes

1. Dwight's dad wasn't a handyman of any kind. He didn't know how to fix things when they broke. And yet, he knew a lot of people and had a lot of friends. So anytime he needed help with something, he'd just call up the right friend, and they'd be able to fix whatever problem he had.
2. Psalm 1:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:7
3. Deuteronomy 30:14, James 4:8
4. Ephesians 2:1-9
5. In Japan, 98% of adoptions are actually not of children, but adult men, aged between 20-30 years old. This is so that business owners can keep their businesses in the family.
6. Many not only get adopted, but they also marry into the family. So they are both sons and sons-in-law, getting both a business and a wife at the same time!
7. Matthew 12:50, Romans 8:16-18, 1 John 3:1-3
8. Romans 11:12, 32
9. The word for "Gentiles" simply means "the nations."
10. Deuteronomy 7:6
11. John 3:16, Romans 5:8
12. 2 Corinthians 5:19
13. They were considered unclean, disobedient, godless dogs, which was reflected when Jesus echoed the common sentiment about them (Matthew 15:26).
14. <https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/midwife-midrash-and-aggadah>
15. <https://bit.ly/Jew-marries-Gentile>
16. While God certainly commanded circumcision, it was never HOW they received God's favor, but rather their RESPONSE (obedience) in light of God's favor, just as baptism is our first act of obedience today. Colossians 2:11-12
17. 1 Corinthians 11:18
18. 1 Corinthians 1:12-13
19. Ephesians 2:8-9
20. Romans 15:4, 13
21. 1 Peter 3:18