



MAIN SCRIPTURE:

Ephesians 2:17-22

MAIN POINT:

The Creator has given you a place to belong.

JESUS CONNECTION:

When we believe in Jesus, we become part of His family.

@HopeHSM

1. READThe Bible

Yessss! We are glad you are here because taking time on your own to study God's word is an amazing way to grow in your relationship with Him. Life with Jesus is the best life! Take a moment to pray and ask God to lead you as you study this Scripture; then read the Scripture (from your Bible or it's on the back).

2. OBSERVE

The Straight Facts

| Who: | |
|---------------------|--|
| What: | |
| Where: | |
| Why: | |
| How: | |
| What is Repetitive? | |
| Highlight it | |
| What is Contrast? | |
| Underline it | |

3. INTERPRETWhat Does the Text Mean?

Research answers using trusted sources like a Study Bible, BibleProject.com, BlueLetterBible.org, and/or Bible.org

What is the historical and/or cultural context of this Scripture?

Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians years after visiting them, from prison, to remind them the Gospel is the foundation of their faith and encourage them to persevere in the face of suffering.

What else do I know about the author, audience, or context of this passage?

What do key words mean in their original language?

What other Scripture might help me interpret this text?

Read the whole chapter of Ephesians 2, it paints a beautiful picture of the foundation of our hope in Jesus.

What is this text's clearest meaning?

4. APPLY *Getting Personal*

How do you relate to any of the characters, events, or words in this Scripture?

What truth(s) from this Scripture can you apply to your life right now?

What is God saying to you through this Scripture?

MAIN SCRIPTURE

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Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit."

NOTES

DOODLES





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THE WHAT

WHAT are we talking about and WHY does it matter to me? (3-4 min)

ME

Tell a story about a time you felt you didn't belong. Maybe you felt out
of place because of your style, preferences, opinions, family,
background, or skin color. Depending on your audience and your
personal preference, you can either make this story fun and lighthearted or serious and poignant. Be sure to linger on the feelings of
discomfort and alienation you experienced.

WE

OPTIONAL DISCUSSION: "HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE YOU DIDN'T BELONG?" I think we could all share a similar story. In fact, everyone pair up with the person next to you and take 2 minutes to share with them about a time you really felt out of place.

 Give them a moment to discuss. Ask a few to share with the whole group.

WE ALL WANT TO BELONG.

- No one likes to feel like they don't belong
- Our desire to belong is actually a part of how God designed us
- This is normal! It's normal to want to belong and feel accepted.
- There are countless ways we enjoy and pursue a sense of belonging. If you need proof, think about...
 - How important your friend groups are to you.
 - o The influence your family has on you.
 - o How we cheer on our favorite sports teams, bands, or celebrities.
 - How the brand or style of our clothes can link us with a certain group of people.
 - The way we gravitate toward people and places we feel accepted.
 - How you may experiment with different interests and groups of people to find where you fit best.

SOMETIMES WE ARE DESPERATE TO BELONG.

- Sometimes, though, our craving for acceptance and belonging gets out of control. Sometimes we get so desperate to belong somewhere — or to someone — that we do destructive things. Maybe we . . .
 - Make poor choices in the hopes it will impress someone we admire.
 - Pretend to be something we're not.
 - Surround ourselves with people who aren't good for us.

| NOTES |
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NOTES THE WHAT CONTINUED **WE CONTINUED** SOMETIMES WE ARE DESPERATE TO BELONG. Sometimes, though, our craving for acceptance and belonging gets out of control. Sometimes we get so desperate to belong somewhere — or to someone — that we do destructive things. Maybe we . . . Make poor choices in the hopes it will impress someone we admire. Pretend to be something we're not. Surround ourselves with people who aren't good for us. This search for belonging is normal, but our fear of not belonging can make it grow out of control, leaving us with regrets over the decisions we've made and the people or places we've run to in our search for that feeling of belonging. If you can relate to that, you're not alone. It's something people have been dealing with since the beginning of human history. Throughout the Bible, we read countless stories of people who struggled with their desire to belong. **SO WHAT** So WHAT does this mean for my faith and life with God? (4-5 min) BACKGROUND TO EPHESIANS 2:17-22. Early in the history of Christianity, some of the first followers of Jesus struggled with belonging. Pretty quickly, Jesus' followers began to realize their decision to follow Jesus would sometimes separate them from the rest of the world. They knew they were called to be different, but their differences made them feel out of place, and sometimes even put their lives in danger. Maybe because they felt like they didn't belong with the rest of the world, early Jesus-followers began to rely on each other for a sense of belonging and community. That's a great thing, by the way! But there was a problem with the way some of these Jesus-followers did this. In their desire to belong somewhere, they actually began to exclude people who weren't like them. You see, the earliest followers of Jesus were mostly Jewish, just like Jesus was. But as the message of Jesus began to spread all over the world, many people who began following Jesus were not Jewish. The Bible calls these people "Gentiles." That simply means "non-Jewish The apostle Paul, born a Jew, made it his mission to not only include Gentiles, but encourage Jewish Christians to do the same. Check out something he wrote to a group of Christians in Ephesus. Read Ephesians 2:17-22.

GOD HAS GIVEN US A PLACE TO BELONG.

people."

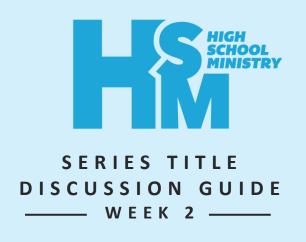
TRANSITION

GOD

- Your Creator has given you a place to belong. Look at all the ways, according to Paul, God has given us a place to belong through Jesus.
 - o WE BELONG WITH GOD. Because of Jesus, we can come to God the Father through the Holy Spirit. We become part of His family. We belong with our Creator who loves us.
 - o WE BELONG WITH GOD'S PEOPLE. Even though following Jesus can sometimes make us feel out of place in the world, we don't have to feel alone. We are members of God's family, along with all of His people.
 - WE CAN INVITE OTHERS TO BELONG. God's family isn't an exclusive club. Everyone's invited. His family is growing every day. Those who are far away from God can still be brought near to Him through Jesus.

SO WHAT CONTINUED **NOTES** JESUS CONNECTION God sent Jesus to die on the cross to rescue us from our sin and death; we are not saved by doing good things but by having faith in Jesus This is the foundation of Paul's writings and the foundation of our When we believe in Jesus, we become part of His family. **TRANSITION** Because of what Jesus had done, you are always loved and always have a place to belong. **NOW WHAT** NOW that we know, HOW can we live this out? (2-3 min) YOU YOU HAVE A PLACE TO BELONG. Isn't it incredible to know that, no matter how lost, or alone, or out of place we feel at times, we can trust that we always have a place to belong through Jesus? Deep down, you want to belong somewhere. You might try to create that feeling of belonging by pursuing popularity, or buying cool clothes, or chasing after a certain person or group of people. • With God, you can't earn your place in His family. You don't need to try. You're already invited. COME NEAR TO GOD. If you've never accepted your invitation to join God's family, do that today. Or maybe you say you're a follower of Jesus but you haven't been spending time with Him, maybe it's time to decide to start acting like you really belong to Jesus. COME NEAR TO GOD'S PEOPLE. Followers of Jesus aren't perfect, but neither are you. We need each other. Let's decide to come near to the people in this room and to Christians outside of this room, too. INVITE SOMEONE ELSE TO JOIN YOU. There are people in your life who are looking for a place to belong. Invite someone to join your small group, come to church with you, or simply hang out with you. Be a person that makes other people feel like they belong. **PRAY** Close your time together in prayer, thanking God for making a way for everyone to belong with Him and His people. As you close, consider playing or performing (or asking someone else to perform) the song "Sons and Daughters" by the North Point InsideOut Band.

WE





MAIN SCRIPTURES:

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Your Creator has given you a place to belong.

JESUS CONNECTION:

Jesus loves you and wants to be in a personal relationship with you.

LEADER CORNER

GOAL OF SMALL GROUP

For students to realize they already have the best place to belong ever.

THINK ABOUT THIS

Sometimes, in our desire to encourage students to live lives of integrity, we encourage them to be the same person at church that they are everywhere else. While this is good advice in some ways, it can also fail to take into account the fact that it's a normal part of the high school phase for students to experiment with different interests, styles, and activities as they search for their own identities. And that's not a bad thing! It's actually a healthy part of growing up. So, while our integrity and character should be consistent everywhere we go encourage your students it's ok to try out different interests, styles, and activities as they figure out who they were made to be.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is a suggestion, not a formula. Adjust the questions and activities as needed, and don't feel like you need to do, or ask, everything you see here. Let the students and the Holy Spirit guide the conversation, too.

CONVERSATION GUIDE

GET THEM TALKING

What are different groups people belong to?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. What makes you feel comfortable around other people?
- 2. What are some ways our desire to belong is normal?
- 3. What are some ways our desire to belong can be dangerous?

READ EPHESIANS 2:17-22 and answer the following questions:

- 4. In your own words, what is this passage saying?
- 5. How can someone belong with God? (This may be a good time to go over the 5 points of the gospel (Go5pel Guide) with your group).

GO5PEL GUIDE

- GOD All of us were created to be in relationship with Him. Genesis 1:27
- **2. SIN** Because of sin, that relationship was broken. *Romans 3:23*
- **3. JESUS** Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the grave to pay the penalty for our sins and fix what has been broken. *John 3:16*
- **4. GIFT** Jesus offers forgiveness and eternity in Heaven as a free gift. *Ephesians 2:8-9*
- 5. **CHOICE** God loves us completely, so He allows us to choose whether to receive or reject this gift. *Romans 10:9-10*
- 6. How can we live like we belong to God? Why can that be difficult?
- 7. What might it look like for us to invite others to belong too? Why can that be difficult?
- 8. When we really believe our Creator has given us a place to belong, how does that change our lives?

NEXT STEP

What is one, tangible next step you can take on your own this week to either live like you belong to God or invite others to belong? Have your students share their goal with the group.

PRAYER GUIDE

Ask your students to share their prayer requests and close your time together in prayer.

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¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of His house-hold, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit."

BONUS LEADER RESOURCE

Sit-Down IceBreaker

In Person Instructions

This ice-breaker is always fun and requires little preparation and no props. It involves everyone. Simply have everyone stand up. Announce that you will be reading from a list of "if" statements. If a statement applies to them, they must sit down. Feel free to come up with your own statements in addition to these:

- You didn't use a deodorant today.
- You have worn the same socks for two days.
- You've played Among Us.
- Your belly button is an outie.
- You have a crush.
- You still suck your thumb.
- You are good looking.
- You hit the snooze button on your alarm clock.
- You ran out of toilet paper at any point in 2020.
- You watch reruns.
- You are the oldest sibling.
- You are the youngest sibling.
- You've eaten a bug.
- You have a hole in your sock.
- You recently got a traffic ticket.
- You have a false tooth.
- You made a New Year's Resolution this year.
- You are still keeping your New Year's Resolution.

End by saying something such as "Sit down if you are tired of standing;" this will usually get everyone to sit down.

Virtual Instructions

Same as above, except "sit down" = "turn off your screen." At the end ask everyone to turn on their screen.