

## Insiders and Outsiders – 07.19.09

### READ USING CD: Ephesians 2:11-22

**Intro** - Do you remember a time when you were brand new at something

- a time when you moved to a new neighborhood?
- a time when you started at a new school?
- a time when you began a new job?
- a time when you went to a new church?

**Illustration:** Roc and Kim moving to Lansing, Michigan.

When you've been a part of something for a long time, it's easy to forget what it was like when you were brand new. When you felt like the outsider. **Today we learn first that...**

#### 1. We should never forget being an

### OUTSIDER TO GOD

**“But don't take any of this for granted. It was only yesterday that you [were] outsiders to God's ways.” Ephesians 2:11 The Message**

**Example:** I was talking to a young man this week who has been a Christ follower for just the last two years. He could easily recall the hopeless days without purpose, before he knew Christ was real in his life.

#### Ephesians says the same here:

- without Christ
- not part of Israel, the only official people of God
- no way to get inside - “alienated” ESV, “excluded” NIV
- having no hope
- without God in the world

Do you remember what it was like to face the tragedies of this world without the hope of Christ? Have you been to a funeral recently of someone who did not profess Christ?

**“We want you to know about those Christians who have died so you will not be sad, as others who have no hope.” 1 Thess. 4:13 NCV**

And because you didn't know the one true God, everything and anything could become your god.

**“You were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist.” Galatians 4:8 NLT**

Twice we are told to “Remember!” Why the emphasis?

a) Because if we forget what it was really like to be without hope and without God, we could fall back into the old pattern of life.  
**“Don't take any of this for granted.” Eph. 2:11 MSG**

b) More importantly, there are many people all around us who are still “outsiders.” And this is not God's plan. He wants the outsiders to become “insiders.” **There is a “before” - and then there is a “but now.” (v. 13)**

## 2. With all persons we emphasize **EQUAL ACCESS**

“For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” Eph. 2:18 NIV

“He treated us as equals, and so made us equals. Through him we both share the same Spirit and have equal access to the Father.” Ephesians 2:18 The Message

This goes completely against human nature. When we get together with other people for any purpose, any club, any organization, any nation, our tendency is always to focus upon our distinctives, what makes us unique, what makes us different than any other group.

In the Ephesians' day it was the distinctive between those who were Gentiles and those who were Jewish. Those who were Jewish had their own laws and their own rules, their own customs of what made them special, what made them different. For a while, some said that in order to be Christian, you had to follow these special rules - you had to become Jewish first, and then you could become Christian.

The writer of Ephesians says “No way!” We have access to the Father NOT BECAUSE OF THE RULES WE KEEP, but because of Christ. In fact, Christ tears down all the walls that separate us from anyone else.

“For [Christ] himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.” Eph. 2:14 ESV

It is so easy for this to happen within the church. We have our own unique way of doing things. If we are not careful, we end up saying to the world (and actually thinking in our hearts), in order to become a Christian, YOU MUST FIRST BECOME LIKE US. You must like the things we like, follow the rules we follow. Politics. Music. Dress. Style of church building. Language. Without even thinking about it, we set up barriers, walls that separate us from everyone else.

To REALLY MEAN EQUAL ACCESS requires deliberate work on our part... to remember... to study... to think... to ask questions... to know the culture... to love the people outside our walls.

**Illustration: Relevancy is the Fulcrum** - Kary Oberbrunner wrote a book called *The Journey Towards Relevance*, which is apropos for Church Requel and her mission “to be a community loving God and loving people. If we do this right, we will balance where faith starts (loving God) and where culture stops (loving people.) Two sides of the same coin. “They bleed over and spill into one another. They too are blended and interfaced.” However, we need to know that this balance is often very difficult to actually practice.

**Separatists** have their Christian friends, music, church. They wear their faith all the time, but *fail to relate to the world around them*. They pride themselves in having a pure faith. But no one wants to hear because *they're completely irrelevant to the culture*.

**Conformists** propose to live a one-day religion. Go to church for two hours, they look, act, and speak like someone who follows Christ. After hitting exit, put their faith on the shelf and live the rest of their week conformed to culture. They *fragment their faith from their culture*. Wear their faith and take it off at will.

Both Separatists and Conformists fail to integrate their faith into their life. Their faith is not relevant to their culture. Our aim at Church Requel is to be neither separatists, nor conformists,

Our aim at Church Requel is to be **TRANSFORMISTS**

What is a transformist? Someone who practically integrates his faith with his culture and his love for God with his love for people.

Think of this as a teeter-totter balanced upon a fulcrum. Without the



fulcrum, our mission is simply a flat board. Merely a philosophy. This is what

People Lover

It's lifeless. happens

when we fail to incarnate our mission. The fulcrum is the pivot point where a real person with a real set of issues incorporates his faith into his life - where theory meets practicality, where knowing the path confronts walking the path.

**Oberbrunner: "Relevance is the unavoidable by-product of a real live person loving God and loving people."**

We are to be that fulcrum for God. He wants to use us to be both God lovers and people lovers. This is why the Bible says...

**"Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household." Eph. 2:19 NIV**

Do you understand what this means? It means that those who were once considered, foreigners, strangers, Gentiles... the "uncircumcised," those considered forever outside of God's special people, now BELONG! That we are now on the inside with God... and that He has a plan to use us. Think of us as a "second incarnation." Jesus was the first incarnation, right? God became man. God put on flesh and walked among us. The great news is that this incarnation is not finished. The plan did not end with Christ's incarnation, but only began. You and I are the continuation of God's plan. The Message version puts it this way:

**"You're no longer strangers or outsiders. You belong here, with as much right to the name Christian as anyone. God is building a home. He's using us all—irrespective of how we got here—in what he is building." Eph. 2:19 MSG**

**And what, exactly, is God building in us at Church Requel?**

3. We are becoming a **HOME** for God's Spirit .....

**"Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. We are carefully joined together in Him." Eph. 2:20-21 NLT**

- **we** - not individuals, but together. Our best comes from together.
- **historical timeline** - built on what has gone before
- **Christ is cornerstone** - we are joined. How? by the Spirit:

**"In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." Eph. 2:22 ESV**

But why? What is the purpose? Is it just for our own benefit? Or does God have a plan that goes beyond us? Let us be glad that He had a plan that did not end before we came to know Christ. What if those who had gone before - the apostles, the prophets, and the hundreds of generations of Christ followers who had gone before your conversion, simply stopped and said - Now God has finally arrived at his destination - my salvation! When I say it, it is laughable. Yet this is how many of us live and function in our church life today. We have arrived. The Spirit is here. It is good. Let us celebrate God's goodness to us.

I have deliberately skipped over a most important verse, because in this verse we see our purpose in God's purpose and what He has practiced as his strategy for the past 2,000 years:

**"Christ came and preached peace to you outsiders and peace to us insiders."  
Ephesians 2:17 MSG**

... to share the **GOOD NEWS** with the outsider.

It's very easy for us to miss this. Remember this letter to the Ephesians is written many decades after Christ has bodily left the Earth. So when it talks about Christ preaching the good news, who is the writer really talking about? He's talking about the church, this body of Christ, built upon the apostles and the prophets, with Christ as the cornerstone, with the power and direction of the Holy Spirit.

Christ no longer preaches himself. He preaches through us as a church body. He preaches PEACE - the reconciliation of God to man.

... to make the **OUTSIDER** into an **INSIDER**

Once Christ takes hold of someone's heart, they no longer remain an outsider. It's not about the changes they make on the outside. It's about what happens on the inside. Just like was true with everyone else who names the name of Christ. We become a diverse group of people, different from one another in almost every respect - different politics, philosophies, families, finances, races, educations - but all the same in the only way that really matters - That Christ is now the cornerstone.

**The circle continues.** The once outsider, once an alien, once a stranger, once a foreigner becomes an insider. And then, with the body of Christ, empowered by the Spirit, goes and shares the good news with others on the outside. Then those on the outside become insiders. And in turn share the good news with others.

This is how we put the mission statement of Church Requel into practice. This is how we become a community loving God and loving people.

**Pray. Communion.**