

Breaking Down Barriers to Community

Ephesians 2:11-22

Text answers/input to 952-388-5648

What are some barriers that we struggle to break through:

- c. To reach our community?
- d. To build our community?

Label them either “Bible” or “culture.”

The cross is a bridge not a barricade!

There is no room for separate standings in the church.

Barriers Broken Down by the Cross

1. Spiritual barriers are broken down in Jesus Christ. 12

- separate from Christ
- excluded from the commonwealth
- strangers to the covenants
- in the world, having no hope

2. Cultural barriers are broken down in Jesus Christ.

- race - gentiles 11
- rites - in the flesh

3. Relational barriers are broken down in Jesus Christ.

- The far off are brought near by the blood of Christ. 13
- Those with enmity establish peace in Christ. 14
“He himself is our peace!”
- The “two” made into one new man! 15
- The enemies are reconciled in one body! 16

Challenge: Breaking Down Barriers to Community

What are we doing to reach out and across?

“Breaking down the barrier of the dividing wall.” 2:14

Discussion Guide

Breaking Down Barriers to Community

Discussion Leaders: I'd love to hear any insight/input you gather; sent it to mike@ssefc.org.

1. We've used the word *community* a lot in our current study. The Bible uses the same root term for communion, community, sharing, fellowship and partnership.
 - In biblical terms, what is the *New Community*?
 - What are the essential elements of a spiritual community?
 - How do your answers relate to what is taught in Ephesians Chapter 2?
How does Acts 2:43-47 help define the *New Community* that is formed by followers of Jesus sharing life? (The text repeatedly uses the term for *community* (fellowship, sharing, etc.) What did *community* look like then and what should it look like for Jesus' followers in the South Suburbs?
 - In what ways are you sharing your life and the life of Jesus with others at SSEFC?
2. God uses the "household" metaphor in Ephesians 2:19-22. In one sense it is the people who live together, yet he also uses the image of a "house" and a "temple" in the "building."
Apply that metaphor to a discussion of the "household" of our church.
 - What is the Foundation? (What does the ministry rest on? If this were changed/taken away, the ministry would be greatly harmed.)
 - What makes this house different from the Jones's (world)?
 - What makes this house different that the Smith's (other churches – are there distinctives)?
 - What is the "structure" of this household? (Rooms – large living areas)
 - What is the HP "household" (family makeup) like?

3. Ephesians 2:11-22 makes it clear that the cross is a bridge, not a barricade.
- Are there walls at SSEFC that need torn down? What sort of people might feel excluded?
 - What are the walls or barriers (between us and God, or us and us, or us and them) that keep SSEFC from being all God desires? From growing? Relating? Progressing?
 - If I were “outside” of the HP household would I sense I’m welcome/wanted on the inside? Does SSEFC preach (and offer) an “equal opportunity gospel”? Do all races and people have equal “access” to our message and ministry? Are there whole sections of our community that sense distance: Unwed moms? Divorced? Singles? Handicapped? Elderly?

Prayer Target
Community!