

## Called: Living as Children of the Light

## 4. No Longer Strangers

## Ephesians 2:11–22 (NLT)

<sup>11</sup> Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. <sup>12</sup> In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. <sup>13</sup> But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. <sup>15</sup> He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. <sup>16</sup> Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

<sup>17</sup> He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. <sup>18</sup> Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

<sup>19</sup> So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. <sup>20</sup> Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. <sup>21</sup> We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

## NOTES:

## "Stranger" throughout the scriptures (92 times)

Ger means foreigner, stranger, alien, sojourner and is found ninety-two times in scripture:

*Moses named him Gershom, saying, "I have become a foreigner in a foreign land."* Exodus 2:22 (NIV)

*"The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.* Leviticus 19:33–34 (NIV)

*Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow.* Deuteronomy 24:20-21 (NIV)

*At this, she bowed down with her face to the ground. She asked him, "Why have I found such favor in your eyes that you notice me—a foreigner?"* Ruth 2:10 (NIV)

*The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.* Psalm 146:9 (NIV)

*I was a stranger and you invited me in... Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'* Matthew 25:35-46 (NIV)

*Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.* Hebrews 13:2 (NIV)

**Next Steps:** Reflect and Write. Who are the "strangers" in my life? How do I see them the way God sees them? How can I communicate a smile, greeting or blessing? Write: A prayer list of those who you think of as "strangers" in your life—especially those who are vulnerable, lonely, isolated, or underserved.

## NOTES:

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

As needed, refer to the Order of Worship and Resources at [solanabeach.church](http://solanabeach.church) for sermon video, message outline, and small group questions print version.

### CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Check in with one another about your daily alone time with God or with an icebreaker question.

### CONNECT WITH GOD

Use one of the below practices or choose a practice from a previous week.

- **The Practice of Confession** This historic practice is part of the liturgical rhythms of worship. In our daily life, though, we often lose sight of its restorative and reconciling power. When we first turn inward and “pay attention to the plank in our own eye before trying to remove the speck in our neighbor’s eye,” we encounter our own fragile humanity and cultivate grace for others. A practice of confession is a declaration of holy trust in the God of grace who is at work in us, and in others.

\*This practice of confession can be done once individually and then together as a group.

- Take a few minutes to slow down and name those things that need to be confessed in your own life. After a time of personal examination, pray this prayer:  
*Holy and merciful God, in your presence we confess our failure to be what you created us to be. You alone know how often we have sinned in wandering from your ways, in wasting your gifts, in forgetting your love. By your loving mercy, help us to live in your light and abide in your ways, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior.*
- Pause and receive the mercy of God. Pray:  
*Lord, have mercy.  
Christ, have mercy.  
Lord, have mercy.*
- In confidence, pray:  
*The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. In the name of Jesus Christ we have been forgiven.*

### CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

- **Pray:** Before digging into the scripture and message more, pray together. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate and enlighten, and to speak to each one of you through the passage.
- **Alone:** Read Ephesians 2:11-22.
- **Alone:** Reflect and Journal with the following prompt:
  - Reflect on the Hebrew word *ger* meaning stranger, foreigner, alien, and sojourner.

- How do you connect to the experience of being a stranger? What stories or experiences do you have of being an outsider or stranger?
- Have you had the experience of being welcomed in when you were new or an outsider? How did this impact you?

- **Together in Pairs:** Share with one another your reflections from the prompts above.
- **Together as a Group:** Continue to reflect and share with one another.

### CONNECT WITH SCRIPTURE

Select the best questions or customize the questions for your group.

- Review the main points from the sermon outline.
- Read together the Old Testament references to the stranger that are found in the message outline. Are there any other biblical stories or passages that connect to the theme of welcoming the stranger?
- What topic did you find most enlightening or challenging during the conversation between Pastor Mike and Matthew Soerens?
- How does Paul describe Gentiles before they become part of this new group in Christ?
- Reflect together on the good news of peace that Christ has brought to us (2:14-18).
- How do Paul’s words and imagery in 2:19-22 shape your vision of what it means to be called together as one people?
- How might our interactions with each other look different because we are members of God’s family?

### ENGAGE AND EXPLORE

Together: explore the quote below, in connection with Ephesians 2:11–22 and the conversation on Sunday.

*“The places and people from whom we might turn away are those to whom, in Christ, we are meant to turn. In the places of injustice, suffering, need and death, we are meant to look and see, love and serve. This is the new vision that comes from worshiping the One who wants our vision to reflect his.”*  
– Mark Labberton, The Dangerous Act of Loving Your Neighbor

### PRAYER

Spend time in intercessory prayer. Use the guide provided in the leader notes to guide your prayer together. Leave room for stillness as you pray the prayer together.