



# St Mary's Woodford

## Home Group

### Study Notes

#### Ephesians 2

### Introduction

These notes are meant to be your servant and not your master. The aim of your group meeting should be to understand God better, and to get to know one another better, through your study of the text and discussion. To the extent that you are fulfilling these aims, feel free to omit parts from these notes, or to supplement them with material from elsewhere. The sermons preached on this chapter are on the church website, but are *not* required reading.

### Background

Paul had studied with the Jewish group called the Pharisees, who studied and debated the fine detail of Jewish law and tradition. A particular concern was a search for 'purity' - purity would make one acceptable to God, but one of the requirements of purity was avoiding contamination from non-Jews (ie the gentiles, the uncircumcised).

Jesus had commanded his disciples to take the good news of God's love to people of all nations (Matt 28), and the book of Acts tells how the Holy Spirit led them to do that - remember Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian official, Peter's preaching in the home of a Roman centurion (for which he was summoned to a disciplinary meeting in Jerusalem), Christian refugees in Antioch sharing the good news with gentiles, and the work of Paul on his travels. Both Jews and gentiles were adopted into the household of God.

### Starter activity

Have one or two people read the whole chapter out loud. Then give members five minutes to find both a **promise** and a **challenge** in the chapter (without looking at the other side of this sheet). Compare and discuss your answers.

### Issues and questions

The starter activity may naturally lead you into discussing any of the following issues. Don't worry if you don't tackle them all, but be sure to cover at least three.

- a) Condemnation. *You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived.* What does Paul mean by this? Is 'dead' the state they were in, or the state to which they were heading?
- b) Salvation. How does God make us 'alive together with Christ'? What has he done, and what do we need to do?
- c) Grace. How would you explain the word 'grace' to somebody who had not heard it before?
- d) Good works. *We have not been saved by good works, but saved for good works* (Mark's sermon). What good works has God prepared for you as an individual? What good works has God prepared for us as a church?
- e) Diversity. Have you ever felt 'the odd one out' because of your race? How diverse is *our* church? Does it reflect the diversity of the local area? What could we do about that?
- f) Unity. What is the difference between *unity* and *uniformity*? How can we encourage unity in the church without imposing uniformity?
- g) New temple. Paul concludes the letter with the image of the Christian community being a temple. What does that imply for us?

### For prayer and reflection

Quietly think about people in our church and in our local community who are not like you: remember that in God's grace Jesus died for them too; and God wants them all to be part of one fellowship, united by his Spirit.

After a few minutes, say the grace together:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore. Amen.**