

The Body of Christ, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 4: The Family of God

Ephesians 2:19–22

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrine at the center of this lesson is the church as the family and household of God, and as the temple where God dwells by His Spirit. Paul moves through three images in four verses: a city (fellow citizens), a family (members of the household), and a building or temple (joined together, growing into a holy temple, a dwelling place for God). Each image deepens the truth that the church is not a human institution but the new people God has formed in Christ, where former outsiders are brought near and made family. What is at stake is a right view of the church: warm enough to be a true family, yet built on the solid foundation of the apostolic word with Christ as the cornerstone.

Note two doctrinal anchors to keep clear. First, the foundation is “the apostles and prophets” with “Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (v. 20). This grounds the church on the revealed, apostolic word, now preserved in the New Testament, and on Christ Himself. It is a guard against any church built on human opinion, later traditions, or new revelation. Second, God’s dwelling is now His people, not a building of stone. This fulfills and replaces the old temple; the Old Covenant order has given way to the New, in which God dwells among His gathered people by the Spirit. Handle this as fulfillment, not as a downgrade of God’s presence but its glorious expansion.

The formational aim is to move students from relating to the church as guests to living in it as family. Many believers, even longtime members, carry a guest’s posture: polite, careful, peripheral, ready to leave. The household image calls them home. Help the discouraged or distant student feel the tenderness of belonging (no longer a stranger), and help every student take up the responsibilities and joys of family life: presence, care, repair of broken relationships, and shared growth into the temple where God lives. Keep the tone one of wonder and welcome, not duty alone.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul says the Ephesians are “no longer strangers and aliens” (v. 19). In light of the first half of Ephesians 2, what were they before, and what does it tell us about the church that its members are people who were once outsiders to God brought near by the cross?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Begin by setting verse 19 against the first half of Ephesians 2. Before Christ, the Gentiles were “separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants, having no hope and without God” (2:12). The weight of “no longer strangers” only lands when we feel how far outside they were.

Stress that the church is made of former outsiders brought near “by the blood of Christ” (2:13). No one is in the household by birthright or merit. Every member is a former stranger reconciled by the cross. This levels all pride and welcomes all who come.

Draw out the reconciliation theme. Christ has broken down “the dividing wall of hostility” (2:14), making the two into one. The church is the proof that the cross reconciles not only sinners to God but enemies to one another.

Apply it to how we receive newcomers and outsiders today. A church that remembers it is made of former strangers will not treat anyone as a permanent outsider. The household has an open door because its members were once outside it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church as former outsiders brought near by the blood of Christ.
- No membership by birthright or merit; all are reconciled by the cross.
- The dividing wall of hostility broken down in Christ.
- A welcoming church that remembers it is made of former strangers.

Discussion Prompts

- What were the Ephesians before Christ, and how far outside were they?
- How does remembering we were once outsiders shape how we welcome others?
- What does the torn-down wall say about reconciliation in the church?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul names a former condition, strangers and aliens, that Christ has ended. Are there ways you still live as though you were an outsider to God, holding back, keeping your distance, not quite believing you belong? Where does that come from?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question takes the truth “no longer strangers” into the heart. Many believers still live with an outsider’s posture toward God, keeping distance, half-expecting rejection, not quite believing they belong.

Help students name where this shows up: hesitancy in prayer, reluctance to get involved, a sense of being on probation with God, a fear that if people really knew them they would not be welcome.

Trace it to its roots without dwelling there: past wounds, shame, a performance-based picture of God. The gospel answers each: Christ has already brought us near; our belonging rests on His blood, not our record.

Aim for one concrete way to live as one who belongs: drawing near in prayer with confidence, stepping into the life of the body, refusing the lie that they are still on the outside.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Living as an outsider after Christ has brought us near.
- Shame and performance-based pictures of God.
- Belonging grounded in Christ's blood, not personal record.
- Drawing near with confidence as a child of the house.

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you still live as though you were an outsider to God?
- What feeds that sense of not quite belonging?
- What would it look like to live this week as one truly brought near?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul calls the church "the household of God" (v. 19) and elsewhere "the family" into which we are adopted (Romans 8:15–17). What does it mean that the church is a family and not merely an organization, and how should that change the way members relate to one another?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question opens the family image. "Members of the household of God" means the church is God's family, and believers are His children by adoption (Romans 8:15–17; 1 John 3:1). The Father language is not sentiment; it is status.

Draw the contrast between a family and an organization. You join an organization for what it offers and leave when it stops serving you. You are born or adopted into a family, and the bonds are covenantal, not consumer. The church is the second kind of thing.

Apply this to how members relate. Family members bear with one another, forgive, show up, carry burdens, and stay. They do not treat each other as acquaintances. The household image raises the bar on our relationships in the body.

Address the cost and the comfort. Family is demanding; it asks more of us than a club ever could. But it also gives more: people who are bound to us, who will not treat us as strangers, who are ours and to whom we belong.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church as God's family, believers as adopted children.
- The difference between a family and an organization.
- Covenant bonds versus consumer relationships in the church.
- Both the cost and the comfort of belonging to a family.

Discussion Prompts

- What changes when we see the church as family rather than organization?
- How do family bonds differ from the bonds of a club we join?
- What does family-level commitment look like among church members?

Question 4

Student Question:

In a healthy family, members carry responsibilities for one another that they would never carry for strangers. What responsibilities of family life in the church have you been treating as optional, and what would it look like to take them up?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question presses the responsibilities of family life. In a family, members do things for one another they would never do for strangers, and the church family is the same (Galatians 6:10).

Help students name the family duties they have treated as optional: showing up consistently, checking on the struggling, welcoming newcomers, helping in practical need, forgiving and reconciling, contributing to the work and support of the body.

Confront the guest mindset directly. A guest enjoys the home but takes no responsibility for it. A family member shares the load. Which posture marks their life in the church?

Aim for one family responsibility to take up this week, named and concrete, not a general resolve to be more involved.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The responsibilities of family life in the church.
- Doing good especially to the household of faith (Galatians 6:10).
- The guest mindset versus the family member's shared load.

- Concrete responsibility as the mark of belonging.

Discussion Prompts

- Which responsibilities of church family life have you treated as optional?
- What is the difference between a guest and a family member in a home?
- What is one family responsibility you could take up this week?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul says the household is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (v. 20). Why is it significant that the church is built on the apostolic and prophetic word with Christ as the cornerstone, and what does this say about where the church’s authority and stability come from?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is a doctrinal block. The household is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone” (v. 20). The foundation is the revealed word given through the apostles and prophets; the cornerstone is Christ.

Explain the foundation. The apostles and prophets were the channels of God’s revelation for the church (Ephesians 3:5). Their word, now preserved in the New Testament, is the church’s foundation. This means the church is not built on human wisdom, later traditions, or fresh revelations, but on the once-delivered apostolic message.

Explain the cornerstone. In ancient building, the cornerstone set the line and level for the entire structure; every wall was measured against it. Christ is that reference point. The church’s identity, doctrine, and life are all aligned to Him.

Draw the doctrinal guard. Because the foundation is the apostolic word and the cornerstone is Christ, the church’s authority and stability come from outside itself, from God’s revelation, not from majority vote, cultural trends, or charismatic leaders. We build on what was laid, not on what we prefer.

Connect to the whole study. This is why we keep returning to the New Testament pattern. A church built on anything other than the apostolic word with Christ as cornerstone is built on sand.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church built on the apostolic and prophetic word.
- The New Testament as the church’s foundation, not human tradition or new revelation.
- Christ as the cornerstone that sets the line for everything.

- The church's authority and stability from God's revelation, not from itself.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does it matter that the church is built on the apostolic and prophetic word?
- What does a cornerstone do for a building, and how is Christ that for the church?
- How does this guard the church from being built on opinion or trend?

Question 6

Student Question:

A cornerstone sets the line and level for the whole building; everything is measured by it. In what areas of your life are you measuring by something other than Christ, and what would it mean to let Him be the cornerstone that everything aligns to?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question takes the cornerstone image into personal life. A cornerstone sets the line and level; everything is measured by it. The question asks where students measure life by something other than Christ.

Help them locate the rival reference points: career success, others' approval, comfort, political identity, family expectations. We align our lives to whatever functions as our cornerstone.

Press the diagnostic question: what do you adjust your life to fit? That is your functional cornerstone. The Christian life is the ongoing work of letting Christ, and not these rivals, set the line.

Aim for one area to realign this week, naming the rival cornerstone and the first step toward measuring by Christ instead.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Christ as the cornerstone that everything aligns to.
- Rival cornerstones: approval, success, comfort, identity.
- The diagnostic of what we adjust our lives to fit.
- Realigning a specific area of life to Christ.

Discussion Prompts

- What functions as the cornerstone your life is measured by?
- Where are you aligning to something other than Christ?
- What would realigning one area to Christ look like this week?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul says the whole structure is “joined together” and “grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (v. 21). What does it mean that the church is a growing temple rather than a finished building, and what part do individual members play in that joining and growing?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question opens the temple image and its dynamic quality. The structure is “joined together” and “grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (v. 21). The church is not a finished monument but a living, growing building.

Stress “joined together.” Each stone is fitted to the others. The growth of the temple happens through the joining of members to one another, not through isolated individuals. The building rises as the stones are knit together.

Stress “grows.” A building that grows is unusual; Paul mixes the metaphor on purpose. The church is both structure and organism, solid in foundation yet living and increasing. Growth is expected and normal.

Apply the member’s part. No stone joins itself or grows alone. Members contribute to the joining by their relationships, their service, and their love. A stone that holds itself apart hinders the rising of the temple.

Connect to the body image of Lesson 3. There Paul stressed interdependence; here he stresses being fitted together and growing. Both insist that the Christian life is corporate, not solitary.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church as a living, growing temple, not a finished monument.
- Members joined and fitted together, not isolated.
- Growth as normal and expected for the church.
- Each member’s part in the joining and growing.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that the church grows like a living temple?
- Why does Paul stress that the stones are joined together?
- What part do you play in the joining and growing of the temple?

Question 8**Student Question:**

Paul pictures the church as a building where every stone is fitted to the others. Is there a relationship in the body where you are not “joined together” well, where there is distance, friction, or neglect? What step toward being fitted together is Christ asking of you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This self question presses the “joined together” language into specific relationships. A temple rises only as stones are fitted to one another; distance and friction between members hinder the building.

Help students identify a relationship in the body that is not well joined: an old grievance, a quiet avoidance, a neglected friendship, a person they have written off. The temple cannot rise where stones refuse to be fitted.

Point to the gospel resource for repair. The same cross that joined former enemies into one household (2:14–16) supplies the grace and the motive to mend our own breaks. We forgive as we have been forgiven.

Aim for one concrete step toward being fitted together: a conversation, an apology, an act of reaching out, a decision to draw near where there has been distance.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Being fitted together with other members.
- Distance, friction, and neglect as obstacles to the temple’s rising.
- The cross as the resource for reconciliation among members.
- Concrete steps toward repair and nearness.

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you not well joined to another member of the body?
- How does the cross supply both the grace and the motive to repair it?
- What step toward being fitted together is Christ asking of you?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul’s climax is that the church is being built “into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (v. 22). Why is it so significant that God’s dwelling is no longer a temple of stone in one city but the assembled people of God, and how should the truth that God dwells among His gathered people shape our view of the church and of our part in it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the heaviest doctrinal block: the church as “a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (v. 22). Under the Old Covenant, God’s special dwelling was the temple in Jerusalem. Now His dwelling is His people, assembled in Christ.

Teach this as fulfillment, not loss. The old temple was a shadow; the reality is the church indwelt by the Spirit. God’s presence is not diminished by leaving the building of stone; it is gloriously expanded to dwell among His gathered people everywhere (compare John 4:21–24).

Draw the doctrinal implication for the Old Covenant. The temple, with its priesthood and sacrifices, has given way to the New Covenant reality in Christ (Hebrews 8–10). We do not go to a holy building in a holy city; we are the holy temple, and we assemble as the dwelling of God.

Apply it to our view of the assembly. If God dwells among His gathered people by the Spirit, then the assembling of the church is not a casual option but a gathering of the temple of the living God. This anticipates Lesson 11 on the worship and work of the local church.

Lift the class to awe. The same God whose presence filled the tabernacle with glory now makes His home among ordinary believers joined together in Christ. To belong to the church is to be part of the place where God lives on earth. Let that wonder reframe how they value the church and their part in it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The church as God’s dwelling by the Spirit, fulfilling the old temple.
- God’s presence expanded, not diminished, in the New Covenant.
- The temple, priesthood, and sacrifices fulfilled in Christ (Hebrews 8–10).
- The assembly as the gathering of the temple of the living God.
- Awe at God making His home among His gathered people.

Discussion Prompts

- Why is it significant that God’s dwelling is now His people, not a building?
- How is this a fulfillment rather than a loss of God’s presence?
- How should the truth that God dwells among His gathered people shape how you value the church?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across Ephesians 2:19–22. Having seen that in Christ you are not a stranger but a member of God’s own household, a living stone in His temple, name one specific way Jesus is calling you to live as family rather than as a guest, and what is the first step?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the capstone, drawing the household and temple images toward a personal step. The lesson has shown that in Christ the student is no longer a stranger but a member of God's household and a living stone in His temple.

Press the move from guest to family. The aim is to name one concrete way to live as family: taking up a responsibility, drawing near where there has been distance, contributing to the building, refusing the outsider's posture.

Be sensitive to the student who still feels like an outsider. For them the step may simply be to believe and act on the truth that they belong, and to let themselves be drawn into the family.

Close on wonder and welcome. The Father's house has room, the door is open, and the student is not a guest but a child at home. Invite them to live like it.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Living as family rather than as a guest.
- Taking up a concrete responsibility or relationship in the household.
- For the outsider-hearted, believing and acting on belonging.
- The Father's house as home, not a place we visit.

Discussion Prompts

- What is one specific way Jesus is calling you to live as family, not a guest?
- What holds you back from living fully as a member of the household?
- What is the first step, and when will you take it?