

Forward Together Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Generally speaking, do you spend the majority of your time thinking about the past, the present, or the future? Explain.
2. Do you expect to travel this year? Explain.

Read the following passage: Ephesians 2:1-22.

Paul is writing to a 1) diverse church, 2) in a major city, that 3) was likely experiencing significant change, and which includes both 4) people who come from generations of worshiping the one true God as well as 5) people who have worshiped idols all their lives. The church in Ephesus clearly had a number of significant parallels to our own local body! The theme that Paul emphasizes in this passage is connection — connection with God and connection with each other. This is an important theme for us as well as we move forward in 2019.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. According to this passage, what is the cause of our separation from God? How has our desperate condition been reversed? What are some of the key terms and explanations Paul employs that jump out to you?
2. In contrast to the salvation that Paul celebrates in Ephesians 2, what are some (ultimately futile) ways that we try to produce connection with God or improvement of our condition?
3. Read Ephesians 2:1-3. In light of what Paul writes here, why should we be suspicious of instincts we may have developed before following Christ? Can you think of any instinctual patterns of thinking, feeling, or behaving that you have had to ask God to help you transform? Explain. Are there any patterns of thinking, feeling, or behaving that are hindering your practical experience of connecting with God? Explain.
4. What can you do this year to live with a greater sense of connection with God?
5. Why do you think Paul put such great emphasis on connecting with each other in his letter to Ephesus? What, practically, keeps us from connecting with each other in the church? What is one way you can better connect to people in Freedom Church (or your local church) this year?
6. Read Ephesians 4:11-16. What is God's strategy for growing his people (the body of Christ)? Why do you think the right relationships are so important for growth? Do you have any relationships in the body of Christ that are helping you grow? Explain. What are some ways you can personally be a catalyst for relationships that lead to growth?

in the body of Christ?

7. Paul speaks of the body of Christ coming to maturity. What are one or two ways you feel that God wants you to mature this year? What might it look like practically for you to grow deeper roots?
8. When it comes to your participation in Freedom Church (or your local church), assess your own degree of “ownership.” When you think or speak about the church, do you think and speak in terms of “they” or “we”? In what ways are you owning the vision and taking responsibility? What are some ways God may be leading you to take greater ownership in the church in 2019?
9. To what extent are you engaging the places where you work, study, live, and play with intentionality and the love of Jesus Christ? What is one way you could more effectively engage your community in 2019?
10. What is one area in your life or character in which you would like to see growth in 2019? How can you begin to take a step in that direction this week?

Pray