

## A NOTE TO PARENTS

The second part of this summer is taking us on a tour through the Epistle to the Ephesians. As we noted last week, we rarely think to share the Epistles with our children; yet Ephesians, in particular, is vivid, practical, down-to-earth, and full of recognizable situations for our lives as families and as communities, even two thousand years later. Its vision of Christian community is robust, sensible, and cheerful.

Remind your child that for a while we will be thinking about what Jesus's life means for us instead of telling stories about it. We will be remembering the earliest groups of people who set out to live in communities centered on his love—both as households and as what we now call churches. We will be seeing how much our lives together have in common with theirs, even so many years later.

One of the themes in the Epistles that speaks immediately to us is their constant celebration of the *inclusiveness* of the Gospel. Today, inclusiveness has become a buzz-word in the church, to the extent that it has sometimes become trivialized. Inclusion comes cheap if it is exercised towards people with whom we have so many features in common—social class, educational level, political beliefs—that they vastly outweigh such differences as race or sexual orientation.

We also trivialize inclusiveness when, instead of seeing it as a glorious *by-product* of the Good News of Jesus, we instead *substitute* it for the Good News. Many churches today loudly proclaim “Everyone is welcome here,” but then fail to mention *what the church is and does* that would make a visitor *wish* to join in. If we were inviting someone to come to a party or a dance or a movie, wouldn't we *first* describe the event itself—and only then add, “Don't worry if you don't have anything to bring” ... “You don't need a partner, and all the dances are taught” ... “The movie is just as good if you haven't read the book ...”? To invite visitors with the message, “Come on in; *you won't be rejected here!*” is a thin, pathetic, and in fact (when you think about it) a rather insulting way of inviting them.

The Good News of the Gospel is: Christ offers us something that is *deeply desirable*—and, incidentally, in case you were worried, it is available to one and all, without exception. Such inclusiveness is, indeed, good news.

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# THE SUNDAY PAPER JUNIOR

Year B  
PROPER 11  
TRACKS 1 and 2

“Jesus is our peace... he has broken down  
the wall that came between us,  
and made us all one.”

EPHESIANS 2:14



PAUL WROTE THIS IN A LETTER:

Long ago, God chose the people of Israel to be his special people.

God gave Israel his laws and promises. People who were not part of Israel seemed to be left out.



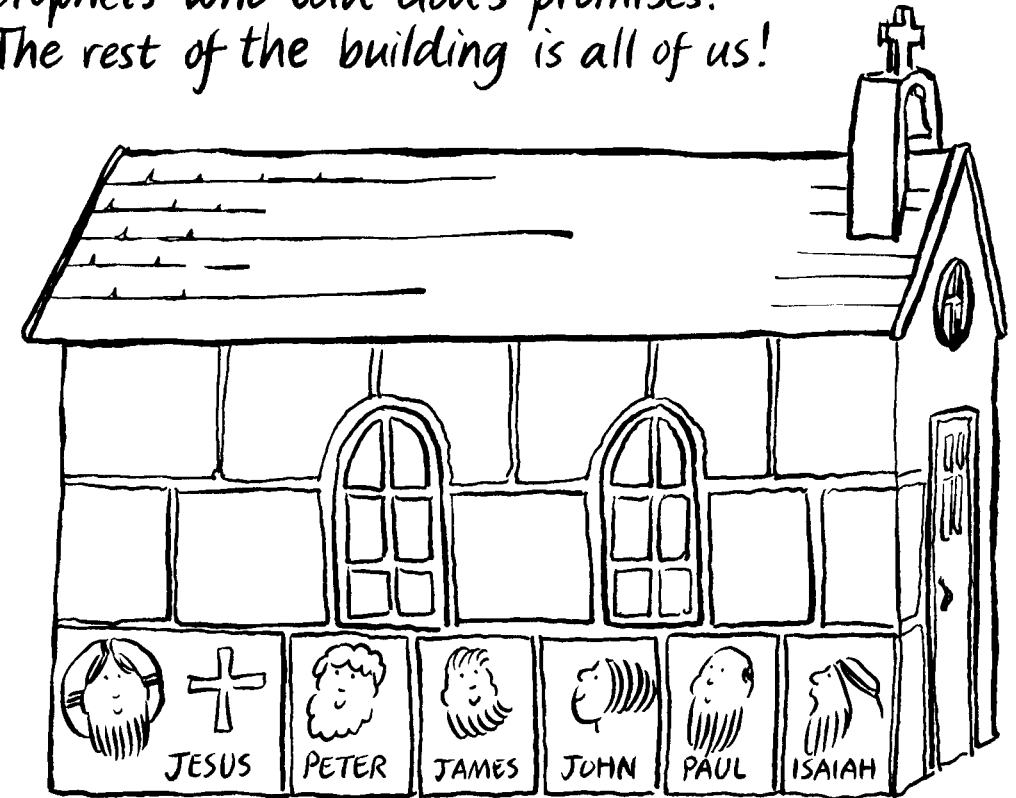
When Jesus came, he said God's promises were for everyone. He died to give new life to everyone.

His Spirit makes us all one in God's love. Now nobody is left out.



Saint Paul was a follower of Jesus who traveled to many places. He helped people believe in Jesus, and get together and start churches. When he was away from them, he wrote letters.

In one letter, Paul says that God's people are like a building. Jesus is the cornerstone. The first row of stones are Jesus's disciples and the prophets who told God's promises. The rest of the building is all of us!



Who else is a stone in God's building? Add some people!