

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

April 19, 2026

Unpuzzled

“The Pathway to World Peace”

Ephesians 2:14-16

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Lance Morrow, an award-winning journalist with *Time* magazine, once set out to write an article asking if there was one universal joke, told everywhere around the world. Here's what he said happened in his search: “I sent out a query to all of *Time*'s bureaus around the world—Moscow, Beijing, Tokyo, Sydney, New Delhi, Jerusalem, Rome, Bonn, London, Paris, Rio, Buenos Aires, and so on. I asked the correspondents to tell me one or two jokes then current in their part of the world. It turns out there is a universal joke. It was what Americans refer to as the “Polish joke.” Except of course that everywhere, the role of [Polish people] in the “Polish joke” is enacted by some appropriate other group. The Flemings have Walloon jokes, for example. The English tell Irish jokes, and vice versa The people in Tokyo have jokes about the people in Osaka. I was once on the tiny island of Grenada (133 square miles) and was told that people on one side of the island had a large stock of vicious jokes about people on the other side of the island; and vice versa. In the universal humor, as in universal evil, you need the Other. The Other is the butt of your joke, or the butt of your evil.”

I remember growing up hearing all kinds of what we call Polak jokes and calling people Polaks. I did not know a Polish person and had no reason to think ill of a Polish person, but we all knew it was a term used as an insult. Our world today is filled with animosity and hostility towards one another. Hostility toward one another dominates our news. As we continue our sermon series on the book of Ephesians called, *Unpuzzled*, God gives us the cure for all the animosity and hostility in our world, the one and only one true path to peace.

Ephesians 2:14-16

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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.

When Paul calls the divide between the Jews and Gentiles a wall of hostility, I am reminded of how on August 13, 1961, Germans woke up and discovered that literally overnight a dividing line had officially been put in place between East and West Germany. Barbed wire went up overnight, instantly cutting off streets, transit lines, and daily life. East Berliners were trapped, cutting off access to jobs and livelihoods in the West. Eventually, the border evolved into a highly fortified, 96 mile, 12 to 13-foot-high wall, with 302 watchtowers, bunkers, trenches, and landmines that created a “no man's land” where guards had orders to shoot escapees. Literally overnight, families were torn apart, with spouses, parents, and children waking up on different sides of an impassable border that caused immediate, severe trauma, separating families, friends, and coworker. The Berlin Wall was built by East Germany to prevent a massive exodus of skilled workers and citizens to the West. It stood for 28 years as a key Cold War symbol of oppression and a “death strip”, before falling on November 9, 1989, due to political pressure and eased travel restrictions. Over 5,000 people successfully escaped, but at least 140 people died trying to escape over the following 28 years. We may not have that kind of wall in our community, but we undoubtedly have our own version of walls of hostility that we have erected. We have racial, gender, generational, political, moral, ideological, liberal versus conservative, religious, economic, Gators versus Noles, and even in churches over the years we have had what is called worship wars over what style of worship is best. The most obvious we have today is that massive walls of hostility that have been built over many centuries in the middle east in which we find our country enmeshed. The devil is having the time of his life stirring and building walls of hostility. As someone in our staff meeting said, you could say that the entire history of humankind is that of war, of building one wall of hostility after another.

The wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile, and the countless walls of hostility in our world today, can be traced all the way back to when Adam and Eve first sinned and all of creation was immediately immersed in hostility. The Bible says that there was hostility between human beings and all of creation when, for example, God told the snake it would bite humanity as it was trampled under our feet. When Adam works in fields, it would be hard work as he now struggles with the land. Also, when sin entered the world, within each person they felt the hostility of shame for their own sin. When Adam and Eve sinned, they immediately felt a wall of hostility between each other, in addition to the hostility felt through pain in childbirth, and we know that the wall of hostility was so bad that eventually the first domestic violence occurred when Adam and Eve's son Cain, killed his brother, Abel. By far the greatest wall of hostility that happened instantly was between Adam and Eve and God as they hid from God in shame and fear due to their sin. All the walls of hostility in our world can be traced back to the effect of sin in each one of us.

GOD THEN ENTERED OUR WORLD AND TORE DOWN THE WALL OF HOSTILITY

God's heart was broken when sin entered this world and built an infinite number of walls of hostility. *God then entered our world and Tore Down the Wall of Hostility.* How did God tear down the wall of hostility that was erected when Adam and Eve sinned? God Himself came into this world through Jesus and tore the wall of hostility Himself.

Thinking about the Berlin Wall, I am reminded of how on June 12, 1987, U.S. President Ronald Reagan risked his life by coming to the famous Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin, a symbol of German division. With bulletproof glass protection, facing East Berliners, President Reagan delivered an historic speech saying, in part, these words in an authoritative and demanding tone to the Russian Communist leadership, "General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization: Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" Many in the U.S. State Department initially opposed the harsh phrasing, fearing it would exacerbate tensions with the Soviet Union. The speech is seen as a key moment in the fight against Soviet oppression and a milestone toward the end of the Cold War, leading to the reunification of Germany. Miraculously, a little over two years later the wall was torn down.

Jesus came into this world to do more than deliver a rousing speech to tear down the walls of hostility. Jesus tore down the wall of hostility as He subjected Himself to all our walls of hostility. Jesus was born into such a hostile world that He and his parents had to flee because Herod tried to kill Jesus by murdering all the newborn baby boys in Bethlehem. Jesus then lived a life of suffering at the hands of humanity because of the wall of hostility between God and humanity. Jesus lived a life of suffering from all our walls of hostility and ultimately experienced the worst of our walls of hostility through His death on the cross. Jesus' life, suffering, and death on the cross tore down the greatest wall of hostility from which all walls of hostility are built and that is the wall of hostility between God and all of humanity. *Colossians 1:21-22* says, ²¹ *Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.* ²² *But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—*". We were at one time at war with God, but through Jesus suffering all our hostility, God has taken the first step to make things right between us and God by forgiving our sins through Jesus' suffering and death. Now, all those who follow Jesus are forgiven of our sins and the wall of hostility between us and God is torn down once and for all.

J.C. Ryle once said, "Without justification it is impossible to have real peace. Conscience forbids it. Sin is a mountain between a man and God, and must be taken away. The sense of guilt lies heavy on the heart and must be removed. Unpardoned sin will murder peace. The true Christian knows all this well. His peace arises from a consciousness of his sins being forgiven, and his guilt being put away. ... He has peace with God, because he is justified."

WE TEAR DOWN WALLS OF HOSTILITY AND BUILD BRIDGES OF PEACE

Once the wall of hostility between us and God is torn down and we find peace with God, we are able to have peace within our own selves, and then peace with one another. As Christians, *We Tear Down Walls of Hostility and Build Bridges of Peace*. The life, suffering, and death of Jesus on the cross destroys all kinds of hostility by creating a new, unified community. The Church worldwide finds our unity in Jesus Christ. We are people from all walks of life who have become one through following Jesus. *Galatians 3:26-29* says, “²⁶ So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” In the church we are not unified according to gender, age, politics, race, economics, education, theology, . . . but through Jesus alone.

The 1992 film, *A River Runs through It*, based on the autobiographical novel of Norman MacLean, chronicles two brothers coming of age in early 20th century Missoula, Montana. The boys grow up under the stern tutelage of their minister father. This preacher teaches his sons about life, grace, and love through the art of fly-fishing. But as the boys mature and follow very different paths (one straight-and-narrow, the other wild) they find fishing is the one bond that still draws them together as adults. Thus, the title *A River Runs through It* was not a description of the land as much as it was a description of a recurring theme in their lives. When all else failed, they could always go back to the river and bond around their love of fly-fishing. If we had to pick a title for the Christian community experience, it might be “A Cross Runs through It.” When all else fails, we can always go back to the cross and bond around our love for the One who died for us there.

Now that all of us who are followers of Jesus are one in Jesus, we then are to act as one people in our community. The church worldwide, and each individual church is meant to be a place where through the miracle of us being one people yet diverse we give this world a taste of what heaven will be like one day. Therefore, in our Christian community the world is meant to experience God’s peace in how we relate to one another. We are a community of imperfect sinners, who have become saints through our sins being forgiven and are now learning to treat each other as true saints who love one another just as Jesus loves us. Now that the walls of hostility between us and God, and between each other have been torn down, we are a peaceful community where we are all learning to love God, ourselves and each other as Jesus did when He walked in this world. We are a community who tears down walls of hostility and builds bridges of God’s peace by loving our enemies, doing to others as we would have them do unto us, forgiving each other when we hurt or erect walls of hostility with each other. We are a Christ-centered community where, when someone builds walls of hostility with us, we do what *Matthew 18* says and love them enough to go to them to tear down the walls of hostility by speaking the truth to them in love with hopes of building bridges of peace. In

our community with each other we treat one another with the Fruit of the Spirit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In our peace-loving community, we do not build walls of hostility through cliques, gossip or slander. Instead, in our relationships with each other we do what *Ephesians 4:31-32* directs us to do as it says to, *³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*” Whenever we treat each other with this kindness, compassion, forgiveness just as Jesus has done for us, we are tearing down the walls of hostility and building bridges of God’s peace with this world. On the other hand it is also true that whenever we build walls of hostility with others, we are in essence picking up a hammer and nails and joining the soldiers in pounding the nails of hostility in Jesus’ feet and hands on the cross.

The one and only way that all the walls of hostility in this world will be torn down is when our wall of hostility is first torn down between us and God through Jesus. Then as we follow Jesus, Jesus will continue to tear down walls of hostility in this world through us one person at a time. Therefore, the one and only answer in tearing down the walls of hostility in our world is Jesus. Jesus is the only path to true peace!

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *The Holy Bible* (Several FREE copies are available in the DRC)
- *Unpuzzled*, J. D. Walt *
- *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer
- *The Gospel According to Jesus*, John MacArthur
- *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande
- *Respectable Sins*, Jerry Bridges

Icebreaker Questions

1. What is one “wall” (real or symbolic) you have seen in life that created division between people? What made it so powerful?
2. Have you ever had a relationship where something shared—a hobby, a struggle, or faith—helped rebuild a broken connection? What happened?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. Paul says Christ “broke down the wall of hostility.” What are some modern-day walls of hostility you see most often in our culture, community, or even the church?
2. The sermon traces hostility all the way back to Adam and Eve and the entrance of sin. Why is it important to understand that our divisions are ultimately a spiritual problem and not just a social one?
3. How does having peace with God through Christ change the way we pursue peace with others? Why must reconciliation with God come first?
4. The phrase “A Cross Runs Through It” reminds us that our unity is found in Jesus, not politics, race, age, preferences, or personalities. What tends to compete most for your identity and loyalty besides Christ?
5. The sermon says that when we build walls of hostility, we are symbolically joining in the hostility of the cross. How does that perspective challenge the way we handle conflict, gossip, bitterness, or unforgiveness?
6. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week’s sermon to your life?
7. How might this group pray for you this week?