



## **Small Group Guide: Bridging the Gap - Tearing Down Walls**

### **Opening Prayer & Ice Breaker (10 minutes)**

**Ice Breaker Question:** Share about a time when someone reached across a barrier (cultural, social, political, etc.) to connect with you. How did it make you feel?

### **Key Scripture References**

- Ephesians 2:11-17 - Breaking down the dividing wall
- John 4:7-9 - Jesus and the Samaritan woman
- 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 - Ministry of reconciliation
- Philippians 2:3-5 - Regarding others as more important

### **Summary of Main Points**

1. **Jesus bridged the gap** between humanity and God through the cross
2. **We are called to connect** with people before we can engage them in discipleship
3. **Common barriers** include pride, fear, prejudice, political ideologies, and busyness
4. **Selfishness is the root** cause of most barriers we create
5. **We must view people** as either lost or saved, not by worldly labels
6. **The Great Commission** mandates us to make disciples of ALL nations

## Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Message (15 minutes)

1. **The pastor said, "We live in a world that likes to talk a lot, but we rarely listen."** How have you seen this play out in your own life or community? What are the consequences of this?
2. **Read Ephesians 2:14-16.** What does it mean that Christ "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall"? What walls did Jesus break down, and why is this significant for us today?
3. **The sermon emphasized that we should view people as "lost or saved" rather than by other labels.** Why is this perspective shift so important? How does it change the way we interact with others?

### Personal Reflection (20 minutes)

1. **The pastor listed several common barriers: pride, fear, prejudice, political ideologies, and busyness.** Which of these resonates most with you? Be honest with yourself and the group about which barrier you struggle with most.
2. **In the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4), Jesus crossed ethnic, religious, gender, and moral lines.** Can you think of a time when you felt called to cross a similar barrier but didn't? What held you back?
3. **The pastor challenged us: "When I hold any ideology over the gospel, that ideology becomes an idol."** Have you ever caught yourself prioritizing political views, personal preferences, or comfort over sharing the gospel? What does repentance look like in this area?
4. **Read 2 Corinthians 5:16.** What does it mean to "recognize no one according to the flesh"? How would your relationships change if you truly saw people this way?

### Application & Action (20 minutes)

1. **The sermon gave four practical first steps:**

- Repent of barriers (intentional or unintentional)
  - Pray for one person by name this week
  - Initiate hospitality (share a meal, coffee, acts of kindness)
  - Listen to someone's story before sharing yours
2. **Which of these four steps is God calling you to take this week? Be specific about who and how.**
  3. **The pastor said, "A divided church cannot win a divided world."** What does unity in the church look like practically? How can our small group model this unity to others?
  4. **Philippians 2:3-4 calls us to "regard one another as more important than yourself."** Share one practical way you can lay down your "mind, will, and emotions" (your soul) this week to connect with someone who is different from you.

## Key Takeaways

- ✓ **Connection precedes engagement** - We cannot make disciples without first connecting with people
- ✓ **Jesus is our model** - He crossed every barrier to reach the lost; we must do the same
- ✓ **Selfishness is the enemy** - The root of our barriers is often our own selfish desires and comfort
- ✓ **No political party can save** - Only Jesus can save; we must not let ideologies become idols
- ✓ **Today is the day of salvation** - Eternity is at stake; urgency matters
- ✓ **We are ambassadors** - God makes His appeal through us (2 Corinthians 5:20)

## This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE of the following and commit to it:

### **Option 1: The Prayer Challenge**

- Pray for one specific person by name every day this week
- Ask God to show you how to connect with them
- Ask God to reveal any barriers you've built

### **Option 2: The Hospitality Challenge**

- Invite someone to share a meal with you this week
- It could be a neighbor, coworker, or someone new at church
- Focus on listening to their story

### **Option 3: The Repentance Challenge**

- Identify one specific barrier in your life (pride, fear, prejudice, political ideology, busyness)
- Confess it to God and ask for His perspective
- Take one concrete action to tear down that wall

### **Option 4: The Reconciliation Challenge**

- If there's someone you're at odds with, take the first step toward reconciliation
- Remember: forgiveness is for you, not them
- You're only responsible for your response

### **Accountability Questions**

1. Who will you connect with this week?
2. What specific barrier is God calling you to tear down?
3. How can this group pray for you as you step out in obedience?

### **Closing Activity (10 minutes)**

#### **Barrier Wall Exercise:**

- Have group members write on a sticky note one barrier they need to tear down
- Don't share names or specifics that would violate confidentiality
- Pray together, asking God to give courage and love to demolish these walls
- Commit to checking in next week on progress

## **Closing Prayer**

Pray together:

- For courage to cross barriers like Jesus did
- For the Holy Spirit to reveal hidden walls in our hearts
- For specific people God is calling us to connect with
- For unity in the church
- For a heart that values eternity over comfort

## **Preparation for Next Week**

Next week's topic: **Equipping for Engagement - Life-on-Life Discipleship**

Before next meeting:

- Read Matthew 28:18-20 (The Great Commission)
- Reflect on: Who has discipled you? Who are you discipling?
- Come prepared to share how your connection challenge went

## **Additional Resources**

- **For further study:** Read the entire book of Ephesians this week, noting every time Paul addresses unity and breaking down barriers
- **Practical tool:** Download the church app and use the digital connect card when you meet someone new
- **Men's Ministry:** Consider joining the CR group or attending the upcoming men's conference in May

*Remember: "No greater love than this than one who lays down his life. Mind, will, and emotions. Jesus did that for us. Why are we not doing it for Him?"*