

“Closer Than You Think”

Session 3: Ephesians 2:11-3:21

Movement: Grounded

Theme: Belonging to God means belonging to each other
— and that changes everything about how we live.



Leader's Notes:

Goal: 100% participation – everyone talks.

Prioritize ★ questions. These make up the central theological themes. In time constraints unstarred questions can be skipped. A great conversation on two or three questions is better than a rushed one on five.

Sessions 1 and 2 were personal. You are chosen. You were dead and God made you alive. You are his poem. All of that is true, and it's the foundation everything else is built on. Session 3 is where the story gets bigger. Paul now turns from what God did for you individually to what God is doing through all of you together. The wall that kept people apart — Jews and Gentiles, insiders and outsiders, people who belonged and people who didn't — has been demolished. Christ didn't just save individuals. He created a new kind of community that the world had never seen before.

This session also contains the theological heartbeat of the entire series. Ephesians 3:17 is where Paul prays that Christ would dwell in his readers' hearts so they would be "*rooted and grounded in love*." That phrase is the source of everything we've been calling **Grounded & Sent**. Your group needs to know that. Being grounded isn't about personal spiritual comfort. It's about being so deeply rooted in God's love that you become someone the world around you can't ignore.

This is a long passage. Don't feel pressure to cover every verse. The two anchor texts are 2:11-22 (the wall comes down) and 3:14-21 (Paul's prayer). The middle section (3:1-13) gives necessary context for Paul's calling and is handled in a leader context note rather than a full discussion block.

Check-In | *DO IT follow-up from Session 2 • ~3 minutes*

Leader note: Keep this brief. One or two people sharing is enough. If your group chose the “But God” or “Poima” options, this is a natural moment for someone to share something they discovered about themselves. Receive it warmly and move on.

1. Last week you chose a Do It option. Did anyone try theirs? What happened . . . or what got in the way?

OPEN IT | *Icebreaker • ~5 minutes*

Leader note: This question sets up the “outsider becoming insider” arc of the passage without tipping your hand. It tends to generate warm, personal stories. Keep it to two or three responses and move on.

2. Think of a time you were the outsider . . . a new school, a new job, a new city, a room full of people who all seemed to know each other. What did it feel like? And what changed the moment you actually belonged?

Let people enjoy this question — the stories are often funny and relatable. What you’re listening for is the emotional texture of the outsider experience and the relief of belonging. Both feelings become important the moment Paul starts talking about what Christ did to the wall between insiders and outsiders. Don’t make the connection yet. Just let the feelings surface.

READ IT | *Scripture • ~4 minutes*

Leaders Note: Before reading this passage, give your group one orienting sentence:

SAY IT:

Paul is about to describe the most dramatic social barrier of the first-century world — and what Christ did to it.

Then ask a volunteer to read.

Context Note: The division between Jews and Gentiles in the first century wasn’t just cultural preference — it was theological, legal, and social. Gentiles were considered

outside the covenant, excluded from the promises of God, and literally separated from Jewish worshippers by a physical wall in the Jerusalem temple. Archaeologists have found inscriptions from that wall warning Gentiles that crossing it meant death. When Paul says Christ “destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall,” his first-century readers felt the full weight of that image in a way we easily miss. This isn’t just a metaphor. It’s a revolution.

- Ephesians 2:11-22

EXPLORE IT | Discussion • ~14 minutes

3. Paul says the Gentiles were once “separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship . . . foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.” That’s a brutal description. Have you ever felt spiritually homeless . . . like you were on the outside of something everyone else seemed to have? What did that feel like?

This question connects the icebreaker directly to the text. Most people in your group can name a season of spiritual homelessness — before they stepped over the line of faith, or during a period of doubt or distance. Some may still feel it. Let people be honest. The point isn’t to wallow in the feeling but to make Paul’s next move — “*but now in Christ Jesus*” — land with the relief it deserves. If someone shares something vulnerable here, receive it and move on gently. Don’t let this question carry the whole session.

Sticky phrase: (Use these to help your group remember what they learn) **“You were outside. Christ didn’t lower the barrier. He demolished it.”**

★ 4. Verse 14 says Christ “*himself is our peace*” . . . and that he made the two groups “one.” He didn’t broker a truce between people who were different. He created something entirely new: one body, one Spirit, one humanity. Who in your life represents the kind of person you’d least expect to be in deep community with? What would it take for that to actually happen?

This is the missional edge of the passage and the question most likely to create productive tension. Paul isn’t describing a world where everyone gets along because they’ve decided to be nice. He’s describing a miracle — Christ making one new humanity out of people who had every reason to stay divided. Your group will think of real people when they hear this question. Political opposites. Different backgrounds. People they’ve written off or who’ve written them off. Don’t let the conversation stay abstract. The

question asks “who” specifically — gently hold people to that. If the conversation goes to societal division rather than personal relationships, redirect: “What about in your own life . . . your neighborhood, your workplace, your family?”

Sticky phrase: **“Christ didn’t just save you from something. He saved you into a community you didn’t choose — and couldn’t have built yourself.”**

5. Verses 19-22 describe the church as a building . . . a temple being constructed with Christ as the cornerstone and every believer as a living stone fitted together. You’re not just a member of a group. You’re a structural piece of something God is building. What part of that image is most challenging to you personally?

This question shifts from the social miracle of verses 14-18 to the structural image of verses 19-22. It’s worth noting that in Paul’s image, a stone that isn’t fitted into the building isn’t fulfilling its purpose no matter how beautiful it is. Isolation isn’t humility. It’s a stone sitting in the yard. Some people will find it challenging that they’re dependent on others. Some will find it challenging that others are dependent on them. Both reactions are worth naming. This is also a natural connection to Brazos Pointe’s small group culture — this isn’t just a Bible study. You play a role in strengthening and supporting the church as we work to build Christ’s body in our community.

Sticky phrase: **“You’re not just attending a community. You’re a necessary part of a mission.”**

READ IT | Scripture • ~3 minutes

Leaders Note: Before the reading, briefly explain what you’re skipping:

SAY IT:

In 3:1-13, Paul describes his own calling to bring this message to the Gentiles — people who were never supposed to hear it. He calls it ‘the mystery’: that Jews and Gentiles would become one body together. He says he’s the least deserving person to carry this message, and yet that’s exactly who God chose. That’s worth sitting with. Then in verse 14, Paul drops to his knees and prays. That’s where we’ll pick up.

Ask a volunteer to read 3:14-21 slowly. This is one of the most beautiful prayers in all of Scripture — it deserves to be read that way.

- Ephesians 3:14-21

Series Connection Note: Verse 17 contains the phrase *“rooted and grounded in love.”* This is the direct source of the series title **Grounded & Sent**. Paul is praying that Christ would dwell so deeply in his readers that they would become grounded — not settled and comfortable, but stable enough to be sent. Being grounded isn’t the destination. It’s the preparation. Make this connection explicit for your group. It’s the moment the series title becomes more than a name.

EXPLORE IT | Discussion • ~14 minutes

6. Paul prays that his readers would grasp *“how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ”* . . . and then immediately says it *“surpasses knowledge.”* He’s praying they would know something that can’t be fully known. What do you think he means? And has there been a moment in your life when you felt the edges of that love — when it was bigger than you could explain?

This question moves the group from theology into testimony. Paul’s prayer is that experiential knowledge would go beyond intellectual knowledge — the same gap the bridge question in Session 2 opened up. The four dimensions (wide, long, high, deep) were likely intentional on Paul’s part — he’s saying the love of Christ extends in every direction beyond what you can measure. Some people will have a story about a moment when God’s love felt undeniable and inexplicable. Make space for those stories. They’re not tangents — they’re exactly what Paul is praying for.

Sticky phrase: *“Paul prays you would know something too big to fully know. That’s not a contradiction. That’s an invitation.”*

★ 7. Verse 17 says Paul prays that we would be *“rooted and grounded in love”* — and that phrase is where the title *Grounded & Sent* comes from. Being grounded in this series doesn’t mean staying put. It means being stable enough to move. Where in your life right now do you feel most ungrounded . . . most easily shaken? What would it look like to let Christ’s love be the thing that steadies you there?

This is the emotional and theological center of the whole session — and arguably of the whole series. Take your time here. When Paul prays *“rooted and grounded,”* he’s using two images: roots going deep into soil, and a foundation being laid for a building. Both images are about stability that enables something else. A tree with deep roots doesn’t

just survive storms — it bears fruit. A building on a solid foundation doesn't just stand — it houses people. Groundedness in Christ isn't about retreating from the world. It's about being stable enough to engage it. The question asks people to locate where they feel most shaken right now — and then to imagine what it would mean to let Christ's love be their footing there.

Sticky phrase: **"Being grounded isn't settling in. It's preparing to move."**

★ 8. Paul closes his prayer with one of the most audacious statements in Scripture: God *"is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine."* He's not just saying God is powerful. He's saying our imagination is the limiting factor, not God's ability. What are you currently not asking God for because you've already decided it's too much?

This is the session's landing question and it has some bite to it. Most people have quietly shrunk their prayers to a size they consider realistic. They've stopped asking for the marriage to be restored, the prodigal to come home, the relationship to be healed, the calling to be real. Paul ends chapter 3 with a direct challenge to that kind of resigned faith. The question is personal and a little uncomfortable — which is exactly right. Give people a moment to sit with it before anyone answers. Some of the best responses to this question won't be spoken out loud. That's fine. The question is doing its work whether or not people verbalize the answer. If your group is comfortable with it, this is also a natural question to close with a moment of silent prayer before the leader reads the Pray It.

Sticky phrase: **"Your prayers aren't too big for God. They're probably not big enough."**

SAY IT | Leader Teaching • ~3 minutes

LEADER NOTE: Read the following aloud or put it in your own words. Keep it brief. If you're running short on time, skip this section and move directly to DO IT.

Here's what Paul is doing across these two chapters: he's showing us that the gospel isn't just personal. It's cosmic. Christ didn't just save individuals. He created a new kind of community — one where the dividing walls that make perfect sense in every human culture have been demolished. Not lowered. Not made optional. Demolished.

And then he prays. Not for programs or strategies or better small groups. He prays that Christ would take up residence in His people so deeply that they become **rooted and grounded** in love. Stable. Immovable. Not because the world around them is stable — it isn't — but because the love underneath them is.

That's the whole series in two chapters. **Grounded & Sent**. You can't be meaningfully sent if you're not genuinely grounded. And the thing that grounds you isn't a discipline or a doctrine. It's a Person. Christ dwelling in you. Love going down like roots. And then — only then — are you ready to move.

DO IT | Application • ~6 minutes

LEADER NOTE: Ask everyone to pick one option and say it out loud before you close. Check in at the start of Session 4 next week.

Choose one of the following this week:

- **Pray the Prayer.** Read **Ephesians 3:14-21** slowly, once a day for the next seven days. Don't just read it — pray it. Let Paul's words become your words. Pay attention to what shifts in you by day seven.
- **Take Down a Wall.** Think about the person from Question 4 — the one you'd least expect to be in deep community with. Do one thing this week to move toward them. It doesn't have to be dramatic. A conversation. A text. Showing up somewhere you normally wouldn't. Just one move toward the wall Christ already demolished.
- **Ask the Bigger Thing.** Write down the prayer you've stopped praying because it felt too big or too unlikely. Say it out loud to God this week. Then read **Ephesians 3:20** over it: *"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine."*
- **Find Your Stone.** **Ephesians 2:22** says you are being *"built together"* with other believers. This week, identify one person in your group or at Brazos Pointe whose faith has steadied yours. Tell them. Specifically. Don't just think it — say it. (or text it)
- **Reflect On It.** Write "Rooted and grounded in love" at the top of a page. Below it, answer honestly: What does my root system actually look like right now? What am I drawing stability from? Is it Christ's love . . . or something else?

PRAY IT | Closing Prayer • ~3 minutes

LEADER NOTE: Paul's own prayer in 3:14-21 is one of the most complete prayers in Scripture — consider reading it again as your closing prayer instead of the one below, or use the one below as a simpler option. Either way, close with something that sends people home with the image of being rooted.

Father,
We were far off, and you brought us near.
We were strangers, and you made us family.
We were divided, and Christ became our peace.
Tonight we heard that you want to dwell in us so deeply
that we become **ROOTED AND GROUNDED** in love . . .
stable enough to withstand whatever comes,
and secure enough to move toward whatever you're doing in the world around us.
We confess that we often draw our stability from things that can't hold us.
Tonight we ask for the real thing.
Root us in your love.
Ground us in your presence.
And when you're ready to send us . . . may we be ready to go.
In Jesus' name, Amen.