



Heaven Meets Earth In Us (Oct. 31st, 2021)

PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with this Study Guide.
- You can watch the 3Crosses sermon online [HERE](#).
- Spend some time in prayer before your group gathers.
- You **always** have the option to use some or all the questions and/or prepare your own questions.

Welcome: *Icebreaker – When you think of the word “unity” what comes to mind?*

Study-Tip: *Why is unity so difficult? Why is unity inside the multi-ethnic church part of the mysterious will of God? To answer these questions, let’s return to the beginning. In the Garden of Eden, God commands Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply while using their image-bearing creativity to cultivate God’s creative work on earth. Implicitly, this task assumes both the multiplicity of humans as well as a cooperative peace between them. This is the Hebrew concept of **Shalom**. Unfortunately, sin introduces chaos, division, and death to God’s earthly image bearers. Did you know, however, that Genesis 1-11 speaks of falls that take place in the *heavenly realms* as well? Prior to the flood, we read about the *sons of God* (heavenly hosts of the [Divine Council](#)) who left their position in rebellion (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6), descended to the earth, had sex with human women, and created offspring; hybrids of heaven and earth (explaining the Nephilim race). Furthermore, the heavenly realm is at play at the fall of Babylon. Moses recounts Babel in Deuteronomy 32:7-9 when he says, “Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. But YHWH’s portion is his people, Jacob, and his allotted heritage.” Moses has this relationship between heaven and earth in mind at the point in which humanity was divided in their rebellion and the nations were allotted to spiritual forces of darkness. **Put simply, to understand unity we need to understand that division is an issue of divine proportions.** While this is all happening, Moses states that the Most High selects the descendants of Abraham as His allotted heritage to bring His blessing to all the nations. Thus, the victory of Jesus over death itself is extraordinarily significant as the moment in which all authority in heaven and earth is given to Jesus. By grace alone and through faith, the church becomes a place where **all** tribes, tongues, and languages – especially those who were under the authority of spiritual darkness from the Babel event - reunite in the kingdom of YHWH. Paul says that in the unified multi-ethnic church, “the manifold wisdom of God might now be known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” As you wrestle with this study guide, challenge yourself to grab onto the concept of unity and recognize how much it means to suggest that heaven meets earth in the unity of the church.*

What’s Going on This Week

This week, Pastor Danny led us into the third week of our series titled *When Heaven Meets Earth!* Pastor Danny drew our attention to *Ephesians 3* in order to talk about Heaven meeting Earth in the church. As your group engages with this study guide, spend some time reflecting on the importance of the church as we strive to be a beacon of hope and truth in the community as well as your role in this effort to unite as one body.

“I think it is one of the tragedies of our nation, one of the shameful tragedies, that eleven o’clock on Sunday morning is one of the most segregated hours, if not the most segregated hours, in Christian America.” – Martin Luther King 1963

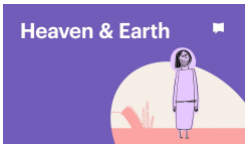


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GROUP MEETING (60 – 90 minutes)

Worship (10 – 15 minutes)

Take time with your group and prepare your hearts as you enter the presence of God for this meeting.

<p>Option 1: Worship Music Have someone share their favorite worship song. You can find it online, play it, and sing along! Have them explain why the lyrics have impacted them!</p>	<p>Option 2: Church Reflection The theme this week will be the unity of the church. In your group, spend some time actively reflecting on the state of the church to help get a fuller picture of where the church is strong and improvement areas</p>	<p>Option 3: Heaven and Earth</p> 
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Word: Explore Some Obstacles to a Multi-Ethnic Community (15 – 25 minutes)

Primary Texts: Ephesians 3:1-13 – In this section of Ephesians, Paul begins to explore another key aspect of the mystery of God’s will; to unite heaven and earth in a multi-ethnic, diverse church community. Here, we discover that Paul works tremendously hard to keep these Jesus communities woven together just as we struggle today when we face (1) the desire to separate from those unlike us, (2) the draw towards those who are like us, and (3) the various identities of the world that draw us away from seeing our true identity in Christ. **When it comes to creating a truly multi-ethnic church community, which one of these challenges do you find to be the most difficult to work through and why? What might the Holy Spirit be calling you to do to work through these obstacles in His power?**

Prayer Tip: As your group members identify any obstacles to unity they may face in their lives, look for any common themes and make sure that at some point, the conversation transitions from problems to solutions.

Word: Reflect on Lessons Learned and Commit to Application (15 – 25 minutes)

Primary Texts: Review Lessons from Ephesians 1-3; Focus on Ephesians 3:14-21 – So far in this series, we have seen how (a) the mystery of God’s will is to unite Heaven and Earth, (b) how Heaven and Earth have united in the work of Jesus, and (c) how heaven and earth unite in the church throughout all generations. At the end of the 3rd chapter, Paul pauses to offer his prayer of strength and encouragement to the entire church after considering the ways in which God plans to bring heaven to earth. **As you come to the halfway point of Ephesians, what has been your main takeaway from this study? What are some of the ways the Lord is challenging you in your faith journey as you explore the depths of the love of Christ and his mysterious will?**

Prayer Tip: Try and align your prayer to that of the Apostle Paul’s. It may even be beneficial to pray this prayer verbatim as many of the conversation topics are embedded into this prayer.



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Witness (20 – 25 minutes)

Considering this week's discussion, here are some different ways that your group can pray!

- Pray that the Lord would expose any of the ways in which the church is lacking in diversity
- Pray through Ephesians 3:14-21
- Pray for any individual prayer request that comes up in your group.
- **Pray for the entire group and how they may be able to participate in future group meetings.**
- **Pray for an interaction with someone who you can invite into your next group meeting!**
- **Pray for God's hand in the multiplication and revival of your group!**

We invite your group to participate in our churchwide [PrayFast](#) event (Tuesday 11/23 from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM) and our next [House of Prayer](#) (Sunday 11/21 from 6:30 PM)

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

-Christmas With 3Crosses: We would love to share with your group some AMAZING volunteer opportunities coming this Christmas. Find out more at Christmaswith3crosses.com

-Stay up to date with Coronavirus Ministry Opportunities: Help us out by pointing the people in your Life Group to 3Crosses.org/coronavirus. If you or anyone in your group is looking to serve, access spiritual care, or seek financial assistance, you can find all you need at 3Crosses.org/neighborhood

-Join relief efforts locally and around the world: Looking to contribute to what is going on both locally and around the world? Visit our website and join one of the [relief efforts](#) being made available through our church partners or sponsor an [indigenous missionary](#)!

-Read Ahead: *Read Ephesians 4* As we grow together into this new body, using our gifts, we begin to become and unstoppable force in the world.

-Life Groups 2021: For more information about joining a group, hosting a group, or general inquiries, contact AJ at avanegas@3crosses.org