



Get Away From Me!

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But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Ephesians 2:13-18

When you're mad at someone, you often try to avoid them. Just the sight of them can make your stomach turn. If they keep bugging you, you might say, "Get away from me!" and go to your room and shut the door. The last thing you want to do is be near them.

But sometimes getting closer can help bring people back together.

When brothers or sisters are fighting, parents sometimes sit them down together and help them talk. At first, neither one may even want to look at the other. Each one thinks, "It's their fault!" But as they talk, they may begin to understand each other. Eventually, they can say two very important things: "I'm sorry." "I forgive you."

Ephesians 2 talks about how two groups of people who didn't get along: the Jews and the Gentiles. "Gentiles" was the name used for everyone who wasn't Jewish. The Jews often looked down on the Gentiles because the Gentiles didn't follow God's Old Testament laws. The Gentiles often disliked the Jews too. A wall of anger stood between them.

What was God's solution in their hostility? He brought both groups together at Jesus' cross. Ephesians says that God would "reconcile both of them to God through the cross." To "reconcile" means to bring people who were separated back together in peace. Both groups had sinned. Neither group could point at the other and say, "We are better than you!" Both groups needed the same Savior, and Jesus gave his life for all of them. At the cross, Jews and Gentiles could see that they were equally sinful—and equally forgiven. They were equally loved by God and equally important to him. Jesus tore down the wall of anger and made them members of one family.

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Jesus brought enemies near to himself—and that changed how they saw one another.

If you're mad at someone today, you may need a little time to calm down. But don't build a wall and decide that you will stay angry forever. Meet that person at the cross. Remember: "Jesus forgave me, and Jesus loves this person too." Then ask Jesus to help you take the first step toward peace. Perhaps that step is saying, "I'm sorry," "I forgive you," or "Can we talk?"

Jesus brings us near to God—and helps us come near to one another.

Questions to Consider

- What two groups of people weren't getting along in Ephesians 2? What name was used for people who were not Jewish?
- Name several countries far away from where you live. After each one, say together, "Jesus died for people in _____ too!"
- Why is it easy to think, "I'm right, and the other person is wrong," when we are angry?
- What does the word "reconcile" mean? How did Jesus reconcile both Jews and Gentiles to God?
- Imagine that you and a friend are angry with each other. What could you say or do to take the first step toward peace?
- Why can remembering "Jesus forgave me too" help you stay calm during an argument?