



God's House

(based on Ephesians 2:17-22)

The followers of Jesus traveled to many faraway cities and countries to teach about Jesus.

Wherever they went, people believed their message, and the church grew. One of the new church leaders was Paul. After visiting a place, Paul often wrote letters to the people to teach them about Jesus and help them to know how to live as Christ's followers. After Paul died, his helpers continued to write these letters.

One of the places where believers gathered as a part of God's church was a place called Ephesus (EH-fuh-suhs). As in many places at that time, there were no church buildings, so the people of God met in someone's house. One day a letter came for the people in Ephesus. It spoke about living the way Jesus did and loving the way Jesus loved. It was a long letter, and here is part of it.

Dear friends in Christ,

You are like a house that God owns. God's house is built on the foundation that the apostles and prophets prepared. The whole house is joined together in Christ, and he makes it grow and become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Christ, you are being built together with all people who love God, no matter what differences you have. All of you are being made into a place where God lives through the Spirit.

The people thought carefully about the letter. They thought about all the ways God's Spirit was making them into a house.

One person said, "We are like a house with the Bible as our foundation. We learn from the prophets' and apostles' words."

Another commented, "We are like the walls and roof of the house because we protect each other and keep each other safe."

"And," said still another, "we are like the doors of the house. We welcome all sorts of people, whether they want to know more about Jesus or they need food and clothing. And we go out to help people wherever we can."

The people began to talk about the beautiful things God had done for them. Before long, they were saying thank you to God for all the good things in their lives.

"Hey!" shouted someone. "God's Spirit is already fashioning us into a house with Jesus as the cornerstone that keeps us all connected. Let's give thanks for God's gifts."

So that's precisely what they did. Every time the people met, they worshiped God and gave thanks for God's gifts. And as they did, they grew stronger in love and faith.



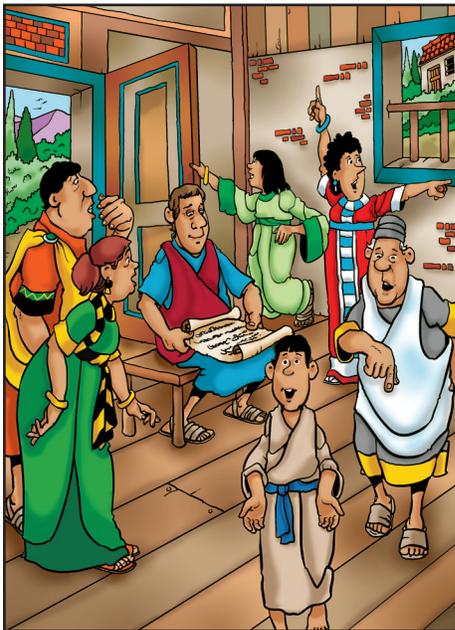
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Explore the ministries your church is involved in that provide a foundation in the Bible, welcome people in, and serve people outside the congregation. How can your family participate in one of these?
- Does your church have a cornerstone? What does it say? If your house was to have a cornerstone, what would it say?



Responding to God's Grace

- Talk about the different ways your family is like the house Paul talks about in Ephesians 2. How is the Bible your foundation? How do you protect each other? How do you welcome others into your home? How do you go out and help others? How do you give God thanks?
- Listen to a YouTube song, “Worship Medley - In Christ Alone/Cornerstone/The Solid Rock Caleb + Kelsey Mashup” (bit.ly/2qMmpVI). What images do you hear about Jesus?

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Work together to build a house in your house using whatever you have available, such as blocks, playing cards, everyday objects, recycling items, and so forth. What is your foundation? Do you have a cornerstone?
- Go on a cornerstone hunt. Look at buildings, particularly churches, in your community. Take a picture or make a drawing of the cornerstone.
- Pray this prayer each day this week:

Dear God, thank you for building us together in community, like a house. May we offer welcome to all who enter and shelter to those seeking it. May we go outside our doors and see Christ in all we meet. Amen.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.