



Six Week Pursuit
Impact Culture

Dear Church Family,

We all have walls and dividers, classifications and prejudices. Sadly, no one is exempt. Honestly, there are just some people we don't want to be around. There are individuals that, by their very nature, put us off and make us uncomfortable.

My R.A. made me uncomfortable. For those that don't know, an R.A. is a trained peer leader who supervises those living in a residence hall or university dormitory. When I went off to university in the bustling city of Kirkland, the last thing I wanted as a shy introvert, was an excitable and intense R.A. But, that was what I got. I instantly decided not to like the blonde and spikey haired ball of energy. He was loud and friendly; too friendly. You can never trust someone that is too friendly, right?

Well, little did I know that ball of energy would come to be one of my closest friends to this day. I was a

Prejudices are roadblocks

groomsman in his wedding and he was a groomsman in mine. Amazing how wrong our assessments of people can be.

Prejudices and first impressions are road blocks; they limit us. And, admittedly, these assumptions tend to lift us up and push others down. For instance, have you ever found yourself stepping into an "us vs. them" mentality? It is a mindset of arrogance; viewing ourselves as greater, holier, and cleaner because, "at least I'm not like them!"

Peter, one of Jesus' followers, faced this very same struggle. He was a Jewish man born and raised. As a Jew, one thing that was absolutely forbidden was associating with Gentiles. Simply interacting with anyone who was not a Jew made that Jew unclean and unable to enter the presence of God. But that all changed when Jesus died on the cross, and soon Peter would witness this change first hand.

The First steps

One day, while Peter is praying, he gets hungry and decides to get some food. Yet, just as Peter prepares to head down and eat, God reveals to him a vision. I love that! God shows up in His time, just as Peter is about to quit praying! God interrupts! That's the Spirit-led life!

In the vision, Peter sees all kinds of things that, if eaten, would make a Jewish man ceremonially unclean. God tells him to eat and Peter says, "Never! I've never eaten anything unclean!" To which God responds, "And the voice came to him again a second time, 'What God has made clean do not call common.'" – Acts 10:15

Jesus told Peter that all people are now welcomed into the family of Jesus, even Gentiles. Just as Peter begins to wonder what just happened, some Gentiles show up at his door and beg him to come to their master Cornelius' house. Long-story short, Acts 10 concludes with Cornelius and his family hearing about Jesus, believing in Jesus, being baptized in the Holy Spirit, and then being baptized in water. This is an amazing story of salvation and proof that Jesus has torn down all dividers. God shows no partiality and Jesus is truly for all.

Walls are no more

Imagine what would have happened if Peter had clung to his perspectives? What would have happened if Peter had either ignored or not heard the voice of the Holy Spirit? Easy answer: Cornelius and his family may have never been saved. In fact, if the early church had not been led by the Spirit, then it is entirely possible you and I would've never heard the Good News of Jesus. Cornelius and his family are our forbearers in receiving the Gospel message. They are the proof that Jesus is available to all who receive Him.

This is huge for us today! The message of crossing divides and barriers is a message our world needs to desperately hear. We are a world full of hatred and bitterness; constantly stating they are evil! They are the wicked ones!

Church, we are just as guilty as the world, and this is the deepest tragedy of all. We have forsaken our calling in favor of political, social, racial, and moral causes! Church, we do not wrestle against flesh and blood! Such thoughts are nothing short of self-righteous and are definitely a symptom of "us vs. them".

The villains are not liberals, conservatives, Muslims, Russians, the SJWs, the alt-rights, etc. Considering such persons as enemies is a worldly perspective! Hatred is a thing of the world, a mindset of sin, and a weapon of Satan! This mentality of the flesh, is dead in God's family. If we continue to think this way, then we are not walking in the Spirit. We need the Baptism of the Spirit, church! We need to **IMPACT CULTURE** by allowing our minds to be transformed and made new! We need Jesus to overflow our culture and transform our hearts!

*Us vs. Them is dead in
the Church.*

What we need church, is for the Holy Spirit to **IMPACT** our **CULTURE** and remind us: "God shows no partiality!" There are people from all walks of life, searching for an answer. All peoples need Jesus just as desperately as the next.

Steps into the unknown as

Church, we need the Baptism of the Spirit to see the bigger picture and help us take steps into the unknown! We need to be led by the Spirit like Peter was. We must step beyond ourselves and bring the healing love of Jesus into a hurting hate-filled world. This world is groaning for an answer. You and I have it church. It's time to **IMPACT CULTURE!** No more division! No more to this hatred! It's time to be baptized in the Spirit again and again! It's time to be transformed. It is time we became like Jesus.

With love,

Pastor Vern Pastor J

Group Discussion

Take a few minutes to discuss the following questions with your group.

1. Why does prejudice exist? What is the true reason behind us putting up walls and pushing certain people groups away?
2. How is the “Us vs. Them” mentality arrogant? When was the last time you found yourself thinking this way? If you are comfortable sharing, who is the person you feel this way about? In honest reflection, do you feel you are better than this person?
3. Read Ephesians 6:10-20. This talks about not wrestling with flesh and blood. What does that mean? Do you “wrestle with flesh and blood”? Why?
4. What do you think of Jesus stating people are not our enemies? Does this bother you? Do you have people in your life you consider enemies? How about people groups? Why are they your enemy?
5. Do you want to follow Jesus? Do you want to be like Jesus? Would you be willing to lay down your hatred and division to follow Jesus? Why or why not? What would it take for you to lay aside your anger and “Us vs. Them” mentality?

Prejudice is a great time saver. You can form opinions without having to get the facts!

Closing Prayer

Close your time together in prayer. Here are a few ideas of what you could pray about based on the topic of today's discussion:

Jesus help us to:

- See through your eyes
- Have your worldview
- Get over “Us vs. Them”
- Tear down our walls and division

Weekly Challenge

Name one heated issue today that really gets under your skin. Consider the people involved in that problem. How do you feel about them? Discuss how you think Jesus would address the issue today. How would He handle it differently than the world? What could you do practically to make a genuine difference with this issue? If you cannot think of solution, then let the issue go and pray for God to help you get over it. If



Questions for Kids

If you have children, here are some questions you can go over with them.

1. Are there certain kids in your school you don't want to be around? Why don't you want to be around them?
2. What do you do when another kid is mean or believes differently than you? Do you feel like you are better than them? Why?
3. Jesus loves everyone and wants us to love everyone too. How can we do that? It's not easy is it? Do you think getting to know Jesus better could help us? How?

Closing Prayer

Pray together as a family. Here are a few ideas of what you could pray about.

Jesus help us to:

- Understand differences better
- Love the people we don't like very much.
- Talk to you more.

Did you know?

Kids in Japan attend school from April until March with only 6 weeks of vacation. While kids in France must go to school from 8-4pm, with a 2-hour lunch break, no school on Wednesdays, and a half-day every Saturday!

Isn't it cool how different we are, but we all have to go to school?

THE EXTREME CHALLENGE

Do you have what it takes to conquer this challenge?

Remember how last week you were challenged to invite 3 good friends and 3 people you're not good friends with to church? Well, this week, we want you to do 1 nice thing a day for a person you're not good friends with or don't get along with very well. It may be tough, but with God by your side, you can really impact the life of that person. You can do it!