



# Managing Group Conflict in the Multicultural Church: An Exegetical Research Analysis of Ephesians 2:11-22

Angela Nicholas  
*Regent University*

---

This chapter presents an exegetical research analysis to understand how Apostle Paul managed the conflict between the multicultural groups in the First Century Church. The analysis examined Ephesians 2:11-22 according to Robbins' (1996) socio-rhetorical analysis. Specifically, the researcher examined the pericope's inner texture to determine how Apostle Paul mitigated cross-cultural conflict among the members of the Church in Ephesus. The socio-rhetorical analysis revealed insights to answer the following questions: (1) How did Apostle Paul advise the Church in Ephesus on how to handle conflict among members of different cultures? and (2) Did Apostle Paul propose a multicultural experience or monocultural experience to mitigate cross-cultural conflict among the members of the Church in Ephesus? The socio-rhetorical analysis revealed that Apostle Paul advised the members of the Church in Ephesus to overcome conflict by embracing peace and unity through the inclusive nature of God. . The analysis also revealed that Apostle Paul proposed a monocultural experience to mitigate cross-cultural conflict among the members of the Church in Ephesus. This exegetical research study informs Church leaders with multicultural congregations how best to resolve cultural or interracial group conflict. This study also contributes to the research of group conflict in multicultural churches.

Keywords: group conflict, multicultural church, diversity, multiculturalism, cultural heterogeneity, socio-rhetorical analysis

---

## Introduction

On April 17, 1960, in an interview on "Meet the Press," Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated, "any church that stands against integration and that has a segregated body is standing against the spirit and the teaching of Jesus Christ" ("Meet the Press", 1960). Over time, many Christian denominations in the United States have made efforts to encourage and embrace congregational cultural heterogeneity (Wright et al., 2015).

However, in many settings, including churches, cultural heterogeneity presents complexities that could impact the cohesiveness of groups. To understand the biblical perspective regarding cultural heterogeneity in “any church” that Dr. King referred to in his interview, this paper utilized exegetical research methods to examine the construct of group conflict as a result of cultural heterogeneity in the First Century Church. The exegetical study was framed around the following questions: (a) how did Apostle Paul advise the Church in Ephesus on how to handle conflict among members of different cultures? and (b) did Apostle Paul propose a multicultural experience or monocultural experience to mitigate cross-cultural conflict among the members of the Church in Ephesus? To answer these questions, this exegetical study explored Paul’s guidance to the Church in Ephesus by utilizing Robbins’ (1996) socio-rhetorical criticism to analyze the pericope of Ephesians 2:11 – 22.

### **Overview of Groups and Cross-cultural Conflict**

For most organizations, including religious organizations, conflict is an inevitable and significant element of organizational life (Putnam, 1988). However, according to Konopaske et al. (2018), “once the confounding variable of intercultural differences is added, conflict resolution becomes even more complex” (p. 291). Conflict between racially or ethnically diverse groups may originate from perceptual differences which may reinforce stereotypes and deteriorate relationships between group members (Avruch, 2004; Konopaske et al., 2018). These perceptual differences lead to issues of intercultural miscommunication and misunderstanding (Avruch, 2004). Conflict arising from intercultural miscommunications and misunderstandings can hinder an organization’s goals and objectives. According to Adams and Galanes (2009), a diverse group can overcome conflict by finding common ground that utilizes the diverse talents, perspectives, and styles of each of its members.

### **Literature Review**

To further understand the construct of group conflict in multicultural churches, relevant articles were analyzed using the process of an exhaustive literature review. The researcher searched for articles utilizing Regent University’s Summon electronic search tool and the ATLA Religion Database with AtlaSerials. This search yielded six articles that provided qualitative and quantitative studies about issues that could potentially spark group conflict in the multicultural church setting in the United States. Additionally, the search yielded four exegetical research articles regarding race relations and conflict in the church. The following section details the themes regarding cross-cultural conflict in multicultural churches that emerged from a review of the extant literature.

## Leadership Challenges in the Multicultural Church

Leaders of multicultural churches face unique challenges. Leaders with multicultural congregations must recognize the stress, uncertainty, and conflict that members of their congregation may face in society (Dunlow, 2017). Therefore, it is important for leaders to be culturally aware of the diversity of their congregation and adapt their teachings to reflect sensitivity to the diverse population (Dunlow, 2017). For those churches that offer small group ministries, leadership engagement is critical to ensure that small groups are culturally diverse. Dunlow found that church leaders in the study expressed that their small group ministry during the week was racially segregated compared to their more diverse Sunday services.

Dunlow (2017) identified that leaders also faced challenges regarding limited Christian education resources that are fitting to the multi-ethnic congregation. Most of the leaders Dunlow surveyed indicated that they did not use curriculum from publishing houses because most of the curriculum on the market are “designed for middle class, white, suburban people” (p. 297). The use of such curriculum may be irrelevant to multi-ethnic members and may discourage engaging discussions by the members who feel alienated by the text. Therefore, leaders of multi-ethnic churches must be creative and either create their own curriculum for Sunday school and their small group ministry or tweak published materials to incorporate multicultural examples to be more relevant for their population (Dunlow, 2017). Dunlow (2017) concluded that leaders of multi-ethnic churches should not have to reinvent the wheel regarding developing curriculum and planning services. Instead, Dunlow recommended that leaders of multicultural churches network with one another to learn and develop best practices.

Zerai (2011) asserted that the leadership of multicultural churches should also be representative of the diversity in the congregation. Zerai pointed out that in one of the multicultural churches in her study, of over 1000 members, at least 30% of the congregation were African Americans, yet the pastoral staff was all white. Diverse representation among the pastoral staff of multicultural churches will more likely encourage the growth of diverse populations.

## Multicultural Church and Societal Race Relations

Emerson and Smith (2000), who conducted some of the initial research into American multicultural churches, posited that “fundamental ideological assumptions between black and white groups” and “individualistic orientation toward social change” made it nearly impossible for churches to embrace integration (Marti, 2010, p. 201). In later studies, Nagel and Ehrkamp (2017) indicated that some Southern churches remained “racially homogenous” due to divisive political outlooks regarding racial inequality (p. 197). Nagel and Ehrkamp contended that some white Christians insisted that racial inequality resulted from the personal, moral failings of blacks. In contrast, black

Christians insisted that such inequalities and racial disparities were the result of systemic discrimination (Nagel & Ehrkamp, 2017). However, Zerai (2011) contended that despite the “divergence in political and social views” among individuals of different races and ethnicities, in multicultural churches, these groups still joined in worship in multiracial and evangelical churches on a weekly basis (p. 2).

### **Immigration and the Multicultural Church**

According to Nagel and Ehrkamp (2017), the changing demographics of inner-city and suburban neighborhoods have created opportunities, and for some churches, a necessity to form immigrant ministries which targeted Asian and Latino immigrants. Even though most of the pastors and members of their study appreciated multiculturalism and rejected “congregational homogeneity,” many of the churches with large immigrant populations implemented separate services for their immigrant congregants (Nagel & Ehrkamp, 2017, p. 200). Nagel and Ehrkamp reported that one of the pastors described the separate immigrant worship services “not as segregation but as cultural accommodation – a means for the church to respect differences among congregants” (p. 200). Nagel and Ehrkamp also found that immigrants also appreciated and preferred their own services where they could worship, pray, and sing in their own native language.

### **Racial Integration of the Worship Service**

In response to a more diverse congregation, some multicultural churches seek to change various elements of their services to accommodate preferences of all members. Racial and ethnic groups vary in their preferences of types of worship music, style of preaching, and even the length of service (Wright et al., 2015). Wright et al. posited that “an expressive, contemporary worship service can transcend racial barriers and welcome people from different backgrounds” (p. 189). Evidence from the two multicultural churches in Marti’s (2009) study supports the concept of corporate worship as a means of showing commitment to membership of the church community despite one’s racial or ethnic background. However, transitioning traditional worship services rooted in European style or traditional black gospel to a more contemporary worship service may lead to conflict between existing church members and newcomers. Zerai (2011) indicated that African American members at one of the study sites decided to leave the congregation following the replacement of the African American music director with a white choir director who incorporated more contemporary Christian music into the worship services.

### **Welcome Experiences at Multicultural Churches**

Even though Jesus commanded His disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations,” some churches have struggled with welcoming newcomers of different nationalities

(Matthew 28:19; Wright et al., 2015). Wright et al. (2015) conducted a study in which they sent inquiries via email to 3,120 churches of various denominations in the United States. Wright et al. used various names that conveyed “different racial and ethnic associations” to determine if the response would vary accordingly (p. 185). Wright et al. concluded that of all the denominations included in the study, mainline Protestant churches demonstrated the most “discriminatory practices.” Wright et al. found that the mainline Protestant churches sent replies that appeared more welcoming in response to emails that appeared to be from individuals with “white-sounding names” versus those that appeared to be from individuals with “ethnic names” (p. 185). Nevertheless, the aging of church members and the decline in church membership has created an organizational initiative and “economic imperative” to attract members (Wright et al., 2015, p. 187). Therefore, churches have become more amenable to welcoming people of different races and ethnicities.

Even with overarching resolutions to become more culturally diverse, the principle of homophily creates an environment that is less than welcoming for newcomers who represent a culture different from the current congregants (Wright et al., 2015). According to Wright et al. (2015), “the principle of homophily holds that people prefer to associate with others similar to them, and this preference is especially relevant for socially salient characteristics such as age, sex, and race” (p. 187). Therefore, homophily results in new members resembling existing members (Wright et al., 2015). If the desire is for a church to become more culturally heterogeneous, leaders must be aware of and recognize the existence of homophily that will limit the church’s reach to newcomers of different races and ethnicities. Furthermore, eliminating a culture of homophily will mitigate conflict that may begin at the onset of welcoming potential newcomers who are different from the majority of the congregation.

## **Multicultural Experience Versus Monocultural Experience**

Some multicultural churches encourage members to assimilate and adopt a new cultural identification as born-again Christians who identify as “no longer Jew or Greek...no longer slave or free...no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Marti (2009) referred to this idea of a new cultural identification as “ethnic transcendence” (p. 64). Marti stated that “ethnic transcendence” encourages members to connect to the church through a “shared religious identity” while retaining the “value for their particular ethnicities” (p. 64).

However, Zerai (2011) pointed out that multicultural congregations that do not acknowledge the racial hierarchy within society are perpetuating color-blind racism, “a racial ideology that has emerged as a central mechanism for supporting and reproducing the racial structure of the U.S.” (p. 11). Zerai posited that in order for multicultural churches to build a cohesive congregation, leadership must acknowledge societal racism and must work together with congregants to “work toward a unified

vision of what it means to build God's kingdom here on earth" (p. 11). This unified vision is similar to other multicultural churches that promote the secular concept of diversity and inclusion and appreciate the cultural differences within their multicultural church community. For example, Nagel and Ehrkamp (2017) shared that one of the white Southern Baptist ministers in their study purported that "God celebrates diversity...He wanted people to be different...God celebrates culture" (p. 198).

### **Biblical Principles Regarding Cross-cultural Conflict and Resolution**

According to Buys and Muswubi (2015), Jesus Christ was an exemplar of how unity is the key to achieving the missional objective of the Church. Keener (2003) asserted that Jesus promoted the pathway to ethnic reconciliation when he crossed an ethnic barrier in his interactions with Samaritans. As the First Century Church began to expand beyond the Jewish culture, the Apostles not only made a resolution but continued to preach unity among the Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians (Buys & Muswubi, 2015). Apostle Paul addressed the cultural conflict in several of his Epistles, including his Epistle to the Romans and his Epistle to the Ephesians. Furthermore, Apostle Paul identified a common ground, their devotion to Jesus Christ, to help manage the conflict between the two diverse Christian groups (Buys & Muswubi, 2015). Even though the scripture details the cultural conflicts that were present in the First Century Church, Melbourne (2001) posited that Jesus Christ broke the barriers and established a new humanity that superseded the racial and ethnic identity of Christian groups in the New Testament.

### **Methodology**

The preceding literature review provided insight into the challenges faced by multicultural churches as well as some viable solutions addressing group conflict as a result of cultural heterogeneity in multicultural churches. However, the paucity of quantitative, qualitative, and exegetical research regarding this construct reveals a gap in critical research that can help inform Church leaders with multicultural congregations how best to resolve intercultural or interracial group conflict. This paper addresses the gap in exegetical research regarding biblical perspectives on addressing group conflict in the First Century Church as it relates to cultural heterogeneity. This exegetical research study answered the questions: (a) how did Apostle Paul advise the Church in Ephesus on how to handle conflict among members of different cultures? and (b) did Apostle Paul propose a multicultural experience or monocultural experience to mitigate cross-cultural conflict among the members of the Church in Ephesus? To answer these questions, the exegetical research study utilized Robbins' (1996) socio-rhetorical criticism to analyze the pericope of Ephesians 2:11-22.

## Socio-Rhetorical Criticism

According to Robbins (1996), socio-rhetorical criticism is an exploration of “textual discourse...as a symbolic act that creates history, society, culture, and ideology as people know it, presuppose it and live concretely in it” (p. 46). The exegetical analysis of Ephesians 2:11-22 used the research methodology of inner textual analysis to analyze the textual discourse of Apostle Paul with the members of the Church in Ephesus. Specifically, “five kinds of inner texture in texts: (a) repetitive-progressive, (b) opening-middle-closing, (c) narrational, (d) argumentative, and (e) aesthetic” were examined to explicate the narrational patterns and significance of the pericope (Robbins, 1996, p. 46).

### Repetitive-Progressive Texture in Ephesians 2:11-22

According to Robbins (1996), the analysis of repetitive-progressive texture seeks to explore the repetition of certain words and “patterns [that] emerge from the repetition of certain [words or] topics in the text” (p. 50). Furthermore, Robbins asserted that an analysis of the repetitive texture in a pericope provides insight into the main characters and main ideas of the passage. The repetition of the word “you” in the English Standard Version (ESV) of the pericope appears seven times (Ephesians 2:11-13; 2:17-22). The initial occurrence of the word “you” is immediately followed by the word “Gentiles,” which indicates that Gentiles were the implied audience of this section of discourse (Ephesians 2:11). According to DeSilva (2004), the implied audience of Ephesians presupposes that the Church in Ephesus was composed of a majority of Gentile Christians. However, “this would not necessarily exclude some Jewish Christian readership...since parts of a letter could be addressed more specifically to a certain part of the audience and expected to be ‘overheard’ by other parts of the audience” (DeSilva, 2004, p. 722).

Associated with the pronoun, “you,” the words and phrases related to the idea of “strangers,” and “aliens/alienated” in the pericope appears four times. Likewise, the word “one” in the pericope appears four times. The word “one” is strongly associated with the pronouns, “us,” which appears in the pericope twice and “we,” which occurs once. In the two concluding verses of the pericope, “together” appears twice. This pattern of repetition and progression of these words as well as its associated pronouns are charted in Table 1.

Table 1

*Repetition and Progression of Pronouns, "Strangers", "aliens/alienated", "one", and "together"*

Verse	Pronoun	"Strangers"	"Aliens/ Alienated"	"One"	"Together"
2:12a	You		Alienated		
2:12b	You	Strangers			
2:14	Us			One	
2:15				One	
2:16	Us			One	
2:18	We			One	
2:19	You	No longer Strangers	No longer...Aliens		
2:21					Together
2:22	You				Together

Table 1 demonstrates how others viewed the Gentiles in the Church in Ephesus; Others viewed the Gentiles as "strangers" and "aliens" from "the commonwealth of Israel" (Ephesians 2:12). However, Paul's repetition of "one" throughout the pericope emphasizes Paul's idea of all believers, both Gentiles and Jews, are united as "one" (Ephesians 2:14-18). Additionally, the progression from "strangers" and "aliens" to "no longer strangers and aliens" and that all believers are "being joined together" further accentuates Paul's proposition of unity of all believers (Ephesians 2:12-19).

### Opening-Middle-Closing Texture in Ephesians 2:11-22

The repetitive-progressive pattern of the pericope also provides insight into the second subsection of inner texture, the analysis of the opening, middle, and closing of the pericope. The progression of "strangers" and "aliens" in the opening of the pericope to "no longer strangers and aliens" in the closing of the pericope further implicates the significance of Paul's exhortation of unity to the members of the Church in Ephesus (Ephesians 2:12, 19). The conjunctive phrase, "but now," denotes the transition from the opening and the middle of the pericope (Ephesians 2:13). In Table 1, Paul used the word "one" repeatedly in the middle of the pericope (Ephesians 2:14-18). Paul also transitioned from using the pronoun "you" to the pronouns "us" or "we" (Ephesians 2:14-18). By employing these first-person pronouns and the word "one" in the middle of the pericope, Paul developed the concept of reconciliation of the Gentiles into "one body" through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:14-18). The transition from the middle to the closing of the pericope is once again denoted by a conjunctive phrase, "So then" (Ephesians 2:19). In the closing, the idea of "one body" and celebration of inclusion culminates with Paul concluding that all members, Gentiles and

Jews, as “fellow citizens...of the household of God,” are “being joined together [and]...are being built together” (Ephesians 2:19-22).

### **Narrational Texture in Ephesians 2:11-22**

The analysis of the narrational texture provides insight into the narrational voice of Apostle Paul and how it translates to his guidance to the Church in Ephesus. Paul, who claimed authority as the “Apostle to the Gentiles,” uses the first-person approach when accentuating the unity of the church (Romans 11:13; Ephesians 2:11-22). Ephesians 2:11-22 presents the narrational voice of Paul with the use of the pronouns “us” and “we” in the middle of the pericope. Paul does not explicitly mention Jewish Christians in this pericope, although he implied that they are also readers along with Gentile Christians. However, using first-person pronouns, Paul placed himself in the discourse which established him as an exemplar of inclusion. As a figure of authority, Paul exemplified the principle of the reconciliation of all Christians “to God in one body” (Ephesians 2:16).

### **Argumentative Texture in Ephesians 2:11-22**

According to Robbins (1996), the “relationships among word-phrase and narrational patterns...produces argumentative and aesthetic patterns in texts” (p. 46). An analysis of the argumentative texture further demonstrates how Apostle Paul used words, evocation, and reasoning to persuade the diverse members of the Church in Ephesus to embrace unity. According to Robbins and Watson (2015), “Ephesians 2:11–22 exhibits a distinct argumentative texture that contains a purposeful and illuminating structure that correlates political topoi” (p. 4). Specifically, Paul “uses the political imagery of citizenship to describe the Gentile’s exclusion ‘from the commonwealth of Israel’” (Ephesians 2:12; Kobelski, 1990, p. 887). Furthermore, Paul’s reference to “the dividing wall of hostility” and “the law of commandments expressed in ordinances” is referring to the Torah, the “fundamental expression of Judaism” (Ephesians 2:14-15; DeSilva, 2004, p. 74). Paul effectively argued that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ has “broken down [and]...abolished” the Torah, and therefore, “create(s) in himself one new man in place of the two” (Ephesians 2:14-15). Furthermore, Paul’s use of the word “one” associated with the crucifixion of Jesus Christ is also in direct contrast of the *Shema*, the “liturgical piece...recited twice daily by most Jews, keeping forever in the forefront of their minds the one God” (Ephesians 2:14-16; DeSilva, 2004, p. 75). Paul’s evocation of the image of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ invokes not only the idea of the one God but also the oneness and reconciliation of “us both to God in one body” (Ephesians 2:16). In the closing of the pericope, Paul again used political imagery of citizenship to describe the inclusion of Gentiles as “fellow citizens...of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19). The argumentative texture analysis further supports Paul’s invocation of the inclusion of all Gentile Christians because the crucifixion of Jesus Christ destroyed the “dividing

wall” of the Torah that separated the Jewish Christians from the Gentile Christians (Ephesians 2:14).

### Sensory-Aesthetic Texture in Ephesians 2:11-22

Finally, an analysis of Ephesians 2:11-22 through aspects of its sensory-aesthetic texture determined how the words of Apostle Paul evokes a “range of senses” (Robbins, 1996, p. 89). According to Robbins, sensory-aesthetic texture consists of three zones: “the zone of emotion-fused thought, the zone of self-expressive speech, and the zone of purposeful action” (p. 30). In the opening of the pericope, Paul immediately appealed to the emotions of the Gentiles by calling them to “remember” that they were formerly “separated from Christ” (Ephesians 2:11-12). In the zone of self-expressive speech, Paul informed the readers of how God came and “preached peace” not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:17). The purposeful action of the Gentiles and Jews being “joined together” and “built together” further supports Paul’s emphasis of oneness and unity. Table 2 displays the words associated with these three zones.

Table 2

*Sensory-aesthetic Texture: Three Zones*

Verse	Emotion-infused Thought	Self-expressive Speech	Purposeful Action
2:11	remember		
2:12	remember		
2:17		preached	
2:21			joined
2:22			built

Table 2 demonstrates how Apostle Paul used verbs to engage the zone of emotion-fused thought, the zone of self-expressive speech, and the zone of purposeful action. Engaging these three zones encouraged the Gentile Christian reader to not only reflect on their past, but also on the conversion experience which has reconciled them into the body of Christ.

## Results

To answer the first question of this exegetical research study, Apostle Paul advised the members of the Church in Ephesus to overcome conflict by embracing peace and unity through the inclusive nature of God. In Ephesians 2:11-22, Paul emphasized that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ destroyed the barriers that existed between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. Therefore, the one God of the Jews is also the one God of the

Gentiles, and regardless of cultural differences, they are both “fellow citizens...of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19).

The repetitive texture analysis revealed the multiple occurrences of Paul’s usage of the word “one” (Ephesians 2:14-18). According to DeSilva (2004), Ephesians “has actualized the universalist idea, wedding humanity into one community mirroring the one God” (p. 725). The repetitive texture of this pericope reveals that Paul emphasized this profound idea of “one humanity and one community” to mitigate any barriers between the members of the Church in Ephesus (DeSilva, 2004, p. 725). Therefore, to answer the second question of the research study, Apostle Paul proposed a monocultural experience to mitigate cross-cultural conflict among the members of the Church in Ephesus.

## Discussion

Utilizing Robbins’ (1996) inner texture analysis of Ephesians 2:11-22, the major theme of inclusion emerged from the exegetical data. As the Apostle to the Gentiles, in many of his epistles, Paul continually reaffirmed the unity of the church as he addressed the conflict that existed as a result of “Jewish exclusivism...and Gentile exclusivism” (DeSilva, 2004, p. 722). The analysis of all five of the inner textures of Ephesians 2:11-22 revealed that Paul’s purpose in his appeal to inclusion in this pericope is no different.

Even though there is no explicit situation of group conflict between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians in Ephesians 2:11-22, the argumentative texture of the pericope exposed that Paul still had to address the ethnic barriers at the Church in Ephesus. Specifically, Paul’s use of words and phrases such as “dividing wall of hostility” and “law of commandments expressed in ordinances” is a reminder to the members of the Church in Ephesus that Christ supersedes the Torah, which separated the Jews from the Gentiles (Ephesians 2:14-15; DeSilva, 2004). Paul further emphasized that God not only broke down the religious barriers between the Jews and the Gentiles but also ethnic barriers as they became “one new man in place of the two” through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:15; DeSilva, 2004).

So, how does Paul’s message to the Church in Ephesus in the First Century apply to modern-day multicultural churches? The literature section of this paper provided an overview of the challenges of multicultural churches. Some of those challenges included the impact of societal race relations, separate services to support cultural accommodations for immigrants, and cultural differences in worship experiences. Paul’s message of “one humanity” and “one community” is mirrored by the concept of “ethnic transcendence” proposed by Marti (2009). The inner texture analysis of Ephesians 2:11-22 supports the idea of “ethnic transcendence” (Marti, 2009, p. 64). Therefore, members of multicultural churches should embrace the concept of “one humanity” and understand that regardless of their race, ethnicity, or nationality, that

they have been reconciled “to God in one body through the cross” (Ephesians 2:11-22; DeSilva 2004; Marti, 2009). This concept does not necessarily eliminate the challenges that members may face in society. However, as “members of the household of God,” church leaders can mitigate cross-cultural conflict in the church by emphasizing that whatever may have separated the members from worshiping together and whatever “hostility” previously existed among members has been abolished by the “blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13, 16).

## Conclusion

The purpose of this exegetical research analysis was to understand how leaders of the First Century Church addressed group conflict in relation to cultural heterogeneity. More specifically, the inner texture analysis of Ephesians 2:11-22 provided an understanding of Apostle Paul’s discourse regarding the conflict among members of different cultures represented in the Ephesian Church. This analysis revealed that Apostle Paul advised the members of the Church in Ephesus to overcome conflict by embracing peace and unity through the inclusive nature of God. Furthermore, Apostle Paul proposed a monocultural experience that embraced the idea of one humanity to mitigate cross-cultural conflict among the members of the Church in Ephesus. The inner texture analysis revealed that Apostle Paul was an exemplar of inclusionary practices in the First Century Church. Likewise, Church leaders with multicultural congregations should promote inclusion among the members of their congregation to mitigate and resolve cultural or interracial group conflict.

This research study was limited in its scope by concentrating on one pericope that addressed the construct of cross-cultural conflict. The scope of this study was also limited by the socio-rhetorical methodology employed to examine the pericope. Future research could explore other Epistles of Paul, which also address cross-cultural conflict among Gentile Christians and Jewish Christians. Also, future research could be conducted using the same pericope but employing a different type of socio-rhetorical criticism.

---

### About the Author

Angela Nicholas is a third-year Ph.D. student at Regent University, where she is studying organizational leadership. She has more than 20 years of human resources leadership and consulting experience. Her research interests include human resources development, cultural intelligence, spiritual leadership, and workplace spirituality.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Angela Nicholas  
angenic@mail.regent.edu.

---

## References

- Adams, K., & Galanes, G. J. (2009). *Communicating in groups: Applications and skills* (7th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Avruch, K. (2004). Cross-cultural conflict in conflict resolution. In K. W. Hipel (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems*. EOLSS Publishers.
- Buys, P. J., & Muswubi, A. T. (2015). Uncovering key biblical principle in handling disputable music matters in missio dei perspective--a basic theoretical study. *In Die Skriflig*, 49(1), 1-13.
- DeSilva, D. A. (2004). *An introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, methods, & ministry formation*. IVP Academic.
- Dunlow, J. (2017). Disciples of all nations: The challenge of nurturing faith in multi-ethnic congregations. *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry*, 14(2), 285-305.
- Emerson, M. O. & Smith, C. (2000). *Divided by faith: Evangelical religion and the problem of race in America*. Oxford University Press.
- Holy bible: English standard version* (2001). Crossway Bibles.
- Keener, C. S. (2003). Some New Testament invitations to ethnic reconciliation. *The Evangelical Quarterly*, 75(3), 195-213.
- Kobelski, P. J. (1990). The letter to the Ephesians. In R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmyer, & R.E. Murphy (Eds.), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Prentice Hall.
- Konopaske, R., Ivancevich, J. M., & Matteson, M. T. (2018). *Organizational behavior and management* (11th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Marti, G. (2009). Affinity, identity, and transcendence: The experience of religious racial integration in diverse congregations. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 48(1), 53-68.
- Marti, G. (2010). The religious racial integration of African Americans into diverse churches. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 49(2), 201-217.
- "Meet the Press" (17 April 1960). Retrieved from:  
[http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document\\_images/Vol05Scans/17Apr1960\\_InterviewonMeetthePress.pdf](http://okra.stanford.edu/transcription/document_images/Vol05Scans/17Apr1960_InterviewonMeetthePress.pdf).

- Melbourne, B. L. (2001). Ephesians 2:13-16: are the barriers still broken down? *The Journal of Religious Thought*, 57(2-1-2), 107-119.
- Nagel, C., & Ehrkamp, P. (2017). Immigration, Christian faith communities, and the practice of multiculturalism in the U.S. south. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 40(1), 190-208.
- Putnam, L. L. (1988). Communication and interpersonal conflict in organizations. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 1(3), 293-301.
- Robbins, V.K. (1996). *Exploring the texture of texts: a guide to socio-rhetorical interpretation*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Robbins, V. K. (1996). *The tapestry of early Christian discourse: Rhetoric, society and ideology*. Routledge.
- Robbins, V. K. & Watson, D. F. (2015). *Guidelines for writing sociorhetorical commentary*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.religion.emory.edu/faculty/robbins/SRS/EGLBS/WritingSRCShortLongMar2015.pdf>.
- Wright, B. R. E., Wallace, M., Wisnesky, A. S., Donnelly, C. M., Missari, S., & Zozula, C. (2015). Religion, race, and discrimination: A field experiment of how American churches welcome newcomers. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 54(2), 185-204.
- Zerai, A. (2011). An assessment of afro centricism, color-blind ideology, and intersectionality. *Race, gender & Class*, 18(1/2), 254-272.