

ICE BREAKER

What were moments in your life you would say felt like death? What were moments that felt life giving?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What part of the message was most encouraging to you? What part do you find challenging?
2. What did You notice about God in the passage? What did you notice about yourself and other people in it?

GOSPEL EXCHANGE (REDEMPITIVE WORK)

Jesus asks us to give Him our burdens (Matthew 11:28-29), whatever they may be (a lie we have believed about God or ourselves, our hurt or negative emotions, or even our concerns for loved ones), so He can carry them for us and give us His peace (wholeness and completeness) in exchange.

What do you want to exchange with Jesus today?

What is the burden? “Lord Jesus, I give you my...”

What’s His gift? “Lord Jesus, I receive your...”

ACTION QUESTIONS

1. What is one step of obedience you can take this week, based on what you’ve learned today? *(NOTE – You might consider stopping and prayerfully asking God to answer this question for you, taking 30-45 seconds to listen in silence for an answer, then write it down.)*
2. During the coming week, who is someone with whom you can share what you learned today? *(NOTE – Consider repeating the same step with this question as the previous question.)*



Sermon Study - Conversation Guide

October 1, 2023

“God’s Grace vs. God’s Wrath?”

Ephesians 2:1-10

This guide is a discipleship tool for personal reflection, family conversations, for home groups, and for Table Talk on Sundays @10:40 am and 12:15 pm on the Lowell Patio

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The book of Ephesians is a letter from a guy named Paul to the Christ followers in the ancient city of Ephesus. They were a mix of people who came from a Jewish background and those who were non-Jews, people who grew up worshipping a multitude of gods. This didn't get along well, which is why Paul wrote in detail to them about God's grace.

What is God's grace? It is God's divine, undeserved, unmerited favor. Right now, in this moment, in every moment of your life, you have God's favor. Everything that belongs to God now belongs to you - wisdom to know His will in every situation, power to walk in victory in every situation, His infinite peace, joy, love, and adoration. That's what He's always giving you. Keep that in mind as we read Ephesians 2:1-3.

2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Do God's grace and wrath work together? If so, how? To get there, let's first define sin. The Old Testament picture of this word was an arrow missing the mark of its target. It fell short. What is transgression? It's a legal term. Some versions interpret it as "your trespasses." In Eden, God told the first man and woman to eat from the Tree of Life, but not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, or they would die.

So, the target God has for us to hit is LIFE and we fell short of it and trespassed the boundary of LIFE into DEATH instead. How did this happen? Satan, our adversary, is the father of lies. Yet in Genesis chapter 3, he told the first man and woman that was God the liar.

They believed what Satan said over God. In doing so, they inverted God and Satan's places in their minds. Satan became the truth and their advocate, and God the liar and their accuser. God is life. When we distrust and hide from Him, we experience death.

Paul calls the lies we believed and received from Satan – *the flesh*. The flesh led us into death. This is why God's wrath falls on the flesh, not us. We have so ingested the enemies lies that we think these lies are us. The flesh is the problem. Not us. God attacks the problem. Not us.

But we're so entwined with the flesh before we put our faith in Jesus, that when God's wrath falls on the flesh, we think He's attacking us. In reality, God is our advocate, fighting to lead us from lies into truth, death to life.

1:4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Here's the truth about God. He is love. He knows us completely, every part of who we are, including our brokenness, and He loves us completely, right where we are. His love towards us is not begrudging or obligatory. His love is wildly passionate towards us!

God wants us to experience life to its fullest potential. This only happens when we choose to believe God for who He is and believe Him for what He says about us. This is what Paul reveals in the next verses.

1:8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Faith is a gift of God's grace. We're meant to simply receive it. Why does God give us lavish gifts? We are His *handiwork*, which literally can be translated as His *poetry*. Before the foundations of the world, God planned for you to be His unique poem. He created works only you can do as You grow to believe what He says about Himself, His perfect love for you, and that you were created in His image to be loved by Him.

When we receive who God is for us as Perfect Love, His love overflows into the lives of everyone around us. We were made to work FROM God's love rather than FOR God's love. Will you choose, right now, today, in this moment, to receive God's love and give it to others?

SMALL GROUP GROUND RULES: Tips for great conversation

- Extroverts: Please allow space and time for introverts to speak.
- Introverts: Please speak up when you have something to contribute.
- Everyone: Show respect by listening to one another, knowing that we all can learn from those who have a different perspective.