

ICE BREAKER

What is at least one thing true of you that you like about yourself?

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 22, 2023

“Approaching God”

Ephesians 3:1-12

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

Coastal Community Church
mycoastal.org

We use a formula in our daily experience that is the opposite of grace: *Accomplishment precedes acceptance and achievement precedes approval.* This is how we think, “If I do good, then acceptance comes.” We tie our worth, acceptance, and approval to ‘working hard.’

How do we handle working equations that never produce the acceptance and love we so desperately need? We create and wear masks.

The problem is our masks get the love. We take the hurt, so they won't break. This was Paul's life before Jesus. Jesus broke his masks and spent 14 years helping Paul rewire his brain. This is why Paul hammers home the lessons he learned about God's grace in the last two chapters.

3:1 *For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.*

Grace is unconditional acceptance given to an undeserving person by an unobligated giver. You're not too much, or too little, or undeserving, or whatever else you might think, which would keep you from talking to God. God wants to hear you, guide you, direct you. It's His greatest joy to give you grace, good gifts you don't deserve, nor could you ever earn!

3:4 *In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.*

The mystery of our Christ, our Savior, is that God enters my pain and suffers it with me, for me, and then delivers me from it at His own cost. God gives grace to the desperate. It's like workers getting paid the same for an hour of work as those who work all day. Grace isn't fair. If there's no more performance, striving, or condemnation because Jesus already earned it all, what does this mean for our relationships with each other?

3:6 *This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

This means all that's left is love. Unity. Connection. Hope. For those who feel disqualified, you're qualified. For those who work so hard to be good, you're already enough. For those who feel far away, you're near. We've been included in an inheritance we didn't earn. So now what?

3:7 *I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.*

We want the tremendous power Paul had when he prayed. People listened to him. People followed him and were changed because of him. These gifts came through Paul's service, through his suffering for people.

The mystery of God is that when we sacrifice for people, the power of God flows through us. You'll never experience having more of God's love and power flow through you, until you take a step of faith and sacrifice for others. So, Paul steps out in faith...

3:8 *Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.*

Paul had no more need for a mask, no need to hide his awful past ever again. Paul's story doesn't diminish him. It gives glory to the God who saved him. So then, Paul wraps up everything he just described in one gloriously beautiful summation:

3:10 *His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*

Manifold means intricate, many colored, detailed. The wisdom of God is the most incredible tapestry ever created. God weaves every part of your story, your needs, heartaches, failures, wounds, talents, victories, and every boring moment of your life into a living piece of art. Together, it's all a firework display of His majesty.

All masks we wear are now pointless. So let them go. Stop pretending. Pray with honesty and confidence, knowing God absolutely loves you right where you are. Then love and sacrifice for others. This is what it looks like to live from the grace Jesus sacrificed to give you.

GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDELINES: Tips for great conversation

- We aren't here to teach/fix each other, but to share our experiences.
- Show respect by listening to one another, asking clarifying questions.
- If you're quick to share, allow space and time for others to speak up.
- If you're slow to speak, your experience is valuable so please share.