

## ICE BREAKER

When is a time someone did a great job of demonstrating God's mercy or grace, or both, to you?

## 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 8, 2023

"You Belong"

Ephesians 2:11-13

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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Ephesians 2:1-10 is one of the most important sections of Paul's letter. He will refer to it throughout the rest of the letter. As we continue, we will keep tying what we're learning back to this passage. So, here's a recap before we go on, because this is so important for us to understand.

**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.***

When we transgress, or trespass, into the land of sin, sin is what kills us. God doesn't heap on punishment because we messed up. The consequence for my sin is what kills me. When we live with bitterness, it kills our love. When we live with fear, it kills our faith.

**2:3 *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.***

As Paul points out in *Romans 1:18, 1:24, 1:26, and 1:28*, God's wrath is defined as God handing us over to what we want. If I insist on eating from the dumpster of death, despite all of God's warning signs, then I deserve the death I insist on eating.

**2:4 *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.***

Mercy never creates shame in us. Mercy creates an overflowing spring of hope and love that brings tears of gratitude as we realize we deserve nothing, and yet we're given everything by Jesus' death on the cross.

**2:6 *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.***

"Grace is love that seeks you out when you have nothing to give in return. Grace is love coming at you that has nothing to do with you. Grace is being loved when you are unlovable." Now, on to verse 11...

**2:11 *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— 12***

***remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.***

Paul first spoke to everyone in the church who were not Jews, who had no history of faith spanning a hundred generations back, and therefore felt like outsiders. It's the same for us. We're outsiders on the other side of the border wall. We had no reason to hope. All we had was death. We were dead without a relationship with God. What was God's response?

**2:13 *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.***

You've been brought near to Jesus so He can raise you back to life. Dead people don't need renovation. They need resurrection. We were dead. Yet Jesus raised us up from death and seated us next to Him on His throne. We belong to Him. He's rebuilding us for a beautiful purpose.

Yet we would rather grovel before God and beat ourselves up than receive mercy. We would rather force others to do the same before giving them mercy. We prefer to dribble out love to others, drop by drop, *IF* they stay in line. We don't give grace either. We regularly choose to keep ourselves far from God. Jesus is our last resort. Why? My deepest struggle is my relationship with myself.

I rarely take the time to receive what God has so generously given. Our default is to ignore our own souls until the bill comes due—when our marriage or friendship is crumbling, when we're once again holding the painful consequences of the pattern we can't stop repeating.

We can't receive God's mercy and grace when we're holding tightly to the enemy's lies. I'm inviting you to let go. We belong to Jesus. So let Jesus love you. We are sponges. What comes out of us is what is poured in. Day by day, we have the choice to slow down and let Jesus' love saturate us, so it overflows out of us. Would you like to choose this?

PRAYER... "Jesus, I receive your mercy and love. I choose to receive grace. I choose to be loved, to reach out when I'm in need, when I'm hurting, when I need help. I choose to pour it all out when I see others in need. Jesus, I choose to both receive and give Your amazing grace."

**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.