

life groups

NorthStar Church

AfterLife Wk 3

The Walking Dead

Ephesians 2:1-10

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Main Point

God is so loving and merciful, that even when we were helpless sinners, He gave us new life in Jesus. We are dead in our sin, but made ALIVE through Christ Jesus.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is your best story of a time when you felt like you were in a dangerous situation?

What happened? How did you get out of that situation?

How did you feel once you realized you were safe?

Whether we recognize it not, all of humanity is in great danger. That's because there is no middle ground when it comes to our spiritual lives. Either we are dead in sin, or we are alive in Christ. Until we see how bad our situation was without Christ, we will never appreciate how good the news of the gospel really is.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 2:1-10.

How do verses 1-3 help us understand what sin is? How do they show us that sin is not just a bad choice, but a condition in which we live?

Why is it important that we understand humanity, apart from Christ, to be dead and not just bad?

How does that understanding change the way we view the good news of the gospel?

Sin is the default condition of the human heart. This frames our understanding of the gospel because it helps us see that Jesus didn't come to make bad people a little better; He came to give life to those utterly without hope in their deadness.

Paul referred to his audience in past tense terms because this was how they once were. Why, even as Christians, is it helpful for us to remember our sinful condition before Christ?

How does doing so change the way we view others apart from Christ?

Paul was not morbid; nor was he obsessed with bad news. It's a healthy practice for us as Christians to revisit who we were before Christ. Then we can look on others not in judgment, but in mercy, knowing that apart from the grace of God we, too, would still be dead in our sin.

Look back at verses 4-7. What attributes of God do you see in this passage?

What is your "but God" moment? The moment when everything changed spiritually for you?

How is your life different now than it was before Christ?

Focus now on verses 8-10. Why is important to know that God didn't just save us from something, but to something?

How can we guard against being prideful in doing the good works that God has saved us for?

Why do you think God wants us to know that we are His workmanship? Is it difficult for you to believe this about yourself? Why or why not?

What matters most about us is not what the world tells us, how people around us see us, or even how we see ourselves. Our identity is determined by what God says about us. While apart from Christ we were dead and hopeless, in Christ we are alive, and we will never be dead again. When we begin believing what God says about us, we can find the freedom to walk inside the good works He has planned for us.

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is one way you can remind yourself of who you were before Christ without feeling a sense of judgment or condemnation?

Who is someone in your life that you have judged but instead need to look on with mercy?

What is one good work God has planned for you this week?

Pray

Thank God that in His mercy, He made you alive with Christ when you were dead in sin. Pray that you would have a greater appreciation of what Jesus has done and a greater compassion for others as you look deeply into the truth of the gospel.

Commentary

Ephesians 2:1-10

2:1 People are not willing to be found (saved) until they know they are lost. Paul reminded his readers of the awfulness of sin that results in every person being lost, separated from God. As long as they are still unbelievers, sinners are in fact best described as dead people. The terms translated "trespasses" and "sins" are similar in meaning. The first term means falling from a known path, that is, actively breaking a boundary or

rule. The second means falling short of a required standard. Both refer to the universal human failure to do what is right, either actively or passively.

2:2-3 Another way to describe the helplessness of sinners is to think of it in terms of a lifestyle, step by step, headed in the wrong direction. No person can blame the world or the devil for their sinning. We have only ourselves to blame. It was our fleshly desires that we indulged. It was the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts that have been the source of our disobedience to God. God's righteous judgment against sin is settled. In our sinful nature, we all deserved eternal condemnation. We were born into this fallen condition. Without God's grace, all human beings are spiritually helpless and hopeless. We need salvation because of what sin has done to us.

2:4-5 Paul turned from diagnosing our spiritual death to describing our new life in Christ. He began by piling up three overlapping terms that describe the divine basis for our salvation. We owe everything to God's character. First, notice the reference to God's "mercy." Mercy is "the disposition to act compassionately in response to the plight of someone in need." Second, notice the reference to God's "love," His sacrificial concern. Paul stressed the abundance of God's love just as he had noted the abundance of His mercy: it was great. The third term Paul used to express the basis of salvation in God's character is "grace." Grace is similar to mercy and love but with a special distinction. The emphasis in the term grace is a person's showing undeserved favor toward someone who has sinned against that person. The first benefit of receiving salvation by grace is that God made us alive. When Christ was raised from the dead, God saw all believers as united with Him.

2:6-7 The second benefit of receiving God's salvation by grace through faith is that God raised us up. Thus when Jesus visibly ascended from earth to heaven, God saw believers as being spiritually united with Him in His ascension. We are now citizens of heaven (see Phil. 3:20). We no longer have to live as those bound to the sinful world, the flesh, and the Devil. Our true identity is in the heavens. The third benefit of salvation Paul named is that God seated us. After His resurrection and ascension, Jesus sat down at the right hand of God (see Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 12:2). He is there now, and God considers believers already to be sharing Christ's eternal victory.

2:8-9 It's too often typical for us humans to suppose that our actions can help earn our eternal life. Paul wrote that this is never true. But then he went on to explain the role that good works have in the life of those who are saved. Trusting wholly in God's provision is the opposite of trusting in one's own contribution to salvation. The whole of our redemption—past, present, and future—is God's gift, by His initiative. For this reason, no one can boast about a personal contribution to salvation. Heaven will be filled with the praises of Christ's glory and His works. No human display of works can compare to the riches of God's grace toward those who once were dead in their sins but now are alive with Christ.

2:10 One of the goals of salvation for us is the fruit of Christlike character and of good deeds. In eternity past God prepared ahead of time that His redeemed people would do these good works as evidence of His grace. Here is His power not only in giving us new life but also in helping us to walk in good works throughout this life and into eternity. We cannot do anything to earn salvation. Yet God means for us who have received salvation to produce good works. If we have been given new life, raised with Christ, and seated with Him, we will certainly do good works as evidence that we have received this great salvation. in the Scriptures