

Ephesians 2.1 - 10
Good Questions Have Groups Talking
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ACCOUNTABILITY

What three fellowships do we have scheduled for the next three months? Who will invite every member? Who will help invite every prospect? Who will help plan the party?

OPEN

Let's each share your name and one thing you are reasonably good at.

DIG

1. What do we learn about ourselves from verse 1?

Before we were saved we were like every other person who is apart from God—dead in... trespasses and sins. The Greek case is the locative of sphere, indicating the sphere, or realm, in which something or someone exists. We were not dead because we had committed sin but because we were in sin. In this context trespasses and sins do not refer simply to acts but first of all to the sphere of existence of the person apart from God. He does not become a liar when he tells a lie; he tells a lie because he already is a liar. He does not become a thief when he steals; he steals because he already is a thief. And so with murder, adultery, covetousness, and every other sin. Committing sinful acts does not make us sinners; we commit sinful acts because we are sinners. Jesus confirmed this when He said, "The evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil" (Matt. 12:35) and "the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders" (Matt. 15:18-19). — MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.

2. What does the phrase, "kingdom of the air" mean in verse 2?

They are of one mind because they have a common leader and lord, the prince of the power of the air. Satan is now "the ruler of this world," and until the Lord casts him out (John 12:31) he will continue to rule. The power [or authority] of the air probably refers to Satan's host of demons who exist in the heavenly sphere. Paul has this in mind in Ephesians 6:12, where he warns of "the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." During the present age he and his demon host dominate, pressure, and control every person who is unsaved. He is the personification of spiritual death because he is the personification of rebellion against God—and so is the system he designed. — MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.

3. How much power does Satan have? How afraid of Satan should we be? Should we worry about what Satan can do to us?

Not if we are in Christ. He has a lot more power than us, but everything is small compared to infinity.

4. Verse 3 speaks of the fact that we were objects of wrath. This is a point we might be happy to gloss over. Why is it important that we not gloss over this? Why is it important that we pause and consider that we were objects of God's wrath?

Because we don't get that excited about the cure if we don't think we have the disease. If we don't think we have a problem, who cares about the solution? We will only get appropriately excited about God as we are sufficiently aware of our position as an object of God's wrath.

5. Jonathan Edwards preached a famous sermon called, "Sinners in the hands of an angry God." Do you think we need more preaching like that today?

We may remember Jonathan Edwards as the preacher of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," but we may not remember the powerful practical effect of Edwards' vision of hell. What becomes of a person who has seen it and fled to the arms of Jesus for rescue? Edwards answers,

A truly Christian love, either to God or men, is a humble brokenhearted love. The desire of the saints, however earnest, are humble desires: their hope is an humble hope; and their joy, even when it is unspeakable, and full of glory, is a humble, brokenhearted joy, and leaves the Christian more poor in spirit, and more like a little child, and more disposed to an universal lowliness of behavior.

A broken, leaping heart will love like Jesus. And the power of the love will be proportionate to the felt fearfulness of our nearness to destruction. The keener the memory of our awful rescue, the more naturally we pity those in a similar plight. The more deeply we feel how undeserved and free was the grace that plucked us from the flames, the freer will be our benevolence to sinners.

We do not love as passionately as we ought because our belief in these things is not real. So our pride is not broken and our demeanor not lowly. And we do not look with aching and longing on the crowds that pass us in the airport or the straying members of our flock. John Newton, the author of "Amazing Grace," is a model of such compassion:

Whoever... has tasted of the love of Christ, and has known, by his own experience, the need and the worth of redemption, is enabled, Yea, he is constrained, to love his fellow creatures. He loves them at first sight; and, if the providence of God commits a dispensation of the gospel, and care of souls to him, he will feel the warmest emotions of friendship and tenderness, while he beseeches them by the tender mercies of God, and even while he warns them by his terrors.

Brothers, we need to feel the truth of hell and the nearness of our own escape. Otherwise the gospel will be vapid, and we will be unable to count others better than ourselves in all lowliness

(Phil. 2:3). Then who will tell our people of these things? Who else in their lives will love them enough to warn them with tenderness and tears? — Piper. *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals: A Plea to Pastors for Radical Ministry*.

6. Verse 5. In what sense were we made alive? We were breathing before; we are breathing now. What changed?

When we became Christians we were no longer alienated from the life of God. We became spiritually alive through union with the death and resurrection of Christ and thereby for the first time became sensitive to God. Paul calls it walking in "newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). For the first time we could understand spiritual truth and desire spiritual things. Because we now have God's nature, we now can seek godly things, "the things above" rather than "the things that are on earth" (Col. 3:2). That is what results from being alive together with Christ. "We shall also live with Him" (Rom. 6:8) says the apostle, and our new life is indistinguishable from His life lived in us (Gal. 2:20). In Christ we cannot help but be pleasing to God. — MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.

7. Verse 6. What does it mean, "seated us up in the heavenly realms"?

Third, he seated us with him in the heavenly realms. That is, he has made possible and certain our resurrection from the dead and has mysteriously positioned us in heaven where Christ dwells (see 1:20). To be seated with Christ in the heavenlies is a figure of speech meaning God considers us worthy and destined to be seated with Christ in heaven when we get there. God has decided to do it, and it is as good as done. We just have to wait for a few years until it happens. The significance of being seated with Christ is much the same as being seated at the head table of a banquet where there are many important people. It is a privilege and honor, and it marks you as one of the important people. We will be important in heaven.

How will we be important? We will share with Christ in his rule as king. We will be seated on thrones (see Rev. 3:21). In fact, we already exercise power with Christ over the powers of this age. We can live lives reflecting Christ's kingdom, not Satan's. We are no longer dead in trespasses and sin. We are alive in Christ, sharing his power and authority, representing him in the battle with Satan where victory is assured through the resurrection. — Holman New Testament Commentary – Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians.

8. Ephesians 2.8 – 9 is a classic. Can anyone quote it? Let's say it three times together then see if three of you can say it.

I believe it's what we see happening in our lives as a result of memorizing hunks of Scripture. We could ask virtually any hard-running verse-logger and he could catalogue numerous benefits of Bible memory work. In my life I have seen the Lord transform attitudes, overcome and redirect or end habits—simply through the consistent application and memorization of Scripture. Many times I am in the heat of the hottest spiritual struggles when the Spirit of God suddenly reminds me of a verse

memorized years ago. Suddenly that verse takes on new meaning and practicality. — Discipleship Journal.

9. How did you come to understand—really understand—that salvation is a gift of grace?

For me it was in learning to share my faith. I went through Evangelism Explosion when I was in high school and the light really came on for me.

10. How were the people of the Old Testament saved?

Nobody has ever been saved, from the day that Abel offered his bloody lamb on a homemade altar, down to the latest convert made today, except out of the goodness of God. Because of God's grace, His mercy, His lovingkindness, His goodness and graciousness, His cordiality and approachability, He kindly saved people. We've taken the word "grace" and made a technical term out of it.

The people in the Old Testament were not saved by keeping anything, because we deserved hell, and if God had acted according to justice alone, He simply would have pulled the stopper out and flushed us all down to hell and been done with it. But God out of His lovingkindness graciously forgave those who would come according to the conditions God laid down. Everybody is saved by grace. Abel was saved by grace. Noah was saved by grace—"Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:8). So was Moses and all the rest down to the coming of Jesus and His dying on the cross. All were saved by grace out of the goodness of God. And everybody's been saved by grace out of the goodness of God ever since. AOG047-048

Lord, thank You for Your wonderful grace, which saved me from the judgment I deserved. May I remember that it is a gift extended to me out of Your lovingkindness. Amen. — Tozer on the Almighty God: A 366-Day Devotional.

11. Why is it so hard for people to accept the fact that we are saved by grace and not by works?

In The Christian Reader, Paul Francisco writes:

When I was a child, our church celebrated the Lord's Supper every first Sunday of the month. At that service, the offering plates were passed twice: before the sermon for regular offerings, and just prior to Communion for benevolences. My family always gave to both, but they passed a dime to me to put in only the regular offering.

One Communion Sunday when I was nine, my mother, for the first time, gave me a dime for the benevolent offering also. A little later when the folks in our pew rose to go to the Communion rail, I got up also. "You can't take Communion yet," Mother told me.

"Why not?" I said. "I paid for it!"

This child's humorous story shows a very adult attitude. We may think we can earn God's salvation. — 750 Engaging Illustrations.

12. What do we learn about ourselves from verse 10?

Ephesians 2:10 is another place where a form of this word *poietai* is used. Paul writes, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...." The word "workmanship" is the Greek word *poiema*, which comes from the same root word as *poietai*.

This tells us that when we were saved, God put forth all His best efforts and creative powers to marvelously fashion and create us in Jesus Christ. Because the word *poiema* is used in Ephesians 2:10, it unmistakably means that God wielded His fullest, greatest, and most creative powers when we were born again. We weren't just mildly saved; rather, God took us into His hands and marvelously made us new in Jesus Christ as He released His most powerful creative forces and made us a workmanship that would be worthy to bear His name.

Whether the word *poietai* is used to depict a poet, as mentioned above, or (in another form) to describe God's creative power, as in Ephesians 2:10, it always depicts someone putting forth his fullest creative abilities to achieve something. Now James uses this word *poietai* in James 1:22 to tell us that we must put forth our fullest efforts and most creative abilities in doing what we have heard preached! We cannot passively hope that the Word becomes a part of our lives; we have to get creative and find ways to make the Word a practical part of our lives. — Sparkling Gems from the Greek.

13. Does "workmanship" imply that we are to work?

As we, his children, stand on display throughout eternity, we will be recognized as God's workmanship. "Workmanship" (*poiema*) is not just a result of effort or labor. It is a result of artistic skill and craftsmanship. If we could earn salvation by our own good works, we would not be a work of God but a work of our own selves. That cannot be and will not be. We were created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God determined before we were ever born. God has prepared a path of good works for Christians which he will bring about in and through them while they walk by faith. This does not mean that we do a good work for God. It means that God does a good work through us as we are faithful and obedient to him. God is at work. In faith we join him in that work to the praise of his glory (see 1:6,12,14).

In summary, we were spiritually dead and the object of God's wrath. God, motivated by his love, extended mercy to us and allowed us to be delivered from his wrath by grace, through faith. God has accomplished this without our help; therefore, all the good that is done through us will be recognized as his work and not our own. — Holman New Testament Commentary – Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians.

14. How do we discover what God has planned for us to do?

I had a friend come to me and say, "John, I don't know where the Lord wants me to serve." I said to him, "Marty, if you had your choice of any service in the world, what would you want?" He said, "Oh, I have such a burden for my people Israel. I speak French fluently, and Paris is just loaded with

Jewish people who don't know Jesus. I personally would like to go to Paris as a missionary to the Jews." I checked him on the five spiritual principles and said, "Marty, have you done all these things?" He replied, "Yes, I honestly believe that I am committed to Christ in these areas." I said, "Marty, good-bye, have a nice trip." — Found: God's Will (Find the Direction and Purpose God Wants for Your Life) by John MacArthur Jr.

15. Have any of you struggled to know what God would have you to do? What are we to do in such a case?

The common approach to spiritual gifts can easily become self-centered rather than God-centered if you are the one who is taking the initiative to decide on a ministry that you think suits you. God does not ask us to find ministries we think match our giftedness. Often when people focus solely on what they perceive to be their spiritual gifts, they assume that any ministry in their church or life that matches their gifting is something they should undertake. Yet only God can tell us what He wants to do through our lives. We can't figure that out on our own. We can't discover God's activity; God must reveal it to us. We don't choose what we will do for God; He invites us to join Him where He wants to involve us. — Experiencing God / by Richard Blackaby

16. Does, “prepared in advance” mean God has planned every day of our lives?

Not only did God shape you before your birth, he planned every day of your life to support his shaping process. David continues, “Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.”³ This means that nothing that happens in your life is insignificant. God uses all of it to mold you for your ministry to others and shape you for your service to him. God never wastes anything. He would not give you abilities, interests, talents, gifts, personality, and life experiences unless he intended to use them for his glory. By identifying and understanding these factors you can discover God’s will for your life. — Rick Warren, Purpose Driven Life.

17. How does it make you feel to think of yourself as God’s workmanship?

The Bible says, “We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.”¹ Our English word poem comes from the Greek word translated “workmanship.” You are God’s handcrafted work of art. You are not an assembly-line product, mass produced without thought. You are a custom-designed, one-of-a-kind, original masterpiece. God deliberately shaped and formed you to serve him in a way that makes your ministry unique. He carefully mixed the DNA cocktail that created you. David praised God for this incredible personal attention to detail: “You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother’s womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous.”² As Ethel Waters said, “God doesn’t make junk.” —Rick Warren, Purpose Driven Life

18. In finding those things that God prepared for us in advance, are we better off working on weaknesses or leaning into our strengths?

After we realize and embrace the way our Creator works in deliberate, beautiful, and intricate designs, then we can turn and look at ourselves. We can direct the telescope back at ourselves and discover our true identities. We can realize how we're made to accomplish His purposes. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ephesians 2:10).

To make this discovery and live in light of it, you must gravitate to your strengths. Donald O. Clifton, in his book *Living Your Strengths*, says from a very young age we are taught to be "well rounded." Our ticket to our teachers' approval is to soften our sharp edges, to become smooth and well rounded. According to Clifton, however, what we're often taught is how to become as dull as we can possibly be. We're taught to play it safe, to be compliant, to follow convention and tradition, to color inside the lines and to stay inside the box.

God never meant for us to be well rounded. He has gifted each of us uniquely, and no one has all the talent, no matter how it might appear. We're to focus on what we're good at and let go of what we're not good at. I am not a good singer—just ask anyone who knows me! I could spend all my time taking voice lessons and auditioning for *American Idol*, but I would only go from bad to lousy. Instead I've focused on the key areas in which God has gifted me, and I've tried to develop them. I'm always working at being a better writer and communicator. It's an insult to God when we focus on the gifts and passions we don't have and try to develop only our weak areas. Our greatest potential lies in the areas of our greatest strengths. — *One Month to Live: Thirty Days to a No-Regrets Life* by Kerry Shook, Chris Shook

19. What do you want to take with you from today's study?

20. How can we support one another in prayer today?