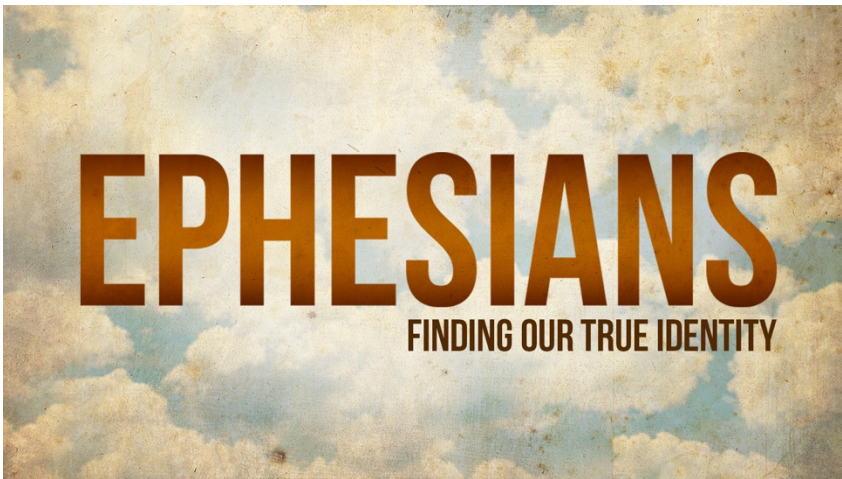


**BIBLE STUDY
QUESTIONS**



Ephesians 2: 11 - 22

Let's begin by looking at Psalm 51

This is a well known psalm, written after the Prophet Nathan confronted King David over his adultery with Bathsheba, and his subsequent murder of her husband. The psalm might at first sight contain some surprising words, but also contains real insight in to the nature of humanity.

- **Verse 6 contains some interesting words. He recognises that it is not his sins (i.e. the things he does) that is the problem, but his inherent sinfulness (i.e. his very nature). Given how serious his crimes, is he right to say “it’s not my fault, I was made this way?”**
- **How true do you think this assessment of people is? Would you apply it to yourself? To a known criminal? To a new-born baby?**
- **What hope for us does the psalm hold out?**

Read chapter 2, verses 11 to 13

When we read this, it's easy to think Paul is talking only about gentile believers, that they were alienated from God. Yet Psalm 51 makes us pause and think. What Paul is saying of them is true for all of us.

- **We read in this passages the consequences of our fallenness in the language of alienation. In what ways are we alienated?**
- **In what ways do we see this in our world today?**
- **Have you experienced this in your own life? What about in church life – is your experience of welcome and acceptance, or do you think you are at times an alien and a stranger?**

Verse 13 dramatically changes direction, and points to the reality of the new identity in Christ for the believer.

- **What imagery is used to help us understand the wonders of what we are in Christ? What in this is magnificent for you?**
- **The way in which we are brought near is the blood of Christ. This has two dimensions. Firstly, it speak of Jesus sacrifice on the cross. What does this affirm for you about you?**
- **Secondly it speaks of the life Christ gives us, as his righteousness and holiness are given to you. How do you live out this new life in Christ, seeking to be like him?**

STRANGERS TO THE COVENANTS OF PROMISE?

In verses 11 to 13 Paul is talking especially to the gentile believers, and how they have been so far away from God's grace and mercy. The wonder of the cross is seen in how far it is able to reach.

Yet for these first Gentile converts, it raised the very real question – what does it mean for us and our children to be brought in to the covenant promises of a gracious God. Are our children equally far away, or as citizens and members of the household of God (verse 19) are they now part of God's covenant community.

The Westminster Confession (written at a Church Assembly convened in Westminster Abbey) states this:

The visible church which is also catholic or universal under the gospel . . . consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, and of their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the house and family of God. (25:2)

One commentator, linking this idea to Ephesians 2, writes:

The fleshly corruptions that separate us from community, intimacy, and worship are overcome by our union with Christ. In him distinctions of race and nationality, pagan and pious, young and old, sinner and saint, prideful and wounded, offender and offended, implode. In him we all are brought near. (Ephesians 2:13)

Or, put another way, what does it mean for my children for us to be part of the household of God? Furthermore, how do we live out this reality, not just in our homes but in our churches?

It is very easy to read these passages through the eyes of our modern individualistic culture, when our identity is tied too closely to our individuality, yet this was not the thinking of many of the great reformation thinkers or of the earliest church writers.

Of course, there will be some who think differently, yet it is good to stop and think why phrases like "members of the household" are used to illustrate what the church is like, and therefore to think about how true we are to our calling in Christ, and to whether there is still more reforming to do in our own lives and churches.

Read chapter 2, verses 19 to 22

It is great to know our identity in Christ, and how we belong to him. Yet it is good to think about where he has placed us. Paul uses the imagery of the home and the house.

- **In the aftermath of the Rwandan Genocide, which left hundreds and thousands of orphaned children, the government changed its policy. It closed all orphanages, and instead invited families, churches and communities to invite the children in to their own homes. This is the picture in Ephesians 2:19 of what God does for us. How then does this reassure you of God's care for you?**
- **How does being part of God's family, under his fatherly care, help us overcome the difficulties of our past?**

God's family is lived out in the local church.

- **In what ways are the prophets and apostles the foundations of the church?**
- **Why is Jesus described as the cornerstone of the new building? What does that mean for you, and how do you depend on him?**

Many people find it easy to love Jesus, but difficult to love their local church. God's glorious vision for his people is often marred by alienation, disunity and discord.

- **How does unity help the growth of the church?**
- **Why is it important that the church does continue to grow?**
- **In what areas of our church life would we say that God dwells (verse 22)? What can we do about the places in which it appears God is not so clearly present?**
- **What do you think our local community sees when it looks at our church**

Ephesians 2 makes it really clear that our core identity is in Christ and that this is the most important aspect of our lives. Is this identity clearly lived out in your life, your place of work, your home? What barriers does the Lord need to breakdown in your relationship with him? In your shared life with others?