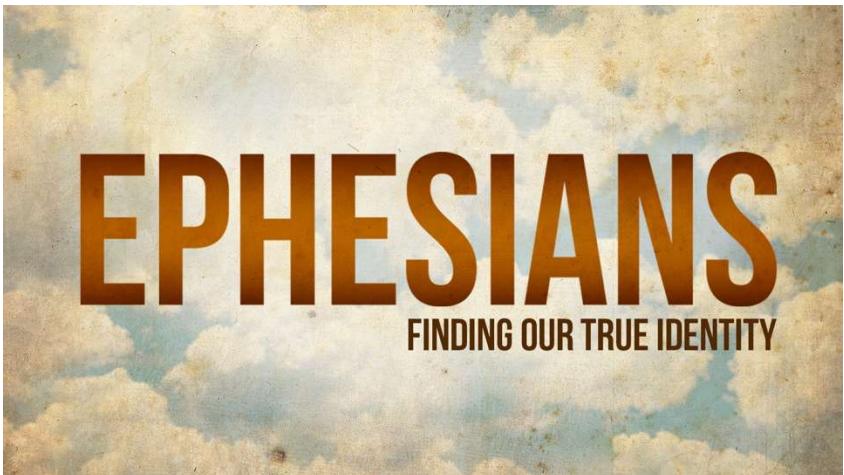


## BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS



**Ephesians 2: 1 - 10**

- Think back to when you weren't a Christian. How do you view this time in your life? Do you remember it fondly or with regret? How relevant or irrelevant is it to who you are today?

### Read chapter 2, verses 1 to 3

Paul is very clear in his description of the human condition, but the language he uses is very strong, and the difference between those who are in Christ and those who are not is very marked.

- Does Paul's choice of words in his description of the human condition resonate with your experience?
- What are the key things that shape people's walking away from God, and doing their own thing?
- If someone said to you "the devil made me do it" how would these verses shape your response?
- What is the status of those not "in Christ"? Why?

The Bible constantly links the things we do wrong with our rebellion against God. To see this, it is worth reading Romans 1: 18 -32. This explores humanity's attitude to God, and the behaviour that flows from that attitude. Verses 20 and 32 in particular let us know that we can have no excuse. Scripture's verdict is clear.

- The world's ideas about beauty, business, sex and so much lead only to death. It is so easy to follow the world's ideals with no suspicion, no resistance or reflection. How has this been true in your life, and how has this changed for you as a Christian?
- How seriously do you view the fate of those around you who do not know Jesus?
- Has this view of humanity spurred you to do anything?

### Now read chapter 2, verses 4 to 6

- Find three words in these verses that sum up the character of God. What does each one mean for sinful people like us?
- There are many times when you will either think yourself, or meet someone who thinks that because of what they have done God cannot possibly love them. How can these verses bring reassurance to those who think they are unlovable?

## DO YOU WANT THE GOOD NEWS OR BAD NEWS FIRST?

It depends I suspect on whether you're a pessimist or an optimist. Some of us like to be positive, to think about the good things, that everything will be all right. Others of us think that things can't get any worse, so telling us the bad won't make it any better.

What about when we share the message of Jesus though – do we talk just of good news, or do we also share the bad news? It is with the latter that Paul begins this chapter. He reflects upon the trajectory of our human existence, and how our nature takes us away from God and leads to death. Of course, we like to think that we have freedom to choose between what is right and wrong, but the reality is that we don't. We are flawed, and we always choose as humans things which take us away from God. It is why we need to be rescued.

GK Chesterton explores this in his book “Orthodoxy”. Optimism is blinded by belief that everything will turn out well, but we know it doesn't. Pessimism is ham-strung as there is no way out, our brokenness determines the failure of our efforts. Chesterton argues that the answer to both of these is Christian hope. This accounts for the woeful inadequacy of our human condition but holds against it God's rescue and the transforming power of God's Holy Spirit to bring about a real and lifelong change. It's why Soren Kierkegaard calls his book exploring the same theme “Fear and trembling.” We need to look with fear at the reality of our broken world and lives, whilst trembling with excitement at the rescue that God has brought for his people.

### Look again at verses 5, 6 and 7

- In these three verses Paul explains the type of life that God gives us in Jesus Christ. Can you pick out the three?

The one you may have struggled to find is the idea of a “united life” as our English translations shorten the greek, which would read literally as “together, he has raised us,” with together repeated three times, something we don't see in the simple word “us”. Yet it is important not to overlook, as Paul is saying that for Jew and Gentile, together they receive the life that God gives, and not when they are apart. This is important for the church today as well, the idea of togetherness.

There is so much that is wonderful, that it is easy to overlook one of the key verses of the whole book – verse 6. We are seated with Christ in the Heavenly Realms. Take a moment to think a little about what this says to you about the reassurance of the completeness of what God has done, about the value he gives us, and the guarantees we have when we are in Christ.

- **What for you is most exciting about verse 6?**

The passage so far has looked at what God has done for us. It has all been about His work. As the passage develops, we understand not just why God has done this, but what doing this achieves.

**Look again at verses 4 to 10**

- **What is God's ultimate purpose in our salvation?**
- **What part do I play in this?**

This passage is really important in helping us understand what salvation is, and why it is needed. It also helps us understand what it is to be a true Christian.

- **From these verses, what would you say are some of the characteristics you would expect to find in a true Christian?**
- **How does this passage help you when talking about your faith to point away from yourself and point to God instead?**

It would be easy to think that everything is in God's hands and that we can "sit back and enjoy the ride." Verse 10 changes all of that as it changes from salvation as a concept to being a personal reality in the life of each and every believer.

- **What difference has being a Christian made in your life, in the way in which you view yourself? In the way in which you view and treat others? In the way in which you work in building God's kingdom alongside others?**
- **What hinders you from doing the good works that God has prepared for you to do?**
- **Despite the gift of His Spirit, we still struggle to be what we are by Grace rather than what we are by nature. How his thinking about God's work in us encouraged you to live more by grace than you were before?**