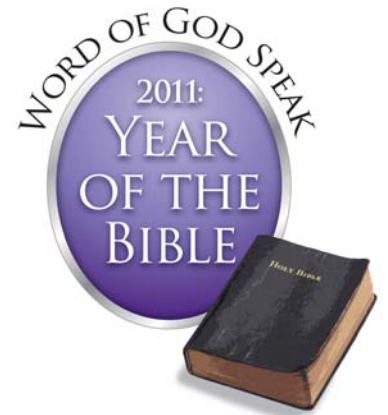


Week 40: Galatians 5 - Ephesians 4 Study Guide for the week of October 3 - 9, 2011



Personal reflection / journaling exercise

This week, spend time with Ephesians 2:1-10. This may be the best summary statement in the whole Bible of salvation by grace through faith. Outline this passage so that you can clearly understand what it is teaching. You are encouraged to memorize vss. 8-9. Read below The Message version of this passage. After doing all this, what new or deeper insights do you have into the truth that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone? What does this grace mean to you? Try writing a brief description of this grace in your own words. Notice how clearly the passage teaches that our salvation is 100% the work of God. Have you fully embraced that you are saved by grace alone? What are any struggles you have in continuing to find your ultimate sanctuary in this grace? What is the source and place for our good works according to verse 10? Spend sometime in prayer thanking the Lord that He has saved you through His grace.

It wasn't so long ago that you were mired in that old stagnant life of sin. You let the world, which doesn't know the first thing about living, tell you how to live. You filled your lungs with polluted unbelief, and then exhaled disobedience. We all did it, all of us doing what we felt like doing, when we felt like doing it, all of us in the same boat. It's a wonder God didn't lose his temper and do away with the whole lot of us. Instead, immense in mercy and with an incredible love, he embraced us. He took our sin-dead lives and made us alive in Christ. He did all this on his own, with no help from us! Then he picked us up and set us down in highest heaven in company with Jesus, our Messiah. Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! We don't play the major role. If we did, we'd probably go around bragging that we'd done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving. He creates each of us by Christ Jesus to join him in the work he does, the good work he has gotten ready for us to do, work we had better be doing. Ephesians 2:1-10 (The Message)

Discussion starters *If you are leading a small group, you may not have time for all of these questions. Pick the ones that will work best for your group.*

1. Ice Breaker Question: What is a high and a low that you experienced this last week?
2. Was there something that jumped out at you, surprised you, encouraged you, or disturbed you from the readings this last week (or two)? Why?
3. Galatians 5:1 What does freedom mean to you? What is the freedom that you have experienced in Christ? From what has Christ set you free? What are some of the "yokes of slavery" that you have struggled with in your life? Have you experienced Christ setting you free from these "yokes of slavery?" How? If you continue to feel enslaved by some of them, what do you need to experience freedom?
4. Galatians 6:1-5 What do these verses teach us about when we think we are spiritually superior to someone else?
5. Ephesians 1:1-10 Here again is one Paul's creed-like summaries of the faith. What jumps out at you in this one?
6. Ephesians 1:4-14 These verses contain some of the scriptural support for the doctrine of predestination. One of my professors in seminary said that predestination is a necessary aspect of the doctrine of God. After carefully reading these verses, use what these verses teach to share your thoughts about predestination. Maybe someone from your group would be interested in doing some further study on this doctrine and report back to the group for further discussion.
7. Ephesians 1:10, 20-23 One of the themes in Ephesians is that God's purpose is to "bring all things in heaven and on the earth together under one head, even Christ." How do you view

Jesus? Describe how you understand Jesus to be the one Lord of the universe. How does this affect the way you live?

8. Ephesians 2:8-9 This may be the best summary statement in the whole Bible of salvation by grace through faith. In your small group, take a few minutes to have everyone memorize these verses and then recite them together a couple times from memory. After you have done this, share any new or deeper insights you gain.
9. Ephesians 2:10 According to this verse, who is the one primarily responsible for our good works? How does this change your understanding of good works? How do you see this verse connecting with the two previous verses?
10. Ephesians 3:16-21 The promises of God are beautifully described here. Try this. Think about when the pastor speaks God's benediction over the congregation at the end of the worship, "*The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.*" Now as a group read these verses from Ephesians out loud. As you read them, imagine that you are speaking them to each other, like a benediction. What is the part of these verses that speaks to you? Why?
11. Ephesians 4:11-15 These verses teach that we are to "become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" and to "grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ." What do you think it means to become mature and grow up as it is taught here? What do you think are some next steps that the Lord is calling you to take to become more spiritually mature and to grow up into Christ?
12. Ephesians 4:26 Why is this a good verse to live by? Do you apply this in your life? How? How do you think this verse is related to the next verse, 27?

Bible verse to memorize: Ephesians 2:8-9

Caring Time

It is important to make time in your group to care for each other. Sometimes that happens during the discussion and sometimes it is best to end your time together praying for each other. One possibility this week would be to pray out of Ephesians 4:11-15 (question #11 above). Separate into pairs and each pair should find a separate place in the house to pray together. Begin by having one of you answer this question:

What you do you think is a next step that the Lord is calling you to take to become more spiritually mature and to grow up into Christ?

After one of you has answered this question, the other should pray for you according to your answer to the question. Then switch.

Also encourage people in the group to get together outside of the group time to foster deeper friendships with each other. Remember that being in a small group is primarily about sharing life together. It has been said that the most important time in small groups is the time people connect outside of the meeting time.