



## SERMON STUDY GUIDE

### **"Experiencing Grace"**

For the sermon preached on 9/8:

**"The Last, Best Word"**

From the text:

Ephesians 2:1-10

### **How to use the Groups Study Guide**

Hello Leaders! Thank you for your ongoing commitment to pursue Christian community and the study of Scripture—study that leads to life transformation in Christ and strives to serve "the other."

These studies have been designed with the following aspects in mind:

1. To facilitate a discussion on the passage of Scripture that was preached that particular Sunday using the Inductive Bible Study Method. In summary, this method stresses **"Observation"** (what the reader can see from the text), **"Interpretation"** (what we can learn when we study the text with various tools, commentaries, and resources), and **"Application"** (how we can apply the Scripture to our lives).
2. Groups using this study range from the new leader to the highly experienced. Groups themselves have their own context. This study attempts to hit the middle. The stronger studies require about an hour of leader preparation to contextualize this resource to the needs and personalities of your group. It's recommended that you rephrase the questions to match your voice and have an understanding of the interpretive questions as you prepare to lead and facilitate.
3. In addition to prep time, please spend time in prayer during preparation and before and after the study. It's the power of the Holy Spirit that illuminates the Word of Scripture and we are humbled that He uses our combined efforts as part of this work. (For more tips on using this study, please see the endnotes.)

As always, we are so grateful for you, your gifting, your servant leadership, and all that you do for the cause of Christ. Please let us know if we can help you in any way.

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Tim, on behalf of the LC Team

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We have begun a new ministry year and a new sermon series called "Experiencing Grace." Grace is one of those words that cover a wide array of meanings. There is "grace" when it comes to style and elegance. There is saying a prayer of "grace." And among more definitions, there is the saving and redemptive power from sin extended by God undeservedly given to us.

The passage that we will discuss today is one of the most familiar, theologically rich and also, one of the most personally transforming – we have been saved by God's grace and not by our own merit.

So what first comes to your mind when you hear the powerful word, “grace”?

**2** As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup>But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup>And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.<sup>8</sup>For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

### **Ephesians 2:1-10**

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**O** – As we like to do, re-read the passage in your own Bible or on a device and allow yourself to be attentive to what words and details resonate with you today. (Give your group a few minutes time to read the passage before moving to the questions.)

It’s tempting to read a passage like this and want to discuss the good parts like the teaching of saving grace. But grace is even more beautiful when we realize just how dire our sinful predicament really is. What does Paul say is the source of our sins and transgressions and what was to be of our fate?

**O** – Paul is contrasting two “kingdoms” – one described as the “kingdom of the air” in an apparent reference to the devil and then of course, Christ’s kingdom. The kingdom of the air operates on the tempting way of whatever you desire or “the cravings of our flesh.” But in the verses that follow, how does Paul describe how God’s kingdom operates?

**I** – Here in verses 4-5 we have one of the most beautiful pivot points in all of human history: “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” Why is this such an essential piece in understanding God’s salvation and our posture of life moving forward?

*(Among the great answers is that one of Paul's chief concerns is that self-righteous pride that sneaks its way into the heart. Paul wants the Ephesian church and all his readers to know that they have not earned their salvation, in fact, we were incredibly undeserving but in God's rich love, he gave us the gift of grace. This is a fundamental tenant in our Christian theology – we didn't earn our salvation, we received it through Jesus.)*

**I** – The treasured verses 8-9 are beloved by countless Christ-followers as they give voice to our darkest need and God's abundant love. What happens when we misunderstand these verses and why is it so crucial that we build our understanding of the concept of grace from here?

*(If we misunderstand that we have somehow earned our salvation than we will never really be able to worship, understand or love God fully as we will have stolen the credit for ourselves. But in understanding our sin, our deserved doom, and the work of Jesus and God's gift of grace, we respond on the other side of having received forgiveness. And that includes gratitude, obedience, and love.)*

**A** – In the sermon, Pastor Bryan unpacked the grand concept of grace with the points of “Undeserved Favor,” “Unconditional Love,” “Unexpected Kindness,” “Unrestrained Mercy,” and “Unbelievable Goodness”. Take a moment and reflect. When have you experienced or witnessed a transformative moment of God's grace?

**A** – Perhaps you remember this quote that was shared - “We are more sinful and flawed than we ever cared to admit, and more loved and accepted than we ever dared to imagine.” – Tim Keller

As we dive back into our complicated, busy lives tomorrow, what lessons of grace can we live by and what beauty can we readily share with those around us?

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- a. Please note that not all these questions might be able to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your group the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your group.
  - b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
  - c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don't rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
  - d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
  - e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.