

Ephesians Part 2 - Jesus is Our Peace



Ephesians 2



As we continue through Paul's letter to the Ephesians, today's session focuses on the second chapter. Paul reminded the believers that they were saved by the grace of Jesus Christ and not by the things they did or the laws they followed. He then went on to describe a unified church full of Jews and Gentiles living out their faith in peace. In this session, we will explore what this model of church could look like today and pray for God's peace in the places where we see disunity.

You will need:

- Paper and pens
- News articles



Leader's notes:

Start off the session by watching the trailer for *Elemental*. Discuss whether the group have seen it.

Watch:

Elemental - Official Trailer (2:19)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hXzcyx9VOxw

Ask:

From just watching the trailer, what do you think is the main message of the film?

Sau:

Elemental is a romantic tale about two elements that really shouldn't mix. Despite the rules and prejudices held by the different elements, Wade and Ember fall madly in love.

Ask:

What other films/books can you name that tell the story of people from different backgrounds uniting together either romantically or for a common cause?



Say:

In the second chapter of Ephesians, Paul encourages the church to look for ways to unify, despite their differences.



Leader's notes:

If the group is interested in watching the film Elemental then arrange a time for a movie night together.



Leader's notes:

Ask the group to share what they remember about the letter to the Ephesians from Session 2. What was the cultural backdrop for the letter? Who wrote it? What was its purpose? What were the key themes covered in chapter one of the letter?

Watch the first section of the Bible Project clip to recap Ephesians 1 and introduce Ephesians 2.

Watch:

Book of Ephesians Summary: A Complete Animated Overview (0:00-4:20) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y71r-T98E2Q

Say:

As we read through Ephesians 2:1-10, think about the themes you have heard Paul discuss earlier in Ephesians 1.

Read:

¹ As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² 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. ³ 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. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁻ 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. ⁶ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – ⁶ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹o 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)



Discuss the following questions.

- Look back at Ephesians 1:3-14. What themes are repeated in Ephesians 2:1-10?
- Why do you think Paul needs to remind the Ephesians how they were before they received the grace of Jesus?
- How does Paul contrast this with their life after believing in Jesus?
- Are you able to identify this contrast in your own life? If so, explain how.

Leader's notes:

The following questions relate to the phrase 'saved by grace' which is repeated throughout the Scripture passage.

Discuss:

- What does it mean to you that 'you have been saved by grace' and not by works?
- Does the promise of God's grace and forgiveness mean that we can do whatever we want?
 Explain your thinking.
- What motivates God to offer his grace to us?
- Why are we saved by grace and not by works?
- How does it feel to know that 'we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works'?

Say:

When we are saved by grace, our relationship with God changes. Despite our sin, we are declared righteous through God. This change in our relationship is described as justification. *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* describes it as follows:

'Our justification depends upon the character of God, the saving work of Jesus Christ and our faith in him. God, who is righteous, masterful and true, has reached out in the person of Jesus Christ to save the guilty and helpless. We are acquitted of our sin, accepted by God and our sins are forgiven because God is gracious and merciful. This is the gift of God."'

- The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine p164

Leader's notes:

Discuss the statement from *The Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine* and clarify any misunderstanding around the theme of grace and works. This is a challenging topic to grasp, so encourage the group to jot down in their notebook any areas they would like to explore further.

Say:

Ephesians 2:10 says the following:

¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

- (Ephesians 2:10)



Ask:

What good work do you think has been prepared in advance for you?



Leader's notes:

If the group wants to discover more about God's grace, then watch and discuss the following clip together.

Watch:

What is the grace of God? Got Questions Ministries (0:00-2:15)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=npoD2pV1u6E



Say:

Whenever there is a general election, each main party puts together a manifesto. This document provides an outline of what the political party will do if/when they get into power. Whether they follow up on these promises when they are in government is a discussion for another time! Your challenge today is to create a manifesto for the Church, based on Ephesians 2:11–22. A manifesto 'is a written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives or view of its issuer'. It outlines what strategies and ideas would be put in place to change things for the better. In this case, we are thinking about our church and how we could live out the words of Ephesians 2:11–22.

First let's read through the Scripture together.

Read:

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called 'uncircumcised' by those who call themselves 'the circumcision' (which is done in the body by human hands) – ¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace



to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

- (Ephesians 2:11-22)

Leader's notes:

If the group needs to recap the context of these verses, then watch the relevant section of the Bible Project Clip from earlier in the session (2:55–4:20). Discuss Paul's description of a new, inclusive family in Jesus and whether this is represented by our church today. Rather than focusing on what is wrong with the church, shift the discussion towards solutions grounded in Scripture. What would a manifesto for the church, based on the inclusive message of Jesus Christ, look like? What would need to change and what would the church look like if it lived out the unified model described by Paul? The young people can work together as a group or in smaller teams to create their manifesto. As they share their ideas encourage them to consider the part they play in bringing the vision of Jesus Christ to life in the church.



Ask:

- What is your response to the following quote?

'Christ alone can bring lasting peace - peace with God - peace among men and nations - and peace within our hearts.'

- Billy Graham
- In our increasingly divided society, how can Jesus Christ be our peace?



Leader's notes:

Prior to the session, gather a collection of news articles, headlines and stories of disunity. These can be from the local community, the country or the rest of the world. Take time to read and consider some of the stories and discuss how the peace of Jesus would change these situations.

As the group discuss the different situations, and add their own, create a list of prayer topics.



Encourage each group member to take a picture of the prayer points (or share it with the group on social media) so that they can continue to pray throughout the week. To bring the session to a close, spend time in prayer focusing on the examples of disunity within our world. A reflective piece of music is provided below to use as part of your prayer time.

Watch:

'Peace in Christ' (Cover) Laura Williams – Feat. The Chosen (6:15) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oOlqV7F-Gg



Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from the second chapter of Ephesians?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.



