

Bad News: You're Dead – But There's Hope

Merchantville Small Group Guide

Warm Up Questions

1. What's one of your favorite redemption stories from a book, movie, or real life? What makes it powerful?
2. Have you ever believed a lie about yourself that, looking back, you now know wasn't true? How did that lie affect your life?

Key Passage: Ephesians 2:1-10 NLT

This sermon explores one of the greatest redemption stories in history—not just John Perkins' story but ours as well. Ephesians 2 reminds us that we were spiritually dead, unable to save ourselves, but **God, rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ.** John Perkins' life demonstrates what it looks like to truly experience and live out that grace. After suffering immense injustice, Perkins had every right to hold onto anger and hatred. Instead, God's grace transformed him, and he became a powerful force for love, justice, and reconciliation. This message challenges us to examine our own hearts: **Are we still believing the lies of the enemy? Are we feeding the desires of our flesh? Are we drifting with the current of the world?** Or have we embraced the transforming grace of Jesus and begun walking in the new life He offers?

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. Ephesians 2:1-3 describes us as being “dead” in sin. What do you think it means to be spiritually dead? How do we see this reality playing out in our world today?
2. John Perkins experienced deep injustice but didn't let hatred define his life. Instead, he let God's grace transform him. How do you think grace and justice can work together in our lives?
3. Think about the “unholy trinity”—the devil, the flesh, and the world. Which of these do you personally struggle with the most, and how have you seen it pull you away from God's truth?
4. John Mark Comer describes the devil's strategy as “deceptive ideas that play to disordered desires, which are normalized in a sinful society.” Where do you see this happening in our culture? How can we guard against it?
5. Perkins' story forces us to wrestle with forgiveness. When have you found forgiveness to be difficult? What helped you move forward?
6. Paul says in Ephesians 2:4-5 that God is “rich in mercy” and that we are saved “by grace.” How does that challenge the idea that we have to earn God's love or prove ourselves?
7. We talked about three ways to walk in new life: exposing the lies, starving the flesh, and resisting the world's pull. Which one do you need to focus on most in your life right now? Why?
8. John Perkins didn't just receive grace—he lived it out. What would it look like for you to live out God's grace in a real and tangible way this week?

Challenge & Application:

This week, take some time to reflect:

- What's one lie from the enemy that you need to expose and replace with God's truth?
- Where do you need to say no to the flesh and yes to the Spirit?
- How can you resist the pull of the world and choose to live differently?

Pray and ask God to show you what step He wants you to take, and then commit to walking in that truth.

Pray