

From Death to Life Through Love Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What is one life-giving hobby or practice you regularly engage in?
2. What is something you really wanted in the past but don't care about any more?

Read the following passages: Ephesians 2:1-10.

It is often the case that the *presenting* problem (i.e. the issue that initially appears to be the problem) is not the *real* problem. We may feel like life is not worth living if we fall short of our career goals or we can't fix our family or we never find the right romantic relationship. Those are painful realities that many of us experience, but they are not the ultimate problem. The ultimate problem is that we are separated from God, dead in our transgressions and sins. But God, in his grace, extends life to us through Jesus Christ because he loves us. His love gives us the promise of eternal life and empowers us to love others even through the painful moments of this life.

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

1. What does Paul mean when he writes that we “were dead in [our] transgressions and sins?” (Ephesians 2:1)
2. Have you had any losses or disappointments that have made life feel like it wasn't worth living? Explain. How should we navigate experiences of overwhelming hopelessness?
3. Genesis 22:1-19 is a stunning account. Both Abraham's remarkable obedience and God's gracious provision are highlighted. What is not fully explained in this passage is why such a great sacrifice was needed in the first place. Centuries later, Jesus's death and resurrection not only provided the solution we desperately needed, they clarified the depth of the problem we were facing. How is the Gospel foreshadowed through Abraham's life, including this experience with Isaac on the mountain?
4. Explain some of the ways holiness emerges as an important category in the Old Testament. How does holiness relate to our ability or inability to get close to God? How should we think about holiness in our present context? What does it mean to live a holy life?
5. What are some unhelpful ways we might pursue our longings for significance, security, and belonging? Have you ever found yourself slipping into any of the following: 1) Moralism, 2) Tribalism, 3) Self-hatred, 4) Moral nihilism, or 5) Distraction? Explain.

6. Paul writes that we have been saved “because of the great love with which [God] loved us” (Ephesians 2:4 ESV). Do you feel loved by God? Explain.
7. Read Luke 7:36-50. How does this scene capture the heart of the Gospel?
8. Jesus told Simon, the Pharisee, “whoever has been forgiven little loves little” (Luke 7:47). What does Jesus mean by this? Why is receiving from God critical for living a life of giving to others?

Pray