

RICH *in* GRACE

Sermon Series in Ephesians

Preparing for Small Group: Read the passage below, and answer the following questions.

- (1) What do these verses tell me about God?
- (2) What do these verses tell me about sinful humanity?
- (3) What do these verses tell me about Jesus?
- (4) What does God want me to know?
- (5) What does God want me to do?

“Who Are You?”

Ephesians 1:1-2

Main Point: Believers are identified by who God says they are in Christ.

Facts about who God says you are in Christ:

Your identity in the work of God comes from the Will of God (1a).

In the address of his letter to the church in Ephesus, Paul began his letter by identifying himself as the author. However, Paul said much more than just his name, and what Paul said revealed not only something about Paul but also something about believers today. Paul stated that he was an apostle “by the will of God.” Paul was an apostle in the early church. This identity was connected to his purpose in the work of God within the church. The apostles were those early leaders who were specifically called and sent by Jesus Christ to be leading messengers of the gospel. What’s important for us today about Paul’s identity in the work of God was that it did not come from Paul’s will. In fact, when God called Paul to this task in the work of God, Paul was persecuting Christians in the early church. Paul’s identity in the work of God came not from Paul’s will but from the Will of God. When it comes to your identity in the work of God, what’s important is not your will for that work but God’s Will for you in His work.

1. Apostles were those who were specifically called and sent by Jesus in a unique way in the early church. Look at Acts 9. Discuss the way that God confronted Paul, called Paul, and revealed His will to Paul. Has God confronted and called you? How?
2. How do you know the Will of God? What is the role of Scripture in knowing the Will of God? What is the role of the Holy Spirit in knowing the Will of God? How do Scripture and the Holy Spirit work to confront, call, and reveal the Will of God in hearts of people?
3. Make a list of the “role(s)” that you have in the church that identify who you are. Why are you in the role(s) that you are in? Is it because of your will or the Will of God? How do you know?
4. Pray for every member in our faith family to hear God’s call and to know God’s Will related to their role in His work right now through our faith family.

Your identity in your relationship with God comes from your faith in Jesus (1b).

Paul went on to identify those in the church of Ephesus to whom he wrote his letter. He identified them in an important way, which was that they were the “saints who are in Ephesus.” This word for saints means that Paul identified the Christians in Ephesus as holy and set apart. In essence, Paul called the believers the “holy ones.” The best way to understand what he

meant is to compare his statement to other things that are identified as “holy,” such as the holy city, Jerusalem, in the Old Testament or the Holy Bible today. Both of these things are identified as holy because they belong to God. For Paul to call the believers saints didn’t mean that they were perfect in all that they did — without any sin — it meant that they belonged to God and that in Christ their sins were forgiven. This was true in their lives because their faithfulness to Jesus Christ demonstrated the truthfulness of their faith in Jesus Christ. In Christ, they were God’s saints. Through Christ, they belonged to God. Nothing has changed today. If you are in Christ, you are a saint, belonging to God and forgiven by God through His grace to you in Jesus.

1. If you are a believer, do you see yourself more as a saint or a sinner? Why? How do you see other believers?
2. Discuss the meaning of “saint” or holy ones. What does it mean to be holy or set apart by and for God? What does it mean to belong to God?
3. Why is faithfulness to Jesus important? What does it reveal about the condition of faith in someone’s heart? What does it look like to be faithful to Jesus? How does that — or should that — look in your life right now?

Your identity as a child of God means His grace and peace are yours (2).

In a beautiful and familiar way, Paul revealed his heart towards the believers in Ephesus by sharing with them and desiring for them the grace and peace of God in their lives. He could do this — and they could receive this — because of the reality of their relationship and standing with God. Paul reminded them of that when he noted that God was their Father and was his Father. Paul reminded them of that when he noted that Jesus was their Lord and was his Lord. Because believers surrender in faith to Jesus as Lord of their lives, they are adopted into the family of God, becoming children of God and brothers and sisters in His family. This beautiful and familiar truth is still a reality today! In Christ, believers are children of God, which means that they have access to the grace and peace of God in their lives and are able to share that grace and peace with others.

1. What does it mean to make Jesus Lord in your life? Is He Lord in your life? When and how did that happen? Who can you share your testimony with this week? Pray for them and for the opportunity to have a gospel conversation this coming week.
2. What are some of the different ways that God’s grace (common and particular grace) touch lives in the world today? What are some of the ways that God’s peace touch lives in the world today?
3. Discuss the implications in your life of the fact that through surrender to Jesus, God becomes your Father. What does that mean? How does that impact your life?
4. Discuss the implications of how being a child of God should impact your relationship with other children of God. Do you have any relationships in God’s family that aren’t pleasing to Him? What do you need to do to honor your Father this week in those relationships? Discuss, and pray.