

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

## COMMUNITY GROUPS ARE BETTER WHEN YOU COME TO GROUP HAVING PREPARED WITH THIS GUIDE!!

### Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

#### Message Summary

In Ephesians 2:1-10, we find the spiritual version of the classic children's book "The Ugly Duckling." The apostle Paul doesn't hide the fact that we were all dead in sins and ugly apart from God, and yet God chose us in spite of who we were because he had a plan for how he would do a makeover and transform us into his handiwork. **He chooses us "in spite of" to use us "in light of"**, and that Big Idea has 2 huge implications for all of us who are following Jesus:

1. **Who we are is greater than who we were:** There is so much freedom in that one statement. None of us was any better than anyone else apart from Christ, and Paul makes that clear here when he writes "all of us" were dead in sins. We were ugly and sinful and yet God saw something in us, and because God is so rich in mercy, and because he has such great love for us, he gave us the greatest makeover ever – he made dead people live, raised buried people up and gave the forgotten people the best seats in the house! Today, we are so much better than we were and we all realize it was 100% because of God's grace.
2. **Who we'll be is greater than who we are:** Over the remainder of chapter 2, we'll get a better picture of the beautiful swan that God is bringing from the ugly ducklings that we all were, but this week we saw in verse 10 that God didn't save us to be his trophy wife. Sometime we fall into the trap of pride by forgetting not only where we came from, but also by forgetting that, as God's handiwork, we're supposed to do works. It's the whole reason why God transformed us, and this means that our best days with Jesus are always ahead of us. When we really see the great grace and mercy of God, our only natural response is to offer ourselves to him for his purposes. We allow him to change us, shape us, and use us "in light of" who he is.

#### Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- Think about the statement that "your past may explain you but it doesn't define you." What do you take away from that truth? How can that one understanding free us from our pasts?
- A lot of the transformations that really move us are dramatic, and yet the changes happen a little bit at a time. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says that we are "being transformed into the image of Christ from one degree of glory to another." (ESV) What are some of the little ways that you have changed from who you were and are changing into who you'll be? Are there any big changes?
- Romans 12:2 gives us a clear step towards transformation when it says we are "transformed by the renewing of our minds." Discuss why Paul specifically addressed the mind (as opposed to the heart or emotions)?
- Read Ephesians 5:25-27. Paul tells us all that the word washes us and helps us become radiant, without stain or wrinkle. How does regular time in Bible reading help us see ourselves "in light of" God's grace and mercy?