

**THE BIG IDEA:** God chooses us “in spite of” to use us “in light of”.

### The Take-Off

This morning we’re talking about TRANSFORMATION & you just watched a segment from this season’s The Biggest Loser Every season Makeover Week is one of the most anticipated episodes of the series, and here’s why:

- reality television is often scripted and not real
- The Biggest Loser is no different
- Makeover Week reveals the true change that is taking place and the reactions of the people the change affected the most
- In short, Makeover Week can’t be faked, and that makes it even more moving, because transformations are captivating and breathtaking

See, there are a lot of things that can be faked, but real change isn’t one of them, and chapter 2 of Ephesians is a chapter that is ALL ABOUT REAL CHANGE

If you could take the children’s story “The Ugly Duckling” and put it into 10 verses, it would be Ephesians 2:1-10.

Let’s read them, and then I’ll give you the Big Idea and then we’ll talk briefly about 2 huge implications for all of us.

There’s a lot going on here, and the Big Idea can help us simplify it: God chooses us “in spite of” to use us “in light of”.

Here are the 2 implications for our lives:

#### 1. Who you are is greater than who you were

- a. For so many of us, the past is something we don’t know what to do with
- b. Should we ignore it, talk about it, and if so, with who and how often
- c. For Paul, the past is what made the present so much better
- d. I love the way Mark Driscoll puts it: your past may explain you, but it doesn’t define you
- e. So Paul could have just written verse 1 and called it a day, but he didn’t
- f. Paul knew that who we are in Christ now wasn’t as powerful without remembering who we were apart from Christ then
- g. He says to the Ephesians, “Look at what you WERE” and then describes what they were:
  - dead in transgressions and sins (v. 1)
  - living in disobedience (v. 2)
  - Feeding the cravings of a sinful nature (v. 2)
  - Slaves to the leading of that sinful nature (v. 3)
  - Destined for wrath as objects of wrath (v. 3)
- h. But something happened, because we weren’t left in that dead place
- i. God did something that no one saw coming: He chose us
- j. Yesterday, I got to marry Derrick and Melissa and the wedding reminded me of this truth
- k. We marry people with baggage, and the best marriages are the ones where the baggage isn’t a surprise
- l. It’s been talked about, prayed about, cried about, and yet 2 people stand and choose each other anyway
- m. It’s great to be chosen when we seem deserving. It’s better to be chosen when we aren’t.
- n. That shows the greatness of God’s mercy, doesn’t it?
- o. He saw something in us that others didn’t, and we won’t see it in others either unless we’re looking spiritually
- p. What we were was bad, but God chose us “in spite of” all that and transformed us
- q. It was dramatic, life-altering, even more so than these (images of changes)
- r. And now, we are alive, raised up, saved and seated in the best seats!
- s. Without a doubt, who we are now is greater than who we were then.

#### 2. Who you’ll be is greater than who you are

- a. But it isn’t enough to be chosen and saved
- b. If that’s it, we live secluded lives full of pride
- c. God didn’t save us to be his trophy wife.
- d. He chooses us “in spite of” who we were to use us “in light of” who he is
- e. And here is who God is:

- He is full of love for us (v. 4)
  - He is rich in mercy (v. 4)
  - He is richer in grace (v. 7)
  - He is kind to us (v. 7)
  - He generous in salvation (v. 8)
  - He is an artist with our lives (v. 10)
- f. Did you get that last one? He has transformed us and he is transforming us!
- g. He's making those of us who are in Christ into a masterpiece!
- h. That's huge! That changes everything I think about where I am and where you are in the process, doesn't it?
- i. Instead of throwing you away because you did something I didn't like, I remember that God is transforming you and that the who you'll be is greater than who you are.
- j. And so the God who saves by grace had a bunch of little kids running around living by grace!
- k. This implication is huge!!!
- l. In light of who God is, we find ourselves allowing him to change us, shape us and use us.
- m. This is what Paul wrote about in Romans 12:1 when he told his readers that they should offer their bodies as living sacrifices to God
- n. Listen, that's nuts - unless we know something about God that makes him trustworthy with our lives, and Paul bases that entire command on one truth: "in view of (in light of) God's mercy"
- o. Over the rest of Ephesians we'll see this theme played out in more detail, but for this morning, can we simply say that our takeaway is that, in Christ, we are always becoming greater than we are now.
- p. Your best days with Jesus are always ahead of you, and who you'll be is greater than who you are.

#### The Landing

**God chooses us "in spite of" to use us "in light of".**

Let's face it. Only God would have chosen you and me.

I'm so glad he did! You and I would have seen a room full of ugly ducklings and given up hope.

But God is a God of transformations and makeovers, and while we all aren't where we will be, we are all so much farther from where we were.

And it's all because of God's amazing grace, and I am so thankful that he chooses us in spite of who we were to use us in light of who he is.