

GROWING IN GRACE

1. In your opinion, what are the marks of a healthy and growing church?

Context

In the first half of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he unveiled the nature of grace. This chapter marks the second half – focusing on the implications of grace.

2. Recalling the first half of the book of Ephesians, what is 'the calling to which you have been called' (verse 1)?

Observation

3. Based on the repetition (verses 1-6), what does it mean to 'walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called'?
4. How do the gifts given by Jesus contribute to the growth of the church (verses 7-14)?

5. What responsibility does everyone have in the growth of the church? What might it look like (verses 15-16)?

Meaning

6. Based on this passage, write down your definition of a healthy and growing church. Share it with your life group.

Application

7. According to your definition of a healthy and growing church, how do you think CrossCulture is doing? What could we continue to develop in?
8. If everyone has a role in the growth of the church, what role do you think you could play? Consider your experiences, gifts and passions.

TRANSFORMED BY GRACE

Context

Ephesus, the capital of the Roman province of Asia, was a large commercial port along a major trade route. A melting pot of diverse cultures and religions, it was also the centre of pagan worship with the temple of Greek goddess Artemis (considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world) just outside the city.

Many would travel from all across the region to visit the temple. It was so significant that there was a whole *industry* of blacksmiths to serve these temple visitors with trinkets and statues of Artemis!

This was the spiritual climate that the church of Ephesus found themselves in, which presented both a dangerous temptation and a great opportunity to grow in the faith Paul was addressing in this passage.

He expounded further that spiritually mature meant living **a new, transformed life**. It sets apart those who believe from those who don't. Let us dive deeper into this transformation and its importance to churches then and now.

Icebreaker

If you could sit down for dinner with one person (historical figure, celebrity, family member, friend or fictional character), who would it be?

If you had to travel thousands of miles to meet this person for just one meal, would you still do it? If not, is there someone else you would do it for?

1. What cultural similarities do you see between the ancient city of Ephesus and the modern city of Melbourne?

Observation

2. The very first thing Paul brought up about the ways of the Gentiles was the 'futility of their minds' (verse 17). What does this say about the power of our mind over the way we live?

3. Paul painted a picture of the old life and the new life with God's grace. Now compare our old and new selves.

Old	New
<p><i>Example:</i> <i>futility of the mind; darkened in understanding; ignorance (verses 17-18)</i></p>	<p><i>Example:</i> <i>taught in Christ (verse 21); renewed in the spirit of the mind (verse 23)</i></p>

Meaning

4. According to Paul, when we are called to 'put on our new selves', we are to be 'renewed in the spirit of our minds'. What does this mean? What might it look like?
5. Compare verses 4:17 and 5:2. How does remembering Christ's offering and sacrifice of himself help us to live the transformed life as described in the passage?

Application

6. Share one aspect of life where you struggle to live out your new life in Christ. How does this passage speak into your struggle?
7. There are ways where our new selves in Christ can shine (verses 25–31), including our manner of speech. Consider how we speak to others – what would it look like to speak in a way that genuinely builds each other up (verse 29)?

LIVING BY GRACE

1. After you came to know and believe in Jesus, what was one difference that others noticed in your behaviour?

Context

Ephesus was extremely diverse in ethnicities, religions and cultures. However, the city had a common propensity towards immorality and impurity, which threatened to infiltrate and influence the church there.

Observation

2. From Paul's list (verses 3-6), which dangers stand out to you and why?
3. According to Paul, in what sense would believers who fell into sexual immorality or coveted the possessions of others be excluded from inheriting the kingdom of God?

Meaning

4. Based on verse 8, how did Paul motivate us to change our conduct? What difference would this make?

GRACE IN RELATIONSHIPS

Context

God's grace not only saves and reconciles our relationships with him, but it also transforms our relationships with one another. In this passage, Paul showed how we could and should live together in various relationships as recipients of God's grace.

Observation

1. How should husbands and wives relate to each other? What does marriage point to?
2. How should parents and children relate to each other? What promises come with it?
See also Deuteronomy 4:40.
3. How should masters and bondservants relate to each other? Why is it so?

Meaning

4. How do we see the gospel at work in marriage, family and workplace relationships?

STAND FIRM IN GRACE

Context

The conclusion to Paul's letter to the Ephesians contains one of the most well-known passages relating to spiritual warfare. He chose an image that the Ephesians would know all too well – that of a Roman soldier – to describe the spiritual reality of all believers and the importance of fully grasping God's grace and promises.

1. What is a modern-day metaphor that we could use to describe the armour of God?

Observation

2. What are the reasons we need to wear the armour of God?
3. What do the different pieces of the armour have in common? In your opinion, which one is the most important?

Meaning

4. Paul urged the believers to 'be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might' (verse 10) – what does it mean?

5. Consider each piece of the armour and its function in a battle (i.e. what it does, what it protects, what it is made from). How do these functions relate to their role in spiritual warfare?

6. Why did Paul end his letter with a focus on spiritual realities? How might it impact the Ephesians?

Application

7. How can we actively utilise the armour of God to combat spiritual challenges and temptations in our daily lives?

8. What are practical ways to 'pray at all times in the Spirit' as mentioned in verse 18?

9. How can we encourage and support fellow believers in their spiritual battles (verses 18-20)?