



PIECE *of* WORK

A STUDY IN EPHESIANS

WEEK THREE

But God

Ephesians 2:1-10

5-DAY DEVOTIONAL · SMALL GROUP GUIDE

But God: From Death to Life

DAY 1

Dead Without Him

READING · EPHESIANS 2:1-3

Paul doesn't say we were sick or struggling—he says we were dead. Dead things cannot fix themselves. A corpse cannot walk to the doctor. This is the sobering reality of life without Christ: spiritually lifeless, controlled by the world's standards, the devil's influence, and our own flesh. We may have felt alive, enjoying the drift down the river, but we were heading toward destruction. Recognizing our true condition is the first step toward transformation. You cannot appreciate salvation until you understand what you've been saved from. Today, reflect honestly on areas where you've been drifting, believing you're alive but spiritually dormant. Acknowledge your need for rescue—not improvement, but resurrection.

REFLECTION

What areas of your life have you been trying to “fix” rather than surrender to God?

DAY 2

The Turning Point

READING · EPHESIANS 2:4-5

“But God.” These two words change everything. They are the turning point in every testimony, the hinge between death and life. God didn't wait for us to clean ourselves up. He didn't require us to earn His attention. While we were dead—completely helpless—He loved us. His mercy means we don't get what we deserve. His grace means we get what we could never earn. Like Lazarus in the tomb, we contributed nothing to our resurrection. Jesus called, and life entered where death was reigning. Your salvation story isn't about your effort; it's about God's intervention. Today, thank God for pursuing you when you couldn't pursue Him, for loving you before you loved Him.

REFLECTION

When was your “but God” moment? How has He intervened in your life?

Made Alive for Purpose

READING · EPHESIANS 2:6–7

God didn't just save you from something; He saved you for something. You've been raised up and seated with Christ in heavenly places. This isn't just positional theology—it's your new reality. God wants to display His immeasurable riches and kindness through your life in the ages to come. You are not an accident. You were known before the foundation of the world and created as His masterpiece—His poem, His beautiful poem. Your life is meant to reflect His glory. The question isn't whether you have purpose, but whether you're walking in it. God has prepared good works specifically for you. Today, ask God to reveal the purpose He's prepared for your life and take one step toward it.

REFLECTION

What good works has God uniquely prepared you to do?

Grace, Not Works

READING · EPHESIANS 2:8–9

You cannot earn salvation. The best you could bring before God on your own is filthy rags. This truth simultaneously humbles and liberates us. Salvation is by grace through faith—a gift, not a reward. You don't work your way to God; you trust your way to Him. This means you can stop performing, stop pretending, stop exhausting yourself trying to be good enough. You never will be, and that's exactly why Jesus came. However, understanding grace doesn't lead to laziness—it leads to gratitude. When you truly grasp that you've been rescued from death, your response isn't “now I can do whatever I want,” but “how can I honor the One who saved me?” True faith always produces transformation.

REFLECTION

Are you trying to earn God's love, or are you living from His love?

READING · JAMES 2:14–17; GALATIANS 5:22–23

A fruit tree doesn't produce fruit to become alive; it produces fruit because it is alive. Good works don't save you, but they reveal that you've been saved. They're the evidence of genuine transformation. If someone struggling with the same addiction you once had looked at your life, would they see freedom? Would they want to come to you for prayer? Your life is producing fruit—the question is, what kind? The fruit of the Spirit should be increasingly evident: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This isn't about perfection; it's about direction. Are you moving toward Christ or drifting with the world? Stop trying to improve a life that needs to be surrendered. Wave the white flag and let God produce His fruit through you.

REFLECTION

What fruit is your life currently producing? What does it reveal about your spiritual condition?

But God

OPENING PRAYER & ICE BREAKER

Ice Breaker: Share a “but God” moment from your life—a time when God intervened in a situation where you felt helpless or hopeless.

SERMON OVERVIEW

This week's message continues the series in Ephesians 2:1-10 with three movements: we were dead in our sins and trespasses; but God made us alive through His mercy, love, and grace; and we are now alive for a purpose, created for good works. Salvation isn't earned through our efforts—it's a gift of God's grace—and good works are the fruit of a transformed life, not the means to earn it.

KEY SCRIPTURE · EPHESIANS 2:4-10

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved... For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works... For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Section 1 · We Were Dead (vv. 1–3)

- 1 Understanding our condition: Paul says we were “dead” in our sins, not just “sick.” What's the difference, and why does it matter for how we understand salvation?
- 2 The three influencers: the sermon identified three things that controlled us before Christ—the world, the devil, and the flesh. Which of these do you find most challenging to resist in daily life? Why?
- 3 The drift: Pastor Jay used the illustration of tubing down a river—drifting comfortably until you realize there's a waterfall ahead. How does this picture resonate with your experience or observations of life without Christ?
- 4 Personal reflection: before knowing Christ (or in areas where you're still struggling), how did you try to “fix yourself”? What did that look like?

Section 2 · But God Made Us Alive (vv. 4–9)

- 1 Mercy, love, and grace: mercy means not getting what we deserve, love is given before we loved Him, and grace is receiving what we cannot earn. Which of these three do you most need to be reminded of right now?
- 2 The Lazarus principle: like Lazarus in the tomb, we contributed nothing to our spiritual resurrection. How does this challenge the way we sometimes think about salvation and spiritual growth?
- 3 Backwards thinking: many people believe they need to “get their life together” before coming to God. Have you ever felt this way? How does Ephesians 2:4–5 address this misconception?
- 4 Dylan's testimony: Dylan shared his powerful story of addiction and freedom. What stood out to you most? How does his story illustrate the “but God” principle?

Section 3 · We Are Alive for a Purpose (v. 10)

- 1 Created for good works: we're saved BY grace, THROUGH faith, and FOR good works. How does understanding this sequence change your perspective on Christian living?
- 2 Fruit, not effort: “A fruit tree doesn't produce fruit to become alive; it produces fruit because it is alive.” How does this shift your thinking about spiritual disciplines and serving God?

- 3 Masterpiece identity: you are God's "poema" (masterpiece/poem). How does seeing yourself as God's workmanship—created with purpose—impact your daily choices and self-perception?
- 4 Fruit inspection: if a "fruit inspector" examined your life, what would they find? What fruit is your life currently producing that shows you're alive in Christ?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ **You were spiritually dead** — and unable to save yourself; only God could rescue you.
- ✓ **Salvation is entirely God's work** — through His mercy, love, and grace, not earned by your efforts.
- ✓ **Good works don't save you** — but they reveal that you have been saved.
- ✓ **You are God's masterpiece** — created with purpose and prepared for specific good works.
- ✓ **Stop trying to improve a life that needs to be surrendered.**

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Choose one of the following to put into practice this week:

Option 1 Surrender Something You've Been Trying to Fix

Identify one area where you've been trying to “work harder” or “fix yourself” rather than surrendering to God. Spend time in prayer this week specifically giving that area to Him.

Option 2 Share Your “But God” Story

Like Dylan did in the service, share your testimony with someone this week—a friend, family member, coworker, or even a stranger. Practice articulating your “but God” moment.

Option 3 Identify Your Good Works

Reflect on Ephesians 2:10 and ask God to reveal the good works He has prepared for you. Write down 2-3 specific ways you sense Him calling you to serve, then take one practical step.

Option 4 Fruit Inventory

Honestly assess the fruit your life is producing—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Choose one to intentionally cultivate this week.

Option 5 Memorize the Key Verse

Commit Ephesians 2:8-9 to memory: “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

CLOSING PRAYER POINTS

- Thank God for His mercy, love, and grace that saved you when you were dead in sin.
- Ask God to help each person identify and surrender areas they've been trying to fix in their own strength.
- Pray for clarity about the specific good works God has prepared for each group member.
- Lift up anyone struggling with feeling “not good enough” or trying to earn God's love.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to produce genuine fruit in each person's life as evidence of their salvation.

LOOKING AHEAD

Continue reading through Ephesians in preparation for next week's message. Pay special attention to how Paul describes our identity and unity in Christ.

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The gospel's not about turning over a new leaf. It's about receiving a new life.

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