



WEEK 2 | *EPHESIANS*

GRACE IN RELATIONSHIPS

We saw last week in Ephesians 1 & 2 that all Christians, Jews first, now Gentiles too, are defined by a new relationship with God. In Jesus, we're forgiven of all our sins, reconciled with God and welcomed into his family. That's who we are!

Now, beyond our relationship with God, this new identity has clear implications for our relationships with other people too. This week we're going to explore those implications in practical terms.

VERTICAL RELATIONSHIP

To quickly recap some things from last week, read **Ephesians 2:1-10**.

1. What was our past? What did we deserve from God? v1-3
2. What's our present and future? What drove God to do this for us? v4-6
3. What's the place of our own good works in the present and future? v8-10

Where do good works have *no* place?

4. Try to summarise '3 principles of grace' from what we've seen so far:
 - EACH ONE OF US IS A _____ DESERVING _____ .
 - IN JESUS, EACH ONE OF US IS NOW COMPLETELY _____ .
 - GOOD WORKS DON'T _____ FORGIVENESS, THEY _____ FORGIVENESS.
5. In your relationship with God, how could these principles spare you from guilt?

What about from pride?

HORIZONTAL RELATIONSHIP

These principles of grace don't just ground our relationship with God. They ground our relationships with others too, particularly other Christians: **read Ephesians 2:11-18**.

6. What fuelled hostility between Jews and Gentiles? (v14-15)
7. How do you think this hostility came about from either side?

8. What brings peace and reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles? How so?

9. Paul starts this section with “Therefore”. How does it flow logically from the principles of grace in v1-10?

So, it’s no longer “decent, law-abiding Jews” vs “filthy, lawless Gentiles”! Both Jews and Gentiles were equally sinful and deserving God’s wrath. Then, in Jesus, they were both equally forgiven and lavished with grace! Reconciliation comes easier when each party sees that they themselves are sinners and that the other party is also completely forgiven in Jesus.

RELATIONSHIPS TODAY

Today, we’ve mostly got over the shock of including Gentiles in our church family. Most of us are Gentiles ourselves! But Jew/Gentile relationships aren’t the only ones where the principles of grace make such a massive difference.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendship is always between sinners, so even the best of friends fight. Sometimes the conflict is never resolved and the friendship is ended, sometimes even with Christian friends. Think about the principles of grace and how they can help to resolve conflict.

10. Can you think of a conflict where you struggled to admit you’d done wrong? What was it like?

What could’ve been different if you’d applied principles 1-2 to yourself?

11. Can you think of a conflict where you struggled to forgive someone? What was it like?

What could’ve been different if you’d applied principles 1-3 to yourself and your friend?

MARRIAGE

Consider Julie's resentful feelings: *"He knew I really needed help with the kids this weekend. We'd talked about it! But he still brought work home and we didn't see him at all! We've talked about it so many times now. And I've always forgiven him. But until I see some change, I just don't think I can do that all over again."*

12. How could the principles of grace help Julie be more open to reconciliation here?

Consider Craig's defensive feelings: *"I can't believe she thinks I did anything wrong! She should be thanking me for working hard to provide! That's what a good man does! If she didn't want that, she shouldn't have married me: that's just who I am."*

13. How could the principles of grace help Craig be more open to reconciliation here, and more open to change?

FAMILY

14. If you're a parent, when do you feel best about yourself? When you look at your children's character, activities and achievements? Or when you recall God's loving kindness to you?

To what extent does this shape your demands on your children?

To what extent does this make it harder or easier to forgive their sins and bear with their natural limitations?

15. What resentments do you have of your parents that are hard to let go?

How has this affected your relationship with them over the years?

How could the principles of grace help you here?

Which relationships in your life need a radical application of the principles of grace? Pray together that God's astonishing grace to us would have an astonishing effect for peace in our relationships with others.