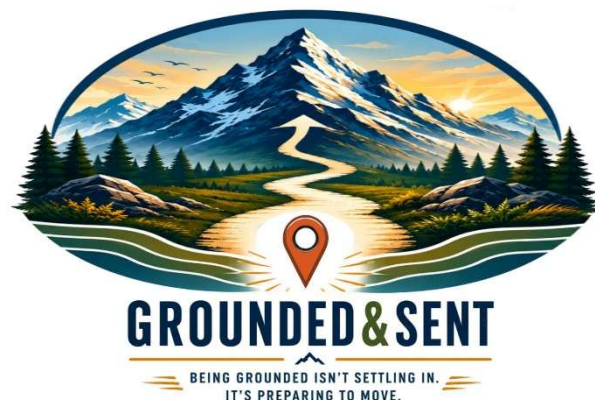


“Dead, Alive, and Made for This”

Session 2: Ephesians 1:15-2:10



Movement: Grounded

Theme: Grace is the only foundation for real transformation.

Leader's Notes:

Goal: 100% participation – everyone talks.

Prioritize ★ questions. These make up the central theological themes. In time constraints unstarred questions can be skipped. A great conversation on two or three questions is better than a rushed one on five.

Session 1 established who you are in Christ. Session 2 asks the harder question: if that's true, why is change so difficult? Paul's answer is as honest as it is uncomfortable. Before we were chosen, adopted, and sealed, we were dead. Not struggling. Not searching. Dead. And the miracle of Ephesians 2 isn't that we found our way to God. It's that God found his way to us . . . while we had nothing to offer and no way to ask.

This session covers some of the richest theological territory in the New Testament, but your group doesn't need to leave with a theology degree. They need to leave with one settled conviction: transformation isn't something they produce. It's something God does in people he already loves. And it always begins with grace, not effort. That's the foundation Grounded & Sent is built on. Session 2 is where that foundation gets poured.

Check-In | DO IT follow-up from Session 1 • ~3 minutes

Leader note: Keep this light and brief. You're not conducting a performance review. You're building a culture where following through matters and where honesty is welcome. One or two people sharing is enough. If no one tried their DO IT option, that's worth a brief, non-shaming acknowledgment: "Life happens. Let's keep trying."

1. Last week you chose a Do It option. Did anyone try theirs? What happened . . . or what got in the way?

OPEN IT | Icebreaker • ~6 minutes

Leader note: This icebreaker sets up the before/after arc of the passage without telegraphing where you're going. Keep it fun and brief. Two or three responses is plenty.

2. What's the most dramatic "before and after" transformation you've ever witnessed . . . a home renovation, a person's physical transformation, a car restoration, anything? What made it feel significant?

Let people enjoy this question. The stories will range from funny to genuinely moving. Don't steer toward the spiritual yet. The passage will do that work. What you're listening for is what makes a transformation feel real and significant to people . . . that instinct becomes important when Paul describes the most dramatic before/after in human history.

READ IT | Scripture • ~3 minutes

Leaders Note: Before reading this passage, give your group one orienting sentence:

SAY IT:

This passage has two movements. First, Paul prays for what God wants to do in us. Then he shows us what God already did for us. We'll read them in two parts.

Ask a volunteer to read this first section of Scripture. After the reading, move straight to Question 3 before any discussion spirals.

- Ephesians 1:15-23

3. Paul is praying that his readers would know God better . . . not just know more about him, but actually know him. He specifically prays they would grasp "his incomparably great power for us who believe." What's the difference between knowing about someone's power and actually trusting it?

This is a bridge question . . . don't let it run long. Its job is to help people feel the gap between intellectual knowledge and lived trust before the dead/alive passage arrives and makes that gap personal. One or two responses, then move into the next part of the passage.

Sticky phrase: (Use these to help your group remember what they learn) **“Knowing about God’s power and actually trusting it are two completely different places to live.”**

READ IT | Scripture • ~3 minutes

Leaders Note: Ask a different volunteer to read this 2nd passage.

- Ephesians 2:1-10

Leaders Context Note: Verse 2 references “the ruler of the kingdom of the air” . . . a first-century way of describing the spiritual forces that animate a life oriented away from God. Paul isn’t describing people who were obviously wicked. He’s describing people who were simply living for themselves, following the current of the culture around them. That’s a description most of your group will recognize. Don’t dwell here but have it ready if someone asks.

EXPLORE IT | Discussion • ~22 minutes

★ 4. Paul says we were “dead in transgressions and sins.” Not sick. Not lost. Dead. Dead people can’t fix themselves, negotiate their way out, or try harder. What does it do to your understanding of salvation when you take that word seriously?

This is the theological hinge of the session. Most people think of their pre-Christ life as a period of struggle or searching, which preserves the idea that they were moving toward God. Paul says something harder: they were dead. Not drifting. Not confused. Dead. That means the initiative was entirely God’s. There was no moment where we turned a corner and found him. He found us while we had nothing to offer and no ability to ask.

Let people wrestle with that. Some will find it deeply freeing. Some will quietly resist it because it removes all credit from their own decision. Both reactions are worth naming.

Sticky phrase: **“Dead people don’t find their way to God. God finds his way to dead people.”**

★ 5. Verses 4 and 5 are one of the most dramatic pivots in all of Scripture: **“But God . . .”** Two words that change everything. What was true before those two words? What became true after them?

Help the group feel the weight of the pivot.

Before: dead, following the ruler of the air, gratifying cravings, deserving wrath.

After: made alive, raised up, seated with Christ in the heavenly realms.

Paul isn’t describing gradual improvement. He’s describing resurrection. If you have a group member who came to faith later in life, this might be a natural moment to invite them to share what their “But God” moment felt like, if they’re comfortable. Don’t engineer it, but don’t miss it if it’s there. This is the kind of story that grounds the theology in real life and reminds the group that Brazos Pointe exists precisely for the person who doesn’t yet know their “But God” moment is coming.

Sticky phrase: **“Two words changed your entire story. ‘But God.’ Everything before them and everything after them is different.”**

★ 6. Verse 8 says salvation is “by grace . . . through faith . . . not by works.” But verse 10 says we were “created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Same passage, ten verses apart. How do you hold those two things together . . . that works have absolutely nothing to do with how you got here, and everything to do with why you’re here?

This is the theological pivot the whole session has been building toward, and it’s worth taking time here. The tension between verse 8 and verse 10 is intentional on Paul’s part. He removes works as a means of salvation entirely, then immediately reintroduces them as the natural outcome of salvation. The distinction is motive and direction. Works-as-currency flow upward toward God, trying to earn or maintain standing. Works-as-

response flow outward from God, expressing gratitude for standing that was already given. One is a transaction. The other is a transformation. Help the group feel that difference. A good follow-up if the conversation stalls: “If you knew beyond any doubt that your standing with God was completely secure . . . would that make you want to do more or less? Why?” Most people will say more . . . and that’s Paul’s point exactly. Grace doesn’t produce passivity. It produces people who are finally free to give without keeping score.

Sticky phrase: **“You weren’t saved by works. You were saved for them. Those are two completely different sentences.”**

7. Verse 10 says we are God’s “handiwork” . . . some translations say masterpiece or workmanship. The Greek word is *poiema*, which is where we get the word poem. God didn’t mass-produce you. He authored you. And he did it with a purpose in mind: “good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” What does it do to your sense of calling to know that the works you’re meant to do were written into your story before you showed up?

This question is the natural landing point of the session and a direct bridge to the “Going” movement later in the series. It’s also one of the clearest connections to Brazos Pointe’s mission . . . guiding people to discover, develop, and deploy faith in Jesus. The “deploy” part isn’t something people manufacture. It’s something God wrote into them before they were born. That’s not pressure. That’s an invitation. Let the group sit with what it means to be a poem God is still composing . . . not a project they have to finish on their own.

Sticky phrase: **“You’re not a self-improvement project. You’re a poem God is still writing.”**

SAY IT | Leader Teaching • ~3 minutes

LEADER NOTE: Read the following aloud or put it in your own words. Keep it brief. If you’re running short on time, skip this section and move directly to DO IT.

SAY IT:

Here’s the thing about transformation: we tend to think of it as something we produce. We try harder, commit more, show up better. And when it doesn’t stick, we assume the problem is effort. Paul says the problem is the starting point. You can’t transform yourself from the inside out. You were dead. Dead things don’t improve themselves.

But God.

Those two words are the hinge everything swings on. Not “but you tried harder.” Not “but you finally got serious.” But God, who is rich in mercy, made you alive. That’s not a self-improvement story. That’s a resurrection story.

And here’s what resurrection means for how you live: you’re not trying to become something. You’re learning to live as what you already are. Grounded & Sent isn’t a small group study for getting better. It’s an invitation to discover what God already did . . . and let that change everything.

DO IT | Application • ~6 minutes

LEADER NOTE: Ask everyone to pick one option and say it out loud before you close. Check in at the start of Session 3.

Choose one of the following this week:

- **But God.** Think back to the moment . . . or the season . . . when your story turned. Write it down in three parts: what was true before, how did it turn, and what became true after. Around Brazos Pointe, we call this your “Three-Word Story.” If you’re not sure you’ve had that moment yet, write about what you wish were different and bring that honestly to God.
- **The Poiema Exercise.** Read Ephesians 2:10 slowly. You are God’s handiwork . . . his poem . . . created for good works he prepared in advance. Spend ten minutes writing or thinking about this: What do you think those works might be? What has God wired into you that keeps showing up? Bring what you find to God as a prayer.
- **Grace Audit.** For one day this week, pay attention to every moment you feel the need to compensate, perform, or earn standing with God or with other people. Just notice it. Don’t fix it yet. At the end of the day, bring the list to God and read Ephesians 2:8-9 over it.

- **Giving Grace.** Not the dinner table kind. Since God made you alive and you don't have to earn His grace, extend to someone else the grace you have received. Have a conversation, send a text, or remind someone else of God's grace toward them.

PRAY IT | *Closing Prayer* • ~3 minutes

LEADER NOTE: Read this prayer over your group, or use it as a closing after open prayer. If your group tends to linger in prayer requests, use this as a gentle anchor to bring the session home.

Father, we were dead . . . and you made us alive. We had nothing to offer . . . and you gave us everything anyway. We confess that we still reach for effort when grace has already done the work. Remind us tonight that transformation isn't something we produce. It's something you do in people you already love. You authored us with purpose and planted good works in our path before we ever showed up to walk them. This week, would you help us live from that reality rather than toward it . . . not as people trying to earn your favor, but as people who can't believe they already have it. In Jesus' name, Amen.