

# You are loved!

## 4: You can Grow!

### WELCOME

*Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...*

Each share a story of a time when you recently felt you grew in your faith –whether small or large.

### WORSHIP

**ASK** if there is anyone who plays an instrument, but not normally in public (whatever standard), whether they could learn a simple Christian song to play for next week & bring the words.

*Now use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...*

Get some tree seeds/nuts (beech nuts, conkers etc) and some dead leaves. Each take a dead leaf. Read out loud verses 22-24. In the silence, each think of things you want to get rid of from your life that are ungodly. Put the leaf back in the middle and say sorry to God for them. Then pick up a nut/seed. Think of a way you could be more righteous and holy –like God. Talk to God about it –committing yourself to becoming more like him and asking for his help.

### WORD

**Read Ephesians 4:1-5:2**

**Discuss** your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

# **Growth Group Notes**

## **Sept-Nov 2009**



Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- In v3 Paul is anxious to maintain unity within the church. What can you do to increase unity within Christ Church?
- To what extent do you view other local churches as competitors or as partners? What are the strengths and weaknesses of having a variety of local churches? How much should we do together and how much should we do apart?
- Paul closely links spiritual growth & maturity ('building up the body' –v12, 16), with action –works and service. How can we grow spiritually through action?
- Paul lists a few examples of gifts (v11) to be used for building up the church. What gifts or talents do you have and how could you better use them in the life of the church?
  
- Paul lists a series of 'do nots' and 'get rid of's' in v17-31 but he also gives some positive advice. What does it mean to adopt this new life (v24) & to be like God (24 & 5:1-2)? How could this change how you live in practice?
- Using these verses as a guide, how would you respond to someone who said 'I'm a good person. I keep the law. I put myself and my family first and I'm tolerant of others. That's enough isn't it?'

## **WHAT NEXT?**

There are popular wristbands that say 'WWJD' –'What Would Jesus Do?' In 2-3s share situations in your life when it might be particularly helpful to ask that question of yourself. Pray for one another.

Write the letters on a card in your wallet, purse or diary or put them on your mobile phone or computer. Over the next few weeks, try to ask yourself that question as you face decisions or go about your daily life.

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## 5: You are Together!

### WELCOME

*Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...*

Imagine you're at a meal with some friends and they start belittling a common friend. How would you respond?

### WORSHIP

**In near-darkness, read out Ephesians 5:3-7.** Take time to say sorry to God for wrongs in your life that come to mind as you hear the passage.

**Now light a candle** and read verses 8-14. Continue to reflect in silence, asking God to fill your life with light.

**Now read verses 15-20.** Then even if you don't normally, why not try using a simple worship song –ideally led by the person who volunteered last week. The others can sing or just read out the words.

### WORD

**Peace Warning!** There are bound to be some strongly held opinions on these passages. Don't forget what's just been written in Ephesians in the way you discuss it! Maybe read 4:1-3 again first!

### Read the remainder of Ephesians 5:3-6:9

Now use **some** of the questions below

- How do you feel when you read verses 3-5? How do Paul's words highlight the scale of God's grace and forgiveness? How should we live in response?
- What practical steps can we take in our lives to 'live as children of light' (v8) and avoid falling into repeated sin?

### Before discussing specific relationships...

- Look at 5:1-2 & 5:21. In our relationships with one another, how do we submit to one another (see also 5:1-2)? Does

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submission mean being doormats (think of Christ as our example)? Who do you find it hardest to submit to?

Paul explains how husbands and wives should submit to one another – the extent to which this is shaped by the culture of the time is the subject of much debate. However, try discussing:

- ‘What would a marriage be like if a husband and wife followed Paul’s teaching perfectly?’ and ‘What things are good or bad about the state of marriage today?’

Paul addresses his comments on how husbands should behave to husbands & his comments on wives to wives. He doesn’t tell husbands what they should expect/demand of their wives or vice versa.

- What differences do you think it would make today if people concentrated on perfecting their own roles in relationships, rather than expecting/demanding of others?

On other relationships...

- 6:1-4: How do you feel about Paul’s advice to children and parents? How can it work in practice?
- The advice in 6:4 is that ‘bringing children up in the training and instruction of the Lord’ will avoid exasperating them. How could this be true?

### **For everyone...**

By addressing slaves and masters, Paul is not condoning slavery. He is giving guidelines for those in these positions on how to behave. Choose a role that you have (parent, child, spouse, employer, sister etc)...

- What advice do you think Paul would write today to you in this role? Each write it down, then discuss your answers together.

## **WHAT NEXT?**

Pray for one another –that relationships would be strengthened.  
Pray for others known to you struggling with relationships (keeping confidentiality)

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## 6: You can pray and be strong!

### WELCOME

*Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...*

Each share one of your favourite films & why you like that film or that type of film.

*(IDEA: You could decide to watch a film together as a Growth Group at home or at the cinema –either as a pure social or have a discussion after about it from a Christian perspective)*

### WORSHIP

*Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...*

**Ephesians 6:18 says:** 'Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.'

Use some clay or salt dough or plasticine or similar.

Each make a model of something that is important to you. Talk to God about it as you make it. If you want, share what you've made at the end.

### WORD

***Leave yourselves extra time to pray this week at the end!***

### Read Ephesians 2

**Discuss** your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

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Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- What does it mean to be 'strong in the Lord' (v10)?
- How do you feel about the idea of spiritual battles (v11-12)?  
What dangers do you think there are in either over or under focussing on 'spiritual attack'? Which do you tend to do? How and why?
- Divide the group into 2-3s. Each consider one or two pieces of the armour. How in practice could you equip yourselves with this armour on a regular basis? Each share your thoughts with the whole group.
- How can we pray more as a church (v18)? How can you be part of it?
- How do you feel about sharing the good news about Jesus 'fearlessly' (v19 & 20)?

## **WHAT NEXT?**

Paul says 'always keep on praying for all the Lord's people' (v18).  
Spend longer praying this week...

**Try** using lots of short prayers (maybe limit them to two sentences max!) rather than fewer longer ones & encourage everyone to have a go. If in doubt, 'thank you God for my friends', 'thank you for this church' or 'please bless this group' would all be great!

Spend time praying in this way for...

- one another (people in the room)
- others known to you (people not in the room)
- your Growth Group
- our church –members, leaders, groups, activities, outreach etc

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- the local community –including groups within it
- wider world issues