

Facilitator:

1. Open with prayer.
2. Welcome any newcomers.
3. Try to keep your discussion to an hour at the most.

Facilitator: Encourage your members to **BRING THEIR BIBLES** and use them during Connect Group.

CONNECT Group study questions for June 24, 2018

Title: “It is what it is.”

1. Think about the introduction to Peppy’s sermon. The doctrine of Predestination is the cornerstone of the doctrine of Eternal Security. Explain how that works. (Hint: Think about the passages Peppy read—Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 1:5, 11.)

Facilitator: The focus of election in all of Paul’s writings is on the end destination of those who have believed in Christ. God predestined those in Christ to be conformed to the image of his Son (Rom 8), God predestined those in Christ to be adopted into God’s family (Eph 1:5), and God predestines those in Christ to obtain an inheritance, heaven (Eph 1:11). The only way a people like us can be saved is by God’s sovereign choice to take those who believe in Jesus and turn them into people like his Son.

Read Romans 9:19-21.

2. Paul talks about God being a potter and about us being the clay. Through this analogy Peppy discussed how a potter will use the same lump of clay to create expensive vases and inexpensive coffee cups. Both uses of the clay are equally the handiwork of the potter (God) and both are made intentionally for a purpose. How does this analogy help us to rest in God’s design for our lives? Our personalities? Our bodies?

Facilitator: Point your group to the truth of each person having a unique purpose in the kingdom of God (Psalm 139:13-14, Isaiah 64:8, Ephesians 2:10, 1 Corinthians 12:25-28). We draw strength and purpose through knowledge of God’s handiwork. There are some that are smarter, more athletic, more courageous, etc., but each of us was intentionally made exactly who we are. Thus, we shouldn’t compare ourselves to others, but rather draw comfort from our being unique.

Read Romans 9:22-23.

3. The entirety of Romans 9 is filled with God’s grace and mercy. How did God show his grace and mercy to unbelieving national Israel (Rom 9:3-5, 13)? Abraham and his children (Rom 9:6-12)? Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Rom 9:17-17)? How has God shown his grace and mercy to us when we’ve refused to believe, doubted, and sinned?

Facilitator: Give your group a chance to brainstorm each of these questions. If they get stuck on Pharaoh remind them that Pharaoh hardened his own heart after God had given him plenty of warning, and remind them that the plagues grew increasingly worse and were given over a period of time to give the Egyptians a chance to repent and believe. Even when the Egyptians refused, God didn’t destroy them completely, and a remnant of believing gentiles went with Israel across the Red Sea and into the wilderness.

Read Romans 9:24-29.

4. Why would the Jewish Christians in Rome have such a hard time believing that the same mercy and grace he had shown Israel in the past, God was now offering to the whole world?

Facilitator: The human heart is hard-wired to despise grace. Deep down we constantly tell ourselves that God saved us because we were smarter or better or more useful than other people. But that's not true. God saved you because he determined in his sovereignty to save the gentiles who believed. Apart from God's choosing, you weren't smart enough or good enough or useful enough to find the grace of God. The Jews, however, believed that about themselves. They had rigorously kept the Law of Moses for more than a thousand years. Surely that would earn them some merit with God. But they missed the grace of God. The gentiles, however, who had not tried to keep the Law of Moses for one day, were offered the grace of God and believed, because God had determined to save those from among all the nations, and so Paul begins calling gentile believers the children of Abraham (Rom 9:8).

5. As we have discussed, God's grace and mercy being extended to the gentiles was a world altering idea to the Jews. This truth also has implications in the way we live our lives and how we interact with others. Discuss these implications as a group.

Facilitator: God has ordained that salvation is for all who believe and that includes us even on our worst days. He extended this offer knowing the choices we have made and will make. This truth should be a comfort to those who are in Christ, and it also has implications to the way we look at others in our lives. They are a part of God's offer of grace and mercy. Oh, that we would see and treat others for the eternal creatures they are! As we accept this gift that was such a shock to Jews we are tasked with spreading this news to others and loving them the way that God does.