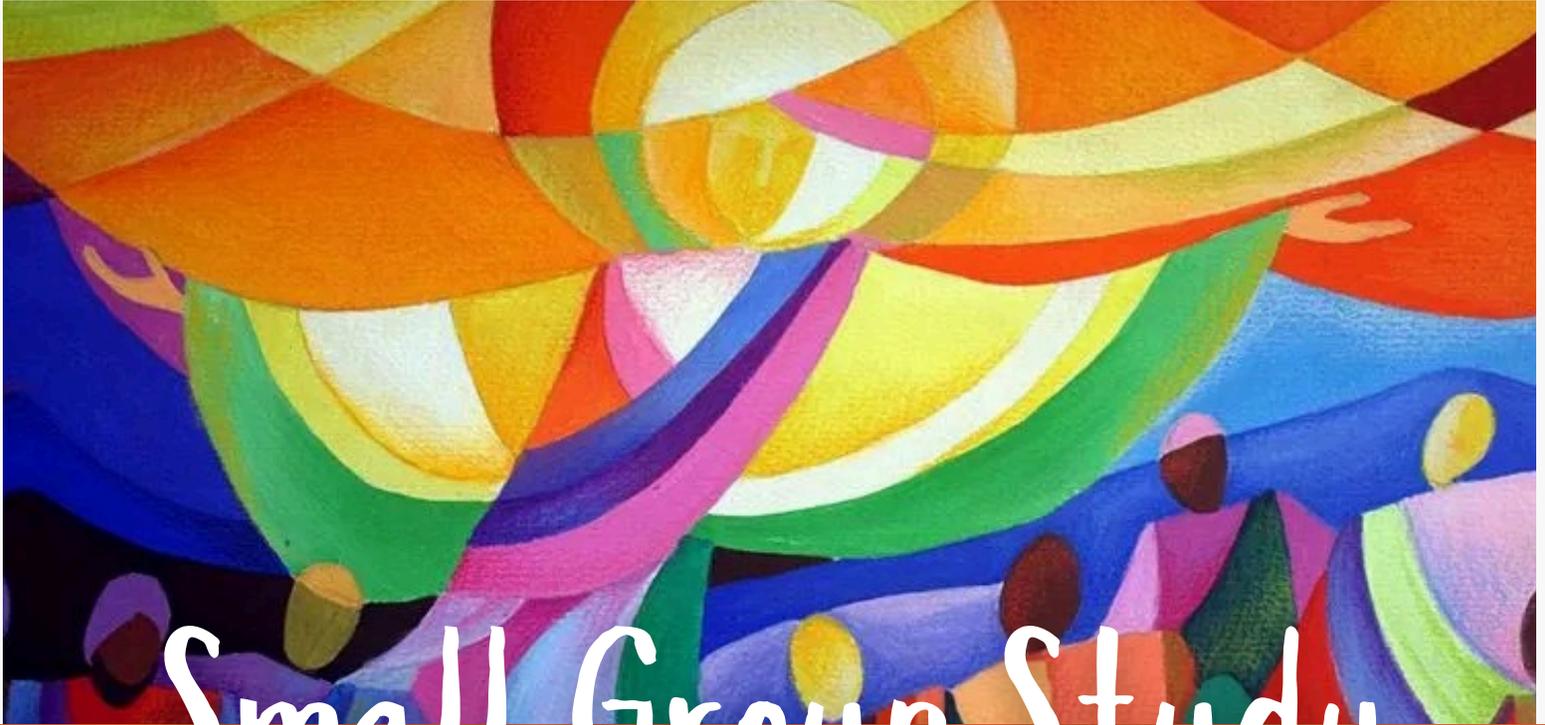




EASTMINSTER
CHRIST-CENTERED ♦ CROSS-CULTURAL



Small Group Study

Ephesians



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SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Ephesians (Intervarsity Press)

Winter/Spring Dates:

- ~~Wed, January 28~~
- Wed, February 11
- Wed, February 25
 - Wed, March 11
 - Wed, March 25
 - Wed, April 15
 - Wed, April 29

**Small Groups meet at 5:30PM or
7:00PM with Dinner at 6:30PM**

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION IN SMALL GROUPS

Commit to Eastminster's Mission

We are people centered on Christ and intentionally cross-cultural. This effects the way we study scripture and listen to one another. We are all responsible for stewarding and co-creating community that is defined by our belief in Jesus Christ AND appreciates all cultures.

We Take Scripture Seriously

While the way we understand and interpret scripture may be different, we all come to the table believing scripture is important and vital to our lives in Christ.

Know Yourself and Make Room for All Voices

If you are a person who talks a lot, try to step back and ask yourself, "Why am I talking a lot?" If you are a person who doesn't talk much, step up and ask yourself, "Why am I not talking?"

Listen with Humility

Listen to understand and not to respond. Have an open heart and approach to new ideas with curiosity. Ask real and sincere questions.

Silence Is Okay

If there are times of silence, don't feel the need to fill that space with words. Sometimes the Holy Spirit does the best work in silence.

Each Person in This Group Is a Gift

Treat people with respect and dignity. Do not dismiss new thoughts or ideas.

Introducing Ephesians

Main Theme

Rich in Christ: New Community. New Life.

Ephesians unpacks deep and amazing realities that are true of those that put their hope in Jesus. It points to a changed identity and details the great riches that a believer has as a result of Christ's work. Part of the riches that we gain by being in Christ is the reality that we have been reconciled to God in the Gospel. Ephesians beautifully extends this unity beyond God and the individual to the individual and other believers. This gives each follower of Jesus new hope and purpose in the world, and therefore, a new life.

Summary

We are rich in Christ, members of a new community and called to a new life!

Ephesians details the great riches that believers have because of Jesus. He unites people to God and to each other, calling all followers of Jesus to a completely new life. Security, social standing, grades, pleasing our families, and more, tug for our attention. Ephesians reveals to us the new and better way. John Stott has this to say about Ephesians: "The letter to the Ephesians is a marvelously concise, yet comprehensive, summary of the Christian good news and its implications.

Nobody can read it without being moved to wonder and worship, and challenged to the consistency of life."

Background

The Apostle Paul wrote Ephesians as a letter to them, that was also intended for circulation to surrounding areas and churches. He wrote it while imprisoned in Rome around the year 62 AD. Acts 28 tells of this moment in Paul's journeys. He wrote Colossians and Philemon around this time as well. Each letter went with Tychicus and Onesimus to their eventual recipients. Paul first visited Ephesians earlier in his travels. That part of his journey is detailed in Acts 19.

Getting Started

- Read Ephesians, start to finish in one sitting. Set aside an hour or so to do this.
- Take notes of your questions and observations and themes as you go.
- If you have remaining questions, find a trusted mentor or commentary to address them.
- Begin preparing for week 1.

EPHESIANS 1:1-14 - NEW IDENTITY

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God’s holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9 he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. 11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

COMMUNITY (15 MIN)

- RELATIONAL, PHYSICAL, MENTAL, SPIRITUAL (RPMS) – When you think of the categories of: Relational, Physical, Mental, Spiritual, which one of these do you feel depleted in this week? In which one do you feel strong?

SCRIPTURE (30 MIN)

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

- **Recite Memory Verse (Optional)**

o “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe” (Ephesians 1:18)

- **Context**

o Ephesians details how rich we are in Christ. All who follow Jesus are united to Him as members of a new community and called to a new life. Each week, we will aim to hear from God in Ephesians. It was written by the Apostle Paul to believers in Ephesus but also throughout the world. It is loaded with relevance for our lives today.

- **Hook**

o What aspects of your upbringing, or your life today, give you the deepest sense of pride?

- Read aloud.
- o Then spend 3 minutes silently; looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

- Spend 2-3 minutes sharing observations and questions.

Gather Observations

Discuss Questions

- Make a list of what is true of those who hope in Christ.
- Make a list of what the passage says that God does to make these realities true.
- What is the relationship of the believer to God as described by the passage?
- Why has God done all this?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

- **Summary**

o Who do you think you are? Your answer to this question impacts how we see the world and who we eventually become. If your identity is in your athletic prowess then being awesome at sports may be your ultimate goal. The activities you engage in and how you respond, for example, if your body is injured, will be drastically different than if your identity is in coin collecting. Your true identity, though, is who God says you are. Because of Jesus, a new reality has taken place. You are God's child. You are in a new family that defines the deepest part of who they are. This new family involves a rich inheritance. It means you will always have access to the Father.

- **Big Idea**

o Through Jesus, we are part of God's family. We are worth more than we could ever imagine.

- **Reflect, Respond & Challenge**

o Choose one of the application options below. Read the questions and give a couple minutes for silent reflection. Then, invite your group to respond by sharing. Finish by challenging your group to take practical next steps this week to implement this truth in their lives.

- What do you currently place your identity in? What would living "to the praise of His Glory" look like in your life? Reflect on the questions and then discuss. This week, journal about what areas of your life absorb the most of your thinking.
- We're ever aware of our needs but quick to forget the ways in which God has already richly blessed us. What are some of the ways that God has blessed you? How could you become more attuned to God's blessings in your daily life?

Reflect on these questions and share. This week, note the ways in which God has and continues to bless you. Keep a journal or a bullet list of them on your phone, and we may share them next week.

PRAYER (10 MIN)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 MIN)

EPHESIANS 2:1-10 - THE GOOD NEWS

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. 10 For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

COMMUNITY (15 MIN)

- **SPIRITUAL LIFE GRAPH** – Take 3 minutes to draw a graph of your spiritual life, from left to right. Include particular peaks and valleys that you’ve experienced along the way. Share with the group (3 minutes each).

SCRIPTURE (30 MIN)

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

- **Recite Memory Verse (Optional)** – I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe (Ephesians 1:18)

- **Context**

o Ephesians details how rich we are in Christ. All who follow Jesus are united to Him as members of a new community and called to a new life. Last week, we learned about how membership in this new community gives us a completely new identity as God’s children.

- **Hook**

o Have you ever been in a situation that was literally ‘life and death’? What was that like?

- **Read**

o Then spend 3 minutes silently; looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

Gather Observations

Discuss Questions

- What is the default spiritual status of every human being? Why?
- How can that status be changed, according to the passage?
- Why did God make the move to offer us new life? (Find two or more reasons)
- What role do good works play in this passage?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

- **Summary**

o Share the following or share a Gospel Diagram. Use Eph 2 Language as much as possible. Rough start to Chapter 2. Our status? Spiritually dead. It's hard to get a feel for exactly what that means. But any time you're talking about being cut off from the source of everything good – well that sounds pretty hopeless. Until something enters the scene and changes everything. Someone, really. God, in his great mercy and love for us, gives us the ultimate gift through Jesus – new life with him forever, instead of death. Again, hard to grasp. But Paul gives us a hint that it's good. Really good. God's great hope after giving us new life? "To show us the incomparable riches of his grace." He wants really good things for us! So how do we get in on this? Paul makes it really clear: it's nothing you can do. God has done it all already. All we do is receive the gift, through faith (trust in Jesus). Then what? Besides a life with God to look forward to in the 'age to come', we also get to enjoy life with him now, in this world where he's prepared good things for us to do with him. In fact, it's what we were made to do.

- **Big Idea**

o We're dead without God. But through faith in Jesus, we have new life – and a new purpose.

- **Reflect, Respond & Challenge**

o Choose one of the application options below. Read the questions and give a couple minutes for silent reflection. Then, invite your group to respond by sharing. Finish by challenging your group to take practical next steps this week to implement this truth in their lives.

- Too Good to be True? – What do you believe about Jesus? About a new life and a new purpose with God? About your status apart from God? Have you already accepted the free gift of new life in Jesus? Or does some part of this not ring true for you yet? Take a risk and share where you're at in your spiritual journey.

- Good Work! – Did you catch that? God has already prepared good work for us to do! So we can't take the credit. But we can partner with God in doing good in this world. Take a moment to ask God to open your eyes to some current opportunities – maybe in your work, at church, or in your family. What does he bring to mind?

PRAYER (10 MIN)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 MIN)

EPHESIANS 2:11-22 - MULTIETHNICITY

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

COMMUNITY (15 MIN)**REFLECTING ON OUR ETHNICITY AND CULTURE**

1. What are some family values and traditions that are important to your family?
2. Where did your ancestors come from and how has that shaped you?
3. What photographs/relics do you have that tell the story of who you are?

SCRIPTURE (30 MIN)**ENTERING THE PASSAGE**

- **Recite Memory Verse (Optional)**

o I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe (Ephesians 1:18)

- **Context**

Last week, we learned how we are alive in Christ! Because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, we receive a new life and a new purpose. We are also called to a new community. In Ephesus, divisions between ethnic and religious groups were often intense and violent, not unlike today. This week we see Paul’s instructions to the church on how to deal with these divisions. While writing this letter, Paul was in prison. Paul was known and seen to be closely associated with Gentiles (non-Jewish people). Simply befriending Gentiles and treating them as equals incited the Jewish people enough to

o insist that Paul be jailed (Acts 21:28-29 & 28:16). At this time, the temple had many barriers or “dividing walls” separating the people. The priests could be in the innermost places, followed by Jewish men, then women, and finally the outer courts which were the only place that non-Jews could worship. These were man-made divisions. In 1 Kings 8:41-43, we learn that the only division in the temple was to be between the priests and the congregation. And in Matthew 27:50-51 we read that when Jesus died on the cross, the curtain dividing the innermost area of the temple was torn in two! This segregation in the temple created all kinds of tension, discrimination, and violence between Jews and non-Jews. Jews and non-Jews were actually killing each other in the streets!

- **Hook**

o What divisions currently exist in the East Liberty neighborhood? In the city? In the world?

- **Read**

o Spend 3 minutes silently; look for observations, repetitions, questions.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

Gather Observations

Discuss Questions

- What’s significant about Paul mentioning circumcision? What’s the big deal with that?
- What’s with all the building analogies- the dividing wall? The chief cornerstone?
- What does it mean that he creates one humanity out of two? Why all the unity language?
- What does it mean when Paul says, “Jesus is our peace”?
- What did “fellow citizens and members of God’s household” mean for Jews and Gentiles?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

- **Summary**

o Paul’s words to the Ephesians were countercultural, then, and they still ring true today. We still see divisions between cultures and ethnicities in the world and even in our church communities. When we decide to follow Jesus, it’s never just an individual act. Jesus died not only so that we would be reconciled to him but that we would be reconciled to one another. Choosing to follow Jesus means that we are choosing to belong to a new community, a family of believers from all around the world!

o A family belongs to one another, cares for and loves one another, and lives with one another in real unity. Paul isn’t asking Gentiles to become more like Jews or for the Jews to become like the Gentiles. He’s calling these two violently opposed groups of people to become part of one new community, a new family centered around Christ. Because Jesus broke down every barrier between us and him through his death and resurrection, we can now truly reconcile and become one with people who we were once separated from. When we become a new community centered on Christ, we do not lose our culture or ethnicity. Rather, we become part of a new family where those differences are seen, valued, embraced, and celebrated.

- **Big Idea**

o Our salvation isn't just individual, it's communal. Being a follower of Jesus means joining a diverse family where everyone has equal access to God. Before we move ahead and talk about how this applies, how does this Big Idea either affirm or challenge what you have heard or been taught to be true about salvation?

- **Reflect, Respond & Challenge**

o Choose one of the application options below. Read the questions and give a couple minutes for silent reflection. Then, invite your group to respond by sharing. Finish by challenging your group to take practical next steps this week to implement this truth in their lives.

- God is not Colorblind – Unity in Christ does not mean that we gloss over our differences. God created different cultures and ethnicities on purpose! Before we can understand and unify with someone who is different from us, we have to understand ourselves and what cultural lenses we have.

- The Dividing Wall of Hostility – Are there any groups of people excluded from your community, either directly or indirectly? What steps can you take to learn about other ethnicities and groups that are not yet part of your community?

PRAYER (10 MIN)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 MIN)



EPHESIANS 3:1-13 - WITNESS

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. 7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. 13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

COMMUNITY (15 MIN)

- CHECKING IN – How are you feeling after last week’s conversation around ethnicity

SCRIPTURE (30 MIN)**ENTERING THE PASSAGE**

- **Recite Memory Verse (Optional)**

o I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe (Ephesians 1:18)

- **Context**

o Ephesians details how rich we are in Christ. Followers of Jesus are members of a new community and called to a new life. Last week, we tackled the topic of ethnicity, learning that our salvation isn’t just individual, it’s communal. Following Jesus means joining a diverse family where everyone has equal access to God.

- **Hook**

o What’s the hardest thing you’ve had to do in life? Was it worth it? (Ie: what is a challenge you’ve faced and how did you overcome it?)

- **Read**

o Then spend 3 minutes silently; looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

Gather Observations

Discuss Questions

- What is the mystery that Paul is talking about here?
- How would making this mystery known change the early church to whom he's writing?
- In what ways is Paul a servant of the gospel?
- What response is Paul hoping his audience ('you') will have to this passage?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

• Summary

o For centuries, the Jewish people worshiped God with a narrow lens, thinking they were the only ones that God loved. Paul blows up that idea and announces that while God's plan to include the whole world has been hidden for a while, it's not anymore. Through Jesus, God is making a path back to himself – and bringing all people together in the process! Paul describes himself as a servant of this good news of freedom and this rich life in Jesus. He feels a charge to bring this to the rest of the world, outside of Israel. He's willing to suffer for it. The proof? He's writing this from prison. He states clearly: don't be discouraged that I'm suffering for this gospel – it's worth it.

• Big Idea

o The gospel is for everyone - and it's worth any cost to get it to them.

• Reflect, Respond & Challenge

o Choose one of the application options below. Read the questions and give a couple minutes for silent reflection. Then, invite your group to respond by sharing. Finish by challenging your group to take practical next steps this week to implement this truth in their lives.

▪ Freedom! – There are a lot of benefits of receiving the gift of the Good News of Jesus. Anyone who trusts Jesus can approach God with freedom and confidence. Do you feel that way in how you relate to God? If so – why? If not – what keeps you from feeling like that? Discuss.

▪ Counting the Cost – Who are your 'people'? In what ways have you suffered in order to give them access to Jesus? Are there ways you've avoided suffering? What would it look like for you to 'break the silence'? Share with the group. Take a moment this week to practice explaining the gospel to someone in your sphere of influence. If time, practice now.

PRAYER (10 MIN)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 MIN)

EPHESIANS 1:15-23, 3:14-21 - PRAYER

EPHESIANS 1:15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

EPHESIANS 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

COMMUNITY (15 MIN)

- HIGHS & LOWS – Share a high and a low from last week.

SCRIPTURE (15 MIN)**ENTERING THE PASSAGE**

- **Recite Memory Verse (Optional)**

o I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe (Ephesians 1:18)

- **Context**

o Ephesians details how rich we are in Christ. All who follow Jesus are united to Him as members of a new community and called to a new life. Last week, we learned that God's Kingdom isn't just for the Jewish people, it's for the whole world! Paul made great sacrifices to make sure that all people had access to the Gospel. This week, we learn from how Paul prays.

- **Hook**

o Have you ever had someone pray for you in person & out loud? What was that like for you?

- **Read both passages aloud.**

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

Gather Observations

Discussion Questions

- Individually, make a list of what is similar and different between each prayer. Share.
- Why do you think Paul focuses on certain themes in each prayer?
- Why does Paul pray about God's power in each prayer? What does that have to do with the people he is praying for?
- Why does Paul call God "Father" in both prayers and reference being part of a family?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

- **Summary**

o In these two passages, Paul shows us a lot about how to pray for our Christian family members. He talks about being "rooted and established in love" and acknowledges God's power over and over again. He prays for his friends because he loves them and they are part of his family. When we truly see other believers as part of God's family with us, we care about their needs and desire to see them become more like Jesus. Through prayer, we can tap into the same power that raised Christ from the dead. And because God is our Father, we can access that power knowing that he cares about our needs and the needs of others.

- **Big Idea**

o Being part of the family of God means we have access to our Father's power in prayer.

- **Reflect, Respond & Challenge**

o Choose one of the application options below. Read the questions and give a couple minutes for silent reflection. Then, invite your group to respond by sharing. Finish by challenging your group to take practical next steps this week to implement this truth in their lives.

- God's Power in Prayer – Do we believe that we have access to God's power in prayer, that same power that raised Christ from the dead? What do you need in your life that only the power of God can do? A friend or family member who is far from God? A mental health issue? This week insert your own name or the name of the person you wish to pray for in these passages and pray them a few times this week.

- Remembering You in My Prayers – Is there a member of your community that you want to commit to praying for daily over the next week? Using these two passages, replace all of the pronouns with their name and pray for them in the words of Paul. Commit to doing this each day.

PRAYER (25 MIN)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 MIN)

EPHESIANS 4:1-6 - PURPOSE

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.” 9 (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. 14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

COMMUNITY (15 MIN)

- How did praying the Scriptures go last week? What did you learn about God and yourself as you prayed using Scripture this past week?

SCRIPTURE (30 MIN)**ENTERING THE PASSAGE**

- **Recite Memory Verse (Optional)**

o Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:14-15)

- **Context**

o Ephesians details how rich we are in Christ. All who follow Jesus are united to Him as members of a new community and called to a new life. This new community is meant to be a family. And last week, we learned that one purpose of this new family is to pray for one another. This week, Paul digs deeper into our purpose as members of this new community.

- **Hook**

o When you hear the word “calling”, what thoughts or feelings come to mind?

- **Read**

o Then spend 3 minutes silently; looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

Gather Observations

Discuss Questions

- What does Paul mean by “calling”? What does it mean to be called?
- Why does Paul mention the roles of apostle, prophet, evangelist, etc...?
- Why is unity repeating so much? What does unity have to do with being called?
- What is this whole ascended & descended thing all about? (See Psalm 68:18)
- According to Paul, what does it mean to be mature? Why is maturity important (v. 14)?
- We see the image of being part of a body; what does this image have to do with calling?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

• Summary

o In God’s family, everyone has a calling: a purpose and a role to play. No one gets to sit on the sidelines. Some might have gifts that are more up front, like in communication or teaching, while others might be more gifted behind the scenes. Either way, we are all invited to use these gifts to encourage and build up our Christian community and to share the Gospel with others and grow our Christian community.

• Big Idea

o God gives everyone a new purpose: to be unified with other believers and to use your gifts to build your Christian community up.

• Reflect, Respond & Challenge

o Choose one of the application options below. Read the questions and give a couple minutes for silent reflection. Then, invite your group to respond by sharing. Finish by challenging your group to take practical next steps this week to implement this truth in their lives.

- Live a Life Worthy of the Calling – You have a calling! As a Christ follower, you have a part to play in supporting and expanding God’s family. When you think about your gifts and skills, how has God uniquely created you? List the things you are good at and passionate about. Share those with the group and spend some time in prayer, asking how God might be inviting you to use those skills in your community for building up the family of God.

- Calling is About Community – What God has equipped and called you to do is not primarily about your personal growth and fulfillment. As Paul states, Christ “equips his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” How is God inviting you to serve your community? What gifts do you have that will build your community up? Reflect and discuss.

PRAYER (10 MIN)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 MIN)

EPHESIANS 5:21-6:9 - RELATIONSHIPS

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery— but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. 6 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. 5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. 9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

COMMUNITY (5 MIN)

- RELATIONSHIP REFLECTION – What’s one relationship in your life where you’ve seen God at work in this season? What about a relationship that needs some help?

SCRIPTURE (30 MIN)**ENTERING THE PASSAGE**

- **Recite Memory Verse (Optional)**
 - o Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:14-15)

- **Context**

o Ephesians details our riches in Christ; we are members of a new community and called to new life. Our relationships are to be made new too. Instead of dominance and favoritism, we are now called to a mutual love and submission.

- **Hook**

o What do power dynamics around seniority and status look like in your community? How does this affect your community?

- **Read**

o Then spend 3 minutes silently; looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

Gather Observations

Discuss Questions

- How does the encouragement to 'submit to one another out of reverence for Christ' affect the rest of the passage?
- What point is Paul making about Christ and the church?
- How does the gospel transform each of these sets of relationships?
- Why do you think Paul focuses on these three pairs of relationships?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

- **Summary**

o How, exactly, should the gospel transform our relationships? The answer is woven throughout these verses, but is summarized nicely in the very first sentence. We submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. By honoring and valuing one another as if doing this for Jesus himself, questions about who has ultimate power or authority melt. The focus is placed on how we serve, love, and care for one another. For example, the husband is to match the submission of his wife with the kind of sacrificial love that took Jesus to the cross. In each case, the guiding principle is the same. The path goes through love and submission; honor the other person over yourself.

- **Big Idea**

o Gospel-centered relationships seek the good of the other first.

- **Reflect, Respond & Challenge**

o Choose one of the application options below. Read the questions and give a couple minutes for silent reflection. Then, invite your group to respond by sharing. Finish by challenging your group to take practical next steps this week to implement this truth in their lives.

- Easier Said Than Done – Paul picks out some traditionally difficult relationships and applies the gospel to each of them. What do you notice about the relationship between men and women in your communities? How does this compare to the ideas of mutual submission and honor that we see in this text? What's one thing you can do to help shift any unhealthy dynamics you identified?

▪ Growing Pains – While not all of us are parents, all of us are someone’s child (or are under the care of a figure that plays that role). There is no perfect parent-child relationship; all of us come out of childhood with some wounds. Where might you need to forgive your parents? Where do you need to seek forgiveness? Spend a moment journaling. Then discuss.

PRAYER (10 MIN)

PRAYER FOR RECONCILIATION

All of us have conflict in our lives. What do we do with it? Jesus offers a listening ear. Be assured: He wants to bring peace and healing to our relationships, even if it takes a long time. Hold someone in your mind before Jesus, and pray for them:

Ask Jesus for forgiveness if there are things to confess.

Ask Jesus to help move you toward forgiveness as well.

Pray for their good, as specifically as you can.

ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 MIN)



*Human Relationships Painting
by Svitlana Balynska*

APPENDIX

Extra Studies for Personal Growth

APPENDIX 1 – EPHESIANS 4:17-32 – TRADING UP

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed. 20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. 29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

SCRIPTURE (30 MIN)

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

- **Recite Memory Verse (Optional)** – Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:14-15)

- **Context**

o Ephesians details our riches in Christ. All who follow Jesus are united to Him in a new community and called to a new life. Last week we discussed the calling given to believers to unify the church.

- **Hook**

o Have you ever “upgraded” something, like a phone or computer? Did it make your life better?

- **Read**

o Then spend 3 minutes silently; looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

- **Summary**

o If you showed up at an average party in the community and noted what you saw, your list might not be that different from this list. The Gentile lifestyle is contrasted with the life the Ephesians have learned from Paul. The church is called to live a life marked by our new relationship with Jesus, not one that looks the same as our old life before we met God. The list of actions are ones that affect both the individual and the unity of the church. Paul challenges the church to live into their new call - to live with eternity in mind and in the truth that they are forgiven by God.

- **Big Idea**

o Jesus calls us out of our old life, and into a completely new one.

- **Reflect, Respond & Challenge**

o Choose one of the application options below. Read the questions and give a couple minutes for silent reflection. Then, invite your group to respond by sharing. Finish by challenging your group to take practical next steps this week to implement this truth in their lives.

- OBSTACLES TO LETTING GO – What stands in the way of letting go of your old life? How does this affect your relationship with God? Share together. The prayer exercise will help us go deeper.

- EVIDENCE OF WHAT? – If a friend were to look at your life, would they see evidence of a life “made new?” If you were to make one change to reflect this truth in your life right now what would it be? Share what you can with the group. Share with a friend for accountability.

PRAYER (10 MIN)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 MIN)

APPENDIX 2 – EPHESIANS 6:10-23 – THE BATTLE

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. 21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. 23 Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE (30 MIN)

ENTERING THE PASSAGE

- **Recite Memory Verse (Optional)** – Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace (Ephesians 6:14-15)

- **Context**

o Ephesians details our riches in Christ. All who follow Jesus are united to Him as members of a new community and called to a new life. Last week we discussed God's hope for relationships.

- **Hook**

o What is your favorite scene of "good vs. evil" in a book or media?

- **Read**

o Then spend 3 minutes silently; looking for observations, repetitions, questions, etc.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE

Gather Observations

Discuss Questions

- Why does Paul use the imagery of armor?
- Make a list of each piece of armor. Define each piece and the role that it plays.
- What does it mean that our battle is against "spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms?"
- What effect on the reader does the author intend by describing the armor that we have?
- How do we pray on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests for all people?

APPLYING THE PASSAGE

- **Summary**

o Paul explains that we are in a cosmic battle of good and evil. Though it is tempting to look to other people as the problem in the challenges we face, he warns that we are actually fighting against spiritual evil forces. Intense thought, but true! Much like an actual battle, we need to be prepared. We must put on the full armor of protection offered to us by God through his spirit and His Word. Paul calls his readers to be alert in prayer on all occasions with all types of requests because when you're in battle it requires complete focus.

- **Big Idea**

o We are in a battle against evil but we are well-equipped in the Spirit.

- **Reflect, Respond & Challenge**

o Choose one of the application options below. Read the questions and give a couple minutes for silent reflection. Then, invite your group to respond by sharing. Finish by challenging your group to take practical next steps this week to implement this truth in their lives.

- Standing Firm – How do you see the powers of darkness around you? What role might God be inviting you to play in combating these spiritual realities? Discuss. Detail how they can rely on God's armor and resources in this battle. This week, spend time re-reading this passage, asking God to protect and empower you in this fight.

PRAYER (10 MIN)

ANNOUNCEMENTS (5 MIN)

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