



DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

Put On the New Man

02

01

Ephesians

David O. Dykes, General Editor



BUT GOD

A person cannot earn salvation by being good or doing good.

The Bible tells us that before faith in Christ, we were dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1). This is true of the whole of humanity. Regardless of how moral and upright a person might appear, he or she cannot escape this indictment of deadness. Apart from Christ, we are dead in our sins—not sick, not dying, but dead. But God, because of His love for us, makes us alive with Christ. Salvation is by God’s grace apart from our good works, “it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

To the Galatians, Paul wrote that “a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ” (2:16), and “if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing” (2:21).

Jesus Himself said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Jesus is waiting for you now.

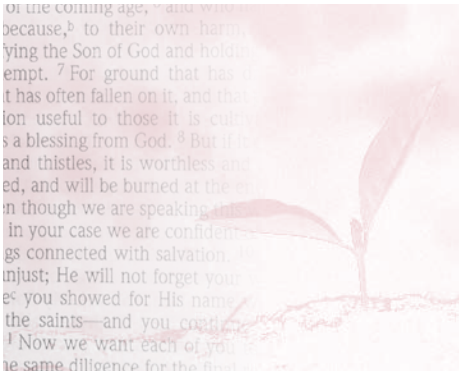
- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God’s Son and accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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» MEET THE WRITER



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Explore
the Bible®

DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

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A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR



Often people will say to us, “Good luck!” You don’t have to be around me for very long to discover that I don’t believe in luck. I only believe in luck if it stands for Living Under Christ’s Knowledge! As followers of Jesus, we have something so much better than luck; we enjoy the blessings of Almighty God. In Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, we discover

some of the richest blessings that are ours as saints—we discover what it means to be “in Christ.”

Even though the apostle Paul was in prison when he wrote the Letter of Ephesians, he knew and we know that the Word of God cannot be bound. The decrees of ancient rulers of Paul’s day and time are forgotten today. The laws of the mighty Roman Empire are disregarded today. But a letter written from a prison cell almost two thousand years ago is being read and studied by millions of people around the world in the 21st century.

Of course, this isn’t just true of the Ephesians. The Bible is still the world’s most-read book. Although it was written by over forty men spanning over 1,600 years writing in three languages, it has one central theme: God’s loving redemption of fallen humanity. This theme is reflected in Ephesians.

As you study this letter, I pray that God will revitalize you and bring revival to you and to your church.

David O. Dykes

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INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

The Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Ephesians. Ephesians 1:1 states this clearly. Both Ephesians 3:1 and Ephesians 4:1 state that Paul was in prison when he wrote the book. Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were also written while Paul was in prison and were probably written at the same time. Bible teachers debate when Paul wrote the letter. Most agree that he wrote it while in prison in Rome. He was also in prison in Caesarea so some have thought he might have written from there. Paul was in prison in Rome during the early 60s AD. Most people give the dates of about 61-63 AD as the writing dates.

The letter, as it is in our Bibles, states in Ephesians 1:1 that Paul wrote the letter to the Christians in Ephesus. However, some of the oldest copies of the letter did not have the title “Ephesians” in the letter. Because of this, some Bible teachers think Paul likely meant for the churches in Asia Minor (Turkey today) to pass the letter around to each other. Some think he may have intended the letter to be for the church in Ephesus, but he wrote it in a way as to be helpful to other churches in the area. All Bible teachers agree that Ephesus was in Paul’s mind as he wrote the letter, for what Paul wrote would have met the needs of that church. Paul was very familiar with the church and the city of Ephesus. He lived there during his third missionary journey for about three years.

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul explained God’s plan to offer salvation to the whole world, not only to the Jews. Those chapters talk about a secret plan for the Gentiles and the offer of grace through Jesus Christ. Paul explained how God had plans to adopt us and accept us by offering redemption and forgiveness. Paul wrote how in God’s plan all believers would have the same Holy Spirit. In chapters 4–6, Paul discussed the body of Christ. Paul said we are to live like children of the light and live a life that shows we are followers of Christ. The new life in Christ is fully different from the old life. This new life will show up in how we live, how we think, how we deal with people, and how we live in our families. Many Bible teachers think Ephesians to be one of the highest statements of the Christians life.

OUTLINES OF **EPHESIANS**

I. A New Life (1:1–3:21)

- a. Greeting (1:1-2)
- b. The Purpose of Christ (1:3-14)
- c. Paul's First Prayer (1:15-23)
- d. Salvation through Grace (2:1-10)
- e. Unity Restored (2:11-22)
- f. Mystery Revealed (3:1-13)
- g. Paul's Second Prayer (3:14-21)

II. A New Walk (4:1–6:24)

- a. Walk Worthy (4:1-16)
- b. A New Self (4:17-32)
- c. Imitators of God (5:1-21)
- d. Right Relationships (5:22–6:9)
- e. Readied for Warfare (6:10-20)
- f. Closing (6:21-24)

WORD LIST

Antioch—Antioch was a city in what is today the country of Turkey. Paul lived there for several years, and the church in this city sent him as a missionary.

Belief—trust, faith, or confidence in someone or something

Caesar—the title used for the rulers of ancient Rome

Circumcision—a medical procedure of removing the foreskin from a male's genitals. It has special religious meaning for Jews.

Cornerstone—An important part of the foundation of a house or building at the corner of two walls. It was very important for supporting the weight of the building.

Deceiver—someone who tries to make you believe something that is not true

Epaphras—a faithful servant who worked with Paul

Foreigners—someone who was born in a different country

Foreknowledge—To know something before it happens. God has foreknowledge of those who will be saved.

Gentiles—The people of the world who were not Jews

Gnosticism—A system of religious beliefs that stressed salvation by knowing special things. This religious system of beliefs was a threat to early Christianity.

Grace—a gift we do not deserve

House Arrest—staying in a house but not able to leave; having a guard like being in jail

Incarnation—The word we use to mean that God became a human. God took on human flesh.

Messiah—The Hebrew word that means anointed one. Christ means the same thing.

Mystery or Secret—Paul used this word to mean a truth that was true all along, but only after the life of Jesus was this truth made clear to everyone to know.

Omnipotence—powerful and has no limit in power

Pah—The spelling of the sign we use that is somewhat like “success.” It is a sign that has no real English equivalent.

Pantheism—The idea that everything is god

Reconciled—to be friendly again; to have a relationship again

Redemptive—acting to save from wrong or evil

Resurrection—raise to life after being dead

Revelation, Reveal—to show something, see something new

Sanctification—The process God uses to make us more like Christ

Sovereign—To have full control

Spiritual Death—To be separate from God. One might be living physically but be dead spiritually.

Spiritual War—To battle in spiritual ways like against the devil and against sin

Spoils of War—The items that the winner of a war takes from the loser

Submission—accepting someone else to be in charge

Trinity—God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

BIBLE READING PLAN

MONTH 1

- ☐ 1. Ephesians 1:1-2
- ☐ 2. Ephesians 1:3
- ☐ 3. Ephesians 1:4
- ☐ 4. Ephesians 1:5-6
- ☐ 5. Ephesians 1:7-8
- ☐ 6. Ephesians 1:9-10
- ☐ 7. Ephesians 1:11-12
- ☐ 8. Ephesians 1:13
- ☐ 9. Ephesians 1:14
- ☐ 10. Ephesians 1:15-16
- ☐ 11. Ephesians 1:17
- ☐ 12. Ephesians 1:18-19
- ☐ 13. Ephesians 1:20-21
- ☐ 14. Ephesians 1:22-23
- ☐ 15. Ephesians 2:1-2
- ☐ 16. Ephesians 2:3
- ☐ 17. Ephesians 2:4-5
- ☐ 18. Ephesians 2:6-7
- ☐ 19. Ephesians 2:8-9
- ☐ 20. Ephesians 2:10
- ☐ 21. Ephesians 2:11
- ☐ 22. Ephesians 2:12
- ☐ 23. Ephesians 2:13
- ☐ 24. Ephesians 2:14-15
- ☐ 25. Ephesians 2:16
- ☐ 26. Ephesians 2:17
- ☐ 27. Ephesians 2:18
- ☐ 28. Ephesians 2:19-20
- ☐ 29. Ephesians 2:21
- ☐ 30. Ephesians 2:22

MONTH 2

- ☐ 1. Ephesians 3:1-2
- ☐ 2. Ephesians 3:3
- ☐ 3. Ephesians 3:4
- ☐ 4. Ephesians 3:5-6
- ☐ 5. Ephesians 3:7
- ☐ 6. Ephesians 3:8-9
- ☐ 7. Ephesians 3:10
- ☐ 8. Ephesians 3:11
- ☐ 9. Ephesians 3:12-13
- ☐ 10. Ephesians 3:14-15
- ☐ 11. Ephesians 3:16
- ☐ 12. Ephesians 3:17-19
- ☐ 13. Ephesians 3:20-21
- ☐ 14. Ephesians 4:1-3
- ☐ 15. Ephesians 4:4-6
- ☐ 16. Ephesians 4:7-10
- ☐ 17. Ephesians 4:11-13
- ☐ 18. Ephesians 4:14
- ☐ 19. Ephesians 4:15
- ☐ 20. Ephesians 4:16
- ☐ 21. Ephesians 4:17
- ☐ 22. Ephesians 4:18
- ☐ 23. Ephesians 4:19
- ☐ 24. Ephesians 4:20-24
- ☐ 25. Ephesians 4:25
- ☐ 26. Ephesians 4:26-27
- ☐ 27. Ephesians 4:28
- ☐ 28. Ephesians 4:29
- ☐ 29. Ephesians 4:30
- ☐ 30. Ephesians 4:31
- ☐ 31. Ephesians 4:32

MONTH 3

- ☐ 1. Ephesians 5:1-2
- ☐ 2. Ephesians 5:3
- ☐ 3. Ephesians 5:4-5
- ☐ 4. Ephesians 5:6-7
- ☐ 5. Ephesians 5:8-10
- ☐ 6. Ephesians 5:11-12
- ☐ 7. Ephesians 5:13-14
- ☐ 8. Ephesians 5:15-16
- ☐ 9. Ephesians 5:17-18
- ☐ 10. Ephesians 5:19-21
- ☐ 11. Ephesians 5:22-24
- ☐ 12. Ephesians 5:25-27
- ☐ 13. Ephesians 5:28-30
- ☐ 14. Ephesians 5:31-32
- ☐ 15. Ephesians 5:33
- ☐ 16. Ephesians 6:1-3
- ☐ 17. Ephesians 6:4
- ☐ 18. Ephesians 6:5-6
- ☐ 19. Ephesians 6:7-8
- ☐ 20. Ephesians 6:9
- ☐ 21. Ephesians 6:10-11
- ☐ 22. Ephesians 6:12
- ☐ 23. Ephesians 6:13
- ☐ 24. Ephesians 6:14-15
- ☐ 25. Ephesians 6:16
- ☐ 26. Ephesians 6:17
- ☐ 27. Ephesians 6:18
- ☐ 28. Ephesians 6:19-20
- ☐ 29. Ephesians 6:21-22
- ☐ 30. Ephesians 6:23-24



REJOICE

God chose to give us all the blessings that come with salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

Many Deaf people went to the School for the Deaf in their state. We see many stories of the good things they experienced. They got education, but they also got ASL, friends for a lifetime, and Deaf culture. In some ways we had an experience like this in Christ. We got salvation, but we also received all the blessings that come with salvation.

Paul wrote the Book of Ephesians to the church in Ephesus. In the opening verses he helped them (and us) see the blessings of salvation. Paul revealed God's secret because it wasn't revealed to the prophets in the Old Testament. We can see in these Scriptures that God had a plan before He created the world. Because of His love, He was ready and knew we would need Jesus to provide us with salvation. We would need the Holy Spirit to guide us. It was His choice and pleasure to make us His children. God gives His grace freely and fully to those who believe in Jesus.

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ, God has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world. **4** That is, in Christ, **he chose us before the world was made** **A** so that we would be his holy people—people without blame before him. **5** Because of his love, God had already decided to **make us his own children through Jesus Christ**. **B** That was what he wanted and what pleased him, **6** and it brings praise to God because of his wonderful grace. God gave that grace to us freely, in Christ, the One he loves. **7 In Christ we are set free by the blood of his death**, **C** and so we have forgiveness of sins. How rich is God's grace, **8** which he has given to us so fully and freely. God, with full wisdom and understanding, **9 let us know his secret purpose**. **D** This was what God wanted, and he planned to do it through Christ. **10** His goal was to carry out his plan, when the right time came, that all things in heaven and on earth would be joined together in Christ as the head. **11** In Christ we were chosen to be God's people, because from the very beginning God had decided this in keeping with his plan. And he is the One who makes everything agree with what he decides and wants. **12** We are the **first people who hoped in Christ**, **E** and we were chosen so that we would bring praise to God's glory. **13** So it is with you. When you heard the true teaching—**the Good News about your salvation** **F**—you believed in Christ. And in Christ, God put his **special mark of ownership** **G** on you by giving you the Holy Spirit that he had promised. **14** That Holy Spirit is the guarantee that we will receive what God promised for his people until God gives full freedom to those who are his—to bring praise to God's glory.

- a. In His foreknowledge, He made a sovereign choice of all who would come in salvation.
- b. God's choice was that we would be children of God. He adopted us through Jesus Christ.
- c. When Paul writes of the blood of His death, he is writing about the death of Jesus on the cross.
- d. His secret was grace to all people through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. This was at the heart of Paul's message that all people, including non-Jews, were part of God's plan for salvation.
- e. The first to hope in Christ were the Jews. But now in God's plan, the Gentiles were included in salvation.
- f. Paul preached the Good News to the Ephesians. He told of God's gift through His Son for those who are willing to accept the gift.
- g. Many English Bibles here use the word "seal." The Holy Spirit in our lives helps us know that all the blessings that come with salvation are ours.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. What are the blessings that come with salvation?
2. God chose us before the world was made. How did He know who would trust Him?
3. Scripture says: "Because of His love..." Why is love important?
4. Do we have to accept Jesus as our Savior? Why or why not?
5. What must we do to get God's grace?
6. How can believers bring praise to God's glory?
7. How does the blood of Jesus' death set us free?
8. What does it mean to have God's special mark or God's seal on our lives?
9. How can believers know they are the children of God?

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare Verses*

Read the verses below. What do the verses tell us about God's plan? How do these verses compare with the verses in today's lesson?

Romans 8:28 _____

Romans 8:29 _____

1 Corinthians 1:21 _____

Hebrews 9:12 _____

2 Thessalonians 2:13 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Before the beginning, God chose us to be His children through Jesus Christ. It is a gift of His grace. We have no reason to brag about working for our salvation.
- Jesus died and rose again. His sacrifice gave us a way to forgiveness and an eternal home in heaven.
- Those who believe in Jesus receive the Holy Spirit in their hearts. The Holy Spirit shows we belong to Him.

Discuss with your group what it means that God chose us to be His children from the very beginning. How can this idea make you love God even more?

What does it mean to you that the sacrifice of Jesus has given you a way to forgiveness and a home in heaven? How can you share God's salvation with your Deaf friends?

What is important about having the Holy Spirit in your life? How does the presence of the Spirit help you to know you are God's child?

MEMORY VERSE

In Christ we are set free by the blood of His death, and so we have forgiveness of sins. How rich is God's grace. – Ephesians 1:7

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 1:3-4, drawing a line under when God chose His people.

Paul often praised God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his letters. Paul showed us by his example that we can and should praise God in our prayers. Why should we do this? It is through Him we receive God's blessings. And here is the greatest blessing: God chose us before He made the world. His plan was for us to become His holy people. Let us learn from Paul to praise our heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ because of His gift to us.

God chose us to be His holy people. Holy means to be separate from the ways of the world. Adam sinned by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam disobeyed God's instruction not to eat the fruit and caused sin to be passed down to us. Sin separated us from the Lord's fellowship. The good news is God already chose us from the beginning to give us the spiritual heavenly blessing. We should not be proud or think we are better than others. We should be grateful and humbled that He planned this salvation before we were born.

How does it make you feel when you see God planned your salvation before the world was made?

In what ways can you show others that you are part of His holy people?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 1:5-6, circling each time God's love shows up.

Because of His love, God decided to make us His own children through Jesus Christ. Before we knew Him, we were sinners and only cared about ourselves. Romans 5:8 tells us God showed His love to us while we were still sinners. As sinners, we were rebellious. We wanted things to be our way. We did not want anyone to tell us what we can or can't do. We thought just like the world thinks. But God did not give up on us. He did not give up because He loved us fully.

Sometimes I wonder why God forgives like He does. I would never give someone another chance if they rebelled against me like we rebel against God. I wonder how God could think we are worth saving. Of course,

the answer is in God's love. He loved us first. Out of His great love, He makes us His own children when we believe in His Son, Jesus. Paul said God wanted to do this. It pleases Him to give His grace to us freely. Do we have to do anything to receive His grace? No. He gives it freely through Jesus Christ, whom we have believed.

Are you willing to show the kind of love God has to others? How can you do this?

How can you explain God's free gift of grace?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 1:7-10, looking for God's plan to save the world.

Paul clearly writes that our sins are forgiven because Jesus died. The sacrifice of His blood was the sacrifice for our sins. In Old Testament times, the priests offered sacrifices of sheep or other animals for the people's sins. They had to do it every year. In Ephesians, Paul explained how Jesus' blood and death are the true way to forgiveness. We don't have to bring sheep to sacrifice every year. We don't need a priest to go before God for us. We don't need the blood of animals to wash away our sin. The Scriptures say God let us know His secret purpose that was not clear to the Old Testament prophets. They did not understand God's plan to give grace to us by trusting Jesus.

The Jews thought they were the only ones to have the one true God in their lives. They thought the Messiah would be their earthly king forever in the land of Israel. But God was doing a new thing in Jesus. God was bringing everything together in Him. Even though this was new, it had always been God's plan.

How did the death of Jesus redeem us from sin? How does His death fulfill God's plan for the world?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 1:11-12, finding the blessings we have in Christ.

Paul said God chose us to be His people because He had decided it from the beginning and it was His plan. From the Old Testament we know God chose the Jewish people to be His holy people. God promised Abraham that He would bring salvation through Abraham's children and all people would be blessed by the Jewish nation. The Jews believed this blessing was only for the Israelites. Paul explained that since God planned it, it is His decision and His plan is for all of us, both Jews and Gentiles.

Not only are the Jews included in God's blessings, but in God's plan the Ephesians and all the peoples of the world can have forgiveness of sin. In addition to the blessing of forgiveness, God gives us spiritual understanding and an eternal inheritance in Christ. He planned this from the beginning and is still working His plan today. When we trust Christ, we live into His plan and give Him glory. We are right, then, when we thank Him for providing forgiveness and an eternal home in heaven.

How do you praise God every day? What actions do you do that bring Him glory?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God's Plan of Salvation*

God made His own plan to save people from sin. That plan is based on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. People are saved when they believe in Jesus. Jesus saves us by the power of His blood offered as a sacrifice for our sin. At salvation we receive the Holy Spirit who works within us to teach and guide us. The Spirit seals us, marking us as God's children. There is no salvation without a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 1:13-14, underlining what the Holy Spirit does in our lives.

Can you remember the moment you knew God was working in your heart and mind? God, through His Son by the Holy Spirit spoke to you and your eyes were opened. All believers had a time when they saw the truth for the first time. We wanted the joy and the love that comes from our heavenly Father. We knew something happened in our souls when we said, “Yes, I am a sinner. I believe in Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to the world so I may have forgiveness. I want a relationship with the Lord.”

The moment we believed, Christ sent the Holy Spirit to be our helper and guide. It is the Spirit who gives us spiritual understanding. Before we accepted Christ, we belonged to the world and did not understand why God sent His son Jesus to die for us. With the Holy Spirit, we learn how to live. The Holy Spirit is our guarantee that we will receive what God has promised us because we belong to Him. The Holy Spirit is the seal on us showing we belong to God for all eternity.

How does the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life help you know you are a child of God?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 1:3-14. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Discuss with your group what it means that God chose from the beginning for you to be His child. How does this fact lead you to love and trust Him even more?

What are the many blessings you have because you are a believer? How can you show thanks for His many blessings?

How do you see the Holy Spirit working in your life? How can you depend on the Holy Spirit this week to lead your daily life?



REMEMBERED

God helps believers understand the riches and greatness of His calling on their lives.

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

How should we pray for each other? There are many prayers that would be good. We often pray for people who are sick or people who have problems. Sometimes we pray for people who are lost. How often do we pray like Paul prayed in today's verses? It is good to pray for those who are sick, but it is also good to pray with the depth of meaning that Paul had in 1:15-23. Did you see how Paul prayed for the believers? First, he wanted them to know God better by having His wisdom. Then Paul prayed that they would know the hope that God has promised His holy people. Finally, he prayed they would know God's blessings and power.

We can learn from Paul to always pray for those in our church and for believers around the world. We can pray for them to recognize that if God has power to raise Christ from the dead, then He has all power. We can be thankful we are His holy people, for we will also be raised up with Christ.

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

15 That is why since **I heard about your faith** **A** in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, **16** I have not stopped giving thanks to God for you. **I always remember you in my prayers,** **B** **17** asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you will know him better. **18** I pray also that you will have greater understanding in your heart so you will **know the hope to which he has called us** **C** and that you will know how rich and glorious are the blessings God has promised his holy people. **19** And you will know that God's power is very great for us who believe. **That power is the same as the great strength** **D** **20** God used to raise Christ from the dead and put him at his right side in the heavenly world. **21 God has put Christ over all rulers, authorities, powers, and kings,** **E** not only in this world but also in the next. **22** God put everything under his power and made him the head over everything for the church, **23** which is Christ's body. The church is filled with Christ, and Christ fills everything in every way.

- a. Paul spent about three years in Ephesus, but he wrote the letter to them years later. Most Bible teachers recognize that the letter to the Ephesians was likely written as a letter to be circulated around to many churches including the church in Ephesus. That may be why Paul wrote, "I heard about your faith."
- b. Paul prayed for the Christians in Ephesus. He wanted them to grow in relationship with God.
- c. Paul prayed Christians will understand the gifts God has for us. One gift is hope. Christian hope is a confidence in God that He will make everything right. Ours is not a wishing hope but a confident hope.
- d. Paul prayed for Christians to recognize the power God has. He used four different Greek words about strength, might, and power trying his best to help us understand God's great power.
- e. God raised Jesus over everyone and everything. The words "rulers, authorities, powers, and kings" can mean earthly rulers but also all the powers of the universe. Christ is above all that is.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Is prayer important? Why or why not?
2. How does Paul's prayer lead us to know how great the Christian life should be?
3. Why did Paul pray for wisdom and revelation?
4. Name a few things God has promised His holy people.
5. Who will receive hope and blessing or the spirit of wisdom from God? Can anyone get these blessings? Why do you think this way?
6. We say we believe God is all powerful. How can you explain God's power to a non-believer?
7. Why is it important for Jesus to be at God's right side?
8. Who will God put in charge of everything on earth and heaven? How do you know?
9. Describe the body of Christ. (See 1 Corinthians 12:12-27.)

BIBLE SKILL: *Prayers in the Bible*

Read the verses below. Write the name of the person who prayed and why they prayed.

Exodus 33:12-14 _____

Judges 16:28 _____

1 Samuel 2:1-3 _____

Matthew 6:9-13 _____

John 17:1-12 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers should pray for themselves and other people. We should pray for them to grow in relationship with God.
- Believers can grow more in hope and in Christ's power as they more fully understand their calling in Christ.
- Believers can know God's great power for it is the power that raised Christ from the dead and saved us from sin.

Discuss as a group about how we can pray for ourselves and for other people to grow in their relationship with God. Especially discuss when you have prayed for people this way.

What is Christ's calling on our lives? Why is it important to know God's power as we come to understand more about Christ's calling? What can you do to more obediently live out God's calling?

Why is the resurrection of Christ such a good picture of God's power? How does the resurrection of Jesus give you confidence to live? In what areas in your life do you need to trust God's power more? How?

MEMORY VERSE

I pray also that you will have greater understanding in your heart so you will know the hope to which he has called us and that you will know how rich and glorious are the blessings God has promised his holy people. – Ephesians 1:18

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 1:15-17, finding how to have a deeper relationship with God.

Who told Paul about the Christians in Ephesus? He had a friend, Epaphras, who was a faithful servant. Paul wrote about him in Colossians 1:4-8. It is possible Epaphras told Paul about the faith of the Ephesians. Paul let them know he had heard about them and was glad for them. Paul also wanted the Ephesians to know he always prayed for them to have a spirit of wisdom and a better understanding of who God is. The only way we can have a deeper relationship with God is to talk to Him and spend time learning from Him through His Word. We must want to know Him better. It is the same with family, spouses, or friends. When we spend more time with the ones we love, we get a deeper understanding of who they are, what they like, and what they don't like. Spend some time talking with God today. Thank Him for the good things in your life. Thank God for your church, your family, and your friends. But also, following Paul's example, pray that you and others will know Him better.

How can you make prayer more important in your life? How can serious prayer take you deeper into a relationship with the God of our Lord Jesus Christ?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 1:18, seeking to understand God's blessings.

In the second part of Paul's prayer, he asked for believers to have an even greater understanding of the hope we have in Christ. Our hope is not like crossing our fingers and saying, "I hope this is true." Our hope in Christ is knowing for sure that He saved us and has a plan for us.

Many believers accept Christ and are happy to know about heaven. They understand they should be good people. They stop there. They don't realize there is much more to know about God and our Lord Jesus Christ. There is more than knowing right from wrong. Our Lord has plans for us for good things. In verse 18, you can see Paul asks that believers will have understanding in our hearts about the blessings God has planned for us. These blessings are rich and glorious. God has promised to give

these blessings to His holy people. However, if we do not study His Word, we will miss out on so much because it is through His Word that we come to know Him. In our lives now, we receive His goodness. We will see even more when we see Him face to face.

What do you picture in your mind when you think about the “rich and glorious” blessings God has promised? What must you do to experience these blessings?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 1:19-20, looking for the greatest example of God’s power.

Paul told us about the great power God has. We know the stories from Exodus. Remember how God punished and defeated the Egyptians, just as He promised the Israelites? God provided for the Israelites in the desert. Water flowed from a rock. God gave manna every morning. He brought the Israelites home to their promised land, like He said would happen. We also read in the four Gospels about the miracles Jesus did. He calmed the sea when the disciples thought they were going to drown. Jesus fed five thousand men, plus women and children with only two fish and five loaves of bread. He healed the sick.

But here, Paul reminded the believers of the power of God that raised Christ from the dead and put Him on the right side of God. The resurrection is the greatest example of God’s power. God took what was dead and made Him live again. God took what was dishonored on the cross and exalted Him to right side of God. What can God do in our lives with this kind of life-giving power? He can take us—the spiritually dead—and by salvation give us life and later a heavenly home. Wow! We worship a powerful God.

What do you think God’s resurrection power can do in your life?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 1:21, putting a line under all the powers over which Jesus rules.

We have heard that Jesus is King and Lord over all; this statement is true. He now sits on a throne, and He rules over everything. Paul used four words to show the fullness of the rule of Christ. The NCV lists these as rulers, authorities, powers, and kings. There is no power that is left out. His control is above all. His rule is now in the world and His rule is eternal even after this world is gone.

It seems we start getting a picture of God's plan. Jesus is the One who was with God in the beginning (John 1:1). He was involved in creation. He became human (John 1:14). By His death and resurrection, He overcame all that might oppose God, and He has set creation right again. Now, no one can beat Jesus—especially not the devil who tried to defeat God's plan. Jesus is now above all other authorities that might be in the world. By His great power—the power shown in His resurrection—He rules over all making things right again. This is the end God has planned.

**How does it encourage you to know that Jesus rules over everything?
How can you encourage other believers to know God put Jesus in charge?**

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Son*

Jesus is the eternal Son of God. Jesus became a human, born of the virgin Mary. He became like us in every way except He never sinned. Jesus died on the cross for our sin, and God raised Him from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right side of God, reconciling people to the Father. He is the head of the church, and in God's time He will return to judge the world.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 1:22-23, thinking about what it means that Jesus is the head of the church.

We see for the first time in this letter that Paul used the word “church.” The church is not a building or a place we go to hear God’s words preached. God established the church with Jesus as the leader of all who are His. The church is the people who love the Lord and submit themselves to the authority of Jesus. The church is Christ’s body. We, the people, are His holy people. Jesus is the head of the body. When we believed in Jesus, we were filled with the Holy Spirit. He shows each believer where they will work and what they should do. When we join Christ, He teaches us what we need to know about His way of life. When we listen and seek His will, He fills us with His love and understanding. The body of Christ has many parts, but they are one people under Him.

What is your part in the body of Christ? How do you experience the fullness of Christ giving you power in the life of His church?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 1:15-23. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

What can you and your group do to know Christ better? How can prayer help?

How can you see God’s power in your life? Where in your life do you need to see more of God’s power?

How do you and your small group experience resurrection power? What can you do to encourage your Christian friends to live confidently because of the resurrection of Jesus?



RESURRECTED

*God provides salvation by grace through faith.
We cannot earn our salvation.*

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

Do you want a different life? It seems that many people in the world do. There are thousands of books for sale that will try to tell you how. In our lesson, Paul tells us more in 10 verses about life change than any writer in the world today. The life change Paul writes about is eternal life change.

Paul started from the beginning and explained how we lived before meeting Christ. Spiritually, we had nothing inside of us. We thought, we lived, and we got any enjoyment we wanted from the world. We did not know much about God's anger or His mercy and forgiveness. In the world, people did what they wanted and hoped no one saw them doing evil things. But God Himself still loved us and wanted to change our lives. Paul said God wanted to save us through His Son, Jesus. That is where real life change happens. In Christ Jesus, we can have a new life with the Spirit of God living in us. God, through the gift of salvation, can change our lives completely.

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

1 In the past you were spiritually dead ^A

because of your sins and the things you did against God. **2** Yes, in the past you **lived the way the world lives**, ^B following the **ruler of the evil powers** ^C that are above the earth.

That same spirit is now working in those who refuse to obey God. **3** In the past all of us lived like them, trying to please our sinful selves and doing all the things our bodies and minds wanted. We should have suffered God's anger because we were sinful by nature. We were the same as all other people. **4 But God's mercy is great**, ^D and he loved us very much. **5** Though we were spiritually dead because of the things we did against God, **he gave us new life with Christ**.

^E You have been saved by God's grace. **6** And he raised us up with Christ and **gave us a seat with him** ^F in the heavens. He did this for those in Christ Jesus **7** so that for all future time he could show the very great riches of his grace by being kind to us in Christ Jesus. **8** I mean that you have been **saved by grace through believing**. ^G You did not save yourselves; it was a gift from God. **9** It was not the result of your own efforts, **so you cannot brag about it**. ^H **10** God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us to do good works, which God planned in advance for us to live our lives doing.

- a. Before we believed in Jesus, we were empty—dead on the inside. We were separated from God. Separation from God is spiritual death.
- b. Worldly people believe they can do whatever they want without thinking about God.
- c. Satan is the ruler of evil. He wants to keep us from God.
- d. Mercy means to give love and forgiveness. God forgives us because He loves us.
- e. When we receive Christ as our Savior, one of the gifts that comes with salvation is a new life. He gives us a new life—a new spiritual life that makes all of life different.
- f. Our place in heaven will be ours, but it is so certain Paul put it in the past tense—“gave.”
- g. We can't work for and earn salvation. It was God who gave us grace. Our first step is to receive God's gift through Jesus Christ's death on the cross.
- h. If we do a good thing, we can brag about it. But salvation was not what we did. It was what God did for us. There is no place for bragging—only for thanking.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Some people believe everyone will go to heaven. Do you agree? Why or why not?
2. How can you explain the difference between salvation by works and salvation by grace?
3. As a group, discuss what Paul meant by being spiritually dead.
4. What does it mean to live the same as the world? Who do the people of the world belong to?
5. What kind of spirit does the world have when they refuse to obey God?
6. What is mercy? To whom does God show mercy?
7. Why is God just when He punishes people who do not believe in Jesus?
8. How would you explain verses 8 and 9?
9. According to verse 10, what has God made us for? If we live for His purposes, how will we live every day?

BIBLE SKILL: *Comparing Scriptures*

Read the verses listed below. Find the word (or words) that matches the same ideas Paul explained in chapter 2 in Ephesians.

Romans 2:8 _____

Romans 3:10 _____

Romans 6:4 _____

1 Thessalonians 5:5 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- People who do not know Christ are separated from God. They will experience judgment from God.
- When a person trusts Jesus Christ as Savior, that person begins a new life with a new purpose.
- God gives us salvation only when we have faith in Jesus so we cannot brag about what we have done.

Discuss with your group what it is like to be spiritually dead and why those who are separated from God by sin will face judgment from God. How can your group show more urgency in sharing Jesus?

How does your new life in Christ compare to your old life in sin? What now is your purpose for living? Thank God for giving you a new life.

How can you explain God's free offer of grace and salvation? Who do you know that does not know Jesus? How can you share about God's salvation with them?

MEMORY VERSE

I mean that you have been saved by grace through believing. You did not save yourselves; it was a gift from God. It was not the result of your own efforts, so you cannot brag about it. – Ephesians 2:8-9

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 2:1-3, looking for what life apart from God is like.

What is life apart from Christ like? Paul describes the separated life in clear detail. It begins by being born in sin with no fellowship with God. As sinners, we do what we want to do and God has no importance in our lives. Because we ignore God, we hurt Him and we hurt the people around us. Living without God, we become followers of evil; Satan, the deceiver, is our master. Because the devil is our master, we do the same kinds of things as our master.

There is only one end for those who live like this. That end is eternal separation from God. God will judge all those who live like Satan and refuse to obey Him. In some ways, judgment has already come on these people, but certainly in the end that judgment will be final. In the end, every soul will spend eternity somewhere, either heaven or hell. No wonder it is important that we look for every opportunity to share Christ with those who are lost. Only with Christ can anyone ever make the right choice.

What was your life like before you became a Christian? How did you feel when you were separated from God?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 2:4-5, underlining the meaning of grace.

We have seen what it means to be spiritually dead. Nevertheless, those who are spiritually dead (who are separated from God) are still trying to find something to live for even if what they find destroys their bodies. They are caught in a trap, lost in heart and mind. But God knows all this and even as sinners He loves us very much. (See Romans 5:8.) In His great love, He has mercy on us. And in His mercy, He saves us by grace!

These two verses mention three important things: God's mercy, His love, and His grace. Mercy is His kindness that offers forgiveness, something we do not deserve. Love is His good action toward us that

draws us to Himself. Grace is a gift that is not earned. It is a gift freely given. This is what salvation is for us. It is God's gift, unearned, freely given, greatly needed.

What do God's mercy, love, and grace mean to you?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 2:6-7, drawing a circle around how we are sure of heaven.

God did not give up on us. Isn't that wonderful? He offered us His Son, Jesus Christ, so that we may receive a new life. We can read about this in the four Gospels. The Gospels tell us what God did for us and how Jesus paid the price for us on the cross. Just like Jesus rose from the dead, He will also raise us up after our death. Also, because we belong to Jesus, He will prepare a place for us in heaven. Paul makes it clear that God did this for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Paul wrote about resurrection in an odd way in verse 6. We know God raised Jesus. We have also learned that He will raise us. The odd sentence is "gave us a seat with him..." Why did Paul write "gave" as if this is something that already happened? It seems that Paul meant our position in heaven is so sure that Paul could write it in the past tense. In Christ, our heavenly position is guaranteed.

How do you know that God will give you life after death? What will that life be like?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 2:8, thinking about all that we don't do to earn salvation.

In verse 5, Paul first wrote that we are saved by grace. Now in verse 8 Paul comes back to the same idea but explains more of what he means. Grace means that God's salvation is a free gift which He prepared for us even before we were born. It is the richest and kindest blessing He has for humans.

However, no gift is actually yours until you receive it. So it is with salvation. The gift is ours when, by faith, we receive His gift. We don't have to walk to a special mountain every year or do some great work like some religions require of their members. We do not need to confess to a priest for forgiveness of our sins. We do not have to bring sheep to sacrifice every year to have our sins forgiven. We do not have to ring bells to get God's attention. We do not need to pay cash for salvation. We do not work to save ourselves; salvation is a gift. We only need to believe.

Why do you think God gives salvation as a gift and does not require us to earn it?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Saved through Faith*

God's Word teaches that sin separates us from Him. God provided a way for us to be saved and have a relationship with Him. It is through Jesus' death on the cross and the power of His blood. When we believe in Him through faith, God saves us.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 2:9-10, finding what happens after salvation.

We cannot work to be saved, so we can't say we were successful (pah) by ourselves. God gave us His grace without any expectation of us paying it back. There is no way we could. Matthew 18:23-35 tells the story of a servant who owed the king a lot of money. After the servant begged the king to give him more time, the king instead decided to forgive his debt and let him go. There is more to the story, but the point is our sin was too much. We could not do anything to earn forgiveness, just like the servant. But it was God's plan to forgive us of our sin debt through Jesus' death on the cross.

God's free gift changes our lives. We cannot continue to live like we did before Jesus saved us. Now, in Christ, we begin to do the good things of God. Verse 10 says that God made us "to do good works." It is His expectation that our lives will be so different that others will know that we have passed from spiritual death to abundant life (John 10:10). After believing in Christ, we will live the rest of our lives showing our thankfulness by doing good works. This is God's plan for us.

How do your actions show you follow Christ? Would people who watch you know you are a Christian? How?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 2:1-10. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

What was your life like before you trusted in Jesus? If you had never trusted Jesus, where would you have spent eternity?

Now that you have faith in Christ, what is your life like? What purpose do you have for living?

How would you explain to your Deaf friends what you believe about salvation by faith alone? Why do Christians do good works? What is the connection between faith and good works?



RECONCILED

God reconciles us to Himself in Christ. God also removes the things that separate Christians from one another.

EPHESIANS 2:11-22

God chose Abraham out of the whole world to make him the father of His people. God said He would make a great nation for His glory through Abram's descendants. His descendants were the Jews. God gave everything to the Jewish nation. He gave the commandments, and the prophets, and showed them how to worship and honor God. God even planned for the Messiah to come from the Jews. So the Jews believed they were the only chosen people and all others (Gentiles) were not part of God's plan.

However, God's plan included all the people of the world. Our lesson today helps us see that through the death of Jesus on the cross, the door is open for anyone to receive His offer of salvation and to be part of the family of God. God reconciles to Himself all who trust in Jesus. And all those who come to Christ are joined together as one Christian family. All that separated us from each other in the past is gone away. Christ gives us true peace and draws us all into one godly kingdom.

EPHESIANS 2:11-22

11 You were **not born Jewish**. **A** You are the people the Jews call “uncircumcised.” Those who call you “uncircumcised” call themselves “circumcised.” (Their **circumcision** **B** is only something they themselves do on their bodies.) **12 Remember that in the past you were without Christ**. **C** You were not citizens of Israel, and you had no part in the agreements with the promise that God made to his people. You had no hope, and you did not know God. **13** But now in Christ Jesus, you who were **far away from God are brought near through the blood of Christ’s death**. **D** **14** Christ himself is our peace. He made both Jewish people and those who are not Jews one people. They were separated as if there were a wall between them, but Christ broke down that wall of hate by giving his own body. **15** The Jewish law had many commands and rules, but Christ ended that law. **His purpose was to make the two groups of people become one new people in him** **E** and in this way make peace. **16** It was also Christ’s purpose to end the hatred between the two groups, to make them into one body, and to bring them back to God. Christ did all this with his death on the cross. **17** Christ came and preached peace to you who were far away from God, and to those who were near to God. **18 Yes, it is through Christ we all have the right to come to the Father in one Spirit**. **F** **19** Now you who are not Jewish are not foreigners or strangers any longer, but are **citizens together with God’s holy people**. **G** You belong to God’s family. **20** You are **like a building** **H** that was built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself is the most important stone in that building, **21** and that whole building is joined together in Christ. He makes it grow and become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in Christ you, too, are being built together with the Jews into a place where God lives through the Spirit.

- a. The Ephesians who received this letter were not Jews. Jews called those who were not Jews, “Gentiles.”
- b. Circumcision was the sign God gave the Jewish people to show they had a covenant relationship with God.
- c. Paul’s point is God made an agreement first with the Jews, not the Gentiles. The Gentiles were lost and separated from God.
- d. Jesus’ death on the cross changed the agreement to include all who believe.
- e. Jews did not believe God cared for Gentiles. But God always did. Through Christ, God’s plan was to make one new people from Jews and Gentiles.
- f. God’s Spirit joins believers together. The Holy Spirit of God lives equally in all believers, thus making all believers one in Christ.
- g. Gentiles, before Christ, were not included with the Jews (God’s holy people) but now they too are true citizens of God’s kingdom.
- h. Paul also used the picture of a building to explain the new people of God. We are like a building built on Christ. Jews and Gentiles are all equally part of this new building.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. What divides people? What makes these divisions unfair?
2. What does it mean to be reconciled to God through Christ? How does this reconciliation join all believers together?
3. Why did circumcision become so important to the Jews?
4. What did God do to allow everybody a choice to be His holy people?
5. What blessings did we receive after Jesus died on the cross?
6. How do we show the world we belong to a family when we become citizens with God's holy people?
7. When building on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, who is the most important stone? Why?
8. What will that "building" become when the Lord makes it grow?
9. Believers have God's Spirit living in them. Why is this important? What does it mean to our lives?

BIBLE SKILL: *Matching*

Read the verses below. Match the verse with the actions God did through Christ.

Colossians 2:11	our old life died on the cross
Galatians 6:15	God has made a new people
Romans 6:6	we are God's temple
1 Corinthians 12:13	believers will be one
1 Corinthians 3:16-17	made free from the power of your sinful self
John 17:23	we share in the one Spirit

IN MY CONTEXT

- God offers salvation to all people. All believers are one in Christ. Therefore, we must work to break down the walls of prejudice between people.
- We have peace with God and with other people because of our faith in Christ.
- All believers are included in God's family and have a place in the kingdom of God.

Discuss as a group how believers can work to build good relationships between Christian groups and break down the prejudices that divide us. How can your group do this?

How does faith in Christ help us have peace with God and with other believers? How are you showing God's peace to others?

Jesus wants us to treat other Christians like family. What changes must happen in your church for everyone to feel like family and to have their place in God's kingdom?

MEMORY VERSE

Christ himself is our peace. He made both Jewish people and those who are not Jews one people. They were separated as if there were a wall between them, but Christ broke down that wall of hate by giving his own body. – Ephesians 2:14

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 2:11-12, searching for what separates Jews and Gentiles.

In this letter, Paul helped us understand some history of the Jewish people and why the Jews and Gentiles were separated. God chose Abraham and told him he would have a son with Sarah. God also made an agreement with Abraham that His people would come through his son with Sarah. God planned to make a great nation of priests and a holy people who would worship the Lord. When Abraham agreed, circumcision was the sign God gave Abraham showing he had accepted the Lord's covenant. From that time on, all the Jewish males were circumcised. The Gentiles were not born Jewish, so they were not circumcised. They were not part of the agreement God had with Abraham and were not in the covenant family.

Circumcision became a big barrier between Jews and non-Jews. Since circumcision was the sign that someone was part of God's covenant relationship with people, anyone not having circumcision was treated as an outsider. Gentiles were separated from the Jews and therefore separated from God and His promise of salvation. In that separation, Gentiles had no hope. They had no hope to know God and no hope for heaven. Anyone who does not have a relationship with God has no hope.

Where do you find hope? How can you help others who have no hope?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 2:13, looking for what all people can now have in Christ.

Verse 13 starts with a wonderful word—"but"! That word "but" usually means that what happened before has changed. In this verse, it shows the situation for the Gentiles changed in a big way. At one time they were not part of the agreement God made with Abraham. But with Christ everything changed. There was a barrier that kept Gentiles from getting to know God. Now, because of Jesus Christ, all people can receive God's

offer of salvation. It was Jesus' death that opened the door for anyone to know God. Also, because of Jesus, all believers are united in Christ.

The Jews and Gentiles in Bible times were very different from each other. Paul wrote that in Christ even Jews and Gentiles had unity in Him. At times, though, it was difficult for them to show their unity. Think about how difficult it is for us to show unity with believers who are from a different background or culture. We must remember, Christ made the way for all people to know Him and for all to be one in Him.

In what ways can you encourage unity with all believers in your church?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 2:14–15, drawing a line under who broke down the walls that separate believers.

The Old Testament law showed the Israelites right and wrong and how to live a godly life, but it did not save anyone. We can easily find stories in the Old Testament about priests and leaders who followed the law but did not have compassion or mercy. The temple leaders stressed the law and the temple, but they made it hard for anyone to understand God's love and forgiveness. It is strange, but for the Jews, following the law made walls between people. Christ's sacrifice with His innocent blood paid for our forgiveness and ended the separation.

Do you ever feel like there is a wall of hate between you and other believers? Maybe there is a wall between hearing Christians and Deaf Christians. It is important to understand Christ breaks the walls and joins believers together. Paul explained how before Christ there was a wall of hate between the Jews and Gentiles. Christ broke down that wall and breaks down walls today. There are many kinds of believers, but we are all one under God. We have true peace with God and with each other.

If you feel there is a wall between you and another believer, what can you do to make peace with that person? Ask God for an opportunity to find peace in Christ.

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 2:16-18, marking with a colored marker who can have true peace.

Isaiah prophesied a time when God would give real peace “to those far and near” (Isa. 57:19). This happened when Christ came. The ones far away were the Gentiles. The ones near were the Jews. This was Paul’s way of explaining that Gentiles did not know God like the Jews did. The Jews knew about God and His ways for a lot longer than the Gentiles did. Jesus changed that by giving us all the same Spirit. That allowed all of us to come to the Father in the same way. With the Holy Spirit that Jesus sent from heaven, we become one with God’s people.

All believers can have true peace through faith in Christ. They can have that peace with God and with other believers. His peace is different from the peace the world tries to give. (See John 14:27.) We will have trouble on earth, but with Jesus’ peace, we do not need to be worried about everything in the world. We know God is in control, and one day Jesus will finally destroy sin and death.

What does it mean to you to have peace with God and others?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Cooperation*

Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another to do missions, education, and acts of kindness ministries so Christ’s kingdom can grow. Christian unity in the New Testament is a spiritual harmony and a voluntary cooperation between different groups of Christ’s people. It is good to cooperate with other Christian groups when that cooperation does not make us compromise our loyalty to Christ and His Word. This kind of cooperation shows our unity in Christ.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 2:19-22, thinking about the family of God as a living temple.

Paul used the word picture of a building to help us understand our united Christian family. A building needs a foundation, walls, doors, windows and a roof. With everything in place, someone can live in it. In Luke 6:47-49, Jesus told about building a house on sand. The builder did not lay down the right foundation. When it rained and the wind blew against it, that house fell down. In our lives, we need a good base to stand on. That base (cornerstone) is Jesus—God's living Word.

Paul said God's family is like a building with a foundation of the apostles and prophets. They share God's Word, and it never moves and does not change. It is the right foundation for our lives. Jesus is the cornerstone and all who build on Him will never be disappointed (1 Peter 2:6). We are joined together in Christ, and He makes us grow into a holy temple. Now all believers, Gentiles and Jews, Deaf and hearing, are joined together, built together making a place where God's Spirit lives.

What is your place in the kingdom of God? How can you make other believers feel like they are included in God's family too?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 2:11-22. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

What can you and your group do to end prejudice against others? What can you do this week to show the unity believers have in Christ Jesus?

Practice explaining how Jesus gives true peace to each believer. Make a list of friends who need to know about His peace and pray for opportunities to share with them.

Discuss with your group the place each member has in the kingdom of God. How can you help others feel they are a part of the living temple of God?



REVEALED

God's plan for the church was a secret in the past. Now God wants us to tell everyone about His plan.

EPHESIANS 3:1-13

There are a lot of television shows about renovating houses. We watch in anticipation of the big reveal at the end of the show. It's always amazing to see the new house revealed.

In some ways, our lesson today is like that. For thousands of years Jews and Gentiles were separate. The Jews were the people God was using to bring His plan of salvation to the people of the world. But His plan was sort of like a secret. Suddenly Jesus came into the world, lived, taught, did mighty works, died, and rose again. Through several ways, God made it clear that His secret plan had always been to include the Gentiles in His salvation plan. In today's verses, Paul shared God's secret. He made the big reveal. God was making one family of faith out of all the peoples of the world.

EPHESIANS 3:1-13

1 So I, Paul, am **a prisoner of Christ Jesus** **A** for you who are not Jews. **2** Surely you have heard that **God gave me this work to tell you about his grace.** **B** **3** He let me know **his secret** **C** by showing it to me. I have already written a little about this. **4** If you read what I wrote then, you can see that I truly understand the secret about the Christ. **5** People who lived in other times were not told that secret. But now, through the Spirit, God has shown that secret to His holy apostles and prophets. **6 This is that secret:** **D** that through the Good News those who are not Jews will share with the Jews in God's blessing. They belong to the same body, and they share together in the promise that God made in Christ Jesus. **7** By God's special gift of grace given to me through his power, **I became a servant** **E** to tell that Good News. **8 I am the least important of all God's people,** **F** but God gave me this gift—to tell those who are not Jews the Good News about the riches of Christ, which are too great to understand fully. **9** And God gave me the work of telling all people about the plan for his secret, which has been hidden in him since the beginning of time. He is the One who created everything. **10** His purpose was that through the church all the rulers and powers in the heavenly world will now know God's wisdom, which has so many forms. **11** This agrees with the purpose God had **since the beginning of time,** **G** and he carried out his plan through Christ Jesus our Lord. **12** In Christ we can come before God with freedom and without fear. We can do this through faith in Christ. **13** So I ask you not to become discouraged because of the sufferings I am having for you. My sufferings are for your glory.

- a. Paul was arrested. (See Acts 21.) Because Paul shared the gospel, the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem were determined to stop him. Paul was likely in prison in Rome when he wrote this letter.
- b. From the moment of his salvation God called Paul to be a missionary to the Gentiles. See Galatians 1:12 and Acts 9:15-16.
- c. Most English Bibles use the word "mystery" instead of the word secret.
- d. Paul uses the word "secret" or "mystery" because for about 2000 years it was not clear that God's plan for salvation included the Gentiles. Now because of Christ it is clear the gospel is for all people.
- e. Paul humbly served the Gentiles, much like Moses served the Jews after leaving Egypt.
- f. Paul called himself the worst of "all sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). It seems Paul could never forget that he had persecuted the church of God. (See Acts 9.)
- g. Even though the secret was revealed through Paul's preaching and writing, what Paul announced had always been God's plan. (See Ephesians 1:9-10.)

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. When you solve a mystery, who do you tell?
2. Since the beginning of the world, what has God's plan of salvation been?
3. Why did Paul say he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus?
4. How did Paul learn this "secret"?
5. What is the secret?
6. Why didn't people in the past (Old Testament times) know about the secret?
7. What did God give Paul so he could become a servant to tell the good news?
8. What kind of a relationship will Gentiles have with the Jews?
9. How are believers able to come before God with freedom and without fear?
10. Why was Paul suffering? How did he encourage the Ephesians?

BIBLE SKILL: *Geography Study*

Read the verses listed below. What do you learn about Paul's mission trips? Write the names of the cities he visited. Look at a Bible map to find the places.

Acts 13:5 _____

Acts 14:1 _____

Acts 16:1 _____

Acts 17:1 _____

Acts 18:1 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- God offers His salvation to all people. Each believer has a place in His church.
- Believers have experienced God's grace and blessings. Now they can tell other people what they have received in Christ.
- Believers have a special purpose in life—sharing the gospel with others.

In what ways does your church show that both hearing and Deaf people have a place in the life of the church and the work of God's kingdom? How can you do this better?

Discuss as a group what your Deaf group can do to reach out and share the good news and the grace of God with the people who live around you.

What is the purpose of your life? How does sharing the gospel with other people fit into your reason for living?

MEMORY VERSE

This is that secret: that through the Good News those who are not Jews will share with the Jews in God's blessing. They belong to the same body, and they share together in the promise that God made in Christ Jesus. – Ephesians 3:6

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 3:1-3, underlining Paul's mission.

Paul said he was a prisoner. He was a prisoner because he shared the good news. It is possible that at this time he was in Rome. Acts 28:16 explains that Paul was able to live alone and had a soldier who guarded him. He was not in a prison but in a house for two years (see Acts 28:30). He met with believers and explained to them that salvation was for all. The Jews argued with him about this. We read in Acts and other Scriptures about how God chose Paul to preach to the Gentiles.

Paul knew he must share Christ Jesus with the non-Jews, even though the Jews did not want anything to do with Gentiles. Paul's mission was to tell everyone about God's grace through Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Paul tried to share with his people, the Jews, but not many accepted his message. Now God gave Paul the job of telling people who were not Jews about Jesus. He wanted them to know it was God's plan to open the door to all people to receive grace from God.

Why do you think Paul was able to share Christ with people even when he was in prison? Do you think you could do this? Why or why not?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 3:4-6, looking for why Paul used the word "secret."

Paul reminded the church about the things he wrote before. He expressed a clear understanding about all Jesus Christ did for the world. The Jews knew about a Messiah who would come and save His people, but the Israelites thought they would have an earthly kingdom where the Jews ruled the world. In this kingdom, they would have peace and the Christ would be their King. The Jews could not understand or did not want to understand that the Messiah must suffer and die for all the world.

To the Gentiles, it must have looked like God belonged to the Jews and they belonged to Him. It must have looked like God did not care for people who were non-Jews. However, the great secret which Paul had to share was how God planned to include all the nations in His offer of saving grace. Paul called this a secret (or a mystery)

because before Jesus lived, no one knew. This was God's eternal plan, but only after the life of Jesus did God reveal it openly. Both Jews and Gentiles are now included in this new community. All believers have a place in Christ's body, the church.

What is your place in the church—in the body of Christ?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 3:7, finding two call experiences on Paul's life.

Many Christians today do not tell other people about Jesus. Some are afraid. Some are ashamed. Paul was not ashamed of Jesus or afraid to tell His story. Paul said it was a special gift for him to tell the good news about Jesus. It would be great if all Christians felt this way.

Paul had at least two experiences that led him to tell the gospel. First, when Paul received Jesus (see Acts 9, especially verses 15 and 16), he learned that he would serve Jesus by telling non-Jews, kings, and the Jews the Christian message. Second, in Acts 13 (see especially verse 2) when God called the church in Antioch, that church sent Paul and Barnabas on a mission trip. Paul never looked back from this call. He made at least three major trips in which he started churches and won people to Christ. The work he did on those trips and the letters he wrote to the churches planted on those trips has inspired Christians ever since to tell the good news about Jesus. Paul accepted this role and obeyed God's call on his life even when it meant suffering.

What is God's calling on your life? With whom have you shared the good news?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 3:8-9, making a list of God's blessings.

Paul was always amazed and thankful that God allowed him to serve. He called himself the “least important of all God’s people.” He remembered how he persecuted those who were followers of Jesus Christ. He worked to put them in prison. When the Jews stoned Stephen to death, Paul stood and watched while holding people’s coats (Acts 7:58). Then he met Jesus Christ, and his life fully changed.

God forgave Paul and sent him on a mission to share God’s grace and richness with those who were outside of the Jewish nation. In these verses, Paul does not list all God’s rich blessings, but he does list at least one: the blessing of telling the gospel story. There are many other blessings such as knowing God’s peace, having purpose in life, and having an eternal home in heaven. But for Paul, right at the top of all God’s blessings, was this one: Paul got to tell people God’s “secret” plan to bring all believers (Jews and Gentiles, rich and poor, black and white, Deaf and hearing) into His family.

How have you shown gratitude and thanks to the Lord for sending someone to tell you about His gift of grace? What are your greatest blessings?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Church*

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a group of baptized believers who join together in faith and in the fellowship of the gospel. The church practices baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The church follows God’s laws, uses His spiritual gifts, and works to take the gospel to the whole world. The church is the body of Christ in the world and is made up of believers from every tribe, language, people, and nation.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 3:10-13, thinking about Paul's purpose in life.

God has a purpose for all of His people while they are on the earth. Just as God gave Paul a purpose to preach to the Gentiles, He also has given each and every one of us a purpose to share the gospel with the whole world. God wanted His church—all believers—to tell the world about God's wisdom and redemptive plan. Paul made it clear that this was not a new plan. It was God's plan since the beginning of time. Because of Christ Jesus, everyone has a chance to say "yes" to His salvation. We are free to come to God the Father, never needing to be afraid.

The believers who knew Paul and his message were discouraged to hear of his suffering. It seems they had heard that Paul was in prison because he had preached to them. This hurt them. Paul was quick to let them know he would gladly suffer so that they may have peace. He ended his thought with this great line, "My sufferings are for your glory." Paul was quite glad to suffer so the Ephesians and others could know Christ!

How are you fulfilling God's purpose in your life?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 3:1-13. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How can your church show God's special gift of grace is for everyone?

What can you and your group do to tell the Deaf people of your community about God's grace and blessings so they might receive Christ?

How can the life and work of Paul inspire you and your group to share the gospel with others? How does sharing Christ give your life greater purpose?

RESIDE

God gives believers strength with Christ living in us.

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

The eight verses of our lesson today are all the words of a prayer that Paul prayed for the Ephesian Christians. This is the second prayer we have studied. Prayer is a conversation we have with God. Prayer is not usually a tool we use for learning about the Christian life. However, when Paul prayed, he prayed with such deep meaning that even though his words were his prayer to God, his words can also teach us Christian truth.

When you read Paul's prayer carefully, you will find five things Paul asked that the Ephesian Christians would receive from God's riches. The first three are prayers for spiritual inner strength. The next two prayers are for spiritual wisdom so that the Ephesians could understand God's great love. Paul's great desire was that the Ephesian Christians would be filled with the fullness of God. Whatever else God's fullness may be, it certainly must be God's power working in us. His power is in us because He is in us. Paul really prayed deep prayers.

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

14 So I bow in prayer before the Father ^A

15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth gets its true name. **16** I ask the Father in his great glory to give you the **power to be strong inwardly** ^B through his Spirit. **17** I pray that Christ will **live in your hearts by faith** ^C and that your life will **be strong in love and be built on love**. ^D **18** And I pray that you and all God's holy people will have the **power to understand the greatness of Christ's love** ^E—how wide and how long and how high and how deep that love is. **19** Christ's love is greater than anyone can ever know, but I pray that you will be able to know that love. Then you can be **filled with the fullness of God**. ^F **20** With God's power working in us, God can do much, much more than anything we can ask or imagine. **21** To him be **glory in the church** ^G and in Christ Jesus for all time, forever and ever. Amen.

- a. Jews in Paul's time usually stood to pray. Bowing or kneeling showed strong emotion. Verse 14 shows us that what follows are the words of Paul's prayer.
- b. He is not talking about physical strength but spiritual strength. In 2 Corinthians 4:16 Paul talked of inner strength even when the body was weak.
- c. Paul does not mean the heart as the organ that pumps blood. In this context, heart represents the whole inner person. Jesus is at home in us.
- d. Love, which is from God, will be the foundation in our lives. The Greek word used in this verse is "agape"—godly love.
- e. We need God's power to understand. His love is too great for us to understand on our own.
- f. Paul's last prayer request was for believers to have more than just an idea or knowledge of God. He wanted us to see and feel God in our whole bodies, hearts, and souls in a very personal way.
- g. Paul did not think about faith simply in personal ways. Individuals come to Christ, but the true glory shows up in the church—in believers living in faith together.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Why is prayer for others important?
2. What special strength do we have as believers because Christ lives in us?
3. Who was Paul praying to? Who was Paul praying for?
4. What kinds of prayers does God listen to?
5. If one believer prays for another believer, how will that please God?
6. How much does God love His holy people?
7. What kind of gifts does God want His people to have?
8. Why do we need God's strength to help us understand God's love?
9. What is the limit to what God can do?

BIBLE SKILL: *Search and Read Bible Verses*

Read the verses below. Write down what you learn from each of these prayers.

John 17:1-26 _____

Matthew 6:8-13 _____

Acts 4:24-31 _____

1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- When believers pray for others, we help them grow spiritually stronger.
- When we trust Christ and decide to follow Him, Christ lives in us. He changes our lives on the inside, and He changes our actions on the outside.
- When God shows us His power and goodness, we should give Him all honor and glory.

Discuss as a group how you and your church members can encourage and pray for the needs of those who are struggling in their lives.

How can you know Christ lives in you? What evidence have you seen that shows He lives in you?

How does your life, lived in connection with His church, give honor and glory to God?

MEMORY VERSE

I pray that Christ will live in your hearts by faith and that your life will be strong in love and be built on love. – Ephesians 3:17

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 3:14-15, looking for who is included in the family of God.

Paul said he bowed on his knees in prayer. Usually Jews stood in prayer, so why was Paul bowing? Bowing his knees may have shown how serious Paul was about praying for the Ephesians. It showed his submission before the One who is Lord of all. Bowing shows respect and says, “I am your servant and You are my master.” Paul wrote in Philippians 2:10 that everyone will bow down at the name of Jesus. This could be why Paul made it a point to bow down in reverence.

Paul’s prayer was to the Father. Jesus taught us to think of God as our Father and to talk to Him like a child with a loving parent. Like all fathers, God has a family. God’s family is in heaven and on earth. The heavenly family may mean the angels and others who live in heaven. However, the earthly family must mean the combined people of God—both Jews and Gentiles. For a long time, the Jews believed they were the only family line that would be with the Father. Now Paul taught that all believers are included. The name for followers of Christ was “Christian,” a name that included Jew and Gentile believers.

How can our prayers for others help them to strengthen and spiritually grow?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 3:16-17, searching for two things Paul prayed for the Ephesians.

In these verses, Paul told the Ephesians exactly what he prayed. These things come from having Christ in us. First, he asked for the believers to be strong on the inside. God is willing to give all believers His power to be strong on the inside. As we read and obey His Word and pray, we will become stronger. Our strength is not from us; it is from Him. It is from His Holy Spirit who lives in us and guides us daily.

Next, Paul asked that believers have a growing faith and love. Having faith means we believe in Jesus as Savior and trust He knows what is best for us. As we trust Him, we will obey Him. Again, faith and love

do not come from our own abilities. They are in us because Christ is in us. When Christ lives in us, we will see great changes. We will become a people of strong faith and of godly love.

How can you pray for other believers? If you follow the example of Paul's prayer, what changes would you pray for?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 3:18, underlining what is at the center of Christ's personality.

In verse 18, Paul prayed for believers to be able to understand thoroughly the kind of love Christ has for His people. Maybe you think that it is easy to understand love since we have all experienced love. It is in our lives every day in one way or another. But Jesus' love is different. Think about the earthly loves you have experienced. We love our friends. But friends might leave us. Jesus never does. We love our family, but even family love is small when compared to God's love. We, as humans, change our hearts toward those we love, but His love never changes.

God loves us because of who He is. The Scripture says that God is love (1 John 4:8). At the center of His personality is love. That is why even when we were still sinners, He loved us and gave His life for us (Romans 5:8). Paul knew we could never understand God's great love without having His great power. It takes His power to give us understanding of the nature and measure of His love for us. Yes, His love is bigger than we can even imagine!

How would you describe Christ's love for us? How has His love changed you?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 3:19, finding how to know the love of Christ.

Paul told us that Christ's love is greater than you or I can know. Yet at the same time, He prayed that the Ephesian Christians would be able to know His love. That might seem strange. How can we know something that is greater than we can know? The answer is in experience. Paul knew that we cannot know God's love by reading about it or seeing someone describe it in Signs. God's love is known by experience.

God, living in us through the Holy Spirit, can change us so that we experience and know His love. Only by spending time with the Lord in prayer and in His Word can this happen. Remember the story of Moses when he went up Mount Sinai? When he came down from the mountain his face glowed. Time with God changed him. In the same way, as we spend time with our Lord, He will change us. If we don't spend time with Him, how can we be filled with His love and power? If we want to experience God's presence in us, we must open ourselves to Him. We must let go of ourselves and let Jesus fill our lives.

If someone asked you how to experience a love relationship with the Lord, what would you tell them?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Holy Spirit*

Jesus promised the disciples that after He left God would send another Comforter to be with the disciples. Jesus was speaking of the Holy Spirit. When the disciples received the Spirit on Pentecost, they knew they had with them what Jesus had promised. They did not fully understand just as we do not. However, they knew that the presence and power of God was living in them. Further, we know that the Holy Spirit now lives in all believers as the living and ever present Lord. Christ indeed lives in us.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 3:20-21, thinking about where God's glory shows up.

In the last part of Paul's prayer, he offered praise to God. He expressed how God's power works in us to do more than we can ask or even imagine. Sometimes, we do not see when God is working in us or around us. But later when we look back, we recognize God was doing great things in our lives. That is what faith is about. We trust God and let Him work through us even when we don't know what will happen. Paul wanted believers to have the experience of having God live through them. When He lives in us, God receives glory.

At the end of his prayer, Paul wrote of "glory in the church." Of course Paul was not talking about a church building, but he was talking about the people of God. When the people of God experience the presence of God within them and the life-changing power that comes from His presence, God is glorified in and through His people. We must never separate from God's church. Instead, we should honor God in our lives and through His church.

Where do you see God's power working around you? How are you and your church honoring God today?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 3:14-21. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned. You can meet by VP if you need to.

How can praying for others help them to grow spiritually? Take some time with your small group to pray for the Deaf Christians you know to grow strong in the Lord.

What does it mean to be changed from the inside out? Share examples with your small group of how the presence of Jesus in your life has changed you from the inside out.

How do you see God working in your church right now? What can you do to give praise to God for the way He is working?



WALKING TOGETHER

When believers work together and show unity in their actions, others can see the truth of the gospel.

EPHESIANS 4:1-10

Many Americans love to watch football. It is fun to watch, but also it can give us spiritual examples. One thing about football that can help us understand today's text is how people who play football must work as a team. It is impossible for a team to win if players are selfish. Every member of a football team must be united in their effort to move the ball forward to score and stop the opposite team from scoring. Football, like many team sports, is a great example of how to have unity in action.

In today's lesson, Paul strongly encouraged Christians to live a life united with other believers. This is the life to which we are called. Jesus is the best example of someone who lived in this kind of unity. He was humble and always wanted His followers to support one another and pray together. He commanded them to love each other so others would know they were His followers (John 13:34-35). It was important for His disciples to have love, patience, and peace with each other. By living in these ways, His disciples would have unity. So will we.

EPHESIANS 4:1-10

1 I am in prison because I belong to the Lord. **Therefore I urge you** **A** who have been chosen by God to **live up to the life** **B** to which God called you. **2** Always be humble, gentle, and patient, accepting each other in love. **3** You are **joined together with peace through the Spirit**, **C** so **make every effort to continue together** **D** in this way. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, and God called you to have one hope. **5** There is one Lord, one faith, and **one baptism** **E**. **6** There is one God and Father of everything. He rules everything and is everywhere and **is in everything** **F**. **7** Christ gave each one of us the special gift of grace, showing how generous he is. **8** That is why it says in the Scriptures, **“When he went up to the heights, he led a parade of captives, and he gave gifts to people.”** **G** **9** When it says, “He went up,” what does it mean? It means that he first came **down to the earth**. **H** **10** So Jesus came down, and he is the same One who went up above all the heaven. Christ did that to fill everything with his presence.

- a. Paul wanted the readers’ attention. He had something very important to say. He was begging them to do right.
- b. When we receive Jesus as our Savior, we should behave in a way that will glorify our Father in heaven.
- c. When we receive Jesus, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our lives. We are joined together with Christ and also with His holy people. Our peace with each other comes from God.
- d. Unity is a major theme for Paul in this text. Once we are joined together with God’s people by the Spirit, it must be a major goal to keep that unity.
- e. Baptism in water is a public way to show we belong to Christ.
- f. The presence of God is everywhere and in everything since He made everything. However, this does not teach a “pantheism,” the belief that everything is god.
- g. Paul quotes Psalm 68:18. In Hebrew the Psalm says “You received gifts from the people.” Paul followed a paraphrase of the verse in his quote.
- h. Jesus came down to earth when He was born in Bethlehem.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. How does the unity of believers show that the gospel is true?
2. What kind of life should a Christian live?
3. What kinds of attitudes did Paul say Christians should have?
4. Why did Paul use the word “one” related to body, Spirit, and hope?
5. Christ gave a special gift. What is that gift and why is that gift so special?
6. How are believers supposed to treat each other in the church?
7. What was Paul writing about when he talked about Christ coming down and going up?
8. When Paul was in prison, how did he spread the gospel of salvation?

BIBLE SKILL: *Explore Scripture*

Read the verses and write the names of those who were imprisoned or suffered because they refused to stop believing in God or sharing the Word of God.

2 Chronicles 18:25-26 _____

Jeremiah 38:6 _____

Daniel 3:19-20 _____

Daniel 6:16 _____

Acts 6:8; 7:58-59 _____

Acts 12:3-4 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- God expects His people to show godly attitudes and character through their lives.
- When believers live in unity with each other, they show their faith in God.
- Jesus won the victory over sin and death. Believers should celebrate this victory in their lives.

Discuss as a group and make a list of the kinds of attitudes and character believers should have. What can you do to develop such attitudes and character?

How is your Bible study group showing you live in unity? How does your unity show faith to the Deaf community around you?

How do you know Jesus won a victory over sin and death? How will you celebrate His victory in your life?

MEMORY VERSE

I am in prison because I belong to the Lord. Therefore I urge you who have been chosen by God to live up to the life to which God called you. – Ephesians 4:1

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 4:1-2, finding words that show the life of a true believer.

The Jews tried to kill Paul in Jerusalem because he taught about salvation for all through faith in Jesus. But Roman soldiers came and pulled him out of the mob's hands. While Paul was in prison, he did not stop preaching the good news. Even while under arrest he continued to share God's Word with those who would talk with him. He sent letters to encourage the churches. In this letter, Paul strongly encouraged all Christians to live the life of a true believer.

The Bible tells us how to live, but the world tries to tell us too. The world will tell you to be strong and fight back. But if we fight, where is our peace? As Christians, we are to be different from the world. We are God's children and His Spirit inside us changes us. Keep in mind that we do right things because we are His. We do not earn salvation with good works. So, as Paul said, let us be humble, gentle, and patient, especially with fellow believers. This shows that we belong to Jesus.

What does the life of a true believer look like? What does your life look like? How does it compare to a true believer?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 4:3, drawing a line under how we keep peace and unity.

The One that unites all believers is the Holy Spirit Jesus sent as our helper and guide. This Spirit joins us all together in the body of Christ. Paul said the Spirit also brings us peace. Remember that Jesus told His disciples He would bring peace, but it is not the same as the world's peace. It is the peace which God Himself gives through Jesus. This peace comes to us because God loves us and forgives us. Therefore, we have peace with God and with each other.

However, we are still human and struggle with our old feelings. That is why Paul said to "make every effort to continue together in this way."

It may not always be easy to have peace with our brothers and sisters but we can rejoice because we are joined together through the Spirit. With His help we can keep the peace. As we develop the characteristics of Ephesians 4:2, we will grow in our ability to keep peace with other believers.

What can you do to keep unity and peace in your church?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 4:4-6, putting a circle around the seven points of our Christian unity.

In these three verses, Paul used the word “one” seven times. Paul wanted to make sure the Ephesians did not miss his point. Christians are united together with other believers in every way. Since believers share the same hope in Jesus, they should live in unity.

The one Spirit which we share brings us into one body (the church), and Christ is the head of that body. We have only one hope for eternal life, and we have that hope because Jesus opened the door of salvation which all of us may enter. Now that we are in Christ, we only have one Lord who rules over us (not the Caesar in Rome). We share one faith which the Spirit revealed to us when we believed. We all experienced the one baptism in water when we announced our faith in Jesus.

Finally, as believers, we live in relationship with the one God who lives in unity in the Trinity. The word “Trinity” is not used here, but the verses show the Spirit, the Lord (Jesus), and the Father who is our God. The unity within the Trinity is our example for Christian unity.

How does God as the Trinity give us the perfect example of unity? How are you living in unity with other believers?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 4:7-8, looking for the special gift we receive from Jesus.

God had a plan from the beginning to offer salvation to the world. It was through Jesus Christ giving His life for us on the cross. We received the special gift of grace after Jesus shed His blood for our sin, and we need to realize how generous and precious that is.

Paul used a passage from Psalm 68:18 to help explain his point. The idea in verse 8 is strange to us, but ancient peoples would have understood this more clearly. In Old Testament times, when a king went out to battle and defeated an enemy, they would bring the enemy back to town in a parade of captives. The king's people could see those who lost the battle. The king and his soldiers also had things they had taken from the enemy. The king gave things taken from the enemies to his people. Paul said Jesus did the same thing. He defeated sin and death, and He gave us the very special gift of grace. We were not there when Jesus defeated our enemies—sin and death—but He still offers the gift of grace even today. Let us never forget this gift and always give thanks in our prayers. We need to remind ourselves that Jesus won the victory.

How will you show your thanks for the special gift of grace?

What can we do to remind ourselves of Jesus' victory over death?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God as Trinity*

The word "Trinity" is not in the Bible, but it is very clear that the idea is. We know that there is only one God. But God has revealed Himself to us in three persons. God has forever been within Himself Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God has shown Himself in three persons with distinct personal attributes, but still there is no division in who God is.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 4:9-10, thinking about the victory of Christ.

We know Jesus was in heaven with God the Father from the beginning. In this passage, we see that He willingly came to earth to live as a man. He came to give His life and to fulfill the prophecy of the Messiah coming to save His people. Bible teachers often use the word “incarnation” to explain what Jesus did. The word simply means God became flesh – God became a human. Jesus coming down to earth means Jesus became one of us.

Jesus came from heaven, and then He went back up after His victory on the cross. Can you see the picture now of the ancient king going to war and winning the victory? Jesus is like the Old Testament king. In His victory, He is high up on a hill. People from all over can see Him and know He won the battle. He is giving gifts to His people. As the victorious one, God has given everything to Jesus, the Son. Now Jesus is filling everything with His presence. All who see this can rejoice and know that one day our King will finish everything that is left.

How can you celebrate Jesus’s victory in your everyday life?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 4:1-10. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How can you encourage each other this week to live with godly attitudes and character?

Discuss with your small group what it means to have one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, and one faith. How will these ideas give you unity with other believers?

In what ways can you and your group celebrate the victory Jesus has won? What does His victory mean to you?



WALKING FORWARD

Christ gives the church gifted leaders to help believers grow in Christ and to minister to others.

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

In ancient times, a king might win a great victory and then bring the spoils of war home with him. The king, because of his great victory, would give gifts to the people of his city. Paul compared that king to our King Jesus. Jesus has won a great victory when He overcame sin and death. Now in His victory, Jesus gives us gifts.

Today's session tells us more about these gifts. The gifts are not gold and silver or tools for war. The gifts are far more valuable than those. He gives us the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of God to live in us. His Spirit teaches and guides us. With His gifts, we will learn and grow in our faith. As our faith matures, we will live in unity in the church, we will stay away from false teaching, and we will minister to the needy people who live around us. Paul encouraged us to be faithful and to stand strong while we are learning to use our gifts in the church to make the body of Christ stronger.

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

11 And Christ gave gifts to people ^A —he made some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to go and tell the Good News, and some to have the work of **caring for and teaching** ^B God's people. **12** Christ gave those **gifts to prepare God's holy people** ^C for the work of serving, to make the body of Christ stronger. **13** This work must continue until we are all joined together in the same faith and in the same knowledge of the Son of God. **We must become like a mature person,** ^D growing until we become like Christ and have his perfection. **14** Then we will no longer be babies. We will **not be tossed about like a ship** ^E that the waves carry one way and then another. We will not be influenced by every new teaching we hear from people who are trying to fool us. **They make plans and try any kind of trick** ^F to fool people into following the wrong path. **15** No! Speaking the truth with love, we will grow up in every way into Christ, who is the head. **16** The whole body depends on Christ, and all the parts of the body are joined and held together. Each part does its own work to make the **whole body grow and be strong with love.** ^G

- a. Christ gives all believers grace and spiritual gifts. He gifted some to be leaders in the church.
- b. Most English Bibles here have the words “pastor and teacher.” Most Bible teachers agree that pastor/teacher is one gift, not two.
- c. The reason for the gifts is to equip God's people in every way so they are prepared to serve others like Christ did.
- d. A mature person is one who is grown up and understands what is right and what is wrong. The mature believer no longer acts childish.
- e. A picture of a person moving from one idea to another idea or from one religious belief to another
- f. Jesus warned us to be aware of false teachers. The church in Ephesus may have been confronted by early Gnostic ideas.
- g. We are the body of Christ living and working in the world today. We need gifted leaders and teachers to help us grow with love, which is “agape” love—godly love.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Why did Christ give gifted leaders to His people?
2. What are the four types of gifted leaders Paul talked about?
3. How long should believers continue God's work?
4. What can we do as God's holy people to make the body of Christ stronger?
5. What can our church leaders do to help make mature believers?
6. How can we who are mature help our leaders teach Bible truth?
7. How can believers stay strong and not be "tossed about"?
8. Who is the head of the body in your church?
9. Why is love so important in our Christian relationships?

BIBLE SKILL

Read the verses below, find the gifts that the Lord has given, and write them down.

Ecclesiastes 3:13 _____

John 4:10 _____

Romans 6:23 _____

Ephesians 2:8 _____

Romans 12:6 _____

1 Corinthians 12:4 _____

Acts 1:8 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Christ gives leaders to His church to teach and prepare His people for ministry.
- With help from our leaders, believers can grow and mature in spiritual ways. As we grow, we will participate more in the mission of the church.
- All believers should grow to be more like Christ. Believers should make the church stronger by each one doing their part.

Discuss with your group the types of leaders Christ gives to His church. What is the role of each of these leaders? How can your group encourage these leaders?

What do members of your church need to do to be mature believers doing the work of God's kingdom? How can you participate more in the work of the church?

How are you growing to be more like Christ? How does being more like Christ help you do your part in the life of the church?

MEMORY VERSE

Then we will no longer be babies. We will not be tossed about like a ship that the waves carry one way and then another. We will not be influenced by every new teaching we hear from people who are trying to fool us. They make plans and try any kind of trick to fool people into following the wrong path. No! Speaking the truth with love, we will grow up in every way into Christ, who is the head.

– Ephesians 4:14-15

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 4:11, drawing a line under each of the four gifts.

Paul told us about some specific spiritual gifts Christ gives to people. Some were apostles. Apostles were the ones who saw Christ after His death and resurrection and were told to start the church. The most basic meaning for apostle is “one sent with a message.” The job of a messenger is to share the gospel and be a missionary. The missionary is sent out to tell others the good news. Often the missionary travels to share the gospel. Prophets shared specific messages from God to His people. Prophets could warn believers if they were doing something wrong, and also encourage the believers. A person who tells the good news could be called an evangelist. Their job was to go to different places and share Christ with non-believers. Those who care for God’s people are pastor/teachers. Because of the way the words are written in the Greek New Testament, many Bible teachers think the pastor/teacher is one person. So Paul writes about four gifts to the church. It may seem strange that God’s gift to His people was people doing different jobs in the church. It is not strange. It is God’s perfect will.

How do you support the gifted leaders in your church?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 4:12-13, looking for the end goal of God in our lives.

Christ gave our leaders gifts for a reason. They are responsible to prepare God’s holy people to do the work of serving. When they do their job, they will help make stronger believers. This work will not take just a short time. The work must continue until all believers become mature. That is a big job. Being mature does not mean that we are grown up persons. Being mature means that we are becoming like Christ.

What Paul said here is not new to Paul’s writing. He is, in fact, continuing his thought about unity and cooperation in all of the churches. Paul is still pushing the Ephesian Christians toward being united as Jews and Gentiles. Leaders must do their part.

We must do ours. Theirs is to equip. Ours is to be joined together in faith and in knowledge. This is an ongoing process of learning and growing together in Christ. The end goal is having His perfection. Most English Bibles have words about the whole measure of Christ, but the NCV takes that to mean the perfection of Christ.

How do the godly leaders of your church help you to be ready to serve in His kingdom?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 4:14, asking yourself about your own spiritual growth.

Babies are cute when they are first born even though they can do almost nothing for themselves. We feed them and take care of them, and what happens? They grow up, and we don't have to care for them as much as we did in the beginning. It is the same way with Christians. They start out with only a small understanding about what it really means to follow Jesus. But as they grow in Christ, they become the strong followers that Jesus wants. In verse 14, Paul tells us not to be babies. He also tells us to not be like an uncontrolled ship or to follow false teaching. A Christian who does not grow can easily fall into these traps.

Stop and look in your heart. Are you growing stronger in your spiritual life? Do you know your Bible well? There are people who want to trick believers. If we do not have the Bible deep in our hearts, how will we know the truth when someone comes to us with false teaching? Babies may be cute, but immature Christians are not. Be a strong follower of Christ!

Think about your spiritual life a year ago. How would you describe your growth from then until now?

How have you tried to encourage other believers to become mature in their spiritual lives?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 4:15, thinking about your place in the body of Christ.

In verse 14, Paul wrote about people who try to trick believers into believing the wrong thing and living the wrong way. Is this the way Christians should behave? Paul answered with a big “no!” Instead, what Paul did, (and what we should do) was to speak the truth at all times. Never trick, fool, or mislead people. At the same time, speak with a loving attitude. When we speak the truth and live in love, we will grow up into mature believers just as the Lord wants.

What does it look like when we grow? Do our bodies change? Well, not our bodies, but the body of Christ which is the church, does change. Probably, it will get bigger. But of first importance the body (the church) will follow Jesus, the head. We will all do our part. We can’t stay in the back of the room and expect someone else to do the work of the church. Remember Matthew 25:14-30? A man gave three servants money to use while he was gone on a trip. The first two servants did as expected. The third servant hid his money. He did not do his part. Growing up means getting busy for Jesus.

What has God put in your heart to do for Him through the church?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Spirit and the Church*

The church is the body of Christ which includes every believer placed in the body by the Holy Spirit. At the moment of salvation, the Spirit baptizes every believer into the body of Christ. The Spirit then helps believers to grow by giving spiritual gifts to every Christian. The Spirit gives understanding and power to believers and the church in worship, evangelism, and service to others.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 4:16, finding what joins and holds the body of Christ together.

In other letters, Paul talked about the body of Christ. The “body of Christ” is how Paul sometimes wrote about the church—the people of God. Paul knew that believers will not become mature on their own. They need the whole body. That body includes all kinds of people. When we receive Christ, the Holy Spirit puts us into the body. We are part of the body with Jesus Christ as the head.

There are many parts to the body, and each part does its own work. Some parts are easy to see, like the leaders in the church. There are others parts you may not notice, but they are still important. I appreciate those who clean the church building. Most people don’t notice them until they see trash. I appreciate those who visit the sick or care for the elderly. Each part works to make the whole body of Christ grow and be strong in love. We are many parts, but we are only one body under Christ. His love joins us and holds us together.

In what ways have you shown God’s love in your church or your ministry? How are your actions making the church stronger?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 4:11-16. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Why does the church need gifted leaders? How can you encourage the leaders of your church?

How are the leaders in your church equipping you to serve the Lord today? What are some ways your leaders are helping you grow in your faith?

What is your part in the body of Christ? How well are you doing the work God has for you?



WALKING DIFFERENTLY

Believers are to live a life that is different from those who reject Christ.

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

There are few experiences in life that change us more than becoming parents. Before a couple has children, they tend to live a life centered around their friends or their jobs or their hobbies. A baby in the house changes everything. New parents must feed, bathe, clothe, and love a new baby almost 24 hours a day. Babies make big changes.

Our lesson today is about the biggest change that anyone can experience—even bigger than becoming a parent. When a person, separated from God by sin, becomes a believer, everything in life changes. In Ephesians, Paul has described some of those changes. Paul has written how we take on a new purpose for life and how we have a new hope in Christ. Paul has written about how believers have a new unity with all other believers in the body of Christ. In today's session, he added another characteristic for believers—purity. Before Christ was in our lives, we lived in evil ways. But now, with Christ, the way we think, the way we treat people, and even the words we say must all be different. Christ makes all things new!

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

17 In the Lord's name, I tell you this. **Do not continue living like those who do not believe.** **A** Their thoughts are worth nothing. **18** They do not understand, and they know nothing, because they refuse to listen. So they cannot have the life that God gives. **19** They have lost all feeling of shame, and they use their lives for doing evil. **They continually want to do all kinds of evil.** **B** **20** But **what you learned in Christ** **C** was not like this. **21** I know that you heard about him, and you are in him, so you were taught the truth that is in Jesus. **22 You were taught to leave your old self** **D**—to stop living the evil way you lived before. That old self becomes worse, because people are fooled by the evil things they want to do. **23** But you were taught to be made new in your hearts, **24 to become a new person.** **E** That new person is made to be like God—made to be truly good and holy. **25** So you must stop telling lies. Tell each other the truth, because we all belong to each other in the same body. **26** When you are angry, do not sin, and be sure to stop being angry before the end of the day. **27** Do not give the devil a way to defeat you. **28** Those who are stealing must stop stealing and start working. They should earn an honest living for themselves. Then they will have something to share with those who are poor. **29** When you talk, do not say harmful things, but say what people need—**words that will help others become stronger.** **F** Then what you say will do good to those who listen to you. **30** And do not make the Holy Spirit sad. The Spirit is God's proof that you belong to him. God gave you the Spirit to show that God will make you free when the **final day comes.** **G** **31** Do not be bitter or angry or mad. Never shout angrily or say things to hurt others. Never do anything evil. **32** Be kind and loving to each other, and forgive each other just as God forgave you in Christ.

- a. If a person believes in Christ, his or her life should change.
- b. If sin is in charge of your life, you will have the thirst to sin more.
- c. Even though the Ephesians saw people living in sin, they knew better.
- d. After they became believers, they realized the truth. They knew not to continue to be sinful.
- e. Believers are no longer under sin's control, they are free from sin by Jesus' love and grace.
- f. Encouraging words help others feel better. We should share the words of hope from the Lord.
- g. The day of Christ's return

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. How should a Christian's life be different?
2. What did Paul say about those who refused to listen?
3. Will those who use their lives for evil have the life that God wants to give? Why or why not?
4. In what ways can believers change their hearts for Christ?
5. What can believers do to keep the devil from making us weak in our faith?
6. How can we help each other to be stronger?
7. What would cause the Holy Spirit in our lives to be sad?
8. What should we do when we become bitter or angry?
9. Why should we be kind and loving to each other?
10. Why does Paul want us to forgive our brothers and sisters?

BIBLE SKILL

Read the stories below about people whose lives were changed by Jesus. Write a short summary of the story. What was different after being with Jesus?

Mark 5:1-29 _____

John 3:1-21; 19:38-42 _____

John 4:1-42 _____

Acts 9:1-31 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers must not forget how empty and worthless life is when it is lived as a slave to sin.
- People who trust Christ as Savior have a new start in life. We do not have the guilt of our sin anymore.
- Because of salvation, believers should live a life like Christ.

Discuss as a group how empty and worthless life was when we used to live as slaves to sin. How is your life different now?

What does it mean to have a new start in life? How does Jesus give us this new start? In what ways has He given you a new start?

Describe what a Christ-like life would look like. How are you living this new life? How can you live this new life better?

MEMORY VERSE

But you were taught to be made new in your hearts, to become a new person. That new person is made to like God—made to be truly good and holy. – Ephesians 4:23-24

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 4:17-19, remembering what life was like before Jesus.

Paul started this section with, “In the Lord’s name I tell you this.” Paul emphasized that his message had authority from Jesus Christ. Believers need to pay attention to the message. Paul wanted believers to remember what life was like without Jesus. People in the world look for something to satisfy them. But the things they think about are worthless. They follow sinful ways that are worthless. Sin does not give hope and peace. Sin causes a desire for more sin. Without Jesus, unbelievers have no feeling of shame. They do not care that they are sinning. They continually do all kinds of evil because they want satisfaction in their lives. Those who do not believe in Jesus Christ are lost. They refuse to listen because they think only about themselves and their evil desires. They have no room for God, so they cannot receive the life God wants for all of us.

What was your life like before you believed in Jesus? How do you see yourself in verses 17-19?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 4:20-22, looking for what happened when the truth opened our eyes.

Paul felt strongly that the Ephesians had to have the new Christian life. They were now God’s holy people. That is why Paul reminded them they belonged to Him, and their lives should be different. The Ephesians had heard about Jesus; they were now in Jesus, and they had been taught the truth in Jesus. Therefore, the old evil ways could not continue.

It is the same for us today. When the truth opened our eyes, we realized who Jesus is and why Jesus died for us. We knew we could not continue in our old ways. The truth made us understand we needed to stop living our evil, selfish lives. You can picture the change in your mind; it is like taking off a dirty, old coat. Our dirty old lives must be gone. If we keep doing evil things, we are only fooling ourselves.

Our lives will get worse. The things in the world will not satisfy the soul. A person can try to get everything in the world, but his or her soul will still be empty.

How do you resist the old selfish ways? What can you do to help other believers resist the old sin life?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 4:23-24, searching for what it means to be made like God.

After we receive Christ, we start learning what it means to be a follower of Christ. Our old self comes to an end; it has been put to death. We take off the old and put on the new. You might remember from our reading yesterday that the old comes off like a dirty, old coat. Well, the new comes on like putting on new clean clothes. It is best to think about this in terms of being a new person. We have the Holy Spirit in our hearts, and He helps us make this change.

The next line is almost startling. Paul said we will be made to be like God, being good and holy. Made to be like God! Can you imagine that? However, this does not mean that we are God in any way. But we do change to be good and to be holy, and God is good and holy. Being holy means we are separate from the world. We are separated to God so He can use us for His purpose. Good, of course, is to be right and just. It is to be the opposite of bad and evil. This is the new person that we become in Christ.

What changes have you seen in your thoughts and actions from your old life to the new life in Christ? What does Christ still need to change in you?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 4:25-28, drawing a line under what to take off and circling what to put on.

In these verses, Paul listed some specific things we should take off of our lives and things we should put on. He warned the believers to stop lying and instead tell the truth. Of course, we should tell the truth in a loving way. (See verse 15.) Next, Paul talked about anger. Some people think that Christians never get angry. Christians still have emotions, but with God's help we can control them. We can be angry but not lose control. We should learn how to respond to our anger. We may need to talk with someone about it. We may need to forgive someone like Jesus forgave us. When we do get angry, we should not be angry for a long time. Anger can cause us to be bitter in our hearts. The devil may use our anger to embarrass us or to cause division in the church.

Next, Paul talked about stealing. We know from the Ten Commandments that stealing is wrong. Paul told the believers they should work to support themselves. Not only that, they should work so they can help others who have needs.

What is in your life that you need to take off? What will your life be like as you put on the new life?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation as Sanctification*

Salvation begins when a person accepts Jesus as Savior and Lord. Salvation will be totally complete when we are present with the Lord in heaven (glorification). But there is a lot that happens between the beginning and the completion. We use the word "sanctification" to explain what happens between. Sanctification is the process of growing to become spiritually mature through the power of the Holy Spirit living in us. Growing in His grace should continue through all the years of a believer's life.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 4:29-32, finding and signing the kind of words you should say.

Paul continued with the list of actions believers need to practice. Paul wrote that believers should not communicate in mean and ugly ways. Our signs need to be kind and encouraging—words that will help others become better people. Saying what people need is not always easy. Here is an example: sometimes we tell a church member, “I’ve missed you!” That makes them feel good. Then we add, “You have not been at church for a long time! Where have you been?” That might make them feel guilty. We need to practice saying things that build up, not tear down.

Paul again talked about getting rid of anger and bitterness. This means it is an important idea. Anger and bitterness can easily lead to sin. Instead, believers must be like Christ. Because of His great love, He chose to forgive. Even when He suffered on the cross, He asked the Father to forgive all those who were against Him. We can follow His example and forgive others.

How can your words and actions make the Holy Spirit sad? How does the forgiveness you have received lead you to forgive others?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 4:17-32. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned. You may want to meet by VP.

Discuss what a life without Christ looks like. How did your life without Christ compare to what Paul said about non-believers?

How was receiving Christ for you like taking off old clothes and putting on new clothes? What other ways can you think of to explain the change between our old life and our new life?

What characteristics of the Christian life that Paul discussed can you see in yourself? What characteristics can you see in your group members? How can you help each other be more like Christ?



WALKING IN LOVE

Believers are to copy the life of Christ and show His love and character.

EPHESIANS 5:1-14

You have probably seen how little children copy or “imitate” their parents. They learn by watching how their parents do things. My friend and his wife are both Deaf. They have two Deaf children. From the time the children were infants, they were watching their parents sign. It is not a surprise that when the children were still babies, they were trying to copy the signs they saw their mom and dad using. Children imitate well.

In the same kind of way, Christians are to copy or “imitate” Christ. Paul wanted the Ephesians to realize they were God’s children. As God’s children, they (and we) should be like Christ. They needed to act like Him and show His love and character. In so many areas of life—our sexual life, the way we talk, how we think about things, even the God we worship—all this must be like Jesus. He lives in us now, and according to Paul, His light shines through us.

EPHESIANS 5:1-14

1 You are God's children whom he loves, **so try to be like him.** **A** **2 Live a life of love** **B** just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as **a sweet-smelling offering** **C** and sacrifice to God. **3** But there must be no **sexual sin among you,** **D** or any kind of evil or greed. Those things are not right for God's holy people. **4** Also, there must be **no evil talk among you,** **E** and you must not speak foolishly or tell evil jokes. These things are not right for you. Instead, you should be **giving thanks to God.** **F** **5** You can be sure of this: No one will have a place in the kingdom of Christ and of God who sins sexually, or does evil things, or is greedy. Anyone who is greedy is serving a false god. **6** Do not let anyone fool you by telling you **things that are not true,** **G** because these things will bring God's anger on those who do not obey him. **7** So have nothing to do with them. **8** In the past you were full of darkness, but now you are **full of light** **H** in the Lord. So live like children who belong to the light. **9** Light brings every kind of goodness, right living, and truth. **10** Try to learn what pleases the Lord. **11** Have nothing to do with the things done in darkness, which are not worth anything. But show that they are wrong. **12** It is shameful even to talk about what those people do in secret. **13** But the light makes all things easy to see, **14** and everything that is made easy to see can become light. **This is why it is said:** **I** "Wake up, sleeper! Rise from death, and Christ will shine on you."

- a. Some English Bibles use the word "mimic" in this verse.
- b. God is love. When we copy Him, love becomes a major characteristic of our lives.
- c. When Paul lived, many sacrifices were burned and offered to God. The burning sacrifice could smell sweet. Our life offered to God is like this kind of sacrifice.
- d. God created sex for those who are married. Sex outside of marriage is wrong. There is no place for sexual sin in the life of a believer.
- e. We belong to Christ so our communication should be pure. We should not talk of evil things or tell dirty jokes.
- f. As believers we need to thank God always (1 Thessalonians 5:18).
- g. This may refer to Jewish Christians teaching salvation by keeping the law or early Gnosticism that was making its appearance.
- h. Light and dark are common symbols of good and evil. When full of light, we are full of good, right, and truth.
- i. The next three lines are probably the words of a song sung in the church. The Ephesians would have known these words.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Why is knowing who we imitate so important?
2. Why did Christ sacrifice Himself for us?
3. Why should Christians resist sexual sin?
4. What should our communication be like?
5. In what ways can His people give thanks to God?
6. How can God's people protect themselves from false teaching?
7. What should God's people do when they are with the unbelievers?
8. How can believers learn what will please the Lord?
9. What does living in the light mean for those who trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior?

BIBLE SKILL

Read the verses below. Did the people in the verses have a worshipful heart or a disobedient attitude toward the Lord? Write a short summary of each.

1. Genesis 8:20-21 _____
2. Exodus 32:4-7 _____
3. 1 Samuel 13:9-13 _____
4. 1 Kings 8:22-23 _____
5. 1 Kings 12:28-30 _____
6. Acts 8:35-37 _____
7. Acts 10:44-48 _____
8. 1 Corinthians 5:1-2 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers should copy the life of God in their own lives especially showing His love for all people.
- Believers should have no part in ungodly behavior but should be separate and away from wrong actions.
- What believers do and the way believers love should clearly but humbly help others know right from wrong.

How can we imitate the life of God? What sacrifices are you willing to make to show God's love for all people?

Discuss how the actions of believers are different from the actions of non-believers and how we can be separate from evil behaviors. What behaviors might you need to stop?

If other people look at how you live your life, will your actions help them know the difference between what is right and what is wrong? What will make the light of your life shine more clearly?

MEMORY VERSE

You are God's children whom he loves, so try to be like him. Live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a sweet-smelling offering and sacrifice to God. – Ephesians 5:1-2

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 5:1-2, looking for two evidences that we copy God's life.

When we receive Christ, we become God's children, born by His Spirit. We are His because He loves us. The NCV reads, "try to be like him." A better translation is "be like him," or "mimic him." Paul writes these words as a command, not as a "try." Believers must live by copying the life of God. What does life look like when we copy God's life?

First, we will live a life of love. We will love God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son. In addition, we will show love to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Further, we will love the lost world without joining in its evil ways. Second, our lives will be lived as a sacrifice. Jesus showed love by giving up His life for us. This kind of sacrificial love is what we must copy. Paul described this as a "sweet-smelling offering." When fat and incense were burned as a sacrifice to God in the temple, it made a sweet smell. It does seem easier to be selfish and mean than to be loving and kind. However, if we say we are God's people—a sweet-smelling sacrifice—we should be copying God's love in every way.

What can you do to show you have the love of God in your life?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 5:3-5, thinking about what kind of words are good to sign.

When we follow Christ, we must not allow sin to control our lives. It seems that some areas of sin are harder to turn away from than others. Paul knew one area of weakness for people is sexual sin. This was true in Paul's day and is still true today. People think sex outside of marriage is normal. They think that pornography harms no one. But these thoughts are wrong. The Bible tells us many times that sex, outside of God's plan, becomes a spiritual trap that leads away from Jesus. Paul also wrote about greed. If we become greedy, those things we want so badly will become our idols. We cannot serve God and our idol at the same time.

Also, Paul wrote about the way we talk. When we talk and Sign, we are not to talk in ways that do not glorify or honor God.

Verse 5 is hard. If we do any of these things even once, does God kick us out of His kingdom? Most Bible teachers understand Paul in this verse to mean that if this is the ongoing pattern of your life you do not know Christ. God is always merciful. But He is also holy and calls us always to right living.

How do your sexual life, your words, and your actions honor God? What can you do to help others understand what God wants?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 5:6-7, drawing a line under one thing that will help you know what the Lord wants.

As followers of Christ, we need to be aware of what the Lord expects from us. One way to know what the Lord wants from us is to know what the Bible says. We should always look to the Bible for answers. We should not just believe whatever people tell us. It is important to compare what people say with what the Bible says. God's Word will lead us to know if people are telling the truth or not.

Paul wanted the Ephesians to know that there were some people with whom they should have nothing to do. Examples would be those who would lead us into sexual sin, greed, and evil talk. We must especially be careful and watch out for false ideas and false teachers. When we find out a person is not telling the truth from the Bible, we should not listen to them. We must stand for the truth. Keep in mind that our loving God also has a loving anger. Because He loves us, He angrily reacts to that which can turn us from Christ.

How can you know who is telling the truth about Jesus and His Word? When should Christians separate themselves from those who do evil?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 5:8-10, searching for the difference between light and dark.

Do you remember what your life was like before Christ? Many people remember how before Christ they lived a life that felt dark and alone. The Bible often uses the picture of darkness when talking about sin and wrong. Paul wrote that people who are not Christians live in spiritual darkness.

Think about what it is like to be in a dark room in your house. You may look around a room in your house and think it looks pretty good. But then when you turn on the light you notice that dust is everywhere. You may see spider webs in the corners. Turning on the light helped you know where to clean. In the past, we were in spiritual darkness. But now we have the light of the Lord within us. So, we need to live like children who belong to Jesus. We need to clean out the “cobwebs” and start doing what He wants. As Paul said, we need to learn how to please the Lord in every way. If we call Him Lord, then we are to obey Him in everything we do.

How different is life when one moves from spiritual darkness to the light of Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINES: *The Scriptures*

The Bible was written by men but inspired by God. It shows us what God is like. The Bible has God as its author, salvation for its goal, and truth, with no mixture of error in all it says. Therefore, we can completely trust the Bible. Whenever we see some new teaching, we need to search the Scriptures to find out if it is true. We are to live our lives by following the Bible and teaching it to others.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 5:11-14, seeking to understand living in the light.

Paul warned us not to have anything to do with things done in darkness because they are worthless. Instead, our right actions can show those things done in darkness are wrong. We will need to tell others what is right. But we should do this in a loving way without judging others and shaking a finger at them. Remember, we also lived wrong, but the Lord showed His love by forgiving us.

Paul took the idea a step further when he said it is shameful to even talk about the evil things people do in secret. Christians know an action is wrong. Sometimes we stop the action but try to keep the old feelings alive by talking about evil things. Soon we find the light of Christ shines so deep into our darkness that every hidden corner of evil is revealed. Confess your darkness. If we confess, we will be healed by the light of Christ. Paul quoted a song probably sung at baptism (likely drawn from Isaiah 60:1). It is a good picture of the healing light of Christ for those who accept Him as Lord.

Do you know someone who is living darkness? What can you do to bring them into the light?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 5:1-14. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

In what ways can we help our friends and our church members live in the same way as Christ?

With your group, think of times when it is right to separate yourself from wrong actions and the people who do wrong actions.

What does it mean to let your light shine? How can you be a witness toward those who live in darkness?



WALKING WISELY

Believers must live wisely and depend on the Holy Spirit to lead them.

EPHESIANS 5:15-21

Some blind people use service dogs to lead them. The blind person and the dog develop a strong relationship. The blind person learns to trust the dog. The dog learns how to lead the blind person safely. A well trained dog will keep the person completely safe. In this human/guide dog relationship, the blind person must fully trust the dog to lead.

Paul did not know about guide dogs, but he knew about trusting the Spirit to lead. In these verses, Paul wrote to inform the Gentile believers how they were to act as Christians. He said they needed to live wisely. The title of this lesson is “Walking Wisely” because many English Bibles use those words in this verse. Walking wisely means to act in a way that honors God. We are to live our lives making good decisions that show we care about what God wants from us. The secret to this kind of life is letting the Holy Spirit guide us and teach us what is good in God’s eyes. Like a trusting blind person following his guide, we must trust and follow the Holy Spirit wherever He leads. That is walking wisely.

EPHESIANS 5:15-21

15 So be very **careful how you live.** **A** **Do not live like** **B** those who are not wise, but live wisely. **16 Use every chance you have for doing good,** **C** because these are evil times. **17** So do not be foolish but learn what the Lord wants you to do. **18** Do not be **drunk with wine,** **D** which will ruin you, but **be filled with the Spirit.** **E** **19** Speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, **singing and making** **F** music in your hearts to the Lord. **20 Always give thanks to God the Father for everything,** **G** in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **21 Yield to obey** **H** each other as you would to Christ.

- a. Many English Bibles have the words “careful how you walk.” The lesson title comes from these words. Paul is not teaching how to walk but how to live.
- b. We are to be holy, separated from the world. We are to be different from those who live unwisely. Our lives are marked by wisdom.
- c. “Use every chance” in the original language was a word from the marketplace. Paul said to “redeem” the days or to “buy them up.”
- d. We are not to fill our lives with wine which will ruin life. (see E)
- e. Instead of wine that ruins life, we must be full of the Holy Spirit that changes life.
- f. Under the control of the Spirit the believer overflows with joy which can show up in singing. It does not matter if we are Deaf. God’s Spirit in us can show up with words of praise.
- g. Giving thanks shows our gratitude and love for our heavenly Father. Giving thanks FOR everything is a true mark of faith that God is in control.
- h. Many English Bibles at this point use the word “submit” which is closer to the meaning in the original language.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Why should believers be careful how they live?
2. How do people live who are not wise?
3. How can the believers learn about what God wants us to do?
4. Why should believers use every opportunity they have to do good?
5. What can believers do to keep from being foolish?
6. Why is it wrong for a believer to be drunk? With what should believers fill their lives?
7. Why does the Lord want believers to sing hymns and spiritual songs?
8. How is it possible to give thanks FOR all things? How does this show great trust?
9. Why should Christians yield to obey each other?

BIBLE SKILL

Read the verses and decide if the person in the story was living wisely or foolishly. Why do you think so?

Genesis 6:11-22 _____

Genesis 19:30-36 _____

Genesis 22:1-19 _____

Joshua 2:1-14 _____

1 Samuel 17:34-50 _____

Acts 5:1-11 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers need to live carefully. We need God's wisdom in all things.
- Believers should allow the Holy Spirit to control our lives.
- When the Holy Spirit is in control of our lives, our actions and attitudes will show His influence.

What does a wise life look like? What do you need to do to live this kind of wise life?

What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? What are some signs that a person is filled with God's Spirit? How do you show you are filled with God's Spirit?

What are three signs in verses 19-21 that would show how a believer was truly impacted by the Holy Spirit living in them? How does your life compare to these three signs?

MEMORY VERSE

Do not be drunk with wine, which will ruin you, but be filled with the Spirit. – Ephesians 5:18

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 5:15, looking for marks of a wisely lived life.

Solomon knew wisdom was important, and he asked God for it. James 1:5 says, “If any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. He is generous to everyone and will give you wisdom without criticizing you.” James also describes the wisdom that is from God as “pure, then peaceful, gentle, and easy to please. This wisdom is always ready to help those who are troubled and to do good for others. It is always fair and honest.” (Jas. 3:17).

If we are wise we will keep ourselves holy—different from the ways of the world. Many lost people believe their lives will be boring if they follow God. They are foolish and do not understand the joy believers have. Let us live a life of purity so the world will know there is a difference between us and them. We can show them that a sinful life is not the wise choice. Living a life with Christ is better in this world and in the world to come.

How does your life compare with James 3:17? What do you need to improve so you are living wisely?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 5:16, thinking about how to use your time wisely.

Paul encouraged us to use our time wisely. The New Century Version has the words, “use every chance you have...” In the original language the Bible said sometime more like “buying back the time,” or “redeeming the time.” We often notice that time goes so fast. We cannot let the time get away from us. We need to use every opportunity to do good while we still can. That is the idea behind redeeming the time or buying back the time. Here are some examples of the good we must do: keep ourselves holy, share God’s Word with people we meet, witness to lost people, and help if we see a brother or sister in trouble.

The wise person knows that sin is growing in our world. When we see this, we feel the need to hurry with goodness all the more because “these

are evil times.” Do not sit back and wait. Go to your Bible or a trusted person and learn now how to live as a wise and godly person. As you trust the Holy Spirit within, you will learn to use your time wisely.

What does it mean to you to use your time wisely? How do evil times make it even more important how you use your time?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 5:17, underlining the meaning of being wise.

Paul used another comparison. We can be foolish or we can learn what God wants us to do. Of course, believers should choose to follow God’s plan. If we do not choose His way, our lives will be full of wandering in darkness which is foolish. As in any relationship, it is better when those in the relationship spend time together to get to know each other better. They learn each other’s likes and dislikes and expectations.

It is the same way with the Lord. We need to spend time in prayer and Bible study so we know Him better. Since our God is a holy God, we need to try our best to be holy. The Lord said, “Be holy, because I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). We need to be like Christ because we say we are His people. We need to learn what the Lord wants us to do, so we can be wise and not foolish. Being wise means we know what the Lord wants us to do so we will be willing to submit to God the Father and not do foolish things.

What does the Lord want you to do?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 5:18, thinking about what fills your life.

There are many things that try to influence our lives. One example is our old sin nature. It will often pop up and try to influence our decisions. Another is the world. The world throws its ideas at us all the time. As believers, from the moment we trust Christ we have the Holy Spirit in us, and He is the best and most powerful influence on our lives. That is why Paul writes that we are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. His wisdom is what will actually influence us to think right and to do right. If we pay attention and follow His leading, He can influence us more and more.

Paul warned us of another influence—alcohol. The person who is drunk has filled his life with that which can only cause ruin. All around the world it is the same story. Alcohol, and the drunkenness that comes with it, only leads to ruin. It certainly does not lead to godliness. Instead, let us be filled with the Spirit of God so we can be like Christ.

**What would it look like if we allowed the Holy Spirit to control our lives?
What is filling your life right now?**

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He is fully God. At the moment of salvation, He baptizes every believer into the body of Christ and fills every believer with Himself. The Spirit leads us to grow to be like Christ. He comforts us and gives us spiritual gifts by which we serve God through His church. Through the Holy Spirit we know God and we relate to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. It is this Spirit, filling our lives, that lets us sing praises to God and give Him thanks.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 5:19-21, drawing a circle around each of the three actions.

Paul listed three things in the next verses which are actions that come from being filled with the Holy Spirit. First, we should encourage each other with psalms and songs so we may keep our spiritual strength up. Many of us Deaf people are not crazy about music. We can't hear it! But music is deeper than ears. Psalms are the music of the Old Testament. We can share those and feel encouraged.

Second, Paul told us to always give thanks to God the Father for everything. We are thankful for many things, especially our salvation. But Paul said to be thankful for everything! Thank God for the good of life. But also thank Him for the hard and the painful moments of life as well.

Third, we should accept our brothers and sisters in Christ and submit to them. Jesus set the example of humility and kindness to others. We honor Christ when we have love and respect in the body of Christ. Romans 12:10 says, "Love each other like brothers and sisters. Give each other more honor than you want for yourselves."

Which of these three actions do you see in your life? Which do you not see in your life? What must you do so that all three are your spiritual strengths?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 5:15-21. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned. If necessary, you can meet by VP.

Discuss with your group what it means to use every chance you have for doing good. How can you help each other accomplish this command from God?

What can you and your group do to build up your relationship with the Holy Spirit so that He alone fills your life?

Look carefully at verses 19-21. What can each member of your group do to help one another live in these three ways?



WALKING AS FAMILY

Believers are to show God's love in their family relationships.

EPHESIANS 5:22-6:4

How are Christian families supposed to live? That should be an easy question to answer because the Bible tells us a good amount about living as family. The world shows family life in a completely different way than the Bible. Just watch TV for a while, and you will see that the world view and the Bible view concerning family are on opposite sides of the fence.

Biblical family begins with submission. Paul asked all Christians to submit to each other in their family roles. Each role requires respect for the others with Christ as the example. Wives yield to their husbands as they would to the Lord. Husbands love their wives as Christ loved the church. Also parents are to discipline their children with a godly love so our children will grow up and honor God. This is “walking” as biblical family.

EPHESIANS 5:22–6:4

22 Wives, yield to your husbands, **as you do to the Lord,** **A** **23** because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. And He is the Savior of the body, which is the church.

24 As the church yields to Christ, so you wives should yield to your husbands in everything.

25 Husbands, love your wives **B** as Christ loved the church and **gave Himself for it** **C** **26** to make it belong to God. Christ used the word to make the church clean by washing it with water. **27** He died so that he could give the church to himself like **a bride in all her beauty.** **D** He died so that the church could be pure and without fault, with **no evil or sin or any other wrong thing in it.**

E **28** In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they love their own bodies. The man who loves his wife loves himself. **29** No one ever hates his own body, but feeds and takes care of it. And that is what Christ does for the church, **30** because we are parts of his body. **31 The Scripture says,** **F** “So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.” **32** That secret is very important—I am talking about Christ and the church. **33** But each one of you must **love his wife as he loves himself, and a wife must respect her husband.** **G** **1** Children, obey your parents as the Lord wants, because this is the right thing to do. **2 The command says,** **H** “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first command that has a promise with it— **3** “Then everything will be well with you, and you will have a long life on the earth.” **4** Fathers, do not make your children angry, but raise them with the training and teaching of the Lord.

- a. “Yield” or “submit” does not mean to accept abuse. When a wife yields to her husband, it is an act of serving God.
- b. Both husbands and wives have responsibility in the marriage. It is a two-way relationship. The major task given to the husband is the task of loving the wife, and the example of this love is Christ’s love for the church.
- c. Husbands are to follow the example of Christ. He gave Himself so we could belong to God. Husbands are to give of themselves for their wives in a sacrificial way.
- d. Paul used the picture of husband and wife to help Christians understand the relationship of Christ with His church.
- e. The death of Jesus was a positive benefit to the church just as the sacrificial giving by the husband brings positive benefit both to him and his wife.
- f. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24.
- g. The most important word for the husband is love, and the most important word for the wife is respect.
- h. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 5:16.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. What does a Christian family look like that shows God's love in their family relationships?
2. What does Paul mean when he calls on wives to yield to their husbands? Does this mean husbands have the right to abuse their wives? Explain what you mean.
3. What does headship look like for Jesus? What does it look like for godly husbands?
4. What kind of love should the husband have toward his wife?
5. What kind of love did Jesus show to the church? How did His death make the church clean?
6. What is the most important word for husbands? What is the most important word for wives?
7. How do husbands and wives live out these important words?
8. Why should children obey their parents?
9. What kind of training and teaching should the fathers give their children?

BIBLE SKILL

Read the verses and find the names of the father and son in them. What do you learn from reading about these families?

1. Genesis 5:28-29 _____
2. Genesis 22:1-18 _____
3. Genesis 41:50-52 _____
4. Ruth 4:21-22 _____
5. 1 Samuel 2:12-17 _____
6. Luke 1:8-17 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Godly wives should yield to obey their husbands as leaders in the home.
- Godly husbands are not selfish and love their wives like Christ loves the church.
- Godly children should follow and obey their parents.
- Godly parents guide their children with love and discipline.

**How is the responsibility of the wife like the responsibility of the church?
How is this idea showing up in your family?**

Compare the love husbands should have for their wives with the love Christ has for the church. How is this idea showing up in your family?

What are you doing today to honor your parents?

What does godly discipline in the family look like? How is your family practicing godly discipline?

MEMORY VERSE

The command says, “Honor your father and mother.” This is the first command that has a promise with it—“Then everything will be well with you, and you will have a long life on the earth.”
—Ephesians 6:2-3

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 5:22-24, finding the meaning of godly submission.

Christ is the head of the church and believers submit themselves to Christ because that is God's will. In the same way, God wants wives to submit to their husbands just as husbands submit to Christ. This is important because the submission of both the husband and wife to Christ's authority will help them each have the right attitude toward the other. We need to understand the right way of submission. We submit ourselves to Christ, and He is the head of the church. When the church submits to Christ, we will have a blessed relationship, and we will be glad in our hearts.

We are God's people, and we should give of ourselves, first to God and then to our spouse. Yielding to another does not mean the person is weak or unimportant. Yielding does not mean we accept abuse. God made man responsible for his wife and family, and the wife honors God by submitting herself to her husband.

What does godly submission look like in a marriage? How does godly submission help us understand the relationship of Christ with His church?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 5:25-27, looking for the meaning of godly leadership.

Christ loves the church and husbands should love their wives in the same way. We know Christ gave His life for the body of Christ and washed away our sin so we can belong to God. Paul explained that Christ's death was necessary so the church could become like a beautiful bride, pure in the eyes of God. The husband is to follow Jesus Christ's example. He should love his wife and family with the same kind of love Jesus has for the church.

Jesus sacrificed Himself for believers. The husband should do the same for his wife who is one with him. The husband is ready to sacrifice himself to take care of his wife in the same way Christ cares for the

church, His followers. God chose the husband to lead the home. A husband must understand what it means to be the leader. He is not a boss or a bully, but the one who pays the price (sacrifice) to keep the family together following God's Word for living and worshiping. In the end, God will hold the husband accountable for his part as the leader of the home.

What does godly leadership look like in a marriage? How does godly leadership help us understand the relationship of Christ with His church?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 5:28-33, drawing a circle around the two biggest words for marriages.

Paul gave an example of a husband loving his wife in the same way he loves his own body. Most men take care of feeding themselves and doing things they enjoy. In the same way, they do things for themselves, husbands should take care of and do things for their wives. Christ gave Himself as a sacrifice to save the church, but He didn't stop there. He takes care of believers and watches over them. Jesus is the example for husbands.

Paul used a verse we often see in weddings, Genesis 2:24, which says, "So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body." How two separate persons become one is a great mystery. It is also a mystery how Christ and His church become one. Both truths need to happen.

Paul repeats the command for the husband to love his wife and he adds that the wife should respect her husband. Those are the two big words—love and respect. Perhaps Paul has found our deepest needs in marriage. When husbands learn to love and wives learn to respect, many marriages will be transformed into something beautiful. God's plan is a good one!

Why do you think the Bible tells husbands to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands? What would happen if Christians truly practiced this command?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 6:1-3, thinking about God’s command to obey parents.

Paul also wrote about the relationship between parents and children. We are not surprised that God has a plan for them as well. Children must obey their parents. This is not a suggestion. This is God’s command. All of us who are parents know this command is for their safety. It is also for their growth toward becoming adults and for harmony in the family.

Paul quoted from the Ten Commandments showing that the command to honor parents includes a promise. The promise is that obedience to parents brings long life. It makes sense that obeying parents will help children have a good, long life. Obedience teaches respect for authority and love for God. Children who live this way set themselves up for healthy lives. Even as children become adults, they can continue to honor their parents and care for them. Such action honors the Lord. Proverbs 23:24 says, “The father of a good child is very happy; parents who have wise children are glad because of them.”

How do you honor your parents today? How does honoring parents lead to long life?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Family*

God made marriage and the family. Families are made up of people related to each other by marriage, blood, and adoption. Marriage is between one man and one woman in a lifelong commitment. The union between a husband and a wife helps us to understand the union between Christ and His church. God’s plan is for believers to be faithful and loving in marriage. God also wants us to bring up our children in the right way following the guidelines in His Word. Godly family relationships give a picture to the world of Christ’s love for His bride, the church.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 6:4, searching for the key to raising godly children.

Parents have a great opportunity and responsibility to bring up children who will love God and live right. To accomplish this goal, parents must teach their children with the same love God has when He teaches parents. God is patient with us and always forgiving. These are the actions parents must model for their children.

Parents should discipline their children as God disciplines believers. To teach this truth, Paul gave a warning about discipline to fathers. (The warning also applies to mothers.) Fathers should not cause their children to be angry. Instead, parents should use right teaching and training from the Lord. The Lord's training is patient, gentle, and loving.

Jesus is our example, and God will give parents wisdom if they ask. God will help families in their relationships as parents and children yield to each other and learn from Him.

What must parents do to raise godly children? How can believers help each other in this process?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 5:22–6:4. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Why is submission important in the husband and wife relationship? How does this submission show you God's will for the church? Why is submission so hard to do?

Discuss with your group the way Jesus loves His bride, the church. How does His love for the church make an example for husbands? How does this idea change you?

How do godly children and godly parents relate to each other? How is your family living up to this kind of godliness?



WALKING TO BATTLE

God gives believers everything they need to live Christlike lives.

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

War is a serious thing. It happens when two or more groups live as enemies against each other. The groups meet one another in combat, trying to win the battle by killing their enemy. Soldiers use armor to protect themselves, and they use weapons to stop the enemy. We have all seen pictures of war, and some of us have fought them.

Christians face war every day. We do not need guns for this war. Our fight is against the powers of darkness. It is a spiritual war. We must dress for spiritual warfare. Satan and his followers try to trick us. We need the armor of God to help us stand strong. Our God prepares us like a soldier ready to stand and fight off spiritual attacks. When we use the armor God gives, we will have a better chance of being faithful to Christ and to our brothers and sisters. If we want to be faithful, we need protection, and God has the equipment we need. We cannot stand strong by ourselves.

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

10 Finally, **be strong in the Lord** **A** and in his great power **11 Put on the full armor of God** **B** so that you can fight against the devil's evil tricks. **12 Our fight is not against people on earth** **C** but against the rulers and authorities and the powers of this world's darkness, against the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly world. **13** That is why you need to put on **God's full armor**. **D** Then on the **day of evil** **E** you will be able to stand strong. And when you have finished the whole fight, **you will still be standing**. **F** **14** So stand strong, with the belt of truth tied around your waist and the protection of right living on your chest. **15** On your feet wear the Good News of peace to help you stand strong. **16** And also use the shield of faith with which you can stop all the burning arrows of the Evil One. **17** Accept God's salvation as your helmet, and take the **sword of the Spirit**, **G** which is the word of God. **18** Pray in the Spirit at all times with all kinds of prayers, asking for everything you need. To do this you must always be ready and never give up. **Always pray for all God's people**. **H** **19** Also pray for me that when I speak, God will give me words so that I can tell the secret of the Good News without fear. **20** I have been sent to preach this Good News, and I am doing that now, here in prison. Pray that when I preach the Good News I will speak without fear, as I should.

- a. Our strength is not our own. It comes from Him. We can be strong only by depending on His power, not our own.
- b. Paul had soldiers guarding him all the time. He could easily see their armor and develop his idea of spiritual armor. Strength comes from God but we must do the action of putting on the armor.
- c. There are bad people, but we are not fighting them. We must face the real enemy which is Satan.
- d. Paul writes about five pieces of spiritual armor: belt, breastplate, shoes, shield, and helmet.
- e. The day of evil may be referring to increased evil near the time of Christ's return or to any time when evil is strong in the world.
- f. Paul encourages us to fight all the way through because we have already won with Christ by our side.
- g. The sword of the Spirit is the only weapon in the armor. It is the Word of God.
- h. Paul tells us to pray for God's people because we are in the body of Christ and our brothers and sisters are fighting also.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. What challenges do believers face today and how can they stand strong?
2. What do you find in these verses that can give Christians the power to live the Christian life?
3. What did Paul mean by “be strong in the Lord and in his great power”?
4. What are the pieces of God’s armor that empower us for the spiritual battle?
5. Who is the real enemy of God’s people?
6. What should Christians do when faced with temptations?
7. When a fellow believer is struggling with a problem, what can we do to help?
8. Why did Paul want prayers for himself and for God’s people?
9. How was Paul able to serve Jesus even when being held as a prisoner?

BIBLE SKILLS: *Study the Verses*

Read the verses and see these stories from the life of Paul. How were these experiences for Paul part of his spiritual battle?

Acts 13:45-50 _____

Acts 14:19-20 _____

Acts 16:22-25 _____

Acts 21:30-36 _____

Acts 27:39-44 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- God gives believers everything they need to stand strong in spiritual battles.
- Believers must prepare themselves for spiritual battles.
- Believers must depend on God through prayer. In that way we will experience victory.

How can you stand firm during times of troubles? What resources has God given you to help you stand strong? What do you need to make sure is being worn today?

What is the spiritual armor that God has provided for you? How does this armor prepare you to face spiritual battles?

Why is prayer important in your battle against evil? How do you depend on prayer for spiritual victory? In what ways do you need to depend more on prayer?

MEMORY VERSE

Put on the full armor of God so that you can fight against the devil's evil tricks. – Ephesians 6:11

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 6:10-11, drawing a circle around our enemy and around our source of strength.

In verse 10, Paul is starting to wind down his letter to the Ephesians. That is why he says “finally.” It will be a long thought, but his final direction for Christians is to be strong in the Lord. As we have seen, He has great power, so we must depend on the Lord for strength. We should not think that we can be holy or good on our own. We do not do all the hard work of right living on our own. God is with us. He does not ignore us, and He knows exactly what we need. In fact, He wants to give us power so we can be righteous before Him.

One of the main reasons we cannot stand on our own is because our enemy is the devil, and he is too clever for us. Only with God’s strength can we resist his temptation. In his prison, Paul was always guarded by Roman soldiers. Paul would have known every piece of their armor. It seems the soldier’s armor gave Paul an idea about the armor that we have to fight the spiritual war. Paul instructs us to put on the full armor of God and resist the evil one.

Where can you find strength to stand strong against the devil and against evil?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 6:12-13, answering the question “How do we protect ourselves.”

Against whom is our spiritual battle? Paul reminded us that our fight is not against the people we live with in the world. The battle is against the ruler of this world and against spiritual darkness. Yes, it is true that many people are against us, but the real enemy is the evil one. People choose who they will listen to and our sinful world makes it easy to listen to and fall for the devil’s tricks.

How do we protect ourselves? There are no worldly weapons that will help us in our battle. But there is spiritual help. Paul described our spiritual help in terms of armor. We must wear the full armor of God so we can stand firm in the fight against the powers of darkness. Paul tells us to be ready and fully dressed with the armor of God because that is

the only way we can face evil and stand strong. The fight may be long, but with God we can make it to the end of the war. And, Paul said, “You will still be standing.”

How would you encourage your brothers or sisters to keep on fighting and not be discouraged?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 6:14-15, underlining the first three pieces of our spiritual armor.

Starting in verse 14, Paul described each piece of our spiritual armor. First, there is the belt of truth. When Paul lived, the soldier’s belt was very important. It was the center piece of the armor. The belt held the robe and weapons in place. The center piece for us as Christians is this fact: the message of Jesus is true. The truth gives us confidence and protects us from lies. We need to have God’s Word of truth around us. Second is the protection of right living, also called the breastplate of righteousness. A soldier’s breastplate covered the chest, heart, and lungs. The symbol of the breastplate is that righteousness protects us at the deepest level.

Third, on our feet we need shoes. Roman soldiers wore shoes that protected and supported their feet. With shoes, soldiers could move forward swiftly into battle. Paul pictured our spiritual shoes as the good news of peace. The message of God’s peace is the foundation on which we stand. We must put on these pieces of our armor so we can stand in our spiritual battle.

How can you prepare yourself for spiritual war? How do you put on truth, righteousness, and the good news of peace?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 6:16-17, identifying the last three pieces of our spiritual armor.

Paul described three more pieces of spiritual armor. The shield of faith, like a Roman soldier's shield, defends us from harm. Paul wrote about the burning arrows of the evil one. The leather shield carried by the Roman soldier could be dipped in water, making it a good tool for putting out fiery arrows. Faith as our shield, protects us when the evil one tries to tempt us.

The soldier's helmet protected his head. The head is the "command center" of the soldier. With the head, we think and believe. With our head we make decisions every day about what we will do to be faithful. The spiritual helmet is our salvation from God. We can stand before the evil one trusting in our relationship with God.

The last piece of our armor is our only weapon. With the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, we fight back. Part of the job of the Word of God is to judge our thoughts and actions. Part of its job is to fight evil around us. With the sword of the Spirit, we can share Christ with others. When we depend on His Word we will know what to do and how to live.

How can our spiritual armor give us strength for spiritual warfare? How can you use the "sword of the Spirit?"

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Kingdom of God and Prayer*

Praying is the way we talk to God and have times of fellowship with Him. It is very important in our lives and in the work of the kingdom of God. Christians should pray and work so that God's kingdom may come and His will be done on earth. We should also pray for the return of Jesus when the final victory of Christ will be seen in history.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 6:18-20, looking for three things Paul said we should pray for.

Some Bible teachers say prayer is the battle field for spiritual warfare. Now that we have the armor, we must pray. Paul listed three things about prayer: 1) we should pray in the Spirit at all times, 2) we should pray for all kinds of different things and, 3) we are to pray for everything we need. Soldiers need to be ready for battle at all times. In the same way, we need to always be ready to pray and never give up.

Paul said we need to pray for all God's people. Who would be on your prayer list? Would you pray for pastors, leaders, and missionaries around the world? Would you pray for the Deaf men and women who serve God with you in your church?

We must be prayer warriors—fully prepared, totally equipped, deeply committed soldiers for Christ praying for our brothers and sisters who are in the fight with us for the victory of the gospel.

**How are you depending on God through prayer for spiritual victory?
What plan can you develop to improve your prayer life?**

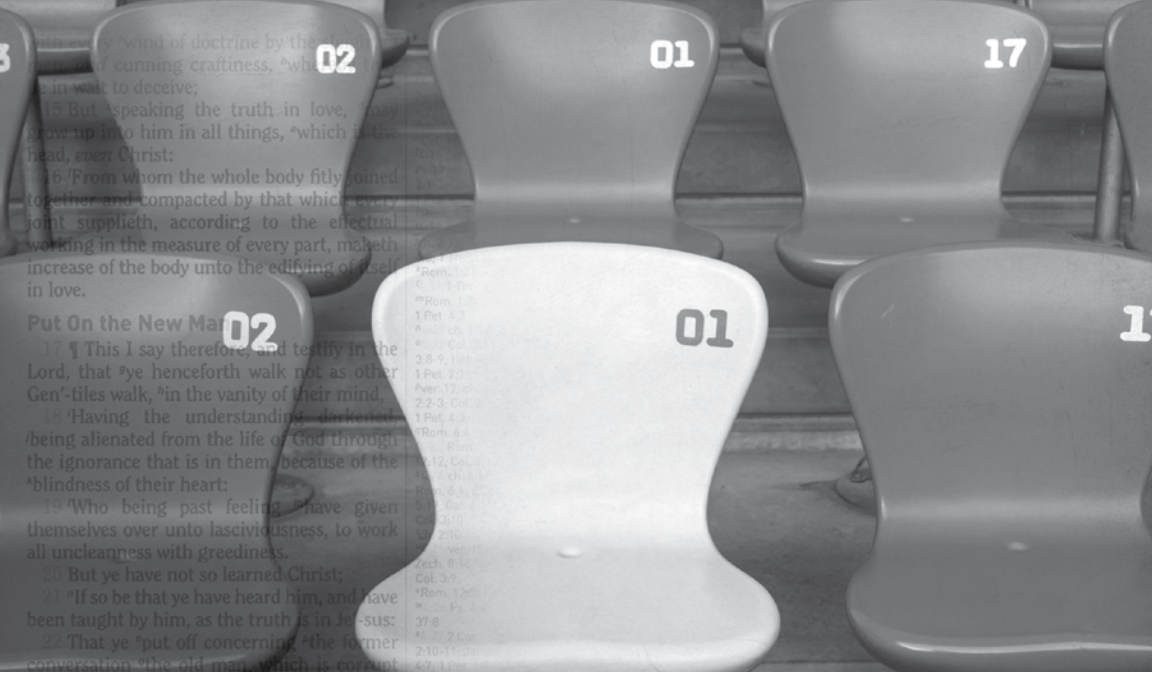
CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 6:10-20. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Discuss with your group what you have learned about the true enemy Christians face. What has God provided for you to face the enemy and win the victory?

How can you and the members of your group prepare for spiritual battle? How will the full armor of God help you?

What can you do to help your small group depend on God through prayer? What practices can you begin now to help you and your group be prayer warriors?



LEADER HELPS

As the leader of the group, you can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, and by facilitating smaller groups.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, and challenge the group to act on that passage. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Study the Bible passage.
- Pay careful attention to the In My Context section for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.

Through the Week

- Ask God to direct your creation of the group plan.
- Create a group plan, adapting the group plans to fit the needs of your group.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Connect and Share to start your conversation.
- Create your own using the ideas on pages 144-145.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early.
- Pray for the study and the group members.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.

After the Group Study Time

- Contact all group members, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests.
- Record insights gained about teaching, group members, and Scripture.
- Do it all again.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

- Encourage everyone on your ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.
- Ask them. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement such as, "I hope you took a look at the Day Three activity for this week."
- Tell them. Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- Show them. Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day One as a group.

- Invite them. Call on volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they use the Daily Exploration section.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

At the end of every session, you will find a section entitled Connect and Share. This section is designed for smaller groups of one or two people to meet weekly, holding each other accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Allow group members to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups)
- Allow groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
- You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
- Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new group members and guests.
- As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
- Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
- Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
- Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.
- Be in a smaller group as well. You may even want to host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

REJOICE

Ephesians 1:3-14

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group to understand more about the Holy Spirit's work in their lives.

ENLIST a volunteer to study the Introduction to the Book of Ephesians and summarize it for the group during the meeting.

ENLIST a volunteer to be prepared to sign Galatians 5:22-23.

WRITE the outline on the board.

BRING a box wrapped as a gift (or a picture of a gift box) to the group meeting.

FOCUS ATTENTION

INVITE the volunteer to share information from the Introduction to the Book of Ephesians.

BEGIN with the following questions and **EXPLAIN:** *When did God decide to save us? Why did He want to save us? In Paul's letter, he answered these questions. It may be hard for us to imagine, but God knew us before He created the world. He knew we would sin, and He made a plan to bring us to Himself. How did He know these things? God knows everything! Nothing surprises Him.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. God Chose Us (Ephesians 1:3-6)

CALL FOR a volunteer to sign Ephesians 1:3-6. Before they sign the verses, **DIRECT** the group to watch for reasons God chose us. **ASK** members to share the reasons they noticed. **DISCUSS** the reasons Paul gave: 1) God wanted us to be His holy people; 2) He loved us; 3) It is what He wanted; 4) It pleased Him and; 5) It brings praise to Him.

ASK: *What is grace?* (One way to explain it is God's love and mercy He gives because He wants to give it. People do not deserve or earn it. It is a gift.) **SHOW** the group the gift box you brought. Offer it to someone in the group. **EXPLAIN** that you just want to give it to them. They did not do anything to earn it. This is just a small picture of God's gift of grace to us. **SUPPLEMENT** the discussion by using questions one through three from Explore the Text.

2. Saved through Christ (Ephesians 1:7-12)

EXPLAIN: *In the next verses, Paul explained more of the blessings from God.*

SIGN Ephesians 1:7-12. **ASK:** *What does verse 7 say has happened to us in Christ?*

EXPLAIN: *Verse 9 talks about a secret purpose. Paul meant God's plan to unite Jews and Gentiles in His kingdom. He will explain more about this in chapter 3. It important to notice in verse 9 Paul again said, "This was what God wanted." We can trust God to do what He has planned because it is what He wants.*

SUPPLEMENT the discussion by using questions four through seven from Explore the Text.

3. Sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14)

SIGN Ephesians 1:13-14. **EXPLAIN:** *God's mark shows we belong to Him. It is like a seal on our lives. In Bible times, when a king wrote a letter, he would put wax on it and mark it with a seal to prove it was from him. Ranchers put a brand on their cattle to show they belong to the rancher.* **ASK:** *What is God's mark to show we are His? What are some ways believers know the Holy Spirit is in their lives?* Answers could include: He helps us remember Bible verses when we need them; He convicts us when we do wrong; He helps us recognize the truth; He helps us develop the fruit of the Spirit. **CALL FOR** the volunteer to sign Galatians 5:22-23. God will help us develop these characteristics because of the Spirit in us. **SUPPLEMENT** the discussion by using questions eight or nine from Explore the Text.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** members to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

CLOSE with prayer. **ASK** God to help us rejoice always as Paul did because of His great gift of grace.

REMEMBERED

Ephesians 1:15-23

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group. Use Paul's prayer requests as a model for your prayer.

ENLIST three volunteers to be ready to sign one of the three sections of Scripture for the session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK: *If someone were to talk about our church group to others, what do you think they would say? Do we show love for each other? Can others see our faith in God? Are we faithful to Him?* Paul heard about the Ephesians from someone. Some Bible teachers believe Paul's friend, Epaphras, told him about them. He had good news to share. The believers loved each other. They were faithful to God. This good news caused Paul to thank God. Paul's prayer in Ephesians is a good example for us to follow as we pray for our Christian brothers and sisters.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Knowledge of God (Ephesians 1:15-17)

INVITE a volunteer to sign Ephesians 1:15-17. It is important to notice that the good things Paul heard about the believers caused him to thank God. He was thankful for their strong faith. He was also thankful they loved each other. **ASK:** *After thanking God, what did Paul ask for?* **LIST** his requests on the board as the group finds them. Answers should include: A spirit of wisdom, revelation, know God better. **DISCUSS** the meaning of wisdom and revelation. **SUPPLEMENT** the discussion by using questions one through three from Explore the Text.

2. Hope of God (Ephesians 1:18-19)

INVITE another volunteer to sign Ephesians 1:18-19a. **GUIDE** the group to watch for specific requests. **ADD** the requests to the list you started on the board. Answers should include: greater understanding, know His rich blessings, know His power.

ASK: *What kinds of things do we normally ask God for when we pray for each other?* We tend to focus on physical needs, healing, financial needs, etc. While it is good to pray for these things, Paul focused on spiritual things. Having a better understanding of these spiritual matters would build faith in the believers. **SUPPLEMENT** the discussion by using questions four through six from Explore the Text.

3. Power of God (Ephesians 1:20-23)

INVITE a volunteer to sign Ephesians 1:19b-20. **ASK:** *Why is it important for believers to understand God's great power?* God is stronger than anything. His power is stronger than death. After Jesus died on the cross, He rose from the dead and then went to be at the Father's right side. We need to understand that same power is in us. His power saves and keeps us. Lead the group to find Romans 8:38-39 in their Bibles. **EMPHASIZE** how God's power holds us close to Him. We can be confident in our salvation because of His power.

INVITE the volunteer to sign Ephesians 1:21-23. **EXPLAIN:** Here Paul introduces the idea of Christ as the head of His body, the church. Christ has all authority over all things, and His position benefits His people. **SUPPLEMENT** the discussion by using questions seven through nine from Explore the Text.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. For today's closing prayer, **SIGN** Ephesians 1:17-19a as a prayer for the group. **GUIDE** the group to pray for believers they know as you sign the prayer.

RESURRECTED

Ephesians 2:1-10

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group. If there is a member who is not yet a believer, pray that God would draw them to Himself and make clear the way of salvation.

FIND a picture(s) that shows a “Before” and “After” of something. It could be a picture of a person before and after losing weight, a house before and after a remodel, or something else that shows that idea.

WRITE the outline on the board.

TAPE three large sheets of paper on the wall. You will write on these during the session, so you will also need a marker.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: *We often see advertisements showing us a before and after picture. For example, (show the picture).* **ASK:** *What happened between the before and the after pictures?* **ALLOW** for discussion.

EXPLAIN: *In today’s session we will see Paul’s clear “before and after” picture of the believer’s life.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. We Were Dead (Ephesians 2:1-3)

ASK the group to watch how Paul described the life of a believer before Christ. **SIGN** Ephesians 2:1-3. **LEAD** the group to describe a person’s life without Christ. **ASK:** *What does it mean to be spiritually dead?* (It means the person is separated from God.) As they discuss life without Christ, **WRITE** some of the descriptions on the first large sheet of paper on the wall. Answers could include: spiritually dead, sin against God, refuse to obey, please self, follow evil, etc. **REMINDE** the group that all of us were spiritually dead before Christ. We all had some of these characteristics.

2. Now Alive (Ephesians 2:4-7)

INVITE a volunteer to sign Ephesians 2:4-7. **ASK:** *What happened? What did God do?* **WRITE** answers on the second piece of paper on the wall. Answers could include: God showed His mercy, He gave us life, showed His grace, He was kind to us, etc. **LEAD** the group to find Romans 5:8 in their Bibles. **ASK:** *When did Jesus die for us? (While we were still sinners.)* God did all the work in bringing us to Himself.

3. Through Grace Alone (Ephesians 2:8-10)

EXPLAIN: *In our examples in the first part of our session, people are very proud of their success. If a person loses 100 pounds, they will explain how hard they worked to eat right and exercise. If someone remodels their house, they may brag about all the planning and work that went into it and how much it cost.* **ASK:** *What did we do for our salvation?* After some have answered, **SIGN** Ephesians 2:8-10. **EXPLAIN:** *Paul made it clear that we do not earn our salvation. There is no way we could ever be good enough to become saved. It is God's gift to us. We can't brag about the hard work we did to have new life in Christ.*

GUIDE the group to look at verse 10 again. **ASK:** *What should we do now that we have new life in Christ?* **WRITE** on the third piece of paper, "Do good works." **DISCUSS** some examples of "good works." The three papers on the wall give a picture of the "before and after" in the life of a believer. **SUPPLEMENT** the discussion by using questions eight and nine from Explore the Text.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer. Praise God and thank Him for the free gift of salvation.

RECONCILED

Ephesians 2:11-22

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group. Pray they will learn to love people who are different from themselves.

ENLIST two volunteers to help lead a group discussion. One will lead in a discussion of Colossians 3:11 and help their group to list people who are sometimes separated from each other, but are united in Christ. The other volunteer will lead their group in discussing how to build relationships in the church. They will discuss Acts 2:42,45-46.

FOCUS ATTENTION

WRITE “wall of hate” on the board. Lead the group to discuss the meaning of that phrase. **ASK:** *What walls of hate do we see in our world today?* **ALLOW** for discussion. **EXPLAIN:** *Today we see hate between all kinds of groups. Racism is a problem. People from some countries hate people from other countries. In Bible times, to the Jews there were two main groups: the Jews and all others. The others were called Gentiles or the uncircumcised. But God had a plan! His plan for salvation would break down the walls of hate between people.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Brought Near (Ephesians 2:11-13)

SIGN Ephesians 2:11-13. **ASK:** *Does anyone know where circumcision started?* God chose Abraham to be the father of the Jewish nation.

Circumcision was a sign of the agreement between God and the Jews.

CALL for a volunteer to sign Genesis 17:10-14. **EXPLAIN:** *Circumcision marked a difference between the Jews and all other people. In verse 13, Paul says the Ephesians were far from God. What happened because of Christ? They came near to God.*

SUPPLEMENT the discussion by using questions one through three from Explore the Text.

2. Peace Announced (Ephesians 2:14-18)

SIGN Ephesians 2:14-18. **ASK:** *Why was there a wall of hate between the Jews and Gentiles? How did Jesus bring peace between them?* **EXPLAIN:** *Jesus' death on the cross made the way for both Jews and Gentiles to come to God. As they come close to Him, they unite with each other.*

In verse 17, Paul said Christ preached to those far and near. Isaiah also talked about this in Isaiah 57:19. "I will give peace, real peace, to those far and near, and I will heal them," says the LORD." The Jews were those who were near. They had a relationship with God because of the agreement with Abraham. Those far are the Gentiles who can now also have a relationship with God.

SUPPLEMENT the discussion by using questions four through six from Explore the Text.

3. Citizens Together (Ephesians 2:19-22)

SIGN Ephesians 2:19-22. In this passage, Paul used a picture of a building to represent the church. God is building His church by bringing people of all nations together. They are united in Him.

CREATE two teams. **DIRECT** one group to find Colossians 3:11 in their Bibles. **INSTRUCT** them to list other groups of people that are united because of Christ. Answers could include: Deaf people, hard of hearing people, and hearing people; people from different countries; ASL Signers, English signers; poor people and rich people; etc. **DIRECT** the second team to focus on Acts 2:42,45-46 and discuss ways believers can make their relationships stronger. After a short time, **INVITE** the teams to share their lists with the other.

SUPPLEMENT the discussion by using questions seven through nine from Explore the Text.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

CLOSE with prayer. **ASK** God to help us build unity among our brothers and sisters.

REVEALED

Ephesians 3:1-13

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group to have the desire and boldness to share Christ with others.

ENLIST a volunteer to practice signing the story of Peter and Cornelius from Acts 10:1-35 so they can sign it for the session.

PRACTICE signing John 3:16 so you will be able to help groups if they need help with their interpretation.

FOCUS ATTENTION

REVIEW the main points of last week's session. Then invite the volunteer to sign the story of Peter and Cornelius. **ASK:** *Why was it important for Peter to have a vision from God?* **EXPLAIN:** *Many Jews believed the Gentiles were unclean. They had nothing to do with them. The vision helped Peter understand that all people were the same to God.* **ASK:** *How should this idea influence our actions with people who are not like us?*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Secret (Ephesians 3:1-6)

EXPLAIN: *The title of the session today is "Revealed." This means to show something or to let people know about something that they did not know before. Paul wrote to share the secret he learned from God.* **INVITE** the group to watch as you sign Ephesians 3:1-6 to see what the secret was. After you sign the verses, **LEAD** in a discussion of questions one through four in Explore the Text.

NOTE that Paul used the idea of believers being part of a body. Remember each member has a place in the church body.

2. The Announcement (Ephesians 3:7-9)

CALL for a volunteer to sign Ephesians 3:7-9. **ASK:** *Why do you think Paul felt he was unimportant?* **DISCUSS** what Paul's life was like before he met Christ. **ASK:** *How did Paul respond to God's gift of grace?* Answers could include: he obeyed, he shared the good news, and he accepted the job of telling the secret of God's plan. **EXPLAIN:** *All believers have experienced God's gift of grace. We can share the good news with others. We should obey God and share the news that His gift of grace is for all people.*

3. The Purpose (Ephesians 3:10-13)

EXPLAIN: *Some people struggle to find a reason or a purpose for their lives. When we become believers, we have a new purpose. God's purpose becomes our purpose.* **DIRECT** the group to look for the purpose while you sign Ephesians 3:10-13. After you sign the verses, **LEAD** in a discussion about God's purpose.

EXPLAIN: *Paul mentioned his suffering was for the Ephesians' glory. Normally when the Romans arrested someone, it was shameful. Paul felt differently about his time in prison. He knew his suffering was because he told the good news to all people. He accepted his suffering as part of his work for the Lord.* **ASK:** *Have any of you experienced suffering for sharing God's message with others? How can we prepare for suffering that might come?*

SUPPLEMENT the discussion by using questions eight and nine from Explore the Text.

IN MY CONTEXT

GUIDE the group to spend some time practicing signing John 3:16 together. This verse is a good one they can share with someone. It gives a clear message of God's love and grace for all.

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

CLOSE with prayer. Ask God to give us boldness to share His message with others.

RESIDE

Ephesians 3:14-21

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group to depend on Christ's power in them.

ENLIST a volunteer to practice signing Ephesians 3:20-21 as a song. They will lead the group in signing the verses together during the session.

BRING a flashlight to use for the introduction to the session. Take the batteries out of the flashlight but bring them with you.

FOCUS ATTENTION

SHARE: Paul wrote to the Galatians about the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Believers have these characteristics because the Holy Spirit lives in us. Without the Holy Spirit, we do not have power. Hand the flashlight to a volunteer and tell them to turn it on. When it doesn't work, ask them why it didn't work. Put the batteries in and ask them to turn it on. With power, it works.

Believers have an important job to do. We have a wonderful message to share. We need power to live right. God does not leave us alone; He gave us His Spirit. In today's session, we will see more about how the Spirit that lives in us helps us.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Asking in Prayer (Ephesians 3:14-15)

INVITE a volunteer to sign Ephesians 3:14-15. **EXPLAIN:** *Paul again expressed his love for the believers by praying for them. Normally Jews stood to pray. By bowing on his knees, Paul showed his deep feelings.*

DISCUSS: *Why did Paul pray often for the believers? Why is it important for us to pray for each other today?*

2. Living in Us (Ephesians 3:16-19)

CALL for another volunteer to sign Ephesians 3:16-19. **ASK:** *What did Paul ask God to do for the believers?* **WRITE** their answers on the board as they list the prayer requests. Answers include: give them power to be strong inwardly, that Christ would live in their hearts by faith, they would have strong love and understand God's love. **EMPHASIZE** we can only have these things because we have the Holy Spirit living in us.

Paul mentioned love several times in these verses. It is important for us to understand God's love. **LEAD** the group to find 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 in their Bibles. **EXPLAIN** that these verses describe the kind of love God has. Because we have His Spirit in us, we can also have this kind of love for others. **CREATE** groups of three. **INSTRUCT** each group to read the verses together and discuss examples of love. After a few minutes **LEAD** the groups to share their examples with the larger group.

3. Giving Honor to God (Ephesians 3:20-21)

ASK: *When you understand more about God's love, how do you feel? When you understand how God's Spirit in us gives us power, how do you feel?* **ALLOW** for discussion, then **EXPLAIN:** *After Paul talked about God's love and power, he ended his prayer with praise to God.* **INVITE** the volunteer to lead the group to sign Ephesians 3:20-21 together.

SELECT one or two questions from Explore the Text to review the lesson.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer. Ask God to help us understand more about the power we have in us because of His Spirit. Also, ask Him to help us remember to pray more for our brothers and sisters.

WALKING TOGETHER

Ephesians 4:1-10

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group to understand the importance of unity in the church body.

FIND a picture of a three-legged race to show the class as a fun example of walking together.

FOCUS ATTENTION

SHARE: In Ephesians 2:10 Paul mentioned how God planned for believers to do good works. We do good works because God saved us. He called us to be His children, and then gave us the responsibility to look like and act like His children. In Ephesians 4, Paul explained more about what the Christian life looks like. One important part of our responsibility is walking together. The Bible often uses the word “walk” as a picture of living. Psalm 1:1 says, “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked...” (NIV). God told the Jewish nation, “I will walk among you and be your God” (Leviticus 26:12). As believers, we live the Christian life together, walking together for God’s glory.

You may have seen a three-legged race. Two people have one of their legs tied to one leg of the other. They must work together to walk smoothly and win the race. Christians work together so they can do great things for God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Walking Right (Ephesians 4:1-3)

SIGN Ephesians 4:1-3. **ASK:** *What does it mean to “live up to the life to which God called you?”* **LEAD** the group in a discussion of what the believer’s life should look like. Be sure they mention the ideas Paul listed (humble,

gentle, patient, loving) in their discussion. **ASK:** *What makes us able to have good relationships with each other? (We are joined together in the Spirit.)* In the next few verses, we will see more about how we can walk together.

2. Living in Unity (Ephesians 4:4-6)

EXPLAIN: *In our world today, there is much emphasis on being an individual, independent, and different. We believe in our rights as individuals. But in the next verses, Paul emphasized unity of the believers.* **ENCOURAGE** the group to count how many times Paul used the word “one” while you sign Ephesians 4:4-6. **ASK:** *Why is it important for believers to show unity?* **ALLOW** for discussion. Then **LEAD** the group to find John 13:34-35 in their Bibles. **INVITE** a volunteer to sign the verses. **REMIND** them that our actions can help a lost world to learn about God and His saving grace.

3. Enjoying Victory (Ephesians 4:7-10)

EXPLAIN: *Paul used an interesting picture in Ephesians 4:7-10. In Bible times, if a king won a battle there would be a parade. The king would give gifts to the people in his kingdom to celebrate the victory. Jesus won the victory over sin and death. He gives the gift of grace to believers as well as spiritual gifts so they can work in His kingdom.*

INVITE a volunteer to sign Ephesians 4:7-10. **SUPPLEMENT** the discussion by using questions six through nine from Explore the Text.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer. **ASK** God to give us a heart of love for our brothers so we can walk together in a way that honors Him.

WALKING FORWARD

Ephesians 4:11-16

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group to grow in their Christian lives.

FIND a picture of a baby to bring to the session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: *When we have the picture in our mind of the idea “walk,” we see movement. When we walk, we do not stay in one place. We usually move forward. The title for today’s session is Walking Forward because Paul encouraged believers to grow in their faith. Our goal should be to become mature Christians.*

God does not expect believers to grow on their own. Parents take care of their children and give them the things they need to help them grow. In the same way, our heavenly Father has a plan to help us grow.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. God Gives Leaders (Ephesians 4:11)

SIGN Ephesians 4:11. **REMINDE** the group about last week’s session. We talked about how Jesus gave us His gift of grace and spiritual gifts. There are other lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible, but this list is specific to the people who help Christians grow. **LEAD** the group to list the responsibilities Paul mentioned. **WRITE** them on the board as they list them.

EXPLAIN: *Apostles were the people who were with Jesus during His ministry and saw Him after He rose from the dead. The prophets had the job to encourage, warn and explain things to the believers. The prophets’ and apostles’ teachings were the foundation for the church. (See Ephesians 2:20.) Those who told the good news are our evangelists and missionaries. The last two are pastors and teachers.*

2. To Prepare the Church (Ephesians 4:12-14)

ASK: *Why did God give the spiritual gifts we listed?* **ASK** the group to read Ephesians 4:12. **DISCUSS** ways these gifts help make Christians stronger and ways Christians serve or minister.

ASK: *How long will we need to learn and grow as Christians?* **ALLOW** for discussion and then invite a volunteer to sign Ephesians 4:13. **EXPLAIN:** We will continue growing until Jesus takes us home or He comes back.

ASK: *When a Christian is not mature, what kinds of problems might he or she have?* **ALLOW** for discussion, then **SIGN** Ephesians 4:14. As Christians grow in Christ, they will know more about God's Word and His truth. They will recognize false teaching.

3. As a Body (Ephesians 4:15-16)

SIGN Ephesians 4:15-16. **REMINDE** the group that God does not expect us to learn and grow alone. We also do not serve and minister alone. His plan is for us to be part of a body. **ASK:** *Why does each part of the body do its work?* (To help the whole body grow and be strong.) Discuss different ways believers serve each other in the church.

IN MY CONTEXT

SHOW the picture of the baby. **ASK:** *What if I told you this baby is 30 years old?* You would think something is wrong. We expect babies to grow. In the same way, God expects us to mature as Christians.

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

CLOSE with prayer. Ask God to help us grow and serve in the way He wants.

WALKING DIFFERENTLY

Ephesians 4:17-32

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group to understand how to live in a way so that others in the world will know they are believers.

ENLIST two volunteers to prepare to share their testimony. They should include: 1) what their lives were like before they learned about Christ, 2) how they decided to trust Christ and follow Him, and 3) what their lives has been like after becoming believers.

FIND a picture of a butterfly to show during the session.

WRITE the outline on the board.

FOCUS ATTENTION

SHOW the picture of a butterfly. **ASK:** *How did the butterfly become a butterfly? What was the process?* **ALLOW** for answers. **EXPLAIN:** *People often think of a butterfly as a picture of the Christian life. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, "If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have gone; everything is made new!"*

INVITE the volunteers to share their testimonies.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Old (Ephesians 4:17-19)

ASK: *When a caterpillar becomes a butterfly, does the butterfly continue to crawl?* Of course not. In this passage of Scripture, Paul begged the believers NOT to continue in the old ways. **INVITE** a volunteer to sign Ephesians 4:17-19. **LEAD** the group in a discussion of what life is like for people who do not believe.

SUPPLEMENT discussion using questions one through three from Explore the Text.

2. The Change (Ephesians 4:20-24)

EXPLAIN: *In some Bible translations, the picture of the change in the believer's life is the same as changing clothes. When the person meets Christ, they take off the old, dirty clothes (old life). Then they put on the new clothes of the new life.* **SIGN** Ephesians 4:20-24. **LEAD** the group in a discussion of how a believer's life changes.

3. The New (Ephesians 4:25-32)

The next section of Scripture has very clear instruction about what the Christian life should look like. **INVITE** a member to sign Ephesians 4:25 for the group. **DISCUSS** reasons why it is important to tell the truth.

LEAD the group to read Ephesians 4:26-27 in their Bibles. **MENTION** that believers will experience anger just as we experience other emotions. However, we have the Spirit to help us control our response to anger. **DISCUSS** how we can respond to anger in positive ways.

In the discussion of Ephesians 4:28, **EMPHASIZE** one of the reasons we work is to be able to help others.

Ephesians 4:29 explains clearly how we should communicate with others. **DISCUSS** the kinds of things we can say to encourage each other. Of course, there are times we may need to correct each other. We can do this in a loving way that helps build and not tear down.

As a group **SIGN** Ephesians 4:30. **ASK:** *How do believers make the Holy Spirit sad?* Answers could include: When we choose to sin, when we ignore the Holy Spirit's conviction, when we hurt our brothers and sisters, etc.

SIGN Ephesians 4:31-32. **FOCUS** on the command to forgive each other. God is our example. We were sinners with no hope and He forgave us. We can forgive others in the same way He forgave us.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

CLOSE with prayer. Thank God for making us new. Pray that our lives show others the change in us.

WALKING IN LOVE

Ephesians 5:1-14

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group. Ask God to help them walk in love daily.

ENLIST three volunteers to sign one section each of the Bible verses for the session.

GIVE three other volunteers one of the following verses to read: John 8:12, Colossians 1:13, and Matthew 5:14-16. During the session they will share with the group what they learned from their verses.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK: *Have you ever noticed how children copy their parents? (Allow members to give some examples.)* **EXPLAIN:** *Sometimes they show the same facial expressions. Other times their actions or attitudes are the same. When a child acts in a particular way, others may see them and say, "I bet they learned that from their dad or mom!"*

When we are around another person a lot, we take on their characteristics. Children are with their parents more than anyone else, so they copy them. As Christians, we want to look like Jesus in our actions and attitudes. This means we need to spend time with Him in prayer and Bible study. We need to be aware of the Holy Spirit in us and pay attention to His leading. Then when others see us they can say, "I bet they learned that from their Father!"

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Copy Christ (Ephesians 5:1-2)

In Ephesians 5, Paul continued teaching what believers' lives should look like. Invite the volunteer to sign Ephesians 5:1-2. **ASK:** *How did Christ show His love for us? How should we respond to His love?* **EXPLAIN:** Jesus gave His life as a sacrifice for us because of His love. **INVITE** members to find John 15:13 in their Bibles. Jesus showed the greatest love. We will probably never need to die for our friends, but we may need to give up

something for them to show our love. **ASK:** *What could you give up for your friends? (Time to disciple/mentor, time for fellowship, money or things to help, etc.)*

SUPPLEMENT discussion using questions one and two from Explore the Text.

2. Be Separate (Ephesians 5:3-7)

INVITE the next volunteer to sign Ephesians 5:3-7. **EXPLAIN:** *Our world today approves many different kinds of sexual sin. God created sex to be a good thing for a husband and wife. Sex outside of marriage is sin.*

This passage also says greed is wrong. **ASK:** *What is greed? Greedy people want things more than they want God. That is why Paul said greedy people serve a false God.* **ASK:** *What else did Paul say is not right for believers?*

Some may wonder about verse 5. We need to remember God will save those who believe in Christ and follow Him. **SIGN** 1 Corinthians 6:11.

3. Show the Light (Ephesians 5:8-14)

INVITE the third volunteer to sign Ephesians 5:8-14. Also **DIRECT** the three volunteers to share what they learned from their assigned verses (John 8:12, Colossians 1:13, and Matthew 5:14-16). **EXPLAIN:** *Paul said we should show that the things done in darkness are wrong.* **ASK:** *How can we do that? What kind of attitude should we have when we talk with others about their sin? (See Galatians 6:1.)* We should have a humble and loving attitude.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

CLOSE with prayer. Thank God for making us children of the light. Pray our lives will look more and more like Jesus.

WALKING WISELY

Ephesians 5:15-21

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group to choose to live wisely.

ENLIST a volunteer to prepare to sign the story about Solomon from 2 Chronicles 1:7-12 during the group session.

On the board, **WRITE** “Wise” on one side and “Unwise” on the other side.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Last week we focused on the difference between the light and the darkness. Because we live in God’s light we should live wisely. **ASK:** *What is wisdom?*

CALL for the volunteer to sign the story of Solomon from 2 Chronicles 1:7-12. **ASK:** *How did God feel about Solomon’s request for wisdom?* **ALLOW** for discussion, then **EXPLAIN:** *We can ask for wisdom, too. James 1:5 tells us God will give us wisdom when we ask. He wants us to live wisely as His children and is happy to help us.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Be Wise (Ephesians 5:15-17)

SIGN Ephesians 5:15-17. **DISCUSS** the difference between acting in a wise way and acting in a way that is not wise. **LEAD** the group to write wise actions on the board under “Wise” and unwise actions under “Unwise.” Actions under “Wise” would include: use opportunities for good and learn what God wants. “Unwise” actions may include: foolish, misses opportunities to do good. **ASK:** *Why should we take advantage of opportunities to do good?* How can we learn what God wants?

GUIDE the group to find James 3:17 in their Bibles and read more descriptions of wise living. **LEAD** them to list the characteristics of the wisdom that comes from God. **ADD** these to the board.

2. Be Filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)

SIGN Ephesians 5:18. **ASK** members what should go under Wise (be filled with the Spirit) and what should go under Unwise (drunk with wine). **ADD** those to the board.

EXPLAIN: *All believers have the Holy Spirit. Remember, He is God's mark on us to show we belong to Him. He is always with us. (See John 14:16-17.) Being filled with the Spirit means we obey Him and follow His influence. When we ignore the Holy Spirit, we are not allowing Him to fill us. We need to yield to obey Him continually.* **GUIDE** members to find John 16:12-15 in their Bibles.

DISCUSS the work the Holy Spirit does in our lives.

3. Be Real (Ephesians 5:19-21)

SIGN Ephesians 5:19-21. **EXPLAIN:** *As the Holy Spirit fills our lives, He will encourage and inspire us to specific actions.* **LEAD** members to list the actions mentioned in verses 19-21. Actions include: talking about God's Word to each other, singing, giving thanks, and yielding to each other. **DISCUSS** the actions. **EXPLAIN:** *Because all believers have the Holy Spirit in them, all believers should show these actions and attitudes.* **ASK:** *Do all believers, even yourselves, have these actions and attitudes in their lives. Why or why not?*

ASK: *What does it mean to "yield to obey each other?"* **LEAD** members to find Romans 12:10 and Philippians 2:3 in their Bibles. These verses say more about the attitude we should have toward our brothers and sisters.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

CLOSE with prayer. Thank God for living in us by the Holy Spirit. Pray we will allow Him to fill us more.

WALKING AS FAMILY

Ephesians 5:22-6:4

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group. Pray they will allow God to influence their family relationships.

ENLIST four volunteers to each sign one section of the verses for the session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

CALL attention to the final verse studied in the previous session.

EXPLAIN: *Paul said believers should “yield to obey each other as you would to Christ” (Ephesians 5:21). This verse is like a bridge between two ideas. It connects to the verses before it because it describes an action that comes from the Holy Spirit filling a believer. It also connects to the verses after that talk about the family. Each family member has a responsibility within the family. Having a humble and yielding attitude toward each other helps members to succeed in their responsibility to the family. Today we will learn about God’s plan for the family. He knows exactly the best way to make family relationships work well.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Wives (Ephesians 5:22-24)

INVITE the first volunteer to sign Ephesians 5:22-24. **EXPLAIN:** *Remember verse 21: we are to yield to each other. However, in a marriage someone must lead. There will be times that someone must make a decision.* **ASK:** *How should the wife handle that kind of situation?*

When wives yield to their husbands, they show a picture of how the church yields to Christ. This is a picture the world needs to see. **REMINDE** the group that yielding does not mean that abuse is permitted or accepted.

2. Husbands (Ephesians 5:25-33)

INVITE the next volunteer to sign Ephesians 5:25-33. **ASK:** *As head of his family, the husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. How would you describe Christ's love?* **ALLOW** for discussion. **ASK:** *If husbands love like Christ loves, how do you think wives would respond?*

NOTICE in verse 33, there is one more action for wives. **ASK:** *Why do you think respect is important? How can a wife show respect for her husband? How would it make him feel?*

3. Children (Ephesians 6:1-3)

INVITE the third volunteer to sign Ephesians 6:1-3. **EXPLAIN:** *Children also have a responsibility in the family. They are to obey their parents. This is not a new idea. Paul quoted the command from the Old Testament.* **ASK:** *What is special about this command? (It comes with a promise.) The promise was for the Israelites as they took the promised land, but in a general way it applies to children still.*

ASK: *Should adult children still honor their parents? How?* **EXPLAIN:** *Some children do not have Christian parents. They can still honor their parents by honoring and obeying Christ.*

4. Parents (Ephesians 6:4)

INVITE the last volunteer to sign Ephesians 6:4. **EXPLAIN:** *There is just one short verse for parents, but it includes important responsibilities for parents and a warning.* **ASK:** *What is the warning? Why is it important? What should parents do?* **ALLOW** for discussion. **EXPLAIN:** *There is a proverb that gives comfort to many parents. Proverbs 22:6 says, "Train children to live the right way, and when they are old, they will not stray from it." It is worth the effort to teach our children the ways of the Lord.*

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share. **CLOSE** with prayer. Thank God for His plan for families. Ask Him for help to follow His plan more closely.

WALKING TO BATTLE

Ephesians 6:10-20

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group. Pray that God will prepare them for spiritual battles.

ENLIST a volunteer to practice describing the armor of God in Ephesians 6:14-17 in ASL so they can share it during the session.

RECRUIT another volunteer to prepare to sign the story of the temptation of Jesus from Matthew 4:1-11. They will sign it during the session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

TELL the group you would like for them to make a cake today. They will need to make enough cake for the whole group. They need sugar, flour, butter, etc. But there is no oven, no sugar, flour, or butter. You don't have any of those things, and they can't go to the grocery store. You still want them to make a cake. That makes no sense, right? Why would you ask them to do something that isn't possible?

Paul wrote many instructions for believers. God wants believers to live right in a way that honors Him. We live in a world with evil. We must be prepared for spiritual battle. God does not expect us to fight on our own. He gives us what we need for the task. Paul described the tools God gives us for battle.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Aware (Ephesians 6:10-13)

SIGN Ephesians 6:10-13. Paul wanted believers to understand there is a battle we must fight. We do not need to depend on our own power. We can stand strong in God's power. **ASK:** *Who are we fighting against? Why is it important to know our fight is not against people?*

Some people do not believe the devil is real. They do not believe in spiritual things. Paul made it clear there are spiritual powers of evil. We must prepare to stand against them. If we depend on God's power and provision, we will be able to stand strong to the end. We must remember, Jesus already beat Satan at the cross.

2. Prepared (Ephesians 6:14-17)

CALL on the volunteer to describe the armor of God. **ENCOURAGE** the group to note how many things are for protection. Also, they should note how many weapons we have. Truth and right living are characteristics that help protect us. The good news of peace helps us stand strong.

ASK: *Why does the good news make us strong?*

ASK: *What are the "burning arrows of the Evil One?" What protects us from them?* **DISCUSS**, then **ASK:** *What is our weapon?* **EXPLAIN:** *Jesus is our example.* **INVITE** the volunteer to sign the story from Matthew 4:1-11. After the story **ASK:** *How did Jesus fight the temptations He faced? (He used Scripture.)*

It is important to remember, we must "put on" the armor. We must use our weapon. It does not help us if we ignore God's provision and try to take on the enemy ourselves.

3. Support (Ephesians 6:18-20)

SIGN Ephesians 6:18-20. **EXPLAIN:** *Remember we have the Holy Spirit. He will help us pray and ask for the things we need.* **ASK:** *Who did Paul tell the believers to pray for? Who are some people we should pray for?* **MAKE** a list of people and leaders who need God's strength for their work. **SPEND** some time praying together for the people on the list.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** the group to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

CLOSE with prayer. Ask God to remind us to use His armor and trust in His power to fight the battle against evil.

LEADER PACK

»» PACK ITEM 1

Map: Paul's Second and Third Journeys

Sessions 1-13

Use the map on page 147 or locate a map in a Bible atlas that shows Paul's missionary journeys.

»» PACK ITEM 2

Outline of Ephesians

Sessions 1-13

Refer to the outline printed on page 7.

»» PACK ITEM 3

Poster: The City of Ephesus

Sessions 1,4,6,8,10

Locate a Bible atlas or Bible dictionary that shows the city of Ephesus during Paul's lifetime.

»» PACK ITEM 4

Poster: Ephesians 2: Old and New

Sessions 3,5,11

Create a poster that lists characteristics of a life before Christ, as listed in Ephesians 2:1-3 and the characteristics of a new life in Christ, described in Ephesians 2:4-6.

»» PACK ITEM 5

Poster: The Armor of God

Session 13

Locate a depiction of a first-century soldier's armor to display.

»» **PACK ITEM 6**

Key Verses: Ephesians 2:8-9

Session 3

Create a poster that lists Ephesians 2:8-9: “For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast.”

»» **PACK ITEM 7**

Handout: Ephesians Time Line

Sessions 2,8

Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events in Ephesians (from 1400 BC–AD 110). Use it as a reference during this study.

»» **PACK ITEM 8**

Handout: Memory Verse Bookmark

Sessions 1-13

Make a list of these suggested memory verses to distribute to your group:

- Ephesians 1:7
- Ephesians 1:18
- Ephesians 2:8-9
- Ephesians 2:14
- Ephesians 3:6
- Ephesians 3:17
- Ephesians 4:1
- Ephesians 4:14-15
- Ephesians 4:23-24
- Ephesians 5:1-2
- Ephesians 5:18
- Ephesians 6:2-3
- Ephesians 6:11

»» **PACK ITEM 9**

Handout: Mystery in the New Testament

Session 5

Use a Bible dictionary to create a handout that defines mystery in the New Testament. Make note of the following Scriptures:

- Mark 4:11
- 1 Corinthians 2:7-8
- Ephesians 1:9
- Ephesians 2:12-13
- Ephesians 3:3-5
- Ephesians 6:19

»» **PACK ITEM 10**

Handout: Ephesians and Colossians

Sessions 8,10

Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to create a chart that compares similar themes in Ephesians and Colossians.

»» **PACK ITEM 11**

Handout: Armor in Ephesians

Session 13

Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to explain the different parts and purposes of “the full armor of God” (Eph. 6:11,13).

»» **PACK ITEM 12**

Handout: Unity in the New Testament

Sessions 4,7,12

Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to create a handout that discusses Christian unity (Rom. 15:5-6; Eph. 4:3-6; Phil. 2:1-2), the root causes of church division (Rom. 15:7; 1 Cor. 3:1-4; Phil. 2:1-4; Jas. 4:1-12), and the role of believers in every generation who bear the responsibility of making unity a reality (Phil. 2:3-4).

»» **PACK ITEM 13**

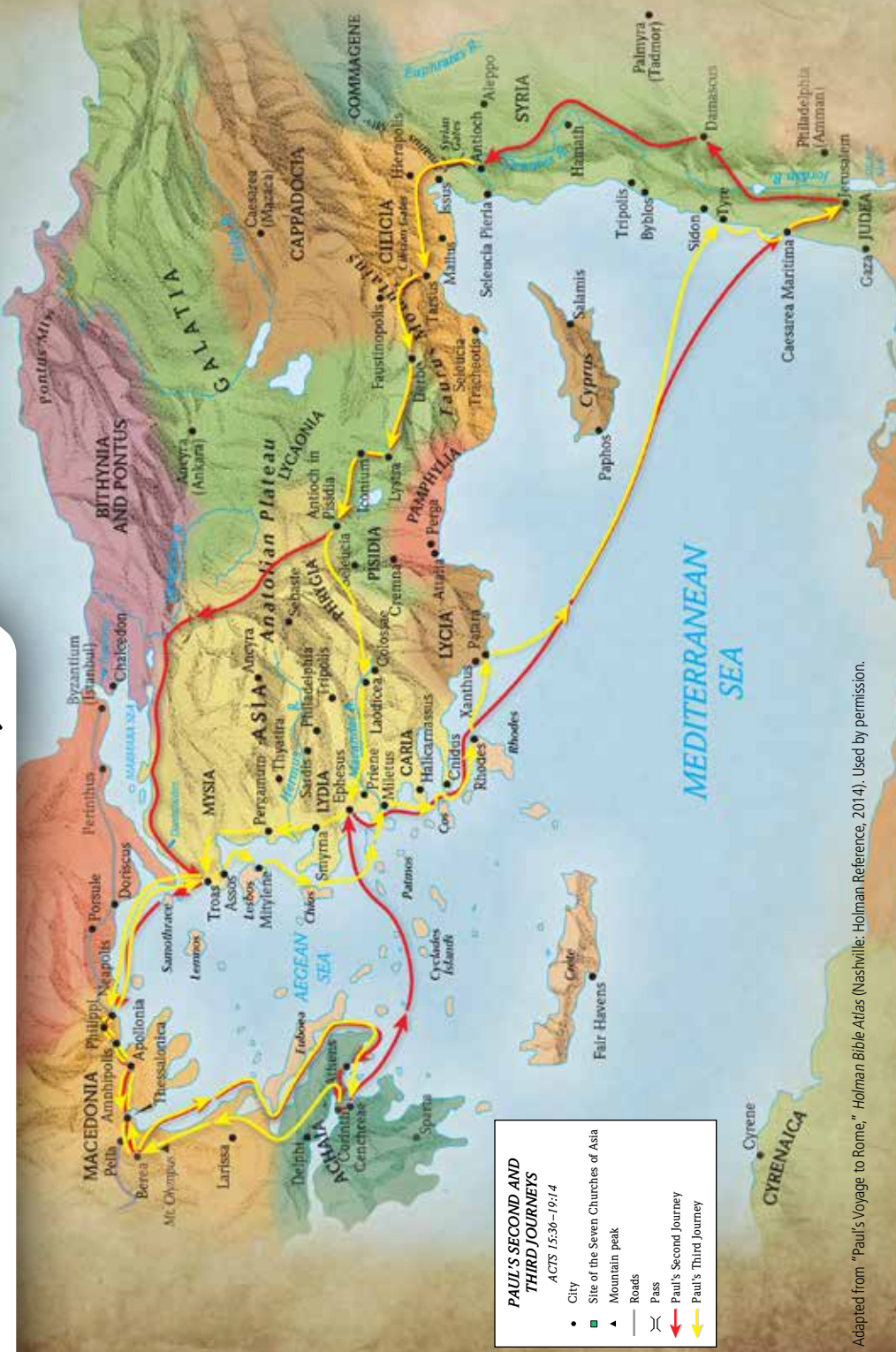
Handout: The Trinity in Ephesians

Sessions 2,6,7,11

Use a Bible dictionary or commentary to create a handout that expounds on the Trinity in Ephesians. List these Scriptures as a guide:

- Ephesians 1:3,7-8,13-14
- Ephesians 1:17
- Ephesians 2:18
- Ephesians 2:22
- Ephesians 3:14-19
- Ephesians 4:4-6
- Ephesians 5:18-21

Paul's Second and Third Journeys



Ephesians

A basic saying of the Christian life is “become who you are.” Because we have been brought to life in Christ, we can live new and distinctive lives through the power of God’s grace. “Become who you are” actually captures the theme of Ephesians; Paul wove it into the very fabric of the book. Chapters 1–3 are about the new life given to us in Christ; chapters 4–6 are about the new lifestyle that is based on this new life. The hinge of the entire letter is found in one word: *therefore* (4:1). It reminds us that because we have been made alive in Christ, we are now to live and walk in a way that is worthy of the gospel. As you engage in this study of Ephesians, prepare to be challenged with this key question: “How can I become in daily life who I am already in Christ?”



Let the Word dwell in you.

The Promise of a

18 But with thee
enant; and thou sh
thou, and thy sons, an
wives with thee.

19 And of every livin
of every sort shalt tho
keep them alive with
and female.

20 Of fowls after the
ter their kind, of ever
earth after his kind,
come unto thee, to ke

here, and its meaning is
tions include "roof" or "t
then the text probably in
inches over the sides of
dow," then it refers to an
four sides of the boat fr

6:17 Only after He com
did God tell him why it w
a flood—a term used onl
all-destroying flood in No
earth shall die. The bibli
in Genesis 6–8 most nat
covered the entire globe.
this (2 Pet. 2:5, 3:6). That
dominant Christian unde
remains so today. Belie
explain the flood's impac
also tackle questions a
quired to flood the entir
preflood geography, so
have needed four times
the flood to cover the b
in the light some defen
gered that preflood ge
graphy. Specifically, the
was later in the preflo
to flood and that the viol
geographical and geolog
ical approach suggestin
ity is largely the same.
greater quantity of water
lost by an unknown mec
was greatly diminished a

6:18 The term *covenant*
means between two partic
parties.

6:19 God's preservation
of a part of every kind of a
male and one female on
every