

Week 1: Ephesians 1:1-14

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Study Questions

1. According to Ephesians 1:3–10, what has God done (v. 4), what is He doing (v. 7), or what will He do (v. 10)?
2. According to 1:3-10, what do we “have”? What blessings has He blessed us with?
3. What does adoption mean when God is doing it?
4. Is understanding God as Father a difficult concept for you? Does it change your view of God in any way?
5. How would you define grace?
6. What “riches” has God lavished on us?
7. A “mystery” in the New Testament refers to something that was previously hidden but has now been revealed. According to verses 9 and 10, what is “the mystery” that has now been revealed?
8. We live in a culture that is fixated on the matter of personal identity. Why is the “in Christ” or “in Him” indicatives (3, 7, 9, 11, and 13) so important to a Christian’s understanding of his/her fundamental identity?
9. “Blessing” and “Praise” is a common refrain in these verses (3, 4, 12, and 13). If you began to see bringing Him praise as your purpose in life, would that change your life goals?
10. How are you bringing Him praise in your life today?



Week 2: Ephesians 1:15-23

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Study Questions

1. In this prayer, Paul speaks of God as “the Father of glory” (v. 17). How do those two terms (‘Father’ and ‘glory’) shape our understanding of the God whom we pray?
2. Paul has heard about their “faith in Jesus” and “their love for all the saints.” How are these two connected in the Christian faith and life?
3. In this section, what are some things that Paul prayed that the Ephesians would see?
4. How does God’s Spirit enable us to know God?
5. D.A. Carson asked and answered, “What is the greatest need in the church today? It is a deeper knowledge of God.... We need to know God better.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?
6. How does ‘biblical hope’ differ from the ways in which we normally use the term ‘hope’?
7. What is the example that Paul uses to illustrate God’s power (vv. 19-20)? Why do you think that he chose that over other possible examples?
8. What practical difference would it make if we understood our hope, God’s inheritance, and God’s power better?
9. Does it surprise you that God places such value on the church today? What is unique about the church that cannot be found in any other institution in the world?

Action Step: Is there a struggle in your life for which you need to rely upon God’s power? Temptation? Attitude? A thorny relationship? Is there some difficult thing you need to do—saying “no,” saying “yes,” or saying “sorry”? Review Paul’s prayer, ask for God’s guidance, and act in God’s power.



Week 3: Ephesians 2:1-10

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Study Questions

1. How does Paul describe the pre-Christian status in verses 1-3?
2. What are some characteristic values of the world ('the course of this world' v. 1) that we experience in 21st century rural America? In what ways are they consistent with Biblical values? In what ways do they contrast Biblical values?
3. How does sin twist our desires ('carrying out the desires of the body and the mind' v. 3), both of the 'body' (food, drink, pleasure activities, etc.) and of the 'mind' (pride, selfish ambition, anger, jealousy, etc.)?
4. God's wrath has been defined as his "settled opposition to sin and injustice"? Why, biblically speaking, would we be deserving of wrath? Why is this notion so counter-cultural today?
5. What changed when we moved from death to life (vv. 4-5)? What are things God has done for us?
6. Why are the words 'but God' (v. 4) so sweet?
7. In what ways do we see both 'mercy' (not getting what we do deserve) and 'grace' (getting what we don't deserve) in this passage?
8. Why is the timing of our salvation and our "good works" (described by Paul in vv. 8-10), so important? Why do we need to know that our good works come after our salvation, and not before it?
9. If you know someone who is trying hard to earn God's grace, what can you say—in a gentle, loving way—to present the truth of Ephesians 2 to them?

Action step: Memorize Ephesians 2:8-10.



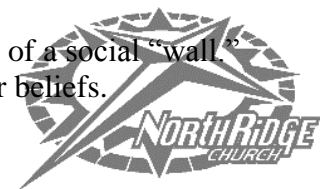
Week 4: Ephesians 2:11-22

11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Study Questions

1. In Ephesians 2:11–13 there is evident division between Jews and Gentiles. Do we have any divisions in our society that are anything like the division between Jews and Gentiles?
2. Why does it seem to be a human tendency to divide ourselves into groups? Is this sinful (always, sometimes, never)? If you answered sometimes, when does it become sinful?
3. What is Jesus called in Ephesians 2:14? In what way is this true?
4. What do verses 14–18 say that Jesus has done or is doing?
5. In the accompanying video, we talked about “walls” in our minds that we tend to erect that divide us from others. Are there any “walls” that, upon reflection, you are now more aware that you hold?
6. What is the architecture of the new temple in 2:19–22? (What is it made of? What is it built on?)
7. When Paul says, “You are no longer foreigners,” or “You, too, are being built together,” who is he talking to? Why do you think he would emphasize this point?
8. How should this passage change the way we think about the church?
9. Why is a diverse, but unified, church such a great witness to an unbelieving world?

Action Step: Ask God to show you how you can reach out to someone on the other side of a social “wall.” Begin praying for those in your life who might not share your culture, circumstances, or beliefs.



Week 5: Ephesians 3:1-13

1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— 2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. 13 So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

Study Questions

1. When writing this letter, Paul faced the challenge of being held in prison for his faith. He sees himself as a prisoner for Christ and not of the Roman state. What steps can you take to strengthen your faith as you face all manner of challenges?
2. In what ways does Paul's pastoral heart in this section challenge and/or encourage you?
3. A mystery in the Bible is something that had previously been concealed but has not been revealed by God. How would you explain the "mystery" (v. 3) Paul describes here?
4. What can you learn from Paul with regard to gratitude for God's grace?
5. Why would Paul say that he is the "very least of all the saints" (v. 8)? Why is humility such an important virtue in the Christian life?
6. Why is it right to say the riches of Christ are "incalculable" or "unsearchable" (v. 8)? How is understanding riches of Christ found in the Gospel a motivation for personal evangelism and a life lived on mission?
7. In light of this passage, why should one see the church as central to what God is doing in the world?
8. Why is this passage an encouragement to pray?



Week 6: Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Study Questions

1. How does our understanding of God impact how we approach him in prayer?
2. In verse 1, what prompts Paul to pray with such humility and gratitude (hint: consider all the references that have come before this prayer)?
3. Right now, where are specific areas of your life that you need an extra measure of God's strength and power?
4. In a world that tends to focus on the externals, why do you think the Bible is so concerned with our 'inner being' or our character (vv. 16-17)?
5. The word translated into our English word 'dwell (verse 17), is a word that means something like 'to take up residence.' Is the image of Christ taking up residence in and making a renovation project of our hearts and lives over time, comforting or concerning to you (or a little of both)?
6. Why is it important to meditate on ways in which the love of God has been shown to us?
7. We will have power to comprehend these dimensions of Christ's love, Paul adds, only *with all the saints* (v. 18). Why is this emphasized?
8. How does verse 20 encourage us to pray with great expectations?
9. According to verse 21, why should we pray for God to do amazing things?
10. In what ways does this whole prayer evidence the freedom and confidence with which we can approach God?



Week 7: Ephesians 4:1-16

1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” 9 (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? 10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Study Questions

1. How can we “live a life worthy of our calling” as Paul mentions in the beginning of chapter four? How do verses 1-3 describe that worthy life?

2. In verses 4–6, why do you think Paul emphasizes “oneness” so much? Why is unity important in a local church?

3. According to 4:7–13, who gives spiritual gifts? Who gets spiritual gifts? What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

4. When thinking about spiritual gifts and the church, there is a useful acronym to help assess how God has wired you. It is as follows: *S- Spiritual Gifts; H – Heart; A – Abilities; P – Personality; E – Experiences*

The following are several helpful diagnostic questions to assist you in thinking through how God has gifted you.

- *What lights you up? What kind of service opportunities get you excited? What passions do you have?*
- *What abilities do you have? What abilities do you have, both natural and learned? What kinds of things can you do that could be used to help other people?*
- *What experiences have shaped you? How has God used your experiences to bless others and bring forth spiritual fruit? What gifts and abilities have others noticed in you and have affirmed about you?*

5. Now as you think about the questions you’ve been considering about yourself—those abilities and passions God has given you— how can you use your gifts for “the building up of the body of Christ” (v. 12)? (Be mindful that sometimes it is just necessary to jump in and serve where there is a need in the church).

6. Why is sound doctrine important in the Christian life (vv. 11-14)? What do you need to do to grow in your knowledge of God’s Word and its teachings?



Week 8: Ephesians 4:17-5:4

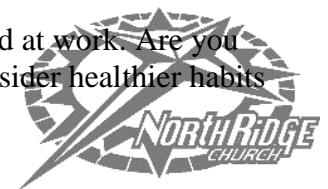
17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

5:1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

Study Questions

1. How have you heard the idea that all religions are the same expressed? Why do you think people say that?
2. What's similar about different religions? Do you think people who believe all religions are the same have a good understanding of Christianity?
3. What sets our faith apart? How are we different?
4. Why is Paul talking poorly of the Gentiles in Ephesians 4:17–19 when, earlier, he was talking about their inclusion in the church? How does he describe the “Gentile” way of life?
5. Take a look at verses 20–22. What “way of life” have we learned from Christ? Look for the words “old” and “new” in these verses. What do you find?
6. So if you are “being made new” or “renewed” in your attitude, who is doing the renewing?
7. In verse 24, who has “created” the “new self” to be “like God”? Who puts off the old self? Who puts on the new self?

Take some time to evaluate your patterns of communication: at home, in the church, and at work. Are you telling the whole truth, or just avoiding technical lies? Are you building others up? Consider healthier habits you could work on.



Week 9: Ephesians 5:1-21

1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. 2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. 5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. 13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." 15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Study Questions

1. Living a life of love - What are some ways that you can practically sacrificially love others as God has sacrificially loved you?
2. What are some ways that Christians have to live counter-culturally in our day and age?
3. Why do you think Paul says we are light in verses 8–14? What about you have been brought from darkness to light?
4. Paul also asks us to “live as children of light” (v. 8). What does that mean for the way you live your life?
5. Back in verse 10, it said, “Find out what pleases the Lord.” In verse 17, it says almost the same thing (“understand what the Lord’s will is”). How can we do that?
6. According to verse 19, we speak to one another in these songs (“psalms, hymns and spiritual songs”). Do you think that gathering together in worship helps us to “find out what pleases the Lord”? If so, how?
7. If Paul is commanding us to “be filled with the Spirit” (v. 18) – letting the Spirit change us more and more into the likeness of Christ – what is our day-to-day role in being obedient to this command? What role does the Spirit have in changing us into the likeness of Christ?
8. Are you growing in the area of thankfulness and gratitude (v. 20)?



Week 10: Ephesians 5:22-33

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Study Questions

1. Why is it important that the council in this passage (along with the resources of patience, repentance, and forgiveness) is practiced in a home that has Christ as its focus?
2. Why is the notion of authority structures within the home such a contentious issue? If you separate ‘headship’ from ‘servant leadership’, how can that lead to abuse (of power)?
3. How does the analogy of Christ and the Church give purpose and hope for every marriage?
4. What specific attributes of Jesus’ love for His bride (the Church) grip you? Why?
5. How is a husband called to love his wife? How might a husband display ‘sacrificial love’ in a practical way?
6. A wife is called to submit to her husband, “as to the Lord”. Practically speaking, how might a wife encourage her husband’s leadership, protection, and provision in the home?
7. How might a wife show “respect” (v. 33) to her husband?
8. How might a husband “love” (v. 33), “nourish” and “cherish” (v. 29) his wife?
9. Talk with your spouse about what your marriage communicates to others? Communicate how, in your daily lives, the wife might better show “respect” to her husband and how the husband might better “love” his wife.



Week 11: Ephesians 6:1-9

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. 5 Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, 6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free. 9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

Study Questions

1. What motivations, goals, and hopes do believers have when we care for children? How are these different from those of non-Christians?
2. Why is it important to model a committed Christian life for your children?
3. What does this passage teach about honoring parents (vv. 2-3)? Taking into account the personalities of your children, what are some ways to teach this principle to them?
4. What are some ways a parent might “exasperate” or “provoke” their children to anger? How could those situations be handled better?
5. Whose ultimate responsibility is it to disciple children? Who do we tend to farm out that responsibility to?
6. What does the last phrase in 6:9 tell us about God?
7. Do you think it is reasonable to apply verses 5-9 to modern employment? Is this essentially the same as a boss-employee relationship? Why or why not?
8. What in these verses (5-9) potentially reshapes your outlook on work—either as an employee or as a boss?
9. In our work lives, what “reward” should we be most concerned about? Who is the ultimate Master?

Prayer: Take extra time this week to pray specifically for the people in the three relationships Paul mentioned: your spouse, your children, and your employer or employees. Let love fill your prayers for each one.

