



THE BOOK OF **EPHESIANS**

CHURCH-WIDE BIBLE STUDY

SMALL GROUP PARTICIPANT GUIDE



NAME: _____



A NOTE FROM PASTOR SCOTT:

First of all, let me say thank you for joining us on this adventure as our church dives into the Book of Ephesians. The prayer of the elders and staff is that each person who participates in this study will grow in their knowledge of the Word of God and deepen their relationship with Jesus over the 9 week study.

I want to commend you for making the decision to be a part of our church-wide study. There is no doubt in my mind that you will take something away from this group study. And I can't wait to see what God does in our church as we dive into His Word.

For this study, we are going to be using a video series by J.D. Greear on the RightNowMedia app. J.D. Greear is the Lead Pastor of The Summit Church in the Raleigh-Durham area of North Carolina, a council member of the Gospel Coalition, and a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and a podcaster and radio host of Summit Life.

In this booklet, you will find the participant study guides for each session. There are more questions and discussion points than you will likely cover in your group, so feel free to use some of those questions in your personal study.

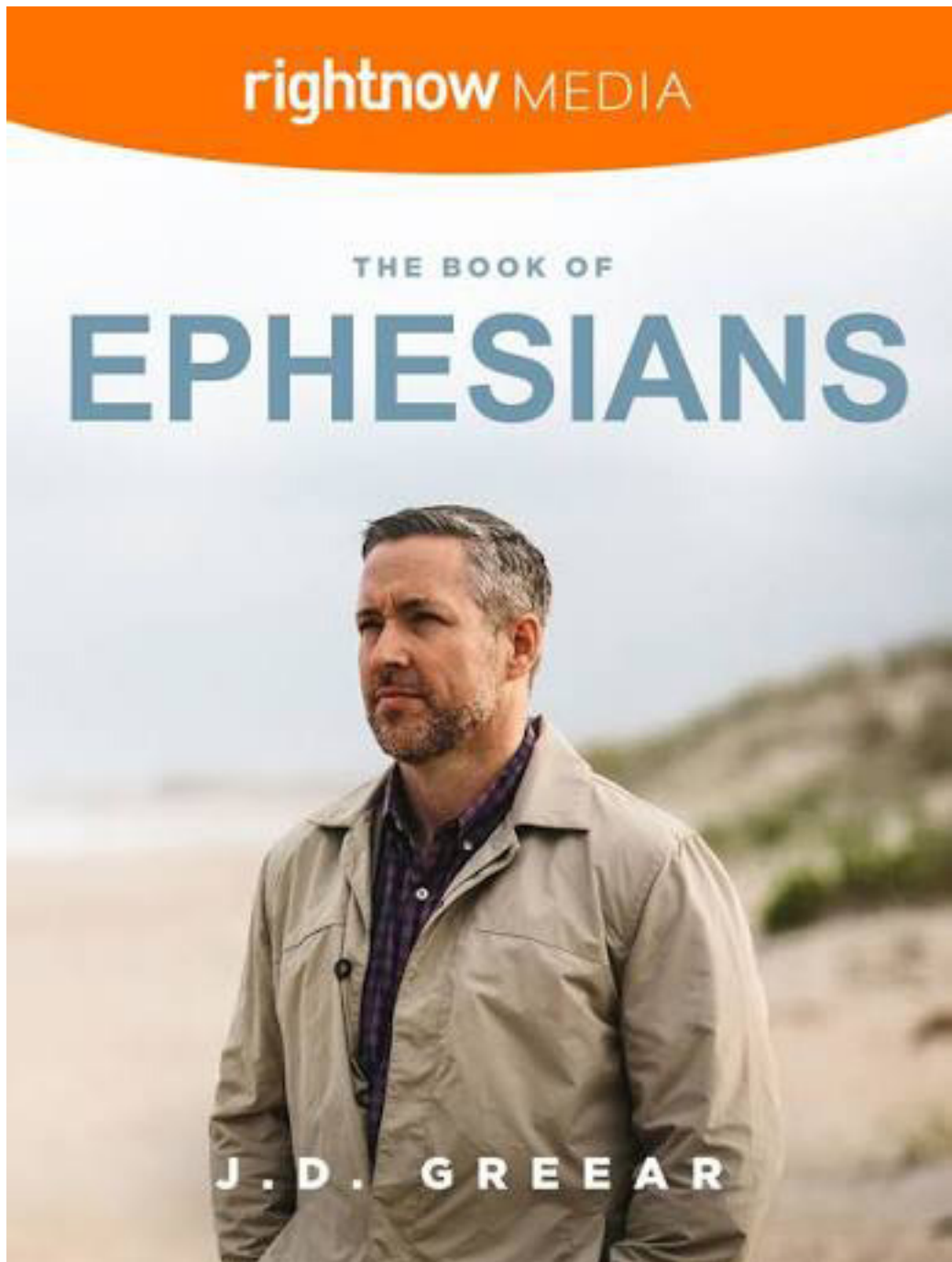
To get the most out of this study, I want to challenge you to read the book of Ephesians during this 9 weeks. You can read the entire book every week, just the verses that you will be talking about, or somewhere in between.

Get ready to immerse yourself in the Book of Ephesians! Let's go!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Stem', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Scott Stem, *Lead Pastor*

The Video Series for our Church-Wide Study



SESSION #1

EPHESIANS

1:1-14

Session 1: Ephesians 1:1–14

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Ephesians 1:1–14

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9 he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

DISCUSS

(There is more here than a group can cover...do not stress, you can always study it on your own)

What were the last three things J.D. mentioned—three things we can take away from this text?

According to Ephesians 1:3–10, what has God done, what is He doing, or what will He do?

According to 1:3-10, what do we “have”? What blessings has He blessed us with?

What does adoption mean when God is doing it?

How would you define grace?

What “riches” has God lavished on us?

What's mysterious about God's will?

According verse 10, what is the mystery?

According to Ephesians 1:11–14, who are we?

What does our identity as Christians mean to you? How can we bring Him praise?

If you began to see bringing Him praise as your purpose in life, how would that change things?

How are you doing with bringing Him praise?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer:

At least four days in the coming week, thank God that He has included you in His great plan.

Encouragement:

If you know a fellow Christian who is going through tough times, offer a word of hope. God has plans for us.

Conversation:

Talk with somebody who isn't a Christian (as far as you know). Ask them about their beliefs. If they ask about yours, be ready to tell them God's story.

Journaling:

Write out the text of Ephesians 1:1–14, a few verses at a time, jotting down your questions and reactions.

Worship:

If you exist “for the praise of His glory,” then throw yourself into worship. Take time on your own to sing and dance and pray and shout, but also join with the church in a gathering of praise.

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SESSION #2

EPHESIANS

1:15-23

Session #2: Ephesians 1:15-24

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Ephesians 1:15–23

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

DISCUSS

He summarized Paul's prayer in four parts. What four things did Paul want the Ephesians to see?

What specific actions have happened, or are happening—just in Ephesians 1:15–16? Can you put them in order?

How does viewing Paul's prayer as a story change the way you look at it? How could prayer-as-story affect the way you pray?

What does Paul mean in Ephesians 1:17? How do we “know God”?

How does God’s Spirit make us know God?

How would you define hope?

How is “the hope to which He has called you” different from hoping that your team wins the big game or hoping you get a raise?

What’s the best thing you can do for someone else to help them have this kind of hope?

Are there times when you feel that you aren’t loved by God? Why or why not? Do you think other people feel that way, too? Why or why not?

How can verse 18 change your mind about hope?

In verses 19–20, we find the next main point of Paul’s prayer. What is it?

How does Paul describe God’s power?

Think of that part of your life that needs a touch of God's power. Your attitude? Your health? Your struggle with temptation? Your relationships? How could God use His resurrection power to transform that?

Is there one phrase that stands out for you in verses 20-23? What does that mean to you?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer:

At least four days in the coming week, pray for other Christians you know, using Paul's prayer as a model.

Encouragement:

Do you know someone who is losing hope? What could you say to them, inspired by this passage, to open their eyes to God's love and power? Find a way to say that this week.

Resolve:

Is there a struggle in your life where you need to rely on 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.

Memorize:

Commit verses Ephesians 1:17–23 to memory (so you can use it as a model for your own prayers forever). Alternatively, write out 5-7 "bullet points" from the prayer and memorize those. Check yourself by reading through the whole prayer each day. (And you might just find that you've learned the whole thing anyway.)

Gather:

Talk with a few friends about getting together this week for a prayer time, based on this passage, in which you specifically pray for the spiritual vitality of your church or your community.

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SESSION #3

EPHESIANS

2:1-10

Session #3: Ephesians 2:1-10

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Ephesians 2: 1–10

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

DISCUSS

In what ways does our culture propagate the ideas J.D. mentioned? Do you know people who hold those beliefs?

In verse 1, we read, “You were dead in transgressions and sins.” What does that mean? How does that make you feel?

What’s “wrath”? Why would we be “deserving of wrath”?

**There's a distinction in verses 1–3 between “us” and “them.” Do you see it?
What's the difference?**

**What changed when we moved from death to life? What do verses 4–5 tell us?
What are things God has done for us?**

What is mercy? Is that different from grace?

**According to verses 8–10, what has happened in the past, what's going on now,
and what can we expect to happen in the future?**

**Why is the timing of each thing Paul described in 8–10 important? Why do we
need to know that our good works come after our salvation and not before it?**

**How does that make you feel—that your new life through Jesus is God's divine
creation?**

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer:

Take some serious time to go through the truth of Ephesians 2 with God. If you've been trying to pay your own way—trying to be good enough for God—talk with Him about it. Trust in His goodness rather than your own. Thank Him for His grace. Commit yourself to be that masterpiece He created you to be.

Memorize:

Ephesians 2:8–10 is an essential expression of the Christian faith. Learn it.

Make Some Art:

God is the Creator, and He made us to be creative, too. What kind of poem could you create to reflect your relationship with God? It doesn't have to be just art—even caring for God's creation (how you mow your lawn) or working with your resources (the way you do your job) reflects the creator-nature God gave to each of us. The possibilities to glorify Him are endless.

Analyze:

In your life, you've probably encountered and studied a great poem at some point in time—even if only in grade school English class. If you're God's divine creation, then maybe you can analyze yourself in the same way. What strengths has God given you? What resources? How have your past struggles prepared you to do good works in the future? How do you help others make the most of their abilities?

Share The Truth:

If you know someone who's trying hard to earn God's grace, what can you say—in a gentle, loving way—to present the truth of Ephesians 2 to him or her?

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SESSION #4

EPHESIANS

2:11-3:13

Session 4: Ephesians 2:11–3:13

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Ephesians 2:11–3:13

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

CHAPTER 3

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— 2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. 13 I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

DISCUSS

Who is Paul addressing in Ephesians 2:11–13?

Why does he specifically address the Gentiles in 11–13?

Do we have any divisions in our society that are anything like the division between Jews and Gentiles?

Do you agree or disagree with J.D. about there being only one category of people—sinners? How would you describe the human tendency to divide ourselves into groups?

What is Jesus called in Ephesians 2:14? In what way is that true?

What do verses 14–18, say that Jesus has done, or is doing?

What specifically has He “put to death” (v. 16), and how did He do it?

How do you feel about our new humanity? Does J.D.’s explanation make sense to you? Do you agree?

What is the architecture of the new temple in 2:19–22? What is it made of? What is it built on?

When Paul says, “You are no longer foreigners,” or “You too are being built together,” whom is he talking to?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer:

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

Invite:

All too often we assume that people know they can come to any church service they like. Maybe they don't know this. And maybe they're waiting for an invitation.

Listen:

Have a conversation with someone of another religion, or no religion at all. Ask them what they think about God, or faith, or forgiveness, or death, or morality. And listen. Do not use this as a trick to tell them what you think. If they ask, be ready. And feel free to ask follow-up questions, but the main point here is to listen to them.

Connect:

Talk with your church leaders about setting up a joint worship service or Bible study with another church—preferably a church with people of another culture.

Draw:

Re-read Ephesians 2:14–18 from a visual perspective. How would you draw the picture described in the verses? Be as literal or symbolic as you like, as you sketch out this powerful text.

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SESSION #5

EPHESIANS

3:14-4:16

Session 5: Ephesians 3:14–4:16

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Ephesians 3:14–4:16

For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

CHAPTER 4

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.”

9 (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

DISCUSS

What comments or stories struck you from this video? Did anything shine a new light on the biblical material?

How can we “live a life worthy of our calling” as Paul mentions in the beginning of chapter four? How does he describe that worthy life?

J.D. made a big deal about growing up. How do the qualities we mentioned display a mature faith?

Take another look at verses 4–6. Why do you think Paul emphasizes “oneness” so much?

In light of contention in the church, how does a conversation about the gifts of the Spirit promote unity? Would people brag about their own gifts? Why or why not?

According to 4:7–13, Who gives spiritual gifts? Who gets spiritual gifts? What are some of the spiritual gifts? What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

ABILITIES TALK

Setup

In your small groups, you'll have several questions to answer about yourself, your background, your abilities, and what you care about. Each person should answer each group of questions before the next person responds. Then go around the circle again with the second and third groups of questions. Feel free to ask follow-up questions as you go and affirm responses. But be careful not to contradict what someone is saying. If anyone feels uncomfortable answering, they may pass.

THE QUESTIONS

Group 1

A. What is something you do—in your work, at home, or at church—that you seem to be pretty good at?

B. When did you first notice that you had that ability?

C. Have you gotten better at that area of expertise through the years?

Group 2

- A. What is something you're really passionate about?
- B. When did you recognize that passion for the first time?
- C. Has the passion grown stronger, or changed in some way?

Group 3

- A. Think about a time when someone thanked you for something you did or mentioned that you were helpful to them. What action were they talking about?
- B. When did this happen? Has it happened often?
- C. Is there a way you could do that type of action (the thing someone appreciated) on a regular basis, or even more intentionally than you do now?

According to Ephesians 4:12–13, why has God given us these abilities and responsibilities? What is their purpose?

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 purposes mentioned in 4:12–13?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer:

Talk with God about the gifts He has given you. Ask Him to confirm your thinking, or to adjust it as necessary. Ask Him for opportunities to use your gifts in His service. In these prayers, spend more time listening than talking.

Conversation:

Talk with other close friends about your gifts. Ask them to confirm the abilities you think God has given you, and they may even suggest ways to use them. You need some cheerleaders around for support, but also talk with someone who can challenge you—“speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

Volunteer:

Look for a new way to use the abilities God has given you. Volunteer for an appropriate ministry in the church.

Peacemaking:

Unity is a strong emphasis in this part of Ephesians. Even though we have different strengths, we have a common Lord. Take some time to think through your relationships—especially those with other believers. Are there any broken, tense, competitive, or difficult relationships? How could you promote a Christ-centered unity with these people?

Calligraphy:

Write out the prayer of Ephesians 3:14–21 and post it where you will see it often. (But ask permission before spray-painting it on a church wall.)

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SESSION #6

EPHESIANS

4:17-5:7

Session 6: Ephesians 4:17-5:7

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Ephesians 4:17–5:7

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

25 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

CHAPTER 5

1 Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

DISCUSS

How have you heard the idea that all religions are the same expressed? Why do you think people say that?

What's similar about different religions? Do you think people who believe all religions are the same have a good understanding of Christianity?

What sets our faith apart? How are we different?

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?

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?

So if you are “being made new” or “renewed” in your attitude, who is doing the renewing?

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?

Stepping back to look at verses 17–24, how does this “way of Christ” compare with the way of “the Gentiles”—that is, those who don’t know God?

What four area of behavior do you see in verses 25–29?

What should we do instead of speaking falsehood and why?

How does being “one body” affect the way we should treat each other?

The verse on anger might be paraphrased as, “Anger will happen, but don’t let it lead you into sinful outbursts.” But what else does it tell us about anger?

What are we supposed to do instead of stealing?

What are we supposed to use instead of “unwholesome language”?

What do you think it means to “grieve” the Holy Spirit?

What does it mean to be “sealed for the day of redemption”?

LIVE IT OUT

Confession:

This passage mentions various behaviors we should examine in ourselves. Where have we strayed from the way of Jesus, especially in the areas of truth-telling, angry outbursts, stealing, and destructive language? But don't just feel guilty about these things— confess them and carry a new commitment to live God's way.

Communication Review:

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.

Anger Cleanse:

Every night before bed, get rid of your anger. Apologize, confess, make peace with those who may be the cause of your anger, and commit to sorting things out in the morning, if need be. You won't solve every problem, but it can mean stronger relationships and better sleep.

Peacemaking:

The biblical discussion of stealing raises an interesting idea. How much are you taking and how much are you giving? We're not talking about theft, but about love. Is your work all about gathering resources for yourself? Or are you "doing something useful with your hands" in order to "share with those in need"?

Accountability:

Invite a trusted Christian friend to check up on you as you find new ways to put on the "new self" and learn the way of Christ.

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SESSION #7

EPHESIANS

5:8-21

Session 7: Ephesians 5:8-21

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Ephesians 5:8–21

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. 14 This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” 15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

DISCUSS

Why do you think J.D. made the point that life is war? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Why do you think Paul says we are light in verses 8–14? Is there something in our identity that has changed from darkness to light?

Paul also asks us to “live as children of light” (v. 8). What does that mean for the way you live your life?

Verse 9 also talks about the “fruit of the light.” That seems to be a strange mixing of metaphors. How does light have fruit? What does that mean to you?

Why do you think Paul used this hymn in verse 14? How did it help his case? What sort of “sleep” do we need to “wake up” from?

What “opportunity” is Paul talking about in verse 16? How should we “make the most” of it?

What sort of “unwise” or “foolish” things might we do when faced with the opportunities Paul’s talking about? How can we avoid those foolish actions?

Back in verse 10, it said, “Find out what pleases the Lord.” Here in verse 17, it says almost the same thing (“understand what the Lord’s will is”). How can we do that?

Why would Paul compare God’s Spirit with wine in verse 18? What’s the connection?

Why does Paul suddenly get musical in verse 19? What do songs have to do with waking up and redeeming the time?

According to verse 19, we speak to one another in these songs. What effect on each other can we have when we address one another through our songs?

Do you think that gathering together in worship helps us to “find out what pleases the Lord”? If so, how?

LIVE IT OUT

Alert Prayer:

Ask God to wake you up to the opportunities of each day. Then find a time during the day when you “walk and talk with God”—ten minutes of specifically tuning into His voice as you go through your normal activities.

Time Budget:

How did you use your time last week? You had 168 hours—what did you do with them? Map it out, as best you remember. Then evaluate. How could you adjust your schedule to reflect your priorities? Set a new schedule/budget for this week.

Coping Check:

When you’re stressed, where do you turn? To alcohol or something less damaging but just as wasteful? Can you begin to train yourself to seek the Lord’s strength in those times? For now, have Psalms 23, 42, and 103 at the ready, and then find other ways to connect with the Spirit in those critical moments.

Praise:

Find some creative, lavish way to thank God. Write a song. Do a dance. Make a video. Create a rock garden. Fill your heart with praise and then offer it, as the Spirit leads.

Worship Together:

Throw yourself fully into the church worship service. Prepare well. Participate enthusiastically. Review it afterward, perhaps talking with family or friends.

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SESSION #8

EPHESIANS

5:22-6:9

Session 8: Ephesians 5:22–6:9

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Ephesians 5:22–6:9

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Chapter 6

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. 5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. 9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

DISCUSS

What does the last phrase in 6:9 tell us about God? No favoritism between whom?

When Paul says, “Treat your slaves in the same way,” what does he mean? What’s the “same way”? Why doesn’t it just say, “Masters, free your slaves”?

Now read over verses 5–8 again. What do you see here? What “reward” should slaves be most concerned about?

Who is the ultimate Master?

Now do you think it’s reasonable to apply these verses to modern employment? Is this essentially the same as a boss-employee relationship? Why or why not?

How could this affect the way you work—either as an employee or as a boss?

In what ways could parents be “exasperating” or “provoking” their children?

According to this verse, what should parents do instead? How would that help?

Do you think it's significant that this is addressed to fathers and not parents in general? Does Paul's exhortation reflect only the culture at that time, or are fathers generally more likely to provoke their kids?

According to verses 1–3, why should children obey parents?

Does obedience always lead to a longer life? What is this “promise” really saying?

In Ephesians 5:31–33, what is the “profound mystery” Paul mentions?

How are those two relationships similar? How is Christ “one” with the church?

How does verse 33 sum up the interaction between husband and wife?

According to verse 25, how should husbands love their wives? What might this look like in everyday life?

Verses 28–30 anticipate the “one flesh” idea with husbands loving their wives as they love their own body. What implications does this have for the day-to-day relationship between husband and wife?

According to verses 22–24, what does it mean to be the “head” of a “body”? In what way is Christ the head of the body? And how is a husband the head of his wife?

How does the teaching in verse 22 compare with what we saw in 6:5, with the instructions to slaves?

How does the church submit to Christ? And how does that provide a model for wives with their husbands?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer:

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

Brainstorm:

If you're married, try this. Think of seven practical ways you could show love to your spouse—being sacrificial, supportive, and respectful. Better yet, work together to come up with seven ways each.

Interview:

If you have kids, schedule some one-on-one time to ask them how their lives are going. This can be a great way to get beyond the “exasperation” of rules and expectations.

Evaluation:

You've probably gone through evaluations at work. Do a self-evaluation based on how well you're serving the Lord. How are you doing with the qualities he loves? If you're a boss, consider how fairly you treat your workers.

Submission:

The verse before this section of Scripture has the blanket statement, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (5:21). In the coming week find three ways you can humbly put someone else first, instead of fighting for your own rights.

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SESSION #9

EPHESIANS

6:10-24

Session 9: Ephesians 6:10–24

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Ephesians 6:10–24

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. 21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. 23 Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

DISCUSS

How do you feel about spiritual warfare? Does it psych you up or freak you out?

Take a look at Ephesians 6:10–12. Do these verses confirm what J.D. was saying or not? How?

When you read about “the devil’s schemes,” and about “the powers of this dark world,” and about “spiritual forces of evil,” how do you feel?

According to verses 11 and 13, what should we do to prepare?

In verse 14, what are the first two pieces of armor mentioned?

Why would the belt of truth come first?

Why is the breastplate associated with righteousness?

**What additional item do we find in verse 15? What should we be ready to do?
What is the “gospel of peace” doing in this battle-ready scene?**

What gear do we find in verse 16? How does faith “extinguish” the devil’s flaming arrows?

The remaining two pieces of equipment are found in verse 17. What are they?

Why would the helmet be connected to salvation?

The sword of the Spirit is identified as the word of God. Why?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer:

Pray specifically for your own resistance to forces of evil, and for others who are under attack.

“Footwear”:

This passage talked about being ready—lacing up the shoes—to go and spread the “gospel of peace.” Do you know someone who needs to hear the message that God wants to make peace with them? How will you make yourself ready to go and share it?

“Belt of Truth”:

Wrap the truth of Scripture around you. One suggestion: set aside time in the next six weeks to go back through the book of Ephesians, studying, learning more, meditating on it, praying through it. You could work on one chapter a week.

Art Project:

Find a doll or figurine and create pieces of armor for it based on this passage.

Caring:

Connect with a local veterans group or charity. Get to know some people who have fought. Consider the spiritual damage they might have suffered. Pray for their healing.

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