

BRIARCLIFF CHURCH

Small Group Study Guide: Ephesians

Week of September 17 (Week 3)
Ephesians 1:15-23



OVERALL SUMMARY

The Letter to the Ephesians is a circular letter written by Paul during his first Roman imprisonment in A.D. 60-62. Paul's frequent references to the church as the mystery (1:9; 3:3-4, 9; 5:32; 6:19) previously unknown but now revealed, seems to be the main purpose of Paul in writing this letter. The first half of the letter (Chs. 1-3) focuses the doctrinal aspect on how God creates a new community – the church, by bringing together both believing Jews and Gentiles. The second half of the letter (Chs. 4-6) stresses the practical aspect on how unity must be maintained within the church. The practical aspect of believer's life involves relationship with one another in the church, with Christ, with one's spouse, as children and parents, and finally with the spiritual forces. Eric C. Redmond rightly notes that "Ephesians explains the theology of the inclusion of those formerly outside the covenant with Israel. Believing Jews and Gentiles in Ephesus are part of a larger design. The church will transform marriage, work, parenting, and morality of her members."

BIG IDEA

As believers, we constantly pray for one another to have a deeper understanding of the hope of our salvation, the riches of our inheritance, and the greatness of the power of God.

OVERVIEW OF THE TEXT

In this passage, we read about Paul's prayer for the believers. His prayer comprises two elements: thanksgiving, and intercession/supplication. Paul is thankful to God for the believers for two reasons. He is thankful for the believers' **faith in Christ** and their **love towards all other believers**. The second part of his prayer is intercession. He prays that God may give the believers a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge thereby enlightening the eyes of their hearts to know the hope, the riches of their inheritance, and the greatness of God's power that resurrected Jesus exalting him above all power and dominion and making him the head of the church.

OBSERVING THE TEXT

Starting with God

1. Read verses 15-23 carefully and find out what is said about Jesus Christ (described either explicitly or implied).

2. What do you understand about God the Father (His character and work) in verses 15-23?

3. What are the manifestations of God's power in verses 19-23?

4. Why are the resurrection and ascension such vivid demonstrations of divine power?

Continuing the Conversation

5. What motivates Paul to pray for the Ephesians?

6. What is the focus of Paul's prayer in verses 18-19?

CONNECTING WITH OTHER TEXT

1. We find several intercessory prayers both in the Old Testament and the New Testament. For example, Abraham's prayer for Sodom (Gen. 18:2–33), Moses' prayer interceding for Israel (Exo. 32:11-13; 31-32), Ezra's prayer, identifying with the sins of his people (Ezra 9:6-15; see also Neh. 1:3-11, & Dan. 9:4-19), Elijah asks God to reveal himself to the people (1 Kg. 18:36-37), Jesus' prayer for his disciples (Jn. 17:6-26), Stephen's prayer for his murderer (Acts 7:60), and Paul's prayer for the Philippians (Phil. 1:9-11) and the Colossians (Col. 1:9-12). What similarity do you find in Elijah's prayer in 1 Kings 18:36-37 and Paul's prayer in Eph. 1:17-23?

2. Read Psalm 110:1 and compare with Matthew 26:64 and Eph. 1:20. See also Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3-4; 10:12-13; 12:1-2, and 1 Pet. 3:22 on the phrase “seated him at the right hand of God.” According to the NT, this phrase connotes the meaning Jesus conquered death (Heb. 1:3), Jesus has the highest place (Eph. 1:20; 1 Pet. 3:22), Jesus is the priest who took away our sin (Heb. 10:11; cf. Ps. 110:4), Jesus is the king who will rule the earth (compare Ps. 110:2 with Rev. 19:15-16). Which meaning from the above fits best with the thought of Paul in Eph. 1:20?

3. Compare Paul’s prayers in Eph. 1:15-23 with Col. 1:3-14. What similar word(s) or theme(s) do you find in these prayers?

APPLYING THE TEXT

1. What can we learn from Paul’s prayer?

2. In our prayers we include the aspects of thanksgiving and supplication, but how is that different from Paul’s prayer in Eph. 1:15-23?

3. How does knowing the greatness of God’s power and the headship of Christ over the church impact believer’s life (belief and practice)?

4. Pray the content of Paul's prayer (1:15-23) for yourself and for one other Christian friend daily this week.

PRAYER GUIDE
September 18-22
Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Paul heard about the faith of the Ephesians and their love for other believers. He begins by praying for them and then reminded them of the power toward us who believe and the preeminence of Christ. It would be well for us to remember what happened to the church in Ephesus recorded in Revelation.

Monday: *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my **prayers**.* Take a moment to thank God for people in your life. Also, *may give you the ... knowledge of him.* What steps will you take to grow in a personal knowledge of Christ Jesus (not just head knowledge about him but an intimate knowledge of him?).

Tuesday: *God's immeasurable **power** toward us who believe.* Take a deep look at *it is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead.* Who can top that? It is immeasurable! What does that power mean to you? Are you living in the fulness of that power? What needs to change?

Wednesday: *God is far above all rule and authority, power; not only now but in all eternity.* That is the **preeminence** of Christ. Is your view of God too small? A.W. Tozer says, "What we think about God directs everything about us." Does your thinking need to change? Think about it! Resolve to do something about it—today!

Thursday: *He put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.* That is also the **preeminence** of Christ as head of the church. How does that change your view of the church? In what way will this change the priority of the church in your life?

Friday: Postlude. Look what happened to the Ephesians. *you have abandoned the love you had at first ... repent ... or ... I will remove your lampstand* (Revelation 2:4). Let this sobering indictment grab your attention. How does this speak to you personally? What safeguards will you establish to protect your love for Jesus from growing cold?

For more resources, visit www.briarcliff.church/ephesians