



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

WEEK 1 - GOD'S REDEMPTIVE PLAN - EPH 1:1

Introduction

The world we live in is in a state of decay and death. At work behind the systems of this world is a dark underworld of demonic powers. God's plan for this world (and us) is to make it (and us) alive. The letter of Ephesians was most likely circulated to many communities of believers in a region known today as Turkey. The first community of believers to hear this lived in the great city of Ephesus. In this letter, Paul the apostle explains the good news of how God would overthrow the stronghold of demonic forces and redeem and restore all things by bringing together a renewed people (Jew and Gentile) into one family. This new family, "the Church", is God's strategy to demonstrate to a dead and decaying world what true life could look like under Yahweh's rule.

Observation/Interpretation

Read Philippians 3:4-8, Acts 7:59-8:3, Acts 9:1-5 and Ephesians 1:1 aloud.

Prior to Paul's conversion he had been a religious, nationalistic racist who was fueled by hatred for followers of Jesus and acted like a terrorist. After Paul's conversion he described himself in Eph 1:1 as "an apostle of Christ (King) Jesus, by the will of God", and joyfully gave himself to serve all people, especially Gentiles. What type of impact do you think this transformation had on others who had been familiar with Paul's story?

Application

What are some of the ways in which God has made you alive?

Prayer

Ask for God's blessing on Calvary SLO, that we would be a Church which emulates the love of God through Christ.

Community Group Discussion

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- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

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WEEK 2 - GRACE CHANGES SAUL & US - EPH 1:1-3

Introduction

The letter to the Ephesians stands as a testimony of God's life-giving purposes, beginning with the very first word in the introduction. The letter begins simply with the word, "Paul". Paul stands as one of the greatest examples of how God can take lost and dead people and make them fully alive.

Observation/Interpretation

- Paul began this letter by referring to his credentials, "an apostle of Christ Jesus...". Why do you think he started with this?
- Read, Eph. 1:1 and Gal. 1:1. By what authority does Paul say that he has become an apostle?
- How does Paul refer to the people to whom he's writing in Eph. 1:1?
- In Paul's greeting he uses two words that are rich in meaning, "grace and peace". Grace refers to "favor", and peace refers to "setting things to right" (the opposite would be like a bone out of joint). According to Paul, what is the source of this grace and peace?

Application

How easy/difficult is it for you to see yourself as a "saint"?

Imagine if you would. How would you live differently if you *truly* saw yourself in the way God sees you, as a highly favored saint whom God has brought into his favor and extended his peace to?

Prayer

Ask God to help you (individually and as a community) to live in light of *who* he has remade you to *be*.

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WEEK 3 - IN HIM BY HIS PLAN - EPH 1:4-10

Introduction

In the original Greek language, verses 3-14 are actually one run-on sentence. It's as if when Paul the Apostle was writing this he was filled with such excitement that he didn't even stop to punctuate or take a breath. The words used in this section celebrate the beauty and greatness of God and the blessing that overflows from Him upon us.

Observation/Interpretation

- The believers who originally received this letter would have gathered around to hear someone read it. Place *yourself* in that setting and listen with fresh ears while having someone in your group read Eph. 1:3-14 aloud. What impact do you think Paul wanted to have upon the believers while reading this passage?
- Read Eph 1:7-8. According to these verses how has God enabled for us to be redeemed and forgiven?
- Read Eph 1:10. According to this verse what is God's goal for all things? In your own words explain.

Application

- Eph. 1:3 begins with the phrase, "Blessed be God...", "...who has blessed us". The phrase implies that God is filled with a sense of joyful happiness and he pours out that joyful happiness upon his people. Do you think of God as being joyfully happy? If not, why? What do you think God is like?
- Discuss some of the reasons why people's views of God don't square with what is revealed about Him in these verses?

Prayer

Confess any false views you've held onto that contradict what He is like, and pray, asking him to move your heart with the sense of His joyful happiness (blessedness) over you and His church.

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WEEK 4 - GOD HAS GLORIOUS PLANS - EPH 1:11-14

Introduction

The Christians in Ephesus were mainly Gentiles. In other words they were not Jewish, were not citizens of God's kingdom, and were not privileged to any of the benefits accompanying that citizenship. They were foreigners—outsiders without inheritance. Yet shockingly Paul announced to them the good news (gospel) that God's kindness and favor has been extended to those who formerly didn't belong. This means that they now have been given a place at the table, they have been accepted, and they have been included in the vast inheritance offered by our gracious God.

Observation/Interpretation

- In Eph. 1:11-12, Paul uses the pronoun “we” referring to Jews, Gentiles and himself alike, as being equal recipients of God's inheritance. What does the usage of this pronoun say about the Gospels' power to reverse prejudice, erase tribalism and heal relationships among enemies?
- Read Eph 1:11-4 and list out the accomplishments Jesus has provided for his followers. Take them one by one and discuss them.

Application

- Knowing what God has accomplished through the loving work of his Son, what would some just responses to his kindness be? List them out.
- Would you say that these are the common responses you feel? If not, why not?

Prayer

Take a moment and confess any disbelief you may have in trusting God's kindness. Spend some time thanking him for the accomplishments He has provided through his son.

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WEEK 5 - KNOWING HIM IN HIS PEOPLE - EPH 1:15-23

Introduction

Paul loved the church in Ephesus. He loved that fact that God had made a dead people alive and that God was creating a family from people who had formerly been enemies, within the system of the world as it stood. Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus that they would live within the awareness of their future hope (1:18a), that they would see themselves as God's inheritance (1:18b), and that they would be amazed by the power of God that has not only saved them but continues to sustain them in Christ (1:19).

Observation/Interpretation

- In Eph. 1:15-16 Paul says, "For this reason...I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers". Why was Paul so filled with gratitude? What's your response when you think about others who are in your family of faith? Would you say it's a similar response to Paul's? If not, why?
- What is God's greatest display of power the world has seen (Eph. 1:20).
- Death in Paul's day is viewed the same way it is today — unstoppable and inevitable. Because God raised Jesus from the dead, this demonstrated to all that nothing is impossible for God. Why is this truth so central, encouraging, and empowering?

Application

- In short, Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was that they would get to know God better. Describe your process for getting to know God better.
- If it's true that the same power of God that was in Jesus when raising him from the dead is at work within us, in what ways could we be using that power within our lives as God's people? (e.g. forgiving our enemies, helping the weak)

Prayer

Ask God to show you (personally and as a group) creative ways of using the power he's given you to live out the gospel in more visible ways in your life.

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WEEK 6 - WHERE IS YOUR BOAST? - EPH 2:1-7

Introduction

Israel's story was that they were once the victims of Pharaoh's oppression. God chose them and delivered them to be a new nation which would embody what He values: generosity instead of devouring others, protection of the weak instead of protection of their goods, peace instead of anxiety and promoting life instead of death. Unfortunately, Israel acted very much like Pharaoh.

Nations are made up of people, and people by nature act like Pharaoh, living according to "the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind" and are by nature, "children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (Ephesians 2:3, ESV). Paul was eager to announce that a new exodus has come in the person of Jesus, who is "rich in mercy...even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive...by grace we have been saved." (Eph 2:4-7). Not only is this good news to be celebrated, but it also carries with it a responsibility that Paul will build upon in the proceeding chapters as to what it looks like to be God's new family.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read 2:1-7. The Devil (Eph. 2:2) and sin (Jn. 8:34) are often described as oppressors (like Pharaoh) which keep us bound. How does Paul describe the condition of those who are not yet rescued from their sin and the devil?
- According to verse 4, what motivated God to act on your behalf to rescue you? How does that make you feel?

Application

- Paul wrote that a Christian is one who has been: "loved" (2:4), "made alive" (2:5b), "saved" (2:5c), "raised" (2:6a), and "seated" (2:6b). Each of these describes what we've been given by God. Talk about the impact that each of these have had upon your life.

Prayer

Thank God for not hoarding his riches...but freely, generously and lovingly giving his riches to us.

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WEEK 7 - GOOD WORKS, THE PROOF OF GRACE - EPH 2:8-10

Introduction

Paul spends a significant amount of time describing and unpacking the Christians' new identity. This is important, because *who* we think we are will impact *how* we live. According to Paul, a Christian is one who has been, “saved by grace”, “for good works”. (Eph 2:8-10). The good works Paul has in mind, have less to do with reading your bible, private journaling & attending church services and more to do with, forgiveness, loving enemies, and living free from the grip of covetousness. Or in other words the “works” we’re called to live out are those characteristics that are consistent with the very nature of God himself.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read Eph 2:8-9. *How* does God save (rescue) people?
- Read Eph 2:10. *Why* does God save (rescue) people?
- Prior to “being saved”, by default, we lived according to the decaying system of this world. This was where we found our identity, and why our works were filled with actions like bitterness, unforgiveness, coveting and stealing, etc. Jesus has saved us (by grace) to live according to a different set of values, with a new identity. What are some of the “good works” which God has created for us to live out? (see also Eph. 4:22-30)

Application

- God’s grace is his freely given and completely undeserved gift to us. Many live with the sense of their own shortcomings and feel they need to earn their salvation by doing good. Have you ever felt like you need to earn God’s favor or grace? If so, why do you think that it’s so hard for us as humans to simply receive God’s grace as a free gift?

Prayer

Pause to give thanks to God for his free gift of favor and salvation. Ask God to move through you by living out good works.

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WEEK 8 - HUMBLER AND THANKFUL - EPH 2:11-16

Introduction

Ever since the beginning of societies, one of the greatest problems has been discrimination. This has often created a weaker class of people (often minorities) who inevitably become subject to mistreatment, marginalization and oppression. It can be said that this is simply the way our broken world operates, and most just learn to deal with it.

Prior to Paul's conversion, as a Jew, he and his Jewish countrymen would often alienate, marginalize and look down upon, gentiles (non-Jews). Yet one of the most shocking realities that Paul discovered and then announced about the gospel is that through Jesus, this broken system has been undone, and rebuilt, so that "in Christ" all are welcome and none are to be alienated. Or as Paul would say, "For *Jesus* himself is our peace, who has made us both (Jew and Gentile) one and has broken down...the dividing wall of hostility." (Ephesians 2:14)

Observation/Interpretation

- What does Paul mean when he says that, "He (Jesus) is our peace"?
- Because of Jesus' work we become a part of a new family. In many ways, it's a society of "others" united around Jesus. Read Eph 2:11-13. How does Paul describe the Gentiles before they were brought into this new family?
- According to vs. 15-16 why did God do all this?
- Define reconciliation. In your opinion how common is reconciliation in our world? Why do you think that is?

Application

- What are some of the reasons why we discriminate against others?
- It's part of being human to have a desire for a place of belonging. Describe a time when you were marginalized or pushed away from that desired place of belonging. How did that make you feel?
- Consider the reality of what it means to be "accepted" and "welcomed" by God instead of discriminated against or alienated. How do you feel in light of that reality?

Prayer

Holy Father, it was through the death of your son that you created a new, united family where all are welcome, and all are treated with dignity and value. Help us to live in a way so that we lovingly welcome and show hospitality to all regardless of their race, religion, sex or social status, so that by our actions we may reflect the ways in which you accepted us.

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WEEK 9 - WITH GOD - EPH 2:17-22

Introduction

Paul uses two metaphors to describe the new community built upon Jesus (2:20). These are, a "nation" and a "temple". It's common for immigrants to always feel displaced, and never fully accepted by the people in their new country. The good news (gospel) Paul shares with the non-Jews (Gentiles) living in Ephesus is that they do not ever need to feel alienated or estranged from God or his people. In an act of grace, God has extended the borders of his new nation far beyond the biological children of Abraham, and has built his new temple, to welcome all who trust in Abraham's God into his kingdom of peace.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read 2:14,17. What do you think the "peace" that Jesus preached is? Why would that be good news to someone who lived in the uncertainty of being accepted?
- Read 2:18. What did Jesus' work accomplish?
- What metaphors did Paul use to describe the Church? Why do you think he did this?

Application

- Paul envisioned a community of people from all nations, with every skin color and many languages, living together, loving one another and serving each others needs. All of these people would be united by Jesus' work on the cross. Why would this dream be considered by most, wishful thinking? How does the gospel create such a community?
- What are the challenges you face in living the Gospel as Paul envisioned it out in your life?

Prayer

Thank God for extending his kingdom to include you. Ask God who he is calling you to announce this good news to?

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WEEK 10 IT'S NOT ABOUT ME - EPH 3:1-7

Introduction

One of the great mysteries revealed in the Bible is that God always had a plan to welcome and embrace people from every nation, tribe and tongue, not just the Jews. People who had followed Yahweh had not always known this until it was revealed through Jesus. This is why Paul was so eager to declare, "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". (Eph. 3:6)

Observation/Interpretation

- Paul gives a brief biographical sketch about his current situation in vs. 1-7. What does he say about himself?
- Read Eph. 3:3. Paul speaks about the "mystery" that God had revealed to him. What was that mystery? Why do you think this was something Paul felt was so important and great that he'd be willing to face imprisonment over?
- Read Eph. 3:6. What are the three great privileges the Gentiles have been given together with the Jesus?

Application

- With an act of imagination, if you truly believed that Eph. 3:6 was true, how would you live your life differently?

Prayer

Thank you Father for opening your heart to us, extending your grace to us, and offering to us the same privileges and honor shown to your Beloved Son.

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WEEK 11 LIVING THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD - EPH 3:8-13

Introduction

Throughout history “rulers and authorities” (along with their demonic counterparts, “in heavenly places”) have sought to organize (and influence) this world and create societies that are based on inequality. Paul saw himself as given the task by God to pioneer and proclaim that God has broken into history, through Jesus, and has begun to reorder the the world according to *His* Heavenly rule - this was the great mystery which has now been made known (Eph. 3:8-9).

This new society is called, “the Church”, and through it, God is bringing together people from all walks of life, all varieties of race, and all social/economic distinctions and *reconciling* them to Himself *and* to each other. Through this new community of Jesus people the world should be able to see the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10).

Observation/Interpretation

- Paul was Jewish by nationality and formerly trained in an elitists sect of the Pharisees. After his conversion, Paul lived his life serving and loving Gentiles. How was Paul’s life, in many ways a great portrait of the reconciling work that Jesus came to do?
- What does Eph. 3:12 say about the type of attitudes and conditions we have in approaching God?

Application

- The Church has often been divided over non-essential things. How do these actions of hatred, division and alienation from one-another send a mixed message to the world about the “riches of Christ” & the “wisdom of God” (Eph 3:,10)?
- Jesus has made the way available for us to be reconciled to God and to others. Are there people in your life currently whom you are not reconciled to? Take a moment and share briefly (if you feel comfortable). Have others lay hands on you to pray for you.

Prayer

Thank God for the access that he’s given to you. You are no longer outsiders, but sons/daughters and heirs of all of His’s riches and grace.

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WEEK 12 ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK - EPH 3:14-21

Introduction

The Community Jesus established was not primarily built on doctrinal agreement (though this is important) but, “love”. Paul would say it like this when writing out his prayer for the whole Church, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, being rooted and grounded in love”. For Paul the very thought that former enemies (Jew and Gentile) could be united together by love, because of Jesus’ work brought him to his knees in awe and wonder.

Observation/Interpretation

- Considering what Paul had written up to this point (Eph. 1:1-3:13), why do you think he paused in a moment of worship and reflection by bending his “knees before the Father”?
- Paul prays that the Church would be, “strengthened with power” (vs. 16). What are some of the ways by which God supplies what we need for this end?
- What are some of Paul’s other prayer requests (vs. 17).
- How does Paul describe God’s love? (vs. 18-19)

Application

- If you (both individually and collectively as a group) understood God’s love as described in Eph 3:18-19, how would you live differently? What people would you reconcile with? What people would you forgive? What people would you apologize to? What people would you welcome into your home?

Prayer

Thank God for the love he’s shown to you. Ask Him to soften and melt your heart so that it can be reshaped to be like his.

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WEEK 13 LOVE AND POWER - EPH 3:14-19

Introduction

Love and power are two themes that much of our world lives with a desire for. They make up a plot line in most every movie, novel or song. The bible teaches that God is both loving and powerful. Paul continues his letter in a posture of prayer asking God to strengthen the Ephesian believers with His *power* and to root and ground them with His *love*.

Observation/Interpretation

- Paul prays that the Church would be, “strengthened with power”. According to Eph 3:16, by what means will God strengthen us with His power?
- According to Ephesians 3:17, Paul equates Christ’s presence in our hearts with being, “rooted and grounded in love”. How does living a life that’s “rooted and grounded” in love, bear testimony to Christ’s presence among us?

Application

- In Ephesians 3:19 Paul prays that the believers would “know, the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge”. On the surface this may sound confusing. After all, how can one “know” something that is “beyond knowing”? The point that Paul seems to be making is that this “knowledge” we’re to have of Christ is not just a knowledge about him, as in knowing certain facts and details, but rather a knowledge of him, as in intimately and experientially. According to the above, what type of knowledge would you say that you have of God? More fact and details based? More intimately and experientially based? Or, a healthy balance of both?

Prayer

Pray for one another that you would know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

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WEEK 14 MOVED TO PRAY - EPH 3:20-21

Introduction

Paul, in response to God's good plan which has been revealed to both Jew and Gentile alike, is moved to pray. Prayer is a natural moving towards God, in an expression of trust and love. God who not only created us, but through his son has sought to redeem and restore us is currently at work in our lives doing far more than we could ever imagine. God invites us to place our confidence in Him as our Father, who is not only powerful, but is also loving and has good gifts to give.

Observation/Interpretation

- In reading and observing Paul's prayer (Eph. 3:14-21), how are your prayers similar or different?
- In Eph. 3:20 Paul uses a word that's been translated as, "superabundantly" in some bible translations. In what ways have you seen God work in your life or in the lives of others that are completely surprising and beyond abundance?

Application

- In reading Ephesians 3:20-21, what ways are you encouraged and motivated?
- As human beings we have great potential of accomplishing many great feats of strength. What are some ways we can determine that as followers of Christ we're living our lives motivated and moved by God's power, instead of our own power?
- Paul's prayer contains a belief (faith) that God is good, powerful and eager to give with far more abundance, than we're often expecting. When you pray, do you see God as Paul views God? If not, why not? What are the hinderances or areas of disbelief that keep you from seeing God in this light?

Prayer

Ask God to increase your faith in Him as a powerful, loving and generous God who is eager to do more in and through you than you are often expecting. Ask God to use the blessings and privileges He's brought into your life to be used as a means of you bringing blessing to others.

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15 - BAPTISM, THE FAMILY SIGN - EPH 4.1-6

Introduction

This week we'll focus more on the topic of baptism, as a way of encouraging those who're followers of Christ and who *haven't* been baptized yet, to do so at our beach service next Sunday (May 18). For those who *have* been baptized we hope this will serve as a fresh reminder and encouragement of what it means to be a son or daughter in the family of God.

In Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul reminds the Gentile believers in Ephesus that they had been graciously accepted into a family they formerly hadn't belong, and that each of them as a sign of entrance in to this family had been baptized. Baptism was and is the sign that one has entered into the community of Jesus' people, that they have been welcomed, washed, raised and called to live as Yahweh's people. In other words, baptism is the external sign of being in the family (by faith).

Observation/Interpretation

- In Eph. 4:4-6 Paul reminds the believers that the family they'd been brought into is marked by a unity with the other family members. Thus he says that there is, "one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all". If baptism is the external sign that we belong to this *one* (unified) family, why is it important that we value and work toward unity?
- What ruins unity in the family of Jesus' people? How can it be safeguarded?

Application

- If you're a follower of Jesus and haven't been baptized, why not? (This question isn't intended to marginalize and make one feel guilty or ashamed. Rather, it's intended to understand and discuss some of the reasons why some haven't been baptized.)
- If you've been baptized describe your experience? What prompted you to get baptized?
- Knowing that baptism is an outward sign that links you to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the community of Jesus' people, how does this reality help you to resist the rugged individualism often pervasive in the western Church?

Prayer

Ask God to help you to live as a family of Jesus' people bearing the traits and characteristics of our heavenly Father.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

16 - UNITY IN THE FAMILY - EPH 4.1-7

Introduction

In keeping everything connected to what Paul described as, “the mystery of His will...set forth in Christ...to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph 1:9-10), “the Church” was seen as the point of entry where the healing “unity of the Spirit” (Eph 4:3) had already begun to break forth in this broken world. For Paul, “the Church” was not just an arbitrary gathering of people, who came together weekly to hear sermons or sing songs. Rather, it embodied a family of people who had been shown great love and mercy, in order to show forth great love and mercy to one-another as well as to those beyond the family, including enemies.

Observation/Interpretation

- In his commentary* on this passage, scholar, N.T. Wright stated, “The one thing we can’t do is pretend that *unity and oneness aren’t* a central & vital issue. Unless we are working to maintain, defend & develop the unity we already enjoy (in Christ), and to overcome, demolish and put behind us the disunity we still find ourselves in, we can scarcely claim to be following Paul’s teaching”. Do you agree with this? Why, or why not? Discuss it.
- In Eph. 4:3 Paul encourages his readers to be, “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit”. The word translated, “eager” can also mean, “to be zealous”. In your life, what are some of the things that you’d say you’re “eager” for, or that you zealously pursue? Is unity/oneness with others (especially Christians) one of them? In not, why?

Application

- If the above statement from N.T. Wright is true, what impact should this have upon the way you welcome, forgive and treat others who may have wronged you or with whom you may not be in right relationship with?
- In light of all this, could it be said that if we (as Christians) choose to foster disunity by alienating ourselves or marginalizing others, that we are undoing what God is intending to do? If so, how do you believe the Holy Spirit will lead you to respond?

Prayer

Ask God to help you to see the humility, gentleness, patience and love with which He’s shown to you. Once your heart’s been melted and moved by God’s kindness, ask Him to help you to show forth these actions towards others.

*Paul For Everyone - The Prison Letters, NT Wright, pg. 44

Community Group Discussion

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Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God’s love through what He’s already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

17 - A HEALING COMMUNITY - EPH 4.7-10

Introduction

The people whom Jesus rescued have also been called and equipped to take part in the healing of our broken world. Until Jesus returns, the church's role among other things is to be a healing community. This healing comes through both *word* and *deed* both within the community and outward towards the world. Like Jesus, what we *say* and *do* can bring healing. Because the body follows Jesus (the head), this healing only comes through a willingness to descend, as it were into those places of darkness and brokenness, those places we often avoid. This process however, happens to be the way in which God has chosen to "fill all things" with his healing presence (Eph 4:10).

Observation/Interpretation

- In Eph. 4:8-10, Paul likens Jesus to a King whose triumphal procession "fills all things", who then generously distributes gifts (spoils of victory) to his followers. Read Eph 4:11-13,16. What seems to be the purpose of these gifts?
- Eph. 4:8 says that "He led captives in his train." This was perhaps a common image drawn from the dramatic processions of the Emperor (Caesar) who would parade defeated enemies through the streets. In Caesars world it was common for enemies to be conquered by being crushed by the super-power. Yet Jesus' victory came through exactly the opposite...he was crushed by and for his enemies. By doing this Jesus defeated evil not by more evil, but by good. Discuss why Jesus' actions are the only way to truly defeat evil and bring healing.

Application

- What are some of the gifts God's given to you that can be used to bring encouragement and healing to those around you?

Prayer

Give thanks to God for the way He's brought victory and the gifts He's given to you for the building up of others.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

18 - AN EQUIPPED COMMUNITY - EPH 4.11-13

Introduction

For God's people to be an effective healing community in a world full of hurt, they need regular training and equipping. God in his grace, has provided gifted individuals to equip his Church for the purpose of embodying good works which promote healing.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read Ephesians 4:11-13. What gifts has Jesus given to the church? What purpose has he given these gifts to the church?
- According to Ephesians 4:13, what is our unity defined by? Why is this important?

Application

- What are some areas of maturity and growth that you see necessary in:
 - your local church community?
 - your community group (small group)?
 - your personal life?

Prayer

Ask God to use you as an agent of encouragement to others for the health and healing of the church and the world.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

19 - A MATURING COMMUNITY - EPH 4.14-16

Introduction

As adorable as little children are, they are notoriously self-centered and destructive. As children grow up, the hope is that they become more aware of others and compassionate. In like manner, God's desire for his Church is that they would grow up into maturity. The template for what "maturity" looks like is Jesus. For he was kind and compassionate, and through his radically others-centered death, created a way by which peace could be made possible.

Observation/Interpretation

- According to Ephesians 4:8-16, what does the Church need in order to grow in maturity?
- Read Ephesians 4:2-3, 15-16. What does a mature disciple of Jesus look like?
- What are some of the hinderances to maturity as a disciple?

Application

- Have you ever honestly asked yourself where you're at in your development and maturity as a disciple?
- Why is it so difficult for us to honestly assess ourselves?
- Honestly assessing ourselves is humbling and often times leaves us feeling ashamed. Our sense of shame is the result of knowing we haven't measured up. Yet, the gospel reveals to us that even though we are not where we ought to be, we are lovingly and heartily accepted by God. How does knowing this beautiful truth set you free from this paralyzing shame to move on toward real growth?

Prayer

Thank God for his faithful love for you, in spite of how you've lived. Ask him to help you to grow into a mature disciple, who can reflect God's love back into our broken world.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

20 - NICE PEOPLE OR NEW PEOPLE - EPH 4.17-24

Introduction

The question is often asked, “does one need to change their way of life (behavior) when becoming a Christian?” This question reveals not only a reluctance to change but also a misperception of what the Gospel accomplishes. One of God’s aims in sending Jesus to rescue us from our rebellion (sin) is to create a new people with new hearts, filled with new desires. If a Christian is living according to the gospel then a lifestyle that’s consistent with God’s character will naturally arise out of their new heart. This is different than moralism, which is a self-motivated attempt at being good. God is primarily interested in us becoming new people, not just nice people.

Observation/Interpretation

- Paul uses language to describe putting off our old ways of life, with that of taking off an old set of worn out clothes. This presupposes that we’ve been given a new set (by grace) to put on. What does the “new self, created after the likeness of God” (Eph 4:24) look like?

Application

- Why is it so hard to put off the old patterns of life?
- What are some practical ways that you can effectively put off old patterns that lead to brokenness, while putting on new patterns that lead to life and healing?

Prayer

Ask for God’s help to be a community of new people who walk in patterns that promote God’s healing and restoration.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God’s mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God’s love through what He’s already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

21 - HEALING ACTIONS - EPH 4.25-32

Introduction

Many Christians today wrongly view the early Church as having lived in a mature state where love was always present and the gospel clearly portrayed. The reality is that the early Christians, like us, struggled with honesty, lying, anger, stealing, speaking condescendingly to one another, having hard feelings, and even bitterness. Paul felt the need to exhort them that since they'd been recipients of God's healing actions, they too are to reflect those same actions outward toward others.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read Ephesians 4:25-32. Paul speaks of a number of negative behaviors to avoid and positive behaviors to embody. List below some of the:
 - Negative behaviors
 - Positive behaviors

Application

- Which of the above negative behaviors do you struggle with most?
- Most of our corrupting behaviors are often rooted in our insecurities and/or idolatries. For example, we may "lie", out of fear of being found out a fraud or hypocrite. As long as others have a high opinion of the person I'm projecting myself to be then I'm safe, yet the moment that image is threatened I'll resort to lying. In this example, lying is the fruit, and the root is an "idolatry" whereby I find my identity. Take a moment to think about the roots beneath the negative behaviors' fruits. What are they? Have you confessed them to God?

Prayer

Ask God for help to be a community of new people walking in new behaviors that promote healing and restoration.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

22 - HEALING ACTIONS PT 2 - EPH 4.28-5:2

Introduction

Many Christians today wrongly view the early Church as having lived in a mature state where love was always present and the gospel clearly portrayed. The reality is that the early Christians, like us, struggled with honesty, lying, anger, stealing, speaking condescendingly to one another, having hard feelings, and even bitterness. Paul felt the need to exhort them that since they'd been recipients of God's healing actions, they too are to reflect those same actions outward toward others.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read Ephesians 4:25-32. Paul speaks of a number of negative behaviors to avoid and positive behaviors to embody. List below some of the:
 - Negative behaviors
 - Positive behaviors

Application

- Which of the above negative behaviors do you struggle with most?
- Most of our corrupting behaviors are often rooted in our insecurities and/or idolatries. For example, we may "lie", out of fear of being found out a fraud or hypocrite. As long as others have a high opinion of the person I'm projecting myself to be then I'm safe, yet the moment that image is threatened I'll resort to lying. In this example, lying is the fruit, and the root is an "idolatry" whereby I find my identity. Take a moment to think about the roots beneath the negative behaviors' fruits. What are they? Have you confessed them to God?

Prayer

Ask God for help to be a community of new people walking in new behaviors that promote healing and restoration.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

23 - IMITATORS OF GOD - EPH 5:1-6

Introduction

The reason why our world is full of brokenness and suffering is because it is out of harmony with how God created it to flourish. In other words, human's who've been given the responsibility to care for each other and this world, do not reflect and imitate God rightly. For example, God is self-sacrificially giving and works for the good of others. We are often self-serving and work for the good of ourselves at the expense of others. The good news (Gospel) is that Jesus came to rescue us from the consequences of these sinful actions and transform us into people like himself.

Observation/Interpretation

- According to Eph. 5:3-4 what does Paul instruct?
- According to Eph. 5:5-6 How serious does he consider these self-serving actions to be?
- In Eph 5:5, Paul called those who are immoral, impure and covetous, "idolators". Why do you think he did this?
- According to Eph. 5:3-4, 7 what is Paul's remedy in response to the immorality and impurity within Jesus people?

Application

- How has your life changed since you started following Jesus?

Prayer

Thank God for how he has treated you with kindness. Ask him to help you to imitate him.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

24 - CHILDREN OF LIGHT - EPH 5:7-14

Introduction

In the Bible light is often used as a metaphor for moral purity, goodness and life. God Himself is described as light. Those whom God has rescued have been described as being brought out of darkness and into the light. Paul urges the Ephesian believers (and us) to live lives, as children of light.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read Eph. 5:8-14 and compare and contrast lives that are “full of darkness”, with those that are “full of light.”
- If someone were to ask you, “what does it mean to live as children of light”, how would you explain it to them?

Application

- Reflect back to the time before you became a Christian. What was your life like then as compared to now? How has Jesus changed you from darkness to light?

Prayer

Thank God for bringing his light into our world in order to rescue us from the darkness of sin and death. Pray for friends and loved ones who don't yet know Jesus.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

25 - WALKING IN WISDOM - EPH 5:15-18

Introduction

God is intent on bringing life to where there is death, and light to where there is darkness. Those whom have been made alive are now to live for that which is life-giving. To do this requires making wise choices. Following Jesus is not just about information and theory but obedience and practice. We are invited by God, through grace, to bring our lives into agreement with himself. It's in this place, our truest humanity and deepest joy are discovered.

Observation/Interpretation

- Throughout the book of Ephesians, Paul uses the metaphor of “walking” to describe our day by day life and conduct. Read through each of the below passages and discuss how they apply to our lives.
 - Eph. 2:2
 - Eph. 2:10
 - Eph. 4:1
 - Eph. 4:17
 - Eph. 5:2
 - Eph. 5:8
- Read the following verses and note the various ways people who walk in wisdom conduct themselves:
 - Eph. 5:15
 - Eph. 5:16
 - Eph. 5:17
 - Eph. 5:18

Application

- While believers are free to drink alcohol, drunkenness is clearly prohibited. Alcohol is considered a depressant, which influences a person by making them less aware of life's circumstances. By contrast, Paul urges followers of Jesus to be “filled with the Spirit”, which gives one better perspective of their lives in relation to a loving and powerful God. Both lead to a sense of, elation, relief and/or freedom, with alcohol making one less aware, and the Holy Spirit, making one more aware. In light of this, why do you think being “filled with the Spirit”, instead of “being drunk with wine” is a better and longer lasting alternative for a life that flourishes?

Prayer

Thank God for giving us wisdom in His word so that we could flourish. Ask God for renewed hearts that love his wisdom, and wills that desire to obey Him in everything.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

26 - WALKING IN WISDOM PT.2 - EPH 5:15-18

Introduction

God is intent on bringing life to where there is death, and light to where there is darkness. Those whom have been made alive are now to live for that which is life-giving. To do this requires making wise choices. Following Jesus is not just about information and theory but obedience and practice. We are invited by God, through grace, to bring our lives into agreement with himself. It's in this place, our truest humanity and deepest joy are discovered. Go through each of the verses below slowly, discussing each one. Cover as much as time allows. (For some, this may be review from last week.)

Observation/Interpretation

- Throughout the book of Ephesians, Paul uses the metaphor of walking to describe our day-by-day life and conduct. Read through each of the below passages and discuss how they apply to our lives:
 - Eph. 2:2
 - Eph. 2:10
 - Eph. 4:1
 - Eph. 4:17
 - Eph. 5:2
 - Eph. 5:8
- Read the following verses and note the various ways people who walk in wisdom conduct themselves:
 - Eph. 5:15
 - Eph. 5:16
 - Eph. 5:17
 - Eph. 5:18

Application

- As one follows Jesus, their lives will naturally expose other ways of living that are broken (or false) and which don't lead to sustainable flourishing. This ought to never lead to a feeling of superiority over others, as pride is *not* characteristic of God. Rather, as Paul describes, light will expose darkness (Eph 5:11-13). Discuss ways that Christians can carefully walk this balance of exposing what's in darkness while avoiding the darkness of pride, arrogance and exclusivism.

Prayer

Ask God for humility and wisdom to live your lives in a way that demonstrate to the world around you that God is good.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

27 - FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT - EPH 5:18

Introduction

Most philosophies and religious movements urge their followers to fill their minds with advice and knowledge that come from its leaders and teachers. Christianity on the other hand urges its followers to be filled not just with advice and knowledge of God, but to be filled with God himself. Paul the apostle urged Christians to the "filled with the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit was understood to be the very creative life of God himself, which pushes back darkness bringing light and overcomes death to restore life.

Observation/Interpretation

- We're all familiar with the various evidences of someone being drunk, but what are some of the evidences of someone who is "filled with the Holy Spirit"?
- Why do you think Paul contrasted, "being filled with the Holy Spirit" with, "being drunk with wine"?

Application

- In what ways is the Holy Spirit's fullness and power evident in your life?
- Talk about some of the areas of your life in which the Holy Spirit is not in control.

Prayer

Ask God to show you the areas that you've not relinquished to the creative and reconstructive Spirit of God.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

28 - SINGING TO GOD - EPH 5:19

Introduction

Throughout the story of the Bible, people who followed God often expressed their trust and love for God through singing. Paul, knowing that singing is a natural response to God and demonstration of worship (what we consider of worth), he urges the Ephesian people (and us) to “sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and make music to the Lord in your hearts”.

Observation/Interpretation

- Paul wrote Eph. 5:19 as an imperative (or a command). Why do you think he would state this as a command instead of a simple suggestion?
- Paul’s reference to “spiritual songs” in vs. 19, no doubt communicates the influence of the Holy Spirit’s influence (Eph. 5:18). What are some distinctions between “just singing” and, “Holy Spirit influenced singing”?

Application

- When gathered as a community of faith, be it on a Sunday or throughout the week in a Community group, do you feel comfortable singing worship to God, out loud? Yes, no, or sort of?
- What are some of the hinderances that keep you (or a church gathering) from singing worship to God?
- Have you even had an experience during worship in song that has impacted you significantly? Describe it.

Prayer

Ask God to help you and our Church to sing boldly and loudly to God. Pray for even greater freedom for yourself, your community group and Calvary SLO to express God’s greatness through singing.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God’s mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God’s love through what He’s already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

29 - GIVING THANKS TO GOD - EPH 5:20

Introduction

One of the things one does when they “walk in the light” (Eph. 5:8) and are “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Eph. 5:18) is overflow with gratitude to God for everything (Eph. 5:20). The late pastor, John Stott rightly said, “the grumbling (complaining) spirit is not compatible with the Holy Spirit. Grumbling was one of the besetting sins of the people of Israel; they were always ‘murmuring’ against the Lord and against Moses. But the Spirit-filled believer is full not of complaining, but of thanksgiving.”

Observation/Interpretation

- Read the following verses and reflect upon what they’re exhorting and/or saying.
 - Philippians 4:6
 - 1 Peter 4:12-14
 - Psalm 34:1

Application

- The Christians in Ephesus would’ve come from a life of paganism. As followers of Jesus they faced great pressure and marginalization from the wider culture around them for converting to a “foreign religion”. It’s in this context Paul exhorts them to, “give thanks always and for everything...”. How would having hearts full of gratitude help them as a community of Jesus people, flourish in the midst of adversity?
- How would you evaluate your ability to “give thanks” and rejoice in the middle of challenging circumstances?
- What are some of the reasons ingratitude is allowed to influence your heart?

Prayer

Pray for Christians in the world (e.g., Iraq, Syria, China, Pakistan) who are being persecuted, and killed for their faith in Jesus. Pray that God would help them to “rejoice” even in the middle of great suffering. Finish by asking God to fill your heart with joy by reminding you of what He’s done to save you and what will one day be yours in the future.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God’s mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God’s love through what He’s already done for them.
- **Mission:** Pray/sing together, give yourselves to God.



EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

30 - SERVANTHOOD - EPH 5:21

Introduction

One of the great evidences that we've been rescued from darkness and are "walking in the light" is mutual care and serving of one another. One of the reasons our world suffers the way it does is because we as sinners focus more upon ourselves rather than on God or neighbor. The gospel is the power of God to save us, not only from our sins but *for* a new purpose which includes loving service to God and neighbor.

Observation/Interpretation

- Society consists of a social hierarchy. The wealthy, good looking, and the powerful are on top and demand respect from those below. Paul claims that the gospel not only reveals the sinfulness and bankruptcy of this system but that it brings about a new order. This reordering results in the last being first and all being treated with honor and respect regardless of skin color, income or status. How does the phrase, "submit to one another..." (Eph 5:21) come against the broken system of the world?
- How can a posture of serving/loving one another undo the brokenness in society and bring healing?
- Read Philippians 2:1-11. How did Jesus deal with others (friends, neighbors and enemies)?

Application

- Why is the command to "submit to one another..." (Eph 5:21) controversial?
- Why is the command to "submit to one another..." (Eph 5:21) challenging to embody, on a personal level?

Prayer

Ask God to help you to truly understand and embody the life-giving posture of servanthood.

Community Group Discussion

- **Information:** Read the passage/answer the questions.
- **Transformation:** Being honest/transparent, discuss how God through the gospel intends to change you.
- **Mission:** Pray together. Surrender to God's mission.

Family Devotion Discussion

- **Information:** Have your child read the passage.
- **Transformation:** Make it personal. Help them to see God's love through what He's already done for them.
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EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

31 - JESUS-SHAPED MARRIAGE PT 1 - EPH 5:22-33

Introduction

The Bible begins and concludes with a wedding. Marriage is the creation of God. There is no other institution on earth which has the potential bring not only healing, wholeness and life but also brokenness, destruction and death. To say that it's an important part of humanity is an understatement. The words God has to say about marriage will not only prove challenging from our various cultural perspectives, but life-giving, should we trust and obey Him.

This is the first part of a series of messages on marriage. The questions below may take some time to answer. Don't feel the need to rush. Rather take the time to explore what they have to say, and break it up into a couple of weeks if needed.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read Ephesians 5:21-22. What seems to be the main purpose and focus of this teaching?
- What areas challenge you to think and act differently than you currently are? Why?
- Paul states that, "the two" becoming "one flesh" is a profound mystery which "refers to Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:31-32). The idea behind the word "mystery" in the Greek refers more to something once hidden, though now revealed. Why do you think Paul points to the institution of marriage as being like a road-sign which points to the gospel of Jesus's redemptive and restorative love for the church?

Application

- What are some of the questions you have about Ephesians 5:21-33?
- In this New Testament we see that:
 - wives are to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22)
 - husbands are to submit to the example of Christ (Eph 5:25)
 - all believers are to submit to one another within differing roles (Eph. 5:21, 1 Pet. 2:13, 2:18, 5:5, Heb 13:17)

What changes of heart and/or actions need to take place in your life regarding the topics covered above?

Prayer

Ask God to help you (and your community group and the Church in general) to reflect the posture of Jesus who submitted himself to the will of his Father.

Community Group Discussion

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EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

32 - JESUS-SHAPED MARRIAGE PT 2- EPH 5:22-33

Introduction

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- What areas challenge you to think and act differently than you currently are? Why?
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Application

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EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

33 - JESUS SHAPED FAMILY AND WORKPLACE- EPH 6:1-9

Introduction

Throughout history, up to and including modern times, marriages, families and workplaces have often been tainted by oppression, destruction and in some cases, even death. Various cultures have responded by attempting to bring reform, but in many instances the solutions are not much better than the problem. Marriages and families were designed by God to bring about protection, security, nurturing and growth in wisdom. Likewise, workplaces are meant to be areas of creativity, community building and stewardship of God's creation. Each of these environments can help us, and those around us, to flourish when they are handled according to God's plan, in response to God's generous love and care.

Unfortunately, these gifts have been distorted by our society, because we as humans have been mastered by sin and sinful desires. Paul the apostle offers us a glimpse of hope as he demonstrated how the gospel reorders our understanding of each of these areas. The gospel has the power to reorient us toward one-another in a new way that treats us all with dignity, value and respect, by reconciling us back to God and his good purposes.

Observation/Interpretation

- Read Ephesians 6:1-3. What does it mean for children to obey and honor their parents?
- What are some practical ways that parents (fathers) practice the commands in Eph. 6:1-3?
- Read Ephesians 6:5-8. Most scholars agree that the "master/slave" relationship of Paul's world paralleled our modern workplace. How are slaves (employees) to do their work?
- Read Ephesians 6:9. How does Paul say that masters (employers/bosses/managers) are to treat their slaves (employees)?

Application

- Reflect upon the example that Jesus gave as He lived out these roles.
 - He is the Son who honored and obeyed his Father, even when it was difficult.
 - He is the Husband who lovingly laid down his life for his bride (the Church) to cleanse and beautify her, even though she didn't deserve it.
 - He is the Master who laid aside his rights and privileges (Phil. 2) in order to serve the weak, with salvation.
- How does his example change your perspective?
- Each of us are currently in one or more of these roles: husband, wife, child, parent, employee or employer. When has it been difficult for you to follow Paul's instructions? How does knowing that God has come to rescue you from sin's mastery, at great cost to himself, transform your heart to live this?

Prayer

Ask God to help you to be a person which demonstrates God's awesome love in all the above areas of your life.

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EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

34 - SPIRITUAL WAR - PT.1 - EPH 6:10-12

Introduction

The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ were a turning point for our entire world. At this time, God broke open the dam on his healing kingdom, spilling His power into our broken and sin-filled world. The Bible teaches us there is spiritual evil, here on earth. This darkness is personified by Satan (and demons), and it influences people toward rebellion against God. The gospel is that God hasn't abandoned us to our brokenness. Instead, he has countered this evil, which is resident in our world and hearts, at great expense to himself, and in so doing has proven his love for us.

During WWII the battle which ultimately decided the end of the war happened on the beach of Normandy, France. After this invasion, scores of Allied troop stormed area and Hitler's days were numbered. Although the war would continue for months, Hitler was effectively already beaten. Similarly, Satan was defeated at the cross, even though for now he still has power to influence and sabotage this world. This is why Paul urges God's people to "be strong in the Lord" and to "put on the whole armor of God", so that we may "be able to stand against the schemes of the devil." We will spend the next several weeks looking at the subject of spiritual warfare, but the important point to remember is that the ultimate victory is already won.

Observation/Interpretation

- What are some of the "schemes of the devil" that Paul's referring to, which he wants for us to stand against? When have you seen these present in your life?
- Read 6:11-12. What kind of battle are we engaged in? What does this mean for us, as soldiers?

Application

- What does spiritual victory look like, in your understanding? Discuss this.
- What does spiritual defeat look like, in your understanding? Discuss this.
- Are you prepared for the spiritual attacks of the enemy? How can you prepare yourself better?
- What are some of the ways in which you find yourself under spiritual attack (oppression)?

Prayer

Ask God for help to discern the presence and nature of spiritual warfare. Ask God to equip you to be strong when such times come.

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EPHESIANS

FULLY ALIVE TO GOD, OTHERS & YOUR TRUE SELF

45 - BELT OF TRUTH - EPH. 6.14

Introduction

Over the next several weeks we'll be looking at the various "spiritual weapons" Paul instructs the believers to be equipped with. The first on his list is, "the belt of truth". While Paul may have had a Roman soldier in mind there can be now doubt his instruction was also shaped by the images of Isaiah the Prophet who anticipated One to come who was defined by truth (and righteousness) as opposed to deception and lies (Is. 11:9).

Paul's point seems to be that one of the ways in which we combat the attacks of the devil are to simply live our lives defined by and in light of truth and truthfulness, as opposed to deception and lies. This truth we're to live by is not just principles but the person of Christ, the embodiment of Truth, for in him is no darkness (deception) at all (1 John 1:5).

Observation/Interpretation

- Read Mark 5:33. When brought face to face with Jesus how does this woman respond?
- Read 1 John 1:5-10. 1 John 1:5 describes God in what way? What does this mean?

Application

- You and I are often deceived and often deceive others. Why do we develop patterns of lying to one another?
- Religious systems often motivate people to stop certain behaviors (like lying), but rarely ever change one's heart. How does the Gospel transform our hearts so as to be "truth-tellers" as opposed to deceivers and lies?

Prayer

Ask God for help to to speak and live the truth of God, boldly, humbly, lovingly.

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