FLOURISH
BIBLE STUDY

EPHESIANS

LEADER'S GUIDE



LYDIA BROWNBACK

INTRODUCTION: GETTING INTO EPHESIANS

The first time your group gathers, you'll want to provide an overview of Ephesians and review your plans for the study. The apostle Paul presents the Christian life as a walk along a path toward heaven. You might want to ask the group to identify where they see themselves on this path today, at the beginning of the study. Is it a steady course, or are they tempted by forks in the road? Relate this to the Ephesian believers who had to walk the path of godliness in the midst of ungodly Ephesus. How was that city similar to the world we live in today? Talk about the overarching themes of the letter, most especially the way it unfolds the importance of the church—God's people living life together for the good of all and for God's glory. Look together at the Reading Plan on page xix and discuss which of the supplemental readings you'll include each week.

WEEK 1: THE BEST INHERITANCE EVER

EPHESIANS 1:1–14

This week's passage, Ephesians 1:1–14, is foundational to everything else in the letter, so it's really important that your group understands what Paul writes here as he sets out the gospel. Rather than try to cover every question during your group discussion, perhaps select a few key questions. If you take this approach, be sure to talk through the chart on pages 4–5 and the question at the top of page 7, and then look back to others that might logically come up when you discuss the "Let's Talk" questions. *Please note that question numbers are missing from the first two questions on page 3. Apologies for any confusion!*

GRACE AND PEACE TO YOU (1:1–2)

1. Paul identifies himself as an apostle in verse 1. The apostles were the leaders of the early church. There were twelve initially, and Paul was added to their number later. According to verse 1, why is Paul able to number himself among them?

   Answer: God's will determined that Paul be counted among the apostles.

2. Paul calls the Ephesian believers "saints," which is simply a way of referring to people who have been set apart by God for salvation. What else do we learn about them in verse 1?

   Answer: They are faithful in Christ Jesus.

3. Paul expresses his desire that the Ephesian Christians experience "grace" and "peace" (v. 2). Grace is God's undeserved favor, and peace in this greeting has to do with a

well-ordered life. According to Paul here, how do grace and peace come to God's people?

Answer: Grace and peace are given by God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

BIG-PICTURE GLIMPSE OF A GLORIOUS PASSAGE (1:3–14)

Paul shows us how all three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—play a part in our salvation. In the chart that follows, note what Paul attributes to each divine person in verses 3–14.

Answer: *God the Father*: chooses whom to save and determines to adopt them into his family. He also carries out his intentions to bless those he's chosen and reveals himself to them. *Jesus Christ*: offered himself as a sacrifice to redeem those God the Father chooses. *Holy Spirit*: he indwells believers so that they are sealed as Christ's for all eternity.

From this passage, verses 3–14, identify the specific blessings or spiritual fruit Paul attaches to the term "in" or "through" Christ.

Answer: *Answers found in the chart passages.*

A CLOSER LOOK (1:3–14)

4. What, according to verse 4, is God's purpose for redeeming us, and what motivated God to choose us to receive this blessing?

   Answer: "that we should be holy and blamless before him." Through Christ, we will be made holy (a state of purity and separation from sin), and blameless (without guilt or payment due for our sin against God).

5. In verses 4–5, Paul tells us that God "chose" us to belong to him in Christ, and he "predestined" (or predetermined) to adopt us into his family and make us his very own children. What does this show us about the part we play in coming to faith in Christ?

   Answer: We play no part in God's decision to save us. As Jonathan Edwards said, "You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary."

6. Paul tells us in verse 5 that God "predestined us for adoption." In saving us, God adopts us as his very own children. What does this truth indicate about God's heart toward his people?

   Answer: God comes to us as a perfect Father—full of love, kindness, and understanding. He desires to restore the close familial relationship he had with humanity

in the garden of Eden—he walked with Adam, gave him every good thing, and provided for every need.

7. God's ultimate purpose in saving us goes beyond the blessings we receive. What, according to verse 6, is this overarching purpose?

   Answer: His overarching purpose is to reveal his grace in all its fullness. He achieves this through restoring relationship with us through Christ. There is a coming day where we will see and known his glorious grace perfectly and will dwell eternally in incredible radiance of his glory.

8. Look again at verses 7–10 and jot down what Paul says concerning the how, the when, and the why of God's plan for redemption.

   Answer: *How*: we are redeemed through the shed blood of Christ and united to Christ by faith. *When*: His plan has always existed and the fulfilling of it unfolds over time. *Why*: The reason reconciling broken sinners to himself, bringing them into his family, and enabling us to bask in his glory and praise him forever.

9. What does he say is the ultimate purpose for this inheritance in verse 12?

   Answer: Again we see that God's overarching is the praise of his glory.

10. Not everyone who hears God's word with their ears hears it with their heart, but those who do—the ones who truly believe—are given a seal, or sign. This seal, which always accompanies salvation, is "the promised Holy Spirit" (v. 13). Paul goes on to describe the Holy Spirit as the "guarantee" or down payment of our inheritance (v. 14). How do the following passages help us understand why Paul describes the Spirit, or Helper, as a seal?

    Answer: *John 16:7*: the Holy Spirit was sent in Christ's absence. Christ's temporary absence (until he returns again) assures us that he accomplished what he intended to accomplish—our debt has been paid.

    Romans 8:15–17: The presence of the Spirit signifies that we have been adopted as children of God. God the Holy Spirit is within us, establishing a sense of familial ties as we are sanctified.

    Galatians 4:6–7: Our ability to cry out to God is evidence of the Holy Spirit's presence within us. We are able to call him "Father" because of the Holy Spirit's opening the eyes of our hearts to know him this way.

    1 John 4:13: We can know and be assured, confident that we are marked as one of God's children, because of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the evidence of his work in our lives. God does not give the Spirit to unbelievers, but only to believers.

WEEK 2: SEEING WITH HEART-EYES

EPHESIANS 1:15–23

Prayer is the clear emphasis this week, specifically Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15–23. In addition to covering the rich theology contained in the prayer, you'll also want to draw out the particulars of Paul's petition—what he asks God to do. The first question on page 12 comes from verse 16, where Paul mentions his unceasing prayers for his Christian friends during his imprisonment. The point to bring out here is the way Paul prays even in personally difficult circumstances. From this verse we learn that prayer is meant to be ongoing, not occasional, and that our prayers for others can be strong and fervent even when we stand in great need of prayer ourselves. The second question on page 14 concerns the third blessing that accompanies enlightened hearts—a realization of God's power toward his people. The type of power Paul has in mind is *resurrection* power, and this power is at work slowly but surely transforming us to reflect Christlike character. You'll definitely want to save time for both "Let's Talk" questions. The first one asks us to examine our prayer practices in light of the way Paul prays and to guide us to pray more often the way he does. The second "Let's Talk" question introduces an important theme that we'll find threaded through the rest of the letter—the vitality of church life.

REMEMBERING YOU . . . (1:15–16)

1. Paul leads into his prayer by attaching it to the first section of the letter—"For this reason . . ." (v. 15). Looking back at verses 1–14, what do you think this reason is?

   Answer: The praise and glory of God the Father.

2. Even from prison Paul writes that his thanks for these believers doesn't cease and that he always remembers to pray for them (v. 16). What does this reveal to us about the nature of Christian prayer?

   Answer: We ought to pray for our fellow Christians and thank God for them frequently. In addition, prayer is not dependent on our circumstances. We can be thankful for the work of Christ no matter where we find ourselves.

HEART-EYES OPENED (1:17–21)

3. Paul's overarching request is found in verse 17: ". . . that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him." How do all three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—factor into this petition?

   Answer: *Father*: Here, the Spirit's work originates from the Father. *Son*: It is through the redeeming work of the Son that we are enabled to receive this gift. *Spirit*: we

realize the wisdom and knowledge of God through the work of the Spirit. God is the Father of glory, and it is knowledge of him that we seek. We are able to know God through the person of Christ, our mediator. We gain this wisdom, revelation, knowledge of God through the work of the Holy Spirit.

4. We want to understand the three terms Paul uses in this petition: wisdom, revelation, and knowledge. How do the passages below shed light on his use of these terms?

   Answer: *Wisdom (1 Cor. 2:11–13)*: We need to Holy Spirit in order to understand what God reveals to us. *Revelation (John 16:13–15)*: The Holy Spirit reveals spiritual truth and helps us understand what has been revealed to us through Scripture. *Knowledge (2 Pet. 1:2–4)*: Knowledge of God the Father and Jesus Christ brings about grace and peace (and all things pertaining to life and godliness).

5. The first blessing that comes to an enlightened heart is hope. Look again at the opening section of the letter, verses 3–14. How does that section identify this hope?

   Answer: The blessings of salvation that begin in this life just get fuller and richer over time and will be realized fully in heaven.

6. The third blessing that comes to enlightened hearts is a realization of God's power "toward us" (v. 19). How does Paul shed light on the nature of this power in verse 20, and what does this convey about how God is at work in our very own lives?

   Answer: It's the same power that raised Christ from death—something beyond our ability to comprehend or imitate in any way. This power is far beyond any power that we interact with or know here on earth. God has both the authority and the power to promote and create change in our lives.

7. How in verses 20–21 does Paul reveal the place of Jesus Christ now?

   Answer: Christ is in a position of authority, which is indicated by the fact that he's seated and that his place is at the right hand of the Father.

8. Paul says that Christ has been placed "above every name that is named" (v. 21). Paul writes the same thing in a different letter, that God has given Jesus "the name that is above every name" (Philippians 2:9). The specific name Paul likely has in mind there is Yahweh, God's personal name, which is rendered as "Lord" with small capital letters in the Old Testament. How does Philippians 2:9–11 explain what Paul means here in Ephesians 1:21?

   Answer: God has given Christ the ultimate authority, the authority that causes all other authorities to bow down in this age and the next. This authority brings glory to God.

ALL IN ALL (1:22–23)

9. In these final two verses of the chapter, Paul wants believers to view themselves not so much as individuals but as a collective whole—the church. What does he reveal in verse 22 about the position of Christ in relation to his people?

   Answer: Christ is over the entire church as its authority, guide, and protector.

10. Christ is "head over all things to the church" (v. 22). Paul here directs us beyond ourselves, out from the church to the world and everything in it. He's saying that Christ's authority governs all that happens in every place at all times for the preservation of his people. How is this meant to shape our understanding of church, not just the big-picture church but our own congregation?

    Answer: Christ sustains our congregations by sovereignly directing everything and everyone worldwide for the good of each individual body.

11. Paul pictures the church as Christ's "body" in verse 23. As you think about this image, what does it convey about our present relationship with our risen Savior?

    Answer: Being united to Christ, we are so close that we cannot function independently of him.

12. Believers altogether are the "fullness" of Christ, and as a united body under Christ's lordship, the church "fills all in all" (v. 23). Read John 17:20–24, a portion of the powerful prayer Jesus prayed as he neared the end of his earthly life. How does this prayer help us understand what Paul means by "the fullness that fills all in all"?

    Answer: He prayed that believers would be so inextricably united to him that we are bound up with each other, and the bond we share through our union with Christ would serve as a testimony to the gospel throughout the whole world.

WEEK 3: BUT GOD . . .

EPHESIANS 2:1–10

The passage you'll talk about this week, 2:1–10, is foundational for the Christian life. Paul sets out salvation, unfolding the gospel so clearly. Definitely take time at the beginning to read slowly and carefully through all ten verses. This is a good week to check in with the group to make sure everyone understands what the biblical gospel actually is. You might begin by asking participants if working through Week 3 raised new questions about the gospel or changed their understanding in some way. If you choose to be

selective about the portions of the study you'll cover, definitely include section 2. When you get to section 3, about Christian "walking," you can discuss how Paul uses the word "walk" overall in the letter rather than rereading and talking through each instance.

DOOMED (2:1–3)

1. All people are followers of something or someone. Christians follow Christ and the path marked out for them in God's word. What two things, according to verse 2, do unbelievers, "the sons of disobedience," naturally follow?

   Answer: Unbelievers naturally follow worldly patterns, seeking to gratify themselves through earthly means. All this is promoted by Satan, "the prince of the power of the air."

2. Before coming to Christ, we were driven by ungodly passions, which Paul describes as "the desires of the body and the mind" (v. 3). How do the following passages enhance our understanding of these particular desires?

   Answer: *Mark 8:31–33*: Apart from Christ, people shape their lives around avoiding suffering and the reality of death.

   Romans 8:5–8: The mindset of unbelievers is on gratifying their flesh.

   Galatians 5:16–21: the desires of the flesh aren't hard to identify and include things such as sexual immorality, unrestrained emotions, and personal gratification at the expense of others.

   1 John 2:15–17: Unbelievers are wrapped up in gratifying desires for pleasure and power.

3. Read Psalm 2, a psalm written to commemorate the rise of Israel's great king David. Even though the psalm celebrates that ancient king, it has a much deeper meaning. It actually points way into the future to King Jesus. How does the psalm clarify what Paul means when he characterizes unbelievers as "children of wrath" (v. 3)?

   Answer: Children of wrath are those who reject God and his means of salvation. In the Old Testament, God appointed an earthly king to provide for and protect his people. This king foreshadowed the eternal King Jesus.

BUT GOD . . . (2:4–9)

4. Review verses 1–3. Notice all Paul says there, and also verse 5 in this new section, about our spiritual condition before we're saved. What is revealed about the part we play in coming to Christ?

   Answer: We played no part in our own salvation. We were dead in our trespasses and therefore unable to help ourselves or save ourselves.

5. According to verse 4, what compels God to intervene in people's lives?

   Answer: Nothing but his mercy and love.

6. What does verse 5 clarify about how God saves us?

   Answer: We were saved solely by God's grace. He unites us to his Son in such a way that we have joined him spiritually in his resurrection.

7. In verse 6 Paul shows how Christ's resurrection from the dead factors in to our salvation, first now, in this life, as we are spiritually transformed, and then later, for all eternity. Paul says that God has raised us up with Christ and "seated us with him in the heavenly places." When we read about Christ's being seated in heaven, it doesn't mean that he's actually sitting. The image is meant to show Christ's authority, like that of a ruler or king who governs from a throne with a scepter in his hand. So with that in mind, what do you think Paul is communicating when he says that God has "seated us with him"? Hint: take a look back at 1:19–23.

   Answer: This gets at the reality that we will participate in his rule and reign because we are so much a part of him. For now, we are under the protection of his rule.

8. In verse 7 Paul reveals the reason why God saves us. What is the reason he gives?

   Answer: He saves us to that we can receive all the riches of his grace—his favor, kindness, and everything that works for our good. And he saves us so that we can truly know him.

9. Paul summarizes how we are saved in verses 8–9. Consider how Paul uses each of the following words in his summary, and write out the part each plays in our salvation.

   Answer: *Grace*: We were saved by grace, which is God's favor to undeserving sinners like us. *Faith*: The instrument through which our salvation is realized is faith, and even our faith is a gift. It's not something we decide to believe or choose on our own. If grace is the medicine, faith is the IV that delivers the medicine of grace. *Works*: our salvation is not in any way contingent on what we do. We contribute nothing.

WALKING IN GOOD WORKS (2:10)

10. Paul doesn't simply say we are to do the good works God has prepared for us—he instructs us to "walk" in them. Paul uses the term "walk" six times in this letter. We are going to examine most of these verses later in our study, but it would be good to take a look at each one now to get a feel for how Paul uses the word and what he has in mind here in 2:10. Jot down a quick note about each one in the space below.

Answer: *Ephesians 2:10*: We are to walk in, or live out, the good works God sets before us.

Ephesians 4:1–3: We are to walk, or live, in a way that reflects the character of our Savior.

Ephesians 4:17: We are to reject the way of life that motivates those who don't know Christ. What motivates them will prove futile in the long run.

Ephesians 5:2: We are to be characterized by love.

Ephesians 5:8–9: We are to walk in the light rather than darkness, which means living in the paths marked out for us in Scripture, not those the world follows.

Ephesians 5:15–16: We are to be mindful of the way we spend our time. Having an eternal perspective enables us to play the long game. The world lives only for what they see in the hear and now.

WEEK 4: ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL

EPHESIANS 2:11–22

This week's passage, 2:11–22, is definitely not light reading, but please resist the temptation to hurry through it! If the conversation stalls, you can jump-start it by pointing out that these verses show how Scripture is really one big story that ties together—an exciting discovery when we can see it so clearly, as we do here. The Old Testament rite of circumcision seems foreign to us and—let's face it—doesn't make for the most scintillating sort of discussion. But the fact that this Old Testament rite factors into New Testament teaching indicates our need to talk it through. You might want to take a few minutes to read Genesis 17:9–14, which reveals its significance. The "blood of Christ" referenced in the first question on page 29 has to do with Jesus's death on the cross. Peace is the result. Because the word *peace* means different things to different people, it's important to emphasize the type of peace Paul is outlining here in Ephesians. First and foremost, of course, the cross brings peace between sinners and God, and after that, it brings peace between God's people. You might want to discuss the various ways the word *peace* is used today and how it can actually contradict biblical teaching. For example, God's people cannot make peace with sin or sinful practices, even in the name of love. Finally, be sure the group grasps the significance of Jesus as cornerstone. If you want to undertake a short read on "cornerstone" as you prepare, here's a link: https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/cornerstone-and-foundation.

THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW (2:11–13)

1. Without this mark—this sign of belonging—the Gentiles were at a great disadvantage. List the disadvantages that Paul identifies in verse 12.

   Answer: *1.* Separated from Christ (this is the primary issue, and thus listed first–our rescue from this world can come only from Christ, therefore if we are separated from Christ, we have no access to the blessings and advantages of being united to Christ). *2.* People outside of Israel, the Gentiles, were not able to access the many benefits of being Israelite). *3.* Strangers to the covenants of promise. Those outside of Israel were not included in God's promises of protection, provision, and his presence, which were all bound up in the covenants. *4.* Those not part of God's people have no firm foundation on which to base their hope and desires for a good future. *5.* Being without God means they had no relationship with the one true God who created them.

2. Apart from the blood of Christ, everyone—Jew and Gentile—is separated from God. Even so, Israel had the centuries-old blessings of the "covenants of promise" (v. 12). How does Romans 9:4–5 explain what Paul means by "covenants of promise"?

   Answer: God related to his people, the Israelites, through covenants. These covenants are promises made between God and the Israelites in the Old Testament. God set his face upon Israel and loved them like a Father through these covenants. The new-covenant promises do not undo the work of God in the Old Testament, but instead add understanding to God's relationship with the Israelites and how Gentiles are now included through Christ. The promises entailed blessings like what Paul lists in Romans: adoption, glory, the law, worship, promises, etc.

3. In Christ, that great divide has been bridged—specifically, by the blood of Christ (v. 13). What do you think Paul is referring to by "the blood of Christ"?

   Answer: His substitutionary death on the cross allowed is what reconciles both Jew and Gentile to God.

OUR PEACE (2:14–18)

4. Knowing this Old Testament backstory enables us to understand what Paul is saying here in verses 14–16. How does the backstory shed light on the way in which Jesus's death on the cross brings peace?

   Answer: The final sacrifice, the blood of Christ, has brought near those who were once far off—the Gentiles. Under the old covenant, Gentiles were shut out. Separation from them was part of the law! Under the new covenant, that separation has ended, and all those brought to Christ by faith are united as one.

5. Paul writes that Jesus "came and preached peace to [those] who were far off and peace to those who were near" (v. 17). Before he began to preach, the Lord sent John the Baptist to prepare people to hear Jesus and respond to him in faith. John's father, Zechariah, was given a prophecy about his son John's calling. How does this prophecy in Luke 1:67–79 give us more insight into why Christ himself is our peace?

   Answer: He is our peace because he bring deliverance from our enemies, deliverance from our sins (salvation), and a sunrise. This sunrise is significant because it symbolizes light overcoming darkness—God overcoming our sin. With sin, there can be no peace. The light of the sunrise casts out the darkness of sin. The light guides us toward peace.

6. How does verse 18 reveal the role of all three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—in the peace we now enjoy?

   Answer: Believers have access to the Father, through Christ, in the Spirit.

PART OF THE "IN CROWD" (2:19–22)

7. The Gentiles are no longer "strangers and aliens" (v. 19), shut out from the people of God. Instead they have full share in the life of God's people. What does the imagery Paul uses in verse 19 convey about the nature of this unity?

   Answer: He calls the church the "household of God" signifying the familial nature of our adoption and reconciliation. We are no longer strangers but instead saints and members of the same household. We now bear a resemblance to our common Father and are unified through his adoption of us.

8. Paul identifies the cornerstone as Christ Jesus, and he explains why in verse 21. What overarching point is Paul making through his building metaphor?

   Answer: The whole church together creates a temple for God by the indwelling Spirit with Christ as the most important stone that bears the weight and brings all the walls firmly together.

9. In the new "temple" Paul describes, there are no animal sacrifices. Instead there is a cornerstone, Christ himself. How do the differences between the two temples show us what Christ's death on the cross accomplished?

   Answer: Christ was the lamb of God, the final sacrifice for the sins of all Christians. Christ's death accomplished perfectly what the animal sacrifices accomplished imperfectly—the full payment for our sins. The previous temple was a place where sacrifice was necessary in order to recive forgiveness. In addition, the people were not able to approach God; only the priests could. Now, God is among us, holding us all together and approaching us in love.

10. Everyone who is in Christ has a part in this new temple, but Paul's emphasis in verse 22 isn't on individuals. What is his emphasis?

    Answer: We ourselves, as the collective church, have together become a temple for the Holy Spirit to dwell in.

11. Paul writes that believers "are being built" into God's dwelling place (v. 22). Notice how this isn't yet finished—it's an ongoing process. How do all three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—factor in to this process?

    Answer: *Father*: We are being built together as a dwelling place for God. *Son*: God the Son is the cornerstone that bears the weight of the church and holds it all together. *Holy Spirit*: The Spirit indwells us and enables us to grow spiritually.

12. This isn't the only time Paul describes God's people as a temple. He used the same imagery in his first letter to the Corinthian church as well. In that letter, he goes into more detail about how believers are to participate in the building process. Read 1 Corinthians 3:10–17. How does this passage help us know how to apply Paul's temple metaphor to our own lives?

    Answer: We "build" with gold, silver, and precious stones by resting on Christ as our foundation, making daily choices to live in trust and obedience, and seeking to please God with our words and deeds.

WEEK 5: MYSTERY MADE KNOWN!

EPHESIANS 3:1–21

Mystery is a key theme this week, and you'll want to be sure the group understands the way Paul uses the word. Look together at Genesis 12:1–3 when you talk through the first question/answer on page 38. Paul's second great prayer in the letter is covered this week, and you'll want to talk through its primary theme—spiritual strength—and what Paul says about the purpose and goal of such strength. We hear a lot about *spiritual power* but often very little about what this power actually is and why it's given to believers. You might want to ask the group to share how they've heard this term used and how studying Paul's prayer this week has reshaped their understanding about it.

MYSTERY MADE KNOWN (3:1–6)

1. "For this reason," Paul begins in verse 1. Paul is about to pray for the Ephesian believers (beginning in verse 14), and he wants them to have fresh in their minds the

reason for this particular prayer. Skim back through what Paul wrote in chapter 2 and then summarize what this "reason" is.

Answer: The unity of the church through Christ and in the Spirit.

2. Paul calls the Ephesian believers "saints," which is simply a way of referring to people who have been set apart by God for salvation. What else do we learn about them in verse 1?

   Answer: Christ came to unify Jew and Gentile in one body, which is the church.

3. Read the promise that was given to Abraham in Genesis 12:1–3, and then read Galatians 3:7–9, which reveals what was hidden in that promise. Note here what you discover.

   Answer: Abraham is father to both the Jews as well as the Gentiles through his faith–he was an example of being saved and blessed through faith in the gospel rather than works of the law. In addition, he was a pagan believer and not an Israelite, forseeing that the blessings of God would applying to the Gentile as well as the Jew. The whole world is bless through him and his descendents, Christians.

THE PLAN OF THE MYSTERY (3:7–13)

4. Paul takes no credit for his prominent role among the believers of his day. In fact, he views it with the utmost humility. How is his humble outlook evidenced in verses 7–8?

   Answer: He gives all the credit for his ministry to God's grace— "though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given." He is affirming that our ministry is not given to us based on our merits or ability but instead based on God's grace towards us.

5. How does 1 Timothy 1:12–16 give us insight into Paul's humble outlook?

   Answer: The mercy of the Lord lead him to repent of all of his former sins and caused him to turn to the Lord to strength. He recognizes what he was without the mercy and grace of God. He thanks God for his judgement that led to his transformation and sees clearly that everything good in him is due to Christ.

6. With what two points does Paul summarize the work of his ministry in verses 8 and 9?

   Answer: 1. Preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ 2. Bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God (preach to the Jews).

7. God reveals himself to human beings! We might be tempted to take this amazing kindness for granted, but if you think about it, the fact that the perfect, holy, allknowing, all-powerful Lord of the universe wants to be known by sinners should blow our minds. Look carefully at verse 10 and note below what is revealed in this verse about God, how this revelation comes, and to whom is it revealed:

   Answer: *What is revealed*: manifold wisdom of God; *how it's revealed*: through the church; *to whom it's revealed*: the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (angelic beings)

8. Read 1 Corinthians 1:26–30. What does this passage add to your understanding of what Paul writes here in Ephesians 3:10?

   Answer: God uses the weak things of the world (the church) to make Christ (the wisdom of God) known to the whole world. God uses the church not because we are somehow better, stronger, more capable, but because we are weak vessels that show how strong our God is.

9. In verse 12 Paul identifies another tremendous blessing that comes through our union with Christ: "boldness and access with confidence." How does Hebrews 10:19–23 help us understand this blessing?

   Answer: It is through the work of Jesus on the cross that we can have confidence and assurance to pray to our God and have communion with him. Our ability to speak to God and have a relationship with him is not grounded in our own holiness, but instead in Christ's holiness that has been given to us through our union with him.

A PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL POWER (3:14–21)

10. Like his prayer in 1:15–21, Paul's prayer here in 3:14–21 is a Trinitarian prayer. In other words, all three persons of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—are integrally involved in what Paul prays for. How do all three persons of the Trinity play a vital part in what Paul prays for?

    Answer: *The Father*: He is the one to whom Paul directs his prayer. Here the Father is the Creator who strengthens us through his glory, and he gives us the Spirit. *The Son*: He dwells in our hearts through faith. *The Holy Spirit*: He strengthen us and empowers us.

11. Paul points out a unique aspect of God's authority in verse 15—that of naming. In the Bible, the act of giving someone or something a name is a mark of authority over the one being named. We see an example all the way back at the time of creation, when God gave Adam authority to name all the animals (take a look at Genesis 1:28; 2:19 and Psalm 8:6–8). With this background in mind, what do you think

Paul is communicating about God here in verse 15 when he says that "every family in heaven and on earth" is named by God?

Answer: God holds authority over every created thing in heaven and on earth and sustains everything he has made.

12. Two times in this prayer, Paul expresses a desire that believers would be strengthened, yet the kind of strength he has in mind is quite different from the kind we so often pray for. When we pray for strength, we're asking God for energy to carry out our responsibilities or to persevere in difficult circumstances. What kind of strength does Paul have in mind in verses 16–19?

    Answer: The strength he prays for is spiritual—that our faith would be strong and thus able to apprehend the depth of Christ's love for us.

13. Paul's prayer is all about what God does for his people through the work of the Spirit, yet we play a part in receiving these blessings. How is this indicated in verse 17?

    Answer: It is through our faith that these blessings are received.

14. What are the anticipated results from the inner strengthening Paul prays for?

    Answer: Apprehending and enjoying our spiritual riches—God's power, the Spirit's transforming work, and Christ's love—is to experience his fullness.

15. Considering the things Paul has emphasized up to this point in the letter, why do you think love factors so prominently in this prayer?

    Answer: The gospel—God's redemptive plan from beginning to end—is rooted in his love for us.

16. Read Romans 8:31–39. What does this passage add to your understanding of Paul's prayer here in Ephesians 3?

    Answer: The love of God is so strong that it keeps us, protects us, and binds us together so that we cannot so much as move apart from his loving will. This power makes us conquerers. We progressively triumph over anything that threatens to separate us from our heavenly Father.

17. In verse 20 Paul finishes his prayer with a doxology, which is an expression or hymn of praise to God. What does Paul reveal about God's power in this doxology, and what does this power accomplish?

    Answer: His power is actively at work within us, accomplishing his plans and purposes for us, and it's better than anything we can envision for ourselves.

18. Paul extols God's glory in verse 21. Where is God's glory displayed, and what is the extent of its reach?

    Answer: God's glory is displayed in the church and in Christ Jesus and it extends throughout all generations eternally.

WEEK 6: LEARNING TO WALK

EPHESIANS 4:1–16

There is a lot of material to cover this week, so you might want to decide ahead of time where you will focus your discussion when the group meets. Definitely give time to talking about the various roles in the early church and how these do and do not function in the church today. The first question on page 48 asks this question: "As you think back on all Paul has already written in this letter, what is the 'calling' he has in mind here?" You can refer back to Ephesians 1:3–10 and 2:10.

CALLED TOGETHER (4:1–6)

1. Paul begins with an overarching application: "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called" (v. 1). As you think back on all Paul has already written in this letter, what is the "calling" he has in mind here?

   Answer: Christians are to live in a manner worthy of salvation. Paul is essentially commending the Ephesians to reflect the blessings they've received. You have been adopted, therefore act like a son of God. You have been called to holiness, therefore strive to be holy. You are united to Christ and to the church, therefore be unified and strive for peace.

2. In addition to love, believers are to be characterized by humility, gentleness, and patience. Note what each of the passages in the Godly Qualities chart adds to your understanding of these godly qualities.

   Answer: *Answers found in the chart passages.*

3. As we've seen all through the letter so far, Christian unity is of primary importance to Paul, and he wants all believers to value it highly. How do the qualities he lists in verse 2 help to maintain unity?

   Answer: *Humility*: humility is outward, not inward, facing. Humble women are oriented upward toward God and outward toward others rather than inward on themselves. *Gentleness*: Gentleness promotes unity because it presents a posture of

encouragement. It navigates tension with kindness and seeks to show grace. *Patience*: patience doesn't insist on one's own time frame, and it bears with the weaknesses of others. *Bearing with one another in love*: we bear with others lovingly when we move toward, not away from them when they don't meet our needs or expectations.

4. Paul uses the word "one" seven times in verses 4–6. As you look at these altogether, what is his primary point?

   Answer: Paul is emphasizing the theological basis for that unity—he is describing all the ways that we as Christians are positionally united (one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God), even though there is great diversity in the church.

5. What does Paul declare about God in verse 6 that provides the overarching reason for his instructions here?

   Answer: God is over all, through all, and in all. He is unfathomably and supremely over and above us, and yet also very near to each one of us. And since he is near to each believer, it brings them near to each other.

GIFTS FROM THE CONQUERING KING (4:7–10)

6. In order for Christ to ascend into heaven, he first had to descend "into the lower regions, the earth" (v. 9). How does Isaiah 53:1–12 show us what this entailed?

   Answer: Jesus's incarnation was truly a descent—he was despised, rejected, sorrowful, grieved, despised, oppressed, afflicated, slaughtered, stricken, crushed, put to grief, and anguished.

7. Never once did Jesus sin, yet he was put to death as a criminal in order to pay for our sins in our place. But after three days in the tomb, he was raised from death. What do you learn from Acts 1:1–11 about what happened after God raised him and how he ascended?

   Answer: He was visible and known to those who saw him. He gave instructions to the apostles to carry the gospel forward. Finally, he was taken up into heaven.

8. What purpose does Paul give in Ephesians 4:10 for Christ's coming to earth and then returning to heaven?

   Answer: The purpose for his coming and returning was, through his life, death, and resurrection, to "fill all things." In this way he fulfilled God's plan of redemption. Christ, as King ruling over all of creation, continues to pour out the blessings of salvation on all believers.

GIFTED TO LEAD (4:11–16)

9. *Shepherd* is a word used all through the Bible to designate certain leaders of God's people, and each one is meant to point to the primary Shepherd, Jesus Christ. The shepherds Paul names here in Ephesians were called to serve as Christ's undershepherds, modeling their shepherding work on his. What do you learn about Christlike shepherding from 1 Peter 5:1–5?

   Answer: A godly shepherd is gladly involved with the people in his church and lives a life worthy of emulating.

10. According to verse 12, what is the purpose for which Christ gifted the church with these four types of leaders?

    Answer: These leaders are promote the growth of each member so that all can exercise their spiritual gifts for the good of the whole.

11. In verse 13, what result, in four parts, is intended to come from this God-ordained structure of church leadership?

    Answer: *1.* Unity among believers concerning the substance of faith, the gospel (saved by faith alone through grace alone, by Christ alone). *2.* Unity among believers concerning knowledge of God (his attributes, character, and purposes). *3.* Maturity. *4.* Resembling Christ more and more as the Spirit transforms us.

12. What does Paul's storm imagery reveal about the nature of spiritual immaturity in verse 14?

    Answer: Spiritual immaturity keeps us vacillating in our convictions and leaves us vulnerable to worldly influence and deceit.

13. Paul contrasts the immaturity of verse 14 with a picture of spiritual maturity in verses 15–16. What characterizes spiritual maturity here?

    Answer: Spiritual maturity entails growing up into Christ, coming to imitate him in all ways, but especially in how we love. As we grow, we recognize our place in the body (we are not the head, Christ is), and we learn to serve the church and promote it's flourishing.

WEEK 7: KEEP ON WALKING

EPHESIANS 4:17–32

This week's lesson should make for lively discussion, as it hits us all where we live and struggle. The ignorance Paul has in mind in verse 18 is spiritual. You might want to look together at 1 Corinthians 2:14: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." When you study verse 22, you might explain that deceitful desires are those that appeal to our flesh and hook us through flesh-based pleasures, and in the process we can be tempted to see them as good when, in fact, they are counter to God's ways and purposes.

AIMLESS WALKING (4:17–19)

1. How does Paul describe the mind and heart of unbelievers in verses 17–18, and where does this place them spiritually?

   Answer: They are dull of mind and spiritually lifeless. In such a state, they are unable to accurately assess the world or anything else.

2. Paul describes unbelievers as ignorant, but he knew, as we do, that there are many highly intelligent unbelievers. What do you think he means by "ignorance" in verse 18?

   Answer: This is an ignorance of the heart.

3. What does Jesus's parable in Matthew 13:1–23 add to your understanding of what Paul means by "hardness of heart" (v. 18) and "callous" (v. 19)?

   Answer: This is a refusal to hear and embrace the gospel and to accept salvation on God's terms. A primary reason for refusal is a sinful desire to fit in with the world and to prosper in worldly ways.

4. How does Romans 1:18–25 fill out a bit more of what Paul writes here in Ephesians 4:19?

   Answer: Paul writes that non-Christians, "are without excuse" because the truth of God is so clearly displayed in all of creation. Their denial is a willing suppression of the truth. They are fools because they are claiming to be wiser than God, saying that they know better and that their understanding is greater than his.

WALKING FORWARD (4:20–24)

5. Paul instructs these Gentile converts to "put off" the "old self" (v. 22). He wants them to treat their pagan past like old, dirty clothes to be discarded. Until we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ, we are "corrupt through deceitful desires" (v. 22). Why do you think Paul calls these desires "deceitful"?

   Answer: These desires promise us all the things that only God can give. They lie to us, they overpromise and underdeliver. Such desires are just shadows and shells of what we really need and want.

6. As believers put off the old self, they are, at the same time, "to be renewed in the spirit of your minds" (v. 23). How do the passages in the Mind Renewal chart clarify how this renewal happens?

   Answer: *Isaiah 26:3*: "staying" our minds on God means fixating on him. As we do, our trust grows as we observe all the ways he proves himself faithful.

   Lamentations 3:19–24: Focusing on the Lord produces hope.

   Romans 8:5–6: when we set our minds on the things of the Spirit, we find ourselves being conformed to those things and live accordingly.

   Romans 12:1–2: As we marinate in Scripture, we are transformed in the way we choose to live, and in the process we discover that God's will and ways are perfect.

   Philippians 4:6–7: Entrusting our cares to God—really leaving them with him to handle—brings peace.

   Colossians 3:2: We are commanded to set our minds on heavenly things, and as we do, we are changed.

   1 Peter 1:13: Setting our minds on the blessings we'll receive when Christ returns produces hope.

7. Paul says that the "new self" of believers is "created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness" (v. 24). How do the following verses help explain what he means?

   Answer: *Genesis 1:27*: We are created in the image of God and although that image is marred because of the fall, it is not lost completely. And through our union with Christ, it is gradually being restored, and when we are glorified in heaven, it will be complete.

WALKING TOGETHER (4:25–32)

8. What reason does Paul give in verse 25 for his exhortation to communicate truthfully with others?

Answer: We all belong to each other through our union with Christ.

9. It's clear from verse 26 that not all anger is sinful. In fact, there are situations in which anger is a godly and appropriate response. We know this in part from Jesus, who was angry on occasion yet never, ever sinned. What angered Jesus in Mark 3:1–6?

   Answer: He was grieved at their hardness of heart and angry at their lack of compassion.

10. How might allowing sinful anger to fester provide an opportunity to the devil (v. 27)? (You might want to take a look at Hebrews 12:15.)

    Answer: Anger is an entry point for other sins like the desire for revenge. Self-righteousness often underlies human anger as well. The devil can use these heated passions as an opportunity to incite us to sin.

11. The selfishness of the old self freely took from others. How is this transformed in the new self in both attitude and action (v. 28)?

    Answer: Instead of taking, the new self works hard to earn what she needs. In addition, the new self is characterized by generosity, earning not just for herself, but also for others.

12. The new walk must also refrain from "corrupting talk" (v. 29). How does what Paul says about grace-filled speech in the remainder of verse 29 expose what he means by "corrupting talk"?

    Answer: Corrupting talk tears down rather than builds up, and ruins opportunities to speak and act graciously.

13. Paul strongly emphasizes how much our words affect our spiritual well-being and that of others. That's clear in verse 29 and again in verse 31, where he includes the heart attitudes that give rise to sinful, hurtful words. List the sinful attitudes Paul identifies in verse 31.

    Answer: Bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor (shouting/quarreling), slander (speech that is defamatory or abusive), and malice (mean-spirited).

14. What, according to verse 32, should undergird how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ?

    Answer: The more fully we grasp the forgiveness and love we have in Christ, the more we'll extend the same to others. It pleases God when we treat others with the tender kindness Christ has shown to us.

WEEK 8: WALKING IN LOVE

EPHESIANS 5:1–21

Another week of very practical teaching that will, no doubt, generate some good discussion. The first question on page 65 asks why Paul singles out sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness as so contradictory to Christlikeness. The most likely reason is that these three sins have an especially negative impact on unity and fellowship—a primary theme in the letter—and they also dishonor God before those watching what Christians do and say. The first question on page 66 considers the link between covetousness and idolatry. The connection is that both involve out-of-control desire that takes on worshipful proportions, pushing the Lord off the throne of our heart. The first question on page 69 notes that being Spirit-filled produces praise, gratitude, and humble submission and asks why living out these traits is an aspect of wisdom. The reason is that living by the Spirit in these ways redirects our focus upward to God and outward toward others, taking our focus off ourselves.

WALKING IN LOVE (5:1–2)

1. What identity do we have that enables us to imitate God (5:1)?

   Answer: We are beloved children.

2. The way love is defined in our day is very different from how Paul defines it here in verse 2. Today love is all about tolerance and accepting any and every conceivable lifestyle. How does Christ's example of love differ from today's definition?

   Answer: The love of Christ is sacrificial, love that is willing to give up everything for other's good and the glory of God.

WALKING AS LIGHT (5:3–14)

3. Sexual immorality includes any sexual activity outside of biblically defined marriage. Impurity is certainly a part of sexual immorality, yet it also includes anything that pollutes holiness. Covetousness is an out-of-control craving for something that someone else possesses. Why do you think Paul singles out these three as so contradictory to Christlike love?

   Answer: All these sins seek to gratify sinful cravings and others' expense.

4. The speech sins Paul lists in verse 4 are likely tied to his admonition against sexual immorality and impurity. We aren't to allow any such talk in our conversations. Instead our conversations are to be characterized by gratitude and praise. How can engaging in either type of talk impact those around us?

Answer: Filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking harm those around us by misleading and distracting people from truth and goodness. Gratitude and praise focus others on God, and they are encouraged.

5. As you consider the nature of covetousness, why does it make sense for Paul to link it with idolatry in verse 5?

   Answer: Idolatry and covetousness are intertwined. Idolatry seeks meaning and fulfullment in something besides God. Coveting is to want that idolatrous craving so badly that you'll go to any length to get it, even taking it away from someone else.

6. Paul gives another warning in verse 6: "Let no one deceive you with empty words." Whether from people within the church or those outside of it, there are always going to be some who proclaim that Christians can be secure in Christ while also clinging to sin, to practices that Scripture forbids. How does 2 Timothy 3:1–5 illuminate how to detect these teachings as "empty"?

   Answer: They are all about self-gratification and overindulgence in fleshly appetites, and they never produce good fruit in the lives of those who teach and practice them.

7. How does Paul contrast the empty teachers with true believers in Ephesians 5:7–8?

   Answer: False teachers are in the dark, whereas believers live in the light. In other words, we have Spirit-given clarity and discernment to pursue what blesses rather than destroys.

8. In verses 8–14 Paul paints the new life in Christ as fruitful light, and everything outside of Christ as unfruitful darkness. What specific instructions does Paul give in verses 10–11 for how to live in the midst of these contrasting ways of life?

   Answer: We are to expose the darkness, which we do by living a contrasting (light-filled) life.

WALKING IN WISDOM (5:15–21)

9. What does Paul link to wisdom in verse 16, and what reason does he give for this?

   Answer: Making the best use of the time—the era in which we live, with all its opportunities and challenges, as well as our own personal time—is a demonstration of wisdom. It's vital to live out this wisdom in light of the fact that evil infests our world.

10. In verse 17, Paul says that understanding God's will is an aspect of wisdom. How do the following passages reveal God's will for us?

Answer: *Romans 12:2*: We are to discern the will of God (that which is good and acceptable and perfect) by not being conformed to this world and being transformed by the renewal of our minds.

1 Thessalonians 4:3: Our sanctification is the will of God. Sanctification is the process whereby we are made like Christ, increasingly able to kill remaining sin in our lives and walk more fully in God's ways.

1 Thessalonians 5:18: God wills that we offer thanksgiving in every circumstance. It shows our willingness to trust that he's in control and working for our good in everything that happens to us.

11. Paul sets up a contrast in Ephesians 5:18: "Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit." What happens to someone who is "filled" with alcohol rather than with the Holy Spirit? Consider Galatians 5:22–23 alongside what Paul says here in verse 18.

    Answer: Someone filled with alcohol loses inhibitions and more easily sins, loses restraint of her tongue, and harms herself and others. It renders her unable to exhibit the Spirit's fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindess, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

12. In contrast to the "debauchery" that drunkenness produces, being filled with the Spirit produces joyful praise, gratitude, and humbly "submitting to one another" (vv. 19–21). In what way is this Spirit-filled lifestyle an aspect of wisdom?

    Answer: It's wise because it enriches both our own walk with God and that of our brothers and sisters in Christ. It also serves as an effective witness to the gospel.

WEEK 9: WALKING UNDER AUTHORITY

EPHESIANS 5:22–6:9

Submission is likely to be a major talking point this week, as you discuss what Paul teaches about godly marriage. The first "Let's Talk" question focuses on a wife's submission, so you might want to hold back lengthy discussion about it until you get there. The third question on page 72 asks, "How can husbands, in their limited capacity, reflect Christ's purpose in how they lead their wives?" Holiness is where this is going—in marriage, a husband can reflect Christ's sanctifying of his people in how he safeguards and cares for his wife's walk with God. The first question on page 74 seeks to distinguish between honoring parents and obeying them. Honor has to do with respectful posture in all matters, whether young or old, toward one's parents. This week's passage is likely to generate a lot

of discussion, so you might want to decide ahead of time which study questions you'll address during group time.

CHRIST-CENTERED MARRIAGE (5:22–33)

1. Paul sees a wife's submission to her husband as submission to Christ himself, and he clarifies that the call applies only to submission to her own husband, not to husbands or men in general (5:22). How in 5:23–24 does Paul ground this call?

   Answer: A wife's submission to her husband reflects the church's submission to Christ and his headship. God designed marriage to point to the church's relationship with Christ, and for that reason—since God designed it this way—marriages that model this experience blessing.

2. In what way does Paul's directive to husbands in Ephesians 5:25 require an even greater sacrifice than a wife's submission might require of her?

   Answer: He is to model Christ's sacrificial love in his marriage, and is responsible for creating an environment in which his wife can thrive spiritually.

3. Christ died to purify—to "sanctify" (5:26) or set apart—his people, the church. This purifying occurs when the word of the gospel is heard with the heart and then symbolized by water baptism (5:26). The purifying of Christ's people will make them altogether into a perfect "bride" for Christ, a bride made radiantly beautiful through holiness (5:27). Paul doesn't expect husbands to purify their wives in this way, nor could they. How, then, can husbands, in their limited capacity, reflect Christ's purpose in how they lead their wives?

   Answer: Although a husband cannot sanctify his wife, he is called to do everything in his power to promote her sanctification and not hinder it. He can lead in prayer, Scripture reading, attending church, serving in the church, and being a godly example for her to follow.

4. Paul describes the church not only as Christ's bride but also as "members of his body" (5:30). Paul's descriptions are designed to show the intimacy of the relationship. In 5:28–30 what rationale does Paul use to encourage husbands to build and reflect this intimacy in their own marriages?

   Answer: Most people do not need to be reminded to take care of their bodies–we sleep, brush our teeth, shower, exercise, feed ourselves, and take medicine when we are sick.. The care we show our own bodies is the care that a husband ought to show to his wife. The reason given in v. 31 is that they are in fact one body.

5. Marriage wasn't designed only for God's set-apart people. He established marriage all the way back at creation, which Paul reflects on in 5:31: "A man shall leave his

father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." He is paraphrasing Genesis 2:24 here. And then he calls this a "mystery" (5:32), which, if you recall, is a word Paul uses in Ephesians to refer to something once hidden but now revealed. As you consider what Paul says here in verses 5:31–32, what is God's overarching purpose for marriage?

Answer: Marriage is to reflect and model Christ's love for his bride, the church. A good and godly marriage is a foretaste of eternity, where we will be reunited with and perfectly loved by Christ.

6. What does Paul join to wifely submission in 5:33?

   Answer: Respect. Submission is a product of reverent respect for one's husband.

CHRIST-CENTERED FAMILIES (6:1–4)

7. Paul roots his instruction, "Honor your father and your mother" (6:2), in the fifth of the Ten Commandments, which you can find in Exodus 20:12. How would you distinguish between Paul's call to "obey" in 6:1 and his use of the word "honor" in 6:2?

   Answer: Under-age children are to obey their parents. The command to honor father and mother extends beyond childhood. All of us, no matter our age and status, are called to honor our parents.

8. Included in Paul's version of the promise is "that it may go well with you" (6:3). In what way do you think life will "go well" for children who honor their parents?

   Answer: We are able to thrive when we respect and listen to the wisdom of our parents. We honor them not only by caring for them in their old age, but by retaining their dignity by valuing their wisdom and counsel. The promise of prosperity and long life are not absolute but are general principles that we can depend on as Christians. And God delights to bless those who live out these instructions.

9. Fathers are cautioned, "Do not provoke your children to anger," and then Paul gives a contrast: "but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (6:4). (Mothers are not mentioned most likely because instruction was primarily the responsibility of fathers.) How does Paul's contrast serve as an indicator of the ways that parents might provoke their children to anger?

   Answer: Parents might provoke their children to anger by viewing their children as a means to serve their own comfort. In such cases, children are a tool to be used rather than a gift to steward faithfully. Raising children in God's ways takes patience, sacrifice, and wise love, all of which are possibly only through Spirit-given enabling.

CHRIST-CENTERED EMPLOYMENT (6:5–9)

10. When Paul instructs bondservants to obey their masters with "fear and trembling" (6:5), he certainly doesn't have terror in mind, which he makes clear as he continues his instructions in 6:6–7. What sort of attitude is Paul promoting in these verses?

    Answer: He again has respect in view. Respect is evidenced through integrity and doing one's best to serve well and faithfully. In so doing, bondservants honor God and display the character of Christ.

11. What encouragement does he offer in 6:8 to those under authority?

    Answer: Regardless of whether their masters treat them well, whatever good they do, they will be blessed in return by the Lord, who sees their good works.

12. How are masters called to view their bondservants, and what sort of treatment is meant to flow from this view?

    Answer: Social hierarchy is leveled at the foot of the cross. Slave and master are equally accountable to God and ultimately share the same master. Masters are to adopt this humble mindset as they oversee these servants.

WEEK 10: STANDING FIRM

EPHESIANS 6:10–24

Be sure to save sufficient time at the end for the additional "Let's Talk" question. It will serve as a good wrap-up to the entire Ephesians study. The last question on page 81 asks how "gospel truth and righteousness (the security of Christ's righteousness given to believers) serve to protect us." Truth and righteousness protect us from Satan, who is noted for being our adversary and accuser. God's truth is a direct weapon against Satan as liar, who, Jesus tells us, "does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). The last question on page 82 asks about the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: "What does this 'sword' indicate about the part we actively play in spiritual warfare?" Perhaps turn to Romans 12:2 to help you answer: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

ARMED IN CHRIST (6:10–17)

1. Paul begins his final instructions with a call for spiritual strength, but the source of our strength lies outside of us. It's found only in Christ (v. 10). According to verse 11, what role do we play in appropriating Christ's strength?

   Answer: We must *put on* the whole armor of God, which means we consciously live in close fellowship with our Savior, immersing ourselves in his Word, praying, and structuring our lives to be able to fellowship regularly with other believers.

2. We need strength to stand against "the schemes of the devil" (v. 11). How do the following passages provide insight into how he schemes?

   Answer: *Matthew 13:24–29; 36–40*: He plants evil in among the righteous.

   John 8:44: He lies with the goal of producing death and destruction.

   1 Peter 5:8: The devil is seeks people to destroy.

3. The enemies most zealous to destroy our faith are not human—"flesh and blood"—but spiritual (v. 12). What does Paul's description of these enemies in verse 12 indicate about their capabilities?

   Answer: They are pervasive and hold sway over the world.

4. Believers are protected by the "belt of truth" and the "breastplate of righteousness" (v. 14). How can gospel truth and righteousness (the security of Christ's righteousness given to believers) serve to protect us?

   Answer: Believing the truth enables us to recognize lies and counterfeits. Resting in Christ's righteousness enables us to ward off the guilt accusations leveled at us by evil powers, and pursuing righteousness in our character and conduct takes away opportunities for evil to get a foothold in our life.

5. When is the "shield of faith" needed, and what does its purpose—extinguishing "all the flaming darts of the evil one" (v. 16)—imply about the nature of the enemy we battle against?

   Answer: The enemy will do everything possible to tempt us to sin, to believe God isn't good, and to destroy ourselves and others. Faith provides confidence that God is good and in control.

6. The sword is the only part of the armor actually used to engage the enemy. This sword, called the "sword of the Spirit" (v. 17), represents God's word. What does this "sword" indicate about the part we actively play in spiritual warfare?

   Answer: Romans 12:2 tells us that we are transformed by the renewal of our minds.

In other words, as we immerse ourselves in Scripture, the Spirit conforms us to it. Our responsibility is to undertake that immersion!

THE POWER OF PRAYER (6:18–20)

7. As we take up the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, we're also to pray (6:18). What are we to pray for, and how are we to pray?

   Answer: We ought to pray for ourselves and others, and by living Christ-centered lives, we become sensitive about things that concern the Spirit, how to pray for our needs and those of others. We are to have a prayerful lifestyle.

8. Paul instructs us to pray "in the Spirit" (v. 18). How does Romans 8:26–27 help us understand what it means to pray "in the Spirit"?

   Answer: We can rely on the Spirit to help us pray. The Spirit within us was sent for this very purpose, as a helper (John 14:15–17). The Spirit will always pray for us and help us to pray for the right things, even when we ourselves are too weak (see Romans 8:26–27).

9. Paul asks the Ephesian Christians to pray for him in verses 19–20, which is very understandable, given that he is writing to them while imprisoned in Rome. What does his specific prayer request reveal about his heart?

   Answer: He does not pray to be freed from his imprisonment, nor does he pray for comfort. Instead, he prays that he will be able to continue in his work boldy. Paul's entire reason for living was Christ and his gospel.

GRACE BE WITH ALL (6:21–24)

10. In addition to delivering the letter, what is Paul's purpose for sending Tychicus to the believers in Ephesus, and what makes Paul confident that Tychicus will accomplish this purpose?

    Answer: He sent him to report to the Ephesians how Paul was doing in his imprisonment and to encourage the Ephesians. We can be confident that he accomplished this purpose since we are reading this letter thousands of years later!

11. Paul ends with a benediction, a declaration of blessing. Notice the words that are featured in the benediction—"peace," "faith," "grace," and, preeminently, "love" (vv. 23–24). As you think back over the letter, how is each word Paul chose to use here a fit way to summarize his teaching?

Answer: *Peace*: Paul began the letter with a greeting of grace and peace, and then, in chapter 2, Paul describes how Christ is our peace (2:14–15). *Faith*: Paul describes in his letter the centrality of faith and the role of faith. We have been saved by grace through the means of faith (2:8), and this faith unifies all believers (4:5). *Grace*: Paul begins the letter with a greeting of grace, and throughout the letter, he describes the richness of God's grace to us (1:6–7, 2:7–8, 4:7). *Love*: Love is the cause of God's grace toward us and our joy in this is to be reflected through loving God and others.