

## STUDY 1: INTRO AND EPHESIANS 1:1-11

You are about to look at a letter that one of the apostles, Paul wrote to a group of churches in the area of Ephesus. This guide is for you as a leader. Share as much of it with the group as you find helpful. There are activities you can do with your group to help them understand the passage more fully while getting to know one another. Also, there are questions for you to ask your group and to guide them in their understanding of this letter. After most questions are my own musings and answers. Use as you find helpful.

Along with this guide is a copy of the same questions you can give to your group members. They do not include my own musings. For those in your group that like to prepare before hand or take notes while you discuss, these will be very beneficial. Lastly, this study has been written for reading the Scriptures in the NIV.

### • Context

In any Bible study, the most important element is to keep the context in front of the group at all times. It's easy to look at the passages through our own context and that will change the meaning of the passage all together. Also, a rule of thumb I always keep in front of groups is: "Turn to what you DO know to answer what you DON'T know."

So, let's get to know the context of this letter.

The first context is to know who Paul was. To learn his story will help you to more fully understand this letter. Encourage your group to read Paul's story before the first week, or in between week 1 and 2. It can be found in Acts 9-28.

The second context to keep in mind is the context of the area of Ephesus and why Paul wrote this letter. Ephesus is the capital city of the Roman province of "Asia". It was known during that time by being the home of the largest theatre-holding up to 50,000 people. Around 51 AD, Paul, at the end of his second missionary journey stayed here briefly (Act 18:18-21). During his third missionary journey, Paul remained here for a few years (Acts 19). When he wrote this letter, it was a young church.

### • Outline

The letter to the Ephesians can be broken down in simplicity by the following outline:

- Chapters 1-2: KNOW the good news of Jesus
- Chapter 3: GROW in Jesus intellectually and introspectively
- Chapter 4-6:9: SHOW Jesus as servants and salt/light
- Chapter 6:10-24: GO in Jesus to the World fully armed.

### • Activity:

- ❖ To more fully understand Paul's heart for the church in Ephesus, read Acts 20:13-38 as a group. Notice his amazing speech and time of prayer with the elders of the Ephesus church.
  - Talk as a group about statements Paul makes that displays his deep love for this church. Then share about an individual or group of people in your life that you have had this type of love for and why?
- ❖ After sharing your stories, someone read the following verses again:
  - Acts 20:22-23, 25, 38

Paul knew what his future would bring. Paul wrote the letter we are about to dig into from prison--probably in Rome. The belief is that he was arrested for bringing a Gentile into the temple (Acts 21:28-29). Ephesus was a Greek, port city and therefore brought many people from different cultural heritages. Yet it was by far predominantly Greek (or during that time also called Gentile). So, it had the opportunity to fully display what it meant to be "one in Christ". Yet Paul found himself in prison for doing just that.

While Paul was in prison, a young slave named Onesimus came and visited him. Onesimus had become a follower of Christ and came to assist Paul. Yet he ran away from his master who was also a follower of Christ. Paul returned Onesimus to his master, Philemon (you can read this story in the book of Philemon) who lived in Colosse. Paul sent another worker, Tychicus with Onesimus back to Colosse. They would have landed in Ephesus on their way back. This gave Paul the opportunity to send both letters, Colossians and Ephesians, with Tychicus to be delivered to those churches. This is the reason why the two letters are so similar. Yet, the letter to the Ephesians was written in broader terms that could have been read to any church on the way as well.

### • READ EPHESIANS 1:1-10

- ❖ What do we learn about those in Ephesus that he is writing to?
  - They are saints, faithful believers
- ❖ Paul begins this letter with worship and recognizing that God has blessed them with every spiritual blessing. Without unpacking the meaning of all of the things he mentions, list the things that Paul is worshipping God for:
  - He chose us before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless
  - He predestined us to be adopted as his sons
  - Freely gave us his love and grace in Jesus
  - We have redemption of sins.
  - He lavished grace on us.
  - Made known to us the mystery of his will

- ❖ Six times Paul mentions how God goes about making all of this possible. How did God go about making this happen?
    - In Christ: vs. 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 9
  - ❖ Paul uses the words “chose” and “predestined”. Before talking about your own understanding of these words, what does Paul say they were “chosen” for and “predestined” for?
    - Chosen to be holy and blameless in his sight
    - Predestined to be adopted as sons in Christ.
  - ❖ While we may carry differing views on what it means to be “predestined” we cannot get around the fact that Scripture uses words like “chosen before the creation of the world”. What is your own understanding of this language and what, if anything is bothersome?
    - Leader: this can get dangerous if people want to push their beliefs. Reason for asking this question is to acknowledge that this language is used. Don't allow the members of the group to “convert” one another to their understanding. Just have them begin good conversation. In this, regardless of your own understanding, all should be able to agree that God's will from the very beginning was that we would be blameless and holy in his sight and adopted as his sons. This was his plan A and continues to be plan A. These verses never mention some “not” being chosen. That issue comes later, but this is a lesson for the group to look at what we “do know” first.
  - ❖ In most major “theological” issues, there can be a tendency to focus so much on the issue that you miss the bigger points. In this passage, Paul is worshipping God! What do we learn about God and his pleasures and will?
    - He loves to bless and to give his love.
    - He loves holiness and blamelessness.
    - He redeems, forgives, and loves.
    - He wants to be known-even his mysteries.
    - He wants to bring all things together.
- **READ EPHESIANS 1:11-14**
- ❖ Paul talks about himself and the other apostles in 11, using the same language he just used. What was the purpose for God choosing Paul?
    - It was part of God's plan to work out his will
    - For the praise of God's glory. Never about Paul himself.
  - ❖ Paul then shows how God's plan plays out through him and to the Ephesians. What is the process Paul describes of the Ephesians “inclusion”?
    - They heard the good news of salvation
    - They believed
    - They were marked with a seal-the promise of the Holy Spirit
  - ❖ Why were the Ephesians included?
    - For the praise of God's glory (vs. 14)
  - ❖ To finish your time in this first study, have a worship service by simply telling your story of being “included in Christ”. How did you hear the good news? Where did you recognize God's forgiveness and his love being lavished on you?
    - Leader, this time is simply to help the group to grasp what Paul has grasped and to appreciate their own inclusion. We are included because God has chosen to love us. We have to appreciate this! It's also a time to let your group get to know one another more fully.
  - ❖ Since our story is not just ultimately about us, how do you see God using you for His glory?

## STUDY 2: EPHESIANS 1:15-2:10

Last week, Paul rejoiced with the Ephesians in that he and they both have been “included” in salvation because of God’s love towards them. For many Christians, our understanding of the “good news” stops at this point-that we are ‘saved’.

### • Activity

There are many things in our lives that we have only the end result in mind and miss all the elements between the beginning and end. Example: I want to get an “A” on a test but once the test is over, I don’t care if I remember any of the information.

- ❖ Share how you see this in yourself and/or in your children if you have kids. Give practical examples.

### • READ EPHESIANS 1:15-23

- ❖ Paul talks about some of the things he’s been doing. What are the actions that Paul is taking in these verses?
  - Giving thanks; remembering them in prayer; asking God to give them things like wisdom and revelation.
- ❖ Last week Paul was excited that the Ephesians knew salvation in Jesus. In this section, what is Paul’s greatest desire?
  - That they would know God better.
- ❖ Paul recognizes that there is great blessing for those that believe in Christ. What are all the ways that Paul hopes for them to know God better and all the ways he longs for the Ephesians to grow?
  - To be given wisdom and revelation; to know the hope to which they are called; to know the riches of their inheritance; to know God’s great power.
- ❖ How does Paul describe the “incomparably great power” of God?
  - It’s like the working of his mighty strength that he displayed when he raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at His right hand.
- ❖ If you are a believer in Jesus, what does it practically mean for you that God would display the same power he used to raise Jesus from the dead in your life? Where would you like to know this power in your life?
  - Leader: this question is to help the group recognize that God is showing the same power he used to raise Jesus in the lives of every follower of Christ. We underestimate this as believers and the goal is

to help the group spend time discussing all the things this could mean.

- ❖ Matthew 28:18-20 is known as the great commission. Read this passage. It can be broken into 3 parts: 1-authority and power of Jesus; 2-more disciples; 3-better disciples. Chapter 1 of Ephesians can be summarized in the same way. Where do you see these 3 elements in Chapter 1?
  - Authority and power of Jesus is laid out in 1:20-23.
  - More disciples is laid out in 1:3-14 (We are included)
  - Better disciples is laid out in 1:15-19

- ❖ Larry Crabb, in his book “Connecting”, describes how these 3 elements flow and work together in this quote:

*Releasing the power of God through our lives into the hearts and souls of others requires that we both understand and enter into a kind of relating that only the gospel makes possible, a kind of relating that I call ‘connecting’. This kind of relating depends entirely on deep fellowship with Christ and then spills over on to other people with the power to change their lives, not always on our timetable or in the ways we expect but as the sovereign Spirit moves.*

In reflection of this quote, how do/could you see these 3 elements playing out in your life personally?

- Leader: challenge the group to think about relationships they are in as they share. Maybe it’s with their spouse, children, co-workers, neighbors. Challenge them to think about what God could do in their relationships as they grasped more and more the very power that raised Jesus from the dead.
- ❖ In the same way that verses 7-8 is a definition of what it means for Jesus to be Savior, verses 20-23 is a definition of what it means that Jesus is Lord. God is the one that makes Jesus Savior and Lord regardless of our belief. But what do you think it means to “accept Jesus as Lord and Savior”?
  - It simply means to recognize what is reality-what is true. Our accepting or not accepting Jesus as Savior and Lord is not what makes it true or not. To accept that He is this is to live in reality. To not accept it is to live in unreality.

### • READ EPHESIANS 2:1-10

- ❖ Paul gives a “before and after” picture of the lives of those that are now believers. Compare and contrast the life described in 1-3 with 4-7.

- 1-3: dead in transgressions and sins; following the ways of the world; following the ruler of the kingdom of the air; following the spirit of the disobedient. Gratifying the cravings of sinful nature; objects of wrath.
  - 4-7: great love shown to; mercy shown to; made alive in Christ; saved by grace; raised up with Christ; seated with him; expressed kindness.
  - Main difference: dead to sin and now alive in Christ!
- ❖ What made all of this true of those that are believers in Christ?
    - The grace of God that we take hold of through faith. And that faith is not even of ourselves-it too is from God-a gift.
  - ❖ In verses 9-11, Paul talks about the role of works by describing what it did do and what it does not do. What is the role of works in the believer's life?
    - We were created to do good works; we are part of God's workmanship-prepared by God to do good works.
    - Our works do not save us-The grace of God saves us and enables us to do good works.
    - Remember, we were dead in our sins-incapable of doing good works. But the grace of God gives us life and enables us to do the works he planned for us to do.
  - ❖ What are the works that you recognize God is doing through you? If you are doing this study as a group, take time to tell one another the works you see God doing in them to build his kingdom.
    - Leader this is a great opportunity for your group to speak very affirming words to one another. Sometimes it's hard to see where God is using you but this is an opportunity for the group to release the "power that raised Christ from the dead" upon one another by affirming God's hand in each member's life. So, take the time to let folks speak words of affirmation to each other.

## STUDY 3: EPHESIANS 2:11-3:13

Since the time of the fall, the image of separation is prevalent throughout the Bible. Most vivid is the separation between God and man. Our world displays this image even more drastically.

### • Activity

Think of all the ways you can that our world displays the image of "separation". As you name them, talk about what it might look like for those images to be reversed and to be "united".

- Leader: this is simply a time to think of all the ways that our world is separated and at distance from one another. It helps the group to see the extent of the "fall" in places it may not have thought it plays out.
- Some ideas: race; politics; countries; gender

### • Read Ephesians 2:11-22

- ❖ There is healthiness of always remembering your story and from where you have come. What does Paul call the Ephesians to remember?
  - Those that are Gentile by birth used to be called "uncircumcised."
  - They were separate from Christ at that time; excluded from citizenship
  - They were foreigners to the covenant; no hope, without God.
- ❖ What was the turning point for the Gentiles and what are the results that Paul list?
  - Jesus Christ is the turning point.
  - They have been brought near; the two have become one.
  - Peace has come.
  - Both Jews and Gentiles have been reconciled to God.
  - Hostility has been put to death and now both have access to the Father.
  - They are no longer aliens but citizens of God's household
  - Being built for God to dwell by his Spirit.
- ❖ In verses 16-18, Paul describes what Jesus has done for both the Gentile and the Jews. For each group, how has Jesus "reconciled them to God" and given both "access to the Father"? How were each foreign to God? Romans 1 and 2 can help you to see this.
  - Leader: point of this question is to make the group think more about each group individually. In reading this passage you can focus just on the Gentiles and miss that God also reconciled the Jews to Him and gave them access as well. The Jews believed they were the chosen ones and were the only ones that had been reconciled to God and had access to the Father. Discuss how they were mistaken on this and how the Jews

also need Jesus. Be good to read all of Romans 1 and 2 to understand this more fully.

- ❖ If Paul were writing this passage to us today, what people groups would you want him to replace "Jew and Gentile" with? Why?
  - Black and White
  - Male and Female
  - Democrat and Republican
  - All the denominations in Christianity
- ❖ There is a role we each play in seeing these divisions as no longer divisions. What are the two things Paul is calling the Ephesians to do and how can you do the same thing?
  - Remember who they were and from where they came.
  - Remember what Christ has done and his purpose for coming.
- ❖ Paul ended said in 1:17 that he longs for God to "give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." Before leaving Chapter 2, how would you summarize what Paul wants them to KNOW about Jesus in this chapter?
  - He wants them to know the "gospel" (the good news) of Jesus:
    - They were living among the dead but they were raised to life with Jesus.
    - It is by grace we have been saved.
    - We have been seated with Christ in the heavenly realms
    - We were created in Christ Jesus to do good works
    - We were separate from God but not reconciled to Him
    - We have access to the Father by the Spirit
    - We are no longer aliens and foreigners
    - We are a part of the holy temple of God!
- **Read 3:1-6**
  - ❖ Paul goes back and remembers his own story. What do we learn about the "mystery" made known to him?
    - It was made by revelation as an administration of God's grace.
    - It's the mystery of Christ
    - It was not made known to other generations in the way it is known now.
    - It has been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets.
    - The mystery is: "that through the gospel, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members of one body. Paul explained this in detail in 2:11-22.

- ❖ Paul states before this that he is a "prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of the Gentiles." In light of this, why do you think Paul is in prison?
  - Most likely for taking a Gentile into the Jewish temple (Acts 21:28-29). Paul knew that the gospel made the Gentiles heirs with the Jews and began to live that out even though his culture didn't like it.
- ❖ Again, there is a role we each play in bringing unity to the divisions we see. It meant prison for Paul. In looking at the divisions you have been thinking about, what might it mean for you? For others?
  - Leader: point of this question is for people to really wrestle with what it might cost them for the sake of the gospel to come to full fruition. Unity in division cost. Are we willing to pay that price?

- **Read 3:7-13**

- ❖ Paul has used the image of being a "prisoner of Christ Jesus" and now uses the image of being a "servant of this gospel". What is the reason he gives for being both of these things? How does this encourage you?
  - He says that it is because of the "gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power."
  - He counts it a privilege to be under the grace of God.
- ❖ How is Paul able to see himself in this way?
  - By remembering who he was and from where he came. He knows he is the least of all God's people. He recognizes that he does not deserve any of God's grace or to be with God at all. So, to simply be in relationship with God is a privilege.
- ❖ How does Paul describe his calling?
  - To preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.
  - To make plain to everyone this mystery.
- ❖ Why does Paul say that God kept this mystery hidden and now revealed it?
  - In order that through the church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.
  - It was according to his eternal purposes that he accomplished in Christ Jesus.
- ❖ In verse 10, the "authorities in the heavenly realms" is referring to the same authorities Paul mentions in 2:1-2 and 6:11-12: Satan and his host. As you ponder this verse, it should make you amazed at the role of the church in the eternal purposes of God. How does the church make known the "manifold wisdom of God" to these powers?

- Simply by showing Satan and his powers that God's plan works. That all that are in Christ can be united and fight for his kingdom! The powers of Satan are about dividing the Kingdom of God but in Christ Jesus, God's mission is accomplished and the church displays the unity that comes through Jesus.
- ❖ Paul asks them to not be discouraged. His imprisonment is part of the wisdom of God being played out. Remembering why Paul was imprisoned, how is it a display of the wisdom of God?
  - Paul shows that nothing (not even imprisonment) is worth more than showing the Jesus united Gentiles and Jews and the church is one.
- ❖ Paul has given new "intellectual" insight to his readers to help them GROW in their understanding of the gospel and the role of the church. In light of this information, how does this challenge your approach to "church"? What is the church, its role and your part in this?
  - Leader; this question is to challenge our attitudes toward the church of Jesus Christ. Many have a consumer mentality that church is what I get out of it. But the church is to show that God's plan of making us one in Christ to build his kingdom actually works.
- ❖ In the next few studies, we will see how Paul describes what it means to be the church of Jesus Christ. To end this study, spend time asking God to help you understand and embrace the eternal power of the church and your role in that. Spend time confessing ways that you may have undervalued the role of the church. Thank him for including you!

## STUDY 4: EPHESIANS 3:14- 4:16

The Myers-Briggs is an amazing test that measures people in 4 areas. If you have never taken the Myers-Briggs, I would recommend you doing so. The goal is to help you identify the way you most regularly approach each area. One of the areas it measures is how a person makes decisions: either by Thinking or Feeling. This doesn't mean that all decisions are made this way, just which way you would lean.

- **Activity:**

As a group, go around the room and have the group guess how they would see each individual most likely making decisions: by Thinking or by Feeling. Then have the individual share with the group what they notice about themselves.

At the end of the last study, Paul had written the Ephesians about some very "intellectual" information about the church to help the GROW. Because growth should happen both "intellectually" and "introspectively", (Thinking and Feeling) Paul now writes about the other side.

- **Read Ephesians 3:14-21**

- ❖ Paul starts this section with "For this reason": what is the reason he is referring to?
  - Paul prays for the Ephesians so they are not discouraged by his imprisonment but for them to be able to see it is part of the role of the church. Remember, he was locked up because of showing the wisdom of God: taking a Gentile into the Jewish temple. He was locked up for being the church. He knows they will need prayer.
- ❖ Paul directs his prayers toward what is going on in them "introspectively" (in their "inner being"). What are all the things he prays for them?
  - That God might strengthen them with power through the Spirit.
  - That Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith
  - They knowing they are rooted in love, all together they would grasp how wide, long, high and deep is the love of Christ.
  - He longs for them to KNOW this love that surpasses knowledge.
- ❖ Paul was an extremely "knowledgeable" man. Read Philippians 3:4-6 and his story in Acts to see this. In Ephesians 3:19, he confesses though that the love of Christ "surpasses knowledge". For those that are "thinkers" what does this say to you? For those that are "feelers" what does this say to you?
  - For Thinkers: the love of Christ moves beyond just having all knowledge. We can't grasp its depth just on intellect.
  -

- For Feelers: we recognize that knowledge is part of it. Paul does not say that the love of Christ is without knowledge.
  - For both, it challenges us to be stretched intellectually and introspectively. The gospel of Christ grows with a balance of both.
- **Read Ephesians 4:1-13**
    - ❖ In Chapters 1-3, Paul has built a foundation of which he now calls the Ephesians to build upon. He is now calling them to “live out” all that he has just written about. What are the ways he calls them to SHOW Christ?
      - Be completely humble and gentle
      - Be patient, bearing with one another
      - Keep unity at all cost through peace
      - Remember grace has been given to each
      - Recognize we are each gifted differently
    - ❖ From this list of ways he calls the Ephesians to SHOW Christ, which one(s) do you struggle with the most and how would you ask God to grow you?
      - Leader: this is just a time for each individual to share with the group places they hope to grow. You may even want to have someone pray over each person after they share how they would like to grow.
    - ❖ The Jews and Gentiles were completely divided up until Christ. Imagine you were reading verses 4-6 as each party. What would these words say to each?
      - Jews wanted to think they had the corner on God. They see that God is one for all—there is not a different hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God for the Gentiles. Their God is the God of the Gentiles as well.
      - Gentiles believed they were not included and had to find another way to God. They see that the God of the Israelites is their God as well.
    - ❖ Verses 7-10, Paul takes off on a tangent. Why does he throw in this tangent?
      - He quotes an OT verse from Psalms 68:18 for the purpose of showing “and gave gifts to men.” Yet he seizes an opportunity to explain the first part of the verse as well—showing that Christ descended and ascended and Christ is the one that gives these gifts through grace. It shows that Christ is the one giving the appropriate portions of grace to build his body. God has given his Son this authority.
    - ❖ What is the purpose of Christ giving grace for each to play these different roles?
      - To prepare God's people for works of service (2:10)
      - To build the body of Christ
      - So we all reach unity in the faith
- That we all grow in knowledge and mature
  - That we all attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
- ❖ Paul tells us in these verses that our gifts are to help others grow. How are you using your gifts in the church to help others grow? If you are not, what steps can you take to do so?
    - Leader: this is an opportunity for folks to see that their gifts are to help others grow in knowledge and mature and to challenge your group to SHOW Christ by serving in their unique measure of grace.
- **Read Ephesians 4:14-16**
    - ❖ If we each use our unique gifts according to the measure of grace Jesus gives us, what will be the result in the church?
      - We will no longer be infants in our faith.
      - We will no longer just go with the flow of all kinds of thinking
      - We will speak the truth in love
      - We will GROW up.
      - We will be joined together under Christ headship.
      - We will each do our part!
    - ❖ These are very powerful words that should challenge your entire view of Serving in the church. Being honest, what would keep you from taking significant steps to discovering your giftedness and doing all that you can to “do your work” in the church of Christ?
      - Leader: this is a great time to hear folks heart and as a group walk beside one another to encourage each to play their part.
    - ❖ End your time in this study taking verses 3:16-19 and praying them as a group (or for yourself). If you are doing this study as a group, have each person pray the entire prayer for the person on their right. Below, I have made the prayer first person to easily pray it over another:

*Jesus, I pray that out of your glorious riches you may strengthen (name of person here) with power through your Spirit in their inner being, so that Christ may dwell in (name of person here) through faith. And I pray that (name of person here), being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that (name of person here) may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Amen!*

## STUDY 5: EPHESIANS 4:17-5:21

Part of the decorating craze today is creatively using items in ways they were not meant to be used. Many of the "home redesign" shows are built around creatively using items that were created for one purpose to serve another purpose.

### • Activity

- ❖ As a group, talk about items you have seen or used yourself for a purpose different than it was originally created. What were things you saw that you liked and what were things you saw that you didn't like?
  - Leader: this is just a time to get people thinking about items being used in different ways than it was originally created. The focus of this weeks study is how we were once used for one thing and now used for another. Let the group have fun even sharing ideas that they might use themselves one day.

### • Read Ephesians 4:17-24

- ❖ In Chapter 2, Paul makes it clear that the mystery of the gospel is that Gentiles and Jews are now alike in Christ. So, why do you think he emphasizes to no longer live like the Gentiles? Why did he not say, no longer live like the Jews?
  - Paul is writing to the church-which is made up of those that used to be Gentiles and Jews. He now sees them as the church. But he is writing to a church located in a Gentile culture. So, his emphasis is to no longer live like those in the culture around you. Had the church been located in a Jewish culture, Paul would have used the word "Jews" here.
- ❖ What are all the ways Paul describes the Gentile culture? You also may want to read Romans 1:18-32 to see how Paul unpacks this description.
  - Futile in their thinking. Darkened in their understanding.
  - Separated from the life of God; ignorant due to heart hardened.
  - Lost all sensitivity, indulge in impurity, lusting for more.
- ❖ What are the ways Paul describes the believers in the church?
  - Heard of Christ, taught in him.
  - Taught to put off the old life-corrupted by its desires.
  - Be made new in attitude of mind
  - Put on the new self
  - Created to be like God in righteousness and holiness.
- ❖ In both descriptions, Paul talks about their actions. What does he say is the root of the actions of each?
  - Their thinking.

- Futile thinking leads to indulgence in impurity.
- New attitude of mind leads to new self living in holiness.

- ❖ For many that enter the church, it is because of a growing hate toward some of their behavior. So, they want to change. Many are told to change their behavior-stop doing the things they are doing. What would Paul's counsel be instead?
  - To allow Christ to change your thinking and then you are able to put off the old behaviors. Behavior never changes thinking. Thinking always changes behavior. First thinking has to be that Christ is my life.

### • Read Ephesians 4:25-5:2

- ❖ Paul now makes a list of the ways the church should treat one another. But what does he say is the ultimate reason? Hint: what is the "therefore" there for?
  - Leader: whenever you see a "therefore" you always ask 'what is it there for?' It always points to what was just spoken. So, in this case, Paul is telling them to live this way because they are a new creation, created to be like God in holiness! They are one body.
- ❖ What are all the ways Paul tells the church to stop behaving?
  - Stop lying to one another.
  - Don't sin in your anger (doesn't say to not get angry).
  - Don't go to bed angry with each other.
  - Those that steal-stop it.
  - Don't let unwholesome talk come out of your mouth.
  - Don't grieve the Holy Spirit.
  - Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger (here he says to rid of anger), brawling, slander, malice.
- ❖ What are the ways he calls the church to behave?
  - Speak truthfully to one another.
  - Those stealing must work; being useful with their hands
  - Speak only what is helpful to build others up
  - Be kind and compassionate to one another
  - Forgive as Christ forgave them
  - Imitate God and live a life of love

- ❖ What are the “new attitudes of the mind” Paul gives for behaving these ways?
  - They are now members of one body- no longer individualistic.
  - An attitude of sharing (vs. 28)
  - An attitude of encouragement (vs. 29)
  - An attitude of living like Christ (vs. 32-5:2)
- ❖ In looking at the list of the ways Paul said to “stop” behaving, which are the ones you struggle with the most?
- ❖ In looking at the list of the ways Paul said to “start” behaving, which would you desire to grow in the most?
- ❖ Looking at the list of reasons Paul says to start behaving these ways, which of these “new attitudes of the mind” do you believe would help you the most to cling to?
- **Read Ephesians 5:3-7**
  - ❖ Paul puts stronger emphasis on other actions here that should not be entertained. What are the actions he list in vs. 3 and then the list in vs. 4?
    - Even a hint of sexual immorality; impurity, greed.
    - No obscenity; foolish talk or coarse joking
  - ❖ In verse 5, Paul labels the actions he list in vs. 3 as idolatry. In what way do verses 3 and 4 compare to the 2 greatest commandments found in Matt 22:37-39?
    - Vs 3 is breaking commandment 1; vs. 4 breaks commandment 2
- **Read Ephesians 5:8-20**
  - ❖ Again, Paul puts emphasis on the way a follower of Christ should live. It is clear that our lives look differently than they used to. What does he discuss in this section as to ways we should “not” live?
    - Nothing to do with fruitless deeds of the dark
    - Don't live as unwise
    - Do not be foolish
    - Do not get drunk on wine
  - ❖ What are the ways he says to live?
    - Exposing the fruitless deeds of the dark
    - Live as wise
    - Make the most of every opportunity
    - Understand what the Lord's will is
    - Be filled with the Spirit
  - Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, spiritual songs
  - Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord
  - Always give thanks to God the Father for everything
- ❖ During the time of Paul's writing, verses 19-20 were a part of the way the church lived with each other. It was not “weird”. If Paul were writing this today, what do you think he would write instead?
  - Leader: just a chance for folks to see the point behind Paul's writing this. It was not to say-sing to each other- it was to say, speak words, songs that lift each other up. Our goal is to encourage each other!
- ❖ Looking at both lists, which actions do you struggle with and in which actions would you like to grow?
- ❖ Paul gives the secret to being able to rid ourselves of the actions we need to rid ourselves of and taking on the ones we should take on in 5:21. Read this verse. If you are in a group, have each member of the group go around the room and read this verse out loud, one at a time.
- ❖ Our reverence for Christ is what Paul prayed would grow for the Ephesians in 3:14-19. This week, have each member of the group pray this verse for the person on their left, again, putting it in first person.

*Jesus, I pray that out of your glorious riches you may strengthen (name of person here) with power through your Spirit in their inner being, so that Christ may dwell in (name of person here) through faith. And I pray that (name of person here), being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that (name of person here) may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Amen!*

## STUDY 6: EPHESIANS 5:22-6:24

The second greatest commandment is to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Yet, most of the time we are tempted to “treat our neighbors as they have treated us.” Part of Showing Christ is the way we serve and love one another.

### • Activity

- ❖ Tell about a time in which you “loved” another person in a way that was completely opposite from what that persons behavior or attitude deserved to be treated. What did they deserve and why did you love them the way you did?
  - Leader: again, this is just a time to get to know the members of your group more and get them thinking about what we will be studying.
- ❖ What type of person (attitude, behavior, lifestyle, personality) is the hardest person for you to love and why?

### • Read Ephesians 5:23-33

- ❖ This is a section of Scripture that is very familiar to people and has become very controversial in Western society. Before discussing this section, read 5:22 again. What is the command Paul gives here and why has he given it?
  - He tells the body of Christ to submit to one another because of their love for Jesus. We are to seek what is best for our neighbors out of our love for Christ.
- ❖ Before digging into 22-24, let's look at 25-31 first. What are the ways the husband is called to love his wife?
  - Give himself up for her as Christ did the church
  - Lift her best up, pull out her best
  - Love them as their own bodies-take care of them.
  - Leave your old family and take care of her!
- ❖ In last weeks study, we looked at behaviors that would be counter-cultural. How would these actions have gone against the culture during Paul's time of writing?
  - Women were seen as property more than relationship.
  - They were there to build the man only and his needs.
- ❖ How would these actions be counter-cultural today?
  - Leader: just a time for the group to express how they see the role of women today.

- ❖ If you are a woman, what would it practically look like to you to be loved in this way? If you are a man, what do you think it would look like to love your spouse in this way?
  - Leader: just a time for people to hear practical examples
- ❖ Now, looking back at 22-24, what are the ways a wife is called to love her husband?
  - Submit (or be under his authority)
  - Submit to everything
- ❖ In the original Greek, there are two words used that are translated in English as “submit”. The word “*dogmatizo*” is used and means to “submit to rules”. The word “*hupotasso*” means “to voluntarily subject oneself.” What are the differences in these 2 words?
  - First is you are put under laws and rules.
  - Second is you are choosing to fall under an authority.
- ❖ Here, Paul uses the Greek word “*hupotasso*”. How would this be counter-cultural during Paul's time? How about now?
  - During Paul's time women would have been under the thinking of “dogmatizo”. To be their spouse would mean that they had to obey all the rules the man set. But Paul says it is about coming under his leadership- and the husband is called to love them as we saw.
  - Now, it would be counter-cultural in that women don't like the idea of being under any headship of a man. This comes from men treating them like “dogmatizo”.
- ❖ If you are a man, what would it practically look like to you to be loved by your wife in this way? If you are a woman, what do you think it would look like to love your spouse in this way?
  - Leader: just a time for people to hear practical examples as before.
- ❖ It would be easier to love a spouse if they were to first love you in the way shown here. So, most spouses wait until the other loves them in this manner. But why does Paul say to love one another this way? (Hint: 22)
  - Out of our reverence for Christ! We are called to obey the 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment and to love one another because of the 1<sup>st</sup> commandment- “love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.”
  - We are not called to love the other after they love us but because Christ has loved us.
- ❖ What is the reason Paul tells us he is giving this example in 32?
  - To illustrate the mystery of the relationship between Christ and the church.

- ❖ How does he summarize the relationship between a husband and a wife?
  - Men love your wives as Christ loved the church; Wives, respect your husband and his leadership-not dictatorship.
- **Read Ephesians 6:1-9**
  - ❖ Paul continues to talk about relationships people are in. What does he call children to do in relationship with their parents? How about Fathers to their children?
    - Children obey parents; Fathers, don't just keep hounding your kids.
    - Fathers, train your children in the Lord.
  - ❖ Part of the reality of Paul's time is slavery. But a slave during that time was someone that owed a debt to another and had to work it off. How does Paul call the one in slavery to treat their earthly masters?
    - Respect, fear, sincerity of heart- like they would Christ.
    - Obey them, not to win favor, but out of doing the will of God.
    - Serve wholeheartedly-like serving the Lord
  - ❖ How are Masters called to treat those in slavery to them?
    - In the same way. With knowledge that they are people that God loves and their true Master is God.
  - ❖ Again, Paul's call in each of these relationships is to love the other in the way they would love themselves and out of a love and fear of God. In thinking about your own relationships, who are people that you struggled to love in this way? Who are you waiting to love you first before you love them?
    - Leader: this is a time for the group members to just be honest about hard relationships and to make it more personal.
- **Read Ephesians 6:10-20**
  - ❖ Over and over, Paul has talked about the "heavenly realms" and "authority and powers" in Ephesians (1:3, 10, 20-22; 2:2, 6; 3:10-11). What are the ways that the "powers of the dark world" display themselves in relationships?
    - Bitterness, unforgiveness, selfishness
  - ❖ When our relationships are broken, we tend to take it out on that person. How does verse 12 help you to approach these broken relationships?
    - My attacks are usually against another person and wanting them to change. I will love them if they change.
- Realizing the battle is spiritual enables me to love them with the love of Christ even if they don't change. It's the battle I fight for Christ and not against this person.
- ❖ Draw a picture of a "stick person". On this person, put the "armor of God" on them by writing the words Paul uses in the location of this armor. Which of these pieces of armor stand out to you personally and why?
  - Leader: this is a time to just hear your group's heart on which piece of armor means the most to them right now. It will allow the group to hear what the person seems to need more right now.
- ❖ What is the only "offensive" weapon that Paul describes and why is this important?
  - The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.
  - We have to know God's word to attack the evil one. Otherwise, all we can do is stand and get hit and shield ourselves.
- ❖ This last section is Paul's call to GO and he describes the armor we are to wear as we GO. On top of all the armor, how does Paul call us to pray?
  - In the Spirit
  - On all occasions
  - With all kinds of prayers
  - Praying for the saints!
- **Read Ephesians 6:21-24**
  - ❖ Paul closes his letter with final words to his friends. After sitting in Ephesians these past weeks, what would be your final "take away" from this letter?

End your time praying that God might allow you to Know Jesus more, Grow in Jesus more, Show Jesus more, and Go in Jesus more.