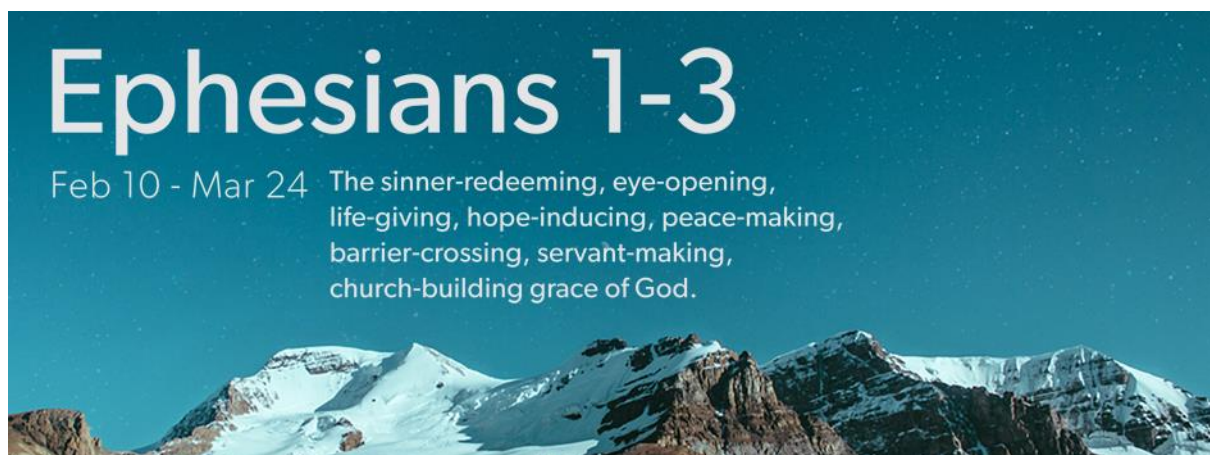


Growth Group Studies



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Three Marks of God's Church

Ephesians 1:1-2

1. Draw a perfect church. Explain to the group some of its more impressive features.

2. Read Ephesians 1:1-2 How does Paul describe himself in Verse 1?

3. Read the following passages and answer the following:

a. What was an Apostle?

b. What was the relationship between the Apostles and the church?

Passages: Luke 6:12-16, Luke 9:1-6, Acts 9:1-22, Ephesians 2:19-22,
Ephesians 4:11-13, Galatians 2:1-10.

4. In practice, what might it look like for a modern church to be built on the foundation of the apostles?

5. How is the Church in Ephesus described in the 2nd half of Ephesians 1:1?
6. Read the description of Ephesus in Acts 19:1-41. What might it have meant for the Ephesian church to be “holy” and “faithful in Christ” while living in Ephesus?
7. What does it mean to be “holy” and “faithful in Christ” while living in Sydney?
8. According to verse 2, which blessings from “God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ” does Paul desire for the Ephesians?
9. What exactly does Paul mean by “grace” and “peace”? (Hint, read through chapter 2!)
10. Revisit your diagram from the first question. In light of these opening verses, how might you alter what you’ve drawn?
11. In light of what you’ve learnt, what can you do to help strengthen our own church?
12. EXTENSION QUESTION. How does the Nicene Creed’s description of the church reflect what we read in Ephesians 1:1-2? (If you don’t know the Nicene Creed, Google it!)

Spiritual blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:3-14

1. Which person has done the most for you in your life? What kind of things have they done? What has been your response to this generosity?

2. Why does Paul praise God in Ephesians 1:3? What kind of blessings are in view here?

3. Read Ephesians 1:4-14, and note down the particular blessings found in the following verses:

v 4: _____ v 5: _____

v7: _____ v 9: _____

v11: _____ v13: _____

4. For each of the blessings listed, try and articulate *why* it is a blessing. Use the extra verses added below to help you.

v 4 (Psalm 24:3-4): _____ v 5 (Rom 8:14-17): _____

v7 (Heb 10:17-18): _____ v 9 (1 Peter 1:1-12): _____

v11 (Rom 8:28-30): _____ v13 (Gal 4:6-7): _____

5. Does the concept of receiving spiritual blessings have much of an affect on you, or do you feel indifferent towards the idea? Would you prefer a different type of blessing? What would be the cost of *not* receiving each of these blessings? Go though each one and think about what would be lost if it were taken away.

6. According to vs 6-7. Which aspect of God's character is underscored by these blessings? What other aspects of God's character do the blessings reveal?

7. What is Paul's response to God's blessings? What is he doing as he recounts these blessings to the Ephesians?

8. To what extent does praise for God's spiritual blessings mark your own prayer life?

9. How do we gain access to these blessings, according to verse 13?

10. Spend some time in praise of the God who has blessed you with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

School's in!
Ephesians 1:15-23

1. What is the most important thing to learn:
 - a. when you're six;
 - b. when you move out of home;
 - c. when you get your first job;
 - d. when you retire?

2. Read Ephesians 1:15-17. What things does Paul pray for on behalf of the Ephesians?

3. According to Paul in v17, what is the purpose of receiving "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation"? What means might God use to answer this prayer? Hint: have a sneak peak at Eph 4:1-13.

4. Read Ephesians 1:18. What in particular does Paul wish the Ephesians to know?

5. What is the Christian's "hope" and "glorious inheritance"? See Titus 2:13, Hebrews 9:15, 1 Peter 1:3-5.

6. How does knowledge of our hope and glorious inheritance impact the decisions we make today? Try and think of 3 differences this knowledge makes. If you're struggling, have a look at Romans 13:11-14, 2 Tim 4:7-8 and 1 Thess 4:13-18.

7. Read Ephesians 1:19-23. What does Paul wish the Ephesians to know according to these verses?

8. Basing your answer on these verses, describe the extent of God's power. What was it about the nature of the city of Ephesus that makes this description of power significant?

9. What should it mean for our prayer life if we truly believe in God's power?

10. Spend some time praying to know more of our eternal hope and of God's power.

The Grace that sparks life

Ephesians 2:1-10

1. How many ways can you fill in the blank? *Sin is* _____

2. Read Ephesians 2:1-3. How is our understanding of sin shaped by the words *transgressions* (v 1) and *disobedient* (v2)?

3. According to these verses, what are sins effects? Which forces are at work in leading us to sin?

4. How far does sin's influence extend? Who is affected?

5. Which of the above aspects of sin resonate with your own experience of life?

6. Reads Ephesians 2:4-6. What does God do to counter the effects of sin? What is God's motivation for doing so? How might knowing a bit about God's motivation help us accept his grace?

7. Paul says we have been 'saved' in v5 (also v8). Given what has preceded in verses 1-4, what have we been saved from? (try and expand your answer beyond simply saying 'sin'!)

8. Read verses 6-7. Practically speaking what does it mean to be “raised up with Christ and seated with him”? See also Colossians 3:1-4, Philippians 3:20.

9. What might verses 8-9 say to the person who thinks “I’ve lived a good life, God will be pleased with me”? What might they say to a person of another religion? What about someone who fears they will fall short of God’s expectations?

10. Considering everything these verses have to teach us, what does a balanced understanding of sin look like? How might we misunderstand it?

11. “But if we are saved by God’s gracious activity, why be good?” Use verse 10 to answer this objection.

12. Pray for someone you know to discover the grace that makes dead sinners alive in Christ.

The grace that creates one people
Ephesians 2:11-22

1. Who was the first friend you made from another culture? What is valuable about multiculturalism? What might be some dangers?

2. Read Ephesians 2:11-22. How might you divide this passage into sections? Can you identify any logical sequence between sections?

3. Read vs 11-12. What was the cost of being a gentile in OT times (see especially v 12)? How was the distinction between people groups expressed under the Old Covenant? See Genesis 12:1-3, 17:1-14, Exodus 12:48, Deut 7:6-11, Isaiah 2:1-5.

4. What danger does racial division pose for (a) our world, (b) our church?

5. If asked to offer a quick explanation, how would you ordinarily explain the cross and what it achieved?

6. Read v 13. Who is Paul referring to when he says ‘you who were far away’? What has brought them near?

7. Read vs 14-18. What does it mean that Jesus ‘himself is our peace?’ See also Colossians 1:21-22.

8. According to these verses and with regard to different people groups, what did the cross achieve, and how did the cross achieve this?

9. Read vs 19-22. How does Paul describe the effect of the cross in v 19?

10. What does Christian multiculturalism look like according to these verses? Is there a limit to Christian multiculturalism? What might you say to someone who says "If all cultures have to follow Jesus, then that's racist."

11. What lessons could modern churches take from this passage? Make a list of *dos* and *don'ts*. Try and come up with answers beyond "be welcoming of other cultures"!

12. What is one action you can contribute to Sundays to practice what you've read? Pray that God will help you live out the truths of this passage.

The grace that shares the Gospel

Ephesians 3:1-13

1. Have you felt sorry for someone this week? What types of people might you ordinarily feel sorry for?

2. Read Ephesians 3:1 and then 3:13. Why might the Ephesians have felt sorry for Paul?

3. Read Ephesians 3:2. What has Paul been given? Why was he given it?

4. Read Ephesians 3:3-6. What was the grace given to Paul? Is it a grace that has been received by everyone?

5. Given the Old Testament provided hints that jews and gentiles would come together (eg Isaiah 2:2-4, 49:6), how can paul say the mystery “has now been revealed?” What is new about Paul’s message?

6. Read vs 7-9. What was Paul’s calling once this mystery had been revealed to him? What word does Paul again use to describe this calling? Can you explain why Paul doesn’t want the Ephesians to be discouraged over his imprisonment?

7. Like Paul, can you call yourself servant of this gospel? What are the different ways we can serve in the spread of this message?

8. Read vs 10-11. Is the goal of Paul's ministry simply that individuals can find salvation? What purpose does the creation of the church fill? See also Luke 15:10.

9. What extra motivation does this give regarding our participation in church?

10. Read verse 12. What individual effect of Christ's work is mentioned here? How regularly are you making use of this freedom? Make use of it now and spread some time in prayer

Paul's Prayer for the Church
Ephesians 3:14-22

1. What goals have you set your self recently? How do you choose your goals?

2. Read Ephesians 3:16-17. What does Paul wish for the Ephesians here?

3. What might the Ephesians need strength for? See v 13 for just one idea. What do we need inner strength for? How is inner strength attained?

4. What subject at school did you have most trouble grasping?

5. Read 17b-18. What do the Ephesians need power to grasp? Do you have trouble comprehending who God is and his love? If so what comfort can we draw from Paul's prayer for the Ephesians here?

6. Read v19. Would you say that you are 'filling up' with God? What are some things you can do to ensure your walk with God is being enriched?

7. Read vs 20-21. How is God's capability to work in and through us described here? Do your own aims in life reflect God's ability to work powerfully? If not, why not?

8. Based on what we've read, share with the group some appropriate goals for your own spiritual development. Pray that God will do immeasurably more in and through you than what you ask or imagine.