

EPHESIANS: MORE THAN YOU CAN ASK OR THINK!

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	Due Date
WEEK ONE: Overview	--
WEEK TWO: Background & Ephesians 1:1-2	2/8
WEEK THREE: Ephesians 1:3-14	2/15
WEEK FOUR: Ephesians 1:15-23	2/22
WEEK FIVE: Ephesians 2:1-10	3/1
WEEK SIX: Ephesians 2:11-22	3/8
WEEK SEVEN: Ephesians 3:1-6	3/15
WEEK EIGHT: Ephesians 3:6-13	3/22
WEEK NINE: Ephesians 3:14-21	3/29
WEEK TEN: Ephesians 4:1-6	4/5
WEEK ELEVEN: Ephesians 4:7-16	4/12
WEEK TWELVE: Ephesians 4:17-24	4/19
WEEK THIRTEEN: Ephesians 5:1-20	4/26
WEEK FOURTEEN: Ephesians 5:21-33	5/3
WEEK FIFTEEN: Ephesians 6:1-9	5/10
WEEK SIXTEEN: Ephesians 6:10-20	5/17
WEEK SEVENTEEN: Eph. 6:21-24 & Wrap-Up	5/24

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

1. Have you ever heard anyone say they don't believe in "organized religion"? What do you think they meant by that statement?
2. When you hear the word "church" what comes to mind? (Write below or on sheet provided)
3. Print out a copy of Ephesians. Read it and underline or flag what catches your eye and verses that have special significance to you.
4. What topics or themes seem to be important in the book of Ephesians?

"Some people construct a Christianity which consists entirely of a personal relationship to Jesus Christ and has virtually nothing to do with the church. Others make a grudging concession to the need for church membership, but add that they have given up the ecclesiastical institution as hopeless. Now it is understandable, even inevitable, that we are critical of many of the church's inherited structures and traditions. Every church in every place at every time is in need of reform and renewal. But we need to beware lest we despise the church of God, and are blind to his work in history. We may safely say that God has not abandoned his church, however displeased with it he may be. He is still building and refining it. And if God has not abandoned it, how can we? It has a central place in his plan." (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 126)

"The good news of the unsearchable riches of Christ which Paul preached is that he died and rose again not only to save sinners like me (though he did), but also to create a single new humanity; not only to redeem us from sin but also to adopt us into God's family; not only to reconcile us to God, but also to reconcile us to one another. Thus the church is an integral part of the gospel. The gospel is good news of a new society as well as of a new life." (Stott, 128-129)

WEEK 2: BACKGROUND

Ephesians is a letter. It applies to us today, but sometimes we forget that it was written to a real, historical people. We must know about the author and the audience of any letter to have the fullest possible picture of the truths being communicated.

DAY ONE: SAUL'S BACKGROUND

1. Have you ever changed your mind drastically and become a strong supporter of something you used to oppose (or vice versa)? What caused the change?
2. **Read Acts 7:1-8:3.** Where are we first introduced to Paul, then called Saul?
3. What was Saul's goal at this point in his life?
4. What is your first impression of him?
5. **Read Acts 9:1-31.** How is Saul described in 9:1-2?
6. What causes his change of heart?
7. How is Saul described in Acts 9:22?
8. What happened to the church as a result of Saul's work, according to Acts 9:31?

DAY TWO: PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS TO EPHEBUS

9. **Read Acts 19:1-40.** How would you describe his relationship with the Ephesian church initially?

10. Describe the incident with the Sons of Sceva.

11. What were some of the interests of the Ephesians described in Acts 19:19?

12. Who is Demetrius? What did Demetrius do? Why?

13. What did the crowd cry out repeatedly? How long did they chant and protest?

14. How would you describe Paul's relationship with the Ephesian church after the Artemis riot?

15. **Read Acts 20:16-38.** How does Paul describe himself to the Ephesian elders?

16. What is Paul's warning to the elders? Do you think this warning came true?

17. What was Paul's encouragement to the elders?

18. With what emotions did Paul depart from the Ephesian elders?

19. How do these passages change your opinion of Paul?

20. How do they better prepare you to study Ephesians?

DAY THREE: SALUTATION (EPHESIANS 1:1-2)

21. **Read Ephesians 1:1-2.** How does Paul describe himself?

22. Apostle can be defined as, “one who is sent by another.” According to the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, “The verb *apostello* appears frequently in the Gospels in reference to the sending of Jesus by the Father and the sending of the apostles by Jesus” (Ryken et al., 60). Why is the word “apostle” important?

23. To whom is the letter addressed? How are the recipients described?

24. With what greeting does Paul begin the letter?

25. Give a working definition of *grace*.

26. Give a working definition of *peace*.

27. “Put them together [grace and peace] and we have, in miniature, the gospel for the whole world”
(MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1906.) What do you think this quote means?¹

28. What have grace and peace meant in your own life and story?

When appropriate, footnotes are provided with relevant commentary. **Please attempt to answer the questions yourself before you look at what the brainiacs have to say!**

NOTES FOR WEEK 2:

¹ “**Grace** (*charis*) was a characteristically Greek word. The Jews use the word **peace** (*shalom*) as a greeting. Put them together and we have, in miniature, the gospel for the whole world. When we unite them we also have the truth of the New Testament church which Paul expounds so fully in Ephesians – Jew and Gentile formed into one Body in Christ.” (MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1906)

WEEK 3: SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST (EPHESIANS 1:3-14)

Though it is broken up in English translations, in the Greek, these eleven verses are one long, elegant, run-on sentence. When reading this section, I picture Paul being so excited that he just can't make himself put a period after writing any of the clauses. He is so amazed by the blessings provided in Christ that he loses track of proper grammar!

DAY ONE: EPHESIANS 1:3-5

1. What do think of when you “count your blessings?”
2. **Read Ephesians 1:3-14.** Write down five words or phrases that are repeated or that you think are significant in this passage.
3. How do you think Paul was feeling, or what was he thinking when he wrote this to the church in Ephesus?¹
4. According to Ephesians 1:3-5, fill in the following chart.

What God Did for Us	How He Did It	Why He Did It

5. Circle or highlight the verbs which describe God's actions in this passage.
6. What do these truths emphasize about God's character?
7. What does the phrase “in the heavenly places” mean in verse 3?²
8. One of my professors says we experience blessings already, but there are more to come. In what sense do we experience these blessings here and now, and in what sense are we waiting to experience them in fullness?

DAY TWO: EPHESIANS 1:5-14

9. **Read Ephesians 1:5-14.** What do the metaphors of “son,” “adoption,” and “inheritance” tell us about our relationship to God?
10. We typically think of the metaphor of adoption as a New Testament idea, but there is evidence of it in the Old Testament as well. Read Hosea 11:1-4. In what sense could God consider Israel his adopted son?^{3,4}
11. What is Paul talking about with the phrase “the mystery of his will”?
12. What does it mean for God to pursue “His good pleasure”?⁵

13. Describe “the plan for the fullness of time” in v. 10.

14. What does “the fullness of time” mean? See also Galatians 4:4 as a cross-reference.

15. How does Paul refer to the Holy Spirit in verses 13-14?

16. What are some modern-day “guarantees”?

17. Read II Corinthians 5:5 and Romans 8:23, which also use words from the same root as “guarantee.” How do these verses help deepen our understanding of the Holy Spirit as a guarantee?

18. Underline the phrase “to the praise of his glory” each time Paul uses it in this passage. What theme do you notice?⁶

19. What part of this passage is most precious to you? Why?

DAY THREE:

In order to avoid “Bible Hopscotch,” that is, flipping through verses to get the answer to each question, we will take time at the end of each section to rewrite the passage in your own words as a prayer. It can be anything from replacing personal pronouns with your name (e.g. “who has blessed *Kelly* with every spiritual blessing”) to taking complicated theological concepts and putting them into your own words for confirmed understanding. It should be a time between you and your Father to pray and thank Him for the truths you have studied in His Word this week. Make the most of this time because this one question will be the most important of each week!

20. Rewrite this passage as a prayer to the Blessed God who has blessed you with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

21. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to “The Church Page” at the end of this study.

NOTES FOR WEEK 3:

¹ “In the original Greek these twelve verses constitute a single complex sentence. As Paul dictates, his speech pours out of his mouth in a continuous cascade. He neither pauses for breath, nor punctuates his words with full stops. Commentators have searched for metaphors vivid enough to convey the impact of this opening outburst of adoration. A gateway, a golden chain, a kaleidoscope, a snowball, a racehorse, an operatic overture and the flight of an eagle; all these metaphors in their different ways describe the impression of colour, movement and grandeur which the sentence makes on the reader's mind. The whole paragraph is a paean of praise, a doxology” (Stott, John R.W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 32).

² “In order to put this beyond doubt Paul adds to his adjective 'spiritual' the clause *in the heavenly places*, or better – since no geographical location is implied – 'in the heavenlies.' This is the first occasion on which he uses this remarkable expression, which occurs five times in Ephesians and nowhere else in his letters. What does it mean? The word 'heaven' is used in Scripture in several different senses. Ancient authors used to distinguish between 'the heaven of nature' (the sky), 'the heaven of grace' (eternal life already received and enjoyed by God's people on earth) and 'the heaven of glory' (the final state of the redeemed). But 'the heavenlies' is to be understood differently from all these. It is neither sky, nor grace, nor glory, nor any literal spacial abode, but rather the unseen world of spiritual reality. The five uses of the expression in Ephesians indicate that 'the heavenlies' are the sphere in which the 'principalities and powers' continue to operate (3:10, 6:12), in which Christ reigns supreme and his people reign with him (1:20, 2:6), and in which therefore God blesses us with every spiritual blessing in Christ (1:3)” (Stott, 35).

³ “Paul's metaphor of adoption... might even have been derived from Israel's deliverance out of bondage in Egypt” (Bruce, F.F., *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 257).

⁴ “It is inconceivable that we should enjoy a relationship with God as his children without accepting the obligation to imitate our Father and cultivate the family likeness” (Stott, 40).

⁵ “This is the dominant theme of the epistle—the glorious truth concerning Christ and the church” (MacDonald, William, *The Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1909).

⁶ “For the praise of his glory and grace. Thus everything we have and are in Christ both comes from God and returns to God. It begins in his will and ends in his glory. For this is where everything begins and ends” (Stott, 50).

WEEK 4: HOPE AND POWER (EPHESIANS 1:15-23)

DAY ONE: EPHESIANS 1:15-19

This too is just one long sentence in the Greek. Paul is so excited to share his theology with his friends in Ephesus that he takes a whole chapter to “calm down” and write properly.

1. At times life seems chaotic and purposeless. Over what part of your life is it difficult to see Christ as sovereign at this time?
2. **Read Ephesians 1:15-23.** Draw a picture of a typical Ephesian and label all the things they either have currently or that Paul prays for them to increase in from verses 15-19.
3. What aspect of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians would you most like to adopt in your own prayer life?
4. Which of the things which Paul prays for on behalf of the Ephesians do you wish was more apparent in your own life?

5. In verses 19 and 20, Paul describes God's power and might working in two ways. What are they?

6. How does it make you feel to hear that the power which raised Christ from the dead is at work within you?

DAY TWO: EPHESIANS 1:20-23

7. **Read Ephesians 1:20-23.** List the things that Christ is above in verses 20-22.

8. How do these verses expand our understanding of Christ's superiority to all else?
 - Colossians 1:16-20

 - Philippians 2:6-11

 - Hebrews 2:5-18

9. Which of these passages brings you the greatest confidence in Christ's superiority? Why?

10. What metaphor is utilized at the end of this chapter in relation to the church? What insight does it bring?

11. Paul uses the terms *full*, *fullness*, and *filled* several times in this section. Those crucial words can be defined as, “containing or holding as much or as many as possible,” “the state of being filled to capacity,” and “to put someone or something into a space or container so that it is completely or almost completely filled” respectively. How has Christ been “the fullness of him who fills all in all” in your life and story?

12. Is there anything else which stood out to you during your reading and study this week?

DAY THREE:

13. Rewrite this passage in your own words as a prayer of thanksgiving to the One who has filled you.

14. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to “The Church Page” at the end of this study.

WEEK 5: THE DEAD MADE ALIVE BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH (EPHESIANS 2:1-10)

DAY ONE: EPHESIANS 2:1-7

1. What is the difference between being terminally ill and being dead? How does this difference illuminate our state as sinners?¹

2. **Read Ephesians 2:1-7.** List the descriptions of our prior state according to verses 1-3.²

3. What is your honest response to this description of yourself without Christ? What does your response reveal about you?

4. Read the following passages and fill in the chart with differences between the old (wo)man and the new.

	Old (Wo)man	New (Wo)man
Galatians 5:19-24		
I Peter 1:14-16		
I Corinthians 2:12-16		

How do these passages deepen your understanding of the chasm between the old (wo)man and the new?

5. In the Greek, the two words which begin verse 4 are “but God.” What is the significance of each of these words?^{3,4,5}
6. In what state did God show love to His chosen? See also Romans 5:8.⁶
7. What blessings did God provide in verses 5-7?
8. What characteristics of God do these verses discuss?

DAY TWO: EPHESIANS 2:8-10

9. **Read Ephesians 2:8-10.** Whose work is salvation and what is our work in salvation?⁷
10. Read Romans 11:5-7 and Romans 4:1-8. What do these passages say about grace, faith, and works?
11. What is our work *because* of our salvation? That is, what have we been saved to do?^{8,9}
12. In verse 10, the word “workmanship” is the Greek word transliterated *poiema*, which carries the connotation of “work of art, masterpiece.” Does understanding the word Paul used change your opinion of yourself? If so, how?

DAY THREE:

13. Rewrite this passage in your own words knowing that you are no longer dead in your sin, but instead are God's masterpiece who has been saved from her own sin.

14. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

NOTES FOR WEEK 5:

¹ “It was necessary that the readers should be raised to life, because they were spiritually dead, severed and alienated from God, the source of true life” (Bruce, F.F., *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 280).

² “Death, slavery, and condemnation: these are the three concepts which Paul brings together in order to portray our lost human condition” (Stott, John R.W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 79).

³ “Paul first plumbs the depths of pessimism about man, and then rises to the heights of optimism, of despair and faith, which constitutes the refreshing realism of the Bible. For what Paul does in this passage is to paint a vivid contrast between what man is by nature and what he can become by grace” (Stott, 69).

⁴ “These two monosyllables set against the desperate condition of fallen mankind the gracious initiative and sovereign action of God. We were the objects of his wrath, but God *out of the great love with which he loved us* had mercy upon us” (Stott, 80- emphasis in the original).

⁵ “The words *But God*, form one of the most significant, eloquent, and inspiring transitions in all literature. They indicate that a stupendous change has taken place. It is a change from the doom and despair of the valley of death to the unspeakable delights of the kingdom of the Son of God's love” (MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1917).

⁶ “God's love is great because of the extreme unworthiness and unloveliness of the person loved. We were dead in our trespasses. We were enemies of God. We were destitute and degraded. He loved us in spite of it all” (MacDonald, 1917).

⁷ “We must never think of salvation as a kind of transaction between God and us in which he contributes grace and we contribute faith. For we were dead, and had to be quickened before we could believe” (Stott, 83).

⁸ “Good words are indispensable to salvation – not as its ground or means, however, but as its consequence and evidence” (Stott, 85).

⁹ “Good works are not the *root* but the *fruit*” (MacDonald, 1919).

WEEK 6: ALIENS AND CITIZENS (EPHESIANS 2:11-22)

DAY ONE: EPHESIANS 2:11-18

1. Do you know any nonbelievers who seem to have their lives together without Christ? What characteristics make them seem like they have fulfilling lives?
2. **Read Ephesians 2:11-18.** What is the “therefore” there for in verse 11? That is, what previous line of thought is Paul connecting with at the beginning of this chapter?
3. What was the state of the Gentiles (most of us) before Christ?
4. What were the effects on the possibility of salvation from these alienations or deprivations for the Gentiles?¹
5. What does it mean to be “without hope and without God in the world”?
6. In what sense are nonbelievers “without hope and without God in the world” today?
7. What is our state now in Christ?
8. What is the reason for the change?
9. “Divisiveness is a constant characteristic of every community without Christ” (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 96). What are some examples of barriers or walls of hostility that

are/were built by non-Christians?

10. What were a few of the requirements necessary for an Israelite to have access to God? (If you are stuck, look at Hebrews 9:1-7 for some help.)
11. Paul speaks of us having access to the Father. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. How does this deepen your understanding of the importance of your access to the throne?
12. From your knowledge of Scripture and history, what were the physical and societal barriers between Jews and Gentiles in these days?
13. Read Matthew 5:17. How did Christ break down the walls?
14. Read Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11. What kinds of barriers did Christ break? ^{2,3,4}
15. What “walls of hostility” or “dividing walls” are present in your society? In your relationships?
16. How are you seeking to make peace and break down these walls? How is the church seeking to make peace?

DAY TWO: EPHESIANS 2:19-22

17. **Read Ephesians 2:19-22.** Paul speaks of the Gentiles as formerly aliens, but now citizens. What responsibilities and privileges come along with citizenship to a nation-state?

18. Read Philippians 3:20-21. What does Paul say about our citizenship in this passage?

19. What are the rights and privileges of our citizenship in Heaven?

20. Which right as a citizen of Heaven is most precious to you? Why?

21. Paul also utilizes the metaphor of a building. Who is the cornerstone? Who comprises the foundation?

22. What is the building doing in verse 21? Why is this strange? What do you think Paul is attempting to portray with this verb?⁵

23. Read I Peter 2:4-10. How does Peter describe the stones? Is this a similar idea to Paul's or different? How?

24. What other similarities do you notice between the Ephesians passage and the I Peter passage?

DAY THREE:

25. Rewrite this passage not as an alien, but as a citizen of a new Kingdom.⁶

26. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

NOTES FOR WEEK 6:

¹ “They were ‘Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless, and Godless’” (Stott, John R.W., *The Message of Ephesians*, quoting William Hendrickson, 96).

² “Now that the barrier has been removed, there is no further need for the communities which it kept apart to remain separate. The purpose of the work of Christ is that they should be brought together into a new unity. In place of the former hostility, he has now made peace. Where two opposed groups once stood over against each other, he has ‘in himself—in Christ Jesus’ created a new humanity, indeed, a new human being.” (Bruce, F.F., *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 299)

³ “No privilege is bestowed on the people of God in which [believing] Gentiles do not enjoy an equal share” (Bruce, 307).

⁴ “You are no longer visitors without legal rights... you belong here” (Stott, 104).

⁵ “Unless it is constantly and securely related to Christ, the church's unity will disintegrate and its growth either stop or run wild” (Stott, 108).

⁶ “It would be hard to exaggerate the grandeur of this vision. The new society God has brought into being is nothing short of a new creation, a new human race, whose characteristic is not longer alienation but reconciliation, no longer division and hostility but unity and peace. This new society God rules and loves and lives in” (Stott, 110).

WEEK 7: THE MYSTERY REVEALED (EPHESIANS 3:1-6)

DAY ONE:

1. What is your favorite mystery story or movie? What is it about a good mystery that makes it so enjoyable?

2. **Read Ephesians 3:1-6.** Why does the chapter begin with the words “For this reason?”

3. Why does Paul call himself “a prisoner for Christ Jesus *on behalf of you Gentiles?*” See Acts 21:27-36.¹

4. What is a brief definition of *mystery*?

5. How many times does the word *mystery* occur in these 13 verses? (Underline it in your Bible or on your printed copy of Ephesians.)

6. The Greek use of *mystery* is slightly different than how we use that word today. To discover its meaning here, look up the passages below. What is the mystery discussed in each passage? What do we learn about the concept of *mystery* from each passage?
 - Romans 16:25-26

 - I Corinthians 4:1

 - Colossians 1:25-27

7. Based on the past several questions, what is the meaning of *mystery* to Paul?

DAY TWO:

8. Returning to the Ephesians passage: What is the mystery that Paul discusses here? ^{2,3}
9. What does it imply about God that He has mysteries and reveals them at certain times?
10. Do you feel like there are mysteries in your life in the way Paul uses the word *mystery*? Explain.

DAY THREE:

11. Rewrite this passage as a prayer penned by one who has experienced the mystery of the Gospel, or who struggles to accept that some of God's mysteries are yet unrevealed.

12. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

NOTES FOR WEEK 7:

¹ "So what led to Jewish opposition to Paul was his bold, uncompromising espousal of the Gentile cause. He not only preached his vision of the new and undivided humanity and wrote about it; he was at that moment suffering for the very truths he was expounding" (Stott, John R.W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 115).

² "In English a 'mystery' is something dark, obscure, secret, puzzling. The Greek word *mysterion* is different, however, Although still a 'secret', it is no longer closely guarded but open. Originally, the Greek word referred to a truth into which someone had been initiated. Indeed it came to be used of the secret teachings of the heathen religions, teachings which were restricted to initiates. But in Christianity there are no esoteric 'mysteries' reserved for a spiritual elite. On the contrary, the Christian 'mysteries' are truths which, although beyond human discovery, have been revealed by God and so now belong openly to the whole church. More simply, *mysterion* is a truth hitherto hidden from human knowledge or understanding but now disclosed by the revelation of God." (Stott, 116)

³ "Here the word 'mystery' has the special meaning of the private, wise plan of God, which in Ephesians relates primarily to the unification of believing Jews and Gentiles in the new body, the church. C.f. verse 6. It may be thought of as a secret that is temporarily hidden, but more than that, it is a plan God is actively working out and revealing stage by stage" (Liefeld, Walter L., *NIV Study Bible Notes*).

WEEK 8: AUDACIOUS ACCESS EXTENDED TO THE UNWORTHY (EPHESIANS 3:6-13)

DAY ONE:

1. Review the discussion of *mystery* from last week. If such a mystery had been revealed to you, what would you do with that information?
2. **Read Ephesians 3:6-13.** Paul refers to Gentile believers in three ways in verse 6; what are they? What is emphasized by these three different descriptions?¹
3. What qualified Paul to be a minister of the gospel? (Hint: This is a trick question!)
4. See I Corinthians 15:9-10. Why did Paul consider himself the “very least of all the saints”?²
5. Has God ever used you in spite of the fact that you felt the least qualified for something, either because of lack of experience or because of previous disobedience? Explain.
6. What is God's intention for the church?
7. In what sense could the church make known the manifold wisdom of God “to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms”?³

8. Read Romans 5:1-2 and Hebrews 4:16. What does it mean to have boldness and access to approach the throne of God?

DAY TWO:

9. Read Romans 11:13-24. How are Jewish and Gentile believers united in this picture?⁴
10. Look back at Week 6 homework question 3 (pg. 20). What is the state of the Gentiles before the mystery was revealed?
11. Name at least three reasons or situations in which you might be denied access to another person.
12. How are each of these limitations of access, when applied to God, removed through our faith?
13. When do you feel bold and when do you feel timid in your access to God? Why?
14. How is Paul's suffering the Ephesians' glory (v. 13)?

15. Read Colossians 1:24. In what sense were Christ's afflictions lacking? How did Paul fill up what was lacking for the Colossian believers?

16. Imagine that you are a part of a young church plant in a closed country. Shortly after beginning your fledgling church, your pastor is arrested. This is the situation in which the Ephesians found themselves. In what sense would your pastor's sufferings bring glory to your church?

DAY THREE:

17. Rewrite this passage as a prayer penned by one who has been granted access to the throne of God.

18. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

NOTES FOR WEEK 8:

¹ “What has now been revealed is the plan of God that human beings without distinction—Gentiles as well as Jews—should on the common ground of their faith be his sons and daughters in Christ” (Bruce, F.F., *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 315).

² “He combined personal humility with apostolic authority. Indeed, while 'minimizing himself he magnified his office'” (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 119).

³ “We are to think of them [angels] as spectators of the drama of salvation. Thus 'the history of the Christian church becomes a graduate school for angels'” (Stott, 124, quoting Mackay, 84).

⁴ “Gentile believers, moreover, have been incorporated into the same body as Jewish believers; they are fellow-members of one body in Christ. This is the first (and only NT) occurrence of the compound adjective meaning 'belonging to the same body'” (Bruce, 316).

WEEK 9: THANKSGIVING AND ABUNDANCE (EPHESIANS 3:14-21)

DAY ONE:

1. What is your biggest prayer request currently?
2. **Read Ephesians 3:14-21.** How do we know that Paul transitions into a prayer at this point?
3. How does all fatherhood or every family take its name from God (v. 15)?
4. Why does Paul burst into prayer here?
5. *Doxology* is “a liturgical formula of praise to God.” *Theology* is “the study of the nature of God in religious belief.” One thing that I love about Paul is how close his praise is to the surface when he is dictating deep theological truths! His theology often spills over into doxology. Read Romans 11:25-36.¹ Which verses are an example of doctrine spilling over into doxology?
6. When was the last time your understanding of God “spilled over” into doxology or praise in your life?
7. List the four or five main things which Paul prays for the Ephesians.

8. Make a chart showing how, where and why Paul asks that the Ephesians be strengthened.

How	Where	Why

9. We know that Christ already is in our hearts through faith, so why do we need additional strength?

10. Have you ever had a time where you have received strength from God that affected your faith? Explain.

11. What does it mean to be “rooted and established in love”?

12. To what degree do you feel like you are “rooted and established in love” right now? Explain.

13. How is the love of Christ described? What insight do you get from this description?

14. Read Job 11:7-9. How does Zophar describe God's wisdom?

DAY TWO:

15. Read Romans 8:38-39. How do these verses, also penned by Paul, compare to his prayer in Ephesians?
16. How should this knowledge play out in the life of a church?
17. How can you know a love which “surpasses knowledge”?
18. Look back to Ephesians 1:23 to recall that Paul says that the church is “the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.” Make a connection between Eph. 1:23 and 3:19 (other than the *obvious* one—that they both contain the word “fullness!”).
19. How is the Trinity present and at work in these verses?
20. “I like to think of the apostle's petition a staircase by which he climbs higher and higher in his aspiration for his readers. His prayer-staircase has four steps, whose key words are 'strength,' 'love,' 'knowledge,' and 'fullness'” (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 134). Draw Stott's four-tiered “staircase of prayer” for the Ephesians.²
21. Do you agree with Stott's interpretation of this passage or not? That is, are the steps required to be in this order or not?

22. Read verses 20-21. What do you learn about God from these verses?

23. Does this look like the God to whom you pray? Explain.

24. What does verse 21 say about God's glory?³

25. What have you been desiring for a lengthy period of time? How could God do “far more abundantly than all you ask or think” in fulfilling that desire?⁴

26. What is the last word in this chapter? Why?⁵

The last two verses of this chapter always make me think of the last paragraph of C. S. Lewis's classic concluding episode in *The Chronicles of Narnia, The Last Battle*, in which every chapter in the story to come is filled with far more abundant blessings than all we could ask or think.

- “Aslan spoke softly, 'The dream is ended; this is the morning.' And as he spoke he no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever: in which every chapter is better than the one before” (228).

DAY THREE:

27. On the next page, rewrite this passage as a prayer for your church, pausing to spend time on each step of Stott's staircase of prayer.

28. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

NOTES FOR WEEK 9:

¹ "That is why Bible reading and prayer should always go together. For it is in Scripture that God has disclosed his will, and it is in prayer that we ask him to do it" (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 132).

² "As we now look back down the staircase which we have been climbing with Paul, we cannot fail to be struck by his audacity. He prays that his readers may be given the strength of the Spirit and the ruling presence of Christ, the rooting of their lives in love, the knowledge of Christ's love in all its dimensions, and the fullness of God himself. These are bold petitions. Climbers of this staircase become short of breath, even a little giddy. But Paul does not leave us in suspense." (Stott, 139)

³ "Doubtless we shall spend eternity exploring his inexhaustible riches of grace and love" (Stott, 138).

⁴ "One of the best ways to discover a Christian's chief anxieties and ambitions is to study the content of his prayers and the intensity with which he prays them" (Stott, 131).

⁵ "With this loud 'Amen' the first half of the present letter is concluded" (Bruce, F.F., *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 331).

WEEK 10: IN ALL THINGS, CHRIST (EPHESIANS 4:1-6)

“Now the apostle moves on from the new society to the new standards which are expected of it. So he turns from exposition to exhortation, from what God has done to what we must be and do, from doctrine to duty” (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 146).

“The sign of this reconciliation is the unity of Jew and Greek in the church. In the messianic community, the one Spirit gives all humans equal access to God, drawing them into a humanity that is based on the pattern of the Messiah. Such is the gift that creates the church. The church is the ‘fullness of him who fills all things’ (1:23). The church is therefore the central focus of Ephesians precisely because it is, as a living community, the revelation to the world and to the cosmic powers of God’s work in the world.” (Johnson, Luke Timothy, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, 413)

DAY ONE:

1. Regarding relational conflict, author Leigh McLeroy once said, “There’s no hurt like church hurt.” Have you found this statement true in your own life? Explain (without using names).

2. **Read Ephesians 4:1-6.** Describe your own idea of “walking in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.”

3. In what sense could we be worthy of this calling?

4. Based on the context of Ephesians, what *calling* is Paul talking about?

5. List the characteristics which Paul calls followers of Christ to exhibit in verses 2-3.¹

6. How do these characteristics contribute to the calling discussed in question 4?

7. Which of those characteristics is most representative of you? Explain.

8. Which one do you need to grow in the most? Why?

9. List all the “ones” Paul enumerates in verses 1-6.

10. Read I Corinthians 12:4-6 and list the “sames” Paul discusses here.

11. Pick one of your answers to question 9 or 10. How could a church with racial, cultural, and/or ethnic tension, that is a church with both Jews and Gentiles in attendance, be tempted to endanger the oneness of this characteristic? How would this affect the unity of the church?

DAY TWO:

12. The church I grew up in had a cross-stitched frame hanging in the church office with a quote attributed to St. Augustine which said:

*“In essentials, Unity
In non-essentials, Liberty
In all things, Charity”*

Back in Augustine's time, charity was defined as “kindness and tolerance in judging others” or “love of humankind.” Knowing these definitions, what does this quote mean to you?

13. What are some of the “essentials” of the Christian life and message?

14. What are some of the “non-essentials” of the Christian life and message?

15. Give an example of how a church or ministry in which you have been involved succeeded in holding to Augustine’s motto.²

16. How have churches or ministries you have been involved in failed to show either unity or charity?

17. Can we still say there is only one church when we experience so much denominational discord? Explain.³

18. How could the conflict which you shared in Day 1, question 1 have been resolved differently using Paul’s exhortations in this passage?

DAY THREE:

19. Rewrite this passage as a prayer of thanks for the unity of the body you have experienced and as a prayer of petition for the disunity of the Body, which you have also witnessed.

20. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

NOTES FOR WEEK 10:

¹ “Now humility is essential to unity. Pride lurks behind all discord, while the greatest single secret of concord is humility” (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 148).

² “Authentic Christian 'unity' in truth, life and love is far more important than 'union' schemes of a structural kind, although ideally the latter should be a visible expression of the former” (Stott, 155).

³ “We must assert that there *can* only be one Christian family, only one Christian faith, hope and baptism, and only one Christian body, because there is only one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You can no more multiply churches than you can multiply gods. Is there only one God? Then he has only one church. Is the unity of God inviolable? Then so is the unity of the church. The unity of the church is as indestructible as the unity of God himself. It is no more possible to split the church than it is possible to split the Godhead. In stating the matter thus baldly and dogmatically, it is not difficult to imagine what the reader is thinking. You will be saying to me something like this: 'It is all very well declaring that we cannot split the church; the truth is we have been extremely successful in doing the very thing you say we cannot do!' How, then, can the evident phenomenon of the disunity of the church be reconciled with the biblical insistence on the indestructibility of its unity?” (Stott, 151)

WEEK 11: OUR UNITY IN DIVERSITY (EPHESIANS 4:7-16)

DAY ONE: (EPHESIANS 4:7-13)

1. What role(s), official or unofficial, wanted and unwanted, do you play in your church?

2. **Read Ephesians 4:7-13.** What is the significance of the transitional word “but” in verse 7? (Hint: look back at verses 3-6 to help find your answer.)

3. According to verse 7, what was given to each one? By whom?¹

4. This grace is not the same as our grace into salvation. Review verses 3, 7 and 8 and look ahead to verses 11-13 to define what Paul means by *grace* in this context.

5. Verse 9 is a complicated statement with several different interpretations. Here is one interpretation of “ascended” and “descended.” According to Ephesians 1:20-21, to where did Christ ascend?

According to John 6:38 and 6:62, to where did Christ descend?

6. List, in order, the various kinds of spiritual gifts in verses 11-12. Why do you think Paul orders the gifts the way he does?

7. Do you think the same gifts exist today? Why or why not?

8. Read I Corinthians 12:4-11, Romans 12:3-8 and I Peter 4:8-11 to fill in the following chart.

	Purpose of Gifts ²	Giver of Gifts ³
I Cor. 12:4-11		
Romans 12:3-8		
I Peter 4:8-11		

9. What gift(s) do you think have been given to you? (And it's okay if you're not sure.)

10. Have you been a good steward of the gift(s) allotted to you? Explain. Or, if you are unsure of your gift(s), what efforts have you made to discover it (them)?

11. When you use your spiritual gift(s), do you use them with the above purpose statements in mind or do you find yourself exercising your gifts for other reasons? Explain.

12. Do your gifts line up with the role(s) you listed in the first question? Why or why not?

DAY TWO: (EPHESIANS 4:14-16)

13. **Read Ephesians 4:14-16.** One of God's intentions for our gifts is to bring maturity to the church.

How would we act if this purpose is not achieved, according to verse 14?

14. Read Ephesians 4:12-15, I Corinthians 3:1-3 and Hebrews 5:11-14. Fill in the chart indicating how infants are described and how the mature are described in these passages.⁴

	Infants	the Mature
Eph. 4:12-15		
I Cor. 3:1-3		
Hebrews 5:11-14		

15. How is the family of God described in verse 16?

16. What other metaphors has Paul used when talking about the church?

17. What insight does the metaphor of the church as the Body of Christ give us?⁵

18. Read I Corinthians 12:12-30 and compare to Ephesians 4:16. What is it like when one part of your body is not working correctly? How does this metaphor carry over into the church family?⁶

DAY THREE:

19. Rewrite this passage as a prayer, knowing that you are a precious and integral part of the living Body of Christ who can use your gift(s) for the health of the whole body.

20. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

NOTES FOR WEEK 11:

¹ “We are not to imagine that every Christian is an exact replica of every other, as if we had all been mass-produced in some celestial factory. On the contrary, the unity of the church, far from being boring monotonous, is exciting in its diversity” (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 155).

² “All spiritual gifts, then, are service-gifts. This is their purpose. They are not given for selfish but for unselfish use, namely for the service of other people” (Stott, 168).

³ Ephesians says Christ's gifts, Corinthians – gifts of the Holy Spirit, Romans – God the Father. Therefore, we should not separate the members of the trinity “together they are involved in every aspect of the church's wellbeing” (Stott, 159).

⁴ “Infants are defenseless, unable to protect themselves: in the spiritual life they are an easy prey for false teachers and others who would like to lead them astray from the true path. Like ships at sea without adequate means of steering, they are tossed about by the waves and carried this way and that according to the prevailing wind. Maturity brings with it the capacity to evaluate various forms of teaching, to accept what is true and reject what is false (Heb 5:14).” (Bruce, F.F., *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 351)

⁵ “The Lord Jesus is not only the **goal** of growth, he is the **source** of growth as well. From Him the whole body is involved in the growth process. The marvelous integration of the members of the Body is described by the phrase, 'joined and knit together'” (MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1937).

⁶ “We should be careful to distinguish between divine gifts and natural talents. No unsaved person, however talented, could be an evangelist, pastor, or teaching in the NT sense. Neither could a Christian, for that matter, unless he has received that particular gift. The gifts of the Spirit are supernatural. They enable a man to do what would be humanly impossible for him.” (MacDonald, 1935)

WEEK 12: OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW (EPH. 4:17-24)

DAY ONE: EPHESIANS 4:17-19

1. Have you ever learned information about health, nutrition or exercise which should have caused you to change to be healthier, but it didn't?

Conversely, have you learned something that you incorporated into your personal lifestyle to be healthier?

What was the difference between the two situations?

2. **Read Ephesians 4:17-19.** How does Paul describe the Gentiles intellectually? Why?^{1,2}
3. How has their intellectual state influenced their spiritual state?³
4. Compare the description of those without knowledge and truth in Ephesians to Romans 1:18-32. What similarities do you see?
5. Aerosmith said, "Walk this way." Paul, in contrast, said, "Stop walking this way." Describe the way Paul wishes his followers no longer to walk.^{4,5}

DAY THREE: DO MORE THAN NOT SIN... DO GOOD! (EPHESIANS 4:25-32)

16. Pray. **Read Ephesians 4:25-32.** Be honest before the Lord. Discuss at least two of the admonitions Paul gives in these verses that you need to clear out of your closet—or positive qualities that you need to put on permanently.^{7,8,9,10,11}

17. Rewrite this passage as a prayer of supplication asking for strength and direction to put off what is unbecoming and put on what is beautiful to the Lord.

18. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to “The Church Page” at the end of this study.

 NOTES FOR WEEK 12:

¹ This is not meant to imply that the reception and understanding of the gospel is purely intellectual. Preaching the gospel to our hearts is an act of God. We do have a role in making decisions and changing our lives according to our change of heart after hearing the gospel. This is what Paul is discussing here.

² “He thus refers to their empty minds, darkened understanding and inward ignorance, as a result of which they had become callous, licentious and insatiably unclean. But in contrast to them the believers has 'learned' Christ, 'heard' him, been 'taught' in him, all according to the 'truth' which is in Jesus. Over against the darkness and ignorance of the heathen Paul thus sets the truth of Christ which the Christians had learned. Scripture bears an unwavering testimony to the power of ignorance and error to corrupt, and the power of truth to liberate, ennoble and refine.” (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 176)

³ “This idea of the 'hardening of their hearts' is carried on in the statement that they have 'lost all moral sensitivity'—a classical term which means primarily that one's skin has become callous and no longer feels pain” (Bruce, F.F., *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 356).

⁴ “The readers are Gentile converts to the Christian faith. They were brought up in the pagan way of life; that must now be abandoned” (Bruce, 355).

⁵ “Seven terrible things characterized them. They were: aimless, blind, ungodly, shameless, sordid, indecent, and insatiable” (MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1937-1938).

⁶ “The 'old man' is the sum-total of their former practices, propensities, and attitudes; he is a prey to harmful desires which beguile people into sin and error. Corruption and destruction are consequently working themselves out in him: they must bid him a long and final farewell” (Bruce, 358).

⁷ “We are not to understand Paul 'so literally that we may take leave to be angry till sunset', for 'then might our wrath lengthen with the days, and men in Greenland, where days last above a quarter of the year, have plentiful scope of revenge’” (Stott, 186, quoting Armitage Robinson).

⁸ “Aristotle said, ‘Anybody can become angry – that is easy; but to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way – that is *not* easy’” (MacDonald, 1939).

⁹ “Instead of sponging on the community, as thieves do, he will start contributing to it. And none but Christ can transform a burglar into a benefactor!” (Stott, 188).

¹⁰ “The fact that [the Holy Spirit] can be grieved shows that He is a Person, not a mere influence. It also means that He loves us, because only a person who loves can be grieved” (MacDonald, 1940).

¹¹ “And so constantly in the teaching of Jesus, the free grace of the Father's forgiving love is the pattern for his children in their forgiveness of one another” (Bruce, 365).

WEEK 13: WALKING FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT, SPIRITUAL GAIT TRAINING (EPHESIANS 5:1-20)

DAY ONE: WALKING FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT (EPHESIANS 5:1-14)

1. Have you noticed anything different this week as compared to last week regarding the two admonitions you chose to clear out of your closet or chose to put on afresh? If so, how? If not, why not?
2. **Read Ephesians 5:1-14.** How are we to imitate God?¹
3. What does the phrase “a fragrant offering” mean to you?
4. According to verse 3-6, from what must believers abstain?
5. What reasons are given throughout this section for why we must abstain from sin and walk in love?
6. Why should such things “not even be named among you?” (See also verse 12)²
7. Pick two things that Paul calls believers to abstain from in these verses which are issues for you. Explain how they have played a negative role in your life.^{3,4}

8. Read I Corinthians 6:9-11. How does Paul provide hope to those struggling with immorality in these verses?

9. Fill in the blanks according to Ephesians 5:8: "At one time you were _____, but now you are _____."5

10. Read II Corinthians 6:14, I Thessalonians 5:5, and Philippians 2:15. What do these verses encourage or command us to do as children of the light?

11. Read the truths of verses 9-10. How can you grow toward these ideals?

DAY TWO:

12. Describe a situation when you would be in the dark and wish there were light.

Describe another situation when you would be in the dark and would not want to have light.

13. Read I John 1:5-10. Is there anything in your life which is currently in the darkness which would benefit from being exposed to a trusted friend? Be honest.

DAY THREE: SPIRITUAL GAIT TRAINING (EPHESIANS 5:15-20)

17. **Read Ephesians 5:15-20.** The ESV translates verse 15, “Look carefully then how you walk...” How is the metaphor of “walking” meaningful when discussing the Christian journey?⁷

18. One of Jonathan Edwards’ famous Resolutions reads: “Resolved: Never to lose one moment of time, but to improve it in the most profitable way I possibly can” (qtd. in Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 202). What in your life needs to change before you can say you make the best use of your time (NIV “the most of every opportunity”)? Why is this idea important?

19. What do drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit have in common? In what ways are they very different?⁹

20. The Greek grammar of “be filled with the Spirit” indicates that it is a command, an imperative. How does this change your understanding of that phrase?¹⁰

21. Are verses 19-21 ways to be filled with the Spirit, results of being filled with the Spirit, or both? Explain.

22. How can we “give thanks always and in everything?”

23. Rewrite this passage as a prayer to be filled in the Spirit and enabled to walk in constant thankfulness.¹¹

24. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

 NOTES FOR WEEK 13:

¹ “The readers, then, are urged to imitate their heavenly Father by showing the same large-hearted forgiveness to others as he has shown them; by this it will be evident that they are his children, reproducing the family likeness” (Bruce, F.F., *New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 367).

² “All God's gifts, including sex, are subjects for thanksgiving, rather than for joking. To joke about them is bound to degrade them; to thank God for them is the way to preserve their worth as the blessings of a loving Creator” (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 193).

³ “Men say immorality is a sickness; God calls it sin. Men condone it; God condemns it. Men say the answer is psychoanalysis; God says the answer is regeneration” (MacDonald, William, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1942).

⁴ “For those who fall into such sins through weakness, but afterwards repent in shame and humility, there is forgiveness. The immoral or impure person envisaged here is one who has given himself up without shame or penitence to this way of life” (Stott, 197).

⁵ “The whole paragraph plays on the rich symbolism of darkness and light, 'darkness' representing ignorance, error and evil, 'light' representing truth and righteousness... Notice that he [Paul] does not say they used to be *in* darkness, but now were *in* the light. That would have been true, as the New Testament writers say. But what Paul writes here is more striking still: they themselves were actually now 'light.' And this radical transformation had taken place *in the Lord*, by virtue of their union with him who claimed to be the light of the world.” (Stott, 199)

⁶ Many believe this is a quotation from an Easter or Baptismal hymn commonly sung in Paul's day. It is not a direct quotation from OT Scripture.

⁷ “For holiness is not a condition into which we drift. We are not passive spectators of a sanctification God works in us. On the contrary, we have purposefully to 'put away' from us all conduct that is incompatible with our new life in Christ, and to 'put on' a lifestyle compatible with it” (Stott, 193).

⁸ “Under the influence of the Holy Spirit we do not lose control; we gain it” (Stott, 204).

⁹ “If excessive alcohol dehumanizes, turning a human being into a beast, the fullness of the Spirit makes us more human, for he makes us like Christ” (Stott, 205).

¹⁰ “'Be Filled' is not a tentative proposal, but an authoritative command. We have no more liberty to avoid this responsibility than the many others which surround it in Ephesians. To be filled with the Spirit is obligatory, not optional” (Stott, 208-209).

¹¹ “Let no one say that doctrine does not matter! Good conduct arises out of good doctrine. It is only when we have grasped clearly who we are in Christ, that the desire will grow within us to live a life that is worthy of our calling and fitting to our character as God's new society” (Stott, 194).

WEEK 14: THE MYSTERY OF MARRIAGE (EPHESIANS 5:21-33)

DAY ONE:

1. What is the worst “horror story” you’ve ever heard about submission?
2. **Read Ephesians 5:21-33.** What does healthy mutual submission look like within a church?
3. Give the initials of a person or role in the church that you have difficulty submitting to.
4. What does healthy submission look like in a marriage? How can it be beneficial?
5. What are some of the arguments that people make against submission today?
6. Why is submission difficult?
7. Read I Corinthians 11:3. Draw the hierarchy of authority according to this passage.^{1,2}

15. How will this bride be presented to her husband? Who helped her get ready?⁴
16. When you look in the mirror, do you see a reflection of the bride the way she is described here?
Why or why not?
17. When you look at your church, do you see a reflection of the bride the way she is described here?
Why or why not?
18. Read Ezekiel 16:1-19. The title of this section in the ESV is “The Lord’s Faithless Bride.” Use it to answer the following questions:
- Who is the bride in this passage?
 - Who is the husband?
 - Describe the bride’s condition prior to meeting her husband.

 - What does the husband do for his beloved?
19. What overlap do you see between the Ezekiel and Ephesians passages?

20. What “mystery” did Paul discuss earlier in Ephesians? How does that mystery relate to the mystery of marriage?⁵

21. Answer one of the following questions:

- If you are married, how does your marriage reflect these requirements? How could your marriage grow to more purely reflect the truth of Christ and His bride?
- If you are single, what would an ideal marriage look like to you? What qualities are you looking for in a spouse? What traits are “deal breakers” in a potential spouse?

DAY THREE:

22. Rewrite this passage as a prayer to the Lover of your soul as His bride-to-be.

23. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

NOTES FOR WEEK 14:

¹ "Now the very notion of submission to authority is out of fashion today. It is totally at variance with contemporary attitudes of permissiveness and freedom. Almost nothing is calculated to arouse more angry protest than talk of 'subjection.' Ours is an age of liberation (not the least for women, children, and workers), and anything savoring of oppression is deeply resented and strongly resisted. How are Christians to react to this modern mood?" (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 215)

² "Two reasons are given, or at least implied, for the wife's submission to her husband. The first is drawn from creation and concerns the husband's 'headship' of his wife, while the second is drawn from redemption and concerns Christ's 'headship' of the church" (Stott, 220).

³ "What Paul stresses is not his authority over his wife, but his love for her. Rather, his authority is defined in terms of loving responsibility. To our minds the word 'authority' suggests power, dominion, and even oppression... But this is not at all the kind of 'headship' which the apostle is describing, whose model is Jesus Christ. Certainly 'headship' implies a degree of leadership and initiative, as when Christ came to woo and to win his bride. But more specifically it implies sacrifice, self-giving for the sake of the beloved, as when Christ gave himself for his bride. If 'headship' means 'power' in any sense, then it is power to care not to crush, power to serve not to dominate, power to facilitate self-fulfillment, not to frustrate or destroy it. And in all this the standard of the husband's love is to be the cross of Christ, on which he surrendered himself even to death in his selfless love for his bride." (Stott, 231-232)

⁴ "The bride does not make herself presentable; it is the bridegroom who labours to beautify her in order to present her to himself. His love and self-sacrifice for her, his cleansing and sanctifying of her, are all designed for her liberation and her perfection, when at last he presents her to himself in her full glory." (Stott, 229)

⁵ "We remember that Paul's 'Mystery' is that Jews and Greeks are reconciled and made one in the church. The relationship between husband and wife, therefore, symbolizes the mystery of unity in plurality and makes that mystery present within the community" (Johnson, Luke Timothy, *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*, 419).

WEEK 15: CHILDREN & PARENTS, MASTERS & SLAVES (EPHESIANS 6:1-9)**DAY ONE: CHILDREN AND PARENTS (EPHESIANS 6:1-4)**

1. A friend once recommended a book entitled, *Relationships: A Mess Worth Making*. Have you ever felt that a relationship wasn't worth the mess it created in your life? Has a messy relationship ever become one of your best relationships?
2. **Read Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:18-21** as a parallel passage to answer the following questions. What is the responsibility of children to their parents?
3. What is the promise given to obedient children from the 5th commandment?
4. Is there a limit to the obedience a child must give to his or her parents? If so, what?
5. How do our responsibilities to our parents change as we become adults?¹
6. What is a parent's responsibility to his or her children?

7. What does “the discipline (or training) and instruction of the Lord” look like?²

8. Read Hebrews 12:5-11. Why are we disciplined?

9. What is one time that you received discipline which was fair and appropriate to the offense committed? Did the discipline achieve its desired effect?

DAY TWO: MASTERS AND SLAVES (EPHESIANS 6:5-9)

10. **Read Ephesians 6:5-9.** What more modern relationship is somewhat comparable to slave/master?

11. **Read Colossians 3:22-4:1** along side the Ephesians passage to answer the following questions.
What is a slave's responsibility to his or her master?

12. What is a master's responsibility to a slave?

13. What warning is given to masters in verse 9?

14. **Read Philemon** in its entirety and use it to answer the following questions.

- What does this book have to do with master/slave relationships?

- Focusing specifically on verses 15-19, how does Paul portray Onesimus' status?

- Some people criticize the Bible because they say it condones slavery. How could you use the Letter of Philemon to respond?

15. How do you work for your employer as working for the Lord? How do you fall short of this goal?

16. Which of these relationships (spouse, parent, children, or employee) is most God-honoring in your life today? Explain.

17. What aspect of these relationships is your greatest struggle? Why?

DAY THREE:

18. Rewrite this passage as a prayer of one who faithfully serves her Master in Heaven.

19. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

 NOTES FOR WEEK 15:

¹ "For now all our relationships are transformed precisely because they are *in the Lord*. They are purged of ruinous self-centeredness, and suffused instead with Christ's love and peace. Even obedience to parents is changed. It is no longer a grudging acquiescence in parental authority. Christian children learn to obey with gladness, 'for this pleases the Lord.' They remember the loving submission which Jesus himself gave as a boy to his parents. Now this same Jesus is their Lord and Saviour, and the creator of the new order, so they are anxious to do what pleases him." (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 244)

² "To the one extreme we need to say: 'The opposite of wrong discipline is not the absence of discipline, but right discipline, true discipline.' To the other extreme we need to say: 'The opposite of no discipline at all is not cruelty, it is balanced discipline, it is controlled discipline'" (Stott, 248).

WEEK 16: STRENGTH AND ARMOR FOR THE WAR (EPHESIANS 6:10-20)

DAY ONE:

1. Have you ever been keenly aware that you were playing a small, but important role in an unseen, cosmic battle? Explain.
2. **Read Ephesians 6:10-20.** Why are we called to put on the armor of God in verses 11 and 13?
3. Who or what are our enemies?
4. Read II Corinthians 10:3-6. How does Paul describe the weapons of our warfare?
5. Read I Peter 5:8-9. How is the devil described?¹
6. Paul commands us two times to “put on the full armor of God.” Why is this important?

7. Use the picture of the warrior provided to label the pieces of armor and their spiritual significance mentioned in verses 14-20.²



8. Do you see a significant connection between any of the pieces of armor and its spiritual significance? If so, what?^{3,4}
9. What is our responsibility in this battle?⁵
10. Do you think there is a method to the order of pieces of armor listed by Paul? If so, what might it be?
11. Read Isaiah 52:7. Why are our feet important?

12. One of the pieces of armor or weaponry has a unique purpose. What is it and why does it stand out?⁶

DAY TWO:

13. What would a soldier look like who has forgotten a piece of armor?
14. What piece of armor, based on its meaning, do you typically “put on first”? Why?
15. Which piece of armor are you most likely to “forget”? Why?
16. How does this affect your ability to fight?
17. Do you view yourself as a warrior for God's kingdom? Why or why not?
18. John Piper, in his book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, wrote “We cannot know what prayer is for until we know that life is war.” What are your thoughts?^{7,8}

19. In what ways do you need to redirect your prayer or your budget to reflect the fact that you are in a wartime situation?

20. What does Paul request prayer for in verses 19-20?

21. Where is Paul at the writing of this letter?

22. What does this tell you about Paul?

23. Would you ask for similar prayer requests if you were Paul? Why or why not?⁹

DAY THREE:

24. Rewrite this section as an eager warrior for the Lord requesting orders in the ongoing fight against this present darkness.

25. Add something that you learned about the church from this week's lesson to "The Church Page" at the end of this study.

NOTES FOR WEEK 16:

¹ "The abrupt transition from the 'peaceful homes and healthful days' of the previous paragraphs to the hideous malice of devilish plots in this section causes us a painful shock, but an essential one. We all wish we could spend our lives in undisturbed tranquility, among our loved-ones at home and in the fellowship of God's people. But the way of the escapist has been effectively blocked. Christians have to face the prospect of conflict with God's enemy and theirs." (Stott, John R. W., *The Message of Ephesians*, 262)

² Knight illustration by Laura Armstrong.

³ "A thorough knowledge of the enemy and a healthy respect for his prowess are a necessary preliminary to victory in war. Similarly, if we underestimate our spiritual enemy, we shall see no need for God's armour, we shall go out to the battle unarmed, with no weapons but our own puny strength, and we shall be quickly and ignominiously defeated." (Stott, 263)

⁴ "The expression the 'whole armour of God' emphasizes the divineness, not the completeness of the outfit" (Stott, 275).

⁵ The armor comes from God. "Yet it is our responsibility to take it up, to put it on and to use it confidently against the powers of evil" (Stott, 283).

⁶ Five of six are defensive weapons. The only offensive weapon is the sword.

⁷ "Life is war. That's not all it is. But it is always that. Our weakness in prayer is owing largely to our neglect of this truth. Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den. God has given us prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie so that we can call headquarters for everything we need as the kingdom of Christ advances in the world. Prayer gives us the significance of front line forces and gives God the glory of a limitless Provider." (Piper, John, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 45)

⁸ "In wartime, we are on the alert. We are armed. We are vigilant. In wartime, we spend our money differently—there is austerity, not for its own sake but because there are more strategic ways to spend money than on new tires at home. The war effort touches everybody. We all cut back." (Piper, 47)

⁹ "What concerns Paul most, however, is not that his wrist may be unchained, but that his mouth may be opened in testimony; not that he may be set free, but that the gospel may be spread freely and without hindrance" (Stott, 287).

WEEK 17: FAREWELL & FINAL COMMENDATIONS (EPH. 6:21-24), WRAP-UP

DAY ONE: FAREWELL AND FINAL COMMENDATIONS (EPHESIANS 6:21-24)

1. **Read Ephesians 6:21-24.** Why is Tychicus sent to the Ephesians?
2. What does this indicate about the relationship of Paul to his readers?
3. Who is Tychicus and how did he serve Paul? Read Colossians 4:7-9, II Timothy 4:12, and Titus 3:12 to learn more about him.
4. Who is your Tychicus? Who serves alongside you, encourages you, and ministers to you when you are in need?
5. Are you a Tychicus to a brother or sister in the Lord? If so, who and how do you serve them? If not, how can you become one?
6. What are the final wishes of Paul to his readers?
7. How do 'peace' and 'grace' summarize the entire message of Ephesians?

8. What would it be like to love Jesus with a love incorruptible (NIV “undying love”)?

9. Rewrite this passage giving thanks to the Lord who has provided you with “Tychicuses” or fellow workers to help you on your journey.

DAY TWO: WRAP-UP

10. How has God shown the beauty of His new society, His church, through the book of Ephesians?

11. Recall the associations made about the church from the first week of this study. Then take a moment to look over what you've written about the church each week on The Church Page. How has your vision of the church (or organized religion) changed from this study?

12. What is the most profound thing you have learned from this study?

13. What was your favorite part of this Bible study? Your least favorite part?
14. How would you adjust this study for future use?
15. If someone asked you to summarize Ephesians in a sentence or two, what would you say?
16. Write one final prayer, using a favorite passage or “free form,” thanking God for all that He has showed you throughout your diligence in completing this study.

*Once again thank you so much for taking this journey with us.
I hope that you learned much about mystery, unity, doxology... and armor. And that, through the pages of
Ephesians, you were shown a God who is more than you could ask or think!
—Kelly*

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