

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION ONE

PASSAGE - Ephesians 1:1-14

MAIN IDEA: God has done all that he has done for us in Christ so that we might praise his glorious grace.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the letter's greeting, Paul identifies himself as an "**apostle**" who is writing to the "**saints**".
 - Why does Paul identify himself this way?
 - What is the relevance of him being an apostle?
 - Who are the saints?
 - What is the common thread in the identity of an apostle and a saint?
2. Paul uses a common greeting of "**Grace to you and peace...**"
 - What is the significance of the order in which he uses the terms grace and peace?
 - How does this allude to the Old Testament?
3. Verse 3 through 14 are one single sentence in the Greek.
 - What are some words or phrases that stand out to you in this section? Highlight them.
 - What are some of the words that you see repeated? Circle them.
 - Why are they significant?
 - What are some themes you see in this section? Jot them down.
4. There are a lot of pronouns in this section of text. Take time to understand who "**he**", "**his**", and "**him**" is referring to each time it is used.
 - How do we see the Triune God working throughout this section?
5. What attributes of God are found in this set of verses? List them as they are discovered.
 - What does this teach us about God?
6. Paul uses the words "**chose**", "**predestined**", and "**adopted**" in this section. Define each of those words.
 - What is your understanding of the meaning Paul is getting at with these words?
 - Why is this such incredibly good news?^A

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7. Paul says we were chosen **“that we should be holy and blameless before him.”** Define holy and blameless.
 - Reference Leviticus 10:10.
 - Why does Paul include both **“holy”** and **“blameless”** in this verse?

8. Paul references the concept of **“redemption”** in verse 7. Define **“redemption”**.
 - Who needs redeeming?
 - What was the cost of our redemption?
 - For what reason were we redeemed?
 - Read Exodus 13:11-16. What parallels can you make?

9. What does Paul mean when he writes **“to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth”** in verse 10?

10. In verse 11, an inheritance is obtained. Define **“inheritance”**.
 - What is the inheritance that Paul writes about?

11. In verses 12 and 13, Paul refers to **“we”** and **“you also”**.
 - Who are these two groups?
 - In verse 13, there are three actions that take place. Name each of them.

12. Paul says after hearing and believing, we are **“sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance,”** or down payment. Reflect on who makes this down payment.
 - How is this encouraging?
 - How should we respond to this?

13. What does this entire section of text (verses 1-14) teach us about God?

14. In light of who God is, what does that teach us about who we are/are not?

^A For further study on our adoption read Romans 8:14-17 and Hebrews 12:4-13.

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION TWO

PASSAGE - Ephesians 1:15-23

MAIN IDEA: Hope, joy, and resurrection power are available for all of God's children who will ask him for it.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Ephesians 1:15-19.
 - What phrases stick out to you?
 - Who and what is Paul praying for here?
 - How should this affect the way we pray?
 - What does this teach us about prayer?
2. Paul states that he does not cease to give thanks for the Ephesians in his prayers.
 - What reason does he cite as his cause for thanksgiving?
 - Read John 13:34-35 and 1 John 2:7-11.
 - In light of this, how should we live in order to be a living testimony to the gospel of Christ?
3. Notice the Trinity referenced by Paul in verse 17.
 - Make markings to distinguish our three-in-one God.
 - Who is the Spirit of wisdom that Paul is asking the Father of glory to grant us?
 - Read Isaiah 11: 1-2 and 1 Corinthians 2:12-16.
 - Why is it important for us to be granted this Spirit in terms of the rest of Paul's prayer?
4. In verse 18, Paul uses the phrase "**having the eyes of your hearts enlightened**".
 - Read Acts 26:15-19 and Revelation 3:17-18.
 - How do these verses help us understand what this phrase refers to?
 - Where have we read of people "seeing but not seeing"? Read Isaiah 6:8-10 and Luke 8:9-10.
5. In verses 18-19, Paul lists three results of "**having the eyes of your hearts enlightened**".
 - Number them in your text.
 - What is the hope to which we have been called? Look ahead at Ephesians 2:5-7.
 - What are some other places in the Bible that describe our hope in Him?
 - Consider a word search using the Blue Letter Bible (BLB) app
6. Verse 18 speaks of an inheritance. Compare this with verses 11 and 14 (see ESV footnote for verse 14)
 - Read Deuteronomy 32:8-9.
 - Who is inheriting what?

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7. Read Ephesians 1:19-23 in a few different translations (*consider ESV, NIV, and NLT*).
 - Underline phrases that stick out to you.
 - What are a couple of themes being addressed in these verses?
 - How does reading multiple translations help enhance your understanding?

8. Referring to God, what example does Paul give when describing the **“immeasurable greatness of His power”**?
 - In Romans 8:11, we are told this power lives in us. How should we live in light of this truth?

9. In verse 22, Paul references Psalm 8 (**“he put all things under his feet”**).
 - Read the entire psalm. Who is David describing?
 - Why would Paul cite this psalm in his description of Christ?
 - How does this connection help you appreciate the Bible as one continuous story?

10. Paul reminds us that Jesus was not only resurrected, but also exalted. In His exalted state, Jesus is given as head^B over the church, which is described as His body.
 - Define the word **“body”**.
 - Read Colossians 1:17-18 & 1:24-26, Romans 12:4-5, and 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.
 - What does this mean and why is this incredibly good news?

11. Read verse 23 in a few translations.
 - What is meant by the phrase **“fills all in all”**?
 - Read the following - Exodus 40:34-35, 1 Kings 8:10-11 & 27, John 1:16, and Colossians 1:18-20 & 3:11
 - How do these cross-references expand your understanding of **“the fullness of him who fills all in all”**?

12. Jump back to Acts 19:13-20.
 - What were many Ephesians involved in before they came to know Jesus Christ?
 - Consider Paul’s purpose for writing verses 19-23 to the Ephesians.

13. Looking back over Paul’s prayer as a whole, what is he ultimately praying for?
 - What can we do to seek out this knowledge of God and understand the hope, rich inheritance, and power available to us?

^A For continued study read John 9 and Hebrews 6:1-6 & 10:32-34

^B For additional references to Christ’s headship read Philippians 2:9-11 and Colossians 1:18-20 & 2:9-10.

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION THREE

PASSAGE - Ephesians 2:1-10

MAIN IDEA: When we were dead in our sins, God made us alive and saved us completely by grace so that we would walk in the good works he has prepared for us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Highlight or underline any repeated words or phrases.
 - How is God revealing His character? Consider listing some attributes of His found in this passage.
 - What connections can you make between this section of the letter and what we read in Chapter 1 (specifically 1:20-23)?
2. Paul begins this section of his letter with "**And you were dead...**"
 - How does this statement hit you when you first read it?
 - What can a physically dead person do? What hope does a dead person have?^A
 - Read the following stories – What does this tell us about ourselves if left to ourselves? What will happen to us if God does not intervene?
 - The Shunammite woman's son - 2 Kings 4:19-22, 32-37
 - Jairus' daughter - Mark 5:22, 35-42
 - Lazarus - John 11:14, 38-44
3. Look specifically at verses 1-3.
 - What are these "**trespasses and sins**" that Paul is referring to?
 - Consider reading Galatians 5:19-21 and Titus 3:3.
 - What was their/our former reality as depicted by Paul?
 - Do any of these resonate with you?
4. Continue reading through verse 6.
 - What is their/our present reality?
 - Read Romans 5:6-8 and Colossians 2:13.
 - How did this change happen? Who initiated it?
5. Consider verses 7-10. Define the word "**mercy**".
 - Reference Lamentations 3:22-23 and Psalm 51:1-2.
 - According to these passages, what is the relationship between God's love and His mercy?
 - What motivates God's mercy?
 - Why is that important to hear after reading Ephesians 2:1-3?

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

6. Looking at verses 4-7, distill the action God took and His reason behind it.

7. Notice how many times “**grace**” appears and the phrase it is included in. Define the word “**grace**”.
 - Read Titus 3:4-7, 2 Corinthians 3:5, and 2 Timothy 1:9.
 - How has your understanding of grace expanded?
 - Reference back to Abraham. Read Romans 4.
 - What are the roles of grace and faith in our salvation? What is the source of both?
 - Consider reading Hebrews 12:2.

8. Look back over verses 1-10.
 - How has our “**walk**” changed?
 - Who should receive the credit for that change?

9. How does understanding our former and present realities help us live lovingly in a fallen world?^B

10. What has Paul’s letter up to this point (1:1-2:10) taught us about God? About ourselves? How should we respond?

^A For continued study read Ezekiel 37:1-14.

^B For continued study read 1 Peter 1.

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION FOUR

PASSAGE - Ephesians 2:11-22

MAIN IDEA: Jesus lived, died, and resurrected to create a new humanity in himself; and his life, death, and resurrection restores and reconciles us not just to God but to each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Consider this basic definition of “**gentile**”:
a person who is not ethnically Jewish (descendant of Israel; a biological descendant of the 12 tribes)
2. Consider annotating verses 11-22:
 - Underline words/phrases that refer to separation or division.
 - Circle words/phrases that refer to unity or bringing together.
3. Notice the pronouns in the text (you, he, us, our).
 - What can be determined based on how the pronouns transition?
4. Paul begins verse 11 with “**Therefore**, ...”.
 - Why do you think this passage starts off with the word “therefore”?
 - How does this section of text relate to verses 1-10 of this chapter?
 - Do you notice a pattern?
 - How is it different?
5. Read verses 11 and 12.
 - What is Paul having the Gentiles remember?
 - What is said to have made the change in verse 13?
 - How does this relate to verse 8?
6. “**Circumcision**” and “**covenant promises**” were very important to the Jews.
 - What significance did circumcision hold for them? Read Genesis 17:9-14 and Acts 15:1.
 - Read some of the covenant promises: 2 Samuel 7:8-17 and Jeremiah 31:31-35.
 - In light of Ephesians 2:13, read Romans 2:25-29, and Colossians 2:6-14.
 - Consider the significance of this for the saints in Ephesus.
 - What can we learn here?

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7. In regards to the **“wall of hostility”** Paul references, consider this brief background:
During King Herod’s reign in Jerusalem, the temple was renovated and expanded. There was a 4-5 foot high wall added between the Court of the Gentiles (outer court) and the Court of Women (part of the inner court). On this wall appeared inscriptions to Gentiles warning them to go no deeper into the temple precincts. If they did, death would inevitably follow. This wall divided Gentiles, who could not go further, from Jews, who were able to go further into the temple court. This “wall of hostility” could also be the law, which became a badge of honor for many of the Jewish people during this time and something else that set them apart from the Gentiles.
- Read Acts 21:27-29.
 - Is this barrier literal, figurative, or both?
 - Figuratively speaking, how do we rebuild this wall that Jesus tore down?
8. Paul says Christ abolished the law.
- Read Matthew 5:17-21. How do we reconcile these verses?
 - How does 2 Corinthians 3:11 help us with this concept?
9. Through the cross, Jesus put hostility between Jew and Gentile to death.
- In doing this, were the Gentiles brought up to the level of the Jews?
 - Read Galatians 3:28 and Colosians 3:11.
 - How does this fit with our typical expectations? How is this unexpected?
 - How does this speak to our experience today? How do we practically live out this reality?
10. Notice the Trinitarian language throughout this text.
- Make markings to distinguish the three persons of the Triune God in the text.
 - What are the roles we see each person of the Trinity play? How does seeing this lead us to deeper worship of the Triune God?
11. Paul writes that Christ **“preached peace to those who were far off and to those who are near”**.
- What does Paul mean by this?
 - What role do we play in the preaching of this message of peace?
12. Read verses 19-22. What is our new position in Christ?
- What do you notice about the language used to describe what Christians are now part of?
 - What is a cornerstone? Read Job 38:5-6, Psalm 118:22-23, and Isaiah 28:16.
 - What significance did the temple hold for the Jews? Read Exodus 25:8 & 40:34-38 and 1 Kings 8:12-30.
 - What connection did the Gentiles in Ephesus have to temples? Read Acts 19:24-27.
 - What do verses 21 & 22 mean for the Church?

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

13. Look back at the entirety of chapter 2.
- What are the common themes and messages?
 - How should we respond to this?
 - How does this cause us to worship God?

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION FIVE

PASSAGE - Ephesians 3:1-13

MAIN IDEA: God makes his wisdom, glory, and power known through the church, which means we should give our lives to building up the church and bringing others into the church.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. This chapter starts with "**For this reason...**". What is Paul referring to here?
2. Why does Paul describe himself as "**a prisoner of Christ Jesus**"?
 - What other ways does Paul describe himself in this section of text?
 - What is common about these titles?
3. Notice in verse 2 Paul references the "**stewardship of God's grace**" (ESV translation).
 - What is the role of a steward?
 - Read verses 1 & 2 in other translations. What other words are used in place of **stewardship**?
 - How does this enhance your understanding?
 - What does it mean to be a steward of God's grace?
 - What does Paul say is the "grace that was given to him"?
 - What are some examples of grace that God has given us?
4. Read Ephesians 3:4-5.
 - What was known of the promise of the coming Messiah before Jesus was incarnate?
 - Take a look at these verses:
 - Genesis 3:15 & 22:15-18
 - 2 Samuel 7:12-16
 - Isaiah 11:1-10
 - Ezekiel 34:20-24
5. Now read verse 6 and consider the main theme of this section of text.
 - What is the **mystery** that is referred to in this passage?
 - How was it revealed? Look at Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 1:26-27 & 3:11 for more support.
 - What does it mean that the Gentiles are...
 - Fellow heirs?
 - Members of the same body?
 - Partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus?
 - Have the promises of God changed?

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

6. Paul describes himself as “**the least of all the saints**”, seeming to have been humbled by his understanding of the gift of God’s grace.
 - Read 1 Timothy 1:12-16 and 1 Corinthians 15:9-11.
 - How does this contrast with our cultural ideal of a self-made person and rugged individualism?

7. Read over verses 8 through 10.
 - After reading these verses in other translations, how does Paul describe the riches of Christ?
 - Look back over the previous chapters for similar phrases about “**riches**”.
 - Do we hold in high regard the position of the Church to tell the world of such riches and wisdom?
 - Although the Church speaks God’s wisdom to men, who else does it testify to?

8. Paul says we have “**boldness and access**” in Jesus Christ and through our faith in Him.
 - How do we utilize this access?
 - How do we approach boldly without being arrogant?
 - Do we see Paul giving us an example of bold prayer?

9. Paul bookends this section talking about being a **prisoner** and the **suffering** he is experiencing..
 - Take a moment to read Acts 9:15-16 and 2 Corinthians 11:24-33.
 - How is Paul responding to his suffering?
 - Reference 2 Timothy 3:12, 1 Peter 5:8-10, and 1 John 3:13.
 - As Christians, how should we react and respond to suffering in our own lives?

10. Looking back over this entire section, how do we see God’s power and sovereignty on display in this text? Notice the work of the Trinity.

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

SESSION SIX

PASSAGE - Ephesians 3:14-21

MAIN IDEA: The more we understand and experience God's great love for us in the gospel, the more we will pray.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How does this section of text relate to the beginning of chapter 3?
2. Paul tells us that "**every family in heaven and on Earth is named**" from the Father.
 - o How does this impact how we look at others?
 - o Does it change our view on missions?
 - o Who are the families in heaven?
3. Read over verse 16.
 - o Why does Paul start his prayer asking that they be strengthened by the Spirit?
 - o What is our inner being?
 - o Look at 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Consider the importance of strengthening our inner man.
 - o Who is able to strengthen our inner being?
 - o Do we see any connection with what Jesus teaches his disciples in John 15:4-9?
4. Consider verses 17-19 and the previously mentioned passage in John.
 - o What does it mean to be rooted and grounded in love?
 - o How does that help Christians understand the love of Christ?
 - o Why is it important that they know the love of Christ? Read 1 John 4:19.
 - o As we more fully understand the Gospel and Christ's love, how are we changed? How do we respond to God? To one another?
 - o Why do we need the Spirit to strengthen us in order to have Christ dwell within us?
 - o If Christ dwells in us through faith, where does that faith come from? Consider looking at Ephesians 2:8.
 - o What are some of the ways that Paul describes the strength of the Spirit aiding Christians?
5. In verse 19, Paul writes about "**surpassing knowledge**" and "**fullness**".
 - o How do we know something that surpasses knowledge?
 - o How are we filled with fullness?
 - o Who does this work?
 - o How does this relate to Ephesians 1:22-23 and Colossians 2:9-10?

EPHESIANS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

6. What is the “**power that works within us**” referenced in verse 20?
 - Cross-reference with Philippians 2:13 and Ephesians 1:19-20.

7. What are ways that God is glorified in the Church?

8. Look back over this portion of scripture.
 - How can we use Paul’s model of prayers in our own lives?
 - Do we often recognize the importance of reflection and remembrance?
 - Do we call on God to do these types of things for ourselves and others?

9. What have we seen the Spirit do for us so far throughout this half of Paul’s letter?

10. How can living in community deepen our understanding and appreciation of God’s love?