Ephesians 1:1–14

Date: 9/06/2023 **Preparation**

- Background of Paul: Acts 26:2–23; Gal 1:11–2:10; Philippians 3:1–21
- Background of Ephesus: Acts 18:18–19:41; 20:13–38

Key Words

- *blessed* (v3): praise, commend. It refers to God's kindness to us as well as our praise and thanksgiving to Him
- *He chose us* (v4): God's pre-temporal, sovereign act of election for salvation (Rom 8:29; 9:11; 1 Thess 1:3–4; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10)
- predestined (v5): God's perfect plan for the destiny of His people that conforms with His love and grace and with human beings' responsibility to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior
- *adoption as sons* (v5): the spiritual act whereby God brings a regenerated believer into His own family (see also John 1:12)
- redemption (v7): buy back, ransom. Used in a salvation context, it refers to Christ's death on the cross that paid the price required to purchase the elect from the slave market of sin
- dispensation of the fullness of the times (v10): God's administration of events and history to accomplish His plan
- sealed with the Holy Spirit (v13): The spiritual act in which the Spirit of God, at the time of conversion, indwells a new believer and secures and preserves his or her salvation

Discussion Questions

- General Questions
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Questions to be tailored for age-appropriateness
 - What does this passage say that God has done?
 - Noting that this passage is full of statements, how would the message of the letter to the Ephesians change if Paul began with commands?
 - For Children: Paul starts by telling us what God has done. Why doesn't Paul start by telling us to obey God?
 - What does Paul mean when he says believers are "in Christ" and what difference does that make in our lives?
 - For Children: If I go to the swimming pool with my swim suit and my towel, what do you think I plan to do there? Where would I swim? Why do we say that I will swim "in the pool?"
 - Paul says believers are "in Christ," just like we swim "in the pool," so what things do we do when we are "in Christ?"

Memorization Passage: Ephesians 1:3–6

Ephesians 1:15–23

Date: 9/13/2023 **Key Words:**

- love for all the saints (v15): the hallmark of God's people (1 John 4:8, 20–21)
- do not cease (v16): see also 1 Thess 5:17
- *spirit of wisdom and revelation* (v17): a disposition of godly knowledge and insight that is possible only for a redeemed, sanctified mind
- *enlightened* (v18): illumined or given light, a reference to the Holy Spirit's ministry of continually illuminating spiritual truth for the child of God
- exceeding greatness of His power (v19): The same awesome power that raised Christ from the dead and exalted him into heaven is made available to every believer in Christ
- principality and power and might and dominion (v21): terms used frequently in Jewish writings to designate the various ranks of angelic powers

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific
 - What characteristics of the Ephesians prompted Paul to be thankful for them? Why highlight these characteristics?
 - For children: How do we believe in Jesus? In what ways can we love other believers?
 - How does this passage show us that we can pray for other believers?
 - A biblical principle is "right thinking leads to right living." How does this passage support that principle?
 - For children: Strength illustration. Where does a Christian's strength come from? *God.* How do we use God's strength? *With our minds*. For what do we use God's strength? *For living a life that pleases Him.*
 - How does Christ's exaltation over all things equip believers to live God-pleasing lives?
 - For children: Who is the "boss" of the universe? What should we believe about our boss? How can we obey our boss?

Memorization Passage: Eph 1:15–23

Ephesians 2:1–10

Date: 09/20/2023 **Key Words**

- *dead in trespasses and sins* (v1): total depravity and lostness resulting in an utter inability to know or please God
- course of this world (v2): a reference to the ungodly world structure, that system of entities and mind-sets that sets itself up against God and His rule
- children of wrath (v3): the rebellious unregenerates who stand condemned before God
- *rich in mercy* (v4): God lavishes compassion and pity on those He loves, despite their abject sinfulness
- *made us alive* (v5): a reference to the supernatural act of regeneration, but also including the sustaining and preserving of life
- grace (v5, 8): the unilateral power of God at work to accomplish His promises for you despite what you deserve
- workmanship (v10): can have the connotation of a work of art

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific
 - What does this passage say the obstacles are for a sinner to be saved?
 - For children: Lazarus illustration (<u>John 11:14–15</u>, <u>21–27</u>, <u>33–44</u>). How are we like Lazarus? *Spiritually dead*.
 - Rich Young Ruler illustration (Matt 19:16–26). How are we like the Rich Young Ruler? We love our sin and don't want God without our sin.
 - How does someone make it to heaven?
 - For children: Jesus's teaching (John 6:37–44). By God's grace through faith.
 - Abraham illustration (Gen 15:1–6). By God's grace through faith.
 - For what does God save us? (v7, 10)
 - For children: What is your favorite thing to play with outside? What if you only thought about playing with that, but never did? Faith needs to be put to work in our lives (James 2:14–24).

Memorization Passage: Ephesians 2:1–10

Ephesians 2:11–22

Date: 9/27/2023 Background: <u>Acts 10</u>

Key Words

- *Gentiles* (2:11): The Greek word is "ethnos," from which we get the English term "ethnic," it also signifies the non-Jewish world
- the middle wall of separation/dividing wall of partition (2:14): an allusion to a wall in the Jewish temple that separated the court of the Gentiles from the areas accessible only to the Jews
- one new man (2:15): The Greek word translated "new" refers to something utterly unlike anything before it. The idea is that all who come to Christ comprise a new entity in which all labels, except the label "Christ," are obsolete. The believer is different in kind and quality. Spiritually, a new person is neither Jew nor Gentile but Christian only
- reconcile (2:16): to change or exchange; to turn from hostility to friendship
- putting to death the enmity (2:16): the death of Christ killed the hostility between a holy God and sinful people
- members of the household of God (2:19): God's family
- *a dwelling place of God in the Spirit* (2:22): in contrast to Old Testament times when God's presence was temporarily localized in the Temple, now God takes up residence permanently in His Body, the Church

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific
 - What formerly separated Gentiles from Jews?
 - For children: dividing wall of the law illustration, one side gets great gifts, one side gets ok gifts
 - This passage is about the reconciliation of former enemies. How have you experienced reconciliation through the gospel in your life?
 - For children: Playroom conflict illustration. Children take things from one another. Talk about hurt feelings and unfairness. Offer a big prize if the children reconcile with each other and help them with what is involved.

Memorization Passage: Eph 2:11–16

Ephesians 3:1–13

Date: 10/04/2023 **Key Words**

- *mystery* (3:4): hidden, unknown, inaccessible apart from a special revelation from God to man
- partakers of his promise (3:6): the Gentiles share in the grace of God; this word was used in extra-biblical Greek to describe "joint possessors" of a house
- boldness and access (3:12): Faith in an all-sufficient Savior makes us acceptable to God and is the basis of our access into the presence of God
- *tribulations* (3:13): the frequent pressures and troubles that Paul encountered as he carried out his apostolic task (see 2 Cor 11:22–29)

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific
 - What mystery was revealed to Paul?
 - For children: destruction of dividing wall illustration and union of the two sides, with both getting great gifts
 - What is the focal point of God's plan in this age and how does that affect your life? (See Eph 3:10)
 - For children: What is your favorite thing in the whole world? What is God's favorite thing in the whole world? What does that mean for us?

Memorization Passage: Eph 3:1–13

Ephesians 3:14–21

Date: 10/11/2023 **Key Words**

- Father (v14): Our awesome Creator is simultaneously a tender, loving, concerned, compassionate divine Parent who welcomes and invites His children to come to Him
- *according to the riches of His glory* (v16): The limitless riches of God's power are available for the spiritual welfare of every believer
- strengthened (v16): fortified, braced, invigorated
- inner man (v16): the real person as opposed to merely the outer physical appearance
- dwell (v17): to live in, to settle down in, to take up residence
- be filled (v19): the Greek word means to make full and speaks of total dominance of the self by God
- exceedingly abundantly (v20): beyond all measure; the highest comparison imaginable

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific
 - Paul prays that the Ephesians would have a stronger spiritual life. If we consider that the entire letter is part of the answer to that prayer, then what areas of life are included in this prayer? In what ways is this different from how we pray for one another? What does this teach us about prayer requests? See also Col 1:9–14; Phil 1:9–11.
 - For children: Physical strength vs. spiritual strength illustration. E.g., Push-ups vs. knowledge; planks vs. love; crab walks vs. faith
 - Paul prays that Christ would "dwell in our hearts through faith" (v17). Why is this word choice significant for our daily living? How does this affect our choices in life?
 - For children: Furnishing a house so that it becomes a home illustration. What things can we put in our lives so that we become a home for Jesus?

Memorization Passage: Ephesians 3:14–21

Ephesians 4:1–16

Date: 10/18/2023 **Key Words**

- therefore (v1): a transitional word that indicates Paul's shift from discussing doctrine to duty
- beseech/exhort (v1): to call to one's side, with the intention of needing help; this word connotes strong feeling or desire and suggests pleading or begging
- *lowliness* (v2): a Greek word unique to the New Testament that describes the humble spirit that should mark all believers
- gentleness (v2): literally "meekness," strength under control, a mild spirit
- longsuffering (v2): literally "long-tempered," that is, patience
- *unity of the Spirit* (v3): the Spirit-given oneness of all true believers
- baptism (v5): probably a reference to water baptism, post salvation
- equipping of the saints (v12): the act of restoring, making fit or complete; in this context, leading Christians from sin to obedience
- *no longer be children* (v14): God's expectation that spiritually immature believers should grow up in their understanding and behavior
- every wind of doctrine (v14): a reference to the beguiling spiritual error promulgated by false teachers

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific
 - What does "walk worthy of the calling" mean and refer to in the letter? Why does Paul include that here and not earlier?
 - For children: The "worthy walk" balance beam illustration. "Worthy" is akin to "suitable" or "appropriate," therefore, what kinds of things are suitable and unsuitable for a believer's life (see Eph 4:17–6:20)?
 - This passage can be organized by the terms "unity" and "diversity." In what ways is the church to be unified? In what ways is the church to be diverse? What is the goal of the diversity?
 - For children: Baking a cake illustration. What ingredients do we need to bake a cake? What happens if we leave some out? What happens if we only use one ingredient?

Memorization Passage: Ephesians 4:1–6

Ephesians 4:17–32

Date: 10/25/2023 **Key Words**

- walk (v17): to conduct oneself in daily living
- being past feeling (v19): a reference to the moral dullness or insensitivity that marks unbelievers as they ignore God and their consciences
- put off (v22): to strip away as in taking off old dirty clothes; a reference to once and for all repentance from sin at salvation
- the old man (v22): the worn out, useless, and unconverted sinful nature
- be renewed (v23): Used only here in the New Testament, this phrase expresses that at salvation, God redeems a person's mind and gives him or her a completely new spiritual and moral capability
- *the new man* (v24): a new creation, not a renovation of what was, but an entirely new (in species or character) entity
- corrupt (v29): foul, putrid, rotten, worthless, disgusting
- edification (v29): the act of being helpful, constructive, or uplifting
- *grieve the Holy Spirit* (v30): we cause sorrow to the Holy Spirit of *truth* when we act in unholy ways and lie to one another

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific
 - Noting that Paul focuses on the mindset and thinking of Gentile unbelievers in vv17–18, which produces their lifestyle in v19, how does this inform and shape your approach to evangelistic opportunities?
 - For children: Unbeliever's mind vs. believer's mind illustration. Use different hard and unbendable items (like rocks or wood) to try to shape them around a Bible. This illustrates how an unbelieving mind can't conform to the Bible because it doesn't want to. Use a soft item (like clay or play-do) to shape it around a Bible. This illustrates how believers are able to conform their thinking and living to the Bible because of what Jesus has done.
 - What does Paul highlight as the distinctive feature that produces faithful Christian living (vv20–21)?
 - For children: see above
 - Reflect on Paul's progression of thought in vv22–24. What are those who have "learned Christ" to do? How does this serve as a general pattern for Christian learning and living? Which example of this pattern in vv25–32 is the most meaningful to you and why?
 - For children: Mindset of the Christian life exercise: We REpent of our sin; We REnew with God's truth; We REclothe with God's righteousness.

Memorization Passage: Eph 4:17–24

Ephesians 5:1–16

Date: 11/01/2023 **Key Words**

- *imitator* (v1): Someone who copies specific characteristics of another person; our English word "mimic" comes from the Greek word translated here
- *sexual immorality* (v3): any kind of sexual sin, including adultery, fornication, homosexuality, etc.
- *impurity* (v4): moral corruption, evil, or wickedness; in contexts where "sexual immorality" occurs, *impurity* refers to general sinful conduct (see <u>Gal 5:19</u>; <u>Col 3:5</u>; <u>Eph 4:19</u>); Jesus places this corruption in the human heart so that the sin that people do is a fruit of their unregenerate sin nature (Mark 7:20–23)
- *foolish talking* (v4): A unique word in the New Testament made up of two Greek words: *moros*, from which comes "moron" (i.e., dull or stupid), and *legos* (i.e., to speak); intended to describe the conversation of someone intellectually deficient
- *coarse jesting* (v4): sins of the tongue that include any speech that is obscene, degrading, suggestive, or immoral
- has any inheritance (v5): those with life patterns of habitual immorality, impurity, or greed cannot inherit God's holy kingdom
- *darkness* (v8): the character of the life of the unconverted as void of truth and virtue in intellectual and moral matters
- have no fellowship (v11): lieterally "do not become a partaker together with others"
- *expose* (v11): the believer's act of confronting and correcting evil in his own life and within the church
- it is shameful even to speak of those things (v12): some sins are so sordid that even describing them is morally and spiritually dangerous
- *look carefully* (v15): accurately, exactly, precisely; carries the idea of looking, examining, and investigating something with great intensity
- redeeming (v16): buying back; we are to buy all the time we have and devote it to the Lord
- *time* (v16): a season that is fixed, measured, or allocated; specifically refers to our individual lifetimes as believers

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific
 - Based on what this passage concludes in vv5–6, can a person be a Christian and still live in long-term, unrepentant sinful lifestyles? Why or why not?
 - The world's definition and descriptions of love are contrary to the Bible's portrayal of it. Verses 2, 3, and 10 are good examples of the contrast. What contrasts do you

observe? How do these contrasts help us understand, practice, and not compromise on biblical love? See also 1 John 3:18; 4:7–21.

- For children: Use verse 2 to talk about how Jesus loved us through His sacrificial death. See also <u>John 13:34–35</u>; <u>Rom 5:6</u>, <u>8</u>; <u>1 John 4:9–10</u>;
- There are at least four positive exhortations for Christian living (vv1, 2, 8, 15). What are they and how do they help us understand the elements of Christian living?
- For children: There are only two options for living: following Jesus or fulfilling sin. To know the difference between the two, we need to know God's character and word. Make a list of 5–10 questions drawn from every day decisions with answers that fit under categories of "following Jesus," or "fulfilling sin." Ask why after each answer.
 - Examples
 - I really want the candy that is in my friend's lunch bag, so I take it secretly and eat it. What have I done? *Fulfilled sin*. Why?
 - My sister is being mean by making fun of what someone is wearing, so I tell her she should stop. What have I done? *Followed Jesus*. Why?

Memorization Passage: Eph 5:1–6

Ephesians 5:17–21

Date: 11/08/2023 **Key Words**

- do not be drunk with wine (v18): a reference to the drunken orgies commonly associated with pagan worship ceremonies in Ephesus
- dissipation (v18): excess; that is, a dissolute, debauched, profligate way of living
- be filled with the Spirit (v18): to be under the influence of God's Spirit; to be dominated and controlled by the presence of Christ through His word
- psalms (v19): Old Testament psalms put to music
- *hymns* (v19): Songs of praise, different from Old Testament psalms in that these likely praised the Lord Jesus Christ by name
- *spiritual songs* (v19): probably songs of personal testimony
- *giving thanks always* (v20): showing appreciation for who God is and gratitude for what He has done should mark the children of God
- *submitting* (v21): humbling oneself before others—a characteristic of Spirit-filled believers

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific
 - In verses 17 and 18, two opposites are contrasted. What are the contrasts and why are they contrasted?
 - For children: read <u>Eph 5:18–21</u> and <u>Col 3:16–17</u> together. What is the same? What is different?
 - A feature of the Greek language which our translations come from is that a finite verb is often accompanied by participles ("-ing" words). The participles explain how to do the main verb. The main verb in this passage is in v18 "be filled with the Spirit." Based on the participles that follow, what is involved in "being filled with the Spirit"?
 - For children: Using the categories of church, family, and country, identify different ways that we can show we are filled with the Spirit (speaking/singing; gratitude; subjection)

Memorization Passage: Eph 5:17–21

Ephesians 5:22–6:9

Date: 11/15/2023 **Key Words**

- *submit* (5:22): to voluntarily surrender one's rights, not out of subservience or servility but out of willingness to function under the other's leadership
- *head* (5:23): a term for leadership; biblically, it speaks of God-ordained authority (see <u>1</u> Cor 11:3)
- *love your wives just as Christ also loved the church* (5:25): unreserved, selfless, sacrificial, unconditional love
- sanctify ... cleanse ... holy ... without blemish (5:26–27): the husband has a divine obligation to help lead his wife in purity to conformity with the image of Christ
- *nourishes and cherishes* (5:29): warm and tender affection, attentiveness, and care for needs
- be joined to his wife (5:31): literally to be glued or cemented together
- *obey* (6:1): literally "to hear under"; that is, to listen with attentiveness and with the intent to respond positively to what has been said
- honor (6:2–3): to value highly, hold in the highest regard
- do not provoke your children to wrath (6:4): Do not rule with domineering and authoritarian practices that crush the spirit of a child and cause him or her to lose heart
- fear and trembling (6:5): not actual fright but deep respect for authority
- eyeservice, as men-pleasers (6:6): conscientious labor performed only in the boss' sight, but laziness when his back is turned
- giving up threatening (6:9): to loosen up, not throw one's weight around in an abusive or inconsiderate manner

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific
 - Remembering that "being subject" in 5:21 is one element of the command to "be filled with the Spirit" and noting that there is not a finite verb in the Greek text, what does this mean for the household relationships in 5:22–6:9?
 - How does a marriage reflect the relationship between Christ and the church?
 - For children: What Gospel stories give a picture for how Jesus loves the church? Examples: foot-washing in <u>John 13</u>; teaching in <u>John 14–16</u>. Use the stories to illustrate how Jesus loves the church.
 - Recognizing that relationships that involve authority are the subject throughout this passage, in what ways does Paul put both the one in authority and the one under authority in relationship with God's authority?
 - For children: What does God want you to do with your parents? Why?

Memorization Passage: Different depending on roles in life

Ephesians 6:10-24

Date: 11/29/2023 **Key Words**

- be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (v10): believers must rely completely on God's omnipotence to win the battle
- *stand* (v11): to stand firm, in a military sense; to maintain a critical position while under attack
- *schemes* (v11): neutrally understood, the word simply refers to "methods"; because Satan is involved in this context the word carries the idea of craftiness, cunning, deception
- wrestle (v12): hand-to-hand combat
- principalities ... powers ... rulers ... spiritual forces of wickedness (v12): a description of the different strata and rankings of invisible, supernatural demons and evil spirits who are part of the devil's empire
- shod your feet (v15): Roman soldiers were boots with nails (cleats) in them to help brace their feet in all terrains; for the Christian, the gospel of peace with God gives sure footing and a solid foundation
- *shield of faith* (v16): refers to a large 2.5x4.5 foot shield carried by soldiers to protect their entire bodies; as long as Christians place their trust in God, they will be protected
- fiery darts of the wicked one (v16): in ancient times, arrows were often tipped with cloth, covered with pitch, and ignited; the idea is that our faith affords us protection against the many temptations of the devil
- the helmet of salvation (v17): protects the head, for Satan attacks a believer's assurance of salvation with his weapons of doubt and discouragement
- *the sword of the Spirit* (v17): the truth of Scripture, the only weapon that a Christian should carry into battle
- prayer (v18): general requests of God
- *supplication* (v18): specific petitions
- in the Spirit (v18): in the name of Christ, consistent with His nature and will
- being watchful (v18): staying awake, being vigilant
- that utterance may be given me (v19): Paul's request is not for prayers for his personal well-being or physical comfort but for boldness to continue proclaiming the gospel, regardless of the cost
- ambassador (v20): an envoy who represents a government
- in chains (v20): Paul wrote this letter while under Roman imprisonment
- Tychicus (v21): see Acts 20:4–6; 2 Tim 4:12; Titus 3:12
- encourage your hearts (v22): bring comfort and good news

Discussion Questions

- General
 - What is interesting or noteworthy to you about this passage? Why?
 - What questions does this passage raise? Based on the context, what are potential answers to these questions?
 - What does this passage contribute to the entire letter?
 - What does this passage teach?
- Specific

- This passage focuses on spiritual warfare, but it does not forget the context of the letter. Where else is the devil or spiritual forces of darkness mentioned? How does that help us understand what "standing firm" looks like in daily life?
 - For children: Bible teaching (Eph 4:14), sanctified relationships (Eph 4:25–27), and wise living (Eph 5:16) are ways believers' counter the schemes of the devil. Review these passages with the children, using them as practical applications to Eph 6:10–13.
- Four pieces of the armor of God come from Isaiah. The girdle comes from Isa 11:5, the breastplate comes from Isa 59:17, the boots come from Isa 52:7, and the helmet comes from Isa 59:17. Why does God or the Messiah put on His armor in those passages? What is the message that believers communicate when they put on God's armor?
 - For children: Identify and explain the significance of the pieces of armor.
- Compare Paul's prayer request in v19 with what he prays for the Ephesians in 1:15–23. Contrast those prayers with our typical prayers for well-being and health. What does this contrast reveal about what our priorities are in life? See also Matt 6:8–13, 25–34.

Memorization Passage: Eph 6:10–13

Ephesians 4–6 Review

Date: 12/06/2023 **Discussion Questions**

- What one passage best helped you understand the message of Ephesians?
- Has your view of the church changed or matured in any way as a result of the study? How so?
- If the Letter to the Ephesians was not included in the Bible, what would you struggle with because of it?
- For children
 - How does God save us? Eph 2:1–10
 - Among what people does God place us when He saves us? Eph 2:11–22
 - Why is the big deal about God placing us in the church? Eph 3:10