

Small Group Discussion Outline



Read: Ephesians 1:15-23

If you look in your Bibles you will see that the first chapter of Ephesians is broken into two main sections. The first is from verse 1 to verse 14, the second from verse 15 to verse 23.



How would you describe the first section? (Verses 1-14)
How would you describe the second section? (Verse 15-23)

Although there are several possible titles, the most simple titles for the sections are: "Praise" and "Prayer."



Do you think having "Praise" before "Prayer" is significant?
In what way?



Read: Ephesians 1:15-16



What two things was the Church noted for?

The Church had a reputation for having faith in Jesus and a love for each other. These are great things to be recognised for, however, Paul demonstrates that, as well as they're doing, there's a lot more to be had as part of their Christian experience.



Read: Ephesians 1:17



What was the purpose of Paul's prayer?
What words does Paul use to characterise the Holy Spirit?

So far, in Paul's letter, he has outlined the blessings the Church has received and the part they have been called to play in God's Big Plan. In this section Paul prays that the Holy Spirit will enable the Church to know God better.

The Message™ Bible says:

MSG Ephesians 1:17 But I do more than thank. I ask - ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory--to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally...

Ephesians is, essentially, a letter written to encourage the Church towards maturity in Christ, a deeper relationship with and co-working with Him in fulfilling His purposes.



How do you think the words "wisdom" and "revelation" in the NIV are related to the words "intelligent" and "discerning" in the MSG?

Ephesians #4 H.I.P. Replacement

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Knowing God requires 'knowledge' about Him, and 'experience' of Him. This is something that Paul reveals is accomplished through the working of the Holy Spirit.



Does the working of the Holy Spirit do away with the need for serious, intellectual Bible study?
Does Bible study do away with the need for the empowerment and experience of the Holy Spirit?

The answers to both questions are a resounding "No!" In the same way that the early Christians devoted themselves to the study of Scripture, so too must we learn to love God's Word and delve deeper into it. As we do so, the Holy Spirit will speak to us giving clarity and understanding as the revelation of God (the Bible) feeds our hearts and minds.



Read: Ephesians 1:18-19a



What are the three things Paul prays will be made clear to the Church?

Paul prays that the Church would fully comprehend the HOPE, INHERITANCE, and POWER that God has made available to them as a result of their relationship with Him.



Considering what we've covered in the previous studies on Ephesians, what is the hope that the Church been called to?

In Ephesians 1:9-10 Paul describes God's Big Plan for unity in submission to Him and under His blessing. The Church is the present manifestation of this, at least, God's intention is for this to be the case.

The Church needs the Holy Spirit to grasp this and to begin to live in this experience today.

The second element of the prayer is that the Church would know their inheritance in Christ. Our inheritance is present and future, it is the Kingdom of God.

Many people find it very difficult to live by the principals by which God has promised to release the present experience of His Kingdom simply because they are so contrary to everything that the world teaches. When God says we'll receive from Him when we give it's so easy to be swayed by the 'wisdom' of the world which says hang on to everything you can get.

This knowledge and experience of our inheritance is made possible only when we surrender to the Holy Spirit and allow His truth and wisdom to replace the 'wisdom' of the present age.

The final element of this prayer is that the Church would know God's power. Just like everything else in this prayer, knowledge means both understanding and experience.



Read: Ephesians 1:19b-21



What two examples does Paul give to demonstrate God's power?



Read: Ephesians 1:22-23

The power and authority Jesus has is to our benefit as He is Head over us, His body.

Ephesians is about growth in knowledge and experience. It occurs with the help of the Holy Spirit and is essential for playing our part in fulfilling God's Big Plan.

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