

MCC Small Group Study Guide

60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians (1 of 12 Lessons)

Signed, Sealed, and Delivered

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group)

What have you actually done since we met last in response to our study and the Action Step we invited you to take? What fruit did that “doing” bear in your life? If you did nothing in response to last week’s study, what do you think got in the way?

Leader’s Note: *Ephesians was written by Paul during a two year imprisonment in Rome. This letter was probably written around 60 A.D. Paul had a special relationship with the church in Ephesus (see Acts 19). Paul typically planted a church and then moved on rather quickly to plant others. However, he spent at least two years in Ephesus and had a very special relationship with the church there. That relationship is revealed in Acts 20:13ff as his tearful farewell to the Ephesian elders is recorded there. He is writing a letter that is full of spiritual truths that should impact the way we live. He is writing to a church for which he has a special love. He begins with a great deal of discussion about who we are in Christ with and then transitions to sections on how to live. His argument is basically...”This is who God has made you in Christ, and now that you know who you are, you should live in a way that reflects your standing in heaven.” Ephesians reveals that we have a position in Christ that far exceeds our spiritual condition. However, God relates to us on the basis of our blood bought position rather than our condition. Spiritual growth closes the gap between the two and knowing who we are in Christ should help us live up to our position rather than giving into our condition. We still need that message today. As you go through this study give special attention to the position we have with God and how we could live if we really understood our identity in Christ.*

20 Minutes – Bible Study

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

Discussion: This section of Ephesians reveals two striking truths. (1) We did not choose God but God chose us (See John 15:16). (2) Having chosen us, he has given us incredible standing in the kingdom of heaven.

- **What phrases in this section reflect those two truths? Summarize these phrases with one word that captures their meaning as those phrases describe who we are in**

Christ. For instance, we are saints, blessed, chosen, holy and blameless, predestined, adopted, sons, redeemed, etc.

- **Discuss how each phrase is true for us in Christ.**
- **Are these descriptive phrases true for us now or only in some future heavenly state?**

- **What do these phrases tell us about:**
 - a. **God's view of us individually?**
 - b. **God's feelings toward us?**
 - c. **God's willingness to bless us and answer our prayers?**
 - d. **Our significance in God's kingdom on this earth?**
 - e. **Our view of ourselves?**

15 Minutes - Application Choose two or three questions to explore with your group.

- How does God's view of us differ from the way we commonly view ourselves?
- If we fully believed these things were true about us, what difference would it make in our attitudes, the way we live, and the things we do?
- Clearly, our *position* in Christ exceeds our *condition*. For instance, our standing with God is that we are holy and blameless, yet we struggle with sin. Both our position and condition are truths about us. Which of these truths do you think God wants us to focus on the most and why?
- What are some practical ways in which we can come to believe these truths about who we are more deeply?

Action Step: Between now and the next time we meet, make a list of the positional truths we have discussed today. Express all of them in the form of”In Christ I am.....” Each day, read that list out loud emphasizing who God says that you are in Christ. Remember these truths through the day whenever the enemy or your flesh says something different from these truths. Notice how these confessions of your standing with God makes a difference in your day. Be ready to talk about your experiences with this next time we meet.

Prayer: Take prayer reports and requests as time permits. Pray for one another now and through the week.

MCC Small Group Study Guide

60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians (2 of 12 Lessons)

The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group)

What have you actually done since we met last in response to our study and the Action Step we invited you to take? What fruit did that “doing” bear in your life? If you did nothing in response to last week’s study, what do you think got in the way?

15 minutes – Study

Discussion Point: If you could ask God directly, to give you a full understanding and total incite into one truth or one thing you have always desired to understand or believe...what would it be?

Read Ephesians 1:15-23.

According to this text, what two things did Paul find especially praiseworthy in the church at Ephesus? How does that compare with our present day criteria for evaluating the greatness of a church?

Paul prayed consistently that God would grant several spiritual gifts to the church at Ephesus. What gifts did he ask the Lord to grant the church and what did he want the church to experience as a result of those gifts?

Gifts: wisdom, revelation, enlightenment

Results:

To know Him better

To know the hope to which he has called us

To know the riches of our inheritance

To know the power that is for us

Why are each of those things important for every believer to know deeply?

According to this text, what position has Christ received from the Father. How does knowing that benefit the believer in his daily walk with Jesus?

20 Minutes - Application

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian church was that the Spirit would reveal to them ...

A greater personal knowledge of the Father.

A greater understanding the hope to which we are called.

A greater knowledge of the riches of our inheritance.

A greater understanding of the power that is for us.

What does Paul mean by "a personal knowledge of the Father?"

What is "the hope" to which we are called?

What does Paul have in mind when he speaks about "the riches of our inheritance?"

How great is the "power that is for us" and what is the implication of that statement in our lives/

According to this text, how do we receive a greater knowledge of these things? How then might we personally receive these blessings?

How would a greater knowledge of these matters make a difference in your life...in your emotions, your relationships, your business, etc?

Action Step: Between now and our next meeting, study the word, pray and ask for revelation about the things Paul has asked the Lord to give the Ephesian church. Write down the truths about your relationship with the Father, your hope in Christ, the riches of your inheritance and the power that is available to you as a child of God. Reflect on those truths and see how it makes a difference in your prayers, in your emotions, your relationships, business decisions, and so forth. Be ready to talk about those things when we get together again.

Prayer: Take prayer reports and requests as time permits. Pray for one another now and through the week.

MCC Small Group Study Guide
60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians
(3 of 12 Lessons)

Alive in Christ

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group)

What have you actually done since we met last in response to our study and the Action Step we invited you to take? What fruit did that “doing” bear in your life? If you did nothing in response to last week’s study, what do you think got in the way?

20 minutes – Study

Discussion Point: What are the major differences in your life now and your life before you became a follower of Jesus?

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

According to Paul, what was our condition before we were saved?

In what sense were we “dead?”

What are the “ways of the world” (verse 2) Paul refers to?

What “cravings of our sinful nature” do you identify with from your life before you came to Jesus?” How have you changed toward those cravings?

According to Paul, what was God’s motivation in making us alive in Christ?

According to Paul, how much of our salvation was God’s doing and how much was our doing?

In this section of Ephesians, how did our position with God change as a result of being saved?

What do you think Paul means when he says that we have been seated with Christ in the heavenly realms? Notice this is something that has already occurred for the believer and not some future event? What does being seated with Christ imply about our position?

What does verse 10 reveal about our life in Christ?

10 Minutes – Application

This section of scripture reveals that God has pursued us when we were spiritually dead, saved us by his grace, seated us with Christ and is crafting us to do good works which he has prepared ahead of time for us to do.

How should knowing these truths make a difference in the way I see myself, my life, others, and opportunities to help others that come my way day to day?

Actions Step: Between now and the next time we meet, I want you to memorize and focus on Ephesians 2:10. Live each day with the idea that God has prepared some moments in that day for you to do good. These may be big moments, but more often they will seem like ordinary moments. But ask yourself, “Is there some good thing God wants me to do in this moment?” Then be obedient to whatever prompting you receive in that moment.

Next time we meet, be ready to talk about the good you did in some of those moments that, perhaps, went by unnoticed before today’s study.

Before our next study, you may want to read and reflect on Ephesians 2:11-22.

Prayer: Take prayer reports and requests as time permits. Pray for one another now and through the week.

MCC Small Group Study Guide

60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians (4 of 12 Lessons)

Jesus...the Prince of Peace

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group)

What have you actually done since we met last in response to our study and the Action Step we invited you to take? What fruit did that “doing” bear in your life? If you did nothing in response to last week’s study, what do you think got in the way?

20 minutes – Study

Discussion Question: If you were asked, “What is the solution for peace in the Middle East?” what would your answer be?

Leaders Note: *Paul begins a description here of the condition of the Gentiles (all non-Jews) before they came to Christ and the animosity between the Jew and Gentile outside of Christ. Remember that Jews and Gentiles felt the same about one another then as Jews and Arabs feel about one another now. There was tremendous anger, animosity and prejudice between the two groups. Yet, Christ was a middle ground on which each group could stand and become unified as believers because they were no longer Jew or Gentile but only Christians whose citizenship was not in Israel or Iraq but in heaven. Jesus is still the only solution to Peace in the Middle East today. Also notice that Israel has a special place in God’s plans and heart. According to Paul, the Jews had special standing with God which was extended to the Gentiles because of Christ. Jesus was Jewish, the prophets were Jewish and the apostles were Jewish. Gentiles were added to the body of Jewish believers rather than the Jews being added to a Gentile church. Oi Vai!*

Read Ephesians 2:11-22.

Who are the two hostile parties that Paul refers to in this text? Does this suggest that there may have been a problem in the Ephesian church between the Jews and Gentiles?

According to Paul, what was the condition of the Gentiles (all non-Jews) before the sacrifice of Jesus Christ? What words or phrases does Paul use to describe that condition?

What is the condition of believing Gentiles after coming to Christ?

According to this section of scripture, what has allowed Gentiles to be brought near to God?

Paul says that Jesus is our “peace”. Obviously, Jesus has made peace between man and God but he also makes it clear that Jesus has made peace between Jew and Gentile (vs. 14). How does Christ make peace between those who have a history of war and hatred?

What is the “new man” that God has created through Christ (vs. 15)?

What is God’s desire for this “new man” that once was at war?

10 Minutes (Application)

Who has been your greatest adversary in your life?

Have you been able to make peace with that person? What has stood in the way?

How can Jesus be the “peace broker” between you and the person with whom you have this conflict?

How would your life change (inner life or outer life) if you truly made peace with this other person? Do you think God would want you to make the effort?

How might you go about this effort to reconcile and how would you involve Jesus in the process?

Action Step: Between now and the next time we meet, spend some time in prayer identifying any people in your life with whom you have an ongoing conflict and a breach of relationship. Ask the Lord if he wants you to make peace with that person and determine how you might begin that process and how you will involve Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace. You may want to discuss this broken relationship with the group next time so that they might pray with you about making peace.

The next time we meet, we will study Ephesians 3:1-13. You may want to read and reflect on that section of scripture before our next study.

Prayer: Take prayer reports and prayer requests and commit to pray for one another until you meet again..

MCC Small Group Study Guide

60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians

(5 of 12 Lessons)

The Mystery Revealed

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group)

What have you actually done since we met last in response to our study and the Action Step we invited you to take? What fruit did that “doing” bear in your life? If you did nothing in response to last week’s study, what do you think got in the way?

20 minutes – Study

Discussion Point: What is your favorite mystery series or movie? Why do you like a mystery?

Read Ephesians 3:1-13

Why do you think Paul begins this section by reminding the Gentiles that he was in prison for their sake?

In what sense was the gospel of Jesus Christ a “mystery” until the time of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament (vs. 5)? **Leader’s Note:** *A mystery is not a puzzle. A puzzle must be something that a person figures out by their own wits. A mystery is a truth that has not yet been fully revealed. Once all the truth has been revealed it is easily understood and we have the “Aha!” experience.*

According to Paul what was the “big surprise” that was revealed when the mystery of the gospel was made known? As a Gentile, what surprises you about that “big surprise?”

Leader’s Note: *Biblically, we have twisted the gospel somewhat when we have the attitude that we (believing Gentiles) are God’s people who will let the Jews in if they are nice and come to faith. The truth is, that believing Jews are the original church or “called out” of God and God has been merciful enough to let us join them.*

What does Paul mean when he says that the church will make God’s wisdom (this mystery) known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly realms? What does that truth reveal about the church’s standing in God’s eyes?

According to these scriptures, with what attitudes can we approach God?

10 Minutes – Application

What is your feeling toward Jewish people or towards Israel? Does there need to be any adjustment in your perceptions in order to reflect God's heart? Is this an important matter today?

How do you respond to this thought? The "mystery" of the gospel is something that even rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms have desired to know for thousands of years. That knowledge has been entrusted to the church by the God of heaven. You are the church and so it has been entrusted to you.

How much do you value the word of God and especially the revelation of who Jesus is and what he has done and continues to do for us? What is the evidence of how much you value that revelation?

If we truly valued the word and the message of the gospel as much as God values it, what would be different in your life?

Action Step: Between now and the next time we meet, look over Eph. 3:10-13 on a daily basis to remind yourself of what a privilege it is to have the revelation of God in our hands, the Spirit of God to give us understanding, and the commission of God to share the message with others. Then be faithful with the stewardship of the word. The next time we meet, be ready to talk about how you responded as a faithful steward of the "mystery" of God.

Prayer: Take prayer reports and prayer requests. Be faithful to pray of one another until you meet again.

MCC Small Group Study Guide

60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians (6 of 12 Lessons)

The Promise of Power

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group)

What have you actually done since we met last in response to our study and the Action Step we invited you to take? What fruit did that “doing” bear in your life? If you did nothing in response to last week’s study, what do you think got in the way?

20 minutes – Study

Discussion Point: Do you experience the power of God in your life like you want to experience it? How would you want to experience it if you could?

Read Eph. 3:14-21

Leader’s Note: *In this short section of scripture, Paul mentions “power” three times. It is the word “dunamis” which is the same word from which we get dynamite. This is a supernatural power that enables the saints to fulfill the call of God on their lives at a given moment. It may be power to act, power to endure, power to understand, power to resist, power to minister in spiritual gifts, etc. What we need to remember is that this power is the same power that formed the universe, brought Israel out of Egypt and that raised Jesus from the dead. When we live a powerless life, it is not because the power is unavailable but typically because we do not know that the power is available or do not have faith to step out believing that God’s power will operate in the moment we need it.*

In this section, Paul speaks of a constant prayer that he offers to God on behalf of the church in Ephesus. The things that Paul prays for are the things he believes are essential to living for Jesus. What are the things he prays for?

How would supernatural strength in your inner being help you live for Jesus?

How would a supernatural ability to grasp the extent of Christ’s love for you help you live for Jesus?

Paul speaks of grasping the extent of Christ's love for us but then speaks of knowing that love that surpasses knowledge. What do you think might be the difference in those two things?

In verse 20, Paul talks about the extent of God's power in relation to our prayers. According to the apostle, how sufficient is God's power for answering any prayers that we might offer?

10 Minutes – Application

When have you experienced this “power of God” in your life?

How might you access more of this power for your life?

To what extent do you understand and experience the love of Christ in your life?

How might you understand and experience his love to a greater degree?

When you pray, do you most often pray for the ordinary or the extraordinary? Which do you think pleases God the most?

Action Step: Between now and the next time we meet, pray daily asking God to give you the things that Paul requested for Ephesus. Pray earnestly and take note daily of the ways that God is beginning to answer those prayers. Be ready to talk about that experience the next time we meet.

Prayer: Take prayer reports and prayer requests. Be faithful to pray for one another until you meet again.

MCC Small Group Study Guide
60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians
(7 of 12 Lessons)

The Unity of the Spirit

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group)

What have you actually done since we met last in response to our study and the Action Step we invited you to take? What fruit did that “doing” bear in your life? If you did nothing in response to last week’s study, what do you think got in the way?

20 Minutes – Looking at the Text

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

In this text, what words echo or suggest the idea of unity in the body of Christ?

What attitudes or perspectives do you discover in this text that are essential for unity to exist in a diverse group of people?

How does the Spirit of Christ facilitate unity among believers?

Is unity the same as uniformity? Can we have unity in the body of Christ without having uniformity? How?

Why is unity so essential for the church and the cause of Christ? See John 13:35

What is the primary function of church leaders according to 4:11-13? How do “works of service” contribute to our maturing in Christ and to unity in His body?

10 Minutes – Application

Have you ever experienced disunity in the body of Christ? How did that affect your spiritual life? How did that impact the witness of the church to unbelievers?

What attitudes have you personally seen in churches that worked against unity?

For any church made up of diverse families and backgrounds, what keys would you suggest for maintaining unity in that congregation? i.e. What could the church emphasize or do on a regular basis that would nurture unity?

What attitudes have you seen in your own family that have worked for or against unity? What principles could you take from this section of Ephesians and apply in your immediate or extended family to promote unity?

Action Step: Between now the and next time we meet, pray daily for unity in the church and in your own family or work place relationships. Ask God to reveal to you any attitudes you need to adjust or actions you need to take to contribute to unity yourself;. Then act on any thing God reveals to you. Remember, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called sons of God.”
Matt. 5:9

Prayer: Take prayer reports and prayer requests. Be faithful to pray for one another until you meet again.

MCC Small Group Study Guide

60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians (8 of 12 Lessons)

Living as Children of Light

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group)

Did you pray for unity in your family and workplace since we met last? What did you notice about unity as you prayed and reflected on your part of creating unity? Did you recognize any hindrances to unity that you may have been bringing to the table?

20 Minutes – Looking at the Text

Read Ephesians 4:17-32

- What was the condition of the Gentiles that Paul spoke about in the beginning of this section?
- In your estimation how dangerous was their condition? Why?
- In your opinion, what had the Gentiles done or not done that led to a hardened heart that had lost all sensitivity?
- To what things were the hearts of the Gentiles insensitive? What was the connection between that insensitivity and their indulgence in every kind of impurity?
- Paul instructed the Ephesians to put off their “old selves”. What are some practical ways for us to do that? What things are suggested in the text that might contribute to putting off the *old self* and putting on the new?
- What practical advice does Paul give about anger? How does anger provide a foothold for Satan and how do you think that foothold might become a stronghold? Where does “forgiveness” fit into dealing with our anger and Satan’s access to our lives?
- How does Paul define unwholesome talk? How is that different from the way we would normally define unwholesome talk?

Application – 10 Minutes

- Which issues in Ephesians 4:17-32 have impacted your life or been a struggle for you?
- How successfully have you dealt with those issues? What did you do?
- How do you manage your anger so that you are “angry but sin not?”
- How has “unwholesome talk” impacted your life? Are you ever guilty of speaking unwholesome words over someone you love? What practical things could you do to keep yourself from slipping into that sin?
- What else in this very practical section of Ephesians spoke to you? Why?

Action Step: Between now the and next time we meet, pray daily that God would help you put off the old man daily and walk in the Spirit of Christ. If you deal with anger or unwholesome talk, ask some group members to pray over you and ask God to deliver you from those impulses. Be ready to talk about what God did for you in those areas when we meet again.

Prayer: Take prayer reports and prayer requests. Be faithful to pray for one another until you meet again.

MCC Small Group Study Guide

60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians (9 of 12 Lessons)

Imitators of God

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group) What experience did you have with anger or unwholesome talk since we met last. Did God show you anything about those issues in your life? Did anything change?

20 Minutes – Looking at the Text

Read Ephesians 5:1-20

- Paul begins this section by calling us to be imitators of God as children would imitate a parent that they adore. He then describes a number of attitudes and actions that would be an imitation of God. What things do you discover about the heart and mind of God in those verses?
- Paul lists a lot of sinful things to avoid in this section. Restate these directions in a positive way by stating the opposite behaviors or attitudes that contrast with these negatives. For instance, if I am warned not to be *greedy* then the opposite of that would be *to live a life of selfless generosity*.
- Make a list of positive behaviors that contrast with the warnings of Paul in these verses (5:1-20).
- What kinds of things define sexual immorality? Impurity? Greed? How do we avoid even the hint of those things in our culture?
- What do you think Paul is referring to when he speaks of “foolish talk?” Does that mean we can’t joke or tease people? What do you think he means?
- Paul really challenges us in verse 12 when he says that we should not even mention what “the disobedient do in secret.” What do you think he means by that and what is his reasoning? What would that look like in our lives in our culture?
- What do you think Paul means when he says we are to “expose” deeds of darkness” in verse 11? Does this mean we are to go about pointing out every person’s sin or are we to be investigative reporters exposing fraud and corruption? What does he mean?

- Paul's last admonition in this section is to be *filled with the Spirit* so that there is not place for sin or deeds of darkness in our lives. What does it mean to be "filled with the Spirit" and how do we fill ourselves with God's Spirit?

Application – 10 Minutes

- What did you see in this section about God's standard for Christian living that you were not aware of or had forgotten?
- What issues in this section do you struggle with most in terms of the things Paul instructs us to avoid?
- What practical things can we do to help us live up to the standards God has set for his children of light?
- Is living up to these standards even possible in our culture? Why is our answer to that question so important?

Action Step: Between now and the next time we meet, keep these standards in mind. Pray that God would make you aware of those moments when you did not live up to the standard. Employ some the practical things we talked about to help you live up to those standards. Be ready to talk about your experience with these things.

Prayer: Take prayer reports and prayer requests. Be faithful to pray for one another until you meet again.

MCC Small Group Study Guide

60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians **(10 of 12 Lessons)**

Marriage

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group) What experience did you have with anger or unwholesome talk since we met last. Did God show you anything about those issues in your life? Did anything change?

20 Minutes – Looking at the Text

Read Ephesians 5:21-33

- As part of being imitators of God and children of light, Paul describes the Christian marriage.
- He begins with a discussion of “submission.” How would you define “submission?” What does that look like in a healthy, godly relationship?
- This section on marriage should probably begin in verse 21 where Paul says ‘submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.’ Why do you think Paul begins with the admonition to submit to one another? How can both people submit in a marriage? What would that “look like?”
- Why is it important to know that when you are submitting to another person that God has placed in a role of leadership that you are really submitting to Christ more than the person “in authority?”
- From this text, does “headship” imply privilege or responsibility? What are the responsibilities of a husband who has assumed “headship” or “leadership” in the home according to this text?
- What do you think Paul means when he says that a husband who loves his wife loves himself (vs. 28b)?
- In verse 32, Paul tells us that marriage is to be a revelation of Christ and his church. What qualities of Christ’s relationship with his church do you think should be seen and demonstrated in a Christian marriage? What gets in the way of that demonstration?

- Why do you think Paul ends this section encouraging husbands *to love* their wives and encouraging wives *to respect* their husbands? How would you define love and respect from this passage and why does Paul point out the need for women to be loved but for men to be respected?

Application – 10 Minutes

- What has been your experience in marriage in relation to this passage? What part of marriage has been hard to submit to this teaching? Why has it been hard? When you have experienced these qualities in your marriage or seen them in a marriage, what was the result?
- What do you think the “sacrificial love” of a husband should look like in a family in practical terms? What should the submission and respect of a wife look like in a marriage in practical terms? How have you done in your marriage with either “sacrificial love” or “submission and respect.?”
- If those areas are lacking in a marriage, what practical things could a husband or wife do to grow in those areas?

Action Step – Between now and the next time we meet, if you are married, make a decision to practice more of what God has called you to do in your marriage. Men should make a list of ways in which they can love their wives (and children) and Christ loved the church. Women should make a list of ways in which they can show respect to their husbands. Having made the list, actually put some of those things into practice. Notice how they affect the relationship. Bring your list next time and be ready to talk about your experience with this *Action Step*.

Prayer: Take prayer reports and prayer requests. Be faithful to pray for one another until you meet again.

MCC Small Group Study Guide

60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians **(11 of 12 Lessons)**

More “Submitted” Relationships

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group) What experience did you have with sacrificial love and respect since we met last? Did you make your list of things to do to demonstrate respect or sacrificial love? Share some of the ideas you have on your list. How did doing those things affect you or your spouse?

20 Minutes – Looking at the Text

Read Ephesians 6:1-9

This section of Paul’s letter continues to speak about relationships in which God or society has established a role that exercises authority over another. Notice that both the one exercising authority and the one under authority have directives from God for their actions and attitudes,

- Paul begins with the parent/child relationship. He says that children are to obey and honor their parents. We understand “obey” but what, in practical terms, does it mean to “honor” our mothers and fathers? How can we do that when our parents seem unworthy of honor because of immoral living, abuse, alcoholism, abandonment, etc.? Does God’s command apply in those cases?
- What blessing does God attach to “honoring our father and mother?” Do you think that promise still holds today or was that just for the Jews or those who lived under the Law of Moses? Have you ever seen the fulfillment of that promise in those that have honored their mother and father?
- What responsibility does God place on the Father since he has been established as the head of the home? What do you think Paul means in 6:4 by “exasperate (NIV)?” What kind of actions or attitudes might a father express towards his children that would exasperate them? How would that kind of behavior work against children growing up to serve the Lord and honor their mother and father? See Gal. 6:7.
- In verses 5-9, Paul talks about master/salve relationships. In our culture these principles most easily apply to employee/employer relationships. Sum up the principles for being a Christian employee from this text. Do you think the Christian is bound to these standards if the employer is abusive or unfair? Why or why not?

- What principles would you derive from these verses for a Christian employer? How might he treat his employees in ways different from the average corporate office in America? What difference might that treatment make in the lives of the employees and in the performance of the company?

Application- 10 Minutes

- What kind of Father did you have growing up? Did your father “exasperate” you or bring you up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord? If yours “exasperated” you, what did that look like? How has that affected your parenting and/or your relationship with your heavenly Father?
- If you had a parent or parents that were hurtful to you, how have you dealt with God’s command to honor them?
- Have you ever been in a situation where you worked for a boss that was abusive or unfair to you and his other employees? How did you respond to that as an employee? How does Paul’s admonition to work hard for that “master” as though you are working for the Lord feel when you think about that employer?
- How would it benefit you to work hard for such an employer even if he/she never noticed or appreciated your work?

Action Step: Between now and the next time we meet, evaluate your relationship with your parents and your employer. Determine if you have been acting outside of God’s will in either of those relationships and determine how you will change your attitudes and actions in those relationships...regardless of their response. Be prepared to talk about it when we meet again.

Prayer: Take prayer reports and prayer requests. Be faithful to pray for one another until you meet again.

MCC Small Group Study Guide

60 minutes

A Textual Study of Ephesians (12 of 12 Lessons)

Spiritual Warfare

5 Minutes –Introduction

10 Minutes – Action Step Follow-Up (Unless this is the first time you have met with your group) What experience did you have with honoring your mother and father or in working hard for an unappreciated boss? How hard was that for you? Did you receive a blessing from it?

20 Minutes – Looking at the Text

Read Ephesians 6:10-24

- In this last section of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, he decides to remind them of where the real battles in life take place. Summarize in your own words what Paul had to say about the “real battle.”
- How does it help us to know that our struggles have real spiritual dimensions to them rather than just people or circumstances coming against us?
- According to Paul, where does our ability to withstand spiritual assaults come from?
- What words or phrases suggest that Satan has a personal interest in each of us and a plan to destroy us? How does thinking about that make you feel?
- Discuss the armor of God that Paul lays out in this chapter. How does each piece protect us or enable us to take ground from the enemy in our daily lives? Which “piece” of armor do you believe is the most important for you?
- Although Paul does not list *prayer* as a part of God’s armor, how much emphasis do you find on prayer in this section of Ephesians? What does Paul encourage the Ephesians to pray about?
- What do you think it means to “Pray in the Spirit....?” (verse 18) How effective do you believe God’s armor will be in protecting you without a life of prayer?

- Do you believe that most Christians (American Christians) have a strong prayer life? Why or why not? If not, what do you think hinders the average Christian in having a strong and consistent prayer life?

Application – 10 Minutes

- When have you personally experienced war in the spiritual realms?
- When did you recognize that spiritual forces were coming against you?
- How did you respond to that and what did you learn from that experience?
- How healthy is your personal prayer life right now? If you struggle with prayer, what seems to be the greatest barrier for you in developing a strong and consistent dialogue with God?
- What practical things might we do to *upgrade* our prayer experience if we struggle with it?
- This is our last study from the book of Ephesians. What has been the most significant thing that God has shown you through this study?

Prayer: Take prayer reports and prayer requests. Be faithful to pray for one another until you meet again.