

Ephesians

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God

An Eight-Week Bible Study

Using the CASE Model

Jesus for me – Jesus in me – Jesus through me



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Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV), unless otherwise noted.

Participants are welcome to follow along in their preferred translation.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Welcome to Our Journey Through Ephesians

We are about to enter one of the most beautiful, hope-filled, and identity-shaping books in all of Scripture. Paul's letter to the Ephesians is a sweeping vision of who God is, who we are in Christ, and who we are becoming together as His people. It is a letter about grace, unity, calling, and the astonishing love of God that makes all things new.

Ephesians invites us to slow down, listen deeply, and allow the Holy Spirit to “make a CASE” in us—to Convict, Assure, Stretch, and Empower us through the living Word. As Luther wrote, *“The Bible is alive... it lays hold of me.”* This study is designed to help you experience exactly that.

Over these weeks, you will not simply learn about Ephesians—you will enter it. You will reflect, question, listen, pray, and practice. You will explore your own story, hear the Christian story, and discover how God is weaving them together. You will encounter the God who “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ,” who “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine,” and who is forming us into “one Body” for the sake of the world.

My prayer is simple:

- that you experience the presence and touch of God,
- that you leave each session wanting to return,
- that you sense God inviting you into deeper trust and courageous love,
- and that you discover again what it means to live “a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

Come ready to listen.

Come ready to wonder.

Come ready to be surprised by grace.

Come ready to grow—together.

Welcome to Ephesians.

Welcome to the journey.

Serving In and through Christ and His love,

Bill Cullen

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The Bible Project has produced an 8:56-minute introductory overview of the epistle.
 It can be viewed at – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y71r-T98E2Q>

LEADER GUIDE

For the Ephesians: One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism, One God Study
Using the CASE Model — Jesus FOR me • Jesus IN me • Jesus THROUGH me

1. Your Purpose as Leader

Your role is not to lecture — it is to **shepherd conversation, guide reflection, and create space for the Spirit to work**. You are helping participants:

- Hear the Word
- Reflect honestly
- Receive grace
- Discern next steps
- Encourage one another

You are not responsible for “covering everything.” You are responsible for **creating a safe, Christ-centered environment** where people can grow.

2. The Flow of Every Session (CASE Model)

Each week follows the same rhythm. Keep this pattern steady — it forms people spiritually.

KNOW

Ground the group in the text.

- What does the passage say?
- What is Paul addressing?
- What stands out?

Goal: Understanding before interpretation.

CONVICT

Let the Law do its work.

- Where does the text challenge us?
- What assumptions or habits are exposed?

Goal: Honest reflection, not shame.

ASSURE

Let the Gospel speak.

- What does God promise here?
- Where is Christ’s grace explicit?

Goal: Anchor identity in Christ, not performance.

STRETCH

Invite growth.

- What new understanding or behavior is God nudging?
- What needs to be released or embraced?

Goal: Spirit-led transformation.

EMPOWER

Name the resources God provides.

- How does the Spirit equip us?
- What truth strengthens us?

Goal: Confidence rooted in God’s power, not our own.

APPLY

Move from study to life.

- What specific action will you take this week?
- Who will you bless or serve?

Goal: Incarnating Jesus' presence in daily life.

3. How to Prepare Each Week (10–15 minutes)

1. **Read the main Scripture passage** slowly, twice.
2. **Skim Part 1** (Leader Background).
3. **Choose ONE question** from each CASE section in Part 2.
4. **Pray for your group** by name.
5. **Begin with confidence** — you don't need to master everything.

4. How to Lead the Session (60 minutes)

Opening (5 minutes)

- Welcome
- Brief prayer
- Optional: one-sentence check-in ("One word to describe your week")

Scripture Reading (5 minutes)

- Read the passage aloud
- Ask: "What word or phrase stood out to you?"

CASE Discussion (40 minutes)

- Use the 6 questions you selected.
- Move naturally — you don't need to force transitions.
- Let silence work.
- Affirm contributions.
- Keep the tone grace-filled.

Apply & Pray (10 minutes)

- Ask: "What is one thing you will do this week to incarnate Jesus' presence?"
- Close with prayer, naming themes that surfaced.

5. Tips for Effective Leadership

- **You set the tone**
Warmth, humility, and curiosity create safety.
- **Less is more**
You do not need to teach everything in Part 1.
Use it only to clarify or enrich discussion.
- **Honor time**
End on time. People will trust you more.
- **Guide, don't dominate**
Your voice should not be the loudest in the room.
- **Encourage Scripture engagement**
Ask: "Where do you see that in the text?"
- **Normalize vulnerability**
Model gentle honesty in Convict and Stretch sections.
- **Celebrate growth**
Affirm steps of faith, however small.

6. Handling Common Challenges

- **If someone dominates**
“Thank you — let’s hear from someone who hasn’t shared yet.”
- **If discussion goes off track**
“Let’s bring this back to the passage.”
- **If someone becomes emotional**
Pause.
Acknowledge.
Pray briefly.
Continue gently.
- **If no one answers**
Rephrase the question.
Or ask: “What do you notice in the text?”

7. Your Weekly Checklist

- Read the passage
- Choose 6 questions (one per CASE step)
- Pray for your group
- Start and end on time
- Keep Christ at the center
- Encourage one concrete action in Apply

8. Your Encouragement as Leader

- You are not leading alone.
- The Spirit is already at work in every participant.
- Your task is simply to **create space** for God’s Word to do what God promises it will do.
- As you lead, remember: *“He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.”* – 1 Thes. 5:24

The CASE Model — A Participant's Guide

Each session in this study follows the same rhythm. We call it the **CASE model** as God in Scripture makes His CASE. Once you learn the pattern, you will find that it mirrors the way God's Word has always worked — moving us from understanding to conviction, from grace to growth, and from empowerment to action.

Here is how each session flows:

KNOW

We begin by grounding ourselves in the text. *What does the passage actually say?* We look at context, key details, cultural background, and the situation Jesus, through Paul, is addressing. Before the Word can work on us, we need to understand it on its own terms.

C — CONVICT

The text holds up a mirror. Where does it challenge our assumptions, habits, or blind spots? Where does the Law do its work — exposing our need, our self-sufficiency, our distance from God's design? *Conviction is not condemnation*; it is the honest recognition that we need a Savior.

A — ASSURE

The Gospel speaks. Where does this passage anchor us in God's grace, Christ's finished work, and the Father's love? This is the heart of Christian theology, particularly Lutheran theology: **assurance rests not in our performance but in Christ's promise and grace**. Here we hear the good news that silences the accuser and sets the captive free.

S — STRETCH

Now the text invites growth. How does it push us beyond our comfort zone into deeper trust, bolder faith, or new understanding? Stretching is not about guilt — it is about possibility and opportunity. The God who assures us also calls us forward.

E — EMPOWER

The Holy Spirit equips. What resources — the Word, the Sacraments, the community of faith, the Comforter Himself — does Jesus provide to sustain us? We are never sent out empty-handed. Empowerment is God's provision for everything He asks.

APPLY

We move from the time of the early church into our world. What concrete, specific step will you take this week to live out what you have received? Application makes the study personal and practical — faith taking shape in daily life as Jesus, through His Spirit, is formed in us.

A Note on the Pattern: The CASE movement — **Convict** → **Assure** → **Stretch** → **Empower** — follows the ancient rhythm of **Law and Gospel**. The Law convicts us of our sin and need; the Gospel assures us of Christ's grace and mercy. From that assurance, we are stretched toward maturity and empowered for mission. **Know** and **Apply** bookends this movement, grounding each session in Scripture and sending participants into their daily lives. This is not a formula — it is the heartbeat of how God's Word has always worked.

Each lesson has three tools. (1) Part I is primarily for the leader, but can be very helpful for participants who want “a little more.” (2) Part 2 is the primary participant discussion guide. When the guide asks participants to choose a Bible passage from a list, the list can be found in Part I. (**NOTE:** There will often not be time to cover all the questions.) Leaders, ahead of time, should pick one question from each of the six areas they want to be sure to include. ★Questions are suggested. (3) Part 3, “*For Personal Reflection and Discussion*,” is for participants who want to do some prep-study during the week before the group discussion. *This is meant to be optional, but available.

All three parts uses the CASE model:

Know – **C**onvict – **A**ssure – **S**tretch – **E**mpower – Apply

Appendix II

Appendix II consists of 56 devotional thoughts based on Bible passages from Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians. These are supplemental devotions and were not originally written to be used as part of the study. They were the author’s personal devotional thoughts, which some readers might find useful.

Group Covenant

At the back of this study guide is a “Group Covenant” that group members may choose to make with one another. This covenant is not being made with God with Divine consequences. It is a group covenant (agreement/pledge) between group members for a period of eight weeks. The intention of the covenant is to encourage members to support each other (both during group meetings and outside them) and to establish accountability to and for each other.

SPECIAL NOTE TO LEADERS: These lesson plans are guides. They are not set in concrete. Leaders should feel free to modify, delete, or add questions in a given lesson. Groups should also feel free to cover a lesson in multiple weeks if desired. The two things that leaders and groups want to maintain are: (1) dependence upon and faithfulness to the Biblical texts, and (2) the flow of (a) know, (b) convict, (c) assure, (d) stretch, (e) empower, and (f) apply. If groups cover a given lesson across multiple sessions, each session need not include all six elements; however, the lesson as a whole should include them all.

STRONG ENCOURAGEMENT TO LEADERS: Before each lesson, read ALL the suggested Scripture passages for that lesson. YOU KNOW YOUR GROUP! **Choose** from the passages listed those you believe will best serve your group. Likewise, choose the questions you will use.

EPHESIANS

ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM, ONE GOD

WEEK ONE – PART 1 – THAT YOUR HEARTS BE ENLIGHTENED

Scripture: Ephesians 1

Theme: Reflections on who we are and what we have in and through Jesus.

KNOW

In Chapter 1, Paul writes to establish our Christian identity as apostles and saints, and as Christ's Body, the church. Our identity is an identity in Christ and through Christ. Eleven times in verses 3-13, Paul will use the prepositional phrases in Christ, or in Him, or through Christ, or through His blood to flesh out our Christian identity and what it means.

Before Pentecost, Jesus' followers were primarily called or identified as "disciples" (*μαθητης / mathētēs*). After Pentecost and the receiving of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' followers were primarily called or identified as "apostles" (*ἀπόστολος / apostolos*).

1. V. 1 – How does being an apostle differ from being a "disciple"?
 - How or to what extent are Christians to be both disciples and apostles? (Mt. 4:19; Mt. 28:19-20; Jn. 17:15-18; Acts 1:8; Col. 1:28-29; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 4:2)
 - Do you see yourself as both a disciple and an apostle? For you, which role is dominant?

In the earliest Greek manuscripts, the words "in Ephesus" do not appear.¹ The earliest manuscripts say, "to the saints," in Greek, "to the *'hagiois'* (*ἁγίοις*)." Hagios/saint did/does not necessarily imply that the person had his or her halo on straighter than most other people. To be a saint is to be "holy," "sacred," "consecrated." It is to be "set apart." It is not to be "set apart from." Rather, it is to be "set apart for." It is to be set apart *for* the purposes of God. All Christians, all who bear Christ's name, are "saints" as "in Christ" we are all set apart for God's purposes (Mt. 4:19; Jn. 15:16-17; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:17-20).

2. V. 1 – What does it mean to you and what does it mean for you to be called a saint? How do you feel about having the identity of being a saint, of being "chosen," "called," and "set apart" by God for His purposes? (see Ro. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Pe. 4:10-11)
 - As God's saint, one chosen, called, and set apart by God, what is your/our primary response-ability? (see Mt. 4:19; Mt. 22:37-40; Jn. 13:34-35; Jn. 15:12,16-17; 2 Cor. 5:17-20)?
3. Vv. 22-23 – As Jesus' apostles and saints, we are members of Jesus' Body, the church; our identity is now "Christian." As His Body, we are to incarnate His presence in the world.
 - For what purpose has Jesus chosen to continue to be incarnate in the world through His Body, the church (see Col. 1:24,28-29)?
 - With what response-ability has He entrusted us/you?

¹ A common understanding of this epistle is that it was a circular epistle being circulated among a number of faith communities; Ephesus was one of them.

C – CONVICT

4. Eph. 4:1 instructs us to live lives worthy of our calling. And Eph. 4:16 tells us that the Body/church will grow when or as each of us does his or her part.
 - When and how have you failed to live a life worthy of your calling (see 1 Cor. 13:4-8; 1 Cor. 16:14; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12-14; Jas. 4:17; 1 Jn. 3:16-18)

A – ASSURE

5. Vv. 3-14 – Again, note the prepositions in these verses and the object of these prepositions.
 - List the things being promised/assured and note the source, what these promises and assurances are reliant on (see 2 Cor. 1:20). (For an understanding of predestination) ²
 - Of what is God particularly wanting to assure you? Which of these things promised is most important to you at this time?

S – STRETCH

6. Vv. 17-18 – How/where is God’s Spirit of wisdom and revelation enlightening your heart and mind? How/where is God’s Spirit nudging you in understanding? ...in feelings? ...in behavior? What change is God desiring you to make?
 - What is hindering you or stopping you from making this change? What needs to be overcome or gotten rid of (see Jn. 15:1-2; Heb. 12:1-2)?

E – EMPOWER

7. Vv. 13-14 – Paul states that the Holy Spirit is God’s seal and/or guarantee. The Holy Spirit is God’s guarantee that He will make good on His promises. Our five physical senses enable us to know and navigate physical reality and physical truth. The Holy Spirit is like a sixth sense that enables us to know and navigate spiritual reality and spiritual truth.
 - How does the Spirit empower you? (see Acts 1:8; 2 Tim. 1:7)
 - What some truths you know through the Holy Spirit (see Jn. 14:16-17; Jn. 16:8-15; 1 Cor. 2:10-16; Eph. 1:3-8)
8. From the passages listed below, identify the one that is the most empowering for you as you think about the Spirit’s nudging and presence. Memorize it and/or make a computer poster of it, and place it somewhere you will see it regularly and be reminded.

Jn. 15:4-5 – “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

² Eph. 1:4-5 – a Lutheran understanding (and my personal understanding) of predestination and election is: (1) God desires all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4), (2) Jesus in His suffering and death has made atonement for the sins of all people (Ro. 6:10; 1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 10:10; 1 Jn. 2:2), (3) by making atonement for all sin, Jesus in effect has predestined/elected everyone to be saved, (4) this atonement is a free gift paid for entirely at Jesus’ expense (Eph. 2:8-9; Tit. 3:4-6), (5) to enjoy the gift one needs merely to receive (not reject) it through faith (Eph. 1:13-14; Mt. 12:31-32; 1 Th. 2:13-14). If one does not receive the gift by faith, one misses out on its benefits (e.g., salvation).

2 Cor. 3:4-6 – “Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. ⁵Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. ⁶He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit.”

2 Cor. 10:4-5 – “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Eph. 1:22-23 – “God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Eph. 3:20 – “[He] is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.

1 Jn. 4:4 – “You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”

APPLY

9. Martin Luther encouraged Christians to begin each morning with the sign of the cross in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thus reclaiming their baptismal identity as a beloved and forgiven child of God (Mt. 28:19; 1 Jn. 3:1).

- You are encouraged to personally adopt this practice or to develop a similar practice whereby you reclaim your identity as God’s beloved and forgiven child.

10. You are a part of Jesus’ Body, the church, a saint, and an apostle. What is one thing you can and will intentionally do this week to help complete what was lacking in Jesus’ affliction (Col. 1:24)³ ?

- Make a plan.
- You are only one member of Jesus’ Body. Are there other Body members you can invite to join or help you? If so, do so.

Closing Prayer.

³ Note: Nothing was lacking in Jesus’ work of “justification.” When Jesus died on the cross, He made atonement for all sin, once for all (1 Tim. 2:5-6; Heb. 10:10; 1 Jn. 2:2). What was lacking is in the work of proclamation. Not everyone knows or believes. This we seek to complete through our words and our deeds.

PART 2 – PARTICIPANT’S GUIDE

NOTE: Leaders, please pick at least one question from each of the six areas ahead of time to ensure you include them.

WEEK ONE — THAT YOUR HEARTS BE ENLIGHTENED –

Core theme: Identity in Christ and participation in His mission.

Ephesians 1

KNOW

1. How does being an apostle differ from being a disciple, and to what extent are Christians called to be both?
- ★ 2. What does it mean to you to be called a "saint" — set apart *for* God's purposes? How do you feel about that identity?
3. As members of Jesus’ Body, for what purpose does He continue His incarnation (bodily presence) through us?

CONVICT

- ★ 4. Where have you struggled to live a life worthy of your calling as “apostle” and “saint”?
5. When, how, and/or with whom do you struggle with incarnating Jesus’ presence?

ASSURE

6. List the things being promised/assured in vv. 3-14 and note what they rest on. Of what is God particularly wanting to assure *you* right now?
- ★ 7. Which promise in Ephesians 1:3–14 is most important to you right now? Why?

STRETCH

- ★ 8. How and where is God's Spirit of wisdom and revelation enlightening your heart and mind — in understanding, feelings, or behavior? What change is God desiring you to make, and what is hindering you?

EMPOWER

- ★ 9. How does the Holy Spirit empower you to live out your calling? What resources has He provided?
10. Which of the listed passages is most empowering for you as you think about the Spirit's nudging? Memorize it.

APPLY

- ★ 11. As a saint and apostle, what is one thing you will intentionally do this week to incarnate Jesus' presence?

PART 3 – For Personal Reflection & Discussion (Optional, but Available)

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in this passage?

2. What is your understanding of apostleship? ...of being a saint?

3. How and/or with what have Christians been blessed?

4. How is the Holy Spirit described, and what is the Spirit's role/function?

5. In what sense is the church Jesus' Body, His continued incarnation?

CONVICT

6. As a "saint," how are you doing? How are you doing as being a part of Jesus' Body, the church, in incarnating Jesus' presence in and for the world?

7. What needs to change in your life?

ASSURE

8. Which of God's blessing/riches is most meaningful to you at this time?

9. How has the Holy Spirit served you as God's seal and guarantee?

STRETCH

10. What is God calling you to more fully believe in this chapter? ...to embrace more fully?

11. What is hindering you from more fully believing and/or embracing the above?

12. What thoughts and feelings are you experiencing about your apostleship and sainthood, your being a member of Jesus' Body, His incarnation in the world?

13. What new way of thinking is emerging?

EMPOWER

14. For empowerment, memorize one of the passages below. Recite it to yourself often.

Mt. 19:26 – "Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Jn. 15:4-5 – “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

2 Cor. 3:4-6 – “Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant.”

2 Cor. 10:4-5 – “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”

Eph. 3:20 – “[He] is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.”

Phil. 2:13 – “It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

APPLY

15. As a saint and a member of Jesus’ Body, the church, what specific action will you take this week to incarnate Jesus’ presence and love?

16. This week I will serve:

Person: _____

Action: _____

When: _____

WEEK TWO – PART 1 – BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH FOR SERVICE

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10

Theme: Jesus Saves, Through Faith We Receive, In Service We Respond

KNOW

In chapter one, Paul established our identity as Christ's Body, the church, apostles, and saints. In Eph. 2:1-10, Paul will root that identity solely in grace, what God has done for us.

The pagan world of Paul's day believed they could appease the gods through offering sacrifice. The Jews took it a step further. They believed Yahweh could be appeased through sacrifice and through obedience to the Law. In both cases, appeasement rested in what people did. From Paul's perspective, a Biblical perspective, appeasement could and would never happen through our efforts or works. It could and would happen only by what He did: His mercy, His grace, His sacrifice.

Arguably, Ephesians 2:8-10 capture the breadth of God's creative and recreative (redemptive) intent more completely than any other three verses of Scripture. In these three verses we see: Jesus '**FOR**' us, Jesus '**IN**' us, Jesus '**THROUGH**' us.

- By **GRACE** – Jesus 'FOR' us, we have been saved.
 - Through **FAITH** – Jesus 'IN' us through the presence and workings of His Spirit, the Holy Spirit.
 - For **SERVICE** – Jesus 'THROUGH' us as His indwelling presence is manifest through us in love for the blessing of others.
1. Vv. 2:8-9 – The Reformation Era and particularly Lutheran theology was and is rooted in three "Solas": "*Sola Gratia*" (Grace alone), "*Sola Fide*" (Faith alone), and "*Sola Scriptura*" (Scripture alone).
 - Rather than saying we are saved by faith alone, why is it more accurate to say, "We are saved by grace alone, which we experience by faith alone, as it is understood and articulated by Scripture alone"?
 2. Vv. 4-5 – What is God's nature (see also 1 Jn. 4:8)?
 - How are our redemption and salvation rooted in the essence and nature of God (see also Ro. 3:23-25; Ro. 6:23)
 3. Martin Luther is commonly quoted as having said, "God does not need your good works, but your neighbor does." In truth, that quote comes from Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, as he summarizes Luther's teaching. What Luther actually said in a Christmas Day sermon was "*God does not need your works... therefore you should devote the works of faith to the benefit of your neighbor.*" "*God needs nothing from us; our neighbor needs everything.*"
 - Compare and contrast what Luther and Wingren wrote with what Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-10? ...with what John writes in 1 John 4:7-12?
 - What do Luther and Wingren mean? What does Paul mean? ...John mean?
 4. Before God, Jesus' sacrifice is all-sufficient. We contribute nothing; we receive everything by faith. However, the people among whom we live need our agape love—our commitment which expresses itself in acts of service.

- What do the passages below contribute to our conversation and your understanding of the role grace plays in the life of a Christian? ...faith plays? ...good works/acts of service play?
- Why/how is “faith” not a good work, but a “grace/Spirit” stimulated response, which, if grace is not resisted or misinterpreted, happens naturally?

Gal. 2:16 – “We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

Gal. 5:6 – “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”

Gal. 6:2 – “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Phil. 2:12-13 – “...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling [with reverence], ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” [words are Bill Cullen’s translation]

1 Tim. 2:3-6 – “This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all....

Tit. 3:4-6 – “⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

Jas. 2:17 – “So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.”

1 Jn. 2:2 – “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” (NIV)

C – CONVICT

5. C.F.W. Walther wrote that the proper distinction (use) of Law and Gospel is the second most important doctrine of the Christian church, right behind “justification by grace through faith.” ⁴

- What are ways you have seen or experienced Law and/or Gospel being misused?
- Which do you believe gets misused more often?
- When have you misused either the Law or the Gospel, or both?
- Which of the verses below convicts you the most?

1 Tim. 4:16 – “Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them.”(NIV)

2 Tim. 2:1-6 – “Remind them of these things, and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. ¹⁵Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth. ¹⁶But avoid irreverent babble, for it will lead people into more and more ungodliness.”

⁴ C.F.W. Walther was the first president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. He was also the first president and teacher of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Probably what he is most remembered for (which many consider his greatest contribution to the Church is his book *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*. Between 1884 and 1885, Walther, in a series of 39 lectures, presented the church with 25 Thesis. In 1929, these lectures were compiled into a book and published by Concordia Publishing House.

A – ASSURE

6. As we acknowledge our sin, God would also have us know that just as we are not saved by our works because of His grace in Jesus' atoning sacrifice, neither are we now condemned by our works, equally because of Jesus atoning sacrifice. Let the passages below speak to you. Memorize the one that speaks most strongly and/or personally to you today.

Jn. 3:16-17 – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Jn. 8:11 – “Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.’”

Ro. 3:23-25 – “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”

Eph. 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

1 Jn. 1:7-9 – “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 Jn. 2:2 – “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” (NIV)

S – STRETCH

A challenge we face, especially in a society focused on merit and on giving people what they deserve, is communicating God's unmerited and undeserved grace while avoiding both license and legalism. It is common to hear people using phrases like “He didn't or doesn't deserve...” or “She deserves...”. Using Law and Gospel as God intends will stretch us, pushing us to think and behave differently from society as a whole.

Uses of the Law

The church from the time of the Reformation has articulated three uses of the Law: (1) as a curb (1 Tim. 1:8-19) protecting us and others from our natural (sinful) tendencies to go out of bounds and do harm to others and/or to ourselves, (2) as a mirror (Ro. 7:7-14) where as we look at ourselves through the reflection of the Law we see our faults, our sins, and our desperate need for help, for a Savior, and (3) a map or a guide to a better way (Ps. 119:105), to God's way, to God's good and gracious will.

Uses of the Gospel

There are three corresponding uses of the Gospel that the church has historically practiced but left unarticulated until one of my University students told me he didn't like three of the Law because, in so teaching, it left one under the Law. The uses of the Gospel, historically practiced but formerly unarticulated, are: (1) an invitation to walk in God's revealing light, to take off our mask and be real, assuring us we will still be loved and forgiven (1 Jn. 1:7-9), for assurance (Ro. 3:23-25; 1 Jn. 2:2), as we take off our mask and look in the mirror of the Law, the Gospel assures us that atonement has been made for our sins and we are indeed forgiven, and (3) for empowerment (Jn. 15:4-5; Eph. 3:20; 2 Pe. 1:3-4), Jesus, through His Spirit indwelling us to do through us that which He asks of us.

7. Think of a relationship where Law dominates to a suffocation of grace.
8. Think of a relationship where grace has led to a minimization of the Law and to permissiveness.

E – EMPOWER

9. As you think about being stretched in mind, heart, and behavior, regarding your understanding and practicing of Law and Grace, which of the verses below do you find to be most helpful or empowering?

Jn. 15:4-5 – “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

2 Cor. 12:8-10 – “Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Gal. 5:22-23,25 – “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.... ²⁵If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”

Eph. 3:20 – “[He] is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

Phil. 1:9 – “It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,”

2 Pe. 1:3-4 – “His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

APPLY

Applying the message of Eph. 2:1-10 means being so confident of God’s love, forgiveness, and grace that you live life with no need to merit or deserve; rather, you are free from self-concern and thus able to be other-concerned. Rather than seeking to merit, you seek to love as you have been loved. (Eph. 4:32; 1 Jn. 4:7-12)

Choose at least one of the three following “Apply” suggestions.

10. Make a banner to the effect of (include images as the Spirit leads):

GRACE ➡ **Faith** ➡ **Serves**
(Revealed) **(Receive)** **(Response)**

11. As a group, brainstorm potential scenarios needing a Law response and needing a Grace response. Take turns role-playing these scenarios. Two will play out a scenario. The rest of the group will observe. Once the scenario has been played out, the group will critique the inaction, identifying what was done well, what was done less well, and what could have been done to improve the exchange.

Once a scenario has been role-played and critiqued, a new pair will role-play another scenario for the group to critique. Continue role-playing scenarios as time allows or until you run out of scenarios.

12. We/you have been graced/blessed by God. We/you are a new creation created and recreated for good works that God has planned for you to do. Identify at least one way you can and will grace and bless someone this week who is in need of God's touch and blessing?

Closing Prayer.

PART 2 – PARTICIPANT’S GUIDE

NOTE: Leaders, please pick at least one question from each of the six areas ahead of time to ensure you include them.

WEEK TWO — BY GRACE, THROUGH FAITH, FOR SERVICE

Core theme: Grace received becomes love expressed.

Ephesians 2:1–10

KNOW

- ★1. Why is it more accurate to say we are saved “by grace alone, through faith alone,” rather than “by faith alone”?
- 2. How do Luther’s and Wingren’s statements (“God does not need your good works, but your neighbor does”) clarify Ephesians 2:8–10?
- 3. Why/how is faith not a good work, but a grace-stimulated response?

CONVICT

- ★4. When/how are you tempted to misuse either the Law or the Gospel, or both? Which do you misuse more often?

ASSURE

- ★5. Which of the listed Gospel passages speaks most strongly to you today? Memorize it.

STRETCH

- ★6. How does God’s grace challenge the “merit mindset” of our culture — and your own thinking?
- 7. Think of a relationship where Law suffocates grace. Think of a relationship where grace has led to permissiveness. What does each teach you?

EMPOWER

- ★8. Which passage is most helpful for you as you think about being stretched in your understanding and practice of Law and Grace?
- 9. Which empowering passage best helps you live by grace?

APPLY

- ★10. Grace concerns itself with need rather than merit. This week, focus on asking "What does this person need?" rather than "What do they deserve?"
- 11. How can you intentionally bless someone this week as a response to God’s grace?

PART 3 – For Personal Reflection & Discussion (Optional, but Available)

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in this passage?

2. What is your understanding of grace? ...of faith? ...of works/service?

3. What relationship do you see between grace, faith, and service?

4. What is the difference between saying, “We are saved by faith” and saying, “We are saved by grace through faith”?

CONVICT

5. What part of this passage challenges you? What part of this passage makes you uncomfortable?

6. C.F.W. Walther wrote that the proper distinction (use) of Law and Gospel is the second most important doctrine of the Christian church, right behind “justification by grace through faith.”
 - What are ways you have seen or experienced Law and/or Gospel being misused?
 - Which do you believe gets misused more often?
 - When have you misused either the Law or the Gospel, or both?
 - Which of the verses below convicts you the most?

ASSURE

7. Identify the passage below you find to be most comforting and/or assuring at this time:

Jn. 3:16-17 – “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

Jn. 8:11 – “Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more.’”

Ro. 3:23-25 – “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”

Eph. 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

1 Jn. 1:7-9 – “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 Jn. 2:2 – “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” (NIV)

STRETCH

8. What is God calling you to more fully believe in this chapter? ...to embrace more fully?

-
9. What is hindering you from more fully believing and/or embracing the above?
-
10. What thoughts and feelings are you experiencing about your apostleship and sainthood, your being a member of Jesus' Body, His incarnation in the world?
-
11. What new way of thinking is emerging?
-

EMPOWER

12. For empowerment, memorize one of the passages below. Recite it to yourself often.

Mt. 19:26 – “Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Jn. 15:4-5 – “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

2 Cor. 1:20 – “All the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

2 Cor. 3:4-6 – “Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant.”

2 Cor. 10:4-5 – “For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. ⁵We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

APPLY

13. Grace concerns itself with need rather than merit. Grace asks, “What does this person actually need at the moment?” It does not ask, “What does this person deserve or merit?”
- This week, focus on asking the grace question rather than the merit question.

WEEK THREE – PART 1 – ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM, ONE GOD

Scripture: Ephesians 2:11-21; 4:4-6

Theme: No More “Us vs. Them” — We Are Now All “US”

KNOW

We live in an “us” vs. “them” world. In some environments, where the outcome does not negatively affect the relationship between competitors or the well-being of either competitor (e.g., healthy athletic competition), temporary competition can be entertaining and fun. In most other cases, an “us” vs. “them” mindset is not Biblical and is against God’s will. God’s intent is for all to be “us.”

In Eph. 2:11-21, Paul tells us that Jesus came to tear down the walls that erect an “us” vs. “them” mentality and lifestyle. In Eph. 4:4-6, Paul tells us there is “one body and one spirit,”...“one hope,”... “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all.”

1. Read Eph. 2:11-21 and Eph. 4:4-6.
 - As a group, list observations you make from these verses.
 - Come to a consensus in regard to the three most important observations you made.
2. Read John 17:20-26.
 - How does knowing that Jesus prayed these words the night before He would be crucified add to or intensify what Paul wrote in the Ephesians passages?
3. How important was it to God to bring reconciliation to a broken and divided world? To what extremes did God go to bring reconciliation, restoration, and unity, both with Him and with one another (see Ro. 5:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:6-8)?
 - What does it mean to be reconciled? What does reconciliation look like in practical terms?
 - Who all is to be included (see 1 Tim. 2:3-6; 1 Jn. 2:2)?
 - What role(s) has God entrusted to us individually and collectively (2 Cor. 5:17-20; Gal. 6:2; 1 Pe. 3:15)?

C – CONVICT

4. Since the Fall in Genesis 3, our world is plagued by division, divisiveness, and competition. Countries are divided both in regard to other countries and in regard to political groups within a country; religions are divided; traditions within religions are divided; schools are divided; states and cities are divided; genders are divided; ethnic groups are divided. There are even divisions within families. It would appear that any time you have more than one person, there is going to be a level of division (really, even within oneself there frequently is division (Ro. 7:15-23).
 - God created things to be different, but He never intended for there to be division or divisiveness. Difference is to be celebrated; however, God’s creative and redemptive intention was and is concord/harmony. What is the difference between “being different” and “being divisive”?
 - What area of divisions and divisiveness most impacts you personally? In what relationship(s) is division and divisiveness most evident in your life?
 - How have you been and how are you a contributor to the division and divisiveness?

A – ASSURE

5. How comforting do you find 1 John 2:1-2 (NIV)?

“My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

6. Which of the passages below do you find to be most assuring and comforting at this time?

Ro. 3:23-25 – “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”

Eph. 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Heb. 10:10 – “We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

1 Jn. 1:7-9 – “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 Jn. 2:2 – “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.” (NIV)

S – STRETCH

7. What are things that commonly create division and divisiveness?

Note: Not all division is bad (some can be fun – e.g., athletic teams). Division that causes divisiveness is what is always bad. Divisiveness creates animosity, and it leads to viewing the other as an enemy.

- Which of the things listed are divisive?
- What tends to cause a divisive nature? Can the divisive nature be eliminated?
- What language would help create harmony? ...attitude adjustment needs to happen? ...what behaviors need to change?

E – EMPOWER

God desires unity, yet there are different kinds or levels of unity He would have people experience and enjoy, depending on the nature of their relationship. The unity that a husband and a wife share is different from the unity that next-door neighbors share. The unity that believers in Christ share differs from the unity non-believers share or that a believer and a non-believer share.

8. How can/do each of the following empower and assist in developing and maintaining unity: (1) public worship, (2) celebrating the Sacrament of the Altar, (3) baptism, (4) group Bible study, (5) prayer, (6) serving together, (7) fellowshiping together?
9. What pointers do the passages below provide for establishing and maintaining unity:

Mt. 12:36-37 – “I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, ³⁷for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Lk. 17:3-4 – “Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, ⁴and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

Ro. 12:3 – “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”

1 Cor. 9:19-22 – “For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.”

Gal. 6:2 – “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Eph. 4:29 – “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Eph. 4:32 – “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

Eph. 5:21 – “...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. ”

Phil. 2:3-4 – “Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

Col. 3:12-14 – “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.”

Col. 4:5-6 – “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

Jas. 1:19,26 – “Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.... ²⁶If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless.”

10. Which of the above passages is most helpful for you at this time?

APPLY

11. Identify one person or relationship in which you want to work for reconciliation (this may be the person’s reconciliation with God, the person’s reconciliation with another person, or your reconciliation with the person.

- Choose at least three of the above passages to give you practical guidance for the task.
- Identify the first step, or the next step. (Always be thinking about the next step.)

Closing Prayer.

PART 2 – PARTICIPANT’S GUIDE

NOTE: Leaders, please pick at least one question from each of the six areas ahead of time to ensure you include them.

WEEK THREE — ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM, ONE GOD

Core theme: Moving from "us versus them" to God's "one Body."

Ephesians 2:11–22 & 4:4–6

KNOW

1. How does Paul describe the unity Jesus creates between Jews and Gentiles?
- ★2. What does “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God” mean for the identity of the church today?
3. How does knowing Jesus prayed Jn. 17:20-26 the night before His crucifixion intensify what Paul writes?
4. As a group, identify three observations you, by consensus, agree are most important from Eph. 2:11-21 and 4:4-6.

CONVICT

5. Where do you see division, hostility, or “walls” in your own life or community?
- ★6. What area of division and divisiveness most impacts you personally? How have you been a contributor to it?

ASSURE

7. How does Christ’s reconciling work assure you personally?
- ★8. Which of the listed passages do you find most assuring and comforting right now?

STRETCH

- ★9. What is the difference between being *different* and being *divisive*? What language, attitude, or behavior in you needs to change?
10. Where is God calling you to pursue unity, reconciliation, or peacemaking?
11. What commonly creates division and what promotes harmony?

EMPOWER

12. What resources has God given you to live out unity?
- ★13. Which of the listed passages for unity-building is most helpful for you at this time?

APPLY

- ★14. Identify one person or relationship where you want to work for reconciliation. What is the first step?

PART 3 – For Personal Reflection & Discussion (Optional, but Available)

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in this passage?

2. What is the difference between having different religions and having different denominations?

3. What is the basis of Christian unity? How does Christian unity differ from denominational unity?

4. What does Christian unity require? What does denominational unity require?

CONVICT

God desires all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:3-6). Theological differences should not cause division or fighting, but should bring us to the table for discussion and mutual edification as we seek and pursue truth together.

5. How are differences handled in the circles of which you are a part?

6. When and what are the differences causing division and fighting in the circles of which you are a part?

7. For you personally, how convicting are: Mt. 12:36-37; Gal. 5:15; Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:5-6; 2 Tim. 2:14-16,25; Jas. 1:19,26?

8. What needs to change in your life?

ASSURE

9. Which of the passages below is most comforting and assuring for you at this time?

Ps. 103:8-12 – “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. ⁹He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. ¹⁰He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; ¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

Ro. 3:23-25 – “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”

1 Jn. 1:7-2:2 (NIV) – “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. ⁸If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we

make him out to be a liar, and his word has no place in our lives. ^{2:1} My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

STRETCH

10. Jesus came to seek and to save (Lk. 19:10), and He entrusted us with the ministry of reconciliation.

“Christian love draws no distinction between one enemy and another, except that the more bitter our enemy's hatred, the greater his need of love. Be his enmity political or religious, he has nothing to expect from a follower of Jesus but unqualified love. In such love there is no inner discord between the private person and official capacity. In both we are disciples of Christ, or we are not Christians at all.” – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

- What people or what types of people do you tend to avoid?

11. What new ways of seeing and valuing is God seeking in you and from you?

12. How would a greater sense of mission help?

EMPOWER

13. For empowerment, memorize one of the passages below. Recite it to yourself often.

Mt. 5:43-44 – “[⁴³“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’
⁴⁴But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

Mt. 9:10-13 – “As Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ ¹²But when he heard it, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Jn. 17:22-23 – “The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Ro. 12:3-5 – “For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

1 Jn. 1:3-4 – “That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

APPLY

14. As one who has been redeemed and who is a part of a greater whole, reach out to a part of Jesus' Body you have tended to discount, devalue, or ignore. Reach out with appreciation and Jesus' love? Begin by making a list of things you value in this person or things God values in him or her.
-

15. This week I will reach out to:

Person: _____

Action: _____

When: _____

WEEK FOUR – PART 1 – BEYOND IMAGINATION

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21

Theme: The Height, Depth, Width, & Breadth of God's Love

KNOW

These verses of Scripture are a prayer, a prayer for the Ephesians and a prayer for us. Other than Jesus' "High Priestly Prayer" (Jn. 17), this is arguably the most meaningful prayer in Scripture. It is meaningful not because of what it asks of or from God, but because of what it acknowledges of and about God. God is a God whose love surpasses understanding (v. 19) and a God whose power is beyond imagination (v. 20). This is a God, our God, who saves and who empowers. He is the God who does not simply ask for our homage, but a God who indwells within us – serving us and empowering us (v. 20). This makes ALL the difference!

1. What stands out for you in this prayer? What captures your attention and your imagination?
 - What is stated and/or implied about God and about us in vv. 14-15?
 - What is stated and/or implied in vv. 16-19?
 - How is God's love described?
 - How would you describe God's love? (see Ro. 5:7-8; 1 Jn. 4:9-10)
 - What is stated and/or implied in vv. 20-21?
 - How is God's power described?
 - Where is God's power located?

What is the greatest thing you, in your wildest imagination, can imagine? God's love and power are far, far greater than that. Why think so small?

V. 17 – Paul prays that Christ (Jesus) might “dwell” within us. Dwelling is more than merely existing. Jesus exists within all Christians (all who in faith receive His grace), but dwelling is more than mere existence. Paul's thoughts here capture Jesus' words in John 14:4-5. Dwelling/abiding implies being at home, with full reign over the house/our life, moving freely at will.

2. What comforts you in this prayer? What excites you? To what does it lead your imagination?

C – CONVICT

3. Most Christians do not verbally take God's name/Jesus name in vain. However, in Eph. 3:14, Paul says our family name comes from God. Our family name is “Christian,” derived from Christ. Every time we sin, we bring dishonor upon our family name; thus, we break the commandment, “Do not take the name of the Lord in vain.” (see Ex. 20:7; Ro. 2:23-24)
 - As you bear Christ's name, “Christian,” reflect on the times and ways you have taken His name in vain this week, bringing dishonor on the name you bear by sinning. Privately, silently confess. (Groups that are comfortable in talking openly about their sins may choose to do so.)
4. In 1 Thessalonians 5:19, Paul instructs us not to “quench the Spirit.” Where, when, how do you tend to “quench the Spirit” by not embracing the fact that God is able to do more than we can imagine?

A – ASSURE

5. Again God speaks, hear and reflect upon God's words of assurance and forgiveness:

Ro. 3:23-25 – “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.”

Eph. 2:8-9 – “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Heb. 10:10 – “We have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”

1 Jn. 1:7-9 – “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

1 Jn. 2:1-2 (NIV) – “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

- Which of the passages above do you find to be most assuring and comforting today?

S – STRETCH

6. God's love for us and for all people surpasses knowledge (v. 19), and His power which is at work within us is greater than anything we can even imagine (v. 20), which in itself is beyond imagination.

F.B. Meyer wrote, “We never test [tap] the resources of God until we attempt the impossible.” And J.B. Phillips wrote a book entitled *Your God Is Too Small*.

- How and why do we/you limit God with our small thinking?
- Where are we/you most tempted to limit God or put boundaries on Him?
- In what area of your life do you believe God is inviting you and the Spirit is nudging you to take a new step of faith? ...in our life as a community?
- What is holding you/us back from taking a step of faith in God's love and power?

E – EMPOWER

7. Read Mk. 5:19; Jn. 20:30-31; 1 Jn. 1:1-3. Personal testimonies can be a very empowering tool of the Spirit.

- If you can, tell about a person whose testimony has inspired and/or empowered you?
- Do you have a personal testimony to share of God's love and/or power?
- Which of the four following Bible stories do you find to be more inspiring and/or empowering, (1) Peter walking on the water (Mt. 14:25-33), (2) the feeding of the 5000 (Jn. 6:5-13), (3) Peter preaching at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41), (4) the story of Stephen (Acts 7:1-60)?

APPLY

8. As a group, plan a celebration of some specific demonstration of God's love that surpasses knowledge and/or some demonstration of His unimaginable power.
9. Referring back to the "Stretch" section, make a plan to take the "new step of faith" that you believe God is inviting and nudging you to take.

Closing Prayer.

PART 2 – PARTICIPANT’S GUIDE

NOTE: Leaders, please pick at least one question from each of the six areas ahead of time to ensure you include them.

WEEK FOUR — BEYOND IMAGINATION

Core theme: Trusting God's limitless love and power.

Ephesians 3:14–21

KNOW

- ★1. What stands out in this prayer? What does it say about God's love and power, and where is God's power located?
- 2. What does it mean for Christ to *dwell* in us, as opposed to merely *exist* in us?
- 3. What comforts or excites you in this prayer?

CONVICT

- 4. Where do you struggle to trust the breadth and depth of Christ’s love?
- ★5. Where do you tend to "quench the Spirit" by not embracing the fact that God can do more than you can imagine?

ASSURE

- 6. Which part of Paul’s prayer most reassures you of God’s love and power?
- ★7. Which of the listed passages do you find most assuring and comforting today?

STRETCH

- ★8. F.B. Meyer wrote, "We never tap the resources of God until we attempt the impossible." In what area of your life is the Spirit nudging you to take a new step of faith? What is holding you back?

EMPOWER

- ★6. Which of the listed Biblical stories do you find most inspiring and empowering?
- 7. Can you identify a testimony (personal or of another) of God's love or power?

APPLY

- ★8. Trusting in God's love that surpasses knowledge and His power beyond imagination, what new step of faith will you take this week? Make a plan.

PART 3 – For Personal Reflection & Discussion (Optional, but Available)

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in this passage?

2. How would you describe God? ...His love? ...His power?

3. V. 15 – What name has God given us?

4. What response-ability comes with our family name? ...with His love and power in us?

CONVICT

5. F.B. Meyer wrote, “We never test [tap] the resources of God until we attempt the impossible.” And J.B. Phillips wrote a book, *Your God Is Too Small*.
 - How small is your God?
 - How and why do we/you limit God with our small thinking?

ASSURE

6. Which of the Biblical stories below do you find most comforting and/or assuring of God’s power? ...of His love?

Mt. 27:42-43 – Jesus being taunted by the crowd to come down from the cross

Mt. 27:46 – Jesus on the cross being forsaken by His Heavenly Father

Mk. 5:1-20 – Casting out of a man a legion of demons

Jn. 6:5-13 – Feeding of the 5000

Jn. 8:1-11 – Jesus defending the woman caught in adultery

Jn. 11 – Raising Lazarus from the dead

Jn. 20 – Jesus appearing to His disciples after His resurrection

STRETCH

7. In what area of your life is the Holy Spirit nudging you to take a step of faith, to think bigger, to get out of the boat?

8. What is hindering you from more fully believing and responding in faith? Why is it scary?

EMPOWER

9. Which of the Biblical stories below do you find most inspiring and empowering?
 - **Exodus 14:26-31** – Moses parts the Red Sea
 - **Josh. 6** – Joshua and the Battle of Jericho
 - **Judg. 7** – God reduces Gideon’s army to 300
 - **1 Kings 18:20-40** – Elijah and the prophets of Baal
 - **2 Kings 6:15-23** – Elisha and the Syrian Army
 - **Dan. 3:8-29** – Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego
 - **Mt. 14:25-33** – Peter walks on water

- **Acts 7:54-60** – Stephen radiates the countenance of God while being stoned to death
- **Acts 2:14-39** – Peter preaches a sermon converting 3000 people
- **Acts 20:7-12** – Paul raises Eutychus from the dead

APPLY

10. Trusting in the love of God which surpasses knowledge and understanding, and trusting in the power of God, which is greater than anything I can imagine, a new step of faith I will take this week is:

The Step:

WEEK FIVE – PART 1 – OUR CALLING

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-16

Theme: Living a Life Worthy Takes TEAMWORK

KNOW

In Ephesians 4:1, the word “therefore” (in Greek οὖν/oun) is very significant. It lets us know that the first three chapters are directly related to the following chapters, and that chapters 4-6 are contingent on and flow out of chapters 1-3. In essence, Ephesians 1-3 and Ephesians 4-6 are two sides of the same coin. Metaphorically, the coin is Jesus. On the one side (Eph. 1-3), Paul established our Christian identity. Our identity is “in Christ,” through whom God, in His surpassing love (3:19) in unimaginable power (3:20), has lavished (1:8) upon us every spiritual blessing (1:3). The other side of the coin (Eph. 4-6) is our Christian life and living. Our life and living are also “in Christ.” It is as we abide in, dwell in, live in our Christian identity – Jesus (Jn. 15:4-5) that our Christian lives/living is God-pleasing and fruitful (2:8-10; Phil. 2:12-13⁵).

1. Ephesians 4:1-16 – Identify three things that catch your personal attention in this passage.
2. What is your understanding of “vocation” or “calling”? (For a deeper discussion, see Appendix I)
 - Eph.4:1-3,15 – What does “a life worthy of one’s calling” look like? (see Mt. 4:19; Jn. 13:34-35; Jn. 15:12,16-17; 1 Cor. 16:14)
3. Vv. 4-6 – Is, or to what extent, is oneness to be a goal of our calling? (see Jn. 17:20-23)
4. In v. 4:7, the word grace (in Greek χάρις/charis) is not referring to God’s unmerited love and favor. It refers to Spiritual gifts, abilities, and endowments given to people to make God’s presence and love real for people and to build His Body, the church. (See Eph. 4:16; 1 Cor. 12:7)
 - How does “grace” as used in v. 7 fit into and/or influence your understanding of vocation (calling) back in 4:1?
 - What do Ro. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:12-26; 1 Pe. 4:10-11 tell us about this grace (giftedness) and how we should view it?
5. Vv. 11-13 begin to address particular roles people might be given or appointed to as they live out their vocation/calling to love others as Jesus has loved us (Jn. 13:34). The roles listed in v. 11 are primarily “equipping” roles.
 - V. 12 – Who is being equipped? For what purpose?
 - What does v. 13 suggest about the goal of Christianity? (see also Jn. 17:21,23; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:28)
6. What does v. 14 suggest about “a” purpose of maturing? (see Jn. 17:15-18)
7. V. 16 – What parallel can you draw between Christ’s Body—the church and a football team?

⁵ Phil. 2:12-13 says, “...work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you....” As we read these verses, it is important to note two things: (1) Paul writes, “work out,” he does not write, “work for.” Paul assumes the reader already has salvation (a gift from God), and now he is simply telling his readers to work it out, live out you have. (2) “fear and trembling” in this passage have nothing to do with terror (1 Jn. 4:18), rather fear and trembling implies deep, compelling reverence.

- What is the difference between being called by God and volunteering to do something?

C – CONVICT

8. When God calls (not everything we are asked to do is a call from God), He is expecting an affirmative answer. He is not asking for volunteers (remember Jonah).
 - How prayerfully do you consider things you are asked to do in order to discern whether or not God is calling?
 - Are there things you refuse to do or even consider doing?
9. Which of the passages below do you find to be the most convicting?
 - **1 Cor. 16:14** – “Let all that you do be done in love.”
 - **Gal. 6:9-10** – “Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone....”
 - **Phil 2:14** – “Do all things without grumbling or disputing.”
 - **Col. 4:5-6** – “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”
 - **1 Tim. 4:14** – “Do not neglect the gift you have.”
 - **2 Tim. 1:6** – “For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”
 - **Jas. 1:22** – “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”
 - **Jas. 4:17** – “Whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.”
 - **1 Jn. 3:17-18** – “If anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

A – ASSURE

10. Which of the following passages give you the most comfort and assurance at this time?

Ps. 103:12 – “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”

Is. 1:18 – “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”

Ro. 6:10 – “The death he died, he died to sin once for all.”

Ro. 8:1-3 – “There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering.”

1 Jn. 2:1-2 – “I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ²He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”

S – STRETCH

11. Which would be a bigger stretch or challenge for you, adjusting the stewardship of your time, of your talents, or of your treasures?
12. Who is someone in your faith community who you struggle to value as God would have you value him or her?

E – EMPOWER

13. Which of the following passages give you the most comfort and assurance at this time?

Mt. 10:19-20 – “Do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

2 Cor. 3:4-6 – “Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant.”

2 Cor. 12:9-10 – “He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

Eph. 3:20 – “[He] is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.”

APPLY

14. This week, send three people notes of appreciation for their part (role) in the Body of Christ.
15. Looking to God for guidance, prayerfully consider (with a listening heart and mind) the things you are asked to do before you give an answer.
16. Spend some time reflecting on the stewardship of your time, talents, and treasures.
 - Make at least one change to bring at least one of these areas into better alignment with God’s calling.

Closing Prayer.

PART 2 – PARTICIPANT’S GUIDE

NOTE: Leaders, please pick at least one question from each of the six areas ahead of time to ensure you include them.

WEEK FIVE — OUR CALLING

Core theme: Every Christian is called and gifted for ministry.

Ephesians 4:1–16

KNOW

1. What does it mean to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received”?
2. What is your understanding of "vocation" or "calling," and how does it differ from occupation or volunteerism?
- ★3. How does "grace" as used in v. 7 (spiritual giftedness) connect to and shape the calling described in v. 1?

CONVICT

- ★4. Where do you resist humility, gentleness, patience, or bearing with others in love?
5. How prayerfully do you consider things you are asked to do in order to discern whether God is calling? Are there things you refuse to even consider?

ASSURE

6. How does knowing that Christ Himself gives gifts assure you of your place in the Body?
- ★7. Which of the listed passages gives you the most comfort and assurance right now?

STRETCH

- ★8. Which would be a bigger stretch for you — adjusting the stewardship of your time, talents, or treasures? Why?
9. Where is God calling you to use your gifts more fully?

EMPOWER

10. How does the Body of Christ help you grow into maturity?
- ★11. Which of the listed passages is most empowering for you as you think about living out your calling?

APPLY

12. This week, send three people notes of appreciation for their part in the Body of Christ. And: make at least one change to bring your stewardship of time, talents, or treasures into better alignment with God's calling.
- ★13. What change will you make to better align with God's calling?

PART 3 – For Personal Reflection & Discussion (Optional, but Available)

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in this passage?

2. V. 1 – How would you describe “living a life worthy of our calling”?

3. How do vv. 2-3 – How do these two verses qualify or define a life worthy of our calling?

4. How is “vocation” (calling) different from occupation? ...from volunteerism?

5. How is “vocation” (calling) a calling of all? (see Jn. 13:34-35; Jn. 15:16-17; Mt. 4:19; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:17-21)

6. What are some “roles” through which a person might live out his or her calling?

7. What specific roles are mentioned in v. 11?

8. V. 12 – What is to be the primary response-ability of people in these roles?

9. V. 16 – For the church to grow as God would have it grow, what is necessary?

10. What role(s) do you have through which you are to live out your Christian calling?

CONVICT

11. Identify three of your primary roles. Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 5 as to how worthily you are living out your Christian calling (Jn. 13:34-35; Jn. 15:16-17; Acts 1:8) in each of these roles.
 - To be more fruitful, what pruning needs to be done (see Jn. 15:1-2)?
 - To be more fruitful, what other care is needed (weeding, fertilizing, watering) for you to be more fruitful? (see Lk. 13:6-9) How might such care be provided and received?

ASSURE

12. Which of the passages below do you find most comforting and/or assuring of God’s care and nurture?

Josh. 1:9 – “⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Jer. 31:33 – “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.”

Lk. 12:28 – “If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!”

Ro. 5:7-10 – “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.⁹ Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

Phil 1:6 – “I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

Phil 2:12-13 – “...work out your own salvation with great reverence,¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” (Translation: Bill Cullen)

2 Tim. 2:13 – “If we are faithless, he remains faithful— for he cannot deny himself.”

1 Jn. 3:1-2 – “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are....² Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.

STRETCH

13. 1 Th. 4:9-10 encourage us to “love more and more.” Consider your various roles through which you have been called to love and to give witness to Jesus’ love and incarnate presence in His Body, the church; how can you give witness to God by loving more and more in each of these roles?
Where/how is the Spirit nudging you?

14. What is hindering you from loving more and more?

EMPOWER

15. Jn. 15:4-5 – What are you doing to abide in Jesus and that He might abide in you?

16. God has provided a variety of resources through which this abiding happens and is nurtured. How are you/can you make use of the tools of the Spirit listed below:

- Bible study (Col. 3:16)
- the Sacraments (1 Cor. 11:23-26; Gal. 3:27)
- Prayer (Phil. 4:6)
- Confession and Absolution (Jas. 5:16)
- Public Worship and Christian Fellowship (Heb. 10:22-25)
- Partnering in and for Ministry (Phil 1:3-6)

APPLY

17. Make a plan for better using at least one of the mentioned tools for “abiding in Jesus.”

18. What one thing can and will you do this week to live worthily as a follower of Jesus?

WEEK SIX – PART 1 – PUTTING OFF THE OLD & PUTTING ON THE NEW

Scripture: Ephesians 4:17-5:20

Theme: Being Clothed With Jesus Means a Whole New Way of Living

KNOW

1. Ephesians 4:17-5:20 – Identify three things that catch your attention in this passage.

In Ephesians 4:17-19, Paul describes the Gentile world of his day as:

- living in the futility of their minds.
- darkened in their understanding,
- alienated from God because of the ignorance
- having hard, calloused hearts
- caught up in/with sensuality and every kind of impurity,

David Reagan, in describing a self-centered life without God, says:

- Their religion – Humanism (self)
 - Their God – Materialism (money and possessions)
 - Their lifestyle – Hedonism (pleasure)
 - Their final state – Nihilism (despair)
- How descriptive of USA culture and society are Paul's assessment of Gentiles and Reagan's assessment of a life without God? How do you see this playing out in the USA?
 - Where do you see understanding darkened? Of what are people ignorant?
 - How are callouses formed, and what do callouses do?
 - When our hearts and minds are calloused, what happens?

2. Eph. 4:22-24,30 – What is our role in putting off the old self and putting on the new? What is the Holy Spirit's role? (see Jn. 15:4-5; Jn. 16:13-15; Ro. 12:2; 1 Cor. 2:10-16; Gal. 3:27; Gal. 4:19; Gal. 5:22-23; Phil 2:12-13; Col. 3:16; 1 Th. 5:19; 2 Th. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Tit. 3:4-6; Heb. 10:22-25)

Ephesians 4:25-5:18 presents us with an extensive list of commands.

3. Make a list of the commands given in Eph. 4:25-5:18. What are your thoughts and feelings as you read and list them?
4. Eph. 5:6-10 warn us against deception; this might be self-deception or the deception of others (see 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

A root question with which people of our culture, in our society, struggle is, "Who has the right to set the rules by which we are to live – us, the government, God? Who???"

5. Eph. 5:11-14 can sound like we are being instructed to be judgmental; yet, in numerous other places in Scripture we are instructed not to judge (see Mt. 7:1-2). What is the difference between judging people (something we are not to do) and judging behavior (something we are instructed to do)? (see Gal. 6:1-2)

C – CONVICT

6. Review the list of commands in Eph. 4:25-5:18. Which of these commands is convicting you? Which are you guilty of? Which do you personally struggle with?

A – ASSURE

7. Jesus has atoned for our sins, so there is no more guilt. There is no longer any debt. It has been paid, and satisfaction has been made.

- Which of the passages below is most meaningful for you at this time?

Ro. 3:23-25 (NIV) – “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice.”

2 Cor. 5:17,21 – “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come....²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Heb. 9:13-14 – “For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer, sanctify for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴ how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

Heb. 10:22-24 – “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”

1 Jn. 2:2 (NIV) – “² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

S – STRETCH

8. Identify one particular command in Eph. 4:25-5:18 that you feel a prodding of the Holy Spirit for you to address. What is one change the Spirit is prodding you to make?
9. Eph. 5:15-16 instruct us to “make the most of every opportunity.” (see Gal 6:9-10; Col 4:5; Jas 4:17; 1 Jn 3:18) Brainstorm some opportunities you individually and collectively have to do good?

E – EMPOWER

10. What is the key to our ability to do good? What can we be confident of?

- For empowerment, memorize one of the passages below.

Mt. 19:26 – “Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Jn. 15:4-5 – “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Jn. 17:15-18 – “I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸ As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

2 Cor. 3:4-6 – “Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, ⁶ who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant.”

Eph. 3:20 – “[He] is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.”

Phil. 2:13 – “It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

APPLY

11. Choose one of the following to focus your attention and energy in doing:

- Using the tools of the Spirit (e.g., Scripture, prayer, meditation, worship [both public and private], etc.), daily focus on putting off the old self and putting on the new self.
- Being informed by one of the commands in Eph. 4:25-5:18, focus on developing a new habit that will help you obey that command more faithfully.
- From the list of opportunities to do good that was developed by the group (question # under Stretch), choose one you will do this week either by yourself or partnering with others.

Closing Prayer.

PART 2 – PARTICIPANT’S GUIDE

NOTE: Leaders, please pick at least one question from each of the six areas ahead of time to ensure you include them.

WEEK SIX — PUTTING OFF THE OLD, PUTTING ON THE NEW

Core theme: Spirit-enabled transformation.

Ephesians 4:17–5:20

KNOW

- ★1. How descriptive of contemporary culture are Paul's portrait of the Gentile world and Reagan's four-point assessment? Where do you see hearts becoming calloused today?
- 2. What is our role in putting off the old self and putting on the new, and what is the Holy Spirit's role?
- 3. What is the difference between judging behavior and judging people?

CONVICT

- ★4. Review the commands in Eph. 4:25–5:18. Which are convicting you? Which do you personally struggle with most?
- 5. Which “old self” habits or attitudes do you struggle to put off?

ASSURE

- 6. How does Christ’s sacrificial love assure you as you seek transformation?
- ★7. Which of the listed passages speaks most meaningfully to you right now?

STRETCH

- 8. What new Christlike habit or virtue is God calling you to put on?
- ★9. Identify one command in Eph. 4:25–5:18 where you feel the Spirit prodding you. What is the one change the Spirit is calling you to make?

EMPOWER

- ★10. What is the key to our ability to do good? Which of the listed passages most empowers you?
- 11. What gives us confidence that transformation is possible?

APPLY

- ★12. Choose one: (a) using the tools of the Spirit, develop a daily practice of putting off something old and putting on something new, or (b) focus on developing one new habit of obedience to a specific command from this passage.

PART 3 – For Personal Reflection & Discussion (Optional, but Available)

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in this passage?

2. V. 17-19 – What do callouses do? What do they inhibit or prevent? Why does Paul use this to describe a life alienated from God?

3. How do vv. 22-24 – What is our role and what is the Spirit’s role in putting off the old and putting on the new? (see Jn. 15:4-5; Ro. 12:2; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:27; Col. 3:16)

4. What commands are found in Eph. 4:25-5:18?

5. Eph. 5:6-10 – What deceptions are you being tempted to buy into?

6. Eph. 5:11-14 – What should Christians judge, and what shouldn’t Christians judge? (see Mt. 7:1-2; Gal. 6:1-2). What is the difference between judging behaviors and judging people?

CONVICT

7. Of the command found in Eph. 4:25-5:18, what are the three with which most struggle?

8. V. 27 – How/when/where do you needlessly flirt with temptation, giving Satan opportunity?

ASSURE

9. God speaks. Which of the passages below speaks the most to you at this time?
Ro. 3:23-25 (NIV) – “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”
Ro. 5:7-8 – “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— ⁸but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
Ro. 6:23 – “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”
1 Cor. 5:17 – “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”
Tit. 3:4-7 – “⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

1 Jn. 2:1-2 (NIV) – “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

STRETCH

10. Eph. 4:25-5:18 – Regarding which three commands in this passage is the Holy Spirit most prodding you for change? What specifically is the Spirit nudging you to do and/or to not do?

11. What is hindering you from greater and more faithful obedience?

EMPOWER

12. With what has God provided us/you to enable a Godly response? Choose one of the passages below to memorize. Recite it daily to empower you.

Mt. 19:26 _____

Jn. 17:15-18 _____

1 Cor. 10:13 _____

2 Cor. 3:4-6 _____

Eph. 3:20 _____

2 Pe. 1:3-4 _____

APPLY

13. Focus on one of the commands found in Eph. 4:25-5:18 – Using the tools and resources the Spirit provides, make a plan for maturing in your obedience.

WEEK SEVEN – PART 1 – CHRISTIAN SUBMISSION = LOVE IN ACTION

Scripture: Ephesians 5:21-6:9

Theme: Christian Submission and Christian Love Are the Same: They are both putting the interest and well-being of others before oneself.

KNOW

1. What stands out for you in this passage? What question, if any, does the passage raise for you?

Most Bible translations, when dividing Scripture into chapters and sections, make a division of Ephesians 5 between verses 21 and 22. That encourages what I consider a misreading of Eph 4:22-5:9. I believe Eph 5:22-6:9 are to be read in the context of Eph 5:21. Ephesians 5:22-6:9 demonstrate that no one is excluded from the instruction to submit to one another.

Eph. 5:21 – Paul instructs ALL Christians to submit to one another. Christian submission flows from agape love, in which a person defers his or her personal interests in order to demonstrate value and care for others (see Phil. 2:3-8). Christian submission is not thinking poorly of oneself. **It is thinking of others rather than oneself.** Christian submission, like agape love and Christian humility, is other-focused rather than self-focused. ***It is self-forgetfulness in other-thoughtfulness.***

2. How do the above two paragraphs influence (color and/or change) your reading and understanding of Eph. 5:22-33? ...of Eph. 6:1-4? ...of Eph. 6:5-9?
 - What does a husband's love do if he loves as Christ loved/loves the church?
 - What does a wife's submission do if she, out of reverence for Christ, is valuing her husband?
 - What does a child's honoring of his/her parent do if the child is honoring the parent out of reverence for Christ?
 - In submitting to their children's best interests, how are parents going to value and treat their children?
 - How are servants and employees going to serve and go about their tasks if they are doing so out of a reverence for Christ?
 - How are masters and employers going to treat those working for them if Christ is to be revered in and through their interactions?

3. How do the following passages inform and shape your understanding of Eph. 5:21-6:9:

Mt. 20:25-28 _____

Jn. 13:12-17 _____

Jn. 13:34-35 _____

1 Cor. 10:24 _____

1 Cor. 13:4-8 _____

1 Cor. 16:14 _____

Eph. 4:32 _____

Phil. 2:3-8 _____

Jas. 1:19 _____

1 Jn. 3:16 _____

C – CONVICT

4. Identify relationships you have where you are in a position of authority. How are you exercising your authority? How are you abusing your authority?
 - How do the above passages come into play? To what extent do you submit to the *best interests* of those over whom you have authority?
5. Identify relationships you are under authority. How are you honoring those in authority?
 - How do the above passages come into play? To what extent do you submit to the *best interests* of those who have authority? Where/how are you failing to properly honor and serve?

NOTE: We are to submit to the “best interests” of others. Loving others as Jesus loves us does not mean that we always submit to their desires and wishes. (see Phil. 1:9)

A – ASSURE

6. God speaks. Which of the passages below speaks the most to you at this time?

Ro. 3:23-25 (NIV) – “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.²⁵ God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”

Ro. 5:7-8 – “For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

Ro. 6:23 – “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

1 Cor. 5:17 – “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

Tit. 3:4-7 – “⁴But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

1 Jn. 2:1-2 (NIV) – “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ²He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

S – STRETCH

7. Identify a relationship in which you need to be more submissive, more valuing, more honoring, and/or more loving?
 - What is hindering you from being submissive, valuing, honoring, and/or loving?
 - What needs to change in your attitude, your thinking, and/or your behaving?

E – EMPOWER

8. Does remembering how Jesus treats you motivate and/or empower you?
9. How does it help to remember that Jesus, through His Spirit, lives in you, to enable you to bear His character (fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control – Gal. 5:22-23) through you?

10. Consider trying this. When I have a hard time loving (or whatever) someone, I ask myself three questions, each with an obvious answer:

- (1) Does Jesus love this person? Obviously, YES!
- (2) Does Jesus live in me? Again, YES, by His grace and through His Spirit, Jesus lives in me.
- (3) Does the JESUS in me love this person? Once again, YES, the JESUS in me loves the person.

Solution: Get out of the way, Bill, and let JESUS do His thing.

11. Choose one of the passages below to memorize.

Jn. 15:5 – “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Gal. 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

Gal. 3:27 – “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”

Gal. 5:22-23 – “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control.”

Eph. 3:20 – “[He] is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

APPLY

12. What are three things you can and will do to submit to the person you thought of under the “Stretch” section? Think of a change in attitude, in thinking, and in behaviors. Note: You have formed habits of thinking, feeling, and behaving. Changing habits does not come easily or naturally. When you fail (and during the process of changing, you will at times fail), confess, seek forgiveness from the person, and begin again.

Closing Prayer.

PART 2 – PARTICIPANT’S GUIDE

NOTE: Leaders, please pick at least one question from each of the six areas ahead of time to ensure you include them.

WEEK SEVEN — CHRISTIAN SUBMISSION = LOVE IN ACTION

Core theme: Mutual submission as practical Christian love.

Ephesians 5:21–6:9

KNOW

- ★1. How does Ephesians 5:21 shape the entire passage?
- 2. What does mutual submission “out of reverence for Christ” mean?
- 3. How does reading Eph. 5:22–6:9 through the lens of 5:21 (mutual submission) change your understanding of the household codes?

CONVICT

- ★4. Where do you resist mutual submission or struggle to love sacrificially?
- 5. In relationships where you have authority, how are you exercising — or abusing — it? In relationships where you are under authority, how are you honoring it?

ASSURE

- 6. How does Christ’s love for the church assure you in your relationships?
- ★7. Which of the listed passages speaks most meaningfully to you right now?

STRETCH

- ★8. Identify a relationship where you need to be more submissive, more valuing, or more loving. What needs to change in your attitude, thinking, or behavior?

EMPOWER

- 9. How does Christ living in you empower you to love difficult people?
- ★10. Try the three-question exercise: Does Jesus love this person? Does Jesus live in me? Then does the Jesus in me love this person? How does this free you to act?

APPLY

- ★11. What three specific changes in attitude, thinking, and behavior will you make to submit to the person you identified? When you are not perfect in the process, what will you do?

PART 3 – For Personal Reflection & Discussion (Optional, but Available)

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in this passage?

2. V. 21 – Who is to submit? How do you understand Christian submission?

3. What relationship or similarity is there between: loving, submitting, honoring, not provoking, obeying, and not abusing or taking advantage of? What is at the root of all of them?

4. How does each of the following passages inform and shape your understanding of Christian submission?
Mt. 20:25-28 _____
Jn. 13:12-17 _____
Jn. 13:34-35 _____
1 Cor. 13:4-8 _____
1 Cor. 16:14 _____
Eph. 4:32 _____
Phil. 2:3-8 _____
Jas. 1:19 _____
1 Jn. 3:16 _____

CONVICT

5. In what relationships do you frequently fail to exercise/practice Christian submission as described in the above passages?

NOTE: We are to submit to the “best interests” of others. Loving others as Jesus loves us does not mean that we always submit to their desires and wishes.

A – ASSURE

6. God speaks. Which of the passages below speaks the most to you at this time?
Ro. 3:23-25 (NIV) – “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.”
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Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

1 Jn. 2:1-2 (NIV) – “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

S – STRETCH

7. Identify a relationship in which you need to be more submissive, more valuing, more honoring, and/or more loving?
-

- What hinders you from being submissive, valuing, honoring, and/or loving?
 - What needs to change in your attitude, your thinking, and/or your behaving?
-

E – EMPOWER

8. How does it help to remember: Jesus, through His Spirit, lives in you, to enable you to bear His character (fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control – Gal. 5:22-23) through you?
-

9. Consider trying this. When I have a hard time loving (or whatever) someone, I ask myself three questions, each with an obvious answer:

- (1) Does Jesus love this person? Obviously, YES!
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Gal. 5:22-23 – “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control.”

Eph. 3:20 – “[He] is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

APPLY

11. Who will you submit to out of reverence for Christ? _____
12. What will you seek to change in attitude, thinking, and/or behaving _____

WEEK EIGHT – PART 1 – THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-20

Theme: With the Armor of God We Are Prepared to Be In the World, Without Being Of the World

KNOW

Jesus, in His High Priest Prayer (Jn. 17:15-17), sends His followers into the world, a world in which we will be tempted. In order to be in the world without succumbing to the temptations of the world, we will need armor. The armor of God in Ephesians 6 is all defensive armor, except for the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. This Word of God is primarily a Word of Gospel. It is Jesus (Jn. 1:1-2,14) and His suffering, death, and resurrection for all humankind. This Gospel, Jesus, is the power of God for salvation (Ro. 1:16).

1. What catches your attention in Ephesians 6:10-20? What questions does the passage raise for you?
2. What does Eph. 6:11-12, Eph. 2:1-3, and 1 Pe. 5:8 suggest about the devil and life in this world?
3. What is the function of each part of God's Armor mentioned in Eph. 6:14-18?

Belt of Truth _____

Breastplate of Righteousness _____

Sandals of Readiness _____

Shield of Faith _____

Helmet of Salvation _____

Sword of the Spirit _____

Prayer _____

- What parts of God's Armor do you put on and wear daily? ...sometimes? ...rarely? ...never?
4. Vv. 18-19 – What is Paul's goal (see 1 Cor. 9:19-22)?

C – CONVICT

Most people have an Achilles Heel that is not being covered by God's Armor. Where are you most vulnerable?

5. In which areas of your life are you most susceptible to temptation and the devil's schemes?
6. Where/how do you needlessly flirt with temptation? (see Eph. 4:27)
7. How would you describe what type of shape or repair each part of your armor is in?
8. As you examine your Armor, what is God exposing?

A – ASSURE

9. What are you assured of by the following verses? Which passage is most meaningful for you at this time?

Josh. 1:9 – “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Jer. 31:3 – “The Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

Ro. 8:37-39 – “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Cor. 2:12-13 – “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

2 Cor. 1:20 – “All the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

Phil. 1:6 – “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

S – STRETCH

10. What can be done to improve your Armor wardrobe?

E – EMPOWER

11. As God speaks, which of the passages below empowers you the most today?

Mt. 19:26 – “Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

Jn. 16:13-14 – “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Col. 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

2 Tim. 3:15-17 – “from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Heb. 12:2 – “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

1 Jn. 5: 14-15 – “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”

APPLY

12. Choose one part of God’s Armor you will focus on polishing and wearing this week?

Closing Prayer.

PART 2 – PARTICIPANT’S GUIDE

NOTE: Leaders, please pick at least one question from each of the six areas ahead of time to ensure you include them.

WEEK EIGHT — THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD

Core theme: Remaining faithful and protected in spiritual warfare.

Ephesians 6:10–20

KNOW

1. What does Paul teach about spiritual warfare and the armor of God?
- ★2. What is the function of each piece of armor in Eph. 6:14-18? Which do you put on daily, sometimes, rarely, or never?

CONVICT

3. Where are you most vulnerable to spiritual attack or distraction?
- ★4. Where are you most susceptible to temptation and the devil's schemes? Where do you needlessly flirt with temptation?

ASSURE

- ★5. Which of the listed passages gives you the most assurance right now?

STRETCH

- ★6. What can be done to improve your armor wardrobe — specifically the pieces in the worst repair?

EMPOWER

7. How does prayer “in the Spirit” empower your daily walk?
- ★8. Which of the listed passages empowers you most today?

APPLY

9. What specific practice will help you “put on the armor” this week?
- ★10. Choose one piece of God's armor to focus on polishing and wearing this week. What does that look like practically?

PART 3 – For Personal Reflection & Discussion (Optional, but Available)

KNOW

1. What stands out to you in this passage?

2. What is stated or suggested about the devil and life in this world?

3. What are parts of God's Armor and their function in Eph. 6:14-18?

- What parts of God's Armor do you put on and wear daily? ...sometimes? ...rarely? ...never?

4. Vv. 18-19 – What is Paul's goal (see 1 Cor. 9:19-22)?

C – CONVICT

5. What is your Achilles Heel, where you are susceptible to the devil's schemes?

6. As you examine your Armor, what is God exposing?

A – ASSURE

7. What are you assured of by the following verses? Which passage is most meaningful for you at this time?

Josh. 1:9 – “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Jer. 31:3 – “The Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

Ro. 8:37-39 – “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Cor. 2:12-13 – “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

2 Cor. 1:20 – “All the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

Phil. 1:6 – “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

S – STRETCH

8. What can be done to improve your Armor wardrobe?
-

E – EMPOWER

9. As God speaks, which of the passages below empowers you the most today?

Mt. 19:26 – “Jesus looked at them and said, ‘With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.’”

Jn. 16:13-14 – “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. ¹⁴He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Col. 3:16 – “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

2 Tim. 3:15-17 – “from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”

Heb. 12:2 – “Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.”

1 Jn. 5: 14-15 – “And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.”

APPLY

10. Choose one part of God’s Armor you will focus on polishing and wearing this week?
-

Bible Study Group Covenant

A shared commitment for Christ-centered community

1. Our Purpose

We gather as a small group to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ — learning His Word, practicing His way of life, and encouraging one another to live as His people in the world.

2. Our Commitments to One Another

Presence

I will make participation in this group a priority.
If I must miss, I will communicate with the group leader.

Confidentiality

Personal stories shared in the group stay in the group.
Stories are ours to protect, not to repeat.

Scripture & Prayer

We will center our time on God's Word and prayer.
We will encourage one another to practice Scripture and prayer throughout the week.

Participation

I will contribute honestly and graciously.
I will listen well and avoid dominating our conversations.

Spiritual Growth

I will pursue growth in Christ through Scripture, prayer, and obedience.
I welcome gentle accountability and encouragement from the group.

Hospitality & Care

We will create a safe, welcoming environment for all.
We will support one another in times of need.

Mission

We will look for ways to bless our neighbors, serve our community, and live out the Gospel together.

3. Our Group Practices

Begin and end on time.
Share leadership responsibilities as gifts allow.
Communicate respectfully and promptly.
Resolve conflict biblically and directly (Matthew 18:15–20).

4. Our Covenant

By God's grace, we commit to these practices for the sake of Christ, His church, and His mission.

Signed:

Group Members: _____

Date: _____

Appendix I – Vocation/Calling

Our English word “call” comes from the Latin word *vocare* meaning “to call,” and our English word “vocation” comes from the Latin word “*vocatio*” meaning “a call” or “a summons.” Before the 16th century, the word vocation was used primarily by Christians and referred to God’s calling of humankind to faith and salvation. By the 16th century, the Roman Catholic Church had come to understand vocation in more narrow terms. By the 16th century, the word vocation had come to be equated with God’s calling of a person into the religious life of a priest, monk, nun, or the like. Today, in both Catholic and Protestant circles, the term “the call” or the phrase “being called” still commonly implies that God has summoned a person to the clergy or some other religious occupation in the church.

At the time of the Protestant Reformation the reformers in their understanding of the *priesthood of all believers* (1 Peter 2:9) broadened the understanding of vocation to include most occupations and most roles a Christian might have (1 Corinthians 7:20). Martin Luther and John Calvin particularly championed the concept of the “Priesthood of all believers” and the idea that most all occupations and roles in life should be understood as vocations or “callings” of and by God. Luther is famously quoted as saying:

“Every occupation has its own honor before God. Ordinary work is a divine vocation or calling. In our daily work, no matter how important or mundane, we serve God by serving the neighbor, and we also participate in God's ongoing providence for the human race.”

“God is milking the cows through the vocation of the milkmaid.” (*Table Talks*, Martin Luther)

Gene Veith commenting on Luther writes:

“Vocation is nothing less than the theology of the Christian life. It provides the blueprint for how Christians are to live in the world and to influence their cultures. It is the key to strong marriages and effective parenting. According to the classic Protestant theologians, our multiple vocations—in the family, the culture, and the workplace—are where sanctification and discipleship happen.”

In today’s vernacular, however, the term vocation most commonly refers to any “occupation to which a person is especially drawn or for which they are suited, trained, or qualified.” (Wikipedia)

Personally, I would like to talk about there being simply ***one vocation*** or calling, but also about people having many roles through which they might live out that one vocation/calling (most people have a variety of roles through which they live out that one calling).

The one vocation/calling shared by all people (particularly by Christians) is the ***vocation/calling to love***. People, through their various roles (their occupation, as a spouse, parent, son/daughter, sibling, friend, student, teammate, etc.), are to live out God’s call to love. What love looks like depends on the situation one is in and the role one has in it.

“Love is the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being.” (The Roman Catholic Church – CCC 2392)

“The vocation of every man and woman is to serve other people.” (Leo Tolstoy)

"Many people mistake our work for our vocation. Our vocation is the love of Jesus." (**Mother Teresa**)

"The whole purpose of every vocation is to 'love your neighbor as yourself' (Matthew 22:39)." (**Gene Veith**)

"A man does not live for himself alone in this mortal body to work for it alone, but he lives also for all men on earth; rather, he lives only for others and not for himself. To this end he brings his body into subjection that he may the more sincerely and freely serve others." (**Treatise on Christian Liberty, Martin Luther**)

"This is a truly Christian life. Here faith is truly active through love (Gal. 5:6), that is, it finds expression in works of freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done, with which a man willingly serves another without hope of reward; and for himself he is satisfied with the fullness and wealth of his faith." (**Treatise on Christian Liberty, Martin Luther**)

"...the Apostle has prescribed this rule for the life of Christians, namely, that we should devote all our works to the welfare of others, since each has such abundant riches in his faith that all his other works and his whole life are a surplus with which he can by voluntary benevolence serve and do good to his neighbor." (**Treatise on Christian Liberty, Martin Luther**)

"We conclude, therefore, that a Christian lives not in himself, but in Christ and in his neighbor. Otherwise he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith, in his neighbor through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love he descends beneath himself into his neighbor. Yet he always remains in God and in his love." (**Treatise on Christian Liberty, Martin Luther**)

Appendix II

“Speak Lord, Your Servant Is Listening” – 1 Sam. 3:10 **56 Supplemental Devotional Thoughts Based on Ephesians**

(Most passages are taken from the NIV translation of the Bible.)

The devotional thoughts that follow were NOT written to be a companion piece for this eight-week study. When originally written, there were 63 devotional thoughts. They were part of my daily devotional time as I worked my way through Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians. However, since this eight-week Ephesians study has 56 days and I have chosen 56 of these Ephesians devotional thoughts, which I thought individuals **might** find useful for their personal devotional time.

The Rhythm: Much of my devotional time is spent in dialogue with Jesus about the passage under consideration. It begins with Jesus speaking in and through the initial passage. I respond with my thoughts as He speaks to me. He then continues the dialogue by bringing to my mind other Bible passages to shape and reshape my thinking, feeling, believing, and valuing. All the additional passages in a given devotion are Jesus continuing the dialogue as I seek to listen to Him.

Week One

1. **Eph. 1:1** “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:” Jesus, this is an exciting verse. “Paul, an apostle”—in one sense, all Christians are apostles, that is, “sent ones.” With Your Great Commission – Mt. 28:19 – and the empowering of Your Spirit, – Acts 1:8 – we are all now new creations and ministers of reconciliation. – 2 Cor. 5:17-20. – Second, while we are both “saint” and “sinner.” You would have us see ourselves primarily as “saints,” as new creations in You, set apart not “from,” but set apart “for” Your purposes. To see ourselves primarily as saints is primarily to find our identity in You. To see ourselves primarily as sinners is to find our identity in Adam. – Gal. 2:20; Heb. 12:2 – Daily the old Adam is gone, and we ARE NEW CREATIONS in YOU. – Ro. 6:3-13; 2 Cor. 4:10-11 – Praise God! Now help me work out that which already is. Help me work out and live out my salvation as You are at work in me, accomplishing Your purposes through me. – Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 2:8-10
2. **Eph. 1:2** “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus, some two thousand years ago, You gave a special greeting of grace and peace by becoming grace and peace incarnate. – Jn. 1:14-17 – You came to live the life I was meant to live and to die the death I deserved to die. In You I know and have grace (God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense), and I have a peace, not a peace void of problems, but a peace in the midst of problems, a peace that transcends problems. – Jn. 14:27; 16:33; Phil. 4:7 – Thank YOU!
3. **Eph. 1:3** “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Jesus, Ephesians is all about our unity as Your body, the church, so “us” in this passage could be us as individuals or us as the church. Either way, the fact that we have been blessed with EVERY spiritual blessing boggles my mind. WOW! – Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 3:20; 2 Pe. 1:3-4 – I am blessed with Your indwelling and through Your indwelling I, in essence, have every spiritual blessing (to be distinguished from every spiritual gift or talent – 1 Cor. 12:4-26)! Thank You! As I have been blessed, move me now to always strive to

bless and to be a true blessing. – Gen. 12:3; Mt. 10:8; Ro. 8:32; 2 Cor. 1:20; Gal. 2:20; Col. 1:27-29; 1 Pe. 2:9

4. **Eph. 1:4** “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.” Jesus, this verse is awesome. What it suggests to me is...We have been chosen in You before creation to be holy and blameless, suggesting You knew before creation that we could and would never be holy and blameless in ourselves. We would need a Savior. – Ro. 5:7-8; 2 Cor. 5:21, Phil. 3:9 – We, that is humanity, chose to separate ourselves from You; but You chose to adopt us back, to predestine ALL people to be saved (not that all people will experience the salvation they have been predestined to enjoy). People’s predestination comes not in Your finicky election of some and not of others. Through Your suffering, death, and resurrection, You predestined/elected ALL for salvation inasmuch as You have made atonement for all sin, providing salvation for everyone. – 1 Tim 2:4-6; Heb 10:10; 1 Jn 2:2 – Your predestination/election comes in the fact that You have made provision for anyone and everyone, for ALL to be saved. If people go to hell, and, unfortunately, some will, it is not because You have not predestined and elected them for salvation, but because through unbelief they refuse the salvation You freely offer. How sad! Jesus, make me an effective messenger of Your salvation, Your election, and predestination of all people. Give me beautiful feet that I might “Go tell that You were born, lived, died and rose again that all might be saved.” – Ro. 10:14-17
5. **Eph. 1:7-8** “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accord with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.” Jesus, You do not bestow Your grace piece by piece—bit by bit. You give it lavishly. When I think of all that I have compared to what I deserve—WOW! What I have in You begins with forgiveness, but it does not stop there. It includes love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and, at least at times, self-control (You give it, I just don’t always use it). Your grace includes strength and companionship. It includes all I really need. Thank You for saving grace, for providing grace, and for empowering grace—all needed, none deserved. As I have freely received, help me to freely give. – Mt. 10:8; Jn. 1:16; Ro. 1:16; Ro. 8:32; 2 Cor. 12:8-10; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 4:11-13
6. **Eph. 1:13-14** “You were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession...” Jesus, our five physical senses reveal physical reality to us. Your Spirit is like a sixth sense, revealing to us spiritual reality with as much, if not more, certainty than our physical senses reveal physical reality. Your Spirit is the means through which we know spiritual truth, and Your Spirit is our guarantee (validator) that You and Your Gospel are real and true. Through Your Spirit, we know our salvation and the certainty of all Your promises. – 2 Cor. 1:20-22; 1 Cor. 2:10-16; 2 Th. 2:13-14; Eph. 4:30; 1 Th. 5:19; Gal. 5:25
7. **Eph. 1:17** “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” Jesus, my heart’s desire is to know You better in a knowledge that comes through Your self-revelation—this is not a knowing “about” You, merely cognitive, historic knowledge, but a personal, relational knowledge through

experiencing You. It is interactive knowledge. The Hebrew word is “Yada.” Touch me, reveal Yourself afresh to me today. – Jn. 4:42; 1 Jn. 1:1-3; Gal. 1:12; 1 Cor. 2:10-16; 2 Cor. 1:22

Week Two

8. **Eph. 1:18-20** “I pray the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so you may know the hope to which he’s called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance... and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead...” Jesus, this is awesome! It tells me I have RESURRECTION POWER, YOUR resurrection power at work within me, making me both a new creation and making me able TO LIVE as the new creation I am. WOW! – Eph. 3:14-21; 2 Cor. 4:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Pe. 1:3-4,8-9; Ro. 6:3-13; Ro. 8:5-14; Phil. 2:12-13. – You have entrusted to me a ministry of grace, the grace with which You have blessed me and which, through Your Spirit, I am now empowered. – 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 2 Cor. 3:4-6; Gal. 5:25; Col. 1:28-29 – May I today live a life worthy of Your trust, my calling. – Jn. 15:16-17; Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10
9. **Eph. 1:22-23** “God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” Jesus, reading this, I have a couple of thoughts. First, the church is not symbolically Your body. The church is Your body tangibly and concretely. The church is the way You continue to be incarnate (physically present) in the world today. As You are my/our head, direct and use me/us today as Your hands, Your feet, Your voice. – Ro. 6:13; Ro. 12:5; 2 Cor. 4:10-11; Eph. 2:8-10; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:24 – Second, You are the “head” of Your body, the church. This includes Lutherans, Catholics, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, etc. It includes conservatives, moderates, and liberals. It includes traditional and emerging. As I am a part of Your body, the church, and as people of all Christian denominations and flavors are a part of Your body, the church, I am one with them, for there is one body of which we are all a part. – 1 Cor. 12:12-26; Eph. 4:4-6. – Help me, help us to respect and value all members of Your body. Help me to recognize, respect, and honor our oneness in You. Your blood, which unites us, is greater than our differences and anything else that might try to divide us. – Eph. 2:13-22
10. **Eph. 2:1-4** “You were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world...But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” Jesus, You are awesome! Your grace is unbelievably awesome. Daily, I experience death and resurrection as my old Adam is daily drowned, and Your Spirit daily births Your life in me, daily making me a new creation. – Ro. 6:3-13; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 4:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:17 – As I now have Your DNA within me, continue to mature Yourself in me in order that I might increasingly reflect Your image – Your love and servant nature. – 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 4:13; Col. 1:28; Heb. 5:12-6:2; Jas. 1:4
11. **Eph 2:8-9** “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” Jesus, You saved us. You saved us by Grace—God’s Riches At Christ (Your) Expense—which we receive, experience, and enjoy through faith. Faith through which we receive grace is birthed in us as You took the initiative, offering Yourself in life and death as a gift, packaged in human flesh and communicated (made known) to us through Word and Sacrament. *Sola Gratia! Sola Fide! Sola Scriptura, Sola Christos!* I thank and praise You for Your love. In view of Your love and sacrifice, move me now to offer myself as a living

sacrifice, responsive to and expressing Your love. – Jn. 3:16-17; Jn. 15:16-17; Ro. 5:7-8; Ro. 12:1; 1 Jn. 3:16-18; 1 Jn. 4:7-16

12. **Eph. 2:10** “We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Jesus, You saved us in and by pure grace—Your undeserved and unmerited favor. But You saved us for works, that through us others might experience Your unmerited grace and favor as well. Move me so to live. Salvation is but a first step in Your creative and redemptive design. Your design is that Your Kingdom, Your reign of love, fully comes as we, Your followers, mature and are increasingly transformed into Your image, living productively and fruitfully as citizens of Your Kingdom of love and trust. – Mt. 4:17; Mt. 6:10 & 33; Lk. 17:20-21; Jn. 15:16-17; Acts 28:23,30-31; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:24,28; Phil. 2:12-13; Mt. 10:8; Gal. 5:6; Gal. 6:9-10; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Jas. 2:26
13. **Eph. 2:13-16** “In Jesus you who were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. He is our peace, making the two one, destroying the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.” Jesus, sin and death have been defeated, and You would have us unite as brothers and sisters in Christ, in You. It must pain You. I know that it pains me to see the conflict and competition between denominations, even between congregations of the same denomination, within congregations, and even within families. You died for us ALL to make us all ONE with You and ONE with one another. Our differences are real. They are not insignificant, nor should they be ignored. HOWEVER, neither should they be divisive. RATHER, our differences should drive all of us back into Your Word, inviting us to the table for humble conversation rather than arrogant debate. We all seek truth. YOU ARE THE TRUTH. – Jn. 14:6 – We need to be challenging and encouraging one another as family rather than judging one another and trying to defeat one another as hostile/demonic enemies. I like what Leonard Sweet says, “When we get to heaven, all of us are going to have to change our theology to some extent.” For all of us who acknowledge Your sacrificial death for our sins and Your victorious resurrection, Your cross and unifying blood are greater than any other theological differences we might have. This same blood, like a magnet, seeks in its redeeming grace to draw all those who do not yet know You into our diverse, yet united, family and fellowship as well. May it be so! – Ro. 14:1; 1 Cor. 8:1; 1 Cor. 13:1-8 & 13; 1 Cor. 16:14; Gal. 6:1; Phil. 4:3-6; Phil. 3:12-16; 2 Tim. 2:14-16,23-26
14. **Eph. 3:7-8** “I became a servant of the gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Jesus, my ministry is not about my ability (thank You!), but about my response-ability. You give me ministry, but I can and do minister ONLY as you give me the ability to minister. RESPONSE-ability comes with being given the ability by, in, and through YOU with which to make a response. Move me to faithfully respond, using the ability YOU provide me to be a blessing of YOUR grace in the lives of those I encounter today. – Jn. 15:4-5; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 3:4-5; 2 Cor. 12:8-10; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:28-29

Week Three

15. **Eph. 3:14-15** “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.” Jesus, first and foremost, our family name is not Lutheran, or Baptist,

or Catholic. First and foremost, my family name is not even Cullen. First and foremost, my family name is Christian, as first and foremost, it is Your family to which and in which I belong, and it is from You I receive my name. While You have always loved me and through Your suffering and death You paid the penalty for my sins and the sins of all humanity, at my baptism the Father has publicly declared me to be His beloved son in whom He is well pleased. At my baptism, I was officially adopted and declared to be a part of Your family. I now bear Your family name. Thank You for making me a part of Your family. Help me now to live a life worthy of our name, Christian, and to live life in a way that brings honor to Your name and mine. – 1 Jn. 2:2; Is. 43:1; Mt. 4:16-17; Eph. 1:5; Eph. 4:1

16. **Eph. 3:16-17a** “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Jesus, this is a part of one of my favorite prayers in Scripture. The realization that YOU are dwelling in me through Your Spirit is truly AWESOME. Through Your indwelling, You provide me with limitless potential—the potential of Your very being, consistent with Your will. May I increasingly grow in knowledge and expression of this reality in order that I might be one of Your blessings in the lives of the people I encounter. – Ro. 6:3-13; 2 Cor. 4:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:29; 2 Pe. 1:3-4
17. **Eph. 3:17b-19** “I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Jesus, I love this. Paul prays for the impossible that the Ephesians (really all people) might grasp and comprehend the incomprehensible, namely, the full richness of Your love. This is truly an impossible prayer because Your love is so vast. It is truly beyond comprehension as You, love incarnate, are beyond full comprehension. In this love, I know You, and from Your fullness I am fully filled, although I will never fully comprehend it nor fully contain Your fullness. – Jn. 13:1-12; Ro. 5:7-8; 1 Jn. 4:7-16 – As You have loved me, may others in increasing measure come to know and experience You and Your love through me. – 1 Jn. 4:7-8,19; Jn. 13:34-35; Eph. 4:32
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18. **Eph. 3:20** “He is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.” Jesus, this verse is mind-boggling. I have a good imagination, but YOUR power WITHIN ME can do immeasurably more. WOW! YOU are a “can-do” God and YOU “can-do” even in and through me. Move me to increasingly realize, claim, and release YOUR power and presence within me in order that I might be a blessing to people and that my life might be increasingly fruitful in and for Your Kingdom, Your reign of love. – Mt. 6:10; Jn. 14:12-14; Jn. 15:4-5; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Cor. 3:4-6; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 3:27; Gal. 5:22-23; 2 Tim. 1:6-7
19. **Eph. 4:1** “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling You have received.” Jesus, to live a life worthy of my calling requires me to live an incarnational, missional life. To truly follow You, I need to be a person of mission, in mission, for You were and are a man/a God of mission in mission. You became incarnate and lived among us as a missionary. As the Father sent You into the world in mission, so You now send us, send me. Guide and empower me that I might truly live a life worthy of my calling—a life following You into mission, a life extending Your salvation, a life nurturing Christian maturity (Christlikeness), a life meeting people in the personal and daily needs, resulting in Your Kingdom, Your reign of love being lived on earth even as it is in heaven. – Mt. 4:17; Mt. 6:10, 33; Acts 28:23,31; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Lk. 9:23; Jn. 13:1-17,34-35; Mt. 28:19-20; Mt.

17:15-18; Acts 1:8; Ro. 12:1; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; Is. 6:8; Jn. 15:4-5; 2 Cor. 3:4-6; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 1:24,28; 1 Jn. 3:16,18

20. **Eph. 4:2** “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” Jesus, this is succinct, profound, and challenging! Humble = self-forgetfulness in other-thoughtfulness. Humility is focusing on the value and interests of others rather than one’s own value and interests. Gentle = requires sensitivity and perceptiveness. Patient = hanging in there when you want to give up. Bearing with one another = is actively rather than passively caring. It means sharing in another’s pain and burden. It generally involves being inconvenienced. In essence, this verse is about being other-centered rather than self-centered. Empower and move me to be more humble, gentle, patient, and forbearing. – Ro. 12:15; Gal. 5:6; Gal. 6:2; Phil. 2:3-8; Jas. 1:19,22
21. **Eph. 4:4-6** “There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” Jesus, throughout his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul emphasizes our oneness through Your blood; yet we tend to focus on our differences—that which would divide us. Help us, help me, to increasingly focus upon our oneness in You and to live out that oneness as family—challenging, supporting, and, when necessary, lovingly admonishing each other. – Jn. 3:16-17; Jn. 17:20-22; 1 Cor. 1:11-13; 1 Cor. 12:13-26; Gal. 3:28-29; Eph. 2:13-22; 1 Jn. 2:2

Week Four

22. **Eph. 4:7** “To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.” Jesus, as I understand it, grace in this passage is not saving grace, but a grace that makes each of us unique through Your giftedness to each of us as individuals. It is a grace that makes each of us a distinctive part of Your Body, the Church. Thank You for uniquely gifting me and uniquely gifting each of us. Increasingly use each of us in our uniqueness according to Your will and individual giftedness in order that Your Kingdom might be advanced, and people might be blessed with Your love and grace. – Eph. 4:16; Ro. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 1 Pe. 4:10-11; Acts 28:23, 31
23. **Eph. 4:11-13** It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Jesus, these callings of apostle, etc., are not given to individuals so that the individuals with these callings do ALL the work entailed therein, but so that they can equip others, equip all Your people for works of service, for ministry.
24. Alan Hirsch suggests that since the time of Constantine, the church has focused upon the callings of pastor and teacher with an inward focus (focusing upon those who are already a part of Your body the church), to the neglect of the callings of apostle, prophet and evangelist which have a much more outward focus (a focus upon a ministry to those who are not yet a part of Your body the church). Hirsch suggests in his book “The Forgotten Ways” that we need to refocus and regain the roles of apostle, prophet, and evangelist if the world is to be reached with Your love and Your saving and transforming gospel.
- Finally, our end goal for people is not their “eternal salvation.” Eternal salvation is vitally important, but it is merely a first step. The end goal is that we become mature in You, in Christlikeness, in order that Your Kingdom and reign of love might be experienced by all. – Mt. 28:19-20 – Does not

instruct us to make mere “converts” but to make “disciples” who follow and obey You in everything You seek to teach us. – 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 1:28; Gal. 4:19; Mt. 6:10; Acts 28:23, 31 – Lead me and help me to be a part of this refocusing.

25. **Eph. 4:15** “Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.” Jesus, truth is important. It is very important as YOU are the truth – Jn. 14:6 – but just as important, if not more so, is love – because You are also love. – 1 Jn. 4:7-8; 1 Cor. 8:1; 1 Cor. 13:1-8, 13 – Help me to never compromise Your truth, but at the same time help me to always express Your truth in love for all concerned. The TRUTH is “You are LOVE and TRUTH.” If it is not spoken in love, it is not the WHOLE TRUTH. If it is not spoken in love, it is certainly not of You. – 1 Cor. 16:14
26. **Eph. 4:16** “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Jesus, Your Body, the church, can and will be fully functional only as each and every Christian (meaning me) does his or her part. We ought not to be competing with one another, nor should we be comparing ourselves to one another. Rather, we ought to be supporting one another, working in tandem for the advancement of Your Kingdom in both the salvation of souls and in Your reign of love, responding to needs as they arise. Help me neither shirk the role You have given me nor envy others' roles. Rather, move me to joyfully embrace the role with which You have entrusted me. Move me and all Christians to join Isaiah in saying, “Here am I, send me.” – Is. 6:8; Gal. 6:9-10. – Help me to appreciate and value all people for the ways You have gifted them and use them, encouraging and supporting them. – Ro. 12:3-18; 1 Cor. 12:12-26; Jas. 4:17; 1 Jn. 3:18
27. **Eph. 4:17-20** “You must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in understanding, separated from the life of God because of the ignorance in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. You did not come to know Christ that way.” Jesus, people form physical calluses by ignoring the messages their senses send of pain or discomfort. We form spiritual calluses in much the same way, by ignoring our consciences (the promptings of Your Holy Spirit). As spiritual calluses are formed, our hearts are hardened, and we become desensitized to the evils of the temptations we face. Jesus, although painful, rip from me the spiritual calluses I have formed in order that I might have a heightened awareness and an appropriate responsiveness to Your Spirit's promptings. – Jn. 14:26; Jn. 16:7-14; 1 Cor. 2:10-16; Eph. 4:30; 1 Th. 5:19 – As I live in and through Your Spirit, may I increasingly walk in and through Your Spirit. – Gal. 5:25
28. **Eph. 4:22-24** “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” Jesus, through my union with You, my old self is daily, moment by moment put off—crucified—and a new self is daily, moment by moment put on. By Your grace daily, moment by moment, I am a new creation. – Ro. 6:3-4; 1 Cor. 15:31; 2 Cor. 4:10-11; 2 Cor. 5:17 – As You live in me, move in me that in and through You and Your presence I might increasingly live a loving and fruitful life of servanthood and outreach and truly be a blessing to all those I encounter, particularly to the members of the congregation I serve, to the community we serve at Brookview Elementary School, and to the

community we serve at Concordia Lutheran Church and School. – Lk. 19:10; Ro. 6:11-13; Gal. 5:25; Gal. 6:9-10; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 4:5

Week Five

29. **Eph. 4:25** “Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.” Jesus, I like to think of myself as a truthful person, but this verse convicts me. If I am to be truthful now, I must confess that I have not always been truthful. I rarely (rarely, probably, is subject to interpretation) outright lie, but I do at times share truth in misleading ways, ways that color the truth to my agenda, which is basically lying. Jesus, You are truth incarnate. – Jn. 14:6 – If I am to incarnate You, I must share truth, but I also need to share truth in truthful ways. Forgive me for when I have been intentionally misleading or deceptive.
30. **Eph. 4:26** “In your anger, do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry.” Jesus, by Your grace, anger is an emotion that is pretty foreign to me. I am much more inclined to feel frustration, disappointment, hurt, loneliness, failure, jealousy, or emptiness than anger. As I experience negative emotions, give me wisdom in addressing them, knowing when and how to speak and when to remain silent. Consume me with Your love so that it (Your love), rather than any negative emotion, controls me. – Pr. 15:1; Pr. 29:11; 1 Cor. 16:14; Gal. 6:1, Col. 4:6; Jas. 1:19 – My feelings tend to want to make things about me. Help me to die to myself so that my focus might increasingly be upon others and their best interests. – 1 Cor. 10:24; Phil. 2:3-4
31. **Eph. 4:27** “Do not give the devil a foothold.” Jesus, this verse is not telling us to live cloistered lives away from all temptation; rather, it is telling us not to flirt with temptation or to “needlessly” put ourselves in its path. You send us into the world to be Your loving presence, that people might come to know You and to grow in Your grace. – Jn. 17:15-18; Ro. 10:14-17 – In the world, we will be confronted with many temptations, but we need not “needlessly flirt” with them. The more we are in the world, the more we need to be in Your Word so that, in the world, we are more influencers than the influenced. Build me up and fortify me with Your Word so that Satan does not gain a foothold while I live in the world, and so that I might boldly be Your loving presence in and to a lost and hurting world. – Mt. 5:16; Col. 3:16; 1 Pe. 5:8
32. **Eph. 4:28** “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.” Jesus, through Paul, You instruct us here to make our lives about others. We are to work hard and invest ourselves not merely so that we might have more and be able to indulge ourselves, but rather so that we might have to share and be able to give to those in need. As You richly have blessed me, move me to bless others. Regarding the time, talents, and treasures with which You have entrusted me, increase in me Your generous heart and Spirit. – Mt. 10:8; Lk. 12:48; 1 Cor. 10:24; 1 Cor. 12:7; 2 Cor. 8:1-7; Gal. 6:9-10; Jas. 4:17; 1 Jn. 3:16-18
33. **Eph. 4:29** “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.” Jesus, this verse always convicts and challenges me. Words are so potent. Benjamin Franklin’s statement that “words are more powerful than the sword” is so true, and the saying “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me” is such a lie. Hurtful and careless words tend to have a much longer and more devastating effect than broken bones. Help me to think before I speak and to speak with sensitivity so that my words are always edifying rather than destructive (This doesn’t

mean that they are always pleasant to hear. Our words must also confront sin, and that can sting.
 – Gal 6:1-2 – Keep me ever mindful of the T.H.I.N.K. acronym – Think, is it Truthful? Think, is it Helpful? Think, is it Inspiring? Think, is it Necessary? Think, is it Kind? If it is not truthful, helpful, inspiring, necessary, and kind, help me to keep my big mouth shut. – Pr. 10:19; 12:18,25; 15:1; Mt. 12:36-37; Eph. 4:16; Col. 4:6; Jas. 1:26

34. **Eph. 4:30** “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” Jesus, Your Spirit wants to do so much in me and through me, and in and through all people. It grieves Your Spirit when I do not allow Him free access and expression. Jesus, the fullness of life for me and for others comes not in my pursuing my agenda, but through seeking and pursuing Your agenda for me. Jesus, I seek to yield afresh to Your Spirit’s presence today. As I have life by Your Spirit, move me increasingly to walk in and by Your Spirit. – Gal. 5:16-25; 1 Th. 5:19; Acts 1:8; Acts 17:28; Ro. 6:11,13; Ro. 8:5-16; 2 Cor. 5:17-20
35. **Eph. 4:32** “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Jesus, loving “as You have loved me” – Jn. 13:34 – is asking a lot as I consider – Ro. 5:7-8. – To me, the words “kind,” “compassionate,” and “forgiving” all suggest a sensitivity to others and a valuing of others. It implies being other-focused regardless.... Rather than being self-absorbed, it is being other-absorbed. Jesus, I thank You for Your kindness toward me in spite of.... I thank You for Your compassion toward me in spite of.... I thank You for Your FORGIVENESS of me and Your SACRIFICE for me in spite of.... Jesus, “I” cannot love as You love, but YOU can love through me. Live Your love through me today. – Mt. 10:8; Mt. 18:21-22; Jn. 13:34-35; Jn. 15:4-5; Ro. 15:1; 1 Cor. 10:24; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; Gal. 6:2; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 4:13; Col. 1:28

Week Six

36. **Eph. 5:1** “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children.” Jesus, first, I find great comfort and assurance in Paul’s words, “as dearly loved children.” I am humbled that You would call and make me Your child. This is agape, unconditional love. You love me (and all people) unconditionally. Thank You!!! Second, I wish Paul had used a different word than “mimetai”— imitator. I have no ability “to imitate” You in “my” power. I need YOU! I am incapable of living my life “for You.” I need You in Your power to live YOUR life “in” me and “through” me. – Jn 15:4-5 – Through Your Spirit and by Your grace You have the ability to incarnate Your presence “in” and “through” me. Only in and through You, and in Your indwelling presence, am I able to do what You ask. May I not quench Your Spirit. – Eph. 4:30; 1 Th. 5:19; 2 Tim. 1:6-7 – Amen, so be it! – 2 Cor. 3:4-6; 2 Cor. 4:10-11; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 3:1-5; Gal.4:19; Phil. 2:13; Col. 1:29; 2 Pe. 1:3-4
37. **Eph 5:2** “Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” Agape love means living a life of selflessness. It is an unconditional commitment to the other’s best interests and well-being, giving/serving, then giving/serving some more. – Jn. 3:16; Ro. 5:7-8; 1 Jn. 3:16-18; 1 Th. 4:9-10 – Our society and culture have conditioned us to view life from a position of entitlement. “I pay my taxes, therefore I am entitled to certain benefits.” “I work hard and am entitled to a decent salary and a vacation.” “I got here first, so I deserve to go first.” The list goes on. “I go to church every Sunday and am entitled to have God bless me.” Jesus, You challenge us to see life not from a position of entitlement, but from a position of service. – Mt. 20:25-28; Jn. 13:1-17 – JFK’s famous statement. “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country” challenges us to be givers rather than takers. Paul and Scripture do the same. – 1 Cor. 9 and Phil. 2:3-8. – Jesus, free me from a

preoccupation with myself and from any sense of entitlement I might have in order that I might be fully available to others as You have always been available and are available to and for me. – Jn. 13:34-35; 1 Cor. 16:14; 1 Jn. 4:7-21

38. **Eph. 5:3** “Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, of any kind of impurity, or of greed; because these are improper for God's holy people.” Jesus, these words are very convicting, especially when You include the words “not even a hint” and “any kind.” These words address not only deeds of conduct, but our words and our thoughts as well. – Mt. 5:22 & 28 – I repeatedly fall short, and I must throw myself upon Your mercy and grace, which, thankfully, You generously bless me, although I am completely undeserving. Thank You! – Ro. 3:23-25; Ro. 6:3-4; Phil. 2:8-9; 1 Jn. 2:1-2 – Help me more faithfully live a life worthy of my calling, a life that reflects what You can do through Your indwelling presence and power even with the likes of me. – 2 Cor. 10:13; Eph. 4:1; 2 Pe. 1:3-7
39. **Eph. 5:5** “Of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” Jesus, this verse would be scary if it were not for You and Your great exchange. – 2 Cor. 5:21; Ro. 3:23-25; Ro. 5:12-21; Ro. 6:23; Gal. 2:16,21; Phil. 3:8-9; Heb. 10:10; 1 Jn. 2:1-2 – By Your grace (Your suffering, death, and resurrection), Your righteousness becomes my own. In You, I am a new creation, – Ro. 6:3,4,6,11,13; 2 Cor. 5:17 – and I get to share in Your life. Thank You. Move me to increasingly and faithfully live out, in accordance with Your will, the life and righteousness I have in and through You. – Phil. 2:12-13
40. **Eph. 5:6** “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.” Jesus, Satan has no legitimate power, but he is a master of deceit and deception. His specialty seems to be half-truth—just enough truth to hook us, and then he adds his own special twist, deceiving us. In John 8:44, You call him the “father of lies.” Jesus, instruct me in Your truth, Your whole truth, and help me instruct others so that we might know You and live You—the TRUTH incarnate. Jesus, in this campaign and election season, we especially pray for discernment, that we might recognize TRUTH amid half-truths and outright lies. Move those involved in campaigning (Democrat and Republican and whoever else) to speak TRUTHFULLY and to speak the TRUTH in love. – Jn. 8:31-32; Jn. 14:6; Jn. 17:15-18; Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:8; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:15; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Tim. 4:2-4
41. **Eph. 5:8-9** “You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth).” Jesus, light illuminates, enabling me to see clearly, and empowered by Your Spirit, it moves me to choose wisely. Lighten my path and lead me upon that path to live a life worthy of my calling—a life of loving, Spirit-powered servanthood where I value all others more than myself. – Eph. 4:1; Ps. 119:105; Mk. 10:42-45; Phil. 2:3-8
42. **Eph. 5:11** “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” Jesus, we live in a culture, even in the church, that tends to rationalize and tolerate sin. I am as guilty as the next. Forgive me. You took and take sin extremely seriously. So much so that You would be born a man, endure unimaginable suffering, and experience death in order to pay the penalty for it. While it is vitally important to be forgiving, sin needs to be recognized and addressed. It must not be ignored. People, including myself, need to be convicted by our sins and

not make light of them. It is as we are truly convicted that we truly appreciate the richness and graciousness of Your forgiveness and Your great sacrifice. Move me to increasingly call sin “sin” and to be disturbed by it. But then move me to proclaim in its full richness, beauty, and power Your mercy, Your forgiveness, and Your grace. – Is. 1:18; Is. 53:3-12; Lk. 18:9-14; Ro. 3:23-25; Ro. 5:7-8; Ro. 6:11-4; Ro. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 6:1-2; 1 Tim. 1:15; Jas. 4:17; 1 Jn. 1:7-2:2

Week Seven

43. **Eph. 5:15-16** “Be very careful how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity.” Jesus, so many opportunities are missed. Opportunities to be a blessing and to touch another person with Your love. Move me to live my life more intentionally rather than carelessly, and to be more sensitive to the impact of my words and actions on others. Help me better recognize and appropriately respond to the daily opportunities before me—the opportunities to touch people with Your presence and love, both through acts of service and through verbal witness. – Mt. 25:34-46; Col. 4:5-6; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; 1 Cor. 16:14; Gal. 6:1-2,9-10; Phil. 1:9; Phil. 2:3-8; Jas. 1:27; Jas. 4:17
44. **Eph. 5:18** “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.” Jesus, this verse makes me examine what motivates/stimulates and/or deadens me: wine/alcohol, circumstances, ego, relationships, convenience, Your Spirit? What? You indwell me through Your Spirit. Increasingly awaken and arouse Your Spirit in me that I might be moved by it and reflect YOU in everything I say and do. – Ro. 8:5-17; Gal. 2:20; Gal. 5:22-25; Phil. 2:12-13; 2 Th. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; Tit. 3:5-6
45. **Eph. 5:19** “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.” Jesus, for me, singing probably is not a good idea, as most would not consider the sounds coming out of my mouth to be making music or at all pleasant. However, I can speak words of grace. So, fill me with Your Word so that sharing it comes as naturally as breathing. Help me share Your Word with humility and in ways that are inviting, engaging, grace-filled, and empowering, rather than intimidating, burdensome, guilt-inducing, and demoralizing. – Col. 3:16; Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:5-6; 2 Tim. 4:2; Acts 20:20; 1 Th. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 10:22-25
46. **Eph. 5:21** “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Jesus, this verse sets up Eph. 5:22-6:9. We are all called to be submissive one unto another. Christian submission can be equated with agape love. Christian submission is simply putting the interest and well-being of others before your own. Move me, work in me a submissive (loving) heart, mind, and spirit. May the interests and well-being (not necessarily their wishes) of the other, whoever they might be, always take precedence over my own. – Mk. 10:42-45; Ro. 15:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:24; Gal. 5:13; Gal. 6:2; Phil. 2:3-8
47. **Eph. 5:25-26** “...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word.” Jesus, Your Word says, “wives submit,” “husbands love.” In Eph. 5:21, however, You, through Paul, instruct all of us to submit to one another. Actually, Christian submission and Christian love are pretty much the same. It is all about serving each other and putting the other's interests and well-being before one's own. Love (submitting) is about the beloved and putting the beloved's interests and well-being before your own. Increasingly, move me to love even when it involves setting aside my will, my agenda, and my time. – Jn. 13:34; Ro. 15:1-2; 1 Cor. 10:24; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; 1 Cor. 16:14; Eph. 4:32; Phil. 2:3-8

48. **Eph. 5:30** “We are members of his body.” Jesus, Lutherans, Catholics, Baptists, conservative, moderate, liberal, etc. – if we acknowledge YOU as Savior and Lord, we are all members of one Body—YOUR Body. Yet so often we do not talk or act as one Body. We berate and slander, ignoring the Eighth Commandment. Move me to increasingly recognize, honor, and celebrate our oneness, building up Your Body and its individual members and parts, rather than tearing it down. – Mt. 12:36-37; Jn. 17:22-23; 1 Cor. 1:10-15; 1 Cor. 12:12-26; Gal. 5:15; Eph. 2:13-22; Eph. 4:3-6; Eph. 4:29
49. **Eph. 6:7** “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.” Jesus, in love, You gave of Yourself 100% for me and for all humankind. Move me to act in kind—giving of myself wholeheartedly, 100%, in loving, faithful service—in serving You by serving others from the least to the greatest. Even better, help me not to think in terms of least or greatest, but simply in terms of personhood, in terms of being, valuing all equally. – Mt. 25:34-46; Ro. 12:1 & 3; Gal. 6:9-10; 1 Th. 4:9-10; Jas. 2:1; 1 Jn. 4:19-21

Week Eight

50. **Eph. 6:11** “Put on the full armor of God so you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.” Jesus, Satan is indeed a sly, crafty schemer. If I am not intentionally connecting with You every day, I can be unintentionally caught off guard and become a victim of his schemes. Keep me faithfully and diligently in Your Word so I can be Your presence in the world without being of the world, so I can be a positive influencer, rather than being unduly and unwittingly the influenced. – Mt. 4:4; Jn. 15:4-5; Jn. 17:15-18; Acts 2:42-47; Col. 2:6-8; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:15-17
51. **Eph 6:14** “Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist.” Jesus, three thoughts: 1) I typically do not “outright” lie, but I do at times share truth in “misleading” ways, thereby being untruthful. Forgive me. Help me to speak the Truth truthfully. 2) You are Truth incarnate! – Jn. 14:6. – To put on truth is to put on YOU! This is exciting and empowering, and it gives life meaning. However, it is also a little scary. Being Truth and speaking Truth truthfully, You were crucified. 3) You are love incarnate – 1 Jn 4:8. – Speaking and living Truth is to always speak and live a life of love. If my words and actions are not expressed in love, they do not communicate You, Your nature, and Your ways. Therefore, they distort Your Truth and malign You regarding whom I am to give witness in all things. – 1 Cor. 16:14; Eph. 4:15 – Help me, move me, to tell the TRUTH, the whole TRUTH, and nothing but the TRUTH. To You be the glory!!!
52. **Eph. 6:15** “...with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.” Jesus, “feet fitted” suggests a going, a sentness, a missional perspective, and “the gospel of peace” is the good news of reconciliation obtained by Your death and resurrection for ALL humankind. – Jn. 15:16-17; Jn. 17:15-18; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:17-21; Mt. 28:19; Acts 1:8. – Fit my feet today, Jesus. “Here am I, send me.” – Is. 6:8 – Give me boldness clothed in sensitivity and compassion in my sentness. – Col. 4:5-6; 2 Tim. 1:7
53. **Eph. 6:16** “Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.” Jesus, the shield of faith is faith in YOU. Through the eyes of faith, I am able to see that YOU, my shield, stand between me and Satan, the evil one, and Satan’s arrows/attacks are incapable of penetrating Your presence. Thank You for being my Rock, my Fortress, my Shield, and for fending off Satan’s arrows of temptation and doubt. Help me to always confront Satan’s temptation with the shield of Your presence and indwelling. With the shield of faith in Your

presence raised, move me to venture boldly forth in the ministry with which You have entrusted me. – Gen. 15:1; Dt. 33:29; 2 Sam. 22:31; Ps. 3:3; 62:2; 115:9; Ps. 144:2; Pr. 30:5; Mk. 9:24; Jn. 15:4-5; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 3:4-6; 2 Tim. 1:7

54. **Eph. 6:17** “Take the helmet of salvation...” Jesus, the helmet or assurance of salvation enables me to live adventurously in Your Spirit, even if such living should end in death – “For to live is Christ and to die is gain.” – Phil. 1:21 – Move me in Your Spirit to live an adventurous and fearless life of witness and service, for even if I should die in my witness or service, I simply gain a fuller life in Your presence. – Josh. 1:9; Ro. 8:31; 2 Tim. 1:7; 1 Jn. 4:4,18

55. **Eph. 6:17** “Take...the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” Jesus, our sword with which we can defeat Satan is Your Word. To effectively battle Satan, it is very important that we know Your Word in its fullness, as Satan also uses Your Word, adding his own special twists as he attempted to do with You in the wilderness. As I grow in Your Word, it becomes a less effective tool in Satan’s hands by which he attempts to manipulate and deceive me. Help me to dwell in Your Word, even as it/You, the Word incarnate, dwells within me. Through Your Word, guide and empower me to meaningfully touch the lives of those I encounter so that I am not merely a “hearer” of Your Word, but an actual “doer” of it. – Jas. 1:22; Mt. 4:4; Jn. 8:44; Col. 2:8; Col. 3:16; 1 Th. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:15-17

56. **Eph. 6:18** “Pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.” Jesus, I see prayer as being both a strength and a weakness of mine. Prayer, as a disciplined practice, is definitely not a strength, yet I am in an ongoing conversation with You throughout the day. At times I listen attentively, and at times I am only half-hearing what You have to say (just like in most of my friendships). For me, the most important part of prayer is listening, because You do not need me to instruct or inform You; I need You to instruct and inform me. Help me to be a better listener in prayer. You have enabled me to memorize a lot of Scripture. Throughout the day, You are also constantly bringing some of these Scriptures to mind, giving me guidance and perspective. Help me do a better job of paying attention and of heeding Your guidance. Your vision and will are always better than mine. – 1 Sam. 3:9-10; Mt. 6:7-8; Mk. 4:9; Phil. 4:6; 1 Th. 5:17; Jas. 1:5-8; Jas. 1:22