



Week 2

Pray for the Church

Memory Verse:

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.

Ephesians 1:17 (NIV)

PERSONAL STUDY

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

OPENING REMARKS:

Sometimes prayer can be difficult, and sometimes the flow of prayer takes over. It can be difficult to pray for those we are deeply concerned about when we are confused about their needs and what might be best for them. But it can also feel very natural to pray for those we love as we bring them before God.

Ephesians 1:15-23 is one of the longer prayer sections in Paul's letters. His prayer for the Ephesians overflowed with praise and thanksgiving as this was a church that was dear to his heart.

Paul prays in light of God's ultimate plan and the work of the Triune God. His prayer does not include trivial requests, but he prays that the believers will come to a deeper understanding of God's plan of salvation and their place in God's plan.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

Read Ephesians 1:15-16. What characteristic(s) of the Ephesians prompted Paul to be thankful? What is revealing about Paul saying that he has “not stopped giving thanks”?

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Read Ephesians 1:17-19. Using your own words, sum up the three things Paul is praying for in these verses.

Verse 17	
Verse 18	
Verse 19	

Who will need to be at work in us if we are to “know God better”? (Refer to verse 17)

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Read Ephesians 1:20. Verse 20 talks about the greatest display of power the world has ever seen. What happened, and why should we be excited about this power?

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Why is it important that Paul is praying for the Ephesians to “know” God’s power, rather than to “receive” this power? (Refer to verse 19.)

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Read Ephesians 1:21-23. What authority does Jesus have now?

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According to verses 22-23, how is the church, the body of believers, central to God’s plans for the universe?

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What role does the church play in your life?

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How do verses 20-23 expand on Paul's discussion of Christ's headship that began in verses 9-10?

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Someone has said, "The purpose of prayer is not to inform God of our needs, but to invite Him to rule our lives." Do you agree or disagree?

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Does Paul's prayer for the Ephesians agree with this statement?

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How do your prayers for Christians friends compare with Paul's prayer for his friends? What might need to change?

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Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12. What do you learn about praying for others from these verses?

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How do these verses help you with your own prayer life?

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Closing remarks:

John MacArthur writes the following in his book, *Our immeasurable blessings in Christ*: “*For Christians, prayer is like breathing. You don’t have to think to breath, because the atmosphere exerts pressure on your lungs and forces you to breathe. That’s why it is more difficult to hold your breath than it is to breathe. Similarly, when you are born into the family of God, you enter into a spiritual atmosphere wherein God’s presence and grace exert pressure, or influence, on your life. Prayer is the normal response to that pressure. As believers we have all entered the divine atmosphere to breathe the air of prayer. Only then can we survive in the darkness of the world...*

The fact is, every believer must be continually in the presence of God, constantly breathing in His truths, to be fully functional. God’s deeper truths cannot be seen with our eyes, heard with our ears, or comprehended by our

reason or intuition. They are only revealed to those who love Him.” And that is the reason prayer is so important.

Paul prayed that all believers would get a fresh gift of wisdom, to be able to see the things that people do not normally see, to have a deeper understanding of God’s plan of salvation and their place in God’s plan. This cannot be achieved without believers spending time in prayer. This can only be achieved by interceding for each other and the church.

Intercession is by definition a prayer for what someone else needs. Most Christians do not understand the principals behind a prayer of intercession because they are much more concerned about getting what they want. The basis of intercession is found in the following principles:

- The greater intercedes for the less. We are the ones who are close to God and therefore greater – that is why we must intercede (pray) for others.
- Those who intercede for others must know who God is. We must see Him as God, the Father, the creator and ruler of all things. If we do not see Him as such, we are praying to the wrong God.
- Intercession does not depend on how important you are, how prominent you are in the church. It depends on who you know – upon the God you serve.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23 reminds the Ephesians of the wisdom, power, and glory of God that give birth to their new existence, an existence rooted in the one whose suffering and death reconciled the world. It is a prayer that their lives of faith active in love would be established upon and moulded by this wisdom and subversive power of God. This is Paul's prayer. Is it yours?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Prayer

Memory verse:

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.

Ephesians 1:17 (NIV)

Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

Scripture Reading:

Ephesians 1:15-23

Discussion questions

When you pray for Christian friends or family members, what kind of things do you tend to pray for? Discuss in the group.

Read Ephesians 1:17-19. Using your own words, sum up the things Paul is praying for in each of these verses. Discuss in the group.

Verse 17	
Verses 18	
Versus 19	

In verse 18 Paul is teaching us to pray not for our circumstances to be altered, but for our heart's view of our circumstances to be altered. Why do we find it hard?

What would change if we saw life in this way? Discuss in the group.

Read Ephesians 1:20. Verse 20 talks about the greatest display of power the world has ever seen. What happened, and why should we be excited about this power? How does this impact your life? Discuss

Read Ephesians 1:21-23. How is the church. The body of believers, central to God's plan for the universe? What role does the church play in your life? Discuss in the group.

Take time to pray for each other in the group. Be clear about what you want God to change.

Close in prayer