

One BRMC Small Group Study

Enlightenment in Christ

Leader's Guide

Please note that this study guide accompanies the pulpit sermon on 20 September 2020. The suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study.

Scripture Passage:

Ephesians 1:15-23

Context:

We begin our sermon series of Ephesians and today, we take a look at an overview of Ephesians. The sermon our study guide is written on is called Enlightenment in Christ. Enlightenment refers to a realization and deep profound understanding. While we may learn many religious truths, this refers to the moment when we bring the head knowledge to become heart knowledge and when we live out God's truth in our lives.

We are also reminded in the message from the pulpit that within each small group, we have a leader who has committed to praying, journeying and guiding us towards enlightenment in Christ.

As we go into this study, may we realize God's truth in our lives so that we may live it out for Him. May we also pause to give thanks to our small group leader(s) for their faithful service to God.

Introductory

1. Paul prays that the 'eyes of [the] hearts' of the Ephesians will be enlightened. (v18) How does the work of enlightenment come about?
 - In v17, Paul says that he prays that God will grant the Ephesians 'the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation.'
 - The work of enlightenment does not come randomly or on a whim. It comes through earnest prayer and a deep desire for the Holy Spirit to work within oneself.
 - Prayer acts as a trigger, through which the Holy Spirit "activates" the Biblical knowledge we have received, allowing it to become alive in our hearts and lives.
 - Even as we pray and seek our moments of enlightenment of the truth, we can (like Paul) also desire and pray for others to come to this realization as well. We could pray as Paul did, for God the Father to give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to others.
 - As we share God's word with the people around us, our efforts bear fruit when we cover our work and service in prayer. The Holy Spirit is the one who ultimately brings the works of our hands to completion. Even when we do not see the immediate result of our work, continue to persist in prayer and trust in the Holy Spirit's timing to bear fruit.

- **Take some time to let your small group share on their moments of enlightenment or seasons of enlightenment that brought much change in their life.**
2. Paul prays that the Ephesians will come to know of the 'riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.' (v18) What does this glorious inheritance refer to?
- Our inheritance refers to blessings that we have in Christ Jesus, as God's children and God's heirs (cf. Rom 8.15-17, 1Pet 1.3-4). This is a priceless gift, not something we earn or merit.
 - We should be reminded that this inheritance in Christ cannot be lost and it is secure in Christ.
 - These blessings shape us in tremendous ways. Through Christ's work on the cross, we have salvation and this brings us redemption from our sinful life and forgiveness for our transgressions.
 - Merely possessing head knowledge of our salvation, however, causes us to lead defeated lives that do not reflect the impact of salvation. Christ's power in the salvation He gives us allows us to have victory over our failures, negative thoughts and insecurities.
 - This inheritance is not just for us alone but is in the saints. As Christian leader John Stott wrote, "God's inheritance (the inheritance he gives us) will not be a little private party for each individual but rather 'among the saints' as we join that 'great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb" (Rev 7.9).¹
 - **As a small group leader, perhaps you can consider sharing a testimony of the work Christ has done in your life to overcome a failure or insecurity. The testimonies of our lives are evidence of this power being lived out in a very real way.**
3. Paul also prayed that the Ephesians would understand the 'immeasurable greatness of [Jesus'] power.' (v19) Where does this power come from and what does it refer to?
- The source of this power is the same power that raised Christ from the dead.
 - This power of resurrection as Paul describes is immeasurable and has the power to transform new lives and to bring about a great change in the world.
 - Romans 8:11 says that 'And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.'
 - When we come to know Christ, this same power is at work within us and transforms us from being spiritually dead to spiritually alive. This power has brought us to be adopted into His Kingdom as his children, allowing us to receive the inheritance of the blessings that come from Christ's salvation.
 - This power continues to work in us today, sanctifying us to become more like Christ.
 - The power also helps us to overcome any challenges that we might face in our lives, easing any fears or anxieties within us.
 - This divine power also works in us to overcome the power and influence of sin and enables us to love God and love our neighbours with our whole beings.

¹ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 57.

Reflection

4. Who or what do you look to as the source of our power, possessions and prayers? (Is it your status or position, wealth, or seniority in age or membership in the church, or is it something else?)
 - Throughout Ephesians 1, Paul reminds the Ephesians that we are in Jesus Christ 6 times. Who and where we are today is solely by the work of Christ and the salvation he gives us freely. Even what we have is a blessing given by our Father in heaven.
 - Christ Jesus is the advocate for our prayers, the giver of these possessions and the source of this power. He helps us to understand how to use these things for the benefit of all people
 - It is easy for us to let pride take over and assume that our power comes from our strength.
 - But it is important to remember that our power comes from Christ. Our strength cannot sustain us but only through Christ can we have power and strength that is everlasting.
 - We also remember the grace that Christ has given us. None of these blessings come from our works but it is out of the graciousness of God.
 - Salvation and these blessings are a free gift to us. (Ephesians 2:9)

5. How have you used the power, possessions and prayers for the good and growth of the people around you? Have you received the help or guidance or prayers of someone that has been for your good and growth in Christ (such as, perhaps your small group leader)?
 - Perhaps you can encourage your small group to share some of the ways that they have been using their time and energy to build others up. It could be a person they are sharing the Gospel with or a ministry that they are devoting their time and energy to. It could even be as simple as sharing stories about Christ with friends and family.
 - Just as Christ has given these things to us graciously and as we aspire to be more like Christ, we should bring forth these blessings graciously to the people around us.
 - This can come in the form of loving others. This can be through the time we share, the words we use edify and support and the actions that we use to build one another up in truth.
 - Christ calls us to build others up, through the immeasurably great power he has given us.
 - Christ's work on the cross was a sacrificial work. We can reflect this when we sacrifice time and energy that can be used for our gain but to build others up instead. Though this may be tiresome and a struggle at times, Christ's power is there for us to rely on to persevere.
 - John 15:13 says, 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.'
 - **Please be encouraged: As a small group leader, the time and energy that you have invested in your Small Group are in faithful service to God, as you serve with Christ's power. Christ sees the faithful and sacrificial work that you are doing. May this passage be an encouragement to you to continue to persevere in your service and to rely on Christ as you continue to serve.**

Application

6. As you rely on Christ's blessings, what is one practical change that you are going to make in your life? What is one practical step that you could take to work towards the good and growth of another?
- Some suggestions for your small group:
 - Perhaps there has been a struggle, failure or insecurity that they are facing or that is giving them much fear or sadness. Remind them that they have the victory in Christ through the salvation that Christ has given them. If they are open to it, consider asking them to share it with the small group or with you in confidence. so that they may receive encouragement through prayer.
 - Perhaps there is someone in their life that God has been calling them to share the Gospel with. Sharing the Gospel is the first step for them to receive the blessings that we have discussed. Remind them that they are sharing it with God's power and they do not need to fear rejection. The transformation is done through the power and the work of the Holy Spirit. Remind them to turn to Christ as the source of boldness and strength.
 - Perhaps Christ is calling them to invest their time and energy in building up a person or ministry. Encourage them and invite the small group to pray concerning this calling that Christ has given them. Remind them of Christ's sacrificial work on the cross and how He laid down His life. As we reflect Christ more in our lives day by day, may our service and sacrifice of time and energy be done out of the love Christ has for us.

Prayer

7. Write out a prayer for yourself based on what you have heard and learned from this session.

(a) What is in your heart for yourself?

- Perhaps you may want to bring a struggle to Christ today.

"Father in heaven, I come to Your cross today to release this burden of... that I am struggling with. Father, I trust that through the power of the cross, I have victory over this struggle. May You fill me with Your peace that surpasses all understanding and Your reassurance that with Your power from Your love, I can overcome any struggle. In Jesus' name. Amen"

(b) What is in your heart for others?

- Perhaps you feel led to serve and build up someone or a new ministry.

"Heavenly Father, I thank you for this calling that You have placed in my life. Through the power of Your Holy Spirit, may you reveal Your will to me clearly and fully. I pray that as I serve, may my service be an outpouring of Your love. As I follow You, may You grant me strength and energy to continue to further Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name. Amen."