

The background of the page is a vertical wooden plank texture. On the left side, there are dark, irregular shadows cast across the wood, suggesting light coming from the right. The text is centered on the right side of the page.

Ephesians
**Mystery
Revealed**

“A Life of Spiritual Blessing”***Lesson 1***

Ephesians 1:1-14

September 17

Icebreaker question. What's the least desirable job you've ever worked?

Prayer (now or end of study). Let each person share a praise from the summer and/or something from the summer that they need prayer for. Then go around, and have each person pray for the person on their left.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. Who wrote this letter?
 - a. Why is it important who wrote this letter? If this letter was not written by Paul, would it make any difference?
3. Who did he write this letter to, and what do you we know about them?
4. In verse 3, Paul blesses (praises) God for blessing “us” with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.
 - a. Who is “us” and how do you know?”
 - b. Make a list of the spiritual blessings we have because of God found in verses 3-14. (At least six blessings).
 - c. How do the blessings relate to the past (vs. 4), the present (vs. 7), and the future (vs. 10)?
5. There are some difficult to understand concepts in these verses... discuss the meaning of
 - a. “Heavenly places” – vs. 3
 - b. Being “chosen” and “predestined” (vss. 4, 5)
 - c. That “[God] works all things according to the counsel of his will?” (vs. 11)
 - d. Being “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.”

6. What is God's ultimate purpose for mankind through Jesus? (Vs. 9 and 10).
7. How do you see each person of the Trinity involved in this passage? Pay attention to action of the Father, Son, and Spirit.
8. Observe in verse 13 the process that results in acquiring the inheritance we have in Jesus. There are four steps in this process.
9. Is there anything we haven't covered in this passage that stands out to you as worthy of conversation?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. When you think about being chosen, forgiven, and sealed by God, how does it make you feel?
2. Being brought into the fold of God's people was costly to God, and took a lot of work on Jesus' part. What is the appropriate response to God's work on your behalf? (HINT: Paul demonstrates this response in verse 3).
3. According to verses 13-14, it is when "we believe in him" that we receive the sealing of the Spirit and our guarantee of an inheritance through Christ.
 - a. Have you believed in him? If not, then you can right now by acknowledging him as the Son of God.
 - b. The Bible consistently presents this as Good News, but for different reasons our world doesn't view these beliefs the same way. How can you show your joy in Christ to an unbelieving world?
4. Did you notice the repeated phrase (vss. 6, 12, 14), "To the praise of his glory?" How can you live all life to the praise of his glory?
5. How does your life need to change to be lived for God's glory?

“A Life of Prayer”***Lesson 2***

Ephesians 1:15-23

September 24

Icebreaker question. If you had to describe yourself with three words that started with the first letter of your middle name, what would they be?

Prayer (now or end of study). Today's passage on is on prayer. Let us pray for each other, and our neighbors/families, the way that Paul prays:

- That the Spirit would help us know him better.
- That our eyes would see the hope we are called to.
- That we would experience his incomparably great power.
- That Jesus would lead his church in power.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. How would you describe the tone of these verses?
3. What is the reason (vs. 15) that Paul gives thanks to God for the Ephesians?
4. Make a list of what Paul asks God to give the Ephesian believers. Find at least four things.
 - a. How would you summarize the goal of these prayers?
5. What does it mean to be “called” by God?
6. What are the eyes of a person's heart?
7. What will be the glorious inheritance we receive in Jesus? Why is it described as “riches”?
8. Describe God's incomparably great power in verses 19-22.
 - a. Why is the resurrection and ascension of Jesus such a clear description of God's power?
 - b. What would it look like to see that power at work in your life every day?

- c. What would it look like to see that power in church?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. Scripture is the guide for Christians, and so we know that Scripture teaches us how to pray. How could your prayer life be improved by adding to it the scope of Paul's prayer?
2. Paul prays for the church's hope to be in the glorious inheritance we will receive.
 - a. What is your hope?
 - i. What do you dream of?
 - ii. What are you looking forward to?
 - b. Is there a way you need to repent (change your mind?)
 - c. What difference would it make if your hope was in God's call?

“A Life of Resurrection”***Lesson 3***

Ephesians 2:1-10

October 1

Icebreaker question. Do you have an accomplishment that is especially meaningful to you? Why is it meaningful?

Prayer (now or end of study). In addition to praying for any personal prayer requests that anyone may have, spend some time praying for those who do not know Christ. If appropriate, you can pray by name. If not, you can pray for an anonymous “friend.” Pray that these people would come to believe in Jesus, and be saved by grace through faith.

Studying the word.**OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. What was the human condition before Christ (verses 1-3)?
Make a list of the descriptions Paul uses (five things).
3. What is “the course of this world?” (vs. 2)
4. What is the prince of the power of the air?
5. What does “sons of disobedience” mean?
6. What does it mean to be children of wrath?
7. What did God do? (verses 5-8) Find at least three things.
8. Why did God do this? Find as many reasons as you can.
9. What is grace? What is faith? (verse 8)
10. Why does Paul work so hard to make it crystal clear that this salvation is by grace, not our works or human effort? [question directly from John Stott, *Ephesians*]
11. What does it mean that God has prepared beforehand good works for us? (verse 10)
12. Do you have any other questions that haven't been touched on yet?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. Does Paul's description of your life prior to Christ challenge you? Offend you? Does it resonate? Why or why not?
 - a. How do you process these words if you are a believer from childhood, taught the faith from infancy?
2. How should we respond to God's incredible grace?
3. What stops you from doing the good works God has called you to?

“A New Humanity”***Lesson 4***

Ephesians 2:11-22

October 8

Icebreaker question. When you were little, what did you want to grow up and be?

Prayer (now or end of study). In addition to praying for any pressing prayer needs, pray for unity and brotherhood among those who know Jesus. Pray specifically for our local church, for relationships between churches, for relationships between denominations, and the church international.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. What is the historical relationship between Jews and the Gentiles according to Ephesians 2:11-12?
3. What did God do through Jesus to take care of the “dividing wall of hostility?” Look at verses 13-18.
 - a. How does the blood of Christ unite Jew and Gentile?
 - b. How did the law and commandments create a dividing wall of hostility?
 - c. Can you think of a scriptural example where Jesus preached Good News to those who were far off? To someone who was near?
 - d. *Just notice how cool this is:* They thought they were killing Jesus and ending his mission when they put him to death, but in reality, God was “killing the hostility” between the various peoples on earth. (verse 16)
4. There are two metaphors used by Paul to describe the unity of Jew and Gentile. You can see one in verse 15, another in verse 21. What are they?

- a. Should there be separation between people who differ in culture, race, or language in the church? Why or why not?
5. The foundation of the "Holy Temple" of God, the church, is the prophets and apostles. How do they form this foundation?
6. Why is Jesus the cornerstone of the building?
7. Any other questions about this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. What individuals, Christians, or groups of Christians are you separated from? Why? Consider any reasons such as class, social status, race, or denomination.
2. How does Jesus' ministry unify people differently than secular methods like education or political action?
3. Are there particular Christians that you are tempted to look down on? Is there any pride of which you need to repent?
4. Do you think you have any role in breaking down barriers between you and others? What might you do?

“A New Ministry”***Lesson 5***

Ephesians 3:1-13

October 15

Icebreaker question. What's the most unusual (or exciting) job you have ever had?

Prayer (now or end of study). Ask yourself the following question: “Do I have clarity regarding what I am supposed to be doing for Jesus' kingdom?” If your answer is yes, briefly share what you are supposed to do, and then let someone from the group pray for you. If no, then have someone pray that God would show you your calling.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. When Paul wrote this, he was a prisoner of Emperor Nero. Why then do you think he refers to himself as a prisoner of Christ?
3. This passage is largely about Paul's ministry. Take a few minutes and write down as many things about Paul that you can learn from the passage, then come back and share them together.
 - a. Why does Paul decide to talk about his own ministry for such a long period? What's the purpose?
 - b. Why is Paul's calling as an apostle so important to the reliability of his message?
 - c. If Paul was not really the author of this letter (as many critical and skeptical writers contend), then what is lost concerning its message and content?
4. Why does Paul choose to describe his gospel message as a mystery which has been revealed?
5. After he elaborates upon his own calling, Paul describes the church's calling. What is the church's calling according to verses 9-12?

6. How does Paul's calling relate to the church's calling?
Remember: "the heavenly places" means the unseen world of spiritual reality. Look up these other verses from the New Testament: 2 Corinthians 4:4, Luke 4:5-6, John 14:30.
7. Anything else that you see or notice in this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. Paul has a very clear view of his calling before God. Do you?
How can you dedicate yourself to your task? How could others help you?
 - a. Remember: calling is determined by an internal call (desire in the person) and an external call (the affirmation of the church and faithful believers around you).
2. How do you respond to taking the message of the Gospel out into the world, to those who need it?
3. Put yourself into the position of a Jew. You can imagine how it would be difficult for them to see themselves as equals with the "unclean Gentiles." Do you have similar views towards particular groups of people in the world? How does this passage challenge you?

“A New Confidence”***Lesson 6***

Ephesians 3:14-21

October 22

Icebreaker question. Answer either (or both) of these questions: What is your favorite potato chip flavor, OR if you could create a new potato chip flavor, what would it be?

Prayer (now or end of study). In addition to praying for any personal prayer requests that anyone may have, take some time to pray for each other, specifically for each person's future. If there is a situation which is causing fear, anxiety, or distress, lift each person up to God's care. Remember Ephesians 3:20, "God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think."

Studying the word. Ask God to guide your study of His Word.

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. What do you notice about Ephesians 3:14 when you compare it to Ephesians 3:1?
 - a. Did you notice what happened in Ephesians 3:1?
 - b. What is the "reason" when Paul writes "For this reason" in verse 14? What is he referencing?
3. What are all the ways that Paul prays on behalf of the church?
 - a. Is there a theme to this prayer?
 - b. Could you summarize the entire prayer in a sentence?
 - c. Do you have any questions about this prayer?
 - d. How would this prayer help unify a church that is divided by race or tradition?
4. How can you "know the love that surpasses knowledge?" What can that possibly mean?
5. What does it mean that God would strengthen us "according to the riches of his glory?" Why does Paul mention the riches of his glory?

6. How does our understanding of God's love shape the way we pray to him?
7. From John Stott: "What effect would it have on the church if the prayer that we could all grasp the love of Christ would be answered?"
8. Some people say that you don't have to go to church to be a Christian.
 - a. How do you think Paul would reply, based on this passage?
 - b. How important is the church in Paul's prayer?
 - c. Where in the passage do you get your answers from?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. Think about prayer:
 - a. How is Paul's prayer the same as your prayers?
 - b. How is Paul's prayer different than your prayers?
 - c. What do you think you need to learn about prayer from this Scripture?
2. Is your view of God's love for you the same as what the Scripture says it is? Why or why not?
3. Do you really believe that God can do more than all that you ask or think?
 - a. How would believing that God can do more than we ask or think shape your prayers?
 - b. How would it shape your life?
 - c. Are there any new ways that you need to trust God with your life?

“Unity”**Lesson 7**

Ephesians 4:1-16

October 29

Icebreaker question. If you could go on a road trip with any one person (dead or alive), who would it be? If you say Jesus, you need to answer where you would want to go.

Prayer (now or end of study). Today we are going to think about the unity of the church as we study the passage. Take some time to pray for unity, and for the various parts of the body that are different than you. Pray for infants, children, and youth. Pray for young adults, college students, and 20 somethings. Pray for young marrieds, families, empty nesters, and the elderly.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. What is the major change in emphasis that takes place beginning in Ephesians 4:1? With what word is this change introduced?
2. In these 16 verses, there is only one command.
 - a. What is this command?
 - b. What words describe how this command should be carried out?
3. What truths empower the Christian to obey this command? Survey the entire passage to find as many as possible.
4. According to verses 15 and 16, what is the purpose of these spiritual gifts for the church?
5. What does it mean in verse 13 when it says, “attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ?”
6. LET’S GO DEEPER: How does the cross and resurrection connect to the giving to us of spiritual gifts?

- a. Notice how Ephesians 4:8 is an OT quote.
- b. Look up Psalm 68:17-18.
- c. What is the difference between the OT quote and the NT quote? How does Paul change it, and why?
- d. What does it mean that The Lord (God, Yahweh) in the OT is Jesus in the NT?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. Do you know your spiritual gift? How are you using it?
2. The body of Christ is called to be unified. Jesus says the unity of the body of Christ is so important, that if you have a conflict with a brother or sister, before you go to the altar to worship, you should be reconciled to your brother. Is there anyone that you need to apologize to?
3. What do you do to maintain the unity of the body of Christ?
4. How could you build up the body of Christ? Is there any way you could be an encourager of your brothers and sisters in the Lord?

“Purity”**Lesson 8**

Ephesians 4:17-5:2

November 5

Icebreaker question. We have spent 8 weeks together now. Try to encourage the person sitting to your left by saying what you have seen that is best about them.

Prayer (now or end of study). In addition to praying for any personal prayer requests that anyone may have, think about God's commandment to us, that we should be holy and not live in sin. At the start of prayer, take a few minutes of silence for people to reflect and pray. Then, the group leader (or as many as wish) can pray out loud, thanking God for forgiveness and asking for help in living a pure life.

A good Scripture is Psalm 103:12, “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. In the first paragraph, verses 17-24, the focus is on the mind of the believer.
 - a. What does Paul say about the Gentiles' minds?
 - b. How does the Christian mind differ from the Gentile mind?
 - c. How important is truth in the Christian mind?
 - d. What is available to the Christian that his or her mind would be transformed?
 - e. What does it mean to put on the “new self?” Is it possible to be a “new self” but not to be living it? Why or why not?
2. Verses 25-5:2 have to do with the way Christians treat each other, especially the way they talk to each other.

- a. What is the relationship between truth and the way we treat each other?
- b. How many commands for how we treat each other can you find in these verses? Make a list.
- c. What does it mean to not let the sun go down on your anger?
- d. What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit of God?
- e. How is Jesus the greatest example of the love we should have for one another? Look at 5:2.
- f. Do you have any other questions about Paul's instruction in this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. What can you do to have your mind conformed to God's will? Do you think this is a one-time event, or a continual process in your life?
2. How do you navigate the situation where "truth" and "love" are in tension with one another... where there is a difficult truth someone needs to hear, and it is the most loving thing to tell the person this truth?
3. Which of these areas of sin are you most vulnerable to?

“Righteousness”***Lesson 9***

Ephesians 5:3-21

November 12

Icebreaker question. If you could trade places with one person for a single day, who would it be? (And why?)

Prayer (now or end of study). One thing that St. Paul's emphasizes is state, national, and international missions. Do you know any missionaries? Spend some time praying for the Gospel to go forth throughout the world, and for the missionaries that we support.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. This passage seems like a barrage of commands and reasons. Let's start by breaking it down...
 - a. How many places do you find the word "Therefore" or "For." What do those words mean?
 - b. What are the commands you see in this passage?
 - c. Why do you think that Paul always connects a command to a reason?
2. Have someone look up the following passages. Exodus 20:14, Matthew 19:4-5, 1 Corinthians 7:2-4, and Matthew 5:27-30. What is the definition of sexual immorality according to the Bible? How do you know that deviations from God's standard are immoral?
3. How do we reconcile God's forgiving love with the warnings to those who persist in sin (verse 5:5)? Is there grace for a repeat offender? Why or why not?
4. What does verse 5:10 and verse 5:17 have in common?
5. Ephesians 5:18 draws a contrast between drinking wine and being filled with the Spirit. What is the point of this comparison?

6. Is there a difference between a psalm, a hymn, and a spiritual song? What is the definition of each? How does this give the church freedom in its musical expression?
7. John Stott: "How could living wisely combat the evil days?"
8. Any other questions about this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. Is there sin, immorality, or impurity in your life that you need to repent of? How does this passage give you reasons to turn from your sin?
2. In 2018, the theme of our church's vision will be "Encouragement." How can verses 19 and 20 teach us to encourage one another in Christ?
3. How could you live more wisely?

“Love”**Lesson 10**

Ephesians 5:21-6:4

November 19

Icebreaker question. If you could look into the future, what would you want to know? What would you not want to know?

Prayer (now or end of study). Thanksgiving is coming! For prayer, spend some time counting your blessings, and then pray in thanks for God's goodness to us in our lives.

Studying the word. *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS

1. DID YOU KNOW? This passage takes the form of a household code, popular in ancient Greek society, that would detail responsibilities of different members of the family. This is revolutionary in that it has instructions for the men, who were usually exempt.
2. Look at 5:19-20. How does that set the stage for 5:21?
3. How is a wife in a family supposed to submit to her husband?
 - a. Is any part of this difficult? Why?
 - b. How does the church submit to Christ?
4. How does a husband love and submit to his wife according to 5:25-32?
 - a. Why does it take more time to describe a husband's duty?
 - b. How did Christ serve the church?
 - c. How does marriage point to Christ and the church?
 - d. Who is called to greater sacrifice, a husband or a wife?
 - e. How would a husband serving his wife like Christ encourage a wife to “submit in everything to her husband?”
5. How is Christ's work on the cross an example for how we treat each other?

6. What does it mean for a child to obey his parents "In the Lord?" Is that different than simple obedience to parents? (Look this one up in a study Bible, there's no clear answer).
7. How do parents exasperate their children?
8. Any other questions about this passage?

QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION

1. If you are married, does your marriage reflect the unity and love of Christ and his church? How could your marriage improve if you followed this instruction?
2. How can the Christian community support marriages and families?
3. How can the church love and serve unmarried people?
4. Do you need to open yourself up to submitting to others? How?