



A Study of Ephesians

THE GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE

STUDENT GUIDE

Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin
2017: The Year of Grace



Northwestern Ohio Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Northwestern Ohio Synod
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Dear Friends in Christ,

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

Welcome to 2017: the Year of Grace. As we commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, the Northwestern Ohio Synod will celebrate the gift of God's grace through worship, Bible study, book reading, and other faith practices.

A few years back, I was teaching an Adult New Members Class. As I covered some of the basic theological insights of Lutheranism, one of the students asked, “Pastor, if you were to pick 1 word to describe Lutherans, what would that 1 word be?” I didn't hesitate. The word is “grace”.

In the New Testament Letter to the Ephesians the writer focuses on the power and the gift of God's amazing grace. One of my “go to” Bible verses is Ephesians 2:8, and this will serve as our memory verse for 2017: the **Year of Grace. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).** This powerful Bible verse captures both God's intent and God's goodness. I would encourage you to memorize this Bible verse, so when I see you, and you recite this verse to me, you will be blessed.

What follows is an 8 session Bible study on the Letter to the Ephesians. I want to encourage you to open your Bible, gather with a group of friends, get outside the 4 walls of the church, and learn what God has to teach you. But, be careful. Be very, very careful, because God's Word has the power to transform people and communities from who we are into the people and communities that God longs for us to be. The church in Ephesus experienced this transformation. ***“For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).*** May we also experience the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit to renew and transform our lives and communities. God's Word has that power.

Let us pray, God of goodness and grace, as we begin the study of your Word may we be inspired by your love and transformed by your will to be the people you long for us to be. Hold us always in the promise of your grace. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

Blessings,
Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin
December 27, 2016
St. John, Apostle and Evangelist

TIPS FOR GROUP MEMBERS

***“My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness”
2 Corinthians 12:9***

You said, “Yes”. Thank you for your willingness to attend this study. If this is something new for you, no need to worry. As God once said to the Apostle Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you...”, and this is most certainly true. Now, you don't have to be a Bible scholar to attend a Bible study. You simply need to be open. Open to experiencing new thoughts, great discussion, and the potential for real growth. Think of a coffee shop conversation rather than a classroom lecture. These studies can be experienced in a variety of settings, though I would encourage you to follow the pattern of St. Paul and lead these studies out in the “market place” (outside the 4 walls of the church building). You never know who might be watching, listening, wondering. These studies are intended to last around 60-75 minutes. Please note that each lesson contains 2 to 4 Scripture passages under the Study and Conversation section, so if time is an issue, please feel free to cover only 1 or 2 of the Scripture passages.

Below are some suggestions to assist you.*

Before the Study

1. Pray. Pray that God would guide you to learn and participate faithfully. Pray for your Bible study leader and the participants who will gather for conversation and discussion. Ask God to open your hearts and minds to hear God's Word that it may motivate you to a new way of thinking and being.
2. Come to the study prepared. Read and then slowly re-read the assigned Bible passage. Write down particular and peculiar words and phrases you have questions about. Bring those questions to the group gathering.
3. Carefully work through the lesson. Take time to meditate and reflect on each question. Write your responses in the space provided.
4. A word about shapes: Each introduction includes an image or a shape. We live in an image based culture. Don't believe me? Just take a look at your I-Phone, computer screen, or Android device. I have found attaching the teachings of Jesus and Scripture to a few basic shapes and images help immensely with the teaching and discipling process. Use the shapes and images to go deeper into Scripture, the life of Jesus, and the Gospel. For a fuller explanation see the Shapes and Images Key found on pages 6-7 of this Student Guide or check out the work of Pastor Mike Breen and 3DM Ministries.
5. Consider ways to apply the assigned Bible passage to your life.

During the Study

1. Bring the necessary materials to your study: Bible, student guide, pen, or pencil.
2. Some tips for participating in discussion:
 - A. Be willing to participate. The leader will not be lecturing, but leading a conversation. Join the conversation.
 - B. Stick to the topic being discussed. Try to avoid drifting off on tangents.
 - C. Be attentive to other participants. Listen to what they are sharing. You may be surprised by their insights. Also, be affirming. This will encourage some of the more hesitant participants to share.
 - D. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. Do participate. But allow others to also participate.
 - E. Fully expect that God will teach you something through the Bible passage and through other members in your group. Pray that you may apply God's teaching to your daily life.
3. Some general guidelines
 - A. We will consider all conversation within our group to be confidential. We will not share confidential conversation without specific permission.
 - B. We will make space for each participant to share / speak as they are comfortable doing so.
 - C. We will listen attentively to one another.
 - D. We will be very cautious about fixing people and giving advice.
 - E. We will practice Martin Luther's explanation of the 8th Commandment: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor".
 - "We are to fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbors, betray or slander them, or destroy their reputations. Instead we are to come to their defense, speak well of them, and interpret everything they do in the best possible light".

**adapted from Bible Studies for Everyone by N.T. Wright*

BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

Study Bibles

Lutheran Study Bible - NRSV (2009) Published by Augsburg Fortress

Harper Collins Study Bible – NRSV (2006) Published by Harper One

NIV Zondervan Study Bible – NIV (2015) Published by Zondervan

ESV Study Bible – ESV (2008) Published by Crossway

Bible Dictionary / Handbook

Harper Collins Bible Dictionary (2011) Published by Harper One

Halley's Bible Handbook (2014) Published by Zondervan

Bible Atlases

Oxford Bible Atlas (2009) Published by Oxford University Press

The Student Bible Atlas (2005) Published by Augsburg Fortress

Zondervan Atlas of the Bible (2010) Published by Zondervan

Commentaries

Ephesians by Pheme Perkins (1997) Published by Abingdon Press

Paul: The Prison Letters by N.T. Wright (2004) Published by Westminster John Knox Press

Ephesians (2 volumes) by Markus Barth (1974) Published by Doubleday and Company

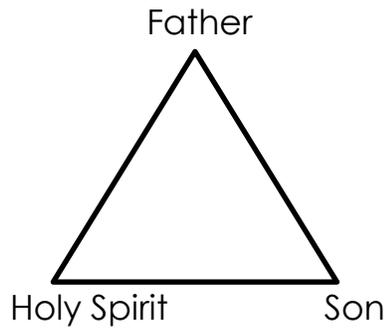
Other

Rose Book of Bible Charts, Maps and Timelines (2015) Published by Rose

Luther's Small Catechism (2016) Published by Augsburg Fortress

Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation (2005) Published by Concordia

SHAPES AND IMAGES KEY

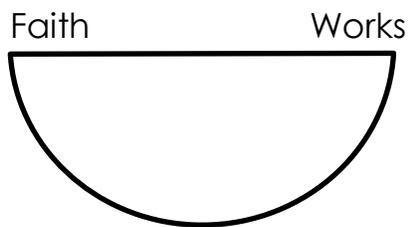


Ascending Triangle: This Is Who God Is

God the Father

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit

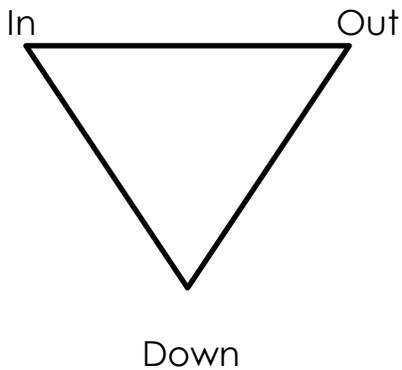


Semi-Circle: Rhythms of Life

Rest and Labor

Time On and Time Out

Faith and Works

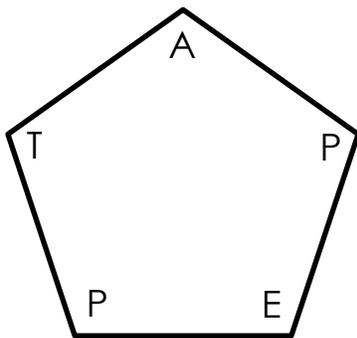


Descending Triangle: This Is What God Does

God Comes Down.

God Gathers Us In.

God Sends Us Out.



Pentagon: Gifts for the Church

Apostles: Extend the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Prophets: Know God's Will for the Christian Community

Evangelists: Recruit Others to the Ministry and Mission

Pastors: Protect and Nurture the Christian Community

Teachers: Understand and Explain God's Truth

Prayer



Prayer: Martin Luther was once asked by his barber, “Dr. Luther, how do you pray?” In 1535, Luther wrote, *A Simple Way to Pray, for a Good Friend*. Here Luther recommends prayer as a daily routine. For many people, the acronym **T.R.I.P.** has proven helpful for daily prayer.

Thanks: For whom / for what am I thankful?

Regret: What has caused me regret?

Intercession: For whom / for what do I need to pray?

Purpose: What action is God calling me to take today?

Live in the Light



The Light: In Ephesians 5:8, Christians are called to live as children of light. As followers of Jesus, the light of God shines in us and through us. Yes, we are saved by grace, and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9); but the way we live our lives is important. Some theologians argue that we are saved by grace through faith... for good works (Ephesians 2:10). The lit candle will serve as a reminder that we are to live in the light of Christ.

Table of Duties

Table of Duties: For Christians, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ frees us from having to impress God with who we are and what we do. By faith in God’s promise in Christ, we are free to serve our neighbor in our everyday lives. Martin Luther called daily life a “holy order and estate”, and used Scripture passages in what has traditionally been called a “Table of Duties” to show how Christians should live in family and society.

EPHESIANS: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE

During the 1st century, Ephesus was a major port city in the Roman province of Asia (modern day Turkey). With an estimated population of between 200,000 - 250,000 people, Ephesus ranked with other great urban centers of the Roman Empire including: Carthage (300,000), Antioch (400,000), Alexandria (500,000), and Rome (1,000,000). Ephesus was a cross roads of commerce; a true “east meets west” city. Trade goods that arrived by caravan from the east were shipped down the Cayster River, into the Aegean Sea, and out to other Mediterranean seaports.

Ephesus was a wealthy city with impressive civic and religious monuments. Wide city streets, huge public structures, and luxurious private homes were built to impress. North of the city was the huge Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. There was a large theater that could seat 25,000 people, an agora (marketplace), public baths, a library, and many other small temples.

We first encounter the city of Ephesus in the Book of Acts. In Acts 18:18-21, St. Paul ends his second missionary journey (est. 49-52 C.E.) with a very short stop in Ephesus. He is joined by Priscilla and Aquilla. After a brief stay, Paul departs from Ephesus with a promise to return, “if it is God's will.” On his third missionary journey (est. 52-57 C.E.), Paul returns to Ephesus and remains there for almost 3 years (Acts 20:31). While in Ephesus, Paul established a network of “house churches”. This network eventually spread the “Jesus movement” throughout the Roman province of Asia. Acts chapters 19-20 details Paul's ministry in Ephesus.

The Letter to the Ephesians has historically been attributed to the Apostle Paul (1:1; 3:1). However, the literary style and the distinct use of “non-Pauline” words cause some Bible scholars to question Paul's authorship. Many scholars attribute the writing of Ephesians to one of Paul's students (disciples). Other scholars take a different approach and argue that the Letter to the Ephesians was written by Paul as a circular letter to be distributed to several Christian churches in the Roman province of Asia. In fact, in some of the earliest and most important manuscripts the words “in Ephesus” (1:1) are missing. This argument affirms the rather impersonal nature of the letter and the lack of personal greetings that mark so many of Paul's other letters. So, Ephesians is most likely a circular letter of Paul's sent to several churches in western Asia Minor (including the Church in Ephesus).

The Letter to the Ephesians follows the standard pattern of ancient letter writing (see Outline of Ephesians). There is an opening (1:1-2), a body (2:1-6:20), and a closing (6:21-24). The body of the letter is divided into two parts: theological

reflection (2:1-3:21) and ethical exhortation (4:1-6:20). Unique features include a lengthy benediction (1:3-14) and two prayers (1:15-23 and 3:14-21). Ephesians 1:3-14 is one entire sentence in Greek.

Important themes that we will encounter in the Letter to the Ephesians include: the gift of God's grace, the call to unity; the cosmic Christ, and the universal Church.

OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS

1. Greeting (1:1-2)
2. God's Purpose (1:3-14)
 - 1:10 is a key verse ***“as a plan for the fullness of time, [God will] gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth”.***
3. Prayer Pause A (1:15-23)
4. God Has a Purpose (2:1-3:21)
 - a. Saved by Grace (2:1-10)
 - b. One in Christ A (2:11-22)
 - c. Paul Proclaims God's Purpose (3:1-13)
 - d. Prayer Pause B (3:14-21)
5. God Has a People (4:1-6:20)
 - a. One in Christ B (4:1-6)
 - b. God's People Live (and Lead) with their Gifts (4:7-16)
 - c. God's People Live in the Light (4:17-5:20)
 - d. God's People Live in Community (5:21-6:9)
 - 1.) Husbands and Wives (5:21-33)
 - 2.) Children and Parents (6:1-4)
 - 3.) Slaves and Masters (6:5-9)
 - e. God's People Live Strong (6:10-20)
6. Benediction (6:21-24)

EPHESIANS MEMORY VERSES

Study 1

Ephesians 2:8 ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God”***

Study 2

Ephesians 1:3 ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,”***

Study 3

Ephesians 2:8-10 ***“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life”***.

Study 4

Ephesians 3:14 ***“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,”***

Study 5

Ephesians 4:11-12 ***“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,”***

Study 6

Ephesians 5:8 ***“For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light-“***

Study 7

Ephesians 6:10 ***“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.”***

STUDY #1: FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON...

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Ephesians 2:8
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Welcome and Introductions
4. Announcements
5. Introduction to the Study

In the Book of Ecclesiastes 3:1 we read, **“For everything there is a season...”**. As I prepare this study, we are experiencing a typical Northwestern Ohio winter. We had a white Christmas on December 25, which was followed by a 61 degree December 26. Many of our neighbors delighted in the gift of an unseasonably warm day and took down their outdoor Christmas decorations. Living in the Midwest, we get this whole notion of seasons. We understand that seasons bring change.

People experience different seasons in life. Rachel and I are slowly learning what it means to be empty nesters, as our 2 oldest children have moved out of our home. Some of you may be looking forward to a new season of independence as you prepare for graduation or marriage. Others may be facing a more difficult season as you deal with aging parents, ill health, and limited mobility.

Churches also experience different seasons. As the Bishop of the Northwestern Ohio Synod, I am invited to participate in congregational anniversaries. St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Archbold, Ohio recently celebrated their 150th anniversary. In their Fellowship Hall, they had an awesome display that highlighted different seasons in the history of their congregation.

The Church in Ephesus also experienced several different seasons. In Acts 19, the Ephesians experienced a season filled with excitement and potential as the Apostle Paul started his 3rd missionary journey (est. 52-57 C.E.) in the city of Ephesus with a bang! Baptisms, healings, Gospel preaching, exorcisms, bonfires, and a riot make for quite a season!

In Acts 20:13-38, there is quite a different season, as Paul bids farewell to the leaders of the Church in Ephesus. In Acts 20:37-38, we read, **“There was much weeping among them all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, grieving especially because of what he had said, that they would not see him again. Then they brought him to the ship.”** Sometimes our seasons involve tears and painful goodbyes.

In Revelation 2:1-7, there is a yet another season for the Church in Ephesus, as the Exalted Jesus offers comfort and challenge. Over 40 years have passed since St. Paul began his missionary work among the people of Ephesus, and things have changed. As many congregations in North America have experienced, the Church in Ephesus is no longer what it once was. Here Jesus praises the Ephesians for their toil, patience, and endurance. But then Jesus admonishes them, **“But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first”** (Revelation 2:4-5). Sometimes our seasons are reminders of what we once were. And sometimes our seasons are reminders of what we have the potential to be.

6. Opening Reflection Questions

A. What is your favorite season? Why?

B. How would you describe the season of life you are currently experiencing?

7. Study and Conversation

A. The Season of Spring: The Church in Ephesus Springs into Action

1. Read Acts 19:1-7, 8-10, 11-20, 21-41

2. What were some of the signs that the Church in Ephesus was springing into action?

B. The Season of Fall: Forlorn and Farewell

1. Read Acts 20:17-38
2. Reflect on Paul's season of forlorn and farewell.

a. Where is Paul going?

b. What will Paul face in Jerusalem?

c. Will the Ephesian elders ever see Paul again?

d. How long was Paul with them?

e. Why does Jesus say, ***"It is more blessed to give than to receive"*** (20:35). Is this true? Have you ever experienced this? Describe that experience.

- f. How did Paul and the Ephesian elders say goodbye to one another?

3. When have you experienced a season of forlorn and farewell?
How did you say goodbye? How did you fail to say goodbye?

4. What does a season of forlorn and farewell look like in a congregation?

5. How do you find the hope and courage to move forward when you are experiencing a season of forlorn and farewell?

C. The Season of Winter: Faithful and Frozen

1. Read Revelation 2:1-7
2. For what does the exalted Jesus praise the Church in Ephesus?
3. For what does the exalted Jesus critique the Church in Ephesus?
4. What are some ways people get stuck and frozen?
5. How do churches get stuck and frozen?
6. How does one go about getting unstuck and unfrozen?

D. The Season of Summer: Sunshine and Salutations

1. Read Ephesians 1:1-2
2. Why does Paul begin with his credentials?

3. As a group try to come up with 7 facts about the life of St. Paul.

4. When is it good to know someone's credentials?

5. How does Paul describe the people of Ephesus? Is this an accurate description based upon the church folks you know?

6. What might be another way to describe followers of Jesus?
 - Sunshine can warm our souls and sunshine can burn our skin

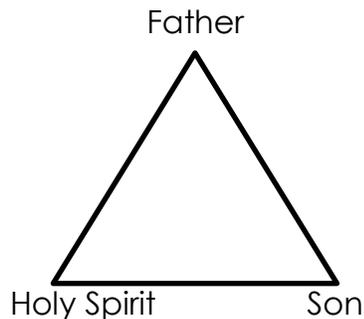
8. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study? Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

9. Homework
 - A. Read Ephesians chapter 1
 - B. Memory Verse Ephesians 2:8
 - C. Work through Study#2

10. Closing Prayer: ***Good and gracious God, we give you thanks for the seasons in our lives. Lead us to be steadfast in our seasons of discontent and grateful for our seasons of delight. Be with those we love and with those who are in need. Bless us to be the people you long for us to be in and out of season. In the name of Jesus. Amen***

STUDY #2: A PURPOSE AND A PAUSE FOR PRAYER

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Ephesians 1:3
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Welcome and Introductions
4. Announcements
5. Review
6. Memory Verse Recitation Ephesians 2:8
7. Introduction to the Study



Ascending Triangle: This Is Who God Is

God the Father

God the Son

God the Holy Spirit

The first shape that we encounter in our Ephesians study is the **Ascending Triangle**. This is where we always begin as Christians. Let's start at the top of the **Ascending Triangle** with the Father; then trace your finger down to the Son; then trace your finger over to the Holy Spirit; finally back to the Father. Then repeat. This **Ascending Triangle** will serve as our visible reminder of who God is. For Christians God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. 1 God in 3 persons. God is God. Jesus is God. The Holy Spirit is God. What the Father is, the Son is, and so is the Holy Spirit.

The Apostles' Creed is another great reminder of who God is. Let's recite it together:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Did you notice that the Apostles' Creed has 3 paragraphs? Did you notice that the **Ascending Triangle** has 3 points? 1 for God the Father. 1 for God the Son. 1 for God the Holy Spirit. It is important for us to begin with who God is, and this is where Paul also begins in Ephesians chapter 1.

After Paul opens the Letter to the Ephesians with credentials, recipients, and a greeting (1:1-2), he turns to God. Ephesians 1:3-14 is actually one long sentence in the original Greek. Bible scholars call this section a "doxology" or blessing. As you read through this passage, notice some of the language Paul uses for God: God the Father (1:3); Lord Jesus Christ (1:3); Holy Spirit (1:13).

Also, note that this doxology (1:3-14) is composed of 3 sections of 3 blessings (there seem to be 3's everywhere we turn!). These blessings are based on the work of the triune God. 1:4-6 celebrates the fact that God chooses God's people by grace. 1:7-12 celebrates God's redemptive purpose through Jesus Christ for us and the world. 1:10 is a key verse as God promises to gather all things in him. 1:13-14 celebrates our sealing in the Holy Spirit. Each of these sections conclude with a mini-refrain that praises God's glory (1:6, 12, 14).

After the doxology (1:3-14), Paul pauses to pray a prayer of thanksgiving (1:15-23). During our study, we'll learn about the **T.R.I.P.** form of prayer and begin using it as a model for daily prayer.

8. Opening Reflection Questions

A. Can you think of a time in your life when you felt like you didn't belong? Describe.

B. Can you think of a time in your life when you felt valued and a part of something? Describe.

9. Study and Conversation

A. God's Purpose: Chosen by Grace

1. Read Ephesians 1:3-6
2. What word or phrase from this reading struck you? Why?

3. What has God done for us through Jesus Christ?

4. What is special about the fact that God chooses us as His people? How might that differ from us choosing God?

5. We are not chosen by God for our own sake. We are chosen by God (by grace) for a purpose. In what ways might God want to bless others through you? In what ways might God want to bless others through your church?

B. God's Purpose: All Things Redeemed

1. Read Ephesians 1:7-12
2. What word or phrase from this reading struck you? Why

3. What are some of the blessings we receive in Jesus (vs. 7)?

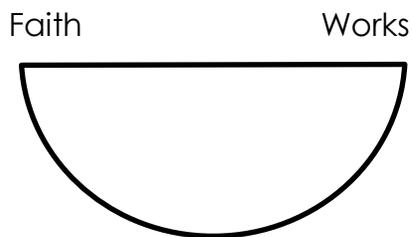
- C. God's Purpose: Sealed with a Promise
1. Read Ephesians 1:13-14
 2. When are we marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit?

 3. What do you know about your baptism?
 - a. Where?
 - b. When?
 - c. Pastor's name?
 - d. Who was present?
 - e. God parents?
 4. How does our baptism remind us that we belong?

 5. In what ways do you bring praise to God's glory (1:14)?

STUDY #3: SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Ephesians 2:8-10
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Announcements
4. Review
5. Memory Verse Recitation Ephesians 1:3
6. Introduction to the Study



Semi-Circle: Rhythms of Life

Rest and Labor

Time On and Time Out

Faith and Works

The second shape that we encounter in our Ephesians study is the **Semi-Circle**. The **Semi-Circle** is a reminder that there are rhythms to life. Picture the **Semi-Circle** rocking back and forth like a playground see saw. We rest and labor. We abide and bear fruit. We practice faith and works.

So, why does it always have to be "either / or"? Republican or Democrat? Books or Movies? Coke or Pepsi? PC or Mac? Michigan or Ohio State? (Michigan!). Faith or Works? When its "either / or" someone must be right and someone must be wrong? And usually, I'm right and you're wrong!

Think about how different the world would be if there was a bit more "both / and". Both books and movies. Both coffee and tea. Both faith and works. I find "both / and" thinking to be a spiritual discipline. It's not binary thinking. It's an approach that challenges me to consider that there may be alternative ways. And it's an approach that challenges me to consider that I may be wrong. "Both / and" thinking keeps us open to new possibilities and to the moving of the Holy Spirit. Think about how different the world would be if we put God's gift of sacred rhythm into practice. Both rest and labor. Both time on and time out. Both faith and works.

In Ephesians 1:10, Paul writes about God's great plan to unite all things in Christ. In Ephesians 2:1-10 God puts the great plan into action and draws us out of death and sin to make us alive in Christ. This God does out of great love (2:4), through faith (2:8), and by grace (2:5). **"For by grace you have been saved**

through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (2:8). Salvation is a gift. Faith is a gift. Grace is a huge gift. But with the gift comes a purpose. We are saved by grace, through faith... for good works (2:10). Another way to consider God's gift of grace is to ask the question, **“Since there is nothing for us to do to earn our salvation, what do we now get to do?”** We get to bear fruit. We get to serve God by doing good works for our neighbor and the world. There is a sacred rhythm to God's economy, as the **Semi-Circle** gently dances back and forth: rest and labor, books and movies, faith and works.

In Ephesians 2:11-22, Paul expands God's great plan. As Jewish and Gentile believers are reconciled to God in Christ, they are also reconciled to one another in Christ (the vertical goes horizontal). **“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us”** (2:14). In Christ, there is no longer Jew or Gentile. There is no longer rich or poor. There is no longer black or white. Through the reconciling truth of the cross there is only one body (2:16). As Paul writes in Ephesians 4:4-6, **“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all”**. Unity in Christ is a part of God's great plan, and as followers of Jesus, we have a role to play in that great plan.

7. Opening Reflection Questions

- A. How would you describe the rhythm of your typical day? Your typical week? How might God's rhythm be different?

- B. How often do you get to relate with folks from different cultures, ethnicities, and races? What do you enjoy about these cross-cultural experiences? Where do you find yourself challenged?

B. One in Christ A

1. Read Ephesians 2:11-22
2. What word or phrase from this reading struck you? Why?

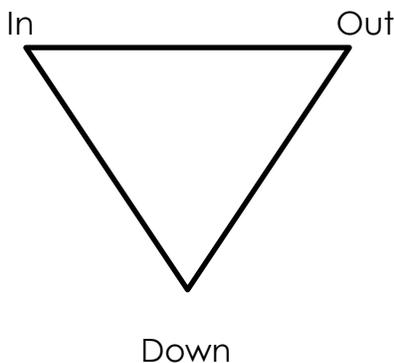
3. What are some words / phrases Paul uses to describe the Gentiles in 2: 12? Are there people living today who are described in the same way?

4. What are the dividing walls in our churches, communities, and country that continue to keep us apart?

5. How do you dismantle a wall that has stood for years and years?

STUDY #4: A PURPOSE AND A PAUSE FOR PRAYER (PART 2)

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Ephesians 3:14
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Announcements
4. Review
5. Memory Verses Recitation Ephesians 2:8-10
6. Introduction to the Study



Descending Triangle: This Is What God Does

God Comes Down.

God Gathers Us In.

God Sends Us Out.

The third shape that we encounter in our Ephesians study is the **Descending Triangle**. You may recall that the **Ascending Triangle** was our visible reminder of who God is. God the Father. God the Son. God the Holy Spirit. The **Descending Triangle** is a visible reminder of what God does. God comes down. God gathers us in. God sends us out. Down, In, Out. Down, In, Out. Down, In, Out...

God comes down to us in Jesus Christ. As we read in John 1:14, **“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”** God always comes down. As we read in Luther’s Small Catechism, God comes down in Jesus Christ, to redeem us and free us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. This Jesus does with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death (see the explanation of the Apostles’ Creed: 2nd Article). Through the gift of the cross and the truth of the resurrection, we are blessed with the gift of forgiveness and promise of eternal life. God comes down. Down, In, Out...

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God gathers us in. God draws us into community, where we may grow in our love for God and others. As we read in Luther’s Small Catechism, *“...the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as*

he calls, **gathers**, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth..." (see the explanation of the Apostles' Creed: 3rd Article). God gathers us in. Down, In, Out...

And as nice as it is to stay in (in fact many congregations do just that!), God doesn't want us to stay in. God wants us out, so God sends us out. At the very end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus sends the Church out. And Jesus came and said to them, "**All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age**" (Matthew 28:18-20). We were not called and gathered to stay in; we are called and gathered to go out. God sends us out. Down, In, Out...

In Ephesians 3:1-13 Paul shares a great mystery that is revealed by the Holy Spirit (3:5). The revelation is this: God's great plan of gathering all things in him (see 1:10), includes not just the people of Israel, but also the Gentiles (non-Israelites). As we read in 3:6, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. God's great plan of gathering all things in him, includes everyone (and everything). You might say that God is in the gathering business, and God sends St. Paul to share the Good News about this gathering. That in Jesus Christ and through the power of the Gospel, God will bring to Godself each one and every one. The mystery is solved. God comes down. God gathers us in. God sends us out. Down, In, Out.

In Ephesians 3:14-21 Paul prays for the Ephesians. He prays for strength, power, and love. These are elements the church will need as it lives out its calling to be God's blessed community out in the world (see 4:1). This prayer also ends Paul's theological reflection (2:1-3:21) and prepares the reader for a series of practical and ethical exhortations (4:1-6:30).

7. Opening Reflection Questions

- A. What is one big dream you've had that has come true? Share your dream.

- B. How might you describe the difference between “the love of power” or “the power of love”? Can you think of some real-life examples?

8. Study and Conversation

A. Paul Proclaims God's Purpose

1. Read Ephesians 3:1 and 3:14
2. Paul begins chapter 3:1, ***“This is the reason...”*** He then puts that thought “on hold” and inserts a 12-verse account of God's purpose, only to resume his original thought in 3:14, ***“For this reason...”***
 - a. Have you ever had to put your life on hold for someone or something? Describe it. Would you do it again? Why or why not?
3. Read Ephesians 3:2-13
 - a. As you reflect on this reading, do you think God has a purpose? If so, what might that purpose be?

5. How is Paul's prayer, similar to, or different than the types of prayers you or those in your church pray?

6. Love is an important part of this prayer.
 - a. Can you think of some specific ways:
 - 1.) God loves you

 - 2.) God loves the world

 - 3.) You love God

 - 4.) You love the world

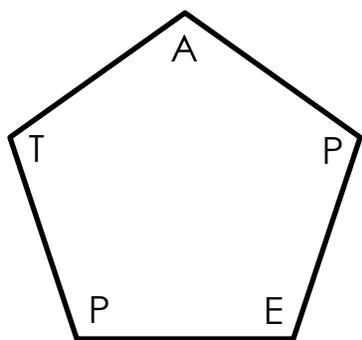
9. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study? Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

10. Homework
 - A. Read Ephesians chapter 4:1-16
 - B. Memory Verse Ephesians 3:14
 - C. Work through Study #5

11. Closing Prayer based on Ephesians 3:14-21 (led by participant): **Let us pray...We pray that, according to the riches of God's glory, we may be strengthened in our inner being with power through the Holy Spirit. We pray that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, as we are being rooted and grounded in love. We pray that we may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that we may be filled with all the fullness of God. We pray that the power of God at work within us may accomplish abundantly far more than we could ever ask or imagine. To God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**

STUDY #5: UNITY AND MATURITY

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Ephesians 4:11-12
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Announcements
4. Review
5. Memory Verse Recitation Ephesians 3:14
6. Introduction to the Study



Pentagon: Gifts for the Church

Apostles: Extend the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Prophets: Know God's Will for the Christian Community

Evangelists: Recruit Others to the Ministry and Mission

Pastors: Protect and Nurture the Christian Community

Teachers: Understand and Explain God's Truth

The fourth shape that we encounter in our Ephesians study is the **Pentagon**. The 5-sided **Pentagon** is a visible reminder of the gifts that God gives through the Holy Spirit to leaders in the church for the world. Paul identifies many spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-31. In Ephesians 4:11, Paul identifies 5 ministry gifts. Each point of the **Pentagon** represents a ministry gift. **A-P-E-P-T**. Let's take a brief look at each gift.

APOSTLES extend. They have the unique gift of extending the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Greek, the word apostle means: "sent one". Apostles ensure that the faith is transmitted from one context to another, from one culture to another, and from one generation to another. They are always thinking about bridging barriers, establishing the church in new contexts, developing new leaders, and networking. A church with an apostle at the helm might become overextended, and may need the leadership gifts of a pastor to ensure people are cared for and are growing in discipleship. Examples: St. Paul, St. Ignatius and the Jesuits.

PROPHETS know God's will for the Christian community. They are particularly attuned to God and God's truth for today. They bring correction and challenge "misdirection" in our churches and culture. They challenge the community to

obey what God has commanded. They point out shadow missions. They question the status quo. Without other **A-P-E-P-T** leaders in place, prophets can become activists, or disengage from the community and become “other-worldly”. A good teacher can help keep a prophet grounded. Examples: Jeremiah and John the Baptist.

EVANGELISTS recruit. These infectious communicators of the Gospel message recruit others to the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ. They call for a response to God's redemption in Christ, and draw believers to engage the wider mission, growing the kingdom. However, some evangelists can be so focused on reaching those outside the church that maturing and strengthening those on the inside may be neglected. A church with an evangelist at the helm needs a pastor and teacher to ensure people are cared for and are growing in the faith. Examples: Philip the Evangelist and Billy Graham.

PASTORS protect and nurture. They are caregivers of the community, who focus on the protection and spiritual maturity of God's flock. They cultivate a loving and spiritually mature network of relationships, and make and develop disciples. Some pastors can value stability to the detriment of the mission. Pastors need apostles and evangelists to lead them out into the community and world. If we only have pastors leading a congregation, what might happen? Examples: St. Timothy, Dallas Willard, Henry Nouwen.

TEACHERS understand and explain. Communicators of God's truth and wisdom, they help others become biblically fluent to know God's will. They guide others toward wisdom, help the community remain faithful to God's word, and construct a "community theology". Without the input of the other **A-P-E-P-T** leaders, teachers can fall into dogmatism or dry intellectualism. They may fail to see the personal or missional aspects of the church's ministry. Apostles, evangelists, and prophets help teachers look up from their books and see the world. Examples: St. Augustine, John Ortberg, Rob Bell, and Timothy Keller.

The body of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians is divided into two parts: theological reflection (2:1-3:21) and ethical exhortation (4:1-6:20). In 2:1-3:21, we learn that God has a purpose. In 4:1-6:20, we learn that God has a people who are called through the Gospel to live lives of integrity, service, and love. “I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” (4:1).

In Ephesians 4, Paul expresses the need for Christian unity (4:1-6) and spiritual maturity (4:7-16). As we read in 4:3, the Holy Spirit creates unity, and it is our call to maintain that unity. Paul follows this call to unity with 7 brief confessional statements (see 4:4-6): 1. One body; 2. One Spirit; 3. One hope; 4. One Lord; 5.

9. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study? Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

10. Homework
 - A. Read Ephesians chapter 4:17-5:20
 - B. Memory Verse Ephesians 4:11-12
 - C. Work through Study #6

11. Closing Prayer: ***Let us pray... we give you thanks, O God, for this life that you have called us to live. Help us to maintain your gift of unity in our families, congregations, and places of labor. And help us to discover and use the gifts that you have given us, that we might equip your people for mission and ministry. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen***

STUDY #6: LIVE IN THE LIGHT

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Ephesians 5:8
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Announcements
4. Review
5. Memory Verses Recitation Ephesians 4:11-12
6. Introduction to the Study

Live in the Light



The Light: In Ephesians 5:8, Christians are called to live as children of light. As followers of Jesus, the light of God shines in us and through us. Yes, we are saved by grace, and not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9); but the way we live our lives is important. Some theologians argue that we are saved by grace through faith... for good works (Ephesians 2:10). The lit candle will serve as a reminder that we are to live in the light of Christ.

The fifth image that we encounter in our Ephesians study is the **Light**. The lit candle will serve as a reminder that we are to live in the **Light** of Christ. In Matthew 5:16 Jesus says, "In the same way, let your **light** shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven".

In Ephesians 4:17-5:20 Paul offers instruction for Christian living. He continues the theme from 4:1, "**I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called**". Paul calls the Ephesians to "take off the old, and put on the new" (4:17-5:2); and to "live in the light" (5:3-20). A few key verses in this section include: 4:26, "**Be angry, but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger**"; and 5:8, "**For once you were in darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light**".

7. Opening Reflection Questions

A. Can you recall a time in your life when someone's words hurt you or your words hurt someone? How did it effect your relationship? Was the incident ever resolved?

B. Tell about a recent ad you have seen that uses sexuality to sell something. Why do companies do this?

8. Study and Conversation

A. Off with the Old, On with the New

1. Read Ephesians 4:17-5:2

2. What word or phrase from this reading struck you? Why?

3. In 4:17-19 Paul describes how the dominant culture lives in Ephesus. What does he affirm and insist we not do? Does this take hard work?

8. In 5:1-2 Paul writes that we should imitate God. How might we do that?

B. God's People Live in the Light

1. Read Ephesians 5:3-20
2. What word or phrase from this reading struck you? Why?

3. In 5:3 the Greek word for fornication or sexual immorality is porneia. Of course this is where we get the word pornography. Pornography is a multi-billion-dollar business and can be easily downloaded or viewed with just the click of a mouse.

a. How does pornography affect the people who view it?

b. How does pornography affect our relationships with God and others?

9. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study? Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

10. Homework
 - A. Read Ephesians chapter 5:21-6:9
 - B. Memory Verse Ephesians 5:8
 - C. Work through Study #7
 - D. Christian Music Challenge

11. Closing Prayer: ***Let us pray... Good and gracious God, lead us to be the people you long for us to be. Lead us to holy thoughts, holy words, and holy actions. Let your light shine through our lives. Empower us by your Holy Spirit to be more like Jesus. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen***

STUDY #7: LIVE IN COMMUNITY

1. Opening Scripture Passage: Ephesians 6:10
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Announcements
4. Review
5. Memory Verse Recitation Ephesians 5:8
6. Introduction to the Study

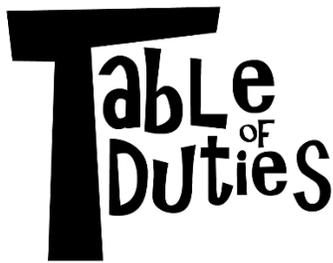


Table of Duties: For Christians, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ frees us from having to impress God with who we are and what we do. By faith in God's promise in Christ, we are free to serve our neighbor in our everyday lives. Martin Luther called daily life a "holy order and estate", and used Scripture passages in what has traditionally been called a "Table of Duties" to show how Christians should live in family and society.

The sixth image that we encounter in our Ephesians study is the **Table of Duties**. Martin Luther's Small Catechism was originally published in pamphlet form, and each part (10 Commandments, Apostles' Creed, Lord's Prayer, etc), was sold separately. At the top of each pamphlet was this heading, "As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household". Luther wrote the Small Catechism for the home, so that parents could instruct their children in the basics of the Christian faith.

Later editions of Luther's Small Catechism included additional parts: Morning and Evening Blessings, Blessings Before and After Meals, the Marriage Service, and the **Table of Duties**, also called, "The Household Chart of Some Bible Passages". Here Martin Luther divides life into 3 realms: church, society, and home. Bible verses are used as examples for how Christians are to behave in these 3 realms. Luther used Scripture passages from Ephesians 6:1-9 as examples for: children (6:1-3); parents (6:4); employees (6:5-8); and employers (6:9). Luther altered Paul's original writing ("slaves and masters") from the Letter to the Ephesians, to reflect the economic reality of 16th century Germany.

After writing about how Christians are to live in community (4:17-5:20), Paul offers instruction for the Christian Household. This builds upon the theme from 4:1, "**I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to**

8. Study and Conversation

A. Wives and Husbands

1. Read Ephesians 5:21-33
2. What word or phrase from this reading struck you? Why?
3. What does it mean to “yield”, “submit” or “be subject” to someone? When might “submission” be a positive thing? When might it turn negative?
4. How does the phrase “out of reverence for Christ” change things?
 - When our motivation is “out of love” or “out of reverence” it moves from a “have to” to a “get to”. I willingly submit myself to God, knowing that God’s ways are more beautiful and holy.

5. What are some concrete ways that spouses might honor one another in daily life? Please list up to 5 ways.

6. Describe what a good and healthy marriage looks like.

B. Children and Parents

1. Read Ephesians 6:1-4

2. What word or phrase from this reading struck you? Why?

3. Take a look at the 10 Commandments section of Martin Luther's Small Catechism. What is the 4th Commandment? What is unique about the placement of the 4th commandment? (Hint: Commandments 1-3 focus on our relationship with God. Commandments 4-10 focus on our relationship with _____.) Why do you think God begins with parents and children?

4. What is the promise that Paul quotes in 6:2-3? (see also Deuteronomy 5:16). Do you see a connection between the promise and the keeping of the commandment to, "Honor your father and mother"?

5. What are some things that make honoring our parents difficult?

6. Is disagreeing with our parents the same as dishonoring them? Why or why not?

C. Slaves and Masters (Employees and Employers)

1. Read Ephesians 6:5-9

2. What word or phrase from this reading struck you? Why?

9. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study? Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

10. Homework

A. Read Ephesians chapter 6:10-24

B. Memory Verse Ephesians 6:10

11. Closing Prayer: ***Let us pray... Dear Lord, we thank you for the precious gift of marriage, family, and honorable work. Lead us to be in right relationship with you and with those you have given us to love and serve. Out of reverence for Christ help us to be the husband, wife, parent, child, employee, employer that you long for us to be. In the name of Jesus. Amen.***

STUDY #8: LIVE STRONG

1. Opening Scripture Passage
2. Prayer Requests and Opening Prayer
3. Announcements
4. Review
5. Memory Verse Recitation Ephesians 6:10
6. Introduction to the Study (Ephesians 6:10-24)
7. Opening Reflection Questions
8. Study and Questions for Conversation based on Ephesians 6:10-24
9. Closing Question: What is your one take away from today's study? Whom might you share this "take away" with this week?

10. Homework
 - A. Schedule a Time to Celebrate (meal, coffee) the completion of this 8 session study.
 - B. Encourage the group to remain together for additional future studies.

11. Closing Prayer