

taking action!

small group material



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Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Labourers

IT'S A REAL RELATIONSHIP • Knowing God

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

Ephesians 1:15-23

Last week we studied the great list of spiritual blessings found in Ephesians 1:3-14. I hope that left you and your group with the strong sense that we are spiritual gazillionaires. Whenever we're tempted to question God's commitment to us, all we need to do is look to the cross and remember that He lavished us with love, forgiveness, and mercy. He blessed us with an eternal inheritance and sealed us in Christ Jesus with the Holy Spirit of promise.

In this passage we see Paul's response is to worship God in prayer. He thanks the Father for the faith and love of these believers and prays that their knowledge of God will increase as their understanding of 1) their hope, 2) His inheritance, and 3) His power available to them deepens. His prayer culminates in exalting Christ for His ultimate authority in this age and the one to come. It is no coincidence that Paul, after detailing the wonders of our inheritance, prays that God will open the eyes of our heart to know Him. Not just to know about Him, but to know Him personally and intimately. In addition, Paul prays that we'll grasp, with assurance, the security of our relationship with Him – centered on the authority of our risen Savior – Jesus Christ.

You want to help your group experience the very thing Paul prayed for. Namely that they would know God better so they can rejoice and rest in their relationship with Him.

Hope

The word hope carries with it a confident expectation of the future. It is sure and certain. Before we came to know Christ we were separate from Christ, strangers to His promises, we had no hope, and were without God (Ephesians 2:12). But now, because we are in Christ, we have a sure and certain hope; therefore, Paul prays that we will know the hope of His calling.

Klyne Snodgrass (a great Bible commentator with a really bummer name) said:

We can look forward to a happy ending of life with God. Hope is therefore a positive force. God has built a bridge from no hope to hope in His creation of life in the midst of death. Hope is a life-changing experience. Paul does not present an other-worldly, pie-in-the-sky theology, but he does view God's work in the resurrection as a cosmic event that has changed the course of history. He therefore prayed that people might know what God's call meant for their future and,

What's the Big Idea?

God wants us to know him by understanding:

1. The hope to which we've been called (v.18).
2. The future inheritance that God has in His saints (v.18).
3. The present power of God that is available to believers, ship over the church (v.19).

What's the Problem?

Often times our knowledge of God is neither deep nor intimate. If we are unaware of His eternal purposes, His great love for us and His incomparable power, we don't really know Him. Knowing Him is what life is all about.





therefore, for their present... if God has called us to be among His future people, hope changes everything and becomes the basis from which we live in the present.

Inheritance

If you read v. 18 quickly you may miss what Paul is really saying here. Remember vv. 3-14 and the sweet list of our inheritance? Well, this isn't that. Paul is talking about God's inheritance. You know what that is? It's us. Paul is praying here that we will know the riches of God's glorious inheritance in the saints. In other words he wants us to know that God sees you and I (and every believer) as His treasure, redeemed at great cost – the death of His Son. He loves us, delights over us, and wants us to know it.

Power

When Paul wants to illustrate the great power of God he goes to the obvious example: The resurrection of Jesus. That same power that He exerted when He raised Christ from the dead He spends for us, because He loves us. Here again is Snodgrass commenting on the connection between God's power and love:

The power Christians have is not intrinsic power, something they have in themselves, but a power that comes from God, defined by the resurrection of Jesus and His exaltation as Lord over every other power, both now and in the future. Because no other power can rival Him, and because in Him the fullness of God lives, Christians do not have to look elsewhere to find what they need for life. What they need is in Christ. This power, however, is not power in the abstract, it is relational power – power that is known because of being bound to the One in whom power resides. (NIV Application Commentary, page 91)

As you bring this study home you might want to pray Paul's prayer over your group and help them think about the steps they can take to really know God better. Just think of how sweet it would be if the women or men in your group really did grasp the hope we have in Christ, the value He places on us, and His great power for us who believe.

What's Our Response?

The primary response we'd like you to try to elicit is a compelling desire to seek and know God more deeply. Count it all joy if your group expresses a desire to know more about Him and take action toward that end – spending time in the Word and digging into the Scripture with purpose; praying to know Him more intimately.

What Are the Questions?

Ephesians 1:15-23

LAUNCH

Have you ever been in a relationship that felt a little shaky or uncertain? How do you feel when you're around or away from this person? In contrast, describe a relationship that you have that is safe and secure. What's the difference between the two?

EXPLORE

Many of us have yet to grasp and experience the fact that our relationship with God is absolutely secure. God's heart is that we'll all grow in our knowledge of Him and enjoy the security that is ours because of Jesus Christ.

Read 1:15-23

1. According to Ephesians 1:15-16 what had Paul heard about these believers?
2. For what does Paul pray in these verses? Why is knowledge of God so important for believers?
3. In addition to giving thanks, Paul prays that God would give them a "spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." Who or what is the source of wisdom which leads to this knowledge?
4. In Ephesians 1:18-19 Paul asks that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened so that they may know three realities. What are they?
5. What is the "hope" to which we have been called?
6. What is the "inheritance" to which Paul refers? Is it God? Is it us?
7. Paul goes on to pray that we will know the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. According to verses 19-23, how has God demonstrated His power?
8. What does Paul want them to understand about God's power?
9. What does Paul want us to understand about the nature of God from this passage, as well as His heart for believers?

APPLY

10. Imagine that Paul's prayer was answered in your life. What might look different?

in your life? Why or why not? What keeps you from centering your life on this hope?
11. Not only does God initiate a relationship with us, but He also wants us to grow in our knowledge of Him. Describe a recent circumstance, conversation, or experience that caused you to know Him better – more personally and intimately.
12. Paul does not present an other-worldly, pie-in-the-sky theology; on the contrary, he views God's work in the resurrection as a cosmic event that has changed the course of history. Has this hope "changed everything"

13. How does this passage invite you to pray differently? What do you think might look different in our prayer lives if they were shaped by the assumption that what people most need is a "God-solution"?

14. Of the three realities for which Paul prays (hope, inheritance and power), which do you most need to embrace and experience right now?

What Are the Answers?

1. That they had faith in Jesus and love for the believers.
2. Primarily that these believers would know God better. Notice that knowing God is Paul's central concern. Paul's prayer life was shaped by the fundamental assumption that what people most need is God.
3. According to Psalm 111 and Proverbs 9 the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
4. The hope to which He called them; the riches of the glory of His inheritance; the surpassing greatness of His power.
5. The confident expectation of acceptance from God, and intimacy with Him forever.
6. Paul prays in verse 18 that we will know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance. You and I (and every believer) are God's inheritance. He sees us as His treasure, redeemed at great cost – the death of His Son.
7. Through the resurrection and exaltation of Christ. Christ is seated at the right hand of God; God put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church.
8. God's power is absolute and over all things now and in the future. No one and nothing has the power and authority that God does. He has given that authority to Jesus Christ – He is victorious over sin and death, He reigns as King over all and we can look to these truths for comfort and hope in the midst of a world that doesn't submit and even dismisses His authority.
9. God demonstrated His power and authority over all mankind through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. At the same time, He makes it possible for us to know Him intimately.
- 10.-14. Choose as many of these application questions as you have time for and allow the group to discuss.

Memorize

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably great power for us who believe.

Ephesians 1:18,19