

The Chapel

Who Do You Think You Are? • You Are Filled • Ephesians 1:15-23 • June 10, 2018

Main Point

God gives of His power to the church, but we only tap into this power when we allow the Spirit to open our eyes to the truths of God revealed in His Word.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What was the boldest thing you did in order to get to know your spouse or a person you have had a relationship with? Share a brief story with the group.

What are some specific things we do when we want to know other people better?

How many of you have struggled with growing in your relationship with God? What do you usually do when you don't feel like you are growing closer to Him?

Although no human being can know everything about God, our understanding of Him and His purposes always has room to grow. One of the many promises of God in Scripture is that He will give us the needed spiritual insight to understand more about Him. As we'll see in today's study, this happens in large part thanks to the Holy Spirit's involvement in our study of the Bible.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Have a volunteer read Ephesians 1:17-20.

What difference does growing in our knowledge of God make in our daily lives?

What did Paul mean by "the eyes of your heart" (v. 18)? Why do our spiritual eyes need to be reopened occasionally?

The phrase eyes of your heart is found only here in the Bible. It's a beautiful picture of a person's inner self (or heart) having the ability to "see" ultimate reality. Natural light must strike our external eyes in order for us to see external realities. Likewise the "eyes" of our inner self must be enlightened by God's revelation in order that we may see ultimate reality.

For what three specific areas did Paul pray that the Ephesians' wisdom would grow (vv. 18-19)? Why is each area important?

How do you live when you know your calling? If you know there's great hope?

What are some specific ways we can expand our understanding of God's hope, calling, riches, and power? What role does Bible study play in this process? What role does prayer play?

What role does the Holy Spirit play?

As the apostle Paul petitioned God on behalf of the Ephesian Christians, he emphasized three areas in which their wisdom should grow. He stressed understanding God's calling on their lives, God's inheritance of them as believers, and the believers' recognition of God's power. Each of these areas help us better understand God's plan for us and why our obedience to Him matters. Only through the Holy Spirit's work in our lives can our wisdom in these areas grow.

Which of the things Paul prayed for in these verses could you use most in your life right now?

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers shows that God's will is for all Christians to grow in spiritual insight. These verses mean that we can pray for ourselves (and for other believers) to grow in the spiritual wisdom we need to understand God's plan and power better, which in turn makes us more obedient disciples.

In a second of Paul's letters—1 Corinthians—the apostle encourages us to access the wisdom of the Holy Spirit so we can gain a better understanding of our salvation and of our role as disciples of Christ. While he denounced the self-seeking wisdom of the world, Paul highly valued and shared God's wisdom. In 1:30, he defined God's wisdom as Christ Jesus. In 2:6-10, Paul defined several elements of this Christ-defined wisdom he taught and on which he relied.

| Have another volunteer read 1 Corinthians 2:6-10.

What influences tend to blind people to the revelation of God's mystery—salvation to all people through Jesus' death and resurrection?

What qualities or actions exemplify spiritual maturity to you?

Christ-centered wisdom is for the mature, which Paul understood to be those who had been saved. These were the ones open to God's Spirit and thus were enabled by Him to comprehend God's wisdom. Paul stressed that only believers would understand and benefit from God's wisdom. The wisdom that Paul proclaimed was not a worldly wisdom, described here as a wisdom of this age. Rather it was the understanding of God's offer of salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection, revealed to unbelievers through the Holy Spirit.

How do the truths in these verses make you feel about your relationship with God? What should our response be in light of these truths?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

The Spirit desires to reveal to you more and more about Christ and about what in this life really matters and what really does not matter. Be sensitive and obedient to Him as He leads you daily to keep your focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. He provides you with all the wisdom you need to live as a mature Christian.

From these two passages, what role do you see the Holy Spirit playing in the life of a believer?

Where do you need the guidance of the Holy Spirit most in your life this coming week?

How do you think would you change if our group prayed Ephesians 1:17-19 every week for each other?

What will you do differently in light of what we've read?

Pray

As you close in prayer, pray Ephesians 1:17-20 over your group. Pray that your group members would continue to grow in spiritual wisdom and would be more attentive to the Spirit's work in their lives this week. Pray that your group members would have a renewed desire to study Scripture for the sake of growing closer to God this week.

Commentary

| Ephesians 1:17-20

Verse 17. Paul's thinking moved easily from thanksgiving for his readers to supplication for them. In a nutshell, he entreated God to give them a certain kind of spirit. He piled on certain phrases to describe God's nature and the kind of spirit he had in mind for the Ephesian believers. The term wisdom refers to an understanding of things as they really are and revelation refers to God's truth as disclosed in His Word as well as in His Son. Paul was not interested in his readers gaining abstract information. He longed for them to have personal knowledge of God by a life of fellowship with Him.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers shows that God's will is for all Christians to grow in spiritual insight. These verses mean that we believers can pray for ourselves (and for other believers) to grow in the spiritual wisdom we need to understand God's plan and power better. As the apostle continued petitioning God on

behalf of the Ephesian Christians, he emphasized three areas in which their wisdom should grow. He stressed understanding God's calling on their lives, God's inheritance of them as believers, and the believers' recognition of God's power.

Verse 18. The phrase eyes of your heart is found only here in the Bible. It's a beautiful picture of a person's inner self (or heart) having the ability to "see" ultimate reality. Natural light must strike our external eyes in order for us to see external realities. Likewise the "eyes" of our inner self must be enlightened by God's revelation in order that we may see ultimate reality. When we were converted, our renewed hearts were given new "eyes." Now God's light needs to strike our heart-eyes.

The first ultimate reality we need to see with our heart-eyes is the hope of His calling. God took the initiative to call us as individuals to salvation. This calling became real in our lives when we became Christians ("when you heard the word of truth ... when you believed," 1:13). But all this looks forward to a glorious future hope, the fulfillment of eternal life guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. In Scripture, hope is not some vague expectation but rather is an assured promise. Paul longed for all believers to live in joyful expectancy for the future as a result of the fact that God has called us to Himself.

The second ultimate reality we need to see is the glorious riches of His inheritance among the saints. In 1:11 Paul acknowledged that "we were also made His inheritance." The Israelites had been spoken of as God's inheritance (Deut. 4:20; 9:29; Zech. 2:12). Now Christians are called God's esteemed possession. Paul did not think of this merely in individualistic terms; rather, we are among the saints. The apostle did not think it presumptuous for believers to think that we are something very special to God—something he called glorious riches. Paul longed for all believers to see that we are God's prized inheritance.

Verse 19. The third ultimate reality we need to see with our heart-eyes is the immeasurable greatness of His power to us who believe. Only divine power is sufficient to bring the two previous realities to fulfillment. Thus Paul prayed that believers will get a grip on the vast power that God has deployed. The apostle piled up four words that are similar in meaning. Power in the original language is the basis of the English term dynamo. The Greek word rendered working is the basis of our English term energy. The phrase His vast strength—literally "strength of His might"—translates two Greek terms that when combined suggest power in action, not a mere abstract quality. Paul longed for all believers to be fully persuaded that there is no power shortage with God. He will accomplish everything He has planned for His beloved saints.

Verse 20. How much power does God have? He has the power involved in raising Jesus from the dead. No other power, whether angelic or demonic, is able to raise the dead. Yet by God's power the death of Jesus was reversed. He received resurrection life that can never die. That same power is already at work in believers. How much power does God have? He has the power it took for seating Jesus at His right hand. Luke described Jesus' ascension from the earth (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9). Paul and other writers knew that this meant Jesus had been exalted to the most prestigious position in the universe (Phil. 2:9-11; Heb. 1:3). By in the heavens, Paul meant the supernatural realm invisible to natural sight.

| 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

In verses 1-5, Paul distanced his motive, method, and message from those who enticed hearers with entertaining but empty words. While he denounced the self-seeking wisdom of the world, Paul highly valued and shared God's wisdom. In 1:30, he defined God's wisdom as Christ Jesus. In 2:6-10, Paul defined several elements of this Christ-defined wisdom he taught and on which he relied.

Verse 6. "However" marks a turn from discussing "men's wisdom" (2:5) to God's wisdom. In 2:1-5, Paul described his message and himself, using the first-person singular, "I." In verse 6, he shifted to the first-person plural, we, including himself along with the Corinthian believers. The Christ-centered wisdom of which he spoke, therefore, applies to the whole church as well as to Paul. Christ-centered wisdom is for the mature. These were the ones open to God's Spirit and thus were enabled by Him to comprehend God's wisdom. (In 2:6, the mature is probably synonymous with "the saved." Paul was contrasting saved and lost people, not discussing levels of spiritual maturity as in 3:1-4.) Paul stressed that only believers would understand and benefit from God's wisdom.

The wisdom that Paul proclaimed was not a worldly wisdom, described here as a wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, those who so strongly influence the thinking and behavior of worldly people. Those who subscribe to that kind of wisdom are coming to nothing, Paul said.

Verses 7-8. If Paul did not preach a wisdom derived from "this age," then what wisdom did he preach? It was God's hidden wisdom in a mystery. In the original language's grammar, the term God's is in an emphatic position. Its placement and form means that this wisdom came from, was centered in, and belonged to God alone. Paul made four statements about God's wisdom. First, it is a mystery. The word describes something that had been hidden but has been revealed (see Eph. 3:4-5; Col. 1:26-27). Therefore, God's wisdom is wisdom once hidden from human reason that has been revealed in the Person and work of Jesus Christ "by His Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:10). Second, God's wisdom was predestined before the ages. God determined this wisdom, now revealed in Christ, before creation. This mystery has always been and always will be God's plan for redeeming sinful human beings. Third, God's wisdom is for our glory. God planned the revelation of redemption in Christ before time began. He reveals Christ in the current age. When Christ returns and is revealed as Judge and King, the completion of our salvation will result in our glory as we receive our resurrection bodies, equipped to live with God for eternity. Fourth, God's wisdom is unknown by the rulers of this age. How could Paul be sure of this? Because had they understood the nature of Christ as God's revealed wisdom, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. The truth about Jesus Christ is revealed only by the Spirit (v. 10); therefore, those religious, intellectual, and political rulers who placed their confidence only in this world's wisdom were not able to understand God's wisdom.

Verse 9. This verse does not refer to the majestic and as yet unseen glories of heaven but to God's plan of salvation for lost sinners. Paul cited the thought of Isaiah 64:4 as a reference to the mystery now revealed in Christ. This gives biblical support for the human inability to grasp God's wisdom apart from the work of the Spirit. Articulate speakers, profound philosophers, or intellectual scholars on their own cannot grasp God's plan to redeem people through Christ.

Verse 10. The difference between those who "crucified the Lord of glory" (v. 8) and "the mature" (v. 6) is an understanding of God's wisdom, which is revealed only by the Spirit. He alone understands the deep things of God; He alone can give understanding of those things to others.