



## NG Study Guide: Ephesians 1:15-23 "Enlightened" [10.29.17]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.

### The Study

**Thesis:** What are some things people usually pray for? In this passage, Paul is praying for the Church at Ephesus. He rejoices in their faith in Jesus Christ, and prays that they would know Christ more deeply. He then goes on to remind us of the great hope we have through know Jesus and His power and authority in the Church, His body. We learn this week that knowing Jesus transforms our prayers, our hope, and our lives.

#### 1. Paul's Praise (15-16)

In light of the blessings Paul discussed in verses 3-14 of chapter 1, Paul is rejoicing over the believers in the church at Ephesus (15: "Therefore"). He also rejoiced because of 2 main characteristics they had as a church, characteristics that are defining points for the lives of followers of Christ (15):

- First, faith in the Lord Jesus (16): Paul recognized their faith (confident assurance of the Truth) in Jesus as Lord. Christian faith is rooted in the Person of Jesus Christ. It is different than a vague hoping for "things to work out"; rather it is the assurance that the Gospel is true and that Jesus is the ruling and reigning King.
- Second, love for all the saints (16): agape love for God's people. Jesus commanded love for neighbors, love for the outcast, and even love for our enemies. Still, there is a special bond that exists within the body of Christ, such that we love each other. This love gives testimony that we really are followers of Christ (John 13:35).

The Church at Ephesus had a reputation for their faith in Jesus and love for each other, such that the news had reached Paul's ears, even as he was in prison (15 "I heard"). Paul's response to this news was:

- Thanksgiving (16): Paul was thankful for the believers at Ephesus. So too are we to be thankful for our brothers and sisters in Christ. This attitude of thankfulness for other believers stirs us up to love God's people more.

- Prayer (16): Paul expressed that he “[did] not cease” to give thanks for the his brethren, and also did not cease in praying for them. Paul made it a consistent habit to pray for other believers. So too are we to pray for each other. Many times we pray for different types of needs and desires, which is great. However, Paul had a specific prayer for the Church that he prayed consistently. What was the nature of this prayer?

## **2. Paul’s Prayer (17-19)**

Paul prays for “a spirit of wisdom and revelation of Him” (17). Paul’s prayer request for the church is distinctly spiritual. He prays that believers would know Jesus, both intellectually and experientially. In the midst of all the needs and desires we may have, our deepest need is to know God more deeply. This wisdom and understanding of Jesus comes from the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 11:2), and comes (in this passage) through prayer. When God answers our prayers of wanting to know Him more deeply, our lives are affected in ways outlined in verses 18-19:

- The eyes of our understanding are enlightened (18): some translations use the word “heart” in place, or in addition to, the word “understanding”. There is a difference between know a person and merely know about a person. What God desires is that we would know him through Christ, and that we would experience a life of following Jesus, not just gaining more knowledge about Him without allowing that Truth to change how we live.
- We know the hope of His calling (18): When Christ reveals the Truth of the Gospel to us. We are given a new, living hope (1 Peter 1:1-7). This hope is rooted in Jesus and the joy of knowing we will be with Him in eternity, such that it carries us through trials and difficulties we go through in this life. When we recognize the hope we have in Jesus, we are able to face difficulty and pain, because we know that our eternity is one of joy and praise in the Presence of our Savior.
- We know the riches of the glory of His inheritance (18): The riches we have in Christ through salvation are unfading and incorruptible (1 Peter 1:4). This is why, in Matthew 6, Jesus urges us to invest in eternity, storing up our treasures in heaven. Our treasures in eternity cannot be destroyed and will away. Also, when we are with Jesus in His kingdom, he restores everything that was broken during our lives here on Earth (i.e. no more tears, no more sickness, no more death, etc.). Paul even reminds us in 1 Corinthians 4:17, that the trials we go through in this life are “preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison”. Ultimately, our inheritance, is Jesus Himself (Psalm 16:5-6). Our greatest joy is that we are with our Lord and Savior forever, all because of God’s love for us and His grace towards us, which He demonstrated on the Cross.
- We know the greatness of His power: It is God’s power that moves, by His Spirit, through prayer, so that all the things mentioned above aren’t achieved through human effort, but by God Himself. Paul takes a closer look at the nature of God’s power in v.20-23

## **3. God’s Power (20-23) *What power is fueling this confident prayer?***

Paul reminds the believers in the church at Ephesus of the great power of our Lord. He reminds them that God’s power would reassure us as God’s people and remind us of how great our God is. He recognized that the power of God is displayed in 2 distinct ways:

- It is the power that raised Christ from the dead (20): Paul reminds us that the same power that makes us a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), is the same power that raised Jesus. Christ’s resurrection is our reassurance that one day we will rise too. Death isn’t the final curtain call for those who believe in Christ, rather it is the beginning of a the next chapter a new life with Jesus in eternity!
- Jesus’ power is displayed in His authority (20-22): There are forces of evil that war against Christ and His Church (Ephesians 6:12). We see evidence of evil all around us, reminding us of the brokenness of the world we live in. However, Paul encourages us that Jesus is on His throne, that He is still ruling and reigning, and because He is

good and gracious, we know that He has promised eternal good for those who follow him (the ideas we discussed earlier, in point 2)

Finally, Paul reminds us that, as the Church, we are the body of Christ. Since He is our head, it means that our lives are dedicated to following Him and seeing Him glorified. Since following Christ cannot be done in our own strength, Paul reminds us that our continual prayer should be that we know Jesus more deeply. The more we know Christ, the more we see how Wonderful and Beautiful He is. The more we see His Wonder and Beauty, the more we love Him. The more we love Him, the more we want to follow Him.

### **Study Guide Q's**

- 1. Paul was thankful for the believers. He was thankful for their faith in Jesus and love of each other. What are some ways we can grow in our faith in Jesus and our love for other believers? What are some hindrances to our love for each other?**
- 2. Paul recognized that the primary need people have is that they would know God. Why do you think He prized knowing God over any of the many other things we can pray for?**
- 3. How does our hope in Jesus carry us through trials in this life? (look at the four bullet points in point 2). How do you see this working out in your own life and the lives of each other?**
- 4. How does recognizing God's power and authority change how we pray? How does it affect how we live our lives?**

### **Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)**

- 1. Why does God desire for His people to pray? Why is our greatest need to know Him more deeply? Consider the words of this article: <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-to-count-it-all-as-loss>**
- 2. Take 1 hour out of your week this week, to dedicate time to pray for yourself and for other followers of Christ to know and love Jesus more deeply. Consider creating a time to pray for this with your NG group together.**

### **Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:**

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

**Consider inviting one of your neighbors over for dinner, in order to get to know them better. Meals are often a way to develop friendship, show generosity, and create space to get to know people, all in a single moment.**

### **Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:**

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

### **Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

### **Leader Notes:**

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
  - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.