



LEADER'S GUIDE 2

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

A Prayer of Intercession

This is a 2 part prayer: Thanksgiving: verses 15-16 and Request for Enlightenment: verses 17-23

As you begin this study, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what God has said through Paul.

DAY 1

Read Ephesians 1:15-23 three times.

1. Paul leads into this section with a phrase: "For this reason" or "Wherefore". In the RSV Bible the phrase "for this reason" is later in the sentence. The prayer springs directly from Paul's vision of the spiritual blessings given to us in verses 3-14.

2. In verse 15 – What are 2 characteristics of these Christians?

Faith in the Lord Jesus and Love for all the saints.

These are the two main characteristic hallmark of what God intends for all of His people. First, to put their faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, and second, to reflect His love to each other. While his message is always of love and witness to the unsaved, he always emphasizes how we are to love and nurture fellow 'saints'.

3. In verse 16 – What are 2 ways Paul gives thanks for them?

Does not cease giving thanks for them and makes mention of them in his prayers.

Paul continues his practice of continuous prayers of thanksgiving for their faithfulness and most certainly petitions for these servants of Christ. He knew of their spiritual need to keep encouraged. It is important for us to edify our brothers and sisters in Christ, encouraging and praying continually for each other as in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 to "pray without ceasing".

TO DIG DEEPER: One way a Study Bible helps us to understand what we are reading is with Footnotes.

Read the footnote for verse 15 – note the 2 possibilities why Paul wrote "ever since I heard". (If you do not have an NIV Study Bible, this footnote is in the Leader's Guide for this lesson.)

FOOTNOTE: "ever since I heard" – This sounds strange from one who spent a few years in Ephesus. He may be referring to a greatly enlarged church there, many of whom Paul did not know, or, if Ephesians was intended as a circular letter, he may be referring to news from the whole area, only a part of which he had visited."

DAY 2

Note the change in the tense of the verbs in verses 16-18 – “have not stopped giving” or “do not cease” or “cease not”, “remembering” or “making mention”, “keep asking” or “constantly asking”, or “pray also” or “pray”. This indicates a present and ongoing action.

One principle of Inductive Bible Study is to note the tense of the verbs which helps us understand the intention and meaning of what the author is saying.

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1. In verse 17 – what 2 things does Paul keep asking God to give these Christians?

The Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.

From Paul’s own experiences he know they continually needed the flow of wisdom and the revelation of God for their understanding of His will for them.

2. Why does Paul want them to have these 2 things?

To know God better

He wants them to continually grow in a deeper personal relationship with the God they were serving that goes beyond just following His instructions to them. Their religious background was more legalistic. He wanted them to fully understand and feel the depth of God’s love and grace and discernment of His guidance for their own ministry to others.

FOR REFLECTIONS: These people are already in a relationship with God. Paul wants it to deepen into a more full knowing of God.

How do you get to know another person?

Spend time with the person

How do you get to know God?

Spend time with Him- read and study the Bible, pray

Do you really know God or do you just know about Him?

DAY 3

1. In verse 18 – what else does Paul ask for these Christians?

The “eyes of your heart may be enlightened” and “know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”.

He asks for the eyes of understanding or for them to “see clearly” and know (be assured) what is the hope (not wishing for, but having the confidence of one who has already been called and chosen as God’s children)for their eternal inheritance. This is the joyful result of each one’s acceptance by faith. See 1 Peter 1:8-9.

“his glorious inheritance in the saints” – can mean the inheritance we have from God (verse 14 and Colossians 1:12) or the inheritance God receives – the saints themselves.

“saints” = those whom God has called to be His own people, i.e. all Christians

The word carries the idea of dedication to a deity.

Using your footnotes in your NIV Study Bible, define “the eyes of your heart”. NIV footnote says: “eyes of your heart – your mind or understanding or inner awareness”.

2. In verses 18 & 19 what 3 things does Paul want them to know?

“the hope of his calling” or “the hope to which he has called you (Ephesians 1:4-5 – to be holy and adopted)

“the riches of the glory of his inheritance (1 Peter 1:4 refers to riches beyond imagination which God has reserved for his people)

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“the surpassing greatness of His power” or “incomparably great power” – it is often so great and awe-inspiring it is hard, if to impossible to define. The extraordinary divine force by which Jesus Christ was raised (vs.20) is the same power at work in and through believers!

TO DIG DEEPER: Read Ephesians chapters 1-3. Mark the word “rich” or “riches”.

Who is rich?

How are the riches described?

What is to be done with the riches?

(A lot of times you are asked to mark a word or phrase. This can be done by underline, brackets, parentheses, using different colored pens or shading with colored pencils. Some people prefer not to mark their Bible. Instead, you can just write down the verses where the word or phrase is found.)

DAY 4

1. In verse 19 Paul talks about God’s power – what is it like?

God’s power is like the working of his might strength. The power that formed and sustains all visible creation and all that God encompasses is available for the benefit of all believers.

2. In verse 20 what 2 events in the life of Christ does Paul use to demonstrate what he means by power?

Jesus victory over death in his resurrection and Jesus is now seated in heaven at God’s right hand. See also Philippians 3:10

“right hand” = symbolic place of highest honor and authority

3. According to verse 19 and the footnotes in the NIV Study Bible, who is this power working in? The NIV footnote says for vrs. 19: “In this verse Paul piles term upon term to emphasize that the extraordinary divine force by which Jesus Christ was raised (vs.20) is the same power at work in and through believers.”

TO DIG DEEPER: Read the book of Ephesians and mark the word “power” or “strength”. Describe this power: From where does it come?

Who has it?

What are they to do with it?

Note: All the Greek words for power are used in Ephesians but one – vios = violence.

DAY 5

1. In verse 21 what is Jesus position in regards to heaven and earth?

Jesus is the authority over all – no other power, by any other name reigns over him.

What statement tells us this position is permanent?

“Not only in the present age, but in the age to come”

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“age to come” = future age when Christ, the Messiah, will consummate his kingdom and there will be a righteous society. See Matthew 12:32

2. In verse 22 what is included in the authority of this position?

All things are in subjection to him and he is head over the church. See also Hebrews 2:6-9.

3. In verse 23 what is the church

“which is his body” and the fullness of Christ

4. How is it the fullness of Christ? (see NIV Study Bible footnote which says: “fullness...fills. The church is the fullness of Christ probably in the sense that it is filled by him who fills all things.)

The New Living Translation footnote says “The church should be the full expression of Christ who fills it.”

The image of body shows the church’s unity – each member is involved with all other members in doing Christ’s work on earth. Christ is the head of the entire body that gives life and direction with passion and eternal love for each of us individually.

TO DIG DEEPER: Read the book of Ephesians and mark the word “body” or “church”. Note what is said about it: Who it is, what it does, from where does it get it’s directions, how is it to do what it is supposed to do”

DAY 6

Not only do we have riches and power in Christ, but we belong to the one who has all riches and power given to Him.

APPLICATION

Paul’s prayers reveal how to pray more effectively for other Christians. From Ephesians 1:15-23 what can I pray for other Christians? Who will I pray for?

FOR REFLECTION: from verses 19-20 – nothing is impossible to God. God has won the final victory and is in control of everything. We need not fear any dictator or nation. Think what the power of Christ’s resurrection can do for you today!