

The background of the page is a vertical wooden plank texture. On the left side, there are dark, irregular shadows cast across the wood, suggesting light coming from the right. The text is centered on the right side of the page.

*Ephesians*  
**Mystery  
Revealed**

## Introduction

**Let's Go!** We are setting off on a new year of small group ministry at St. Paul's. I hope you feel the enthusiasm that comes with this essential ministry. So many of our new visitors and members get connected to St. Paul's because of your commitment. This cannot happen without you. I pray the Spirit would put some wind in your sails! Let's keep building this ministry together.

**The Inductive Method.** The word "inductive" means to make conclusions about God and his ways by way of careful observation and analysis of the Bible. The three steps are observation, interpretation, and application. In other words, "What does it say," "What does it mean," and "What does it mean to me?" This way of studying the Bible helps us follow 2 Tim 2:15, that we would properly handle the word of truth.

**A Small yet Noteworthy Change.** In our first go-round, we separated observation and interpretation questions into two sections. Sometimes this gave the discussion a choppy feel. You will no longer find "interpretation" questions listed separately.

**Expect & Pray for God to Teach You.** It is critical to come to God's Word with a sense of expectation. God wants to speak to us, that we would be encouraged and grow.

Also, prayer is more important than you think. Throughout the day, think of the people in your group and lift them up to the Lord.

**Look for Action.** James says, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." When we start doing what God wants, we will see him take our baby-steps of faithfulness and turn them into something much greater than we could do on our own.

**Don't Stop Building Your Group.** Consider pursuing some new people for your group. If you would like to have a few more in your group, go out and ask someone. There are many who would benefit from a group who don't join because no one asked them. The worst thing that can happen is they say no.

**Don't Talk Too Much.** A last reminder for your group – a good leader is one who is asking good questions and then stepping out of the way. People are prone to taking the path of least resistance. This means they would rather you answer their questions than think it through themselves. Instead of answering, ask, "What do you all think about that question?"

### **THROW A PARTY!!!**

I put this one in big fold font because it may be one of the most important things you do. Feel free, once a session, to cancel the study and have a feast of some sort. Enjoy each other's company, have some fun! This is a time to invite spouses who do not regularly attend, or a neighbor or friend who might not come otherwise. You can do it at a different location than you normally meet if that is better.

**Giving Credit.** Creation of this small group guide was done with reference to John Stott's small group guide "Ephesians, which was invaluable in deciding the passage breakdowns and titles," and also an inductive study on Ephesians produced by Grace Bible Church in College Station, TX.

**"A Life of Spiritual Blessing"****Lesson 1**

Ephesians 1:1-14

September 17

**Icebreaker question.** What's the least desirable job you've ever worked?

**Prayer (now or end of study).** Let each person share a praise from the summer and/or something from the summer that they need prayer for. Then go around, and have each person pray for the person on their left.

**Studying the word.** *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

**OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. Who wrote this letter?
  - a. Why is it important who wrote this letter? If this letter was not written by Paul, would it make any difference?

Two important reasons it needs to be written by Paul. 1) If it was not written by Paul, the letter begins with a lie. 2) If it was not written by Paul, it was not written with apostolic authority. The apostles were specially committed by God for the purpose of declaring the Gospel to the world.

3. Who did he write this letter to, and what do you we know about them?
4. In verse 3, Paul blesses (praises) God for blessing "us" with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.
  - a. Who is "us" and how do you know?"

"Us" is the church at Ephesus. These promises are available to the whole human race, but have only been received by those

who are in Jesus Christ (vs. 13-14).

- b. Make a list of the spiritual blessings we have because of God found in verses 3-14. (At least six blessings).

1) We have every spiritual blessing. 2) Chosen for adoption as his children. 3) Redemption/forgiveness through his blood. 4) Knowing the mystery of his will. 5) Obtained an inheritance. 6) Sealed with the Spirit, a guarantee we will receive the promise

- c. How do the blessings relate to the past (vs. 4), the present (vs. 7), and the future (vs. 10)?
5. There are some difficult to understand concepts in these verses... discuss the meaning of
- a. "Heavenly places" – vs. 3

This is a phrase that only is seen in Ephesians. It seems to mean the unseen world of spiritual reality. Eph. 6:12 is an example of this applied to the demonic sphere.

- b. Being "chosen" and "predestined" (vss. 4, 5)

The word "predestined" is clearly Scriptural, but the definition of the word has been disagreed upon different theologians. One interpretation is that God has chosen a secret group of people (the elect) for salvation, and these people will come to faith through God's providential guidance.

The other interpretation is that predestination refers to God's plan, in that he predetermined at the beginning of time to send Jesus and accomplish salvation for those who would believe. Our church does not make a big deal about which of these is true.

- c. That "[God] works all things according to the counsel of his will?" (vs. 11)
  - d. Being "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."
6. What is God's ultimate purpose for mankind through Jesus? (Vs. 9 and 10).
7. How do you see each person of the Trinity involved in this passage? Pay attention to action of the Father, Son, and Spirit.
8. Observe in verse 13 the process that results in acquiring the inheritance we have in Jesus. There are four steps in this process.
9. Is there anything we haven't covered in this passage that stands out to you as worthy of conversation?

### **QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

1. When you think about being chosen, forgiven, and sealed by God, how does it make you feel?
2. Being brought into the fold of God's people was costly to God, and took a lot of work on Jesus' part. What is the appropriate response to God's work on your behalf? (HINT: Paul demonstrates this response in verse 3).
3. According to verses 13-14, it is when "we believe in him" that we receive the sealing of the Spirit and our guarantee of an inheritance through Christ.
  - a. Have you believed in him? If not, then you can right now by acknowledging him as the Son of God.
  - b. The Bible consistently presents this as Good News, but for different reasons our world doesn't view these beliefs the same way. How can you show your joy in Christ to an unbelieving world?
4. Did you notice the repeated phrase (vss. 6, 12, 14), "To the praise of his glory?" How can you live all life to the praise of his glory?
5. How does your life need to change to be lived for God's glory?

***“A Life of Prayer”******Lesson 2***

Ephesians 1:15-23

September 24

**Icebreaker question.** If you had to describe yourself with three words that started with the first letter of your middle name, what would they be?

**Prayer (now or end of study).** Today's passage on is on prayer. Let us pray for each other, and our neighbors/families, the way that Paul prays:

- That the Spirit would help us know him better.
- That our eyes would see the hope we are called to.
- That we would experience his incomparably great power.
- That Jesus would lead his church in power.

**Studying the word.** *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

**OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. How would you describe the tone of these verses?
3. What is the reason (vs. 15) that Paul gives thanks to God for the Ephesians?

*“Because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints...”*

4. Make a list of what Paul asks God to give the Ephesian believers. Find at least four things.

*1) The Spirit of wisdom and revelation. 2) Eyes of your heart enlightened. 3) Knowing the hope to which he has called you. 4) Knowing the immeasurable greatness of his power toward those he believe.*

- a. How would you summarize the goal of these prayers?

Allow, of, course for different answers, but I would guide it this direction: "The goal of these prayers is that the Spirit would help us fix our eyes on the end result of our salvation. The hope of glory, the enlightening of our hearts to understand our hope, and the power released in us that raised Jesus Christ from the dead."

5. What does it mean to be "called" by God?
6. What are the eyes of a person's heart?

According to John Stott: "in biblical usage the heart is the whole inward self, comprising mind as well as emotion."

7. What will be the glorious inheritance we receive in Jesus? Why is it described as "riches?"
8. Describe God's incomparably great power in verses 19-22.
  - a. Why is the resurrection and ascension of Jesus such a clear description of God's power?
  - b. What would it look like to see that power at work in your life every day?
  - c. What would it look like to see that power in church?

### **QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

1. Scripture is the guide for Christians, and so we know that Scripture teaches us how to pray. How could your prayer life be improved by adding to it the scope of Paul's prayer?
2. Paul prays for the church's hope to be in the glorious inheritance we will receive.
  - a. What is your hope?
    - i. What do you dream of?
    - ii. What are you looking forward to?
  - b. Is there a way you need to repent (change your mind)?
  - c. What difference would it make if your hope was in God's call?



***“A Life of Resurrection”******Lesson 3***

Ephesians 2:1-10

October 1

**Icebreaker question.** Do you have an accomplishment that is especially meaningful to you? Why is it meaningful?

**Prayer (now or end of study).** In addition to praying for any personal prayer requests that anyone may have, spend some time praying for those who do not know Christ. If appropriate, you can pray by name. If not, you can pray for an anonymous “friend.” Pray that these people would come to believe in Jesus, and be saved by grace through faith.

**Studying the word.****OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. What was the human condition before Christ (verses 1-3)?  
Make a list of the descriptions Paul uses (five things).

1) Dead in our trespasses, 2) following the course of this world, 3) following the prince of the power of the air, 4) following the passions of the body and mind 5) we were by nature children of wrath.

3. What is “the course of this world?” (vs. 2)
4. What is the prince of the power of the air?

This is a reference to the devil.

5. What does “sons of disobedience” mean?
6. What does it mean to be children of wrath?
7. What did God do? (verses 5-8) Find at least three things.

1) Made us alive with Christ. 2) Raised and seated us with Christ. 3) Saved us by grace.

8. Why did God do this? Find as many reasons as you can.

Many reasons! Because he was rich in mercy. Because he had great love for us. So that in the coming ages he might show the riches of his grace...

9. What is grace? What is faith? (verse 8)
10. Why does Paul work so hard to make it crystal clear that this salvation is by grace, not our works or human effort? [question directly from John Stott, *Ephesians*]
11. What does it mean that God has prepared beforehand good works for us? (verse 10)
12. Do you have any other questions that haven't been touched on yet?

Pastor Brian's interpretation: Even the good we do in this world is given to us by God. Think of Paul's perspective. He was a persecutor of the Christians. God called him. Saved him. And then gave him a task. And I believe, in Paul's mind, he was simply carrying out the good works that God had prepared for him to do. He still regarded himself as unworthy, and as the worst of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15).

### **QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

1. Does Paul's description of your life prior to Christ challenge you? Offend you? Does it resonate? Why or why not?
  - a. How do you process these words if you are a believer from childhood, taught the faith from infancy?
2. How should we respond to God's incredible grace?
3. What stops you from doing the good works God has called you to?

***“A New Humanity”******Lesson 4***

Ephesians 2:11-22

October 8

**Icebreaker question.** When you were little, what did you want to grow up and be?

**Prayer (now or end of study).** In addition to praying for any pressing prayer needs, pray for unity and brotherhood among those who know Jesus. Pray specifically for our local church, for relationships between churches, for relationships between denominations, and the church international.

**Studying the word.** *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

**OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. What is the historical relationship between Jews and the Gentiles according to Ephesians 2:11-12?
3. What did God do through Jesus to take care of the “dividing wall of hostility?” Look at verses 13-18.
  - a. How does the blood of Christ unite Jew and Gentile?
  - b. How did the law and commandments create a dividing wall of hostility?

These last two questions have a sort of unified answer. Jesus fulfilled the law. Because he lived the perfect life under the law, we don't have to. We are justified apart from works, and so any of those commandments of the OT which created separation between the Jews and Gentiles are out of the way.

There were several laws that separated Jews and Gentiles. We call this the Ceremonial Law. These included dietary laws, laws about cleanness and uncleanness, and material sacrifices, and even intermarriage with Gentiles.

- c. Can you think of a scriptural example where Jesus preached Good News to those who were far off? To someone who was near?
  - d. *Just notice how cool this is:* They thought they were killing Jesus and ending his mission when they put him to death, but in reality, God was “killing the hostility” between the various peoples on earth. (verse 16)
4. There are two metaphors used by Paul to describe the unity of Jew and Gentile. You can see one in verse 15, another in verse 21. What are they?
  - a. Should there be separation between people who differ in culture, race, or language in the church? Why or why not?
5. The foundation of the “Holy Temple” of God, the church, is the prophets and apostles. How do they form this foundation?
6. Why is Jesus the cornerstone of the building?
7. Any other questions about this passage?

### **QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

1. What individuals, Christians, or groups of Christians are you separated from? Why? Consider any reasons such as class, social status, race, or denomination.
2. How does Jesus' ministry unify people differently than secular methods like education or political action?
3. Are there particular Christians that you are tempted to look down on? Is there any pride of which you need to repent?
4. Do you think you have any role in breaking down barriers between you and others? What might you do?

***“A New Ministry”******Lesson 5***

Ephesians 3:1-13

October 15

**Icebreaker question.** What's the most unusual (or exciting) job you have ever had?

**Prayer (now or end of study).** Ask yourself the following question: “Do I have clarity regarding what I am supposed to be doing for Jesus’ kingdom?” If your answer is yes, briefly share what you are supposed to do, and then let someone from the group pray for you. If no, then have someone pray that God would show you your calling.

**Studying the word.** *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

**OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. When Paul wrote this, he was a prisoner of Emperor Nero. Why then do you think he refers to himself as a prisoner of Christ?
3. This passage is largely about Paul's ministry. Take a few minutes and write down as many things about Paul that you can learn from the passage, then come back and share them together.
  - a. Why does Paul decide to talk about his own ministry for such a long period? What's the purpose?
  - b. Why is Paul's calling as an apostle so important to the reliability of his message?
  - c. If Paul was not really the author of this letter (as many critical and skeptical writers contend), then what is lost concerning its message and content?

Many things would be lost. First, it would be predicated on a lie from the outset (the author claims to be Paul). Importantly, the early church rejected letters by false authors. Second, the historical circumstance of Paul's imprisonment would be false. Third, the

letter would not be from one called by God according to God's power, but instead from an unknown, unapproved source. The contents of the whole message would be made unreliable.

4. Why does Paul choose to describe his gospel message as a mystery which has been revealed?

It is a mystery because for ages past it was not known, but now has been revealed. God's plan in Christ is to reconcile the world to God (vs. 5).

5. After he elaborates upon his own calling, Paul describes the church's calling. What is the church's calling according to verses 9-12?
6. How does Paul's calling relate to the church's calling? Remember: "the heavenly places" means the unseen world of spiritual reality. Look up these other verses from the New Testament: 2 Corinthians 4:4, Luke 4:5-6, John 14:30.

The devil is described by Jesus and Paul as being the ruler of this world. The "powers in the heavenly realms" refers to demons. As the church receives the Gospel, the enemy is pushed back and God's kingdom comes on earth. Pretty amazing!!!

7. Anything else that you see or notice in this passage?

### **QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

1. Paul has a very clear view of his calling before God. Do you? How can you dedicate yourself to your task? How could others help you?
  - a. Remember: calling is determined by an internal call (desire in the person) and an external call (the

affirmation of the church and faithful believers around you).

2. How do you respond to taking the message of the Gospel out into the world, to those who need it?
3. Put yourself into the position of a Jew. You can imagine how it would be difficult for them to see themselves as equals with the "unclean Gentiles." Do you have similar views towards particular groups of people in the world? How does this passage challenge you?

***“A New Confidence”******Lesson 6***

Ephesians 3:14-21

October 22

**Icebreaker question.** Answer either (or both) of these questions: What is your favorite potato chip flavor, OR if you could create a new potato chip flavor, what would it be?

**Prayer (now or end of study).** In addition to praying for any personal prayer requests that anyone may have, take some time to pray for each other, specifically for each person's future. If there is a situation which is causing fear, anxiety, or distress, lift each person up to God's care. Remember Ephesians 3:20, "God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think."

**Studying the word.** Ask God to guide your study of His Word.

**OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. Read today's passage aloud...
2. What do you notice about Ephesians 3:14 when you compare it to Ephesians 3:1?
  - a. Did you notice what happened in Ephesians 3:1?

In Ephesians 3:1, Paul stopped his train of thought and diverted the subject into a different direction. In Ephesians 3:14, he picks up where he left off in verse 1. This means the "reason" looks back at the content of Ephesians 2:22 and preceding verses.

- b. What is the "reason" when Paul writes "For this reason" in verse 14? What is he referencing?

The context of Ephesians 2 is the unification of Jew and Gentile through the death of Christ.

3. What are all the ways that Paul prays on behalf of the church?



- a. Is there a theme to this prayer?
  - b. Could you summarize the entire prayer in a sentence?
  - c. Do you have any questions about this prayer?
  - d. How would this prayer help unify a church that is divided by race or tradition?
4. How can you “know the love that surpasses knowledge?” What can that possibly mean?
  5. What does it mean that God would strengthen us “according to the riches of his glory?” Why does Paul mention the riches of his glory?
  6. How does our understanding of God’s love shape the way we pray to him?

Knowing that God is full of love helps us approach him in times of need and failure, knowing that he is good and will, as a good father, give us what we need.

7. From John Stott: “What effect would it have on the church if the prayer that we could all grasp the love of Christ would be answered?”
8. Some people say that you don’t have to go to church to be a Christian.
  - a. How do you think Paul would reply, based on this passage?
  - b. How important is the church in Paul’s prayer?
  - c. Where in the passage do you get your answers from?

### **QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

1. Think about prayer:
  - a. How is Paul’s prayer the same as your prayers?
  - b. How is Paul’s prayer different than your prayers?
  - c. What do you think you need to learn about prayer from this Scripture?

2. Is your view of God's love for you the same as what the Scripture says it is? Why or why not?
3. Do you really believe that God can do more than all that you ask or think?
  - a. How would believing that God can do more than we ask or think shape your prayers?
  - b. How would it shape your life?
  - c. Are there any new ways that you need to trust God with your life?

**“Unity”****Lesson 7**

Ephesians 4:1-16

October 29

**Icebreaker question.** If you could go on a road trip with any one person (dead or alive), who would it be? If you say Jesus, you need to answer where you would want to go.

**Prayer (now or end of study).** Today we are going to think about the unity of the church as we study the passage. Take some time to pray for unity, and for the various parts of the body that are different than you. Pray for infants, children, and youth. Pray for young adults, college students, and 20 somethings. Pray for young marrieds, families, empty nesters, and the elderly.

**Studying the word.** *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

**OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. What is the major change in emphasis that takes place beginning in Ephesians 4:1? With what word is this change introduced?
2. In these 16 verses, there is only one command.
  - a. What is this command?
  - b. What words describe how this command should be carried out?
3. What truths empower the Christian to obey this command? Survey the entire passage to find as many as possible.

1) There is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all... 2) Grace was given to each one according to Christ's gift. 3) There are given certain people in the church to equip others to carry out ministry.

4. According to verses 15 and 16, what is the purpose of these spiritual gifts for the church?

5. What does it mean in verse 13 when it says, "attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ?"
6. LET'S GO DEEPER: How does the cross and resurrection connect to the giving to us of spiritual gifts?
  - a. Notice how Ephesians 4:8 is an OT quote.
  - b. Look up Psalm 68:17-18.
  - c. What is the difference between the OT quote and the NT quote? How does Paul change it, and why?
  - d. What does it mean that The Lord (God, Yahweh) in the OT is Jesus in the NT?

These are perhaps tough questions, but the ESV Study Bible summarizes it nicely. "Jesus here is seen as the conquering Lord of Psalm 68, and the spoils of his victory which he receives in Psalm 68 he is seen as giving to his church." This connects well with the immeasurable riches of Christ, a phrase we have seen previously.

### **QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

1. Do you know your spiritual gift? How are you using it?
2. The body of Christ is called to be unified. Jesus says the unity of the body of Christ is so important, that if you have a conflict with a brother or sister, before you go to the altar to worship, you should be reconciled to your brother. Is there anyone that you need to apologize to?
3. What do you do to maintain the unity of the body of Christ?
4. How could you build up the body of Christ? Is there any way you could be an encourager of your brothers and sisters in the Lord?

**“Purity”****Lesson 8**

Ephesians 4:17-5:2

November 5

**Icebreaker question.** We have spent 8 weeks together now. Try to encourage the person sitting to your left by saying what you have seen that is best about them.

**Prayer (now or end of study).** In addition to praying for any personal prayer requests that anyone may have, think about God's commandment to us, that we should be holy and not live in sin. At the start of prayer, take a few minutes of silence for people to reflect and pray. Then, the group leader (or as many as wish) can pray out loud, thanking God for forgiveness and asking for help in living a pure life.

**A good Scripture is Psalm 103:12,** “as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.”

**Studying the word.** *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

**OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. In the first paragraph, verses 17-24, the focus is on the mind of the believer.
  - a. What does Paul say about the Gentiles' minds?
  - b. How does the Christian mind differ from the Gentile mind?
  - c. How important is truth in the Christian mind?
  - d. What is available to the Christian that his or her mind would be transformed?
  - e. What does it mean to put on the “new self?” Is it possible to be a “new self” but not to be living it? Why or why not?
2. Verses 25-5:2 have to do with the way Christians treat each other, especially the way they talk to each other.

- a. What is the relationship between truth and the way we treat each other?
- b. How many commands for how we treat each other can you find in these verses? Make a list.

1) Speak truth to your neighbor. 2) Be angry and do not sin. 3) Do not let the sun go down on your anger. 3) Give no opportunity for the devil. 4) The thief should not steal but labor. 5) Do not speak corrupting talk, but only that which builds others up. 6) Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. 7) Let all bitterness and slander be put away from you. 8) Be kind to one another. 9) Be imitators of God. 10) Walk in love as Christ walked for us.

- c. What does it mean to not let the sun go down on your anger?
- d. What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit of God?

As Christians, we believe the Holy Spirit is a person. Not a human person, but a person – the Holy Spirit is always a “he.” And in this passage, we learn that the Holy Spirit feels emotions. He can feel grief when we sin, for He dwells in us. Asking for the filling of the Spirit is very important, as is confessing your sin to the Spirit and asking for Him to guide you and fill you.

- e. How is Jesus the greatest example of the love we should have for one another? Look at 5:2.
- f. Do you have any other questions about Paul's instruction in this passage?

### **QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

- 1. What can you do to have your mind conformed to God's will? Do you think this is a one-time event, or a continual process in your life?

2. How do you navigate the situation where “truth” and “love” are in tension with one another... where there is a difficult truth someone needs to hear, and it is the most loving thing to tell the person this truth?
3. Which of these areas of sin are you most vulnerable to?

## ***“Righteousness”***

## ***Lesson 9***

Ephesians 5:3-21

November 12

**Icebreaker question.** If you could trade places with one person for a single day, who would it be? (And why?)

**Prayer (now or end of study).** One thing that St. Paul's emphasizes is state, national, and international missions. Do you know any missionaries? Spend some time praying for the Gospel to go forth throughout the world, and for the missionaries that we support.

**Studying the word.** *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

### **OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. This passage seems like a barrage of commands and reasons. Let's start by breaking it down...
  - a. How many places do you find the word “Therefore” or “For.” What do those words mean?
  - b. What are the commands you see in this passage?
  - c. Why do you think that Paul always connects a command to a reason?

**It is important to remember that there is always a reason for God's commandments. They are not arbitrary. And by letting us know the reasons, it can help us to have a why in our mind when we are wrestling with good behavior.**

2. Have someone look up the following passages. Exodus 20:14, Matthew 19:4-5, 1 Corinthians 7:2-4, and Matthew 5:27-30. What is the definition of sexual immorality according to the Bible? How do you know that deviations from God's standard are immoral?

**In Matthew 5, Jesus took the OT understanding that sex outside of**



marriage is wrong, and applied it even to the thoughts of the mind. Certainly, we must conclude that behavior outside of God's design is wrong, because even thoughts outside of God's design are wrong!

Sexual sin is often very destructive to families, private, and full of shame. Be sure to handle this with care.

3. How do we reconcile God's forgiving love with the warnings to those who persist in sin (verse 5:5)? Is there grace for a repeat offender? Why or why not?

This is perhaps the most difficult of all the content in this passage. There is tension to reconcile the truths of God's grace and warnings like this. I would remind people of 1 John 1:8-9.

4. What does verse 5:10 and verse 5:17 have in common?
5. Ephesians 5:18 draws a contrast between drinking wine and being filled with the Spirit. What is the point of this comparison?
6. Is there a difference between a psalm, a hymn, and a spiritual song? What is the definition of each? How does this give the church freedom in its musical expression?

A psalm was a literal OT Psalm of which there are 150. A hymn may be represented in Philippians 2:5-11, the "Servant Song." The early church developed their own hymns. Apparently, a spiritual song is similar. There is great freedom because of what is allowed by Scripture.

7. John Stott: "How could living wisely combat the evil days?"
8. Any other questions about this passage?

**QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

1. Is there sin, immorality, or impurity in your life that you need to repent of? How does this passage give you reasons to turn from your sin?
2. In 2018, the theme of our church's vision will be "Encouragement." How can verses 19 and 20 teach us to encourage one another in Christ?
3. How could you live more wisely?

**“Love”****Lesson 10**

Ephesians 5:21-6:4

November 19

**Icebreaker question.** If you could look into the future, what would you want to know? What would you not want to know?

**Prayer (now or end of study).** Thanksgiving is coming! For prayer, spend some time counting your blessings, and then pray in thanks for God's goodness to us in our lives.

**Studying the word.** *Ask God to guide your study of His Word.*

**OBSERVATION & INTERPRETATION QUESTIONS**

1. DID YOU KNOW? This passage takes the form of a household code, popular in ancient Greek society, that would detail responsibilities of different members of the family. This is revolutionary in that it has instructions for the men, who were usually exempt.
2. Look at 5:19-20. How does that set the stage for 5:21?
3. How is a wife in a family supposed to submit to her husband?
  - a. Is any part of this difficult? Why?
  - b. How does the church submit to Christ?
4. How does a husband love and submit to his wife according to 5:25-32?
  - a. Why does it take more time to describe a husband's duty?

My seminary professor once suggested that the reason that this is so long is because the men need a lot more help carrying out their end of this bargain. I think that is probably right. One reason women are so against submitting to their husbands is because of a history of laziness and/or abuse from their man. Men need to grow up into Christ in a big way.

- b. How did Christ serve the church?
- c. How does marriage point to Christ and the church?
- d. Who is called to greater sacrifice, a husband or a wife?

There's not a right answer to this exactly, because it may be a tremendous sacrifice for a woman to submit to her husband. But giving yourself wholly up to brutal crucifixion on behalf of another is a great sacrifice, and that is the picture in this passage.

- e. How would a husband serving his wife like Christ encourage a wife to "submit in everything to her husband?"
- 5. How is Christ's work on the cross an example for how we treat each other?
  - 6. What does it mean for a child to obey his parents "In the Lord?" Is that different than simple obedience to parents? (Look this one up in a study Bible, there's no clear answer).

Some people think that obeying your parents "In the Lord" means to obey your spiritual parents, perhaps your pastors or those who brought you into Christ. I disagree with this analysis, personally. The context here is the immediate family, mother, father, children. And children can obey their parents to show the love of God to the world in the family.

- 7. How do parents exasperate their children?
- 8. Any other questions about this passage?

### **QUESTIONS FOR APPLICATION**

- 1. If you are married, does your marriage reflect the unity and love of Christ and his church? How could your marriage improve if you followed this instruction?

2. How can the Christian community support marriages and families?
3. How can the church love and serve unmarried people?
4. Do you need to open yourself up to submitting to others? How?