

Grown Up Faith

Ephesians

Weekly Devotional



April 4-8, 2011

Bible Study

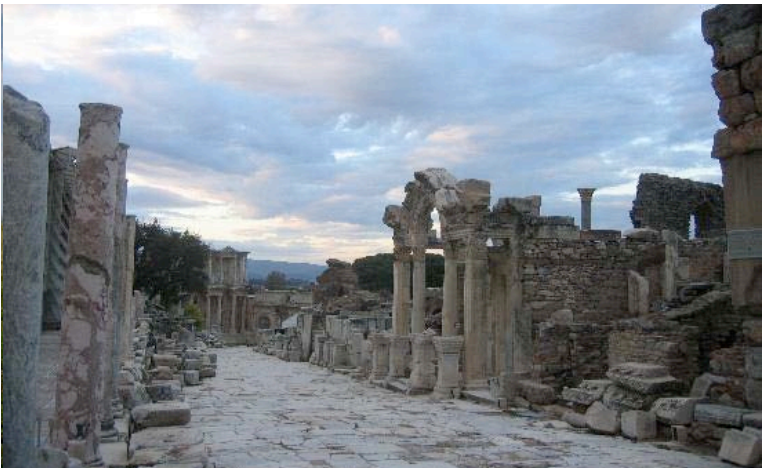
As we study Ephesians we will have questions each week for you to use in your personal devotion time. These will not only help with your own spiritual walk and understanding of Ephesians, but will help you prepare for the weekend services.

1. From God's point of view, what are the most important results that should come out of marriage?

2. In Ephesians 5:21-33, Paul gives a picture of Christ and the church. Look at the following passages: Matthew 9:15; John 3:29; 1 Corinthians 6:15; 2 Corinthians 11:2 and Revelation 19:7-9 and 21:2. How do they help you understand the image Paul is trying to portray?

3. How might Paul's teachings be misunderstood? How might you practically apply his teachings to something you are facing this week?

4. How do verses 21 and 33 help you understand Paul's goals for his teaching in this section?



Monday

Ephesians 3:7-13; Hebrews 12:1-3



Recently one of our Life Group members told me about a discussion her group had had on the Ephesians 3 passage. As she and I talked, we began to understand that our actions, our day-to-day encounters with people, are being viewed by those not only on earth, but also those in the heavenly realm (both those on God's side and His adversaries). Much like a basketball tournament where both sides are rooting for their team, so our actions are being celebrated by one side or the other . . . Which side is cheering the loudest right now?

The mystery that God has finally made known is His plan to restore that which was lost in the Fall (Genesis 3) through Jesus dying on a cross and the establishment of the Church as God's holy people, a holy family, as He originally intended to have when He created Adam and Eve in the first place. God wants us to love Him because of our own free choice, not because we have to. In giving us free choice, He knew we would choose to sin, to be selfish, to make decisions as we saw fit rather than listening to our loving Father. Satan's side seemed to be winning; they were cheering loudly. But God's game plan was to send Jesus to die that we might be restored to fellowship with Him, that we might see just how great His love was to die for us even as we were rejecting Him. When Jesus died, the stadium went silent. On Easter God's side began to cheer. And with each one of us who begins to live in the love of God, displaying that love to others, the cheers go up on God's side. The game is still going on with cheering from both sides. The lives, the souls of individuals, are in the balance. My actions are being cheered on, but again, by which side?

Are there things that have gotten in the way of my showing love to others? Do I tire easy in dealing with the sin of others and become unloving rather than displaying God's patience? Do I slip back in my own need to do it my way, or force God's timing? Do I let the Internet get in the way of creating honest, good, open relationships? Folks are cheering me on to make the right decisions. Lord help me to not give up!

Prayer: Pray for those who are trapped in addiction.

Tuesday

Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33



As we start this week's discussion on Ephesians 5:21-33, it is only appropriate to go back and re-read Ephesians 5:1-2. First and foremost, we are called to follow Christ's example, His example of loving God and loving others. Jesus never asked what was best for Himself; He always asked what will bring God glory, what will show love to another. Such an attitude is not easy; in fact, it often requires sacrificing our own comfort, needs and desires for the sake of another. This is why Paul calls it a sacrifice, a killing of something. But it is a killing of self that results in a pleasant aroma to God.

The early Christians were called people of "The Way." They lived a different way of life; they were on the way to something different; they had different goals, different values. They sought to model the self-giving generosity of God. (Father God gave up His Son, and the Son gave up His life on a cross.) This valuing of another over oneself, this sacrificial servanthood goes against our very nature. We often ask the question: What's in it for me, what do I want, and how do I get it? But in Christ we are called to change our whole way of thinking, asking instead: What does another need and how can I provide it? Such a focus shift from self to sacrificial love for another will involve our money, our time, our listening skills, what we talk about, how we use our imaginations, and what we dream about. We can make this shift only by remembering who we are in Jesus—a His dearly loved children who have been filled to overflowing with His love. Because Jesus first loved me, I can be filled up enough to love others.

Being people of "The Way" needs to be seen first and foremost in our homes. We are to practice sacrificial, other-centered love towards those we are close to. At times this is relatively easy, but often it is the hardest thing we will ever be called to do. Honoring our parents in the midst of our hectic lives is not easy. Letting our children make their own decisions and suffer the consequences is not easy. Loving one's siblings or spouse can often be the hardest thing to do. Love, though, is not an emotion; it is a sacrificing of self, a decision, a commitment to do what is best for another.

Prayer: For families today.



Wednesday

Ephesians 5:21-33; Matthew 20:25-28

The first time I ever heard someone teach on this passage was one summer when I was home from college. Our college intern was working his way through Ephesians and the night I showed up, he turned to this passage. But instead of starting with verse 22, he started with verses 25-29. He began by asking the question: How did Jesus display His love for the church and what was His purpose? The answer is rather simple: Jesus showed His love by leaving that which was comfortable (heaven) and sacrificially dying to His own desires, even to the point of dying on a cross in order that we might not only be forgiven, but that we might become the people God intended us to be. He then said that husbands are to love their wives in a similar way and that the job of husbands and fathers is to do all in their power to enable their wives and children to become all that God created them to be. They are to use their time, talents, money, listening skills, vocabulary, and imaginations towards one goal: presenting to Father God those He had entrusted to them as a beautiful offering. Husbands, your families are your offering to God.

This really is very different than how we normally read this passage. Generally we focus on the word head and we have discussions over what it means to have authority in a family. But Jesus never “lorded” it over anyone; He only served. And He took the proper measures to make sure that He did not “burn out” in serving. He went off by Himself to pray; He sought to have as His goal to bring God glory and allow God to give Him the needed energy and means to accomplish His task. By the way, the word for head here actually means “source.” The husband is the source by which each member of the family grows into who they are in Jesus.

When I perform weddings, most non-churched brides do not want this passage read. That is until we read it together slowly. When a bride comes to understand that her husband has the major responsibility for her becoming who God wants her to be, she is often more than willing to follow his lead. And so the question: Husbands, are you loving your family as Jesus loved the Church? If you are burned out and discouraged, do you lose patience with your family, or do you seek encouragement from God and other mature brothers in Christ?

Prayer: Pray for husbands and dads.

Thursday

Ephesians 5:21-33; Genesis 3:16

Women's lib has given Paul a very bad name. To be people of "The Way" means that our marriages run a different "way" than those around us. In Paul's day women had no rights at all. In fact, to get an understanding of what a woman's life was like, one need only to look at the most conservative Muslim women today. Women had no rights and no voice; they were objects that could easily be disposed of, and they were given at best the most basic of an education. As Paul interpreted the teachings of Jesus, he changed all that. Paul let women speak in church, celebrated their giftings, and gave them rights in marriages. The problem is that once we are given an inch we often take a mile.

In the early church women actually became disruptive in services. They flaunted their new-found freedoms; rather than making the Christian marriage attractive, the opposite was true. People questioned whether the very fabric of society was being threatened. The same can be true with the women's lib movement. Rather than using our freedoms for the betterment of our families and as opportunities to love our husbands, we end up trying to make sure our needs are fulfilled in our way and our timing. Too often when one is unable to meet our needs, the response is: "God would not want me to live this way," and the search begins for an excuse to leave.

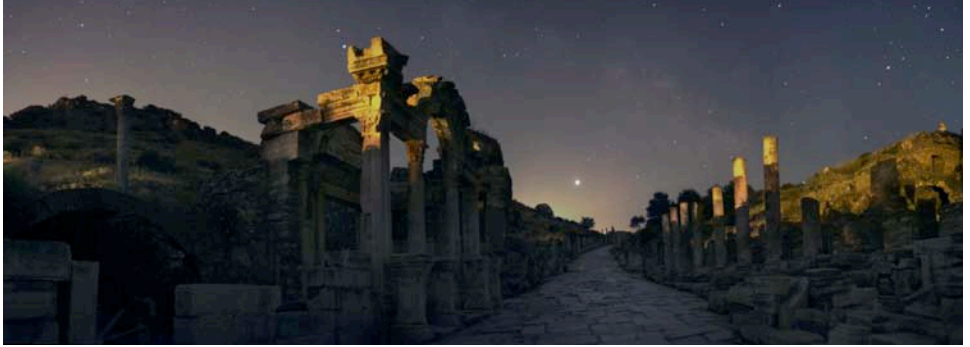
The curse of the Fall was that man would rule over woman. At the cross the curse is turned aside. But instead of mutual submission, we find ways to manipulate, rule or question. Jesus never came to rule; He was submissive to Father God, seeking in all things to bring Him glory. What would happen if, in all things, our first question was not about our happiness but about what would bring glory to our spouses and family? Would our language be different? Would we complain about something different?

Prayer: For wives and moms.



Friday

Ephesians 5:21-33; Phillipians 2:1-11



I mentioned earlier this week that the first teaching I ever heard on this passage was by my college intern. At the end of that talk, He focused on verse 33. He asked these questions: What is the easiest thing for a woman to do? What is the hardest? What about for men?

At the time he pointed out that for women, love comes pretty easily. Women see another person in need and their hearts break. For men, love is not so easy. For them respect comes relatively easy. Men might not love someone, but they are able to find something in others to respect, or at least treat someone with respect. Women, on the other hand, are known for their gossip, their cutting down of another person's character. Paul knew this, and so at the end of this chapter he calls women to guard that which they will easily lose, respect for their husbands, and He tells men to love their wives. What does this look like for you?

Paul says that what he is talking about in this passage is not so much marriage as he is Christ and the Church (v. 32). We often skip over this verse. But I think it is highly significant. For one thing, in the Church we are called to a oneness in Jesus. No longer are we to be concerned about meeting our own needs, but we are to seek ways to meet the needs of others. No longer am I to worry about myself, but I'm called to use my time and resources so that others can become all that God created them to be, holy and pure. This passage also means that we are to have a oneness with regards to our purpose. When churches get to the point of splitting the very fabric of what it is to be a church, the church is torn apart. This passage also means that whereas it takes both father and mother to have a healthy growing family, so also both the gifts of men and women are needed in the church. Are you doing your part? Are you letting others do theirs? Finally, in all situations we are to submit to each other as Jesus did to the Father: husbands and wives, masters and slaves, children and parent. What does that look like? Prayer: For the oneness of the Church.



1700 East Palopinto Ave.

Glendora, CA 91741

(626) 914-4833

www.GlenkirkChurch.org