

PUT ON THE NEW SELF: *BIBLE STUDY GUIDE ON EPHESIANS*

HOW TO USE THE GUIDE

This guide is not the object of the study. It is a pointer to the Bible, which should be the focus of the study/discussions. To get maximum benefit from the study, a few suggestions could be helpful.

a. Preparation

Each member of the group needs to go through each study before the actual meeting time. This would deepen your insights and greatly enrich the discussions. Then spend some time in prayer for the study and for the group.

b. The Discussion

Each member must participate in the discussions.

The guide is designed in the Inductive Bible Study method, which aims to get the message of the Bible by first getting the details of the text and then drawing the conclusions and lessons from them. Each sub-section has 3 questions:

1. **Observation:** Meant to help you get the facts directly from the text. Ask yourself the question: ‘What does the text literally say?’ Do not spend too much time on this question.
2. **Interpretation:** Meant to bring out the meaning of the text. ‘What do you think the writer intended to communicate? How do you think the first readers of the text understood its message?’ Allow sufficient discussions on this question.
3. **Application:** Meant to help you relate the message of the text to your own life. They are questions for personal or group application of the facts. Allow sufficient discussions on this question. The applications should be as honest and as practical as possible.

c. Memory Verse

As a key verse for the study, it helps you to keep in memory whatever is learnt in the discussions. Do your best to memorize it. Check on one another at the beginning of the next study.

Preface

The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians is known for not being written to point out and refute any errors which would have sprung up in the church at Ephesus. However, it is full of not only doctrinal teaching but also practical ones for the church in Ephesus.

Paul's first and hurried visit for the space of three months to Ephesus is recorded in Acts 18:19-21. The work he began on this occasion was carried forward by Apollos (Acts 18:24-26) and Aquila and Priscilla. On his second visit, early in the following year, he remained at Ephesus three years. The church was established and strengthened by his assiduous labors there (Acts 20:20,31). From Ephesus as a center the gospel spread abroad almost throughout all Asia (Acts 19:26).

On his last journey to Jerusalem the apostle landed at Miletus, and summoning together the elders of the church from Ephesus, delivered to them his remarkable farewell charge (Acts 20:18-35), expecting to see them no more.

In this letter, Paul first builds the convictions of his readers through doctrinal teachings, then goes ahead to give practical exhortations.

As we study the book Ephesians, let us check on our convictions on different doctrinal issues explored, and make these practical exhortations ours for “our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”

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STUDY 1: SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN JESUS CHRIST **(Ephesians 1.1-14)**

Introduction

It is said that a certain man in an airplane when asked what he would take declined the offer thinking that he would have to pay additional money for the food. He went the whole journey hungry because of his ignorance of his rights and privileges, gotten by simply buying the ticket. It is important to know one's privileges and be able to enjoy them.

1. Identify the spiritual blessings in Christ Paul is describing in this passage.
2. Why do you think Paul was so excited about these spiritual blessings in Christ and mentioned them in this way to the saints in Ephesus?
3. a. Have you personally experienced some of these 'blessings' in your life? Share this testimony with your group.
b. How should the knowledge that you have these spiritual blessings in Christ inform/affect your personal life in Christ?

Memory verse: Ephesians 1.7-8

"In Him we have the redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."

STUDY 2: APOSTLE'S PRAYER FOR EPHESIANS **(Ephesians 1:15-23)**

Introduction:

Interactions between Christians are often rich with requests and promises of prayers for one another. But sometimes, people forget to fulfill their commitment to pray for one another. We find Paul going ahead and communicating to the Ephesians even the content of his prayer to them.

- 1) a) Outline the points of Paul's prayer to the Ephesians and the reasons he gives for each?
b) What did God do to Jesus according to the passage?
- 2) a) What do you think Paul intended to achieve by communicating his prayer to the Ephesians?
b) What is the significance of the comparison found in verse 19-20?
c) What link do you see between this passage and the message of the last study?
- 3) a) How does the supremacy of Jesus Christ influence your Christian life?
b) What can you do "so that you may know (God) better?"

Memory verse (Eph1:17)

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better."

STUDY 3: SAVED BY GRACE (Ephesians 2.1-10)

Introduction

The reality of life in our time and day is that nothing comes for free. If you need something, you got to pay for it. Whenever someone is offended, he looks for justice and wants the offender to pay the penalty, even if it means selling the property of the offender. The concept of grace, which has been defined by some as “undeserved favour”, is hard to internalize. Finding it is not easy, if not impossible. However, how does God deal with men?

1. Paul’s testimony in this passage refers to himself and his readers. Identify what he says about the following:
 - a. Their former state.
 - b. What God has done, and how?
 - c. Their latter state.
2. In this context, what do you understand by: “being saved by the grace”?
3. a) How is this testimony similar to yours? Share with your group.
b) Are there times when, by your conduct, beliefs or words, you have failed to exhibit the truth of this passage? If so, give examples. How can you avoid such in future?

Memory verse: Ephesians 2.8-9

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast.

STUDY 4: THE TWO MADE ONE (Ephesians 2.11-22)

Introduction

Hatred and hostility are a reality in every corner of the world. Tribes despise one another, families hate one another and sometimes there is no hope for reconciliation. This reality was alive between Gentiles and Jews in the days of the apostle Paul. His message for them can thus be very helpful in dealing with our own situations.

1. a) What was the former status of the Ephesians according to the passage?
b) Describe the way the “two groups” became “one”.
c) What is the Ephesians new status?
2. a. How did the “cross put to death the hostility” between Gentile and Jews

b. What do you think would be the significance to the Ephesians, of knowing that they were “no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people?”
3. a. How does the former state of affairs concerning the Jews and Gentiles reflect the Rwandan situation? What should we learn from their experience?
b. Do you count yourself “no longer foreigners and aliens, fellow citizen with God’s people”? What blessing have you received through this?

Memory verse: Ephesians 2.19-20

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”

STUDY 5: HEIRS TOGETHER WITH ISRAEL
(Ephesians 3.1-21)

Introduction

Good news is sometimes very rare. Coming from poverty to riches, from oblivion to recognition, from rejection and despising to acceptance and glory are stories only seen in movies, hard to believe. Paul addresses a similar situation while talking to Ephesians.

1. a. According to this passage, what is the mystery that was revealed to Paul?

b. Identify the main points of Paul's prayer for Ephesians and the reasons he gives for these?
2. a. Read verse 6. Why do you think Paul call this a mystery of Christ?

b. According to this context, why do you think Paul mentioned this prayer to the Ephesians?
3. How does the reality of being heirs together with Israel encourage you in your walk with God and your service to him and others?

Memory verse: Ephesians 3.6

“This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

STUDY 6: BUILDING THE BODY OF CHRIST
(Ephesians 4.1-16)

Introduction

God created man with different organs and members. These have different roles to play for the building up of the body and thus achieving its purpose. How does this apply to the Church?

1. a. What instructions is Paul giving to the Ephesians?

b. Identify the gifts given to people. Why are they given?

c. What will be the results of this?
2. In this context what do you understand by verse 16?
3. What gift do you think you have from God? How have you used it to build up the body of Christ? What can be improved? Share with your group.

Memory verse: Ephesians 4.16

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

STUDY 7: PUT ON THE NEW SELF (Ephesians 4.17-32)

Introduction

It is easier to identify newcomers in a new place especially if they are from a different environment. They are not yet accustomed to the new manners and ways of living of this new place. It just takes them willingness to learn the new lifestyle and they are like those who were born in the area. The Ephesians also had to pass through the same process. .

1. Identify the way Paul wants Ephesians to live according to this passage.
2. What do you think Paul wanted to mean by these statements:
 - a) “Put off your old self
 - b) “Put on the new self”?
3. Is there any area of your life in which you know you are living according to your old self? What will you do to change this?

Memory verse: (Ephesians 4: 17)

“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.”

STUDY 8: CHILDREN OF LIGHT (Ephesians 5:1-20)

Introduction

It is said that a young eagle would stay forever in the nest, not conscious of its capacity to be the king of the air, unless it is helped to discover itself and live its name. Then it goes out and soars in the skies. There is a way that failing to understand ones identity affects whatever they are and do.

1. Identify the instructions Paul gives to Ephesians in this passage. Which reason does he give for each?
2. What do you understand these commands to mean in this contest:
 - a. “live as the children of light”
 - b. “living –not as unwise but as wise”
3.
 - a. Are there any fruitless deeds of darkness in your life? What are you going to do to change this?
 - b. How do you expose the fruitless deeds of darkness around you?

Memory verse: Ephesians 5: 8--11

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.”

STUDY 10: THE FULL ARMOR OF GOD
(Ephesians 6.9-24)

STUDY 9: SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER
(Ephesians 5:21-6:9)

Introduction

Relationships are key in the human experience and life, for God created man a relational being. However, when these are not well handled, especially in a household, they are a source of frustrations. How does Paul expect the Ephesians to relate to one another?

1. Describe the instructions given to each category in this passage and the reason the Apostle gives for each.
2. a. Why do you think that Paul was also concerned about the relationships of the saints in Ephesus?

b. What do you understand by “submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ?”
3. Is there anywhere you need to improve your relationship with your parents (or guardians), house-workers at home or your spouse?

Memory verse: Ephesians 5:21

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”

Introduction

In a battle, having weapons is important as well as knowing your adversary, the reason for the battle and how to use your weapons. Paul instructs the Ephesians about this.

1. a) According to this passage, why are the Ephesians instructed to put on the full armour of God?

b) Identify from the passage the weapons we possess against the devil.
2. How was each weapon to help them stand firm?
3. a) The Apostle Paul seems to suggest that there is perpetual spiritual warfare to every believer (V.12). In what areas of your life do you experience this conflict and how do you overcome it?

b) Personally, do you pray for God’s work either in your church or generally? Share with your group.

Memory verse: Ephesians 6.10-12

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”