

Ephesians

Lesson 3 Ephesians 1:15-23

Leader Guide

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Lesson 3

Ephesians 1:15-23

Intercessory Prayer

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. *Ephesians 1:17*

Prayers

Introduction

In his book, *How to Pray*, Pete Grieg describes the act of praying for someone as an unspeakable honor - standing between heaven and earth before the very throne of God, beseeching His favor as he makes decisions on the affairs of His kingdom. Intercessory prayer is a Christ-like way of loving others. We often wonder if our little prayers make a difference in facing seemingly insurmountable problems. Still, the Bible teaches that prayer is vastly powerful for our daily needs, others, our leaders and our nation, and especially against the spiritual struggles we face in this dark world. In this lesson, Paul models the act of intercessory prayer for the Ephesians. Paul prays for the extraordinary. He asks for the Holy Spirit to give them wisdom and revelation so they would know God better, have hope, know their eternal inheritance, and know God's incomparably great power.

Read Ephesians 1:15-23, Thanksgiving and Prayer.

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 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. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Discuss

1. What prompted Paul to pray for the Ephesians?

Paul heard that the Ephesians believed in Jesus Christ and loved other Christians.

2. In verse 15, Paul writes that the Ephesians had love for all the saints. Refer to the following verses and discuss some attributes of love for others.
 - a. Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Love is kind, compassionate in meeting the needs of others, and forgiving – as Christ has forgiven us.

- b. Philippians 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Love is self-sacrificing, putting the needs of others ahead of our own.

- b. James 2:14-16 What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?

Love takes action.

- c. 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love is patient, kind, gracious, humble, calm and steady, forgiving, protecting, trusting, seeks the best for others, and is strong.

- 3. Have you ever had a difficult time knowing how to pray for others? What were some things Paul included in his prayers for the Ephesians in verses 16-19?
 - a. Verse 16 **Thanks for them**
 - b. Verse 17 **He asked God to give the Ephesians his Spirit for wisdom and understanding so they would know Christ better.**
 - c. Verse 18 **He prayed they would know the hope to which they have been called – their eternal inheritance.**
 - d. Verse 19 **He prayed they would know the incomparably great power of God – the power to raise the dead to eternal life.**
- 4. In verse 18, Paul refers to the hope to which God called the Ephesians. In the scriptures, hope does not mean wishful thinking or by chance. It is the assurance of God’s unseen promises. What are some of the things we can hope for in Christ?
 - a. Colossians 1:24-29 **Hope of Christ being in me and being with him in glory**
Col 1:27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
 - b. Mt 11:28-30 **Hope for the weary and burdened**
Mt 11:28 **“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”**

c. 1 Peter 1:3 **Hope for spiritual rebirth and an eternal inheritance**

^{1Pe 1:3} Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,
^{1Pe 1:4} and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade —kept in heaven for you, ^t

d. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 **Hope for spiritual renewal**

^{2Co 4:16} Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we **are** being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

e. 1Co 1:30. **Hope to share in the righteousness in Christ**

^{1Co 1:30} It is because of him [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

f. Matthew 6:11-13, 31-33 **Hope for God to provide for our daily needs**

^{Mt 6:11} Give us today our daily bread.

^{Mt 6:12} Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

^{Mt 6:13} And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

^{Mt 6:31} So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

5. What riches accompany Christian's glorious inheritance (verse 18)? See also verses 1:3-14.

^{Eph 1:18} I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people.

^{Eph 1:3} Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

^{Eph 1:4} For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

^{Eph 1:7} In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

^{Eph 1:9} And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

^{Eph 1:11} In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

Eph 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Our glorious inheritance is all of God's promises we have through faith in Christ. As Paul pointed out in verses 1:3-14, God's promises include both the temporal and the eternal. In Christ, we have holiness in God's sight, a loving Father as God's adopted children, redemption from a life of darkness, forgiveness of sins, wisdom and knowledge of God's plan of salvation through Christ, the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit and spiritual rebirth, a life of purpose according to his plans that God made for each of us before he created the world, and eternal life.

6. What actions come to mind when you think about God's power (verse 19)?

Paul refers to God's power in raising Christ from the dead and exalting him to His right hand in heaven. God's power will raise all who believe Christ is their Lord to join Him in the heavenly realms. God displayed his power in creation, calling the universe into being through the power of His Word and creating man from the dust of the ground. He continues to sustain his creation through his powerful word. God demonstrated his power and love in his plan of salvation through Christ, who lived a perfect life, incarnate as a man, to be the perfect sacrifice for our sins. God continues to demonstrate his power through his sovereignty, calling us to be his children, giving us faith in His salvation and His Spirit, and securing us in Him.

7. What assurance do Christ's resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God in heaven give you?

Chris's resurrection assures us that all of God's promises are true. Through faith, we are joined with Christ in his death so that we are dead to a life bound by sin and raised to a new life of spiritual rebirth through baptism and the indwelling Holy Spirit. We are assured our salvation is complete in Christ, who spoke from the cross, "It is finished," the perfect sacrifice for all our sins for all time. Nothing more needs to be done for our salvation but to believe in Christ and love. Christ's ascension to heaven assures me that God hears my prayers because Jesus is my gracious and merciful mediator who loves me perfectly and sympathizes with all my many weaknesses.

8. Discuss a time with the group when you earnestly prayed for another person. What did you experience; extremes of emotion, urgency, joy and thanksgiving, burden?

Intercessory prayer can be an endurance marathon, especially when a chronic illness of a loved one stretches into months or years. There is an emotional burden and mental anguish in bringing the needs of suffering loved ones to God. Suffering can challenge our faith. God mercifully heals some in life and others through death. We do not know why. With time, "why" becomes less important and is replaced by trust and comfort through our loving God.

9. What do you most often pray for? Do they relate to physical or material well-being or spiritual health?

Answers will vary.

Closing Prayer

Dear Gracious Lord and Savior, we join in the prayer you taught your disciples to pray.
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation.
Amen