

WEEK 2

MADE **ALIVE**

The Book of Ephesians



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WEEK 2
JANUARY 15, 2024



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A **PASSAGE** TO READ,

... SOME **COMMENTS** TO CONSIDER,

... THREE **QUESTIONS** TO ASK,

... A **PRAYER** TO PRAY.



WEEK 2

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DAY 1

SAVED FROM SOMETHING AND FOR SOMETHING

First read Ephesians 1:15-17.

Paul moves from praise to prayer. Having celebrated **“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us,”** he now prays for his readers (v.3). His flow of thought is instructive to us. You see, Paul is balancing gratitude with solicitation. He’s naming how God has already cared for him and his readers, but his thankfulness doesn’t hinder him from voicing his ongoing need (see vv.16,17). “If we keep together praise and prayer, benediction and petition,” notes pastor John Stott, “we are unlikely to lose our spiritual equilibrium” (*The Message of Ephesians*, 52). A healthy relationship with the Heavenly Father encourages us to acknowledge his previous provision and our persistent needs (see Matthew 6:11).

Paul is asking for insight. He wants his readers (including us) to not simply receive **“every spiritual blessing”** but to have **“the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him”** (vv.3,16). In many ways, he’s not asking for an additional blessing. Instead, he’s longing for his brothers and sisters to comprehend and, therefore, live in light of their salvation more deeply. After all, God hasn’t simply saved us *from* something but also *for* something.

It’s easy to belittle the gospel as merely a message about going to heaven when we die or, perhaps conversely, not going to hell. But the good news is better than that! The promises of God are for this life as much as they are for the next. That’s what the combined liturgy of praise and prayer teaches us. We praise God for saving us *from* death. We also pray he’ll help us understand the purpose of salvation *for* this life.



DAY 1

SAVED FROM SOMETHING AND FOR SOMETHING

1. Why is the Heavenly Father worthy of our gratitude and supplication?
2. Do you pray more about what you're thankful for or what you need? Why do you think that's the case? How can you better incorporate the other?
3. What has Christ saved you from? What has he saved you for?

Heavenly Father ...

Thank you for saving me from death. In you, I have a hope and a future. Thank you also for giving me life now. Help me to embrace more fully the goodness, love, and purposes you have for me today.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 2

KNOWING IS A MATTER OF THE HEART

First read Ephesians 1:18.

A lot of knowledge has little to do with cognition. It's holistic. We know with our whole being—mind, heart, soul, and body (see Deuteronomy 6:5). That's what Paul is getting at here. The Ephesians know the hope of their calling or ***“the riches of [God’s] glorious inheritance”*** not because they've learned some facts (v.18a). Rather, their knowledge is a result of *the eyes of their hearts* being enlightened (v.18b). You see, biblically speaking, knowing is a matter of the heart.

Sin clouds our hearts with death and dysfunction. Even when we know facts about God, we fail to honor him rightly and become like many of the Romans who were ***“futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened”*** (Romans 1:21). Fourth-century philosopher St. Augustine explains that this darkness causes us to order our loves wrongly. “We fix our love on the creature, instead of on thee, the Creator,” he says (*City of God*, XV.22).

We say we love God, but sex controls our self-concept.
We say we trust God, but money dictates our disposition.
We say we know God, but something else owns our hearts.

Amidst our ignorance, Jesus shows up. In relationship with him, he brings clarity to our whole being. He has ***“shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”*** (2 Corinthians 4:6). In other words, in his light, we realize what we love too much or too little. That's not something we learn by studying. That's something we know when we're loved rightly.

Knowing is a matter of the heart because our hope is not an idea. Hope is a person—Jesus Christ.



DAY 2

KNOWING IS A MATTER OF THE HEART

1. Why do you think God cares so much about what you love?
2. What things do you love too much? What do you love too little?
3. How does Christ teach and empower us to reorder our loves?

Heavenly Father ...

*Help me to know and love you with all my heart,
mind, soul, and body.*

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 3

POWER THROUGH WISDOM

First read Ephesians 1:19-20.

God is strong. Theologians call him omnipotent—he’s *all*-powerful. In principle, few of us question this aspect of his divine nature. Being all-powerful is fundamental to being God, *right? But what does his power mean for us practically?* Well, this passage tells us God raised Christ from the dead and **“seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places”** (v.20b). And this is the same tremendous and immeasurable power that’s welded **“toward us who believe”** (v.19). We have resurrection power within us (see Romans 8:11).

We’re tempted to believe God’s power ensures our privilege. *Since he can do anything, he’ll do everything I want.* Jesus even says, **“whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you”** (John 16:23). This, of course, is misguided. Paul is making a connection in Ephesians. He’s not simply telling us *that* God’s power is available to us but *how* God’s power works for us.

As God raised Christ from the dead ... so too will he raise us.
As God seated Christ at his right hand ... so too will he secure our futures.

We’re excited by the idea of getting whatever we want because we think we know what will bring us joy and security. But in the same way God is more powerful than us, he’s also wiser than us. And God always welds his power (omnipotence) through his wisdom (omniscience). Or, as Pastor Timothy Keller explains, “God will only give you what you would have asked for if you knew everything he knows.” That’s really comforting. He uses his power for our ultimate good—namely, full and forever life with him.



DAY 3

POWER THROUGH WISDOM

1. How have you experienced God's power?
2. What (or who) are you tempted to trust other than God for your joy and security?
3. How do the resurrection and reign of Christ demonstrate God's power and wisdom?

Heavenly Father ...

I'm often too eager to find security, hope, and safety in earthly powers. Open my eyes to their impotence. Open my heart to your wisdom and strength. Open my mind to the beauty of your salvation.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 4

CHRIST IS FAR ABOVE BECAUSE HE WENT FAR BELOW

First read Ephesians 1:21.

In Paul's day, someone's name was more than what people called them. A name encapsulated every quality that might come to mind when thinking about that person. It was about their "hidden essence, demonstrated power, and recognized honor" (*Barth*, 155). When Jesus' kingdom rule, cosmic authority, and divine power come to mind, we realize he's **"above every name that is named"** (v.21b).

This isn't some empty pageantry. Jesus' name was secured and demonstrated when **"He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over"** (Colossians 2:15). Daily, we face nefarious forces that plague our world. When these rulers, authorities, and powers pester our souls, we're invited to confide in the name that is far above them all.

But let's not miss this. The triumph of the cross is deeply counterintuitive. Jesus defeats every evil power of this world--Satan, sin, and death--by dying. In other words, he is "far above" everyone because he willingly went "far below" everyone (see 2 Corinthians 8:9). **"He humbled himself,"** and so **"God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name"** (Philippians 2:8,9). He's above because he went below.

We often believe that a great name is achieved through ascending. The more money, fans, accolades, achievements, and experiences we acquire, the higher and better our name. However, Jesus shows us that a truly great name comes not from ascending but from surrendering (see Matthew 18:4).



DAY 4

CHRIST IS FAR ABOVE BECAUSE HE WENT FAR BELOW

1. How would you describe God's greatness?
2. What rulers, authorities, and powers pester your soul?
3. How does the triumph of Jesus bring you protection, peace, and comfort?

Heavenly Father ...

Help me to trust in the triumph of Jesus today. No matter what frustrations or temptations I face, cause my heart to surrender to your will, compassion, and righteousness

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 5

A FOOTSTOOL OF ENEMIES

First read Ephesians 1:22-23.

At first blush, it might seem like a meaningless detail. But Jesus is *sitting*. Specifically, he's **"seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places"** (v.20). His location (at the Father's right in heaven) tells us about his authority. But his posture (seated) tells us about his victory. In the ancient world, most people worked on their feet. Similarly, a king would stand to make a proclamation or go to war. So, *when do you sit down?* When the work is done or the war is over.

When the work of redemption is complete Jesus sits down ... and puts his feet up. Notice, all things are **"under his feet"** (v.22a). This is quite the picture. The triumphant Savior returns to his Father's right side, takes his place on the throne, and rests his feet on an ottoman of his enemies.

This is amazing, but it's not surprising. Thousands of years previous, God promised the Messiah King would **"Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool"** (Psalm 110:1). As the spoils of redemption, Satan, sin, death, disease, war, shame, greed, Mammon, and darkness all lay captive underneath Jesus' heel (see Genesis 3:15). However, their destructive influence is still very real.

When the Emancipation Proclamation was announced, enslaved people were declared free in America. This was the reality and law of the land. However, word of this edict took time to spread and take hold of the young country's imagination. It wasn't until June 19, 1865—two years after President Lincoln's proclamation—that the final vestiges of slavery were eradicated in Galveston, Texas.

In the same way, evil has been defeated. That's the reality. They are all Christ's footstool. And yet as the one who is **"head over all things to the church,"** Jesus is inviting us to spread this edict as heaven takes ever-increasing hold of the earth (v.23, see Matthew 6:10).



DAY 5

A FOOTSTOOL OF ENEMIES

1. What does this passage teach us about God's character and nature?
2. What causes you to doubt that Jesus has already defeated his enemies?
3. How ought Jesus' posture encourage us to have confidence and clarity in the work of the gospel?

Heavenly Father ...

It's hard to always believe Jesus' enemies are his footstool. Daily I see the vestiges of earthly and demonic forces. It even seems like they're winning; bringing destruction, shame, and brokenness all around me. Settle my soul in your Word today. Help me to trust you. Help me to believe that even though heaven and earth aren't yet fully one, one day all shall be well.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

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To receive updates about this reading guide and discover more gospel resources to help you enjoy the truth and beauty of Jesus, please visit churchinthesquare.com.





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