

The Good Life Course

Bible Study Edition



The Good Life Course Booklet: Bible Study Edition

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WELCOME

Hi there, and welcome to the Good Life Course! We're so glad you could join us.

Over the next six weeks we want to help you think about what it means to live for King Jesus now and forever! This course is primarily designed for new believers as a follow up to our Good News Course, but we hope that it will still be useful no matter what stage of the Christian life you're at.

The plan for our time together is to work through the book of Ephesians while also branching off onto a few tangents to lay some good foundations for the Christian life.

Week 1: God's Glorious Plan

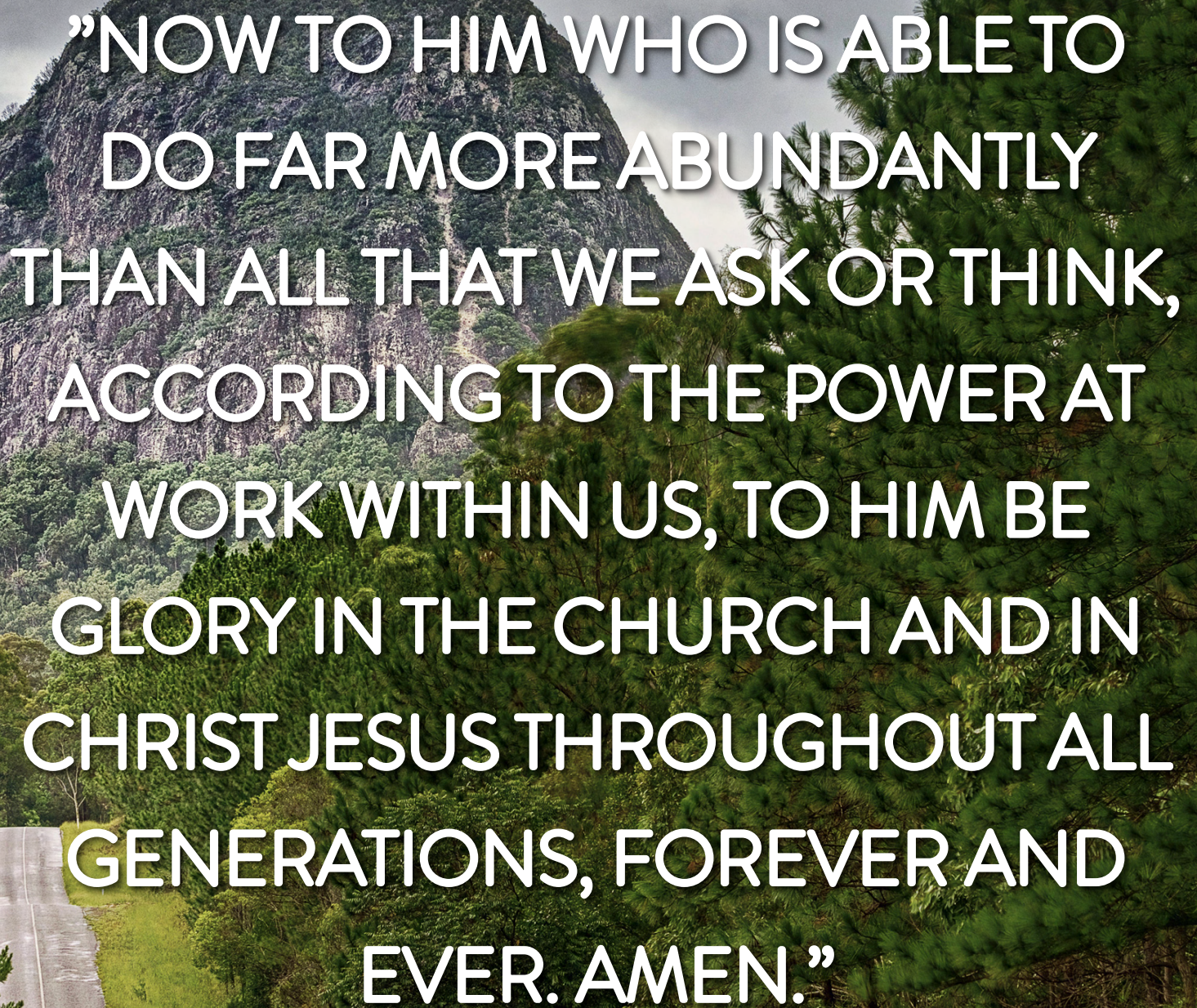
Week 2: Grace not Works

Week 3: Prayer

Week 4: The Church

Week 5: New Relationships

Week 6: The Fight



”NOW TO HIM WHO IS ABLE TO
DO FAR MORE ABUNDANTLY
THAN ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK,
ACCORDING TO THE POWER AT
WORK WITHIN US, TO HIM BE
GLORY IN THE CHURCH AND IN
CHRIST JESUS THROUGHOUT ALL
GENERATIONS, FOREVER AND
EVER. AMEN.”

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

Session 1: God's Plan

Discussion Starters

1. Dream together for a moment. If you could be living anywhere, doing anything etc. How would you describe the good life?

2. The bible teaches that the Good Life is about Knowing God. According to one famous old summary (called the Westminster Shorter Catechism):

Q. What is the chief end of man? (i.e. humanity's ultimate purpose)

A. Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.

Spend some time unpacking this summary.

a. What does it mean to glorify something or someone?

b. Does it surprise you that 'enjoyment' is given such a prominent place in the Christian life?

c. How does Box 1 of 2WTL help to flesh out the good life God intended for humanity?

3. How does Sin (think back to Box 2 of 2WTL) keep us from fulfilling our purpose in life?

Digging into the Bible: Read Ephesians 1

Focus on vv.1-2.

1. Who is Paul?
2. Who is he writing to?

Focus on vv.3-14.

The God we know reveals himself to be the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.¹ In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we see him introduce us to each person of the Trinity in turn.

1. God the Father (vv.3-6)
 - a. Who is God the Father the God and Father of?
 - b. What has he done for us?
 - c. Notice the use of the "in him" language throughout this passage? What does it mean to be "in Christ"?
 - d. Why is it important to notice that these are "spiritual" blessings not "material" blessings?

¹ Peter Jensen, *The Life of Faith: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*. 79.

e. Why is this “to the praise of his glorious grace”?

2. God the Son (vv.7-10)

a. What did Jesus accomplish for us?

b. Why is it important that redemption and forgiveness underpin the Christian life?

c. God’s ultimate plan is “to unite all things in him (i.e. Christ)”. What does this mean?

3. God the Holy Spirit (vv.11-14)

a. What is meant by the language of sealing in v.13?

b. What is meant by the language of guarantee in v.14?

To Summarise:

God the Father *orchestrates* our salvation.

God the Son *accomplishes* our salvation.

God the Holy Spirit *applies* our salvation.

Food For Thought:

1. Is your life about knowing God (i.e. glorifying and enjoying him)?
2. Are there any areas of your life that don't really fit with that goal? How could you change your habits, attitudes, plans to prioritise knowing God in your life?
3. What's something wonderful about God that you've learned from this passage?
Set your mind on it.

Four Healthy Habits (for Homework):

1. Read Ephesians 2.

- Put an exclamation mark next to anything that stands out to you as important or interesting.
- Put a question mark next to anything you don't understand.
- Put an arrow next to anything that prompts you to change your beliefs or behaviours.

2. Request

Set aside some time each day to pray and give thanks to God.

- Thank the Father for all the Spiritual blessings he has given you.
- Ask God (the Father) to grow you in your knowledge and love of God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit).

3. Remember

Memorise Ephesians 1:3.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...”

4. Relay

Talk with a friend or neighbour about something you learned in Ephesians this week. It could be a Christian or a non-Christian, someone at church, at home, at Uni or at the gym.

Session 2: Grace and Works

Review the Homework

1. How did you go reading, remembering, requesting and relaying?

Discussion Starters

1. How do you feel about deathbed conversions?
 - a. Do you think that would be ideal? You could live life however you want to... and then still get to go to heaven when you die?
 - b. Or, do you think that sounds unfair? How is it fair for God to freely forgive people who have spent their whole lives doing evil?
2. If forgiveness is totally free, and salvation is not based on performance at all, then what is the Christian motivation for doing good?

Digging into the Bible: Read Ephesians 2

Focus on vv.1-3.

1. Talk about the state of humanity outside of Christ:
 - a. What does it mean to be “dead” in trespasses and sins?
 - b. How does Paul describe our natural relationship to:
 - the World?²
 - the Devil (i.e. the prince of the power of the air...)?
 - the Flesh?

Focus on vv.4-7.

1. Why did God intervene in our lives to save us? Did it have anything to do with something good or loveable about us?
2. Define:

² Notice the language of “ages” in 1:21 and 2:7. The same Greek word appears in 2:2 translated “course” in the ESV. The bible speaks of two ages, the old age (or the age of this world) and the new age (sometimes called the new world or the new creation). More on this later.

Mercy -

Love -

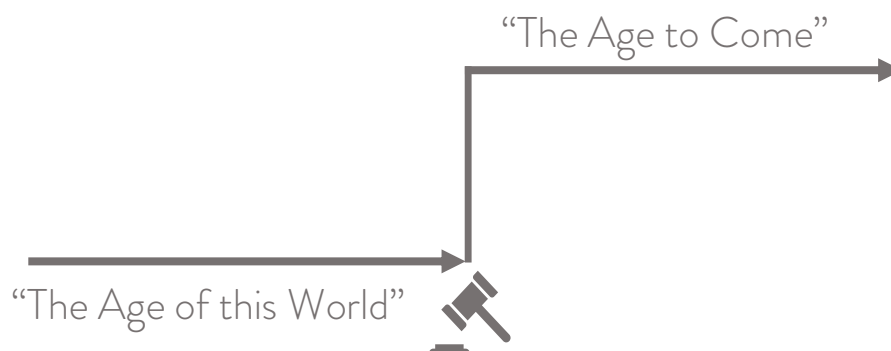
Grace -

3. Look back at Paul's prayer in chapter 1:19-23 and then draw out the connections to 2:1-7.

a. What does Paul mean that God "made us alive together with Christ"?

b. Where is Christ now? And where are we?

At this point it might be worth mentioning something about the two ages/epochs in the bible (mentioned in 1:21). First, imagine the two ages occurring consecutively – one after the other. The age of this world, ruled by the devil, is characterised by sin, death and chaos. The new age, ruled by Christ, is characterised by righteousness, life, joy, peace and freedom etc. The transition from one age to the next happens at the Judgement Day – when the old age is condemned and destroyed, the devil is defeated and Christ begins his eternal reign.



The only problem with this ‘program’ is that no one would be saved. At the end of the world, we would all rightly be condemned for our sin. This is why Christ came into the world early to bear our sins and the judgement-day-punishment for them on the cross. When Christ rose again and ascended into heaven, he began the new age but he did not immediately put an end to the old age, in order to give people time to repent and be saved. On the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) Christ poured out his Holy Spirit so that people can participate in the New Age even as we remain physically in the Old Age. This happens because the Holy Spirit unites us to Christ in his death and resurrection – applying the benefits of his death and resurrection to us. This is why Paul can speak of Christians being “made alive together with Christ” even though our bodies are yet to be resurrected.



Focus on vv.8-10.

1. What part do our works play in earning salvation?
2. What is faith? And what part does faith play in salvation?
3. What does Paul mean that we are God's *workmanship*?
4. What were we newly created *for*?

To Summarise:

Apart from Christ, all people are dead in their sins; enslaved by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

God's love for us (completely unearned and undeserved) is what motivated him to intervene for us and to save us.

God made us alive with Christ. The new life we have in Christ empowers us to live new lifestyles full of good works.

Food For Thought:

1. Looking back over vv.1-3, is this how you want to live? Is this how you are living?
2. So why do Christians do good works? And what are some bad motivations to do good works?
3. Why does salvation by grace silence all human boasting?

Four Healthy Habits (for Homework):

1. Read Ephesians 3

- Put an exclamation mark next to anything that stands out to you as important or interesting.
- Put a question mark next to anything you don't understand.
- Put an arrow next to anything that prompts you to change your beliefs or behaviours.

4. Remember

Memorise Ephesians 2:8-10.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

3. Request

Set aside some time each day to talk to God.

- Thank God for his grace and love, and for making you alive in Christ
- Ask the Father to help you walk in the good works he has prepared for you

4. Relay

Talk with a friend or neighbour about something you learned in Ephesians this week. It could be a Christian or non-Christian, someone at church, at home, at Uni or at the gym.

Session 3: Prayer

Review the Homework

1. How did you go reading, remembering, requesting and relaying?

Discussion Starters

There are all sorts of ways we can talk to God:

Confession is when we admit to God that we've done wrong.

Praise is when we declare God's qualities.

Thanksgiving is when we express our gratitude for God's love and blessings.

Nowadays, in many places, "Prayer" has become an umbrella term for all of these different kinds of speech. Someone might say "Prayer is just talking to God". But this is not how the bible uses the term. In the bible, to pray just means to ask.

1. Do you pray? Why or why not? How important is prayer to you?

2. What does asking God for things imply about him?

Digging into the Bible: Read Ephesians 3

Focus on vv.14-19.

1. Who does Paul pray for?

a. Why do you think Paul tells the Ephesians what he prays for them?

2. Who does Paul pray to?

a. In the bible, prayer is almost always directed to God the Father (i.e. not God the Son, or God the Spirit). Why do you think this is?

[Optional] Notice how Paul connects God's fatherhood to earthly fatherhood/family structures in v.15. What do you think this means for ideas about fatherhood/patriarchy in our society?

3. What does Paul pray for?

a. What kind of strength/power does Paul want from God?

b. What kind of knowledge does Paul want from God?

Focus on vv.20-21.

4. What does God's power mean for Paul's (& your) prayers?

5. Why does Paul want all the glory to go to God?

To Summarise:

Prayer is about presenting our requests to God the Father.

Paul prays for the Ephesians – that they might have inner strength and knowledge of Christ's love for them.

God is more than capable of answering our prayers. He deserves the credit for saving and creating the church.

Food For Thought:

1. How do Paul's priorities in prayer need to shape your own?

2. Do you struggle with fear, anxiety or a sense of powerlessness? Why is prayer a helpful response in times like this?

Four Healthy Habits (for Homework):

1. Read Ephesians 4

- Put an exclamation mark next to anything that stands out to you as important or interesting.
- Put a question mark next to anything you don't understand.
- Put an arrow next to anything that prompts you to change your beliefs or behaviours.

4. Remember

Memorise Ephesians 3:20-21

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

5. Request

Set aside some time each day to talk to God.

- Ask the Father to strengthen your inner being, and to give you a better grasp of Christ's love.
- Thank God for hearing our prayers and acting for our good.

6. Relay

Talk with a friend or neighbour about something you learned in Ephesians this week. It could be a Christian or non-Christian, someone at church, at home, at Uni or at the gym.

Session 4: Church

Review the Homework

1. How did you go reading, remembering, requesting and relaying?

Discussion Starters

In the Greek New Testament, the word for church is Ἐκκλησία. This word just means a gathering, a meeting or an assembly. It is not even an especially Christian or religious word (see for example Acts 19:32).

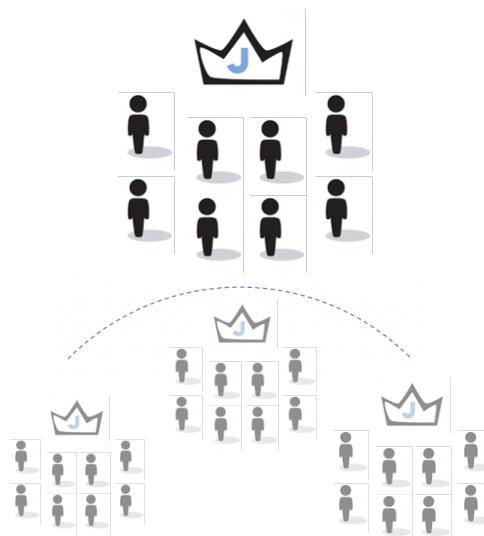
This is why, technically speaking, it is not really accurate to talk about denominations as churches (e.g. the Anglican Church, or the Roman Catholic Church), or buildings as Churches (e.g. St Blog's Church), or the Global Church, or even just as a synonym for God's people. All of these, in one way or another, obscure the fact that a church is a gathering of people.

So... what makes a gathering Christian? Well, it's not just a gathering where Christians are present. Christians might gather for all sorts of reasons – to catch a bus together, or play football. But a Christian gathering is a gathering around Christ. It's a gathering in the name of Christ. Indeed, more than this, it is a gathering where Christ is present.

Because there is only one Christ (seated bodily in heaven) there is only one Christian church (which is the gathering around him in heaven). At present, this hidden spiritual reality is manifested in many earthly churches. The churches on earth do not all add up to the heavenly church. No, rather, they are all the whole church – each a reflection, or mirror, of the heavenly church on earth. So each of

them is the church, and Christ is present at each of them, by his Holy Spirit. Ruling them and sustaining them by his inspired word.

1. What is church? Take some time discussing the explanation above and the diagram below. How does this description of church differ from what you have heard / thought before?



2. How important do you think it is for Christians to go to church?

3. How would you respond to someone who said, "I'm a Christian, but I don't go to church."

Digging into the Bible: Read Ephesians 4

1. Notice the “Amen” at the end of chapter 3, and the “Therefore” at the beginning of chapter 4. This represents a major turning point in the book of Ephesians. Take some time looking back over the first half of the letter. And try to write a short summary of each major chunk.

1:1-14

1:15-23

2:1-10

2:11-22

3:1-13

3:14-21

Focus on vv.1-3.

2. What is the significance of the calling language in v.1?
3. What ties together the character traits mentioned in v.2?
4. What is the significance of the little word “maintain” in v.3?

Focus on vv.4-6.

1. Paul lists seven things that unite all Christians (i.e. seven things that all pertain to our shared gospel-calling). What are they? And what is the significance of having all these things in common?

Focus on vv.7-16.

1. In v.7, Paul moves from the language of “all” to the language of “each”. How does this help us to understand the diversity in the church?
2. In vv.8-10, Paul pictures Christ as a conquering hero returning from a great victory and distributing plunder.
 - a. Who/what has he plundered (v.8)?
 - b. Where has Christ been? (v.9)
 - c. Where is he now? (v.10)
3. What/who did Christ give to the church (v.11)?

4. What were these men supposed to do (v.12)?

5. What were the Saints³ supposed to do (v.12)?

6. What is the ultimate goal of all this (v.13)? Take some time to think about how lofty and magnificent this goal is.

7. How does this differ from the childishness of v.14?

8. How does “each part” of the body help the whole body to grow?

³ Note: By “Saints” Paul probably had in mind Early Jewish Christians specifically rather than all Christians. A saint is someone who has been ‘set apart’. In the Old Testament, the Jews were set apart from the other nations. Part of what Paul is arguing in this letter is that the barrier between Jews and Gentiles has now been broken down (2:11-22) by the cross. In chapter 4, he is explaining how this happened historically in the early church. Christ used “saints” (i.e. early Jewish Christians) to reach gentiles and include them into the one new community under Christ.

To Summarise:

A Christian church is a gathering around Christ.

Christ calls us by his word. The Spirit unites all believers. We are called upon to maintain the unity of the Spirit by peaceable behaviour.

Christ rules the church from heaven. He gave word-ministers to the Saints so that they might serve the whole body.

The church builds itself up by every member speaking the truth in love to one another.

Food For Thought:

1. Look back over the character traits in v.2. Are there any areas of your life you need to work on?
2. How could you be more deliberate about helping to build the church?
3. Are there any things in your life (or in the life of your church) holding you back from reaching maturity?

Four Healthy Habits (for Homework):

1. Read Ephesians 5

- Put an exclamation mark next to anything that stands out to you as important or interesting.
- Put a question mark next to anything you don't understand.
- Put an arrow next to anything that prompts you to change your beliefs or behaviours.

2. Remember

Memorise Ephesians 4:15-16

¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

3. Request

Set aside some time each day to talk to God.

- Ask the Father to help you walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called.
- Thank God for gathering you into the new body he is building.

4. Relay

- Invite someone to church this week.
- Make a plan to deliberately encourage someone at church this week with the truth. Perhaps you could try and share one of the memory verses you have been learning in Ephesians so far.

Session 5: Christ & Culture

Review the Homework

1. How did you go reading, remembering, requesting and relaying?

Discussion Starters

Culture: the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time. (Cambridge English Dictionary)

1. How would you describe the culture you grew up in? Think about the customs and beliefs of your family, school, nation etc.

2. How do you think these customs and beliefs differ from the way of life God wants for his people?

Digging into the Bible: Read Ephesians 5

1. How should the cross shape the attitude of Christians towards one another?

Focus on vv.3-6.

The Greek word **πορνεία**, translated “sexual immorality” by the ESV, is a general term which includes all unlawful sexual activity. For instance, the bible condemns bestiality, incest, paedophilia, prostitution, homosexuality, adultery, fornication, pornography etc. - in short, any sexual desires or activities outside of a loving marriage between one man and one woman.

1. What do you think is the connection between love (vv.1-2) and sexual immorality (v.3-6)? Why is it important to distinguish between love and lust?

2. How does Paul expect Christian speech to differ from those around us?

3. How does the gospel change our ‘national identity’ (think especially about the “saints” mentioned in v.3 and the “Kingdom” mentioned in v.5)?

Focus on vv.7-14.

4. Think about the metaphors of light and darkness:

a. What does darkness have to do with immoral behaviour?

b. How does light change things?

To Summarise:

The church is a new community created by Christ's loving sacrifice. Therefore, the culture of this new community must be characterised by love.

Love means not letting sexual immorality and impurity destroy our relationships.

Love means holiness - living differently from those around us.

Love means living in the light (and bearing the fruit of light), not continuing in the shameful ways of darkness.

Four Healthy Habits (for Homework):

1. Read Ephesians 6

- Put an exclamation mark next to anything that stands out to you as important or interesting.
- Put a question mark next to anything you don't understand.
- Put an arrow next to anything that prompts you to change your beliefs or behaviours.

2. Remember

Memorise Ephesians 5:1-2

¹ Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ² And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

3. Request

Set aside some time each day to talk to God.

- Thank God for welcoming you into his family.
- Ask the Father to help you imitate him and walk in love.

4. Relay

Talk with a friend or neighbour about something you learned in Ephesians this week. It could be a Christian or non-Christian, someone at church, at home, at Uni or at the gym.

Session 6: Good Soldiers

Review the Homework

1. How did you go reading, remembering, requesting and relaying?

Discussion Starters

1. Looking back over the last couple of weeks. How have you gone at walking worthily of the calling to which you have been called (Eph. 4:1)? Have you been...
 - a. walking in all humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with others in love (4:2)?
 - b. putting off your corrupt old life along with things like sexual immorality, impure desires, and covetousness (4:22, 5:3)?
 - c. walking as a child of the light – pleasing the Lord by doing what is good and right and true (5:9-10)?
 - d. walking wisely or unwisely? Getting drunk or being filled with the Spirit - singing and giving thanks etc. (5:21)?
 - e. If you're a wife – have you been submitting to your husband (5:22)? If you're a husband – have you been loving your wife (5:25)? If you're a child, have you been obeying your parents (6:1)? If you're a Father, have you been lovingly disciplining and instructing your children (6:4)?

The normal Christian life is a struggle. Perhaps, just reading the list above has been discouraging and exhausting for you. Please don't lose heart. That is what this

passage is all about. How do we go about living faithfully, fighting the good fight in the everyday battle against the devil and his schemes?

2. The devil has two tactics: persecution and seduction. Talk about how persecution and seduction threaten the Christian life. Where do you personally feel under threat at the moment?

Digging into the Bible: Read Ephesians 6

1. In this passage Paul encourages Christians to wear armour. Whose armour is it?
2. Why do we need to wear the armour?
3. Why is it important then not to be naïve about the Christian life and who we're fighting?
4. Who does Paul say we are *not* fighting? Why is it important to remember this? (Think back especially over the context of the letter e.g Eph. 4:25-32, 5:22-33, 6:1-4 etc.)
5. What is the significance of the language of "standing" repeated throughout this passage?

6. Why does Paul describe the day/days we live in as evil? (v.13 cf. 5:15-16)

Every day we face new temptations to lie to one another, to lust after one another, to hate each other and fight with each other. Until Christ returns, we will face continually, the onslaught of the devil and his legions. Paul's not talking about a future, super-intense day of evil, or the kind of strange 'spiritual warfare' you see in Hollywood horror. just the fact that each morning, as you go out to face normal, boring, ordinary days, you will face temptation to give up on Christ, to stop walking worthily of the calling to which you have been called - to stop loving your brothers and sisters in Christ, or honouring your parents or whatever - to allow bitterness and resentment to grow in your heart. That's how the devil gets a foothold (4:27). Every day, we face a subtle combination of persecution and seduction, designed to take our eyes away from the Lord Jesus to fall back into sin. That's why we need this armour, every day. Because we're weak, and our only hope is to find strength in the Lord. Because our enemy is cunning. And because today is the day of battle - the evil day.

Focus on vv.14-17.

In this section Paul outlines six pieces of armour we all have:

1. Truth (v.14)

- a. What truth is Paul talking about? (cf. 1:13, 4:15, 25, 5:6, 9)

b. How will it protect us from the devil's schemes?

c. Why do you think Paul decided to put truth first in his list?

d. Why do you think Paul describes Truth as a belt?

2. Righteousness (v.14)

a. How do Truth and Righteousness go together? (cf. 4:17-24)

3. Gospel Readiness (v.15)

Isaiah is one of the key Old Testament books that stands behind this passage. In particular the gospel shoes in this passage seem to relate back to Isaiah 52:7, so it is worth getting a bit of background on Isaiah before we go further.

Isaiah was a prophet who lived in the 8th Century BC while the nation of Israel was in decline. He wrote about God's judgement upon Israel because of their Sin, and how this would come at the hands of foreign armies (first the Assyrians, and then the Babylonians). He also spoke about how God would save his people from sin, judgement and death through his *Messiah/Servant*. After the judgement, God would restore the Kingdom and the whole of creation such that even death, sickness and

- a. Look up Isaiah 59:16-17. Why did God wear a “helmet of Salvation”. What does it mean for us to wear his helmet?

6. The Word of God

- a. Some churches claim to be Spirit-filled, but do not focus on God’s Word. Indeed, sometimes the work of the Spirit and the work of the Word are put in opposition to one another (as if one is necessarily mystical and emotional, while the other is dry and cerebral). How does this verse challenge that false dichotomy?
- b. How should we expect the Spirit to be at work in our lives and in the lives of others?

Focus on vv.18-20.

In this final section it is worth noting that prayer is not just another piece of the armour. Rather, it is how we put the armour on. Moreover, it is worth remembering from a few weeks back that prayer is not some mystical or strange religious ritual. To pray, simply means to ask. In other words, we put the armour on by asking God to clothe us with it.

1. Looking back down the list of armour, what are some practical things you could do to clothe yourself in it? For example, if you want to learn the truth, you could you could read the bible, or seek out wise and truthful people etc.
2. Why is prayer, ultimately, the only way to clothe yourself in the armour?

To Summarise:

Christians live on a battlefield – threatened on every side by the schemes of the devil.

We need to wear God's armour in order to stand strong in this evil day.

The armour all centres around the gospel. In order to stand firm, we must live in & live out the gospel.

The Sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. Hoping that the Spirit will work in your life without paying careful attention to God's word, is like asking a surgeon to work without a scalpel, or a musician to play without an instrument, or a warrior to fight without a sword.

The gospel armour is a gracious gift of God that can only be received by asking for it. It cannot be earned.

Food For Thought:

1. Some commentators have described this passage as "The Pauline Great Commission" - alluding to Jesus' words in Matthew 28:18-20. It is not only a call to embrace the gospel for ourselves (and let it reshape our lives), but it is also a call to preach the gospel to others. What would it mean for you to live your life, like the Lord Jesus, to seek and save the lost?

Four Healthy Habits (for Homework):

1. Read.

Choose your own adventure! Pick another book in the bible and read it. You might like to start by reading one chapter every morning.

- Put an exclamation mark next to anything that stands out to you as important or interesting.
- Put a question mark next to anything you don't understand.
- Put an arrow next to anything that prompts you to change your beliefs or behaviours.

2. Remember

Memorise Ephesians 6:10-11

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

3. Request

Set aside some time each day to talk to God.

- Ask God to equip you with his armour.
- Ask him to help you live worthy of the gospel, and speak the gospel boldly.

4. Relay

Share the gospel with someone who doesn't yet know Jesus. It could be a friend, a family member, a neighbour or colleague or someone on the bus. Let them know that Jesus is the true King of the Universe who will reign forever, and invite them to church to find out more.

