



A JOURNEY THROUGH

Ephesians

DEVOTIONALS

FREEDOMCHURCH
NORTHWEST

Grace

Paul opens his letter to the Ephesians with, "Grace to you." What does that mean? We sing about God's Amazing Grace, we know we are saved by grace, we give grace for one another's short-comings, but do we really understand the concept of God's kind of grace? Honestly, I don't think our limited human minds can actually grasp the magnitude and scope of God's grace, but it sure is fun to try. I believe we will spend the rest of eternity continuing to discover and experience what God's grace really means.

To begin today, write your own working definition of grace below:

Paul spends much of Ephesians discussing the concept of Grace. Let's look at just a few of these passages.

Read the following verses and fill in the key words below.

Ephesians 1:6

To the praise of His _____ .

Ephesians 1:7

In him we have _____ through his blood, the _____ of our trespasses, according to the _____ of his _____ .

Ephesians 2:9-10

For by _____ you have been saved through _____ . And this is not your own doing; it is the _____ of God, not a result of _____ .

Why is it His grace that saves us? Let's look at the meaning of this word in Greek to get a better understanding.

Grace in Greek is charis. It means favor, acceptance, a kindness granted, a favor done without expectation of return; absolute freeness of the lovingkindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and free heartedness of the Giver; unearned, unmerited favor.

Take a minute and think about some of these phrases above. Underline your favorite. Why is that your favorite phrase or word in this definition? What does it say about God? What does it say about His attitude toward you?

But wait, there's more! This word for grace, charis, stands in direct opposition to, erga, which means works. This word is also translated as joy. And no wonder! We have been saved by grace. It is the gift of God. It has nothing to do with our good works. We can not obey enough, change enough, or do-good enough to be any more secure in our standing with God. Take some time now and thank God for His Amazing Grace in your life. Let the joy of your salvation be renewed as you meditate on this wonderful, free gift He has given you.

Further study on Grace:

2 Timothy 1:9, Colossians 1:6, Romans 3:23-24

Adoption

The journey we as a family have been on in regards to adoption has opened up even more meaning to me about this topic. We have five biological children of our own, and two wonderful foster kiddos we are hoping to adopt soon. These two new children want very much to be adopted by us, and will frequently ask us, "When will we get to sign the papers?" When we pray at night, they thank God for our family and pray that they could, "stay here forever." We pray the same thing, but have to wait for the process in the courts. They want so much to know that they will be in our family forever. We love each other deeply, and we feel like family, but there is still the insecurity of an unknown future looming over our heads. They will ask us sometime, "Will you ever send us away?" I reply, "No". They follow with, "What if we do something really, really bad. Will you keep us then?" I say, "I will never send you away, no matter what you do. I will always love you." It is so hard for them to understand the unconditional love and acceptance of a parent. This is a new concept for them. For them, permanence will come when we can finally sign the adoption process.

As you read this story, think about how you relate to God.

Read Ephesians 1:3-6

He has adopted us. Made us His sons and daughters. Made us a part of His family. But do we really believe and receive the fullness of what this means? Do we understand the permanence of our adoption as His children?

Look again at verse 5

Fill in the key words:

He _____ us for the _____ as _____
through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His _____.

This phrase, "adoption as sons", has a profound significance when broken down in the original language. It is two words put together, *huios* (son) and *tithemi* (to place), and means 'to place as a son.' To really understand this, we need to understand what *huios* means. In the Hebrew culture, they had different words to describe the different stages of childhood. A *teknon* was a child who was still being trained in the ways of the family and in their faith. When the father believed the 'teknon' had reached a maturity and readiness to enter into adulthood, a rite of passage was conducted with a public ceremony to celebrate at the end. It was at this ceremony that the father then declared that his 'teknon' was now a, 'huios'. As a *huios*, this son was now an adult who carried authority in the family and as a legal heir.

Read Ephesians 1:3-6 again

We have been placed as mature adults and legal heirs in the family of God.

Read Ephesians 2:6

Where are we seated?

Now read Hebrews 10:12

Where is Christ seated?

The right hand side of a king was the highest place of honor that could ever be granted. A queen, the next in power and authority, sat to the right of a king. Christ is God's *Huios* and is seated at the right hand of God. We too, because of His grace, have been made *huios*, and are seated with Christ in a place of favor, honor, and authority just as He is.

Take some time now to talk with the Father. Have you fully accepted His love and acceptance of you? Do you struggle with insecurity or perhaps shame when you think of how he sees you? How might truly understanding your security and position with God affect the way you live?

For further study on adoption:

Matthew 3:17, Galatians 4:6, John 1:12-13

Inheritance

Read Ephesians 1:3,11-14

In both verse 11 and 14 we are told we have obtained something. What is it?

Read Romans 8:17

We are heirs of _____ and co-heirs with _____. As God's sons and daughters, we are his rightful heirs along with Jesus.

My biological children and my adopted children will all share equally in the inheritance we will leave them. They are all our children and that is it. Our God is the same way with us. Jesus is God's begotten Son and we are his adopted sons, and because God is a good father, there is equal share among his children.

Read Hebrews 1:2-4

What is Christ's inheritance?

This will be our inheritance too.

When a will is written, it must be legally verified to be effective. A notary, or a lawyer, serves as a guarantor that the document is binding and cannot be changed. Their signature is the 'seal' that verifies the will's legality.

Read Ephesians 1:13-14 again

We were sealed by the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance.

Read Ephesians 1:3

What have we been blessed with?

Paul says we have been blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing. This word, "blessing", in Greek, means, "to distinguish with favor"; to prosper or to make happy. There is an inner experience, that is our inheritance, that can exist apart from outside pain and suffering. I wonder, do we even begin to touch the reality of what EVERY spiritual blessing in the heaven lies might mean? As his heirs, we have access to an abundant wealth of love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. We have every right to walk in a strength of character and inner peace that is indicative of the inheritance to come. This abundant inner life is His grace driven gift to us as his sons and daughters.

Take time now, to draw near to His throne of grace, and let his mercy and grace fill you in the middle of your need (Hebrews 4:16). Tell him what you need, and let His strength fill you and His love refresh you.

For further study on inheritance:

2 Timothy 2:12, 1 Peter 1:4, Colossians 1:12

Will of God

Ephesians 1:5

"He predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to His _____"

Ephesians 1:9

"... making known to us the mystery of His _____ , according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ".

Ephesians 1:11

"In Him we have obtained inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His _____,"

How many of us have ever questioned the will of God. This has been something I have struggled with in my life for years. Paralyzed in fear to step out into something because I was unsure if God really wanted me to. How do I know if this is in God's will for me? What if I make the wrong decision and get set off course? Why won't He just show me what to do? Sometimes it is easy to know what God has planned for our lives, He has a way of making Himself known and it is obvious. Yet other times we find ourselves with no clear direction, feeling stuck and not wanting to make a wrong choice because the "right" choice hasn't been presented to us.

"Will" is derived from the latin word "velle" meaning to wish or to want.

What is it that you think God wishes or wants for you?

If we look at other scriptures we can know what God's will for us is. Take some time to read through these scriptures and write down what the Bible says about what God's will for us is.

- **Jeremiah 29:11**
- **1 Timothy 2:3-4**
- **Hebrews 13:20-21**
- **Luke 9:23**

Romans 12:2 says "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

As humans we have free will, but as followers of Christ we can use that to either chase after God's will for our lives or our own worldly desires. In Romans 12:2 it talks about the "renewal of the mind", this can only occur as the Spirit changes our thinking through consistent study and meditation of scripture. We are called to be transformed into the likeness of Christ and the more like Christ we become the greater the knowledge we have for discerning His will for our life. We may not always have the most perfect or clearest answer but we can know the direction in which we are supposed to head in. Some of my best "God" moments were stepping out into the unknown, with no clear direction only knowing that it was pursuing God deeper and He helped me to fine tune the details along the way.

Not Saved by Works

Ephesians 2:8-10

"For by grace you have been saved through _____ .
And this is not your own doing: it is the _____ of _____ .
Not as a result of _____ so that no one may _____ .
For we are His _____ , created in Christ Jesus for
_____, which God prepared beforehand, that we should
_____ in them.

We learned earlier that the latin word for grace was "charis" and one of the definitions of that was "a favor done without expectation of return".

In your own words write what you think it means to be saved by grace through faith:

Do you struggle with being a busybody? I know I do from time to time. Sometimes I get so caught up in doing things for others I find myself drained and exhausted. I do it because I know I should be doing it, not necessarily because I want to. Other times I feel like I can keep going and it fills me up, what makes that difference? The difference is your motivation behind your work.

Let's look at some scriptures talking about works.

- **John 6:28-29**
- **1 Corinthians 16:14**
- **Hebrews 10:24**
- **1 Corinthians 15:58**

What do you think it means when it talks about “works and good works” in the Bible?

We are saved by God's grace, He chose to save us. We don't need to prove that we are the perfect Christian or worthy of it. If we truly believe that the love of Christ is what set us free and saved us from death then that should be our motivation. Our acts or “works” are internally motivated by the love of Christ and our desire to serve Him by loving others.

Galatians 6:9 says “ Let us not become weary in doing good. For at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”

Is there an area in your life your motivations for your works have been selfish instead of because of your outward pouring of your inward love of God? The more you fill up with Jesus the more you have in your tank to overflow onto others.

Wisdom

I have seven children. Yes, seven. The amount of times I find myself thinking in a day, "I have no idea what to do right now" is countless. I need help, lots of it, all of the time. Each child, with their different issues, challenges and questions, is so unique. It is never a one size fits all formula for raising a child. Maybe for you, your need is wisdom for a child as well. Or maybe it's for a spouse, a job, friends needing advice, school, and usually, it's all of the above. I find myself constantly in need of wisdom that is beyond what I naturally possess.

Read Ephesians 1:17-18, James 1:5

Based on these two passages, what can we ask God for, and He will give it?

In the Greek the word for wisdom is sophia, and describes someone who is prudent with others and knows how to regulate circumstances. Skillful, judicious, expert.

Did you know we can ask for wisdom? I find that such great news. One of my favorite movies is called the Matrix, made in the late 90s. It's about a man who takes a journey to find reality. In the unreal world, his mentoring trainer, simply downloads information onto a computer that is connected to the man's mind and gives him new skills and knowledge he did not have before. For example, he wakes up after a 30 second download and suddenly is an expert in Kung Fu and can beat the best of the opponents matched up against him. How cool would that be? To just suddenly have skills and knowledge that would normally take a lifetime to acquire? You know, it's not so different when it comes to our life in the spirit. Because we have the Holy Spirit living inside of us, we have His wisdom, and power, of the eternal ages living inside of us. We can ask him to give us wisdom and revelation for the situations in our lives and he will give it to us.

Read Ephesians 3:20

What Is God able to do?

And How does He do this?

Read Phillipians 2:6

What can we tell God?

Write out what you need wisdom for in your life right now. Take a moment, and tell God what you need.

Sit quietly in His presence and wait. Did a scripture come to mind? Perhaps the name or face of a person that God is nudging you to reach out to for help? Did God shift your perspective, give you understanding, open your eyes to see something you didn't see before. Record below how God answered you as you waited.

The book of Ephesians was written while Paul was imprisoned in Rome. In fact, much of the New Testament was written by Paul from his cell to the churches he oversaw.

Suffering

Read Ephesians 3:11-13

What do you think Paul is meaning when he talks about suffering?

What do we understand about how God redeemed the suffering Paul experienced?

God asks us to walk by faith not by sight. Sometimes we go through moments and times of suffering and we want to throw up our fists at God and ask "why?!?!" Though, one thing I have come to realize is that most often at the end of our trials, looking back we realize it has marked us in such a way that God can use it to bring hope and testimony to others. The biggest thing that comes to mind for me is when God put it on my heart to move to Uganda to live for 6 months. The first thing to go through my head was, "what an exciting adventure, but no way". I was called to be the hands and feet of Jesus. There were many times I wanted to throw in my towel and give up. There were times I wanted to say the heartache I endured there wasn't worth it. Despite seeing corruption, poverty, and being personally attacked I stayed despite my countless thoughts to jump on a plane and come home. Coming back to the states I realized that my time there had changed me. It had opened up doors for me to walk through that hadn't been opened before. It allowed me to be able to walk into other people's suffering and relate to them and offer them hope. Our sufferings are not in vain. That is unless you choose to stay in it and not use it to reach out, connect and live intentionally with others.

“To suffer” in greek comes from the word “sufferre” which means to bear, undergo or endure.

You don't have to go on the mission field to experience suffering. We all have in our lives. It could be the enduring hardships of your family. The loss of a loved one. Or the many other things we face each and every day.

Read Romans 5:3-5

What are we called to do in our sufferings?

What does suffering produce?

Hope has its roots in suffering. God has redeemed our lives and has a purpose for it. When we go through suffering it produces something in us that would otherwise not exist. Without suffering we cannot offer hope to others.

Read Romans 8:28 and Phillipians 3:10

What are some ways that you have been able to bring peace, comfort or hope to someone in their suffering because you yourself have been through something similar?

For further study:

“Don't Waste Your Sorrows” By, Paul Billheimer

Abundant Life

Read Ephesians 3:20

What stands out to you about this verse?

In your own words write a definition for abundant:

I think sometimes we get stuck in a mindset where we just accept life the way it is. We fall into the "it's never going to get better" or "this is just the hand I've been dealt". We forget that God created us to have passion, purpose and a desire to live life to the fullest. How often do we stop and ask God for things that seem out of reach?

Take a moment now, and talk with God about those things that seem impossible to you. Abundant comes from the latin word "abundare" which means "to overflow or run over"

Honestly look at your life. Have you been living a life that is backed by passion, and with a purpose? Seeking and living in abundance?

Let's look at some verses about abundance, write down the things that stand out to you.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:8, John 10:10, Matthew 6:33, Romans 15:13

What do all these verses have in common?

What do they say God will do for us, and to what extent?

“He doesn't want you merely existing each day. He wants you to experience abundant life. And there is a thief who wants to steal the passion, purpose and potential you were born with”. - Christine Caine

We as Christians have hope to live life to the full, in abundance with our Father because He has destroyed our enemy and overcome the grave. He wants to see us happy and living lives full of passion and purpose. He wants to bless us. Let that sink in for a minute. Your Father, in heaven, wants to bless you.

How does that last statement sit with you?

Where in your life are you feeling called to live in more abundance?

Good Works

We studied earlier about how we are not saved by works, but by faith in Christ, according to His grace alone. Our coming near to God and being made right with Him is nothing we can earn or work towards. However, the Bible has a lot to say about the importance of our good works.

So what is the difference, and where does our good works fit into God's free gift of salvation?

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

Verses 1-3 spell out clearly what our evil works were before coming to Christ.

Who did we formerly live according to?

What does verse 3 say we were indulging in?

The works we did before, and unfortunately still do at times, were dictated by the desires of the flesh. Like so many, we were living according to the cultural norm. This is what is meant by "walking according to the course of this world." But then God happened.

Read verses 4-6

What is it that God has done for us?

Read verse 10

What were we created for and what are we to do about it?

Paul makes a clear distinction here, that our good works are the result of our salvation. They are the overflow, and demonstration of our new nature, and the love of God that now fills our hearts.

James 2:14-26 makes a strong case that only a real faith, that changes our nature, will result in our changed behavior.

What do you hear God saying to you through this passage?

Galatians 6:8-10, We once lived according to the flesh.

Now, who do we live according to?

Our family has had our two precious foster kiddos in our care for 6 months now. The work is constant, yet fulfilling. We are continually training, reminding, correcting, and of course loving them. We recently went to a gathering where there were several people who knew them from before they came into our home. With tears in their eyes, they told me how changed the kids are. They said things like, 'Wow! You guys are doing an amazing job.' They told me that the kids were so much more loving, open hearted, looking them in the eye, and giving hugs. I get so caught sometimes in the day to day training, I hadn't realized how much transformation had already occurred in such a short amount of time as a result of kids being a part of our family.

Read Matthew 5:16

Thinking of the story above, how has your life changed as a result of being in the family of God?

Do you 'make the Father look good' by the way you act and treat people?

For further study read:

Titus 3:1,8,14, 1 John 2:17, 1 Corinthians 6:20

Strength

My oldest daughter is a collegiate athlete. Although her physical ability comes naturally, it constantly amazes me how much time and effort she has to spend on strengthening and fine-tuning her body so that it can withstand the rigors of this level of play demands. Each workout, physical therapy session, pre-and post regiment, even her diet, are all focused around her being able to execute effectively in a game. She is continually strengthening her body. We live in a continual spirit competition Between the forces of evil and the host of heaven, with earth being the trophy at the end. We live in constant battle, whether it be the battle in our own minds, circumstances we face, or people we interact with. This life requires great strength.

Read Ephesians 3:16-19

Where is Paul saying we should be strengthened?

David, when in battle, was about to lose heart, but then he made a choice. **What does 1 Samuel 30:6 say this choice was?**

Our inner man is our soul and spirit. Our desires, emotions, and thoughts, and therefore our choices, flow from the condition of the inner man. Do you feel shaky, weak or unstable? It is time to strengthen yourself in the Lord.

So how do you do this? The key is found in verse 17. **What are the two key components you see?**

1. _____

2. _____

The first one, is Christ dwelling in our hearts. Our dwelling is our home, it's the place where we make our lives, it is where we settle, find rest and refreshment. Our home is the part of this world that is ours to make our own. This idea of Christ living in our hearts is more than just him existing there. It is as allowing him to take over our hearts, settle in, and make them His own.

The second, is being rooted and grounded in love. A plant that is rooted is not easily removed from the soil. It has anchored itself deep, wrapping its roots around the rocks that live inside the soil. I grew up along the northern California coast. It is known for its rugged coast line and huge waves. Another distinct feature, is the large kelp forests that grow beneath the surface of the water. The kelp anchors itself to the rocks on the bed of the seafloor with what is called a holdfast. Scientists have tried for decades to reproduce the strength of the glue that naturally occurs within the holdfast, but have been unsuccessful. Kelp can grow over 100 feet tall, and stay anchored to the rocks on which they've secured themselves through great currents, and storms. This is the picture that comes to mind when we read about being rooted and grounded in love.

Romans 8:39 says there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Understanding that his love for us will never change, and nothing can remove us from his love, is what allows us to stay strong and rooted in the storms of life.

The word, 'to know' in verse 19 is the word ginosko, which is a unique kind of knowing. This is not an intellectual perceiving or a gathering of information. This is the kind of knowledge that can only be obtained through experience. So much so in fact, it is the same word used for physical intimacy. To know the love of Christ requires spending time experiencing His Love. Experiencing His love is what gives us strength in our inner man.

What practices help us experience His love?

Do you take time on a regular basis to intentionally do so? Take a few minutes now, and sit quietly with Jesus, and open your heart to Him. Let Him love you, adore you, and care for you. Then respond to Him.

For further study:

Psalm 18:1-2, Psalm 73:26, 1 Chronicles 16:11

Unity

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

Paul exhorts us here to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. There isn't a question of whether or not we have a call on our lives. If we belong to Christ, then we are each called to be his ambassadors on the earth (2 Corinthians 5:20).

In verses 2-3 Paul explains how we are to walk out our calling. **List the 6 ways.**

Unity in the body of Christ is a running theme throughout all of Paul's letters, but particularly here. Read verses 4-6 again.

How many times do you see the word 'one'?

Skipping ahead to verse 11, Paul lists some gifts of the spirit.

What does he say these gifts are meant for (see verse 12)?

1 Corinthians 12 is a parallel passage. It, too, spells out spiritual gifts, and the role they play in the building up of the body of Christ. Take a moment and **read** through this chapter.

What similarities do you see between Ephesians 4:1-16 and 1 Corinthians 12?

We did not become disciples of Christ to become lone rangers. Psalm 68:6. Allowing the Lord to use our gifts, to build one another up and build the body of Christ, is what brings us to maturity as the family of God. It is impossible to reach maturity as a believer, apart from our connectedness to a local community of believers.

Read verse 16

Are you connected to a local church body?

Do you allow the gifts God has given you to benefit those you are in community with?

If you have allowed yourself to become isolated, are you open to the Holy Spirit reconnecting you with a local body of believers?

Are you connected, but only partially? What happens in our natural body when a joint isn't fully connected and healthy? What parallels can be drawn from this about a spiritual body?

The Body of Christ

Fill in the blanks for Ephesians 4:11-16

"And He gave the apostles, the prophets and the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to _____ the saints for the work of ministry, for _____ up the _____ of Christ, until we all attain the _____ of the faith and the _____ of the Son of God to _____ manhood, to measure of the stature of the _____ of Christ so that we man no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness is deceitful schemes. Rather, _____ the truth in _____, we are to _____ up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ from whom the whole body, _____ and _____ by every joint with which it is _____, when each part is _____ properly, makes the _____ so that it _____ itself up in _____."

What do all the words you filled in have in common?

What does this verse mean to you?

When I first started attending my last church I sat down in the back, listened to the sermon and left. I was in and out before I could talk to anyone, before anyone knew my name. It was a very lonely way to live life. I thought that I could just have my relationship with the Lord and keep to myself. I didn't want anyone to let me in and I definitely didn't want to let anyone in. I had been hurt by too many people.

Many of whom I had known from previous church experiences. Yet over the years I realized that I was not only depriving myself of the importance of having a community of believers I would eventually do life with; but I was robbing from the unity of the church. I had the attitude that I didn't have to participate and they didn't need me and I didn't need them. Long story short I was there for almost seven years and I went from being someone who hid in the background to someone who sat in the front and was involved and sharing my gifts with my community of believers. By the time I left that church, to move here (Washington) I was leaving behind not only a piece of myself but the ways I had impacted those around me.

Have you ever felt like you have blended into the background? If so, what is/has kept you there?

What does the bible say about the importance of the body of Christ?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:25-27, Colossians 3:15, Romans 12:6-8

What are we called to do as the body of Christ?

It can be easy to fall between the cracks. To feel like you don't matter, but have you ever thought that by accepting the lie that you don't matter or you are not enough is actually in a way stealing from God? It's depriving the church's ability to function properly. If you aren't using your gifts and talents to bring unity to the body of Christ then the mission of the Gospel is hindered.

What are some lies that you have been believing?

What is one lie you are going to surrender to God this week?

Spend the rest of your quiet time meditating on Ephesians 1:18

Bearing with One Another

Read Ephesians 4:2-3

“ With all _____ and _____ , with _____ , _____ with one another in _____ , _____ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit with is the bond of peace.

What do you think it means to “bear with one another in love”?

Let’s look at some scriptures to help us see this more clearly.

- **Galatians 6:2**
- **Luke 10:30-37**
- **Hebrews 10:24-25**
- **Mark 11:25**
- **John 13:34**
- **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**

After reading these scriptures how are we called as believers to “bear with one another”?

I will never forget the day it happened. I was at my house in Uganda and I got the phone call that a dear friend of mine had lost her baby girl due to preventable causes. I was so angry, so hurt for my friend. I didn’t even know how to be a friend at that point. The next day we drove out to her place to sit and grieve with her. I remember thinking, I don’t know her that well, I don’t know how to help, I should just stay home. Yet as I wrestled with my own discomfort, the Lord whispered “ weep with those who weep”. I had never had a child of my own and I had never lost one and I had no idea how to comfort my friend. I was terrified. Yet again God said “weep with those who weep”. So that’s what I did. I jumped into a crammed van and drove 40 minutes down a bumpy dirt road and I sat on the floor of my friend's house and I held her in my arms and I cried with her.

From the verse before, we see that we are not only supposed to bear with one another but do it with humility, gentleness and patience.

Define humility, gentleness and patience in your own words below:

/ Humility:

/ Gentleness:

/ Patience:

In order to live in a manner worthy of our calling as it states in verse 1 of Ephesians 4 we must bear with one another in love not just putting into practice these three things with God but with our neighbors, our friends, with fellow sinners. To "bear" means to carry, endure without resistance, to support, to hold up.

Humility: comes from the latin word "humus" meaning ground or dirt.

Genesis 3:19 "By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Reminding us to put others above ourselves.

In what area in your life can you grow in humility? Be specific.

Gentleness: or gentle comes from the root word "gentillis" meaning of the same clan.

Philippians 4:5 *"let your gentleness be evident to all, the Lord is near"*.

Reminding us to treat others as we want to be treated.

In what area of your life can you grow in gentleness? Be specific.

Patience: comes from the root word "patientia" meaning suffering.

Romans 8:18 *"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us"*

Reminding us to sit with others in the midst of their pain and trials.

In what area of your life can you grow in patience? Be specific.

When you think of almost any while animal, what do most of them have in common?

They travel together in some form of group or herd. They do this to protect each other, to help each other, to provide shelter for one another and they are there by each other's sides when they are at their most vulnerable. Most animals by themselves in the wild don't make it long. We are not much different. We need each other. We need community. We need people to bear with us and not give up.

How is God calling you to respond today?

God Imitators

Read Ephesians 5:10

Depending on the translation you use, this verse will likely use one of two phrases: 'follow God's example' or better imitators of God. Both are good translations, but to fully understand the depth of this verse we need to go back and look at the context of the Greek that it was originally written in. This word 'follow' or 'imitate' is the word *mimetes* in the Greek. It means to imitate someone and their actions, to act, emulate or copy. It was used to describe actors who did impersonations, or played the part of important figures on the stage. The actor's goal was to perfectly replicate the person they were seeking to portray. Paul uses this word, *mimetes*, several times in his writings.

2 Thessalonians, 1 Corinthians 4:16, and Hebrews 13:7 are examples of times when Paul encouraged the churches he was writing to, to imitate the lives and actions of other believers, and even himself.

Why would Paul encourage other believers to imitate himself? Take a moment and think about Paul's life and all he did to establish and build the early church, all he sacrificed, endured and gave up to see the gospel reach as many people as possible. I know when I evaluate my own life, I fall incredibly short of Paul's example to make every effort to spread the Good News of Jesus.

Why did Paul do this? Who was his example? Paul's predecessor was Christ himself. Jesus was the perfect representation of the Father.

Read John 14:9

What are attributes of Jesus we see recorded in the scriptures?

We could take a moment now and evaluate how we measure up to this list, but we would all have the same answer- we don't even come close. That's why Paul began Ephesians 5:10 with the word 'therefore.'

"Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children."

The Greek word for therefore, when it is connected with the following word, communicates the idea of a continual action, a constant effort. A better translation could be, "Be constantly in process of becoming." It describes a person who has begun a process in their lives, but is continuing to work on it, and is committed to staying in the process.

The effort to replicate Christ is a lifelong journey, but one He has told us to be committed to. See Eph 5:10, 15. Our truest happiness can only be found in a life lived out as His dearly loved children.

Ephesians 5:1 could be interpreted as:

"Be constantly in the process of becoming more like God - making it your aim to act like Him, to duplicate Him, and to exactly copy Him in every area of your life, because you are His children who He dearly loves."

If we are God's children we should act like our Father and take on the family way. Just as Jesus' life portrayed to the people of His day who God really is, our lives are meant to be a window into who God is, to the people of our day. See John 13:35.

What difference would it make in your life if you imitated God when dealing with an unloving person?

How can you better 'act like' God today? Be specific. What has the Holy Spirit been wanting you to get intentional about?

Power of God

Ephesians 6:10 says, "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." Every word of this verse is loaded with meaning, beginning with the word 'Finally.' This word in the Greek means in conclusion, in summary. If you remember nothing else I've said, remember this. In this context, the word 'finally' indicates that the following statements are going to be the most important of the whole letter.

What does Paul write about following verse 10?

The Ephesian church was one of the largest churches of the day. The believers there had amassed large quantities of spiritual knowledge and facts, but they were not truly experiencing the life of freedom Christ came to bring them. The instructions in 4:25-31 would not have been necessary if they were. The sin of the people was giving the enemy access to attack the church, thus the instructions on the armor of God. Paul was exhorting the church in Ephesus, "Be on guard! You are under attack! Use the weapons God has given you, and don't let the enemy have a foothold!"

The next word we need to take note of is the word strong. Paul says to be strong in the Lord. This word in the Greek is *endunamoo*. I love this word. It contains so much meaning. It creates the picture of a specially designed vessel or container being filled up with explosive power, strength, and ability. For example, the Greeks used this word to describe Hercules and his superhuman strength. It's actually where we get our word dynamite from! We are that specially designed container, made to receive the explosive power of God within us! Look at 1 John 4:4.

What power could the enemy have over this dynamite power of God that lives within us?

Now, let's look at the word power. In the Greek, this word is *kratos*. This is not an idea of power, or a contained power. This word was reserved for demonstrated, eruptive, manifested, visible power. Go back and read Ephesians 1:19, 20 again to see another use of this word *kratos*, translated as power. This *kratos* kind of power, that shook the earth, raised Christ from the dead, knocked the soldiers to the ground, was the strongest kind of power known, and it lives inside you and me.

This verse ends with 'of His might.' The word might comes from *ichus* which was used to describe huge, muscular, unusually strong men, like the Olympians who competed in their day. Paul is depicting God as such a man, heroic and strong.

If we take all of these ideas together, and reword Ephesians 6:10, it would read something more like:

"Be filled with God's explosive power, outwardly demonstrated ability, as a result of God's great strength that causes this to happen"

Whatever temptation, problem, or conflict we are facing, we have the ability to walk in total victory over the enemy and his tactics. The only power he has, is the power we choose to give him through intentional sin.

Why give ourselves to lesser things, when we have been made to be vessels of His incredible victorious power?

When you think about your life, are there any areas of sin or compromise that could allow the enemy to mess with you?

Do you pray for God's power to fill your life on a regular basis? Take a minute, and do so now.

"With God's power at your disposal, you can confront the unseen demonic spirits that come to wage war against your flesh and your soul - and you can win every time! Since this power is available to you today, you are ready to lay hands on the sick, pray with power and authority, speak the word of faith in every situation, and see mountains move on your behalf!" Sparkling Gems, By, Rick Renner

Armor of God

Read Ephesians 6:10-18

Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote Ephesians. Guarded by Roman soldiers. He must have had plenty of time to study their armor.

He saw each piece and noted its importance. Just like a soldier wouldn't go into battle without his armor, we must not go into battle without our spiritual armor. Although our battles, unlike Roman soldiers, occur everyday.

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

We fight wars everyday. We fight anger, injustice, hatred, jealousy, lust, pain, lies.... you name it. Our fight is not so much physical as much as it is spiritual. Against a real enemy, Satan, who seeks to destroy us and separate us from Christ.

Read 1 Peter 5:8

We must consciously arm ourselves daily in order to win the battles we face. Have you ever been in a rush in the morning and forgot to brush your teeth? Then you go about your day self conscious about your bad breath. You try gum and mints and it only masks it.

Let's take some time looking at each one of these in some more detail.

Read Ephesians 6:14

In a way this can be an analogy for how we start our day with Christ. Sometimes we are in a rush, wake up late, press snooze on our alarm and think "eh, I'll just do my devotional or read my bible later. I'll pray later". We try to make it through our days but we find that the littlest things get under our skin. The smallest offenses become huge and we are frustrated and angry and we don't even know why. Much like forgetting to brush your teeth, you can try to artificially fill your cup with caffeine or sweets or whatever it may be but there is nothing that will satisfy and soothe your aching spirit til you get in the word. If we forget to brush our teeth every once in awhile in the morning, the worst thing that will happen is we are embarrassed by bad breath. Yet, what if it became a habit? What if it was several mornings a week? What if you just stopped doing it all together? Eventually your teeth would develop cavities and then eventually they would die.

What are the seven things we are supposed to put on as armor?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

Let's take some time looking at each one of these in some more detail.

Read Ephesians 6:14

Belt of Truth

The belt of the roman armor held all the pieces together. It kept the breastplate securely fastened to the soldier and it was the anchor place to hold all the sheaths for weapons they carried. Without the belt the armor would literally fall apart.

Read John 14:6

Jesus is the _____ and the _____ .

What is the truth we are supposed to use to hold ourselves up with daily?

Breastplate of Righteousness

The breastplate was made of chainmail. A very durable metal armor that covered all of the vital organs. It protected the main frame of the roman soldier from the enemy.

Read 1 John 2:29

"... everyone who _____ is born of Him."

What is the righteousness that is supposed to protect us daily?

What are some things that can get in the way of that?

Read Ephesians 6:15

Gospel of Peace

The shoes that the roman soldiers wore were not just sandals, they were intense. They had spikes on the bottom so that during battle they would be able to have the traction needed to stand firm. They also usually had spikes on the toes of one of both feet as an added weapon. Their shoes protected them from the environment. Could you imagine going into battle barefoot? You would feel so exposed. We don't think of protecting our feet but if we are unprepared then we are unable to fight any battle.

Read Philippians 4:7

And the _____ of God, which transcends all understanding, will _____ your _____ and your _____ in Christ Jesus.

What role does peace play in our lives?

Read Ephesians 6:16

Shield of Faith

The shields that roman soldiers used were often said to be the size of a door. They were heavy and big enough for them to hide behind and be completely protected. Yet, these were massive and required a lot to care for. They would have to oil down their shields almost daily in order to keep it from becoming brittle and worn down. A roman soldier knew how important it was to take care of their shield each day. It was their first line of defense against their enemy.

How can you grow in your faith each day?

Read Ephesians 6:17

Helmet of Salvation

The helmet was one of the most important pieces of armor because it protected their heads. How many of you have had a concussion? I have had too many and let me tell you, brain injuries are not fun. There is nothing worse than having a blow to the head to not make you feel like yourself for awhile. If you get hit in the head the fastest way to heal is literally to do nothing until your brain has time to go back to normal. Unlike a flesh wound or a broken bone where only that part of your body should be immobile. Many of our battles in this life take place in our thoughts, in our minds.

Read Romans 12:2 & 2 Timothy 1:9

What do you think the helmet of Salvation is?

How can you remember to wear it daily?

Sword of the Spirit

Roman soldiers often used a much heavier sword in practice, one requiring two hands so that when they were out in the battle field using a smaller blade they would be swifter and stronger. The word "sword" in this verse is actually referring to a different type of sword we would normally think of. Its referring to what is called "macaera" it was more like a knife and extremely sharp. Causing severe damage but from an up close encounter with the enemy.

When we listen to the Holy Spirit He is able to give us insight and wisdom through His word and this can be our biggest defense of all.

Read 2 Timothy 1:7, Acts 1:8, Romans 8:27

What does arming ourselves with the Spirit look like?

What piece of armor do you think comes more naturally to you?

Which one do you struggle with the most?

Read verse 18 again

How are we supposed to be in our prayers?

Who are we supposed to be praying for?

Why do you think this is important?

