

Ephesians—Series Overview

God's Glory in His Church

The Letter that appears with the name **Ephesians** in the Bible was written by God through the apostle Paul to a group of churches in modern-day Turkey. The primary theme of this biblical book is God's glory displayed through the Church. If you have questions about what the Church is all about, Ephesians is a great place to look. In six brief chapters God tells us what His design for the Church is. The first half dwells on who He has made us to be as His people and the second half explains what it means to live in this new reality of being the Church.

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

Please ask the Holy Spirit to guide you:

What does it mean for us to grow in Christ? How is it similar to getting to know someone else? How is it different? What is the hope to which Christ has called us? What riches do we have as children of God? What has His great power accomplished? Why?

How do you (we) need to repent for ways we have not been pursuing Christ in relationship? What would it look like this week for you (us) to take these things seriously and actively pursue knowing Christ better?

Pray for FCCW to know Christ better in hope, riches, and power.

Ezra-Nehemiah—Series Overview

A Community Restored for Worship

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah was written to encourage God's people returning after exile to believe the covenant promises and restore the temple in Jerusalem. God's people were being restored in the place of promise as a worshipping community. The restoration of purpose was far greater than their real estate. The place always has to do with what God promised would happen there.

Sermon Notes and Daily Devotional
First Congregational Church of Woodstock

Pastor Doug Warren
September 23, 2018

Morning Service

Ephesians 1:11-23

Growing Up in Christ for God's Glory

1. We Are Adopted to Bring God Glory (11-14).
2. We Are to Mature Together in Christ (15-19).
3. God's Power Is at Work in Our Growth (18-23).

God is to be praised not just for our *initial* adoption as spiritual babes, but for the whole of our adoption that will be made clear when Christ comes for us and makes us gloriously perfect. To that end we are to grow and mature as co-heirs with Christ. We do this together through rejoicing in the hope of His calling, counting on the riches of His glory, and abiding in the surpassing greatness of His power.

Evening Service

Ezra 4:1-5:17

God's People and World Powers

1. God's People Are Surrounded By Enemies & Potential Allies.
2. We Need to Stop Acting Like Orphans.
3. How Do We Avoid Syncretism in Our Service to the King?

Worship of the King of Kings must not be polluted by state-worship. God's law is above the laws of the nations and we need to remember that God sets up and throws down earthly kingdoms according to His will. The leaders of nations are pawns in God's work and the Church must not lose sight of Christ's victory over death.

Taking Gathered Worship Home

The whole of our salvation, adoption, and glorification is due to God's overwhelming grace. He has saved us not just so that we can be saved, but so that we can grow in Him. This maturing process is fed and nurtured by the same good news that saved us. He has given us hope, riches, and power that we might know Him better. Let us grow in Christ together to the praise of His glory.

Please use the devotional material below each day this week to meet with Jesus. Ask the Lord to teach us His ways that we may walk in them to accomplish His purposes.

Sunday AM

READ today's passage: **Ephesians 1:11-23**. Where are you (we) in your maturity in Christ? How are you (we) growing? In what ways do we know His hope, riches, and power in daily life together? DISCUSS some of the songs we sang in gathered worship. Which helps in enlightening your heart? Why? How can we keep singing during the week? PRAY for God to convince us that nothing compares to the promise we have in Christ.

Sunday PM

READ today's passage: **Ezra 4:1-5:17**. What is the relationship between Israel and the world leaders? Why? How did God use the leaders? PRAY for God to lead us in biblical fidelity. Ask Him to embolden us to extend His grace throughout the world.

Monday

READ **Romans 8:28-39**. On what is our confidence based? How certain is it that we will not be separated from God? PRAY for neighbors, peers, friends & family asking God to save them. EXTEND His grace to someone you know today. Lovingly express to them in word/deed the grace Christ has lavished upon you (us).

Tuesday

READ **Ephesians 1:15-17**. To whom does Paul pray? Why is he confident? What is already evident? What does he hope to increase? PRAY and thank our Father for making us His in Jesus. ACT: Tell others how and why you are grateful.

Wednesday

READ **Ephesians 1:18-21**. DISCUSS: What three things are mentioned here as part of our growth in Christ? How are these related to what Christ has done? What import do they have in our walking in newness of life? PRAY, "Lord Jesus, thank You for what You have accomplished for us." ACT: Invite a friend who doesn't know Jesus to do something together; build on your friendship looking for ways to tell them about Jesus.

Thursday

READ **Ephesians 1:17-21; Colossians 1:9-14**. Paul prays for similar things in both passages. How does this help you to understand each? How is growth in Christ expressed in each? CONFESS your need for Jesus' resurrection. PRAISE God for the finished work of Christ for us.

Friday

READ **Ephesians 1:22-23**. What did the Father put in subjection under Christ's feet? Over what does He have authority? How is this related to His Church? PRAY, "Heavenly Father, thank You for all Your promises and for the fulfillment of all of them in Christ. Help us to see them more clearly, to believe in You rather than ourselves or the lies of this world. Strengthen our faith and allow us to know Your faithfulness. Show us how Christ has come so that we may repent from our sin and turn to You. Reveal the depths of Your love for us. Strip away any other comfort that distracts us from loving You above all else."

Saturday

READ **Ephesians 1:11-23**. What have you been learning from this passage this week? READ tomorrow's sermon passage: **Ephesians 2:1-10**. PREPARE today for the gathered worship service tomorrow. PRAY for God's glory to be more and more manifested in this region. Ask Him to use us to extend His grace as we celebrate it together. INVITE a neighbor, co-worker or friend to come with you to worship.