

Midweek Leaders Guide

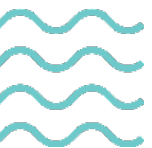


rest Church



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PART 01

Vision For Midweek Sermon Based Groups



Midweek is not simply another church program, Bible study, or event to attend. Our goal is to create environments where people can follow Jesus and find rest together through relationships, Scripture, prayer and shared spiritual rhythms.

We believe spiritual growth happens best not only through teaching, but through consistently walking with other believers over time.



Why We're Doing Midweek SBG

Our desire is to help people move beyond simply attending church and toward meaningful Christ-centered relationships. We want to create environments where people can:

- know and be known
- process Scripture together
- pray together
- grow spiritually
- build trust
- ask questions
- walk through real life together

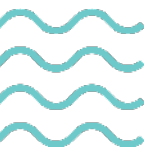
The Goal of Midweek

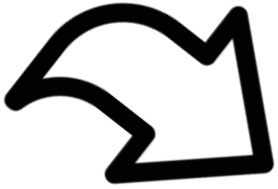


The primary goal of Midweek groups at rest is simple: To **foster significant Christ-centered relationships**. Everything else is secondary.

This is *NOT* primarily about:

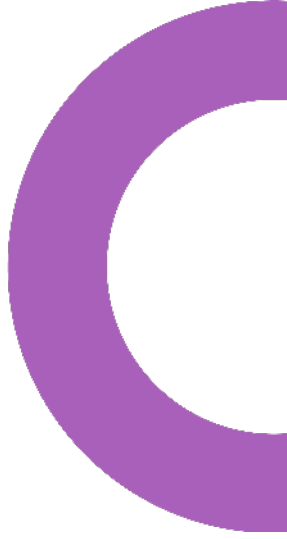
- information transfers
- perfect answers
- theological impressiveness
- polished teaching





This /S all about helping people:

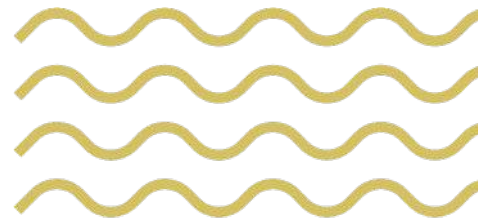
- follow Jesus together
- build relationships together
- process truth together
- grow in spiritual maturity together
- move from isolation toward spiritual family together



3 Rhythms

We believe each rhythm plays a different role in spiritual formation:

- 🗣️ **Sunday = Proclamation**
- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🤝 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**



Sunday helps proclaim truth.

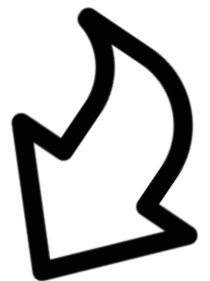
The **devotional** provided will help people personally meditate on truth. **Midweek** helps people process and practice truth together.



The Mindset for ALL

Midweek is intentionally built for “all Believers.” That means we are trying to create environments where:

- newer believers can engage
- mature believers can still grow deeper
- questions are welcomed
- people are not pressured to perform spiritually
- Scripture remains central
- relationships remain accessible





"All Believers," does *NOT* mean non-believers are unwelcome. In fact, they absolutely are welcome here! We hope Midweek always feels like a safe place for people exploring faith, asking questions, or trying to understand Jesus more clearly.

At the same time, the primary mechanics and structure of Midweek for adults has intentionally been built around helping Christians grow spiritually and relationally together.

Our goal is to create environments where "*all believers*," can be formed into the people God is calling them to become, while still leaving room for others to observe, participate, ask questions and experience the life of the Church along the way.

This idea closely mirrors the "funnel" concept discussed in *Sticky Church* (p.151) where environments are intentionally designed around the primary audience they are trying to form and disciple, while still remaining welcoming and accessible to others exploring faith and community.

Formation + Information

One of our biggest convictions is that transformation usually happens relationally and gradually. Therefore, **Midweek formation is *NOT*:**

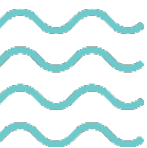
- another sermon
- a lecture
- a debate room
- an information download session

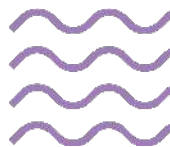
Midweek formation IS:

- conversation
- prayer
- shared identity
- practicing life together "in Christ"



The goal is not simply learning more Bible information, but learning how to live as the people of God together.





Why Sermon Based Groups?

One thing we've wrestled through carefully and prayerfully is how the Church is called to function as a spiritual family together and not merely as isolated individuals or subsets of groups. As a result we are going to spend 12 weeks preaching through Ephesians.

Part of what Ephesians will keep pulling us toward is unity, shared identity, maturity, humility, honor and healthy relationships within the Body of Christ together.

Our goal is not forced vulnerability or removing healthy boundaries. Our goal is creating safe, healthy, Christ-centered environments where people can grow at their own pace while learning to follow Jesus together.

We also recognize that additional men-with-men or women-with-women discipleship may naturally happen outside of midweek through: coffee, home meetings, lunches, mentoring, devotional studies or smaller gatherings and we believe that is healthy too.



Another unique part of this season is that rKids and RSM will also be walking through Ephesians in their own age-appropriate ways alongside adults. We think there's something really powerful about entire families moving through the same themes, language and truths of Scripture together. What a gift for parents and kids to leave church talking about the same ideas, passages, identity truths and conversations throughout the week.





The Wednesday Hub Concept

Wednesday Midweek serves as the primary discipleship hub for this season at rest.

Why? Because it:

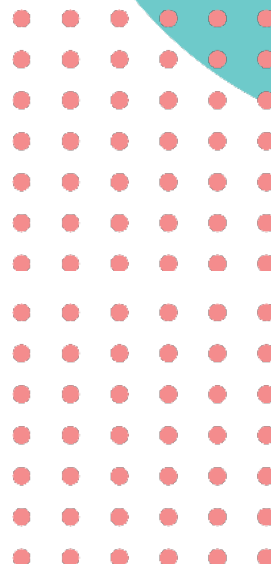
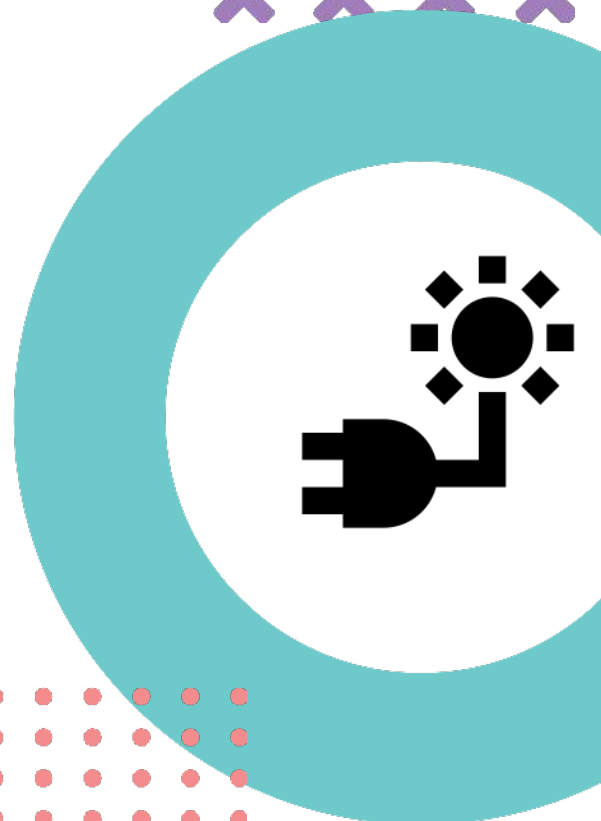
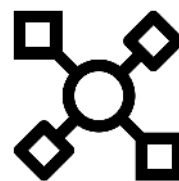
- simplifies schedules for families
- keeps childcare centralized
- creates an easier entry point for new people
- helps unify the church around shared rhythms
- allows adults, students and kids to move together in the same direction spiritually

At the same time, we understand Wednesday is not the only valid expression of discipleship.

Some groups may eventually:

- continue outside Wednesday
- meet in homes
- meet for prayer
- multiply
- form smaller discipleship rhythms organically

The goal is *NOT* forcing everyone into one exact structure. But, the goal is helping people build meaningful Christ-centered relationships that continue shaping how they follow Jesus long after the semester ends.





What Success Looks Like

Success is *NOT*:

- perfect attendance
- covering every discussion question
- emotionally intense moments every week
- impressive leaders
- launching dozens of groups immediately

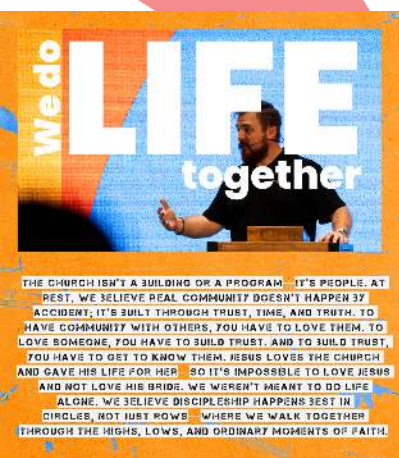


Success looks more like:



- people building trust
- friendships forming
- Scripture being discussed honestly
- prayer becoming natural
- newer believers engaging
- mature believers helping others grow
- people feeling seen, known and spiritually encouraged
- relationships continuing beyond Wednesday nights

Ultimately, success is creating environments where people are connected closely enough and long enough for life and the Gospel to naturally shape one another over time.



FALL SCHEDULE 26'

Semester: Wed, Aug. 12 - Oct. 21 (11 weeks)

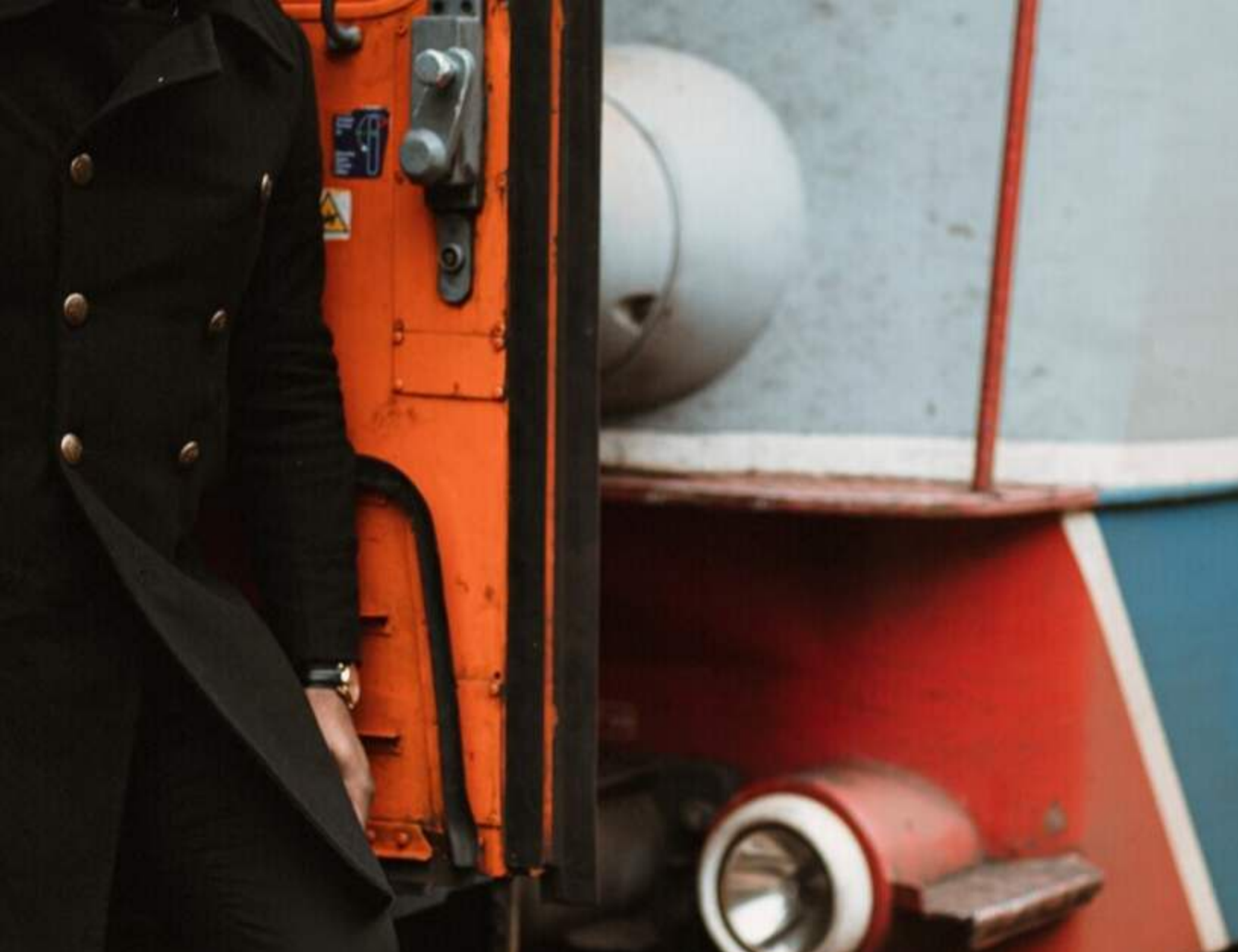
***Trunk or Treat** October 28th

Sign-Ups: July 5 - August 2 (though groups will remain open)

SBG Vision Day: Sun, July 12

Leader Team Prayer Day: Sun, July 26

Midweek Leaders Guide



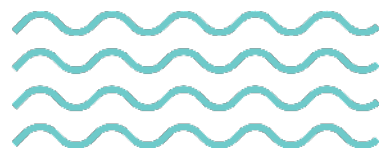
PART 02

Leadership Roles + Expectations



Midweek is *NOT* built around personalities, polished teaching, or “super leaders.” The goal is creating healthy, repeatable environments where people can follow Jesus and find rest together through relationships. That means leadership at Midweek is less about platform presence and more about:

- spiritual warmth
- relational warmth
- humility
- consistency
- safety
- hospitality
- emotional maturity
- Gospel-centered presence



We are *NOT* looking for perfect leaders. We are looking for leaders who follow the Perfect Leader (Jesus). We need leaders who are healthy, teachable people, who genuinely care about others and want to help create environments where discipleship can happen naturally over time.



DIFFERENT LEADER ROLES



MODERATOR

The **Moderator** helps unify the entire room and protect the overall tone, rhythm and direction of the night. The Moderator is *NOT* a Group Leader.

The Moderator's role is to:

- welcome the room
- cast vision for the night
- communicate rhythm and flow
- execute transition moments
- protect the culture and tone of Midweek
- launch groups into discussion
- close the room in prayer
- help maintain calm, clarity and unity



The Moderator helps Midweek function as one church moving together spiritually.



HOST

The **Host** helps **shepherd the physical environment** for the night. The Host's role is to:

- setup tables/chairs before Midweek
- organize food/drinks
- manage room logistics
- assist with room cleanup
- solve practical problems
- work to create a warm and distraction free environment



A healthy Midweek environment rarely happens accidentally. Hosts help make the room feel intentional, welcoming and ready for people to connect.



GROUP FACILITATOR

(Spiritual Warmth)

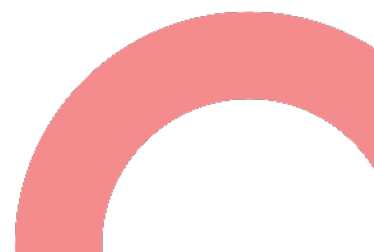
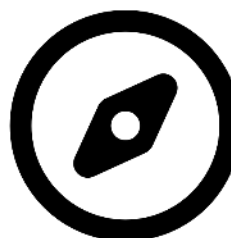
The **Group Facilitator** is the primary facilitator of all table discussions by **shepherding the conversations**.

Their role is *NOT* to:

- preach a mini-sermon
- dominate discussion
- impress people with their knowledge
- answer every question perfectly

Their role is to:

- guide discussion
- engage Scripture
- facilitate participation
- create spiritual direction
- keep conversations centered on Jesus



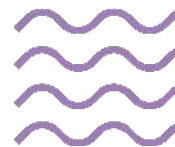


TABLE CONNECTOR

(Relational Warmth)

The **Table Connector** helps create relational warmth and emotional safety at the table.

This role may or may not overlap with the Group Facilitator. Table Connectors help by **shepherding the people**. Their role is to:

- notice isolated people
- welcome new people quickly
- protect the health of the table
- remember names/stories/details
- create warmth and inclusion
- follow up with absent people when appropriate
- help people feel seen and remembered
- lower social anxiety around the table



SPIRITUAL & RELATIONAL WARMTH

Leading Midweek is less about performing well and more about helping create healthy environments where everyone can genuinely follow Jesus together.

Both spiritual and relational warmth matter deeply!

(Spiritual Warmth)



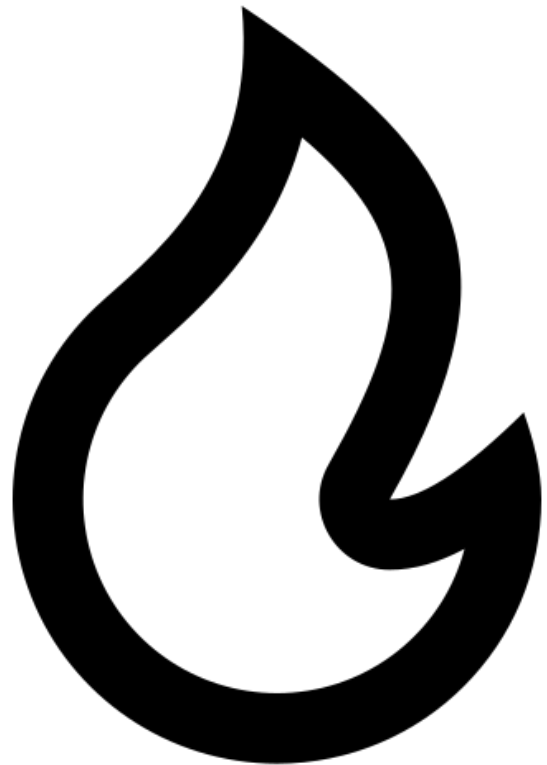
People feel:

- pointed toward Jesus
- biblically grounded
- spiritually encouraged
- prayed for

(Relational Warmth)

People feel:

- noticed
- emotionally safe
- remembered
- welcomed
- included





APPRENTICE MINDSET

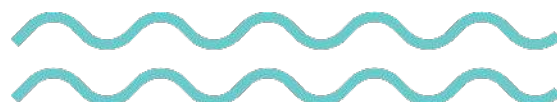
We want Midweek to remain healthy, sustainable and reproducible over time.

Because of that, **Group Facilitators** should begin *identifying potential apprentices* within their group. Look for those who are:

- teachable
- relationally healthy
- spiritually warm
- humble
- consistent
- capable of helping facilitate discussion over time
- excited about Jesus

This is *NOT* about pressure or forced multiplication.

It *IS* about helping to develop healthy future leaders gradually and relationally.





WHAT LEADERS ARE + *NOT*

Midweek leaders are:

- facilitators
- encouragers
- listeners
- relational bridge-builders
- tone setters
- spiritual encouragers
- table shepherds
- humble guides

Midweek leaders are *NOT*:

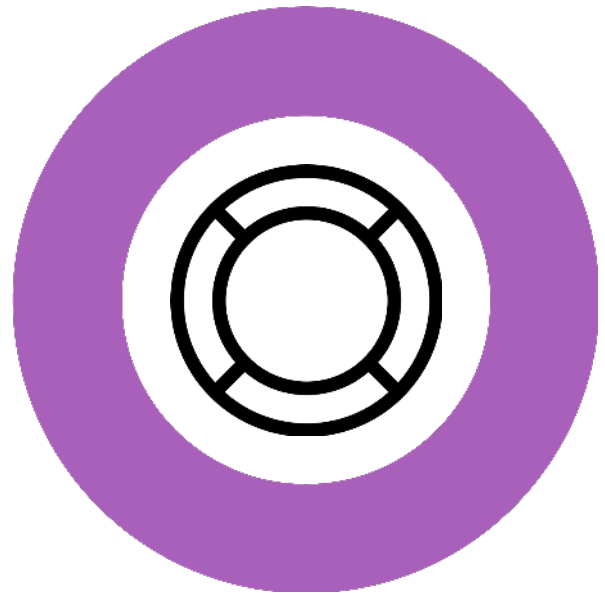
- therapists
- professional counselors
- debate moderators
- lecturers
- performers
- mini pastors
- expected to fix every situation

Leaders should never feel pressure to carry situations beyond their responsibility or ability.

If something feels:

- unhealthy
- unsafe
- overwhelming
- emotionally heavy
- beyond your pay grade

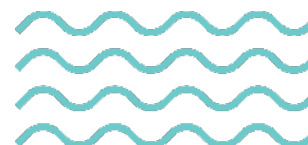
...involve a Pastor quickly.

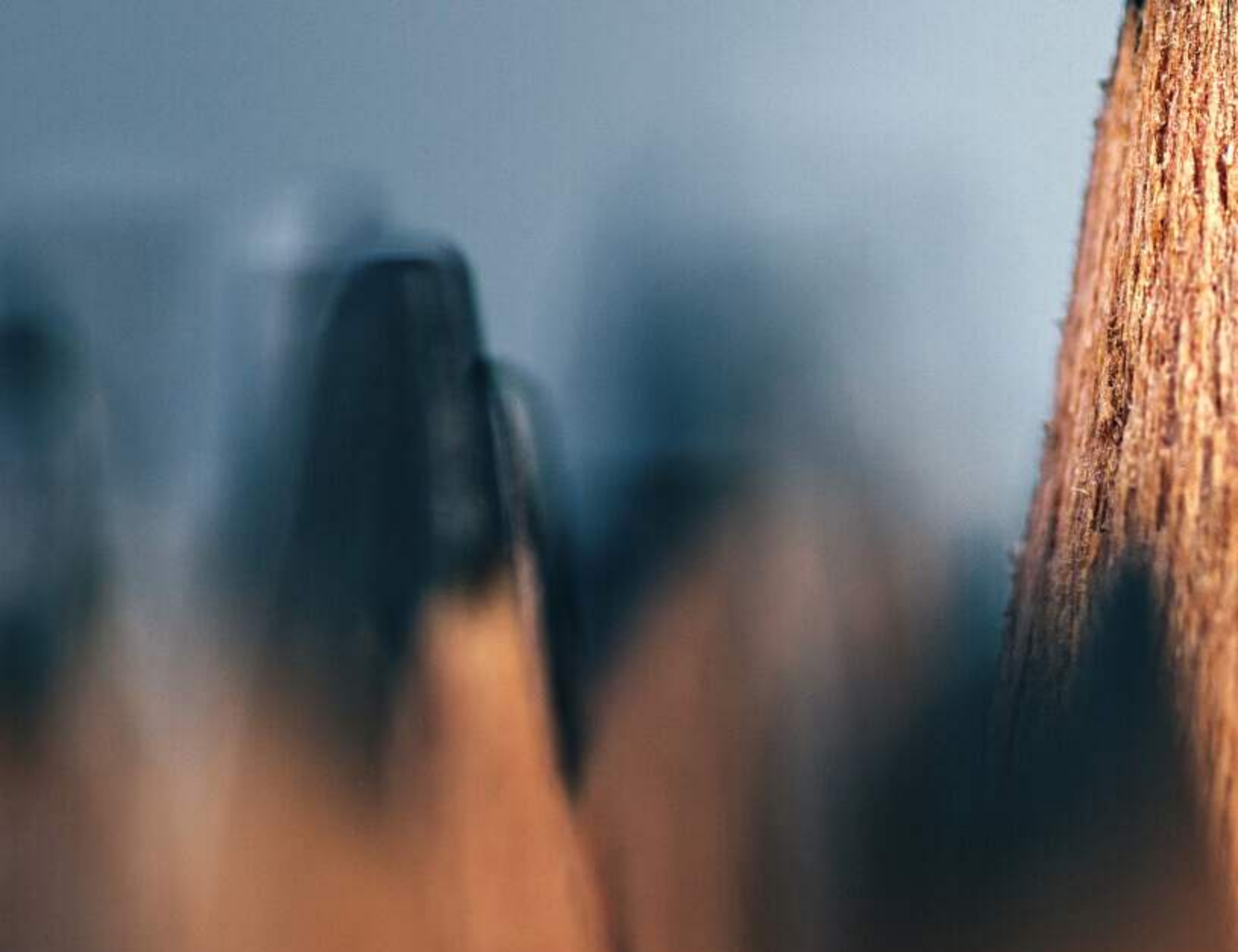


Leader Covenant

All leaders are expected to agree with and sign the Midweek Leaders Covenant.

<https://rest.churchcenter.com/people/forms/1237489>





PART 03

Helpful Tips for Leading



Midweek Principles

Midweek should help answer: “*How do we process and practice Ephesians together?*”

This night is *NOT*:

- another sermon
- a lecture
- a theology debate
- a time for information overload

This night *IS*:

- formation
- conversation
- community
- practicing shared identity together

The “win” *IS*:

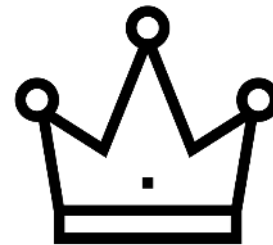
- participation
- connection
- safety
- clarity
- movement toward Jesus

The “win” is *NOT*:

- perfect answers
- covering every question
- impressing the room
- forcing vulnerability

Ultimately, we want people leaving Midweek thinking:

“This really helped me follow Jesus and find rest with the body of Christ through Ephesians.”





Helpful Leader Rhythms

30% > 70% Rule

Leaders talk less. Groups talk more.

The goal is *NOT* dominating conversation or constantly teaching, but facilitating healthy discussion and participation.

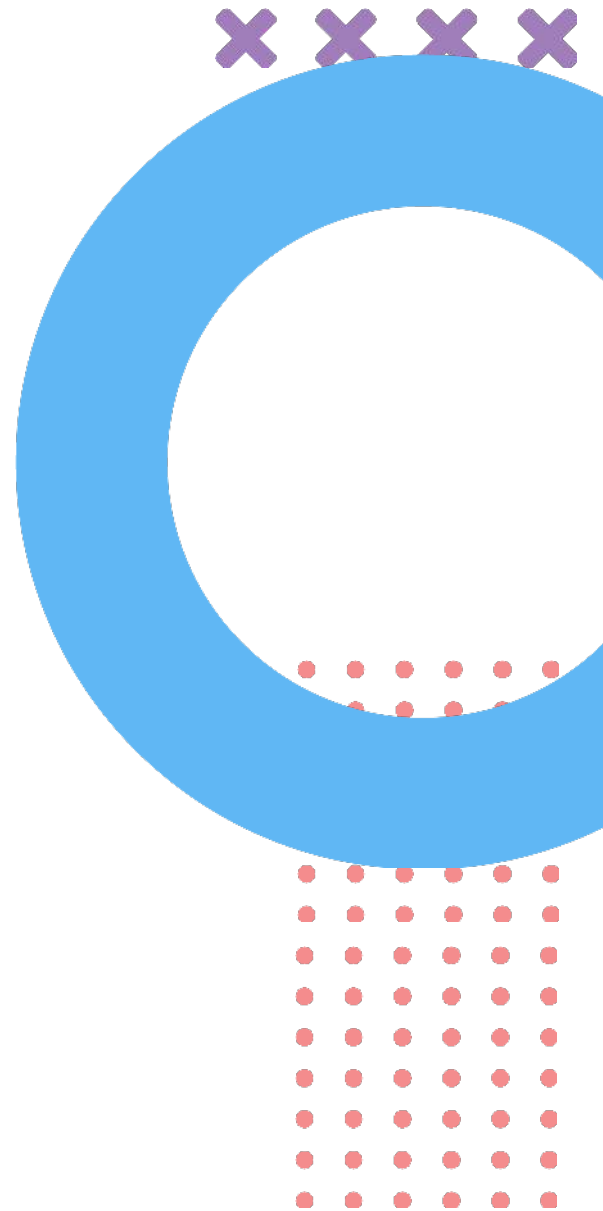
The goal is helping people:

- engage
- process
- participate
- think out loud
- connect truth to real life together

Make Space, Don't Fill It

Healthy leaders:

- ask good follow-up questions
- let silence breathe a little
- draw quieter people in naturally
- redirect dominating voices gently
- create room for participation instead of rushing to teach

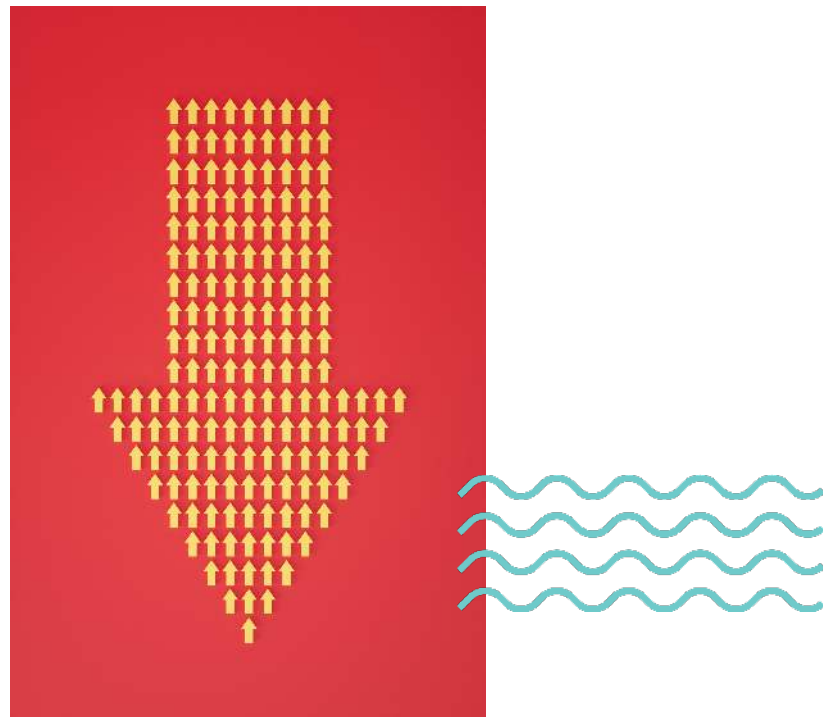


Good Follow Up Questions

Consider:

- “Tell me more about that.”
- “Why do you think this matters?”
- “Did anyone else feel that tension?”
- “How does that show up in real life?”
- “What stands out to you about this?”

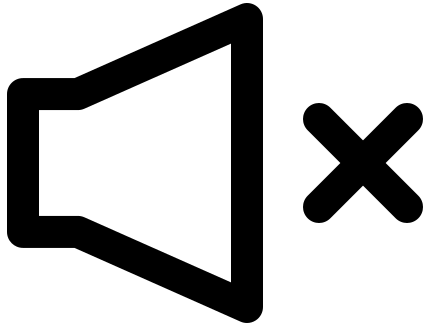
Sometimes the best leadership move is simply asking a good question and listening well.



Avoid:

- mini sermons
- answering every silence too quickly
- correcting every imperfect phrase or answer
- rushing emotionally vulnerable moments
- letting one person dominate the room
- answering with something if you don't know

Remember: Formation > Information



Don't rescue silence too quickly

People rarely grow because someone impressed them with knowledge.

People usually grow because truth was processed relationally, consistently and honestly over time.

Silence is *NOT* failure.

Many people:

- process internally first
- need time to think
- are nervous speaking in groups
- are building the courage to participate

If you immediately answer every silence, people learn:

"The leader will eventually fill the space anyway."

Let moments breathe a little.

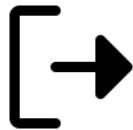
Some of the healthiest conversations often begin: 3–5 seconds after the silence gets awkward.

Healthy leaders gently guide conversations without embarrassing people.

How to redirect

If discussion begins drifting:

- too far off-topic
- into rabbit trails
- theology debates
- one-person monologues
- excessive negativity
- inappropriate vulnerability



Redirection should feel:

- calm
- honoring
- relational
- non-defensive

...gently redirect the room.

Simple phrases like these may help:

- *“That’s really helpful. Let’s tie that back to the passage.”*
- *“I’d love to keep us centered on tonight’s main idea.”*
- *“That may be a bigger conversation for another time.”*
- *“Let’s make sure we leave room for others to share too.”*



Handling Awkward Moments



Awkward moments happen in every group... eventually.

That’s normal.

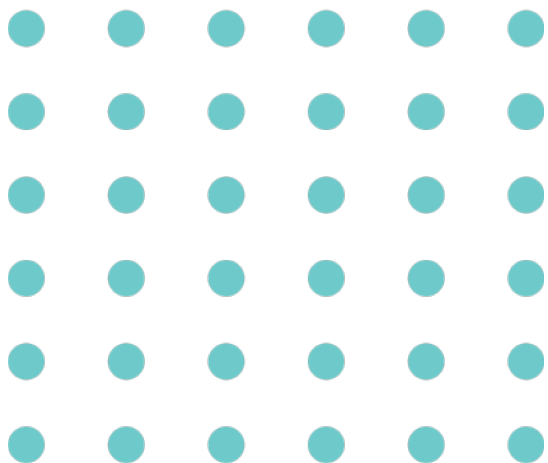
Do *NOT* panic when:

- someone overshares
- an answer gets weird
- silence happens
- emotions surface
- people disagree awkwardly
- someone dominates conversation

Your calmness sets the emotional tone for the table.

Most awkward moments do *NOT* need:





- overreaction
- correction
- embarrassment
- immediate shutdown

Usually, awkward moments simply need:

- warmth
- redirection
- patience
- emotional maturity

Leaders should help protect the room from:

- shame
- manipulation
- gossip
- domination
- emotional dumping
- forced vulnerability

If someone begins:

- unloading major trauma
- monopolizing the discussion
- marriage venting or gaslighting
- inappropriate oversharing

...gently redirect them.



Accessibility for "all"

Midweek is intentionally built for: "all Christians."

That means leaders should help create environments where:

- newer believers can engage
- mature believers can still grow
- people are *NOT* intimidated to participate
- questions feel welcomed
- Christ stays central
- relationships stay accessible

Avoid:

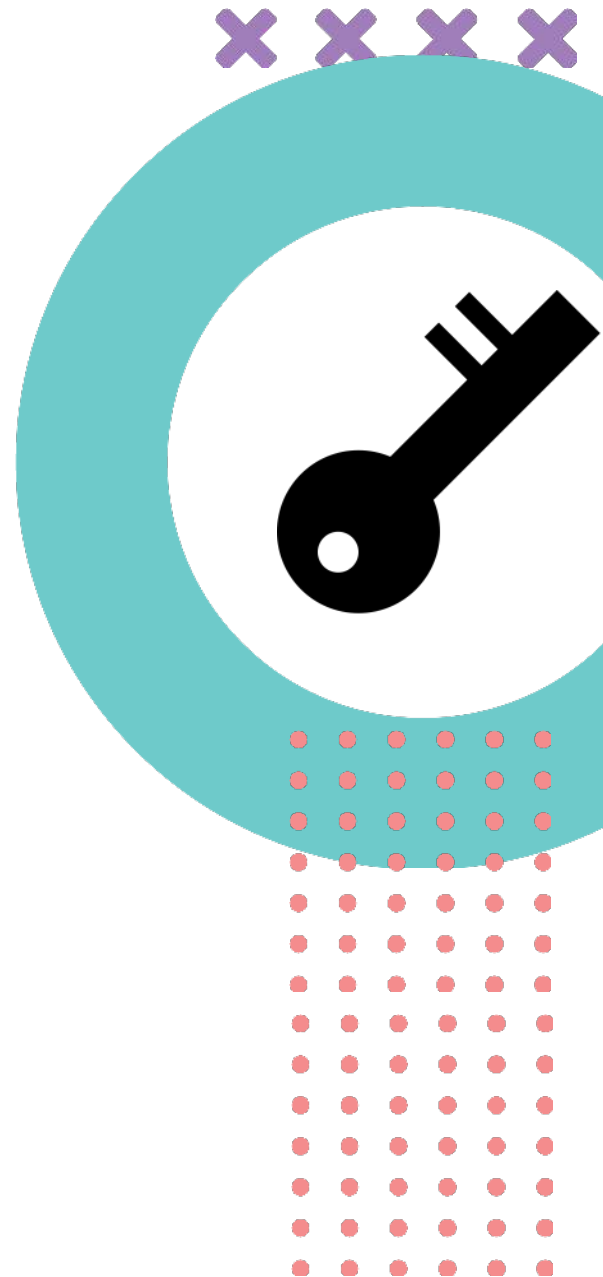
- insider church language
- unnecessary complexity
- showing off your Bible knowledge
- making people feel spiritually inept

Remember, "deep" and "accessible" are *NOT* mutually exclusive truths.

Jesus taught in ways ordinary people could understand while still containing truth that mature believers could spend a lifetime growing into.

Midweek should feel:

- safe
- emotionally healthy
- relationally & spiritually warm





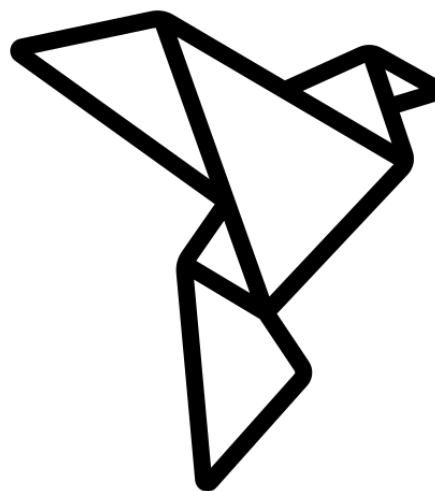
Follow the Spirit, Not Just the Template

Discussion guides are: frameworks, *NOT* scripts.

The goal is *NOT* to rigidly “get through all the questions.”

Sometimes God the Holy Spirit may lead your table toward:

- deeper discussion in one area
- an extended time of prayer
- care for someone hurting at your table
- intentionally slowing down
- sitting in one question longer or skipping others



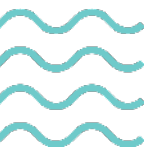
That **flexibility is healthy**.

At the same time:

- stay grounded in Scripture
- stay aligned with the tone of Midweek
- stay aware of the room

Healthy spiritual leadership balances:

- preparation
- sensitivity
- wisdom
- structure
- flexibility





When to Involve Pastors

Leaders are *NOT* expected to carry heavy situations alone.

So again, if something feels:

- unsafe
- overwhelming
- above your pay grade
- emotionally unhealthy
- spiritually concerning

...involve Pastors quickly.

Examples might include:

- a marriage crisis
- abuse disclosures
- suicidal comments
- severe emotional instability
- ongoing unhealthy conflict
- situations you feel unprepared to navigate

Asking for help is *NOT* failure.
It *IS* wisdom.

Formation Takes Time

One of the biggest mistakes churches make with groups is expecting instant depth.

Real discipleship usually happens:

- slowly
- relationally
- consistently
- over time

Trust *takes time*.

Honesty *takes time*.

Spiritual maturity *takes time*.

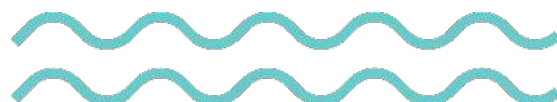
Don't judge the health of your table by:

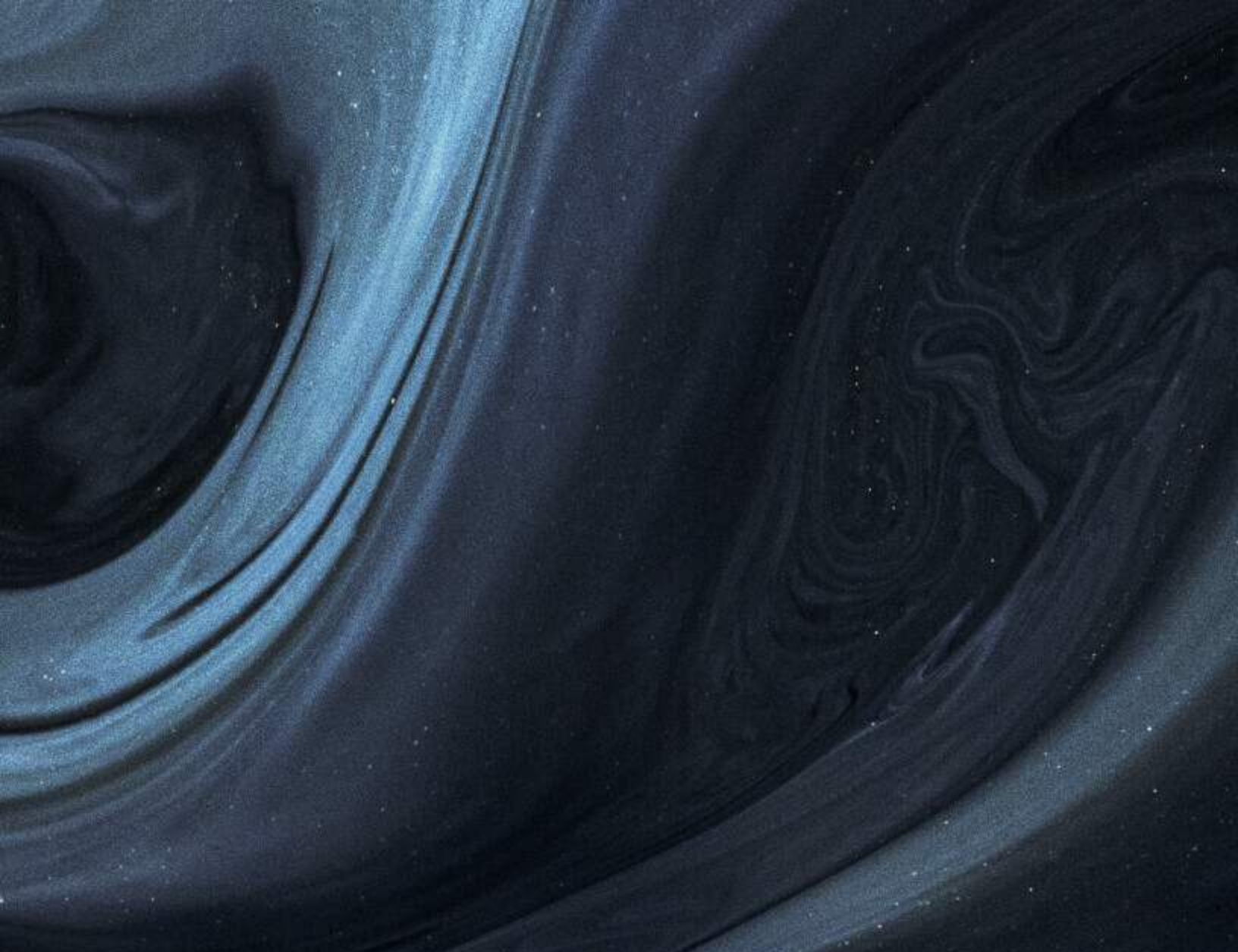
- emotional intensity
- instant vulnerability
- how "deep" or "shallow" week 1 feels

Sometimes success simply looks like:

- people returning next week
- conversations lasting longer
- trust growing slowly
- someone finally speaking up
- relationships beginning to form

Faithfulness over time *matters more*
than emotionally impressive moments.





PART 04

》》》》 General Flow of the Night (Adults)





Arrival (Everyone)

 **6:00–6:30 PM**

As people begin arriving, the environment should already feel warm, calm and welcoming.

Pre-service music should already be playing, chairs moved, tables prepared, food/drinks ready and leaders intentionally looking for opportunities to welcome people naturally.

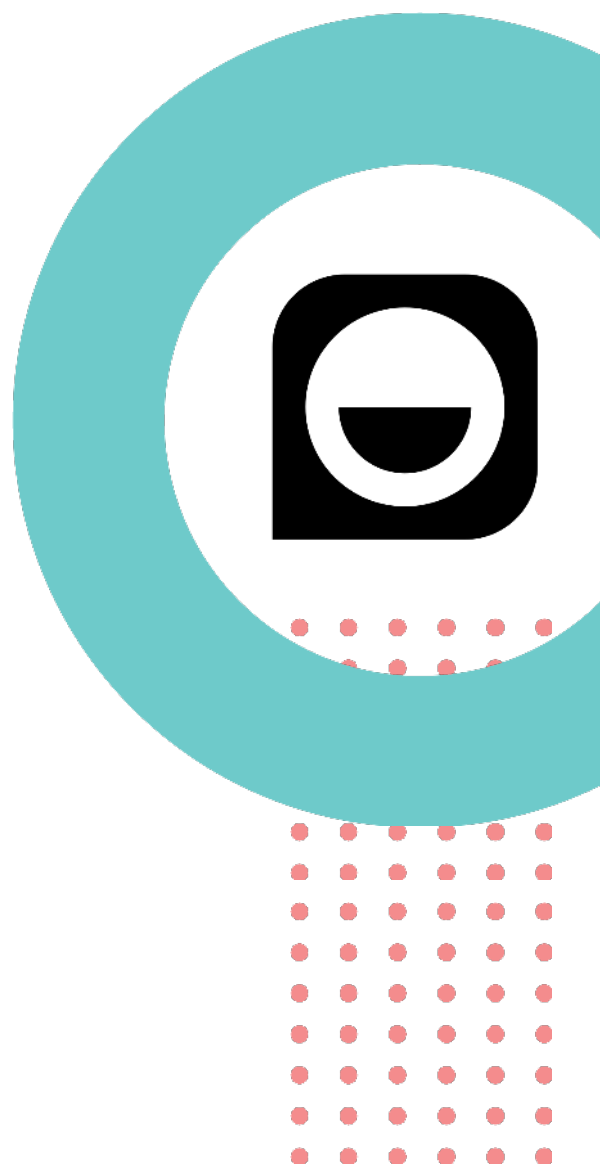
This is *NOT* the primary connection time of the night.

Here, leaders should focus on:

- greeting people warmly
- learning names
- noticing isolated people
- ***avoiding leader clusters***
- helping to lower social anxiety before the room officially begins

If worship team rehearsal happens beforehand, it should ideally conclude by *6:15 PM* so the room can transition into a more relaxed and inviting environment.

A weekly countdown video will begin leading toward the 6:30 PM worship kickoff.





Corporate Worship (Everyone)



6:30–6:50 PM

Midweek begins with the entire church gathered together in the sanctuary:

- adults
- students
- children

Student-led worship helps reinforce the idea that Midweek is *NOT* separate ministries functioning independently, but one church family moving in the same spiritual direction together.

This portion of the night typically includes:

- a brief welcome or direction
- 2 worship songs
- prayer
- dismissal into different ministry environments

This also creates a powerful opportunity for entire families to engage the same themes and rhythms together throughout the Ephesians series.



Food + Connection (Adults)



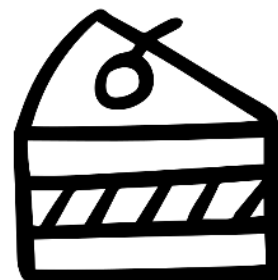
6:50–7:05 PM

After worship, adults transition into table groups where light food/snacks are already prepared on tables.

****Pre-assigned tables will generally consist of groups of about 8 people (+/-4).***

This portion of the night should feel:

- warm
- conversational
- alive
- natural
- low pressure



Background music should continue quietly underneath the room.

The **Moderator** briefly welcomes the room, frames the night and invites people to relax, eat and connect before discussion begins.

Group Facilitators and **Table Connectors** should intentionally:

- help people find seats quickly
- introduce new people immediately
- avoid closed-off circles
- help conversations begin naturally

The goal here is *NOT* heavy icebreakers or forced vulnerability, but helping people begin relaxing relationally before discussion begins.

***For Week 1, take a few minutes for simple introductions, such as:**

- knowing everyone's name
- how long they've been at rest (or how they found rest)
- where they work / what they do
- something they enjoy outside of work

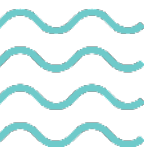


Table Discussion

 **7:05–7:50 PM**

The **Moderator** helps transition the room into table discussion.

Group Facilitators then facilitate discussion around:

- the Sunday sermon
- the Ephesians text
- practical processing and application

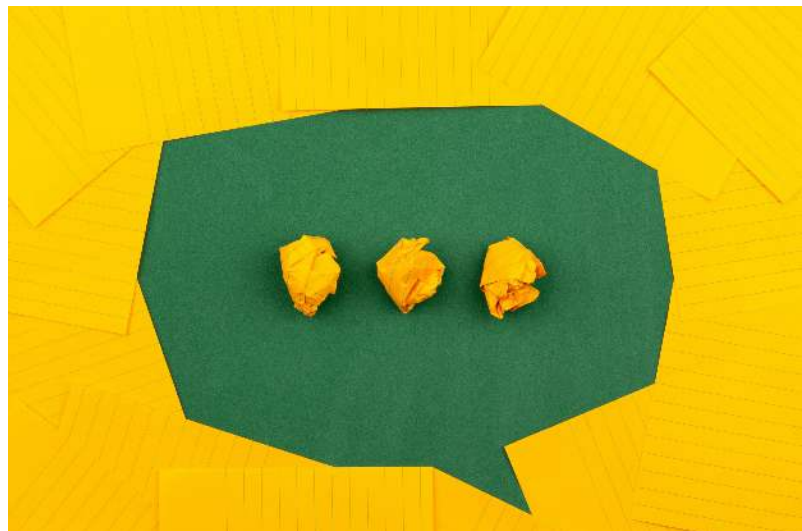
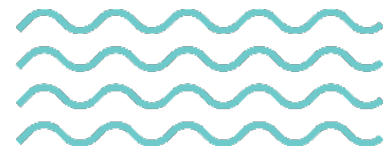
****The week by week grid is below***

The goal is *NOT* to:

- re-preach Sunday
- create mini sermons
- endlessly debate theology
- dominate conversations

The goal *IS* to:

- help people process truth together
- practice shared identity in Christ
- create meaningful spiritual conversations
- connect theology to real life



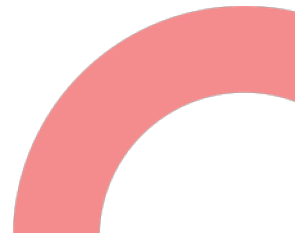
Discussion guides should function as: frameworks and *NOT* scripts.

Some groups may spend:

- more time discussing
- more time listening
- more time caring for someone
- more time praying

Again, flexibility is healthy.

Table Connectors should also quietly **track attendance** and continue helping maintain relational warmth throughout the discussion (*attendance note below*).





Prayer + Close

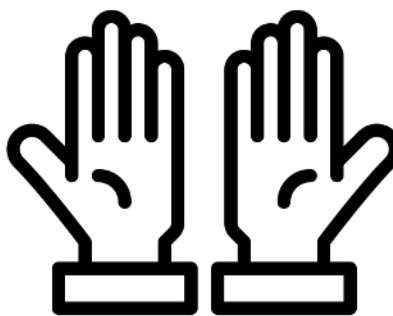


7:50–7:55 PM

As discussion wraps up, the **Moderator** steps back in briefly and invites tables into a short, simple time of prayer.

Prayer should feel:

- warm
- accessible
- unforced
- spiritually meaningful



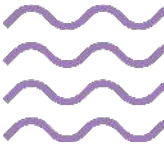
Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers

Men and women may briefly split within tables for prayer if preferred, but that is always optional for each group.

Light instrumental music should continue underneath the room during prayer time.

The **Moderator** then closes the room in prayer and dismisses everyone.



Post-Group Connection

 **7:55–8:15 PM**

A countdown timer should launch at 8:00 PM reminding people:

*“Feel free to hang out and connect for a bit! **Cleanup** will begin around **8:15p** tonight. If you have children please get them, but feel free to come back to the sanctuary after.”*

While **we do have a hard stop at 7:55**, people should never feel rushed out immediately.

One of the most important parts of Midweek often happens *AFTER* the official discussion ends.

Group Facilitators and **Table Connectors** should intentionally linger for:

- follow-up conversations
- prayer moments
- encouragement
- connecting newer people
- relational care

This is often where:

- friendships begin
- trust deepens
- discipleship naturally develops





Leader Check-Ins

Before leaving for the night, **Group Facilitators** and **Table Connectors** should briefly connect with **Pastor CJ** via email: **cj@restchurch.net**

These check-ins should stay:

- quick
- honest
- relational

Simple feedback includes:

- attendance
- concerns
- wins
- struggling people
- anyone needing Pastoral follow-up
- how the Pastors can specifically pray for you as a leader or your group

The goal is *NOT* another meeting, after the meeting.

The goal *IS* helping everyone stay connected while helping Pastors care for people well over time.





Cleanup



Begins Around 8:15 PM

Cleanup should happen calmly and collaboratively via the **Host team**.

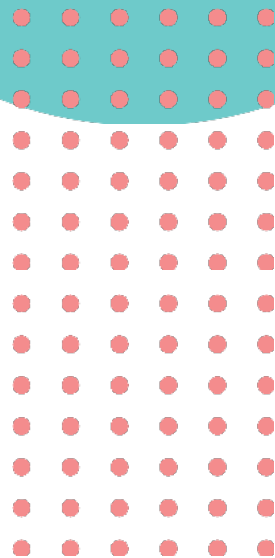
This includes:

- *removing/storing tables and chairs
- throwing away trash
- wiping down tables if needed
- shutting down drink stations
- adjusting the thermostat
- helping reset the room for Sunday

****Lights will be turned off remotely @9p***

If a **facilitator** or **connector** remains afterward helping care for someone relationally or spiritually beyond 8:15p, the **Host** should communicate with them before leaving so responsibility for locking up is clear.

***Tables:** On Sunday mornings after service we will ask everyone to move their chairs to the side with the exception of the first few sections (we will also set up tables). At the end of Wednesday night, **facilitators** and **connectors** *should assist* returning their group chairs and table.

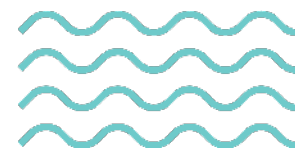




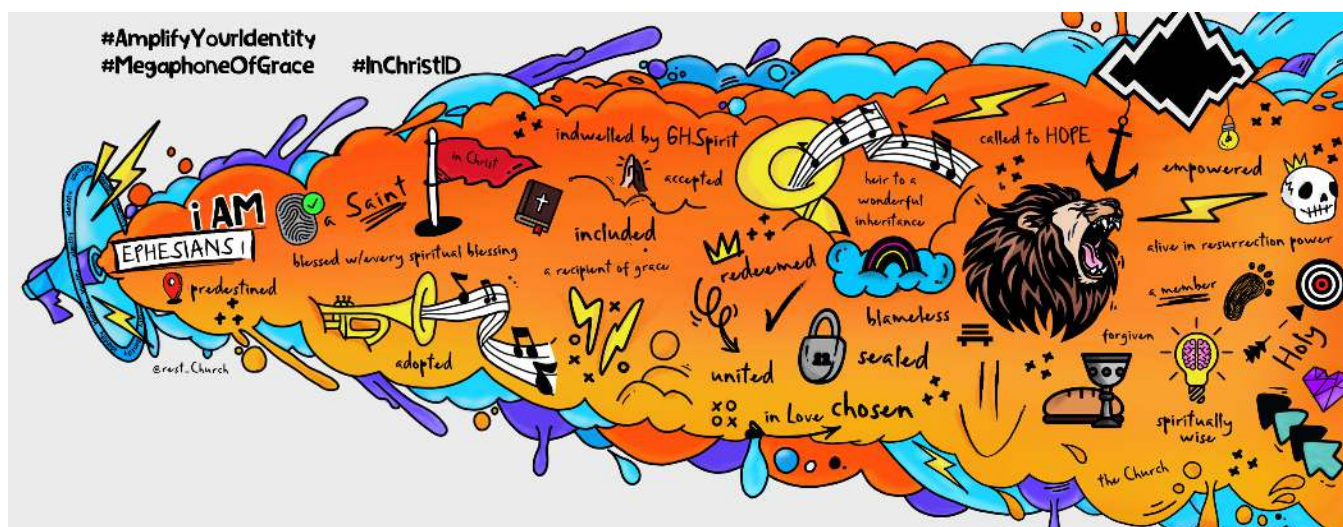
PART 05

WEEKLY DISCUSSION GUIDES





EPHESIANS: JESUS CHANGES EVERYTHING



● PHASE 1 | NEW IDENTITY



Who You Are Because of What God Has Done
| Ephesians 1:1-2:22 | weeks 1-5

● PHASE 2 | NEW FAMILY



How We Live Together Because of Who We Are
| Ephesians 3:1-5:21 | weeks 6-9

● PHASE 3 | NEW LIVING



How Identity Shows Up IRL |
Ephesians 5:22-6:20 | weeks 10-12





Weekly Discussion Guides

These weekly guides are designed to help group **facilitators** guide healthy, repeatable, Scripture-centered conversations throughout the Ephesians Midweek semester.

Each guide is intentionally built around the same overall Midweek rhythms:

-  **Connect**
-  **Open**
-  **Discuss**
-  **Land the Plane**
-  **Pray**

The goal is *NOT* to:

- rush through material
- cover every question
- create perfect discussions

The goal *IS* to:

- build meaningful relationships
- process Scripture together
- create spiritual formation over time
- connect Sunday truth to everyday life

Discussion guides should always function as frameworks, *NOT* scripts.

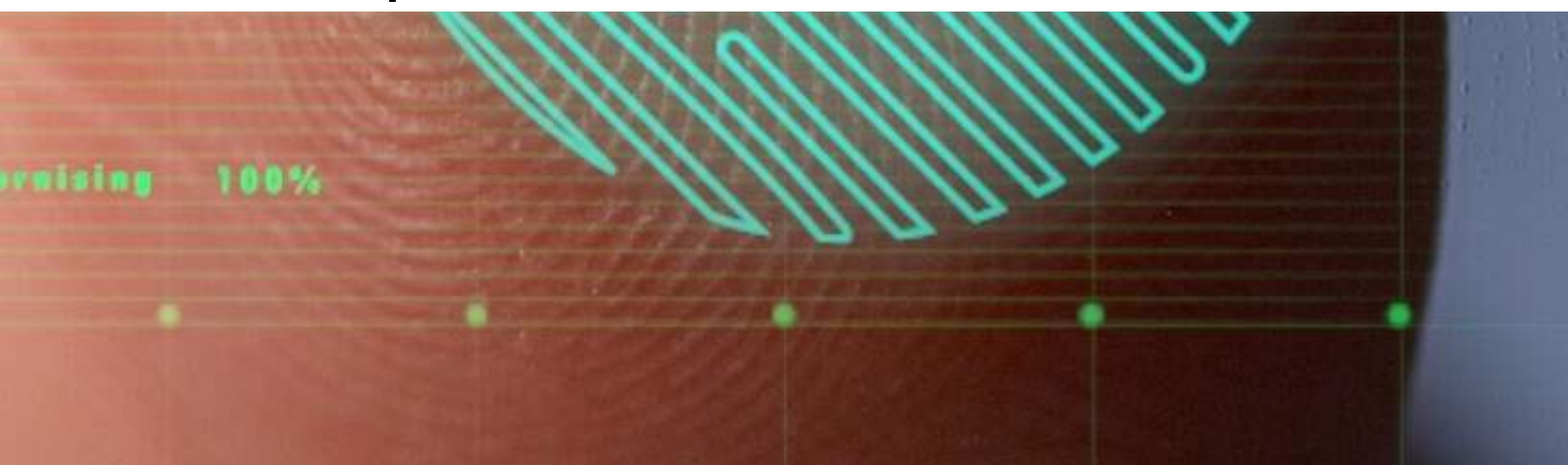
Facilitators should feel freedom to:

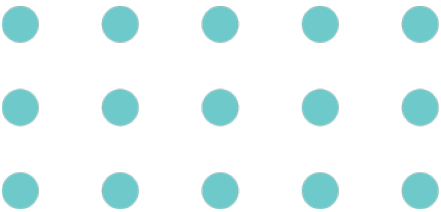
- slow down
- ask good follow-up questions
- stay longer in healthy conversations
- prioritize people over “getting through content”



● PHASE 1 | NEW IDENTITY

💡 **WEEK #1 | AUGUST 12**





WEEK 1 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: Wanted From The Start**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 1:1–6

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50–7:05 | 15 min
2. Open + Background | 7:05–7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10–7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45–7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50–7:55 | 5 min

Main Focus:

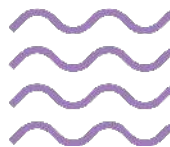
Identity in Christ begins with what God has done for us, *NOT* what we do for Him.

Big Themes:

- chosen
- adopted
- grace
- belonging
- identity
- in Christ

Midweek Emphasis:

Helping people begin building identity on what God says about them rather than performance, approval or comparison.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational, and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

Moderator: moves groups into table discussions and hands off to **Facilitators**



Table Discussion | Opening Thought

This semester is about learning who we are in Christ and what that changes about how we do life together. You don't have to know everything. You don't have to perform. You don't have to pretend. We simply want to create space for people to follow Jesus and find rest **TOGETHER**.



Set The Scene | Background of the Book

Paul is writing to Christians living in Ephesus, one of the most influential and spiritually confused cities in the Roman world. Ephesus was wealthy, powerful, diverse and filled with competing voices trying to shape people's identity, purpose and worship.

Many believers were surrounded by pressure, temptation, status systems and spiritual confusion.

Throughout Ephesians, Paul keeps bringing the Church back to one central truth, that: Their identity is no longer rooted in culture, success, background or performance... but "**in Christ**."





Set The Scene | Background of the Text

Before Paul talks about how Christians should live, relate, grow, serve, fight sin, or walk in unity, he starts with identity. **Ephesians 1:1-6** opens the letter by reminding believers that God moved first.

Before striving. Before obedience. Before performance.

There was: grace, love, choosing and adoption.

Paul intentionally roots Christian living in who God says we already are.



Read The Text | Ephesians 1:1-6

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

Have someone in the group pray. Ask God the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to His Word, by using themes, words or phrases from the passage you just read to pray over your group. *(As the leader models this, your group will catch on)*

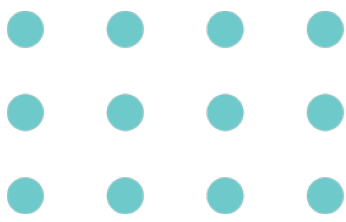
PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday or from this passage?

PURPOSE: Gets everyone participating early while helping the group slow down and truly notice the text before rushing into application.

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: "Why do you think that stood out to you?"





Setup

One of the biggest themes in Ephesians is that Christianity doesn't begin with what we do for God, but it begins with what God *has* done for us in Christ.

Theologian Insight

JI Packer once wrote: “*What matters most about us is not what we think about God, but what God thinks about us.*”

Ephesians opens with that same tension.

Paul wants believers to understand that identity “*in Christ*,” isn’t: fragile, earned or circumstantial. But, that identity is rooted in the eternal love and initiative of God.

Zoom In (Text)

Before we rush to application or try to “figure everything out,” let's slow down and sit in what Paul is actually saying.

Read the Text Again Together

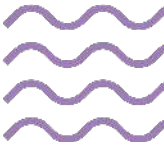
Ephesians 1:1–6 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the text slowly and carefully.

Before jumping into answers, simply notice the text:

- are there repeated words or ideas?
- what reveals God’s heart in these verses?
- what feels comforting or challenging?
- what surprises you?

Then ask your group again: “*Now, what stands out most to you from this passage?*”

Leader Note: Keep the conversations centered on the text and the main idea of identity in Christ. Don’t let the discussion drift too far into unrelated debates or rabbit trails. If it does, gently and lovingly redirect.



? Question #2 | Why do you think Paul uses family words like “chosen, adopted, and beloved,” instead of just using “forgiveness” language?

Possible Answers:

- God doesn’t just forgive us, He brings us near
- Christianity is relational, not just transactional
- God wants sons and daughters, not just cleaned-up sinners
- Adoption speaks to belonging, intimacy, security and identity
- Family language changes how we relate to God and one another

Optional Follow Ups:

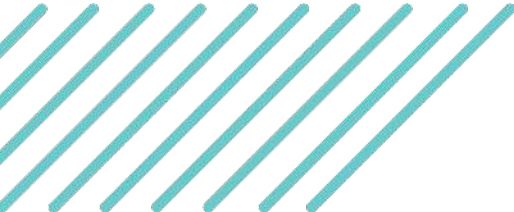
- Why do you think belonging matters so deeply to people?
- What’s the difference between being tolerated and being wanted?
- How might someone’s relationship with God change if they truly believed they were adopted by Him?
- Why do you think Paul starts with family language before commands or correction?
- Which word hits you most personally: chosen, adopted, loved or blessed? Why?

Zoom Out (Text)

Throughout this passage, notice how active God is: He chooses, He adopts, He loves, He blesses, He moves first.

The spotlight of Ephesians 1 is not ultimately on us trying harder for God, but on God moving toward us in grace before we ever moved toward Him. Paul isn’t just teaching theology here, but he’s rebuilding how believers think about: God, themselves and each other.

 **Optional Share:** Leaders share a quick story (1–2 minutes max) of a time in your life when someone moved toward you in love when you didn’t deserve or earn it.





? Question #3 | What do you notice about who God *is* and what God *does* in this passage?

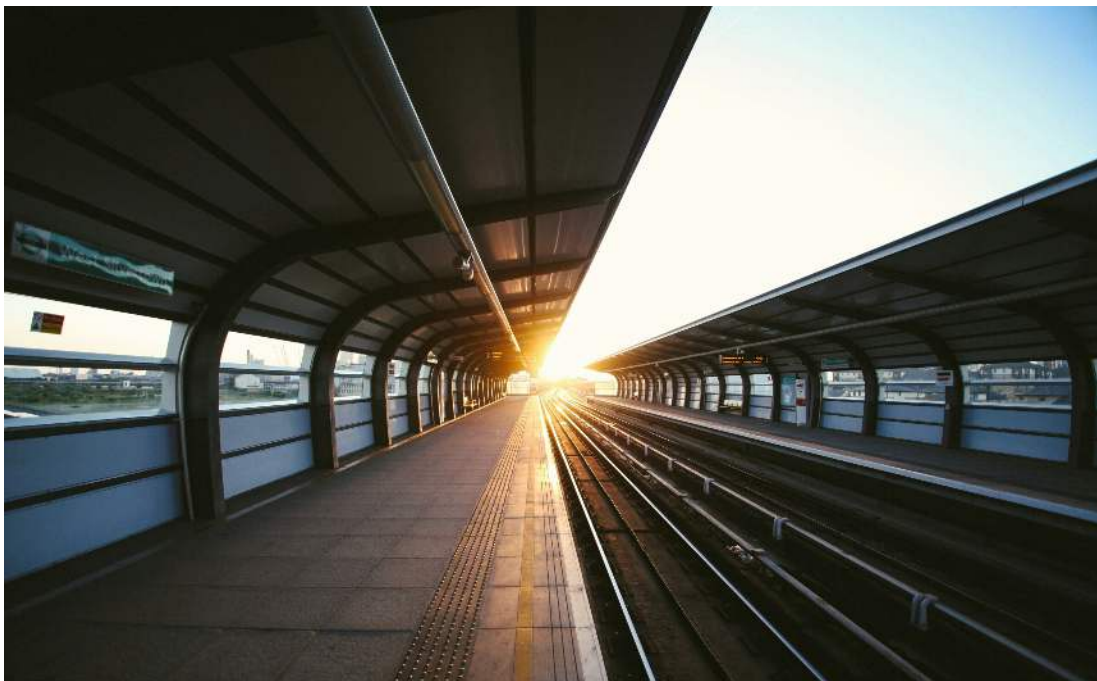
Possible Answers:

- God is intentional (vv. 4–5)
- God initiates relationship (vv. 4–5)
- God is loving, not reluctant (vv. 4–5)
- God's grace is personal (vv. 5–6)
- God desires relationship, not just rule-following (vv. 4–5)
- God's love existed before our performance (v.4)

Optional Follow Ups:

- What stands out to you about God's initiative in this passage?
- Why is it difficult for people to believe God moves toward them first?
- How does this picture of God differ from how many people imagine Him?
- What part of God's character in this passage feels most comforting?
- What part feels hardest to believe personally?

Leader Reminder: Don't rush to the next question *too quickly*. If the conversation is healthy: stay there, ask good follow-ups, let the text breathe and let people process. *Remember, formation usually happens slower than we want it to.*





Zoom Out (God)

A lot of people picture God as:

- distant
- disappointed
- constantly frustrated with them

But, Ephesians 1 paints a very different picture.

Paul describes a God who:

- pursues
- adopts
- blesses
- loves His people

...before they *ever* clean themselves up.

The more clearly we see God's heart, the more securely we begin to live as His people.



Zoom Out (Us)

👉 **Optional Share:** Has anyone ever heard of '*imposter syndrome*'? It's the feeling that:

- you don't really belong
- eventually people will "find out"
- you're *not* actually enough
- you're only accepted because you've performed well so far

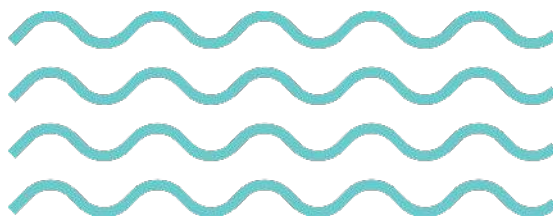
A lot of people live spiritually that way too.

They believe God tolerates them as long as they keep:

- performing
- pretending
- proving themselves

👉 **Optional Share:** Leader share a quick story (1-2 minutes max) of a time you struggled with insecurity, feeling like you didn't belong, or felt pressure to prove yourself.

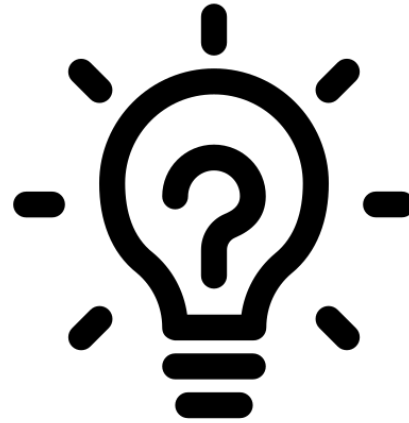
How did that affect the way you related to other people?



? Question #4 | How does our insecurity about identity affect the way people relate to others?

Possible Answers:

- comparison
- jealousy
- people pleasing
- isolation
- competition
- pretending
- defensiveness
- fear of rejection
- needing constant approval



Optional Follow Ups:

- How does insecurity shape our friendships or marriages?
- Where do you see comparison showing up most in modern culture?
- Why do insecure people sometimes become defensive or controlling?
- How does knowing your identity in Christ create healthier relationships?
- What's the difference between relating from security vs striving for approval?

Zoom Out (Us)

One reason *identity* matters so much is because **insecurity never stays private**.

What we believe about ourselves eventually shapes how we: treat people, respond to criticism, handle conflict, pursue approval and build relationships.

When our identity is fragile, relationships can often become exhausting because we constantly feel the pressure to: protect, prove or perform.



? Question #5 | Why do you think so many people struggle with feeling “enough”?

Possible Answers:



- comparison culture
- performance pressure
- social media
- family expectations
- shame
- fear of failure
- tying our identity to success
- believing love must be earned

Optional Follow Ups:

- What voices most shape people's identity today?
- How has social media affected insecurity or comparison?
- Where do you personally feel pressure to prove yourself most?
- Why do people tend to connect worth with achievement?
- What would practically change if someone truly believed they were already loved by God?

Zoom Out (Us)

Most people spend their lives trying to prove they matter, through:

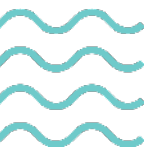
- achievement
- appearance
- relationships
- success
- approval

But, Ephesians begins somewhere completely different.

Paul reminds believers that identity in Christ begins with:

God's heart, *not* our performance.

Therefore, the Gospel doesn't just give us encouragement, but it gives us an entirely new foundation for who we are.



PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to **Facilitators**

One of the dangers Paul's confronting in Ephesians is the temptation to build our identity on things that constantly shift: success, status, appearance, relationships, approval or productivity.

The problem is that *anything* built on performance eventually creates pressure.

So:

- if your identity is rooted in achievement, then failure becomes devastating
- if your identity is rooted in approval, then rejection becomes crushing

A fragile identity eventually creates fragile relationships because we begin needing people to constantly validate what only God can ultimately secure.

But Paul keeps pulling believers back to something deeper: **your identity started with God before it started with you.**

Before you accomplished anything...

Before you changed things...

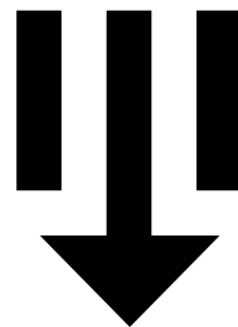
Before you began to prove yourself spiritually...

God moved toward you in Christ.

That means your relationship with God is not built on:

- pretending
- performing
- constantly trying to earn your place

"In Christ," you already belong.





And when your identity becomes secure in Jesus, your relationships begin to change too! We no longer have to: compete with people, compare ourselves to people, impress people or hide from people. Instead, we can begin living with: honesty, humility, security and rest in Christ.



Thursday AM Application

Consider having the group write down this question or make a note of it in their phone. So, before your day starts tomorrow, take 2 minutes and ask yourself: “What am I going to look to today to tell me that I matter?**”*

Then **re-read Ephesians 1:1–6** slowly and remind yourself: “***My identity is NOT something I achieve, but something I have already received in Christ.***”



Rhythm Reminders

Before you pray to end, encourage everyone to lean into these 3 rhythms throughout this Ephesians journey this week:

- 🗣️ **Sunday = Proclamation**
- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🤝 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**

***Hand out the devotional books**, please remind people that these are *NOT* the official doctrinal statement of rest but a supplemental resource; eat the meat and leave the bones.

Each *rhythm* plays a different role in spiritual growth, but together they help move truth from: only being heard → to actually being lived. And remember, you don’t have to be perfect at this. Just: stay engaged, stay connected and keep showing up!



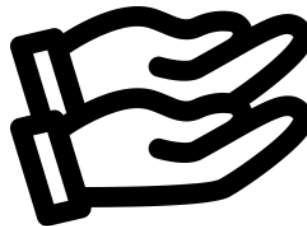
PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:50-7:55 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables into short time of prayer then hands off to **Facilitator***

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

- personal needs
- one another
- truths from tonight's text



Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



✌️ **Dismissal**

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
- come back and connect afterward if possible

Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

Table Connectors especially should:

- notice isolated or lingering people
- follow up with new guests
- help bridge conversations relationally



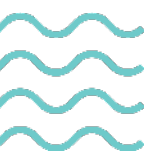
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

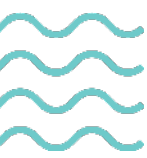
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



NOTES



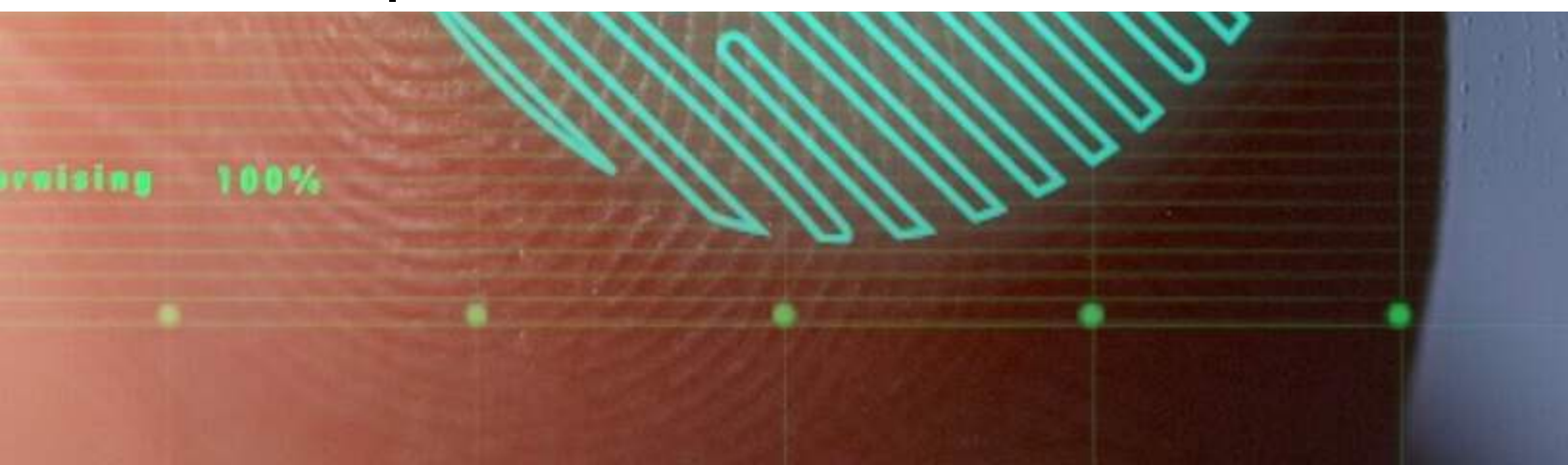
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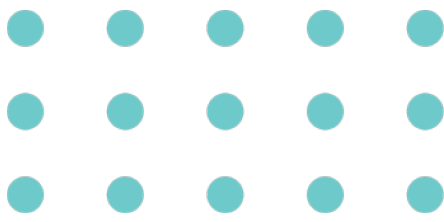




● PHASE 1 | NEW IDENTITY

🧠 **WEEK #2 | AUGUST 19**





WEEK 2 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: Covered By Promise, Called By Purpose**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 1:7-14

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

Main Focus:

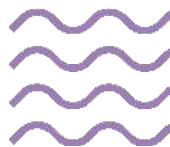
What God promises, He secures... and that shapes how we live.

Big Themes:

- redemption
- forgiveness
- grace
- belonging
- identity
- security in Christ

Midweek Emphasis:

Helping people begin building identity on what God says about them rather than performance, approval or comparison.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

Moderator: moves groups into table discussions and hands off to **Facilitators**



Table Discussion | Opening Thought

Last week we discovered that our identity begins with God's initiative, *not* our performance. This week Paul continues building that foundation by reminding us that God didn't simply begin our salvation, but He also secures it. Because of Jesus, we don't have to wonder where we stand with God or live trying to earn what He has already promised.



Set The Scene | Background of the Book

Paul is still helping believers *reshape* how they think about themselves. Surrounded by uncertainty, pressure and competing voices, the church in Ephesus needed more than encouragement... they needed confidence in what God had *already* accomplished through Christ.

Paul reminds them that God's grace isn't temporary or fragile, but rooted in His eternal purposes.





Set The Scene | Background of the Text

In **Ephesians 1:7–14**, Paul continues describing the spiritual blessings believers have “in Christ.” He talks about: redemption, complete forgiveness, God’s unfolding plan, an eternal inheritance and the promised Holy Spirit who seals *every* believer.

Rather than leaving Christians wondering if they’ll make it, Paul points them to a God who keeps His promises and finishes what He starts.



Read The Text | Ephesians 1:7-14

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

Have someone in the group pray. Ask God the Holy Spirit to help your group not only understand these truths, but to receive them. Pray that God would replace fear, insecurity, or uncertainty with confidence in His grace and faithful work through Christ.

PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday or from this passage?

PURPOSE: Gets everyone participating early while helping the group slow down and truly notice the text before rushing into application or interpretation.

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: *"Was anything surprising or encouraging?"*





Setup

Last week Paul reminded us that God chose us 'in Christ' before the foundation of the world. This week Paul keeps building on that same foundation by reminding believers that God's work doesn't stop at salvation but it continues through redemption, forgiveness, purpose and the gift of God the Holy Spirit.

Christianity isn't simply about getting into heaven someday; it's about living today with confidence in what God has already secured through Christ.



Zoom In (Text)

Before we begin answering questions, let's slow down and notice how often Paul emphasizes what believers *already have* because they are "*in Christ*."



Read the Text Again Together

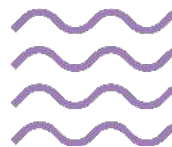
Ephesians 1:7-14 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the passage slowly and carefully.

Before jumping into answers, simply notice the text:

- are there repeated words or ideas?
- what does God give?
- what does God promise?
- what surprises you?
- what reassures you?

Then ask your group again: "*Now, what stands out most to you from this passage?*"

Leader Note: Keep bringing the conversation back to what Paul emphasizes: *NOT* what believers must earn, but what God has already provided through Christ. If discussion drifts into speculation or theological debates, gently redirect everyone back to the main focus.



? Question #2 | What do you think Paul wants believers to notice about God's plan in these verses?

Possible Answers:

- God's plan began long before ours did (vv. 9–10)
- Redemption is part of God's purposes, it's not 'Plan-B' (vv. 7–10)
- God is bringing 'all things' together 'in Him' (v. 10)
- Salvation isn't random, but it's part of God's larger story (vv. 9–12)
- Our security rests in God's faithfulness, not our ability to hold on (vv. 13–14)

Optional Follow Ups:

- What words or phrases point to God's purposes?
- Why do you think Paul keeps emphasizing God's will and purpose?
- How does knowing God has a plan change the way we can face uncertainty in our lives?
- What do you think it means that God is 'uniting all things in Christ'?
- Where do you see yourself fitting into God's bigger story?

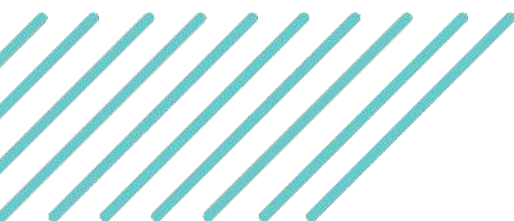


Zoom Out (Text)

Throughout this passage, Paul keeps reminding believers that God's plan is bigger than their individual stories: redemption, forgiveness, inheritance and God the Holy Spirit are all part of His purposes centered on Christ.

Paul also says God's plan is to “*unite all things in Christ*.” Even the word predestined, which has divided many Christians, appears here to point believers toward confidence in God's purposes, *NOT* division among God's people. The emphasis isn't on creating arguments, but on creating assurance that what God begins, He faithfully finishes.

Leader Note: If the conversation drifts into a debate on predestination, gently redirect it back to Paul's main emphasis: God's grace, purpose and security in Christ.





? Question #3 | What do you notice about who God *is* and what God *does* in this passage?

Possible Answers:

- God is faithful to His promises (vv.11-14)
- God is generous with His grace (vv.7-8)
- God doesn't hold back His forgiveness (v.7)
- God has a purpose for history (vv.9-10)
- God secures His people through His Spirit (vv.13-14)
- God finishes what He starts (vv.11-14)

Optional Follow Ups:

- Which description of God stands out to you most?
- What does it mean that God's grace is "*lavished*" on us?
- Why do you think Paul includes the Holy Spirit in this passage?
- How does God's faithfulness affect your confidence in Him?
- Which promise in this passage gives you the most hope?

Leader Reminder: If your group is engaging well, don't feel pressure to move quickly. Stay curious, ask good follow-up questions and let people wrestle with what they're seeing.

Sometimes the best discussions come from slowing down instead of covering more material.





Zoom Out (God)

A lot of people believe that God:

- Forgives them... but doesn't *fully* accept them
- Saves them... but expects them to keep earning His approval

But, Paul is describing the God who

- redeems
- lavishes grace
- keeps His promises
- seals His people

...so they can live with confidence, *not* uncertainty.

The truth is, the more we trust God's promises, the more we begin to live confidently as His people.

Theologian Insight

“There is tremendous relief in knowing that God’s love for me is utterly realistic, based at every point on prior knowledge of the worst about me.” — **J.I. Packer, Knowing God**

Optional Follow-Up:

- How should knowing God fully knows you... and still chose, redeemed and sealed you, change the way you see yourself?

Zoom Out (Us)

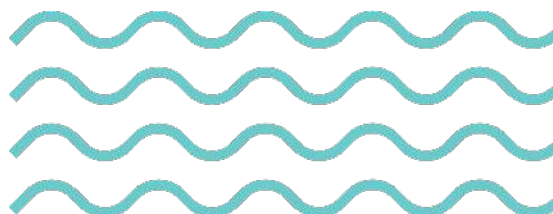
Has anyone ever made you a promise that they didn't keep?

How did that affect:

- your trust?
- your confidence?
- your relationship with them?

The good news is that God is completely different from us, in that He never makes a promise He can't keep.

 **Optional Share:** Leader share a quick story (1–2 minutes max) of a time God proved faithful even when you couldn't yet see what He was doing. Show how His faithfulness changed the way you trusted Him moving forward.



? Question #4 | How does knowing your future is secure in Christ change the way you live today?

Possible Answers:

- less fear
- more peace
- greater confidence
- freedom from constantly proving myself
- willingness to take steps of faith
- less anxiety about where I stand with God
- less driven by comparison to others
- greater trust in God's timing
- courage to obey, even without all the answers



Optional Follow Ups:

- How do "*redemption, forgiveness, inheritance and sealing*," build on what we learned about adoption last week?
- Why do you think Paul moves from identity (vv. 1-6) to security (vv. 7-14)?
- What does this passage teach us about the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- How does the Holy Spirit's seal give believers confidence in God's promises?

Zoom Out (Us)

Many believers do trust Jesus for salvation, but still live as though they're on spiritual probation with God.

Paul points us somewhere completely different. Our confidence doesn't rest in our ability to keep ourselves, but in God's promise of security. The more securely we rest in God's promises, the more confidently we can follow Him each day.



? Question #5 | What do you think keeps people from living with the confidence Paul describes in the text?



Possible Answers:

- fear of failure
- guilt over past mistakes
- believing God's love must be earned
- trusting feelings over God's word
- forgetting what is already true in Christ
- comparison with others

Optional Follow Ups:

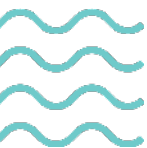
- How do our feelings sometimes compete with what God says is true?
- Why is it sometimes easier to believe God forgives us than the truth that He keeps us?

Zoom Out (Us)

Most of us don't wake up wondering if we're redeemed, but we do wake up wondering if we're *enough*.

That's why Paul keeps bringing believers back to what God has *already* done. Our confidence isn't found in how we feel from one day to the next, but in the promises God has already made and secured through Christ.

The Gospel doesn't just give us hope for eternity, but it gives us confidence for today and everyday.



PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to **Facilitators**

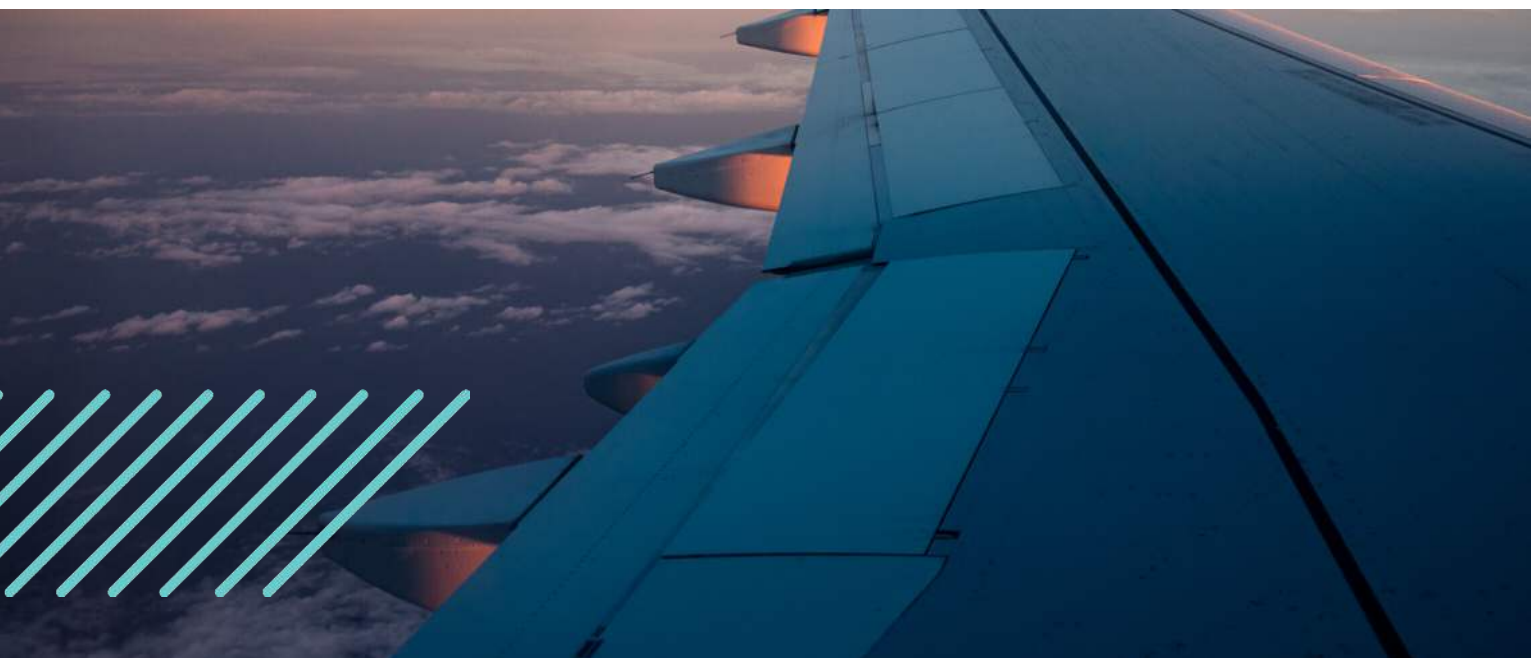
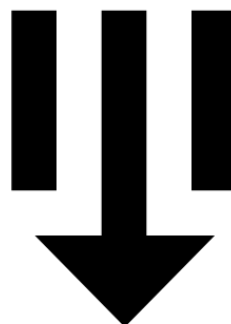
One of the biggest lies many Christians believe is that their standing with God rises and falls with their performance. When we fail, we assume God must love us less. When we succeed, we quietly begin trusting ourselves more than Him. Before long, our confidence becomes tied to our circumstances instead of God's promises.

But Paul keeps pointing believers somewhere so much better...

Because of Jesus, you have been redeemed, completely forgiven, given an inheritance, and sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. Those aren't rewards for good behavior, but they're gifts of God's good grace.

Therefore, your security doesn't rest on your ability to hold everything together, but on God's faithfulness to keep what He has promised.

When that truth begins to sink in, we stop living like we're trying to earn God's acceptance and start living from the confidence that we already belong to Him.





Thursday AM Application

So, before your day starts tomorrow, take 2 minutes and ask yourself: “***Today will I choose to trust God's promises or simply how I feel?***”

Then **re-read Ephesians 1:13–14** slowly and remind yourself: “***I am redeemed, forgiven and sealed by the Holy Spirit. God doesn't make mistakes. My security rests in what God has promised, not in how I feel today.***”



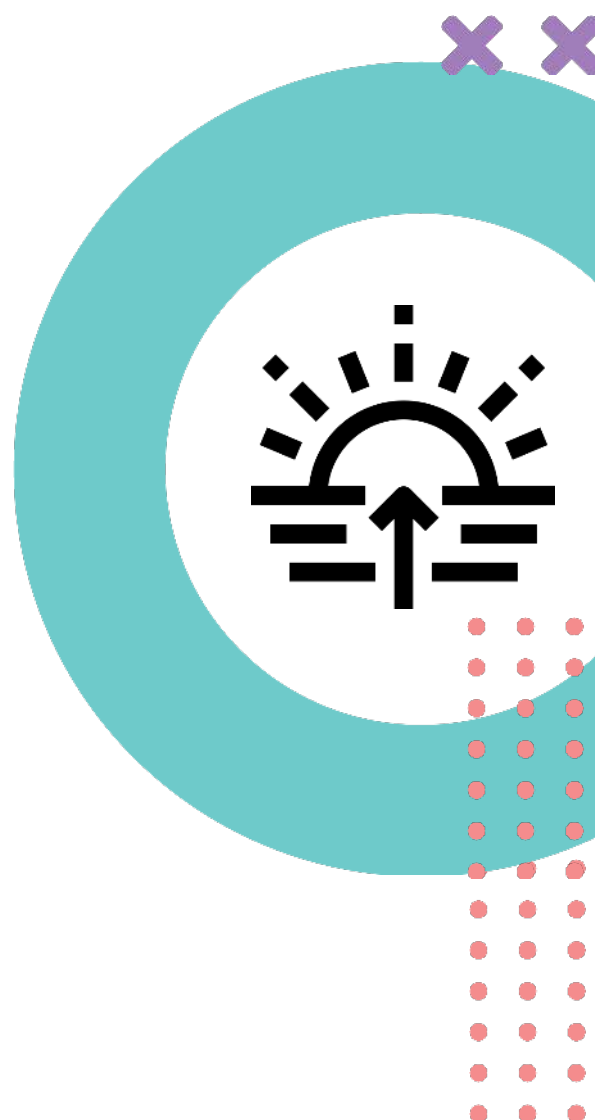
Rhythm Reminders

Before you pray, encourage everyone to lean into these 3 rhythms throughout this Ephesians journey this week:

- 🗣️ **Sunday = Proclamation**
- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🤝 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**

Each rhythm plays a different role in spiritual growth, but together they help move truth from: only being heard → to actually being lived.

And remember, you don't have to be perfect at this.
Just: stay engaged, stay connected and keep showing up!



PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:50-7:55 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables into short time of prayer then hands off to **Facilitator***

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

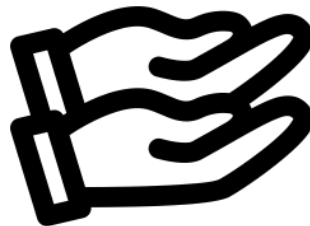
- personal needs
- one another
- truths from tonight's text

Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



✌️ Dismissal

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
- come back and connect afterward if possible

Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

Table Connectors especially should:

- notice isolated or lingering people
- follow up with new guests
- help bridge conversations relationally



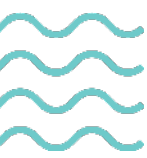
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

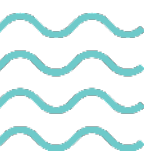
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



NOTES



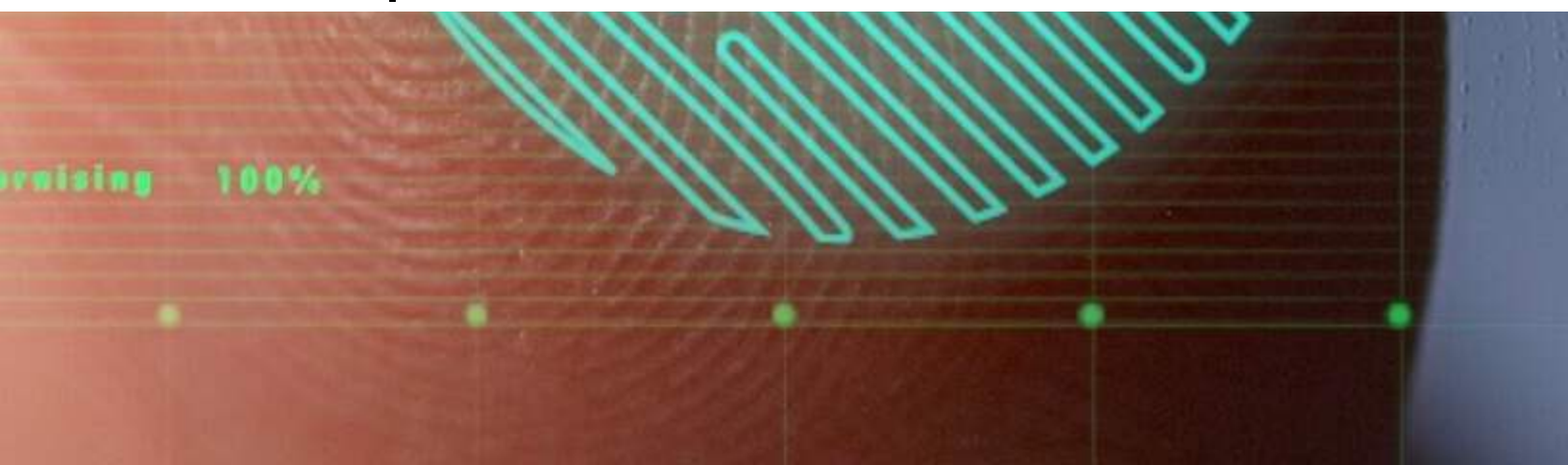
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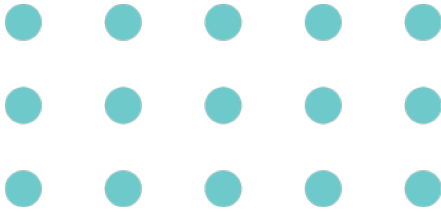




● PHASE 1 | NEW IDENTITY

🧠 **WEEK #3 | AUGUST 26**





WEEK 3 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: Power You Can't Measure**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 1:15-23

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

Main Focus:

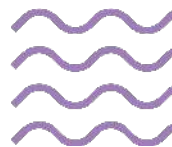
God's power is already at work within you, so ask Him to help you see it

Big Themes:

- hope
- spiritual sight
- inheritance
- resurrection power
- Jesus' authority
- confidence in Christ

Midweek Emphasis:

Helping people understand that spiritual growth *isn't* about trying harder, but it's about seeing clearer. Paul doesn't pray for believers to receive more power but for God to open their eyes to the hope, inheritance and resurrection power they already have in Christ.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational, and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

Moderator: moves groups into table discussions and hands off to **Facilitators**



Table Discussion | Opening Thought

Over the past two weeks, Paul has reminded us who we are *in* Christ and what God has *already* secured for us *through* Christ. This week, Paul shifts from celebrating those truths to praying that believers would actually see them. Sometimes our greatest need isn't more information, but greater spiritual awareness for what God has already done.



Set The Scene | Background of the Book

Paul has celebrated God's work in choosing, redeeming, forgiving and sealing His people. Now he pauses to pray.

Interestingly, Paul isn't writing to a struggling church. He has heard about their faith in Jesus and their love for one another, yet he still prays they would continue growing in their knowledge of God.

The truth is, healthy believers *never* outgrow the need for deeper spiritual understanding and spiritual maturity is *never* finished this side of heaven.





Set The Scene | Background of the Text

In **Ephesians 1:15–23**, Paul prays that God would give believers “*the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.*”

He asks that the eyes of their hearts would be enlightened so they would know the hope of God’s calling, the riches of His inheritance and the immeasurable greatness of His power.

Paul ends by reminding the church that the risen Christ now reigns at the Father’s right hand, above every authority and power.



Read The Text | Ephesians 1:15-23

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

Have someone in the group pray. Ask God the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to His Word, by using themes, words or phrases from the passage you just read to pray over your group. (*As the leader models this, your group will catch on*)

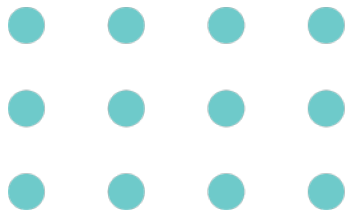
PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday or from this passage?

PURPOSE: Gets everyone participating early while helping the group slow down and truly notice the text before rushing into application or interpretation.

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: “*Why do you think that stood out to you?*”





Setup

Paul doesn't begin this section by giving the church *commands*, instead he tells them he's *praying* for them.

Even though he's heard about their faith in Jesus and their love for others, Paul knows there's still room to grow. His prayer isn't that they would try harder, but that they would see more clearly who God is and what He has already done for them.

Growing in Christ isn't just about gaining information, it's about growing in the knowledge of God Himself which transforms the way we see everything else.



Zoom In (Text)

Before we rush to application or try to "figure everything out," let's slow down and sit in what Paul is actually saying.



Read the Text Again Together

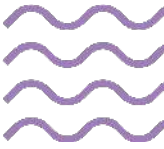
Ephesians 1:15–23 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the passage slowly and carefully.

Before jumping into answers, simply notice the text:

- are there repeated words or ideas?
- what reveals God's heart in these verses?
- what all does Paul pray for?
- what gives you hope from this text?

Then ask your group again: "*Now, what stands out most to you from this passage?*"

Leader Note: Keep the discussion centered on Paul's prayer and the main idea of spiritual sight. Don't let the conversation drift too far into unrelated topics or rabbit trails. If it does, gently and lovingly redirect.



? Question #2 | Why do you think Paul prays for 'wisdom' and 'revelation'?

Possible Answers:

- spiritual growth is more than simply learning facts (*John 17:3*)
- knowing God is different from knowing about God (*Jeremiah 9:23-24*)
- because we *need* God the Holy Spirit to help us understand God's truth
- Revelation = God the Holy Spirit illuminating God's truth to our hearts
- Wisdom = helps us rightly apply what God has revealed

Digging Deeper

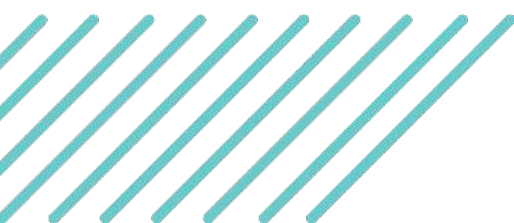
The Greek word for “knowledge” in verse 17 is *epignōsis* (ἐπίγνωσις) which is a reference to deep, growing, relational knowledge of God... not merely collecting information. Knowing this, we can see that Paul isn't primarily praying that believers would simply know more *about* God, but that they would truly *know God* Himself.

Zoom Out (Text)

Paul's prayer isn't centered on getting something new from God, but on growing deeper in the God we already know. As we know Him more fully, our hope, confidence and trust begin to grow as well.

 **Theologian Insight:** “*It is one thing to know about God; it is another thing to know God.*” — **J. I. Packer, Knowing God**

Optional Follow Up:

- Has there ever been a passage of Scripture you had read many times before, but one day it just seemed to “*click*” in a completely new way? What happened?
- 



? Question #3 | What do you notice about who Jesus *is* and what He *is doing* right now from the text?

Possible Answers:

- Jesus *IS* alive (v. 20)
- Jesus *IS* seated at the Father's right hand (v. 20)
- Jesus *IS* reigning over every ruler, authority and power (v. 21-22)
- Jesus *IS* supreme over all creation (v. 21)
- Jesus *IS* Head of the Church (v. 22-23)
- Jesus' resurrection power *IS* still at work today (v. 19-20)

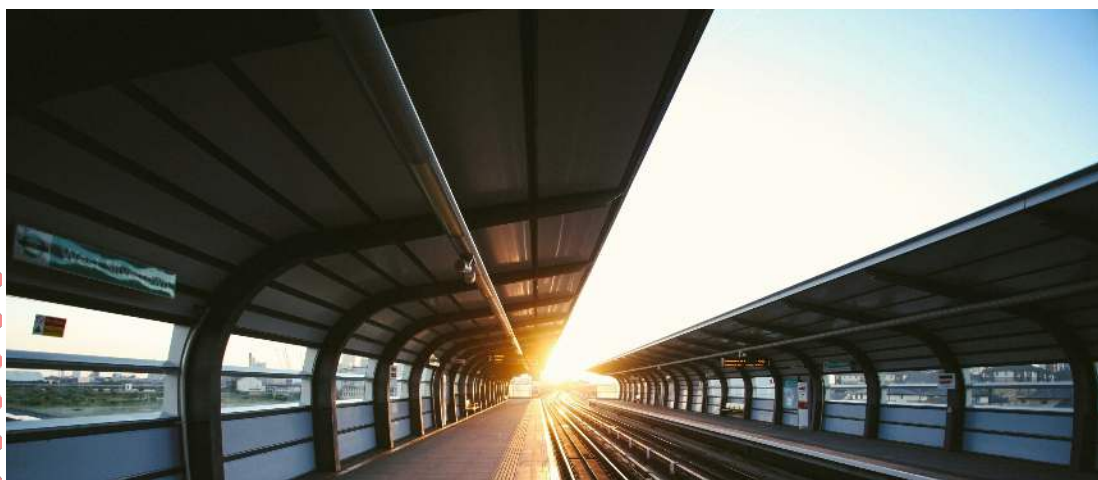
Optional Follow Ups:

- Why do you think Paul emphasizes where Jesus is seated (v.20)?
- How does knowing Jesus *IS* reigning right now change the way you face fear, uncertainty or opposition?

Digging Deeper

The phrase “*at His right hand*” wasn't just about location for Paul, but it was a position of honor, authority and Kingly rule. Paul reminds believers that Jesus isn't merely a Savior from the past that *use to do* some great things but that He *IS* the risen King who reigns over every authority, power and person right now.

Leader Reminder: Don't rush to the next question too quickly. If the conversation is healthy: stay there, ask follow-ups, let the text breathe, let people process.





Zoom Out (God)

A lot of people see Jesus as:

- inactive
- only relevant to the future
- simply a good teacher

But, here Paul describes Jesus, who:

- rose from the dead
- *IS* seated at the right hand of the Father
- *IS* reigning above every ruler, authority and power
- *IS* the Head of His church

...right NOW!

The more clearly we see Christ's eternal authority, the more confidently we can trust Him with every part of our lives.

 **Cross Reference:** Colossians 1:15-18



Have you ever felt like, life was:

- out of control?
- overwhelming?
- bigger than you could handle?

Theologian Insight:

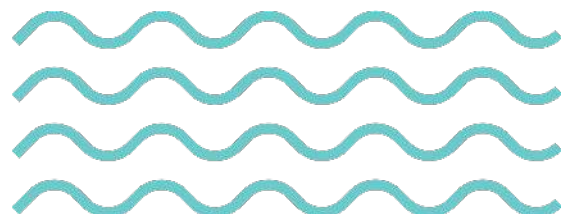
Abraham Kuyper once said, "*There is not one square inch in the whole domain of human existence over which Christ, who is Lord over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'*"

Paul reminds us that Jesus isn't ruling over *some* things... He's ruling over *ALL* things.

That means:

- your past, present and future
- your fears
- your circumstances
- your unanswered questions

 **Optional Share:** Leader share a quick story (1-2 minutes max) of a season when remembering Jesus was still on the throne changed the way you faced fear, uncertainty or hardship. How did focusing on who Christ is change the way you responded?



? Question #4 | If Jesus really *IS* reigning over all things right now... what difference should that make in the life of a believer?

Possible Answers:

- We can trust Him even when life feels uncertain (*Proverbs 3:5–6*)
- Fear doesn't have to control us (*2 Timothy 1:7*)
- We can live with greater hope and confidence (*Romans 15:13*)
- We don't have to carry every burden by ourselves (*1 Peter 5:7*)
- Our circumstances don't determine who is in control (*Romans 8:28*)
- We can pray with confidence because Christ reigns (*Ephesians 3:12*)



Optional Follow Up:

- When Paul talks about God's "power" (v.19) in this passage, what kind of power do you think he's describing?

Digging Deeper

The word for "power" in *verse 19* is *dynamis* (δύναμις), referring to God's mighty, active power (it's also where we get the English word "dynamite" from). Paul isn't describing human determination or willpower, but the same resurrection power God displayed in raising Christ from the dead is the same active working power He now works in and through every believer (vv. 19–20). Btw, dynamite changes everything it makes contact with. 🤖

Zoom Out (Us)

One reason God's power matters so much is because we often underestimate what He's already doing in our lives. Many of us expect God's power to show up as one unforgettable moment. But the resurrection power of Christ is *not* like a Roman candle that fizzles out after a few shots. It is a dynamite, explosive, life-changing, and continuous power that transforms us from the inside out.

And that same power that raised Jesus from the dead is *still* breaking chains, changing hearts and making people more like Christ every single day.



? Question #5 | If God's dynamite power is already at work in you, what might change about the way you approach this week?

Possible Answers:

- taking a step of faith
- overcoming a fear or anxiety
- fighting temptation
- persevering through hardship
- loving someone that's difficult
- sharing my faith
- remembering that God isn't finished with me



Digging Deeper

The phrase “*toward us who believe*” (v.19) reminds us that God's power isn't reserved for a select few. Paul says this resurrection power is at work in *every believer*. So, the question isn't whether God is working... it's whether we're living in light of the truth He is working.



Zoom Out (Us)

Many of us live as though the Christian life depends on our own strength, or discipline or ability.

But, Paul reminds us that God never intended us to follow Jesus alone or by our own power. The Christian life *isn't* powered by self-effort, but by Christ's resurrection power at work within us.

The more we depend on His power, the more confidently we can live for His glory.

💬 **Theologian Insight:** “*The Christian life is not merely difficult; it is impossible apart from the grace and power of God.*” —

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Optional Follow Up:

Where are you most tempted to rely on your own strength instead of God's?

PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to Facilitators*

One of the biggest temptations in the Christian life is believing that if we just tried harder, knew more, or became stronger then we'd finally become the person God wanted us to be.

But that's *NOT* Paul's prayer.

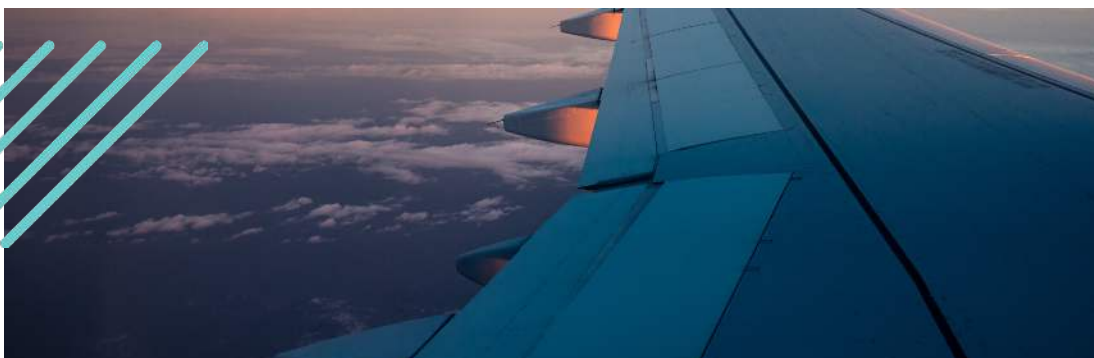
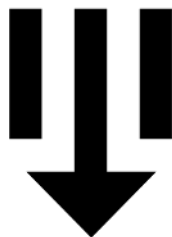
Paul doesn't pray for believers to receive more power, **he prays that they would see the power they *already* have in Christ.**

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is now at work in every believer.

That means you're *not* left to follow Jesus by your own strength, wisdom or determination. God hasn't simply given you a better example to follow, but He's given you His Spirit to transform you from the inside out.

So, when life feels overwhelming, remember where Paul points our eyes: not to ourselves, but to the risen and reigning Christ.

Because the One who is seated above every ruler, authority, power and name is also the One who is powerfully at work in His people right now.





Thursday AM Application

So, before your day starts tomorrow, take some time and ask yourself: “***Where am I relying on my own strength instead of Christ’s power?***”

Then **re-read Ephesians 1:19–20** slowly and remind yourself: “***The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in me TODAY.***”



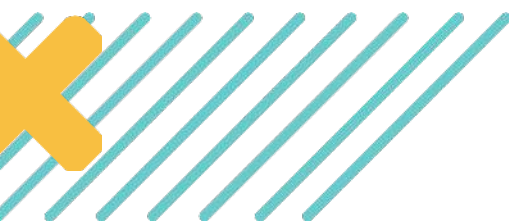
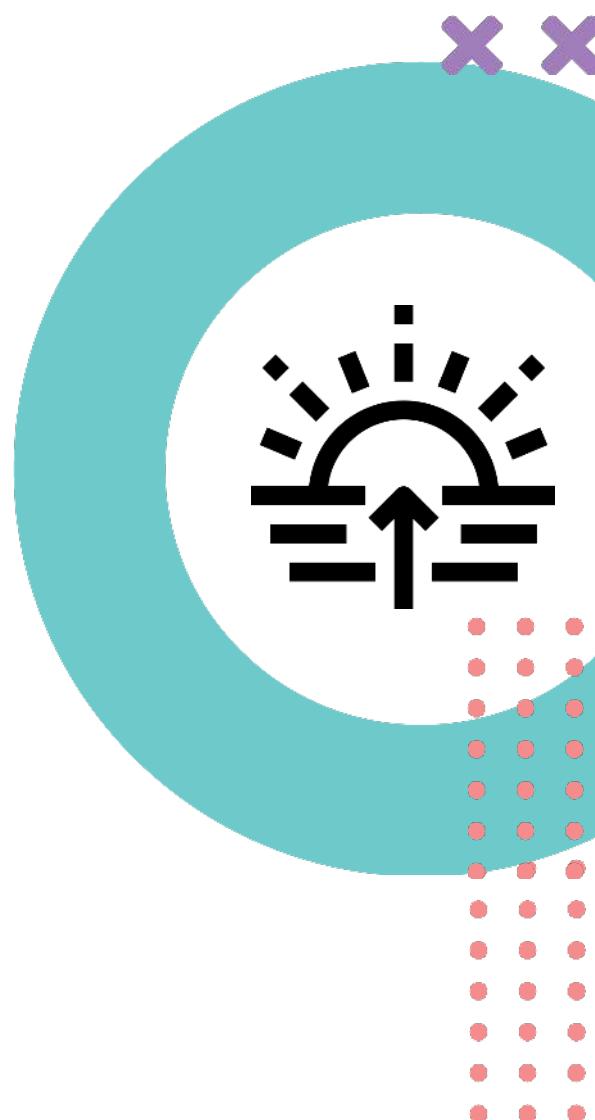
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- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🤝 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**

Each rhythm plays a different role in spiritual growth, but together they help move truth from: only being heard → to actually being lived.

And remember, you don’t have to be perfect at this. Just: stay engaged, stay connected and keep showing up!



PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:50-7:55 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables into short time of prayer then hands off to **Facilitator***

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

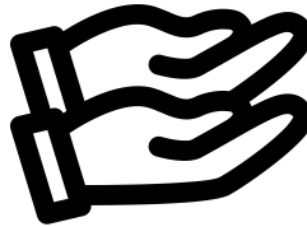
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Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
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- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



✌️ **Dismissal**

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
- come back and connect afterward if possible

Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

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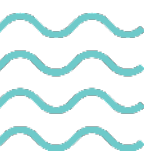
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

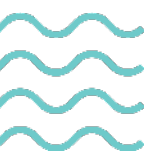
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



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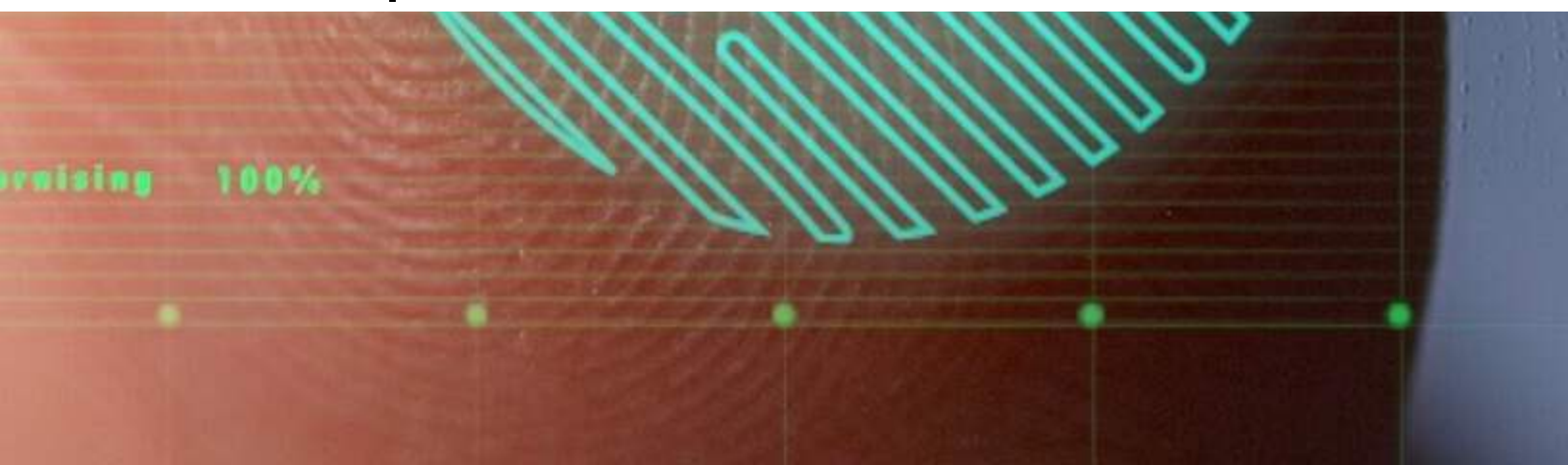
NOTES





● PHASE 1 | NEW IDENTITY

💡 **WEEK #4 | SEPTEMBER 2**





WEEK 4 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: From Dead To Different**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 2:1-10

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

Main Focus:

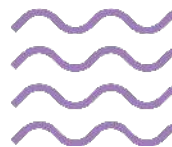
In Christ, you *weren't* improved, you were made alive.

Big Themes:

- spiritual life/death
- purpose
- salvation
- workmanship
- new life
- God's mercy

Midweek Emphasis:

Helping people understand Christianity is more than behavior modification. Good works don't *earn* our salvation, they *flow from* the new life we've *already* received in Christ.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational, and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

Moderator: moves groups into table discussions and hands off to **Facilitators**

💬 Table Discussion | Opening Thought

Over the past several weeks, Paul has been reminding believers who they are because of what God has done. But, before we fully appreciate the good news of the Gospel, we have to understand just how desperate our situation really was. The passage from Sunday reminds us that Christianity isn't about becoming a better version of ourselves, but it's about God making spiritually dead people alive through His mercy and grace.

📖 Set The Scene | Background of the Text

Ephesians 2:1-10 is one of the clearest pictures of the Gospel in all of Scripture. Paul begins by describing humanity's condition apart from Christ not as wounded or struggling, but as spiritually dead. Then, in one of the greatest turning points in the Bible, everything changes with two simple words: "But God..."

Instead of leaving us in our sin, God acts out of His mercy, love and grace, making us alive with Christ. Paul reminds believers that salvation isn't earned by us, but it's received by us, as God's good gift. And because we've been made alive we can now walk in the good works He prepared for us.





Read The Text | Ephesians 2:1-10

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

Have someone in the group pray. Ask God the Holy Spirit to open your hearts and minds to His Word, by using themes, words or phrases from the passage you just read to pray over your group. *(As the leader models this, your group will catch on)*

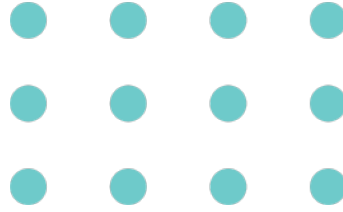
PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday's MSG or from this passage?

PURPOSE: Gets everyone participating early while helping the group slow down and truly notice the text before rushing into application or interpretation.

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: *"Why do you think that stood out to you?"*





Setup

Not to be morbid, but one of the most important words in Ephesians 2 is “*dead*.” Paul doesn’t describe humanity as spiritually weak, wounded, or struggling but he describes us as spiritually dead. That’s important because dead people don’t rescue themselves.

Part of why the good news of the Gospel begins with bad news, is because the more honestly we understand our condition apart from Christ, the more clearly we see the greatness of God’s mercy, grace and love.

Theologian Insight:

“Before God can deliver us, we must first acknowledge the depth of our need.” – **John Stott**

Zoom In (Text)

Before we rush to application let's slow down and sit in what Paul is actually saying.

Read the Text Again Together

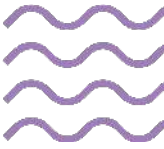
Ephesians 2:1–10 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the passage slowly and carefully.

Before jumping into answers, simply notice:

- are there repeated words or ideas?
- the contrast between our condition and God’s action
- what reveals God's character?
- what feels challenging or encouraging?
- what surprises you?

Then ask your group again: *“Now, what stands out most to you from this passage?”*

Leader Note: Don’t rush past verses 1–3 because they’re uncomfortable. Paul intentionally paints an honest picture of our condition so the beauty of God’s grace in verses 4–10 shines even brighter. Help the group stay grounded in the text before moving into application.



? Question #2 | Why do you think Paul describes people as spiritually dead instead of simply spiritually weak or broken?

Possible Answers:

- Dead people can't rescue themselves (*John 6:44; Romans 5:6–8*)
- Sin affects every part of our lives (*Romans 3:10–12, 23; Isaiah 64:6*)
- Salvation had to begin with God, not us (*John 1:12–13; Titus 3:4–7*)
- Grace is necessary, not optional (*Romans 11:6; Galatians 2:21*)
- Our greatest problem wasn't behavior, but separation from God (*Isaiah 59:2; Colossians 1:21–22*)

Optional Follow Up:

- How does understanding your condition apart from Christ make God's grace even more amazing?

Digging Deeper

The Greek word for “dead” is *nekros* (νεκρός), meaning lifeless or without life. Paul intentionally chooses the strongest possible word for dead. He isn't describing people as spiritually sick, weak or hurting, but completely unable to bring themselves to life. That's why salvation is always God's work before it is our response.

Zoom Out (Text)

Perhaps Paul begins with the bad news so we'll fully appreciate the good news. Before we can understand the greatness of God's grace, we have to understand the seriousness of our need.

💬 **Theologian Insight:** “Christianity is not about making bad people good; it is about making dead people alive.” — **Voddie Baucham**

👉 **Optional Share:** Share a quick story (1–2 minutes) of a time you realized Christianity wasn't about trying harder, but about trusting what Christ had already done.





? Question #3 | Why do you think Paul interrupts such a hopeless picture with the words, “*But God...*”?

Possible Answers:

- Mercy triumphs over our misery (*Lamentations 3:22–23; Titus 3:4–7*)
- God didn’t leave us in our sin (*Romans 5:8; Colossians 1:21–22*)
- Christ is enough (*Hebrews 10:10–14; 2 Corinthians 5:21*)
- The turning point in the story is God’s action, not ours (*John 3:16–17*)

Optional Follow Up:

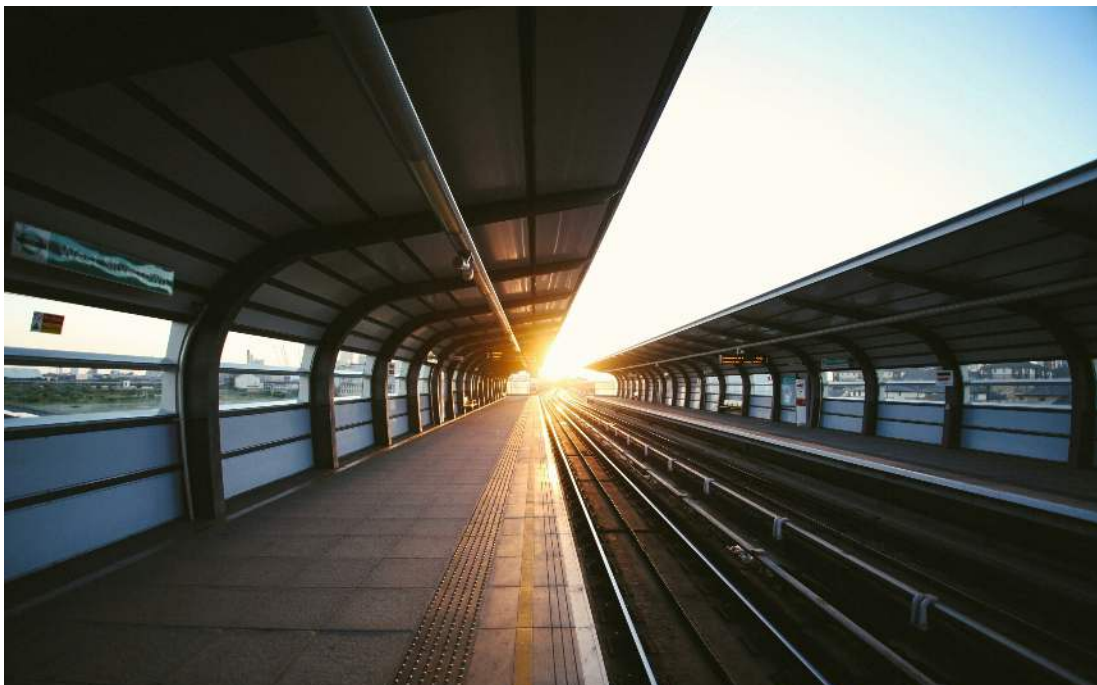
- What does “*But God...*” reveal about God’s character?



Digging Deeper Notice Paul’s language:

- *MADE us* alive
- *RAISED us* up
- *SEATED us* with christ

All three are written as completed actions. While we do still await the fullness of eternity, Paul reminds believers that our spiritual position has *already* changed because we are united with Jesus. Our identity isn’t based on where we stand on earth, but where we are seated with Christ in the heavenly places (v.6).





Zoom Out (God)

Paul reminds us of a God whose:

- mercy moves toward the undeserving
- love isn't earned
- grace is freely given
- character never changes

...even when we could offer Him *NOTHING* in return.

God's love isn't motivated by our worthiness, but by His own character.

The more clearly we understand who we are in Christ, the less pressure we feel to *become enough* on our own... because Jesus already is.

Theologian Insight

"The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope." — **Tim Keller**

Optional Follow Up:

- Which part of that quote do you find harder to believe: that you're more sinful than you realize, or more loved than you imagine?

Zoom Out (Us)

It's easy to say "Jesus is enough," but it's a whole nother' thing to live like it.

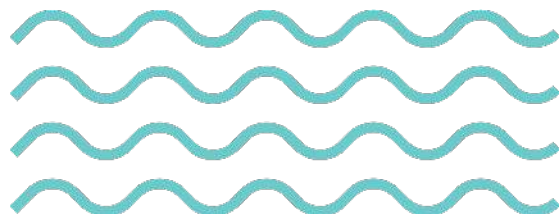
Many people think that they must:

- clean themselves up before coming to God
- earn God's approval
- prove their worthy
- keep God happy through performance

 **Optional Group Share:** Be honest, have you ever felt like you had to "get your act together" before coming to God?

Ephesians 2 reminds us that God's love isn't something we achieve, it's something we receive.

Because we are in Christ, we don't have to prove anything and the more we believe that, the less we will feel the pressure to perform.



? Question #4 | Okay, but... If we're saved by grace and *not* by works, why do you think Paul immediately starts talking about good works in verse 10?

Possible Answers:

- Good works are the result of salvation, not the cause (*James 2:17-18*)
- We obey because we've been changed (*2 Corinthians 5:17*)
- Grace doesn't remove obedience, it reshapes our motivation (*Titus 2:11-14*)
- Good works reveal a changed heart (*Matthew 5:16*)
- Our lives become a reflection of God's grace (*1 Peter 2:9-12*)

Optional Follow Up:

- How can knowing you're *already* accepted by God change the way you think about obedience?

Digging Deeper

The word translated "workmanship" here is *poiēma* (ποίημα) and it's where we get the English word "poem." It's describing something that's been carefully crafted or intentionally made.

In "*workmanship*," Paul reminds believers that they aren't spiritual accidents but they are God's good work, created with purpose to reflect Him through the good works He has prepared for them.





Zoom Out (Us)

Paul doesn't see grace and good works as opposites. Grace is the root of salvation. Good works are the fruit of salvation. We don't work for God's acceptance, we work from God's acceptance.

 **Theologian Insight** “*We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves us is never alone.*” — **John C.**

 **Optional Follow Up:** How can other Scriptures help you understand the relationship between salvation & good works? (cf. *James 2:14–26; Romans 3:28; Titus 3:4–8*).

Question #5 | **How should being** **God's** **“workmanship,”** **shape the way you** **live??**

Possible Answers:

- God has a purpose for my life
- My identity comes before my activity.

- God is STILL shaping me.
- Good works are an opportunity, not a burden.
- I don't have to compare my calling to someone else's.
- God intentionally created me to make an eternal difference.

Digging Deeper

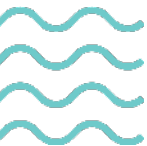
I love the phrase “*prepared beforehand*” (v.10) because it reminds us that God not only saves His people, but He also has a purpose *for* His people. Our good works don't earn God's favor, but they are the path He has lovingly prepared for us to walk in as His redeemed children.

Zoom Out (Us)

If we're honest, it's easy to spend our lives asking or thinking:

- “*What am I supposed to do with my life?*” “*Does my life really matter?*”
- “*Do I even have a purpose?*” “*Could God really even use someone like me?*”

Ephesians 2 gives a resounding, “Yes!”
Your life does matter. God can use you.
You were created for purpose.



PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to **Facilitators**

One of the greatest lies we can believe is that our value comes from what we accomplish, achieve or produce.

That's why so many people spend their lives trying to earn significance through success, approval or performance.

But Paul reminds us that purpose doesn't begin with what we do, it begins with what Jesus did and that moves into whose we are.

💬 **Application Moment:** This may feel a little awkward, but do it anyway. Sometimes we need to preach the truth to ourselves before we fully believe it.

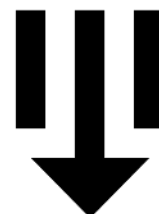
Have everyone at the table say together: "***I am God's workmanship, and God doesn't make mistakes.***" Then, pause for a moment after everyone says it. Then, remind the group: "*Because you are in Christ, your life has purpose, your story has value and God is still at work in you.*"

You *ARE* God's workmanship. What an amazing truth!

Which means your life isn't random, your story isn't wasted and your future isn't without purpose.

Because, long before you ever wondered whether your life mattered, God had already decided it does and He prepared good works for all of your days.

The invitation this week isn't to strive for *MORE* significance, but it's to faithfully walk *in* the purpose and position He has already placed before you.





Thursday AM Application

As you go through your day tomorrow, intentionally stop three times and ask: “***God, is this one of the good works You've prepared for me?***”

You may be surprised how often God uses ordinary moments for eternal purposes.

Pay attention to the ordinary moments: a conversation, an interruption, an opportunity to serve, encourage, forgive, or simply be present. You may discover that God's purpose is often found in the ordinary everyday things when you stop to notice Him.



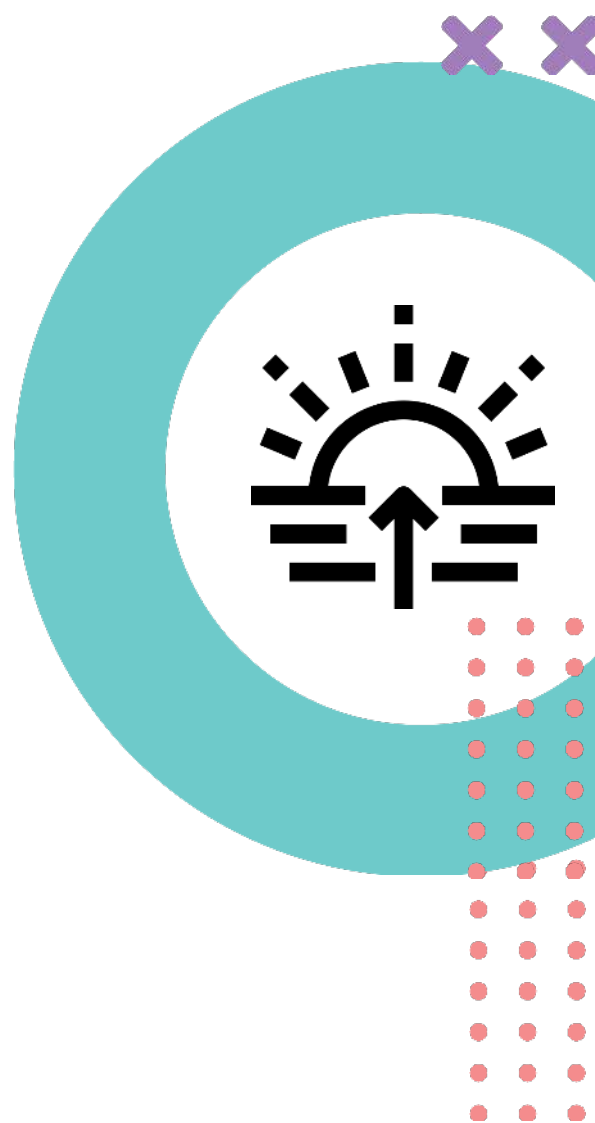
Rhythm Reminders

Before you pray, encourage everyone to lean into these 3 rhythms throughout this Ephesians journey:

- 🗣️ **Sunday = Proclamation**
- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🧡 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**

Each rhythm plays a different role in spiritual growth, but together they help move truth from: only being heard → to actually being lived.

And remember, you don't have to be perfect at this.
Just: stay engaged, stay connected and keep showing up!



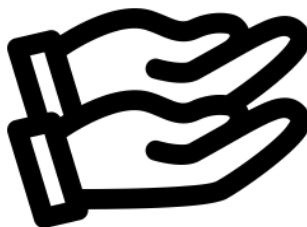
PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:50-7:55 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables into short time of prayer then hands off to **Facilitator***

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

- personal requests
- one another
- the text from Ephesians



Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



✌️ **Dismissal**

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
- come back and connect afterward if possible

Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

Table Connectors especially should:

- notice isolated or lingering people
- follow up with new guests
- help bridge conversations relationally



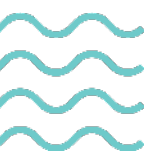
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

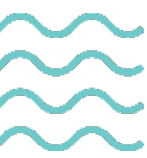
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



NOTES



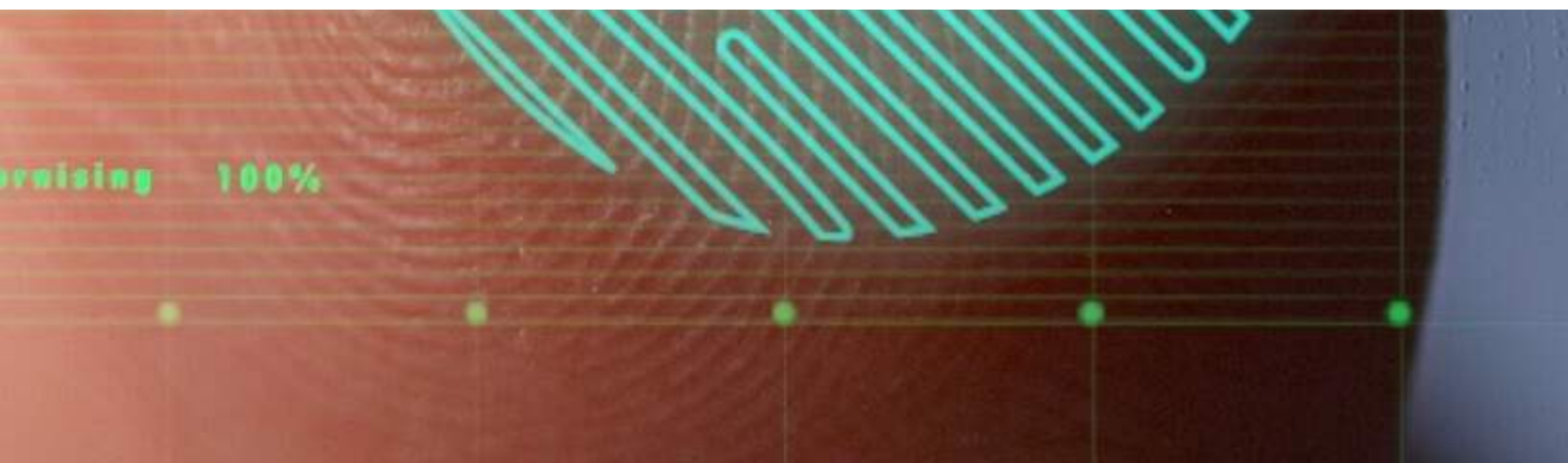
NOTES





● PHASE 1 | NEW IDENTITY

💡 **WEEK #5 | SEPTEMBER 9**





WEEK 5 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: 'In Christ,' Changes Everything**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 2:11-22

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

Main Focus:

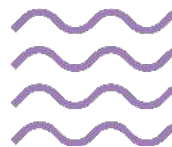
Your identity is no longer determined by where you've been or what you've done, but by where you are... *in Christ*.

Big Themes:

- peace
- reconciliation
- grace
- access to God
- belonging

Midweek Emphasis

Leader Aim: Help people see that *where* they are now determines *who* they are. Because they are in Christ, *EVERYTHING* about their identity has changed.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational, and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

Moderator: moves groups into table discussions and hands off to **Facilitators**



Table Discussion | Opening Thought

Over the past four weeks, Paul has reminded believers that they were chosen, redeemed, empowered and made alive through Christ. Now he begins drawing all of those truths together with one of his favorite phrases: “*in Christ*.” This passage reminds us that our identity *isn’t* defined by our past, our performance, or even our background. It is defined by our new position in Christ. Everything changes when Christ becomes the place where we now live, stand and belong.



Set The Scene | Background of the Book

Throughout the first half of Ephesians, Paul has been building a foundation for Christian identity. He has shown that believers are chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, empowered by the Spirit and made alive by grace. Now, Paul begins bringing those truths together by showing what it means to be “*in Christ*”. This becomes one of the central themes of the entire letter and prepares us for the practical application that follows in the second half of Ephesians.

LEADER REMINDER: Some of this may sound familiar, but repetition reinforces truth and it will help as new people join tables throughout the semester.





Set The Scene | Background of the Text

Ephesians 2:11–22 shifts from what God *has* done for us to *where we now stand* because of Christ. Paul reminds the Gentile believers of who they once were: far from God, separated from His promises and without hope. But, through the blood of Jesus, everything has changed! Those who were once far away have been brought near, *not* because of anything they accomplished, but because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross.



Read The Text | **Ephesians 2:11-22**

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

Have someone in the group pray. Ask God to help your group better understand what it means to be in Christ, to appreciate the nearness we now have because of Jesus and to live with confidence in the identity He has given us.

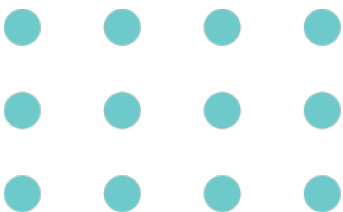


PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday's message or from this passage?

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: "*Why do you think that stood out to you?*"





Setup

In this passage, Paul asks the Church to remember who they once were, *not* to produce guilt or shame, but to magnify the grace of God.

Sometimes the best way to appreciate how far you've come is to remember where you started.



Zoom In (Text)

Before jumping into application, take a moment to observe what Paul is emphasizing.

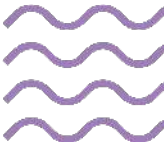
Read the Text Again Together

Ephesians 2:11–22 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the passage slowly and carefully.

As you re-read the text, notice:

- are there repeated words or ideas?
- contrasts (“once... but now”)
- descriptions of who we were apart from Christ
- descriptions of what Christ has done
- anything that surprises or encourages you?

Leader Note: This passage is jam packed full of contrasts. Encourage your group to notice how often Paul compares what *was* to what now *is*. Those contrasts help reveal the beauty of what God has done through Christ in us.



? Question #2 | Why do you think Paul tells the Gentile believers to remember who they once were?

Possible Answers:

- Remembering increases our gratitude for God's grace (vv. 11–13)
- It reminds them that salvation is entirely God's work (vv. 13–18)
- It keeps them humble (vv. 11–12)
- It helps them see how much Christ has changed them (vv. 13–16)
- Remembering the past helps them celebrate God's faithfulness (vv. 19–22)

Optional Follow Up:

- Why do you think it's important to remember where we've come from without continuing to live there?

Digging Deeper

When Paul refers to “the *uncircumcision*” and “the *circumcision*,” he’s describing the divide between Gentiles (non-Jews) and Jews (God’s covenant people under the Old Covenant). Circumcision was an outward sign of belonging to God’s covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17). Gentiles were viewed as outsiders, separated from Israel’s promises, worship and covenant blessings.

Zoom Out (Text)

Paul reminds the Gentile believers of the past *not* to shame them to live in guilt, but to magnify what Christ has accomplished. He tells them to remember so they’ll never lose the wonder of what God has done.

Theologian Insight

“The Christian life is lived by looking back to what God has done in Christ and forward to what He has promised.” — **John Stott** (paraphrased from The msg of Ephesians)





 **Optional Group Share:** Invite someone to share a quick story (1–2 minutes max) of a time when remembering where God brought them from gave them a greater appreciation for His grace. How did looking back strengthen your faith in the present?

? Question #3 | What do you think Paul means when he says those who were “far off” have been “brought near” through Christ?

Possible Answers:

- We now have direct access to God (*Hebrews 4:14–16; Romans 5:1–2*)
- Our separation from God has been removed (*Colossians 1:21–22; Isaiah 59:2*)
- Jesus accomplished what we never could (*John 14:6; Acts 4:12*)
- We no longer have to wonder where we stand with God (*Romans 8:1; Hebrews 10:19–22*)
- Nearness to God is a gift of grace, not something we earn (*Romans 3:23–24; Titus 3:4–7*)

Optional Follow Up: How should knowing you’ve been brought near to God change the way you approach Him in everyday life?

 **Digging Deeper** The phrase “far off” wasn’t just about physical distance, but it described the spiritual reality for the Gentiles. They were outside of God’s covenant people, without the privileges Israel had received (vv. 11–12). Yet, through Christ’s sacrifice, Paul says they have been “brought near.” This language echoes **Isaiah 57:19**, where God promises peace “to the far and to the near.” Paul is showing that what God promised through the prophets has now been fulfilled in Jesus.





Zoom Out (God)

Both Jew & Gentile serve a God who:

- pursues those who are far away
- fulfills every promise He makes
- removes every barrier sin created
- welcomes people through Christ

...*not* because we've found our way to Him, but because He came to us.

God isn't waiting for us to bridge the gap.

In Christ, He bridged it Himself.



Zoom Out (Us)

Theologian Insight

Sinclair Ferguson reminds us, “*Grace is not simply God’s decision to overlook our sin; it is His determination to make us His own.*”

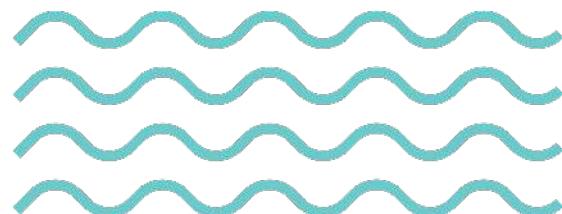
Optional Follow Up:

- Have you ever found yourself pulling away from God after you’ve sinned, instead of running toward Him? Why do you think we tend to do that?

Ephesians 2 reminds us that because of Christ, we don’t have to wonder if we’re welcome. But, we have been brought near.

Therefore, *when* we fail... our first instinct shouldn’t be to run from God, but to run to Him, knowing our acceptance is rooted in Christ and not our performance.

 **Optional Share:** Share about a time when your first instinct changed from “*Oh no, Dad’s going to find out,*” to “*I need to go get Dad and bring Him in on this.*” What changed in that relationship?



? Question #4 | What does Paul mean when he says "Jesus is our peace" instead of simply saying "Jesus gives us peace"? (v.14)

Possible Answers:

- Peace is ultimately found in a person, not a circumstance (*John 14:27*)
- Jesus reconciles us to God (*Romans 5:1*)
- Christ removes the hostility caused by sin (*Colossians 1:19–22*)
- Lasting peace comes from being united with Christ (*Philippians 4:6–7*)
- Our peace is rooted in what Jesus says, not how we feel (*Isaiah 53:5*)



Optional Follow Up:

- *When* are you most tempted to look for peace somewhere other than Christ?

Digging Deeper

Notice that Paul doesn't say Christ *made peace* first. He says "*He Himself is our peace.*" Paul is pointing his readers back to a Person before he points them to the benefits package.

Christianity isn't ultimately about receiving peace, it's about receiving Christ. But, when you receive Christ you find out that peace isn't only a gift Jesus gives but it's the result of being united to Him and walking with Him daily.

Zoom Out (Us)

Many people look for peace in:

- control
- comfort
- success
- avoiding conflict

...hoping if they can just get everything under control, they'll finally have peace. But the truth is, peace isn't the absence of problems; it's the presence of Christ.



? Question #5 | What do you think Paul means when he says Jesus is the cornerstone? (vv.20-22)

Possible Answers:



- Jesus is the foundation everything else is built upon (v. 20)
- Everything finds its alignment in Christ (vv. 20–21)
- Our lives only make sense when centered on Him (vv. 20–21)
- Christ holds everything together (v. 21)
- God's work is built on Christ, not on us (vv. 20–22)

Optional Follow Up:

- What are some things people build their lives on that can never truly support them?

Digging Deeper

In the ancient world, the cornerstone was the first and most important stone placed in a building.

It determined the alignment, stability and direction of the entire structure. If the cornerstone was even slightly off, every other stone would eventually be affected.

Zoom Out (Us)

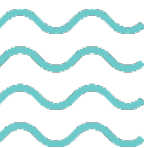
Many build their lives on:

- success
- relationships
- financial security
- approval from others

...only to discover those foundations eventually shift.

Optional Group Share

Ask someone to share about a season when something they had been depending on was shaken. Looking back, how did that experience strengthen your dependence on Christ as your foundation?



PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to **Facilitators**

Throughout the first half of Ephesians, Paul keeps reminding believers of one life-changing truth: **Your identity has changed because of Jesus.**

You are no longer defined by your past. You are no longer separated from God. You no longer have to search for peace in temporary things.

Because you are in Christ, you have been brought near, given peace and placed on a foundation that will *never* move.

The invitation this week isn't to try harder. It's to live every day from the security of who you already are in Christ.

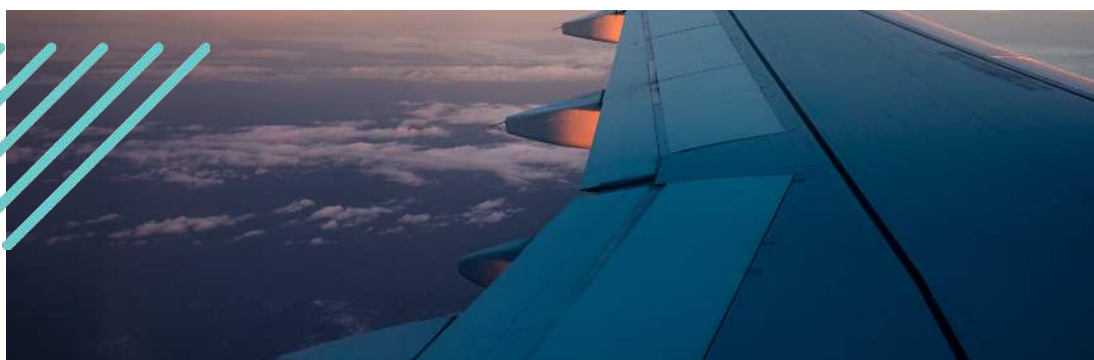
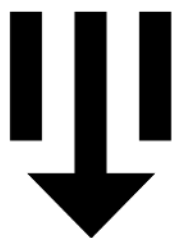
💡 Application Moment

Have everyone at the table complete this sentence:

"Because I am in Christ, I no longer have to _____."

Allow several people to share or write down their response.

Then remind your group: The Gospel doesn't just change where you'll spend eternity, it changes how you live today.





Thursday AM Application

Before your day starts tomorrow, take some time and pray this simple prayer: ***“Jesus, help me remember that my identity is found in You, not in my performance, my past or my circumstances.”***

Then **re-read Ephesians 2:13** and carry this truth with you throughout the day: *“But now in Christ Jesus **you** who once were far off **have been brought near** by the blood of Christ.”*



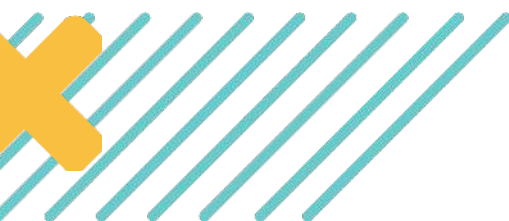
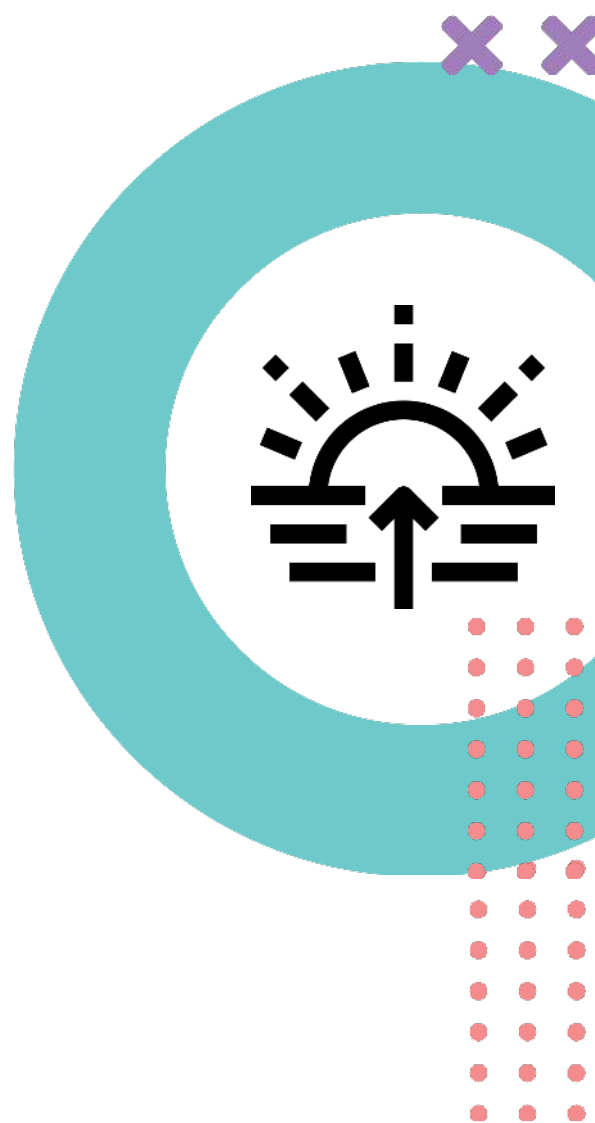
Rhythm Reminders

Before you pray, encourage everyone to lean into these 3 rhythms throughout this Ephesians journey this week:

- 🗣️ **Sunday = Proclamation**
- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🤝 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**

Each rhythm plays a different role in spiritual growth, but together they help move truth from: only being heard → to actually being lived.

And remember, you don't have to be perfect at this.
Just: stay engaged, stay connected and keep showing up!



PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:50-7:55 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables into short time of prayer then hands off to **Facilitator***

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

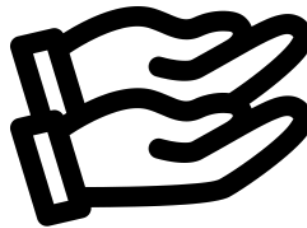
- personal needs
- one another
- truths from tonight's text

Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



Dismissal

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
- come back and connect afterward if possible

Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

Table Connectors especially should:

- notice isolated or lingering people
- follow up with new guests
- help bridge conversations relationally



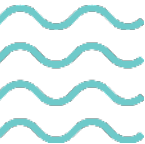
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

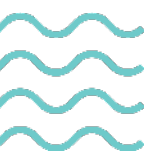
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



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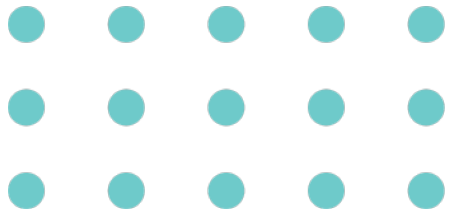




● PHASE 2 | NEW FAMILY

💡 **WEEK #6 | SEPTEMBER 16**





WEEK 6 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: Less Me, More We**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 3:1-21

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

Main Focus:

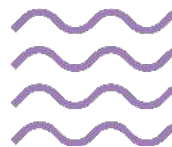
The greatest surprise in God's redemptive plan wasn't that Gentiles could be saved, it was that they would become equal: heirs, members and participants in Christ.

Big Themes:

- mystery revealed
- fellow heirs
- one body
- access to God
- together in Christ

Midweek Emphasis

Helping people see that God's plan was always bigger than individual salvation alone. In Christ, outsiders are brought in, barriers are broken and radically different people are made participants in the same promise.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational, and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

Moderator: moves groups into table discussions and hands off to **Facilitators**

💬 Table Discussion | Opening Thought

For the past five weeks, we've focused on who we are in Christ: chosen, adopted, redeemed, made alive and brought near by grace.

Now we begin a new phase in Ephesians. Paul shifts from our identity to our purpose together. The question is no longer simply, “*Who am I?*” It’s becoming, “*Now that I know who I am in Christ, how should I live with His people and participate in His mission?*”

As we continue through Ephesians, we’ll discover that the Gospel doesn’t just change us, it changes how we relate to one another and how God chooses to work through His Church.





Set The Scene | Background of the Text

Ephesians 3 begins with what seems like an interruption. Paul starts to pray for the church (v.1), but before he does, he pauses to explain why he's in prison and why he gladly gave his life to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul wants the believers to understand that his imprisonment isn't proof that God's plan has failed. In fact, it's evidence that God's plan is advancing.

The mystery God kept hidden for generations has now been revealed: Through Jesus Christ, people from every nation can become full participants in God's promises.



Read The Text | Ephesians 3:1-21



Pray The Text

Have someone in the group pray. Ask God to help your group better understand His plan for the Church, to see the beauty of the Gospel reaching all people and to faithfully steward the calling He has given each of us.

PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | (Ephesians 3:1-6) Why do you think Paul describes himself as “a prisoner of Christ Jesus” instead of a prisoner of Rome?

Possible Answers

- Paul saw God's sovereignty over his circumstances (v. 1)
- His identity wasn't defined by his situation (v. 1)
- Paul viewed suffering as part of his calling (vv. 1, 13)
- He believed God could accomplish His purposes even through hardship (vv. 2, 7-8)
- Paul cared more about God's mission than his own comfort (vv. 8-9)





Optional Follow Up

How does your perspective change when you see your circumstances through God's purposes instead of your own?

Digging Deeper

The Greek word for “*prisoner*” is *desmios* (δέσμιος), meaning someone who is bound or in chains.

Paul isn't saying that Jesus imprisoned him. Rather, he's acknowledging that his life belongs to Christ. Although Rome physically held him in chains, Paul knew he was ultimately Christ's servant and even his imprisonment was being used to accomplish God's purposes.

Rome controlled Paul's circumstances, but Christ directed Paul's life.

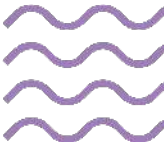
Read the Text Again Together

Ephesians 3:1–13 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read this portion of the passage slowly and carefully.

As you read the passage again, pay attention to:

- how Paul describes himself
- what surprises you about Paul's attitude toward suffering
- what Paul says about God's purpose and plan

Then ask your group again: “*Now, what stands out most to you from this passage?*”



? Question #2 | (Ephesians 3:2-6) What does Paul mean when he says the “mystery” has now been made known?

Possible Answers:

- God’s plan was hidden but is now fully revealed in Christ (vv. 3–5)
- The Gospel was always intended for all nations (vv. 6)
- Gentiles are now equal heirs of God’s promises (v. 6)
- God’s plan was revealed progressively throughout Scripture (vv. 4–5)
- The mystery wasn’t *new*, but it was *newly revealed* (vv. 3–6)

Optional Follow Up:

- Why do you think God revealed His plan gradually instead of all at once?

Digging Deeper

When Paul says, “mystery” (mystērion μυστήριον), in the New Testament, this mystery isn’t something mysterious in the sense of impossible to understand. Mystery is a truth that was once hidden but has now been revealed by God. The mystery Paul celebrates isn’t that Gentiles could be saved. The mystery is that through Christ they are now fellow heirs, members of the same body and partakers of the same promise (v. 6) equal participants in God’s redemptive plan i.e. - ‘*No cheap seats*’ in Christ.

Zoom Out (Text)

Throughout the Old Testament, God repeatedly promised that all nations would one day be blessed through His redemptive plan. What was once hinted at through the prophets has now been fully revealed in Christ. The mystery wasn’t that God changed His plan, it was that He unveiled the plan He had intended all along.





? Question #3 | (Ephesians 3:7-10)

According to Paul, why did God reveal this mystery and entrust him with the Gospel?

Possible Answers:

- To proclaim the riches of Christ to all people (vv. 7-8)
- To make God's plan known (v. 9)
- To unite people in Christ (vv. 6, 10)
- To display God's wisdom through the Church (v. 10)
- To fulfill God's eternal purpose (v. 11)

Optional Follow Up:

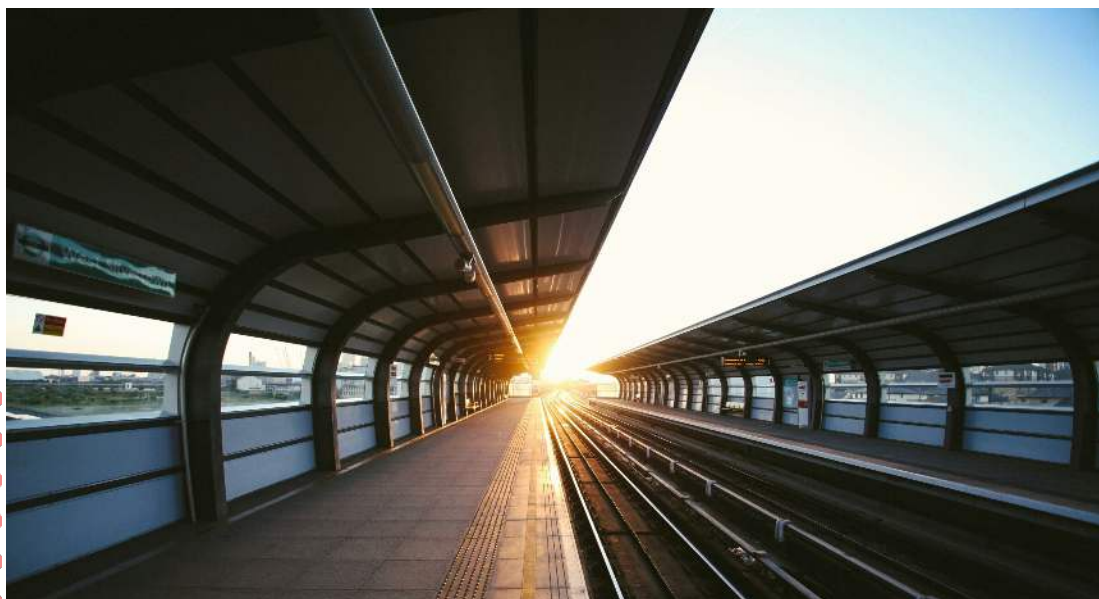
- What does it tell us about God that He chooses ordinary people to make His extraordinary plan known?



Digging Deeper

Paul calls himself “the very least of all the saints” (v. 8), yet God entrusted him with an extraordinary mission. Throughout Scripture, God consistently delights in using ordinary, unlikely people to accomplish His purposes, *not* because of their ability, but because of His grace.

It's easy to see that Paul never got over the fact that the man who once persecuted the Church had now been entrusted to preach Christ to the nations.





Zoom Out (God)

Think of how Paul describes God in this text. He is a God who:

- delights in showing grace
- accomplishes extraordinary things through ordinary lives
- receives the glory for His work

...not because people are impressive, but because His grace is.

The more clearly we see God's heart, the more willing we become to let Him have ours.

Theologian Insight

"God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supply." — **Hudson Taylor**

Optional Follow Up

- Is there an area in your life where you've been waiting to feel more qualified before saying yes to God?

Zoom Out (Us)

If we're being honest, sometimes it's easy to believe that God only uses:

- the *most* gifted
- the *most* qualified
- the *most* experienced
- the people who "*have it all together*"

The beauty of Ephesians 3 is that Paul reminds us that God's calling isn't based on our ability, but it's based on His grace.

He isn't looking for perfect people. He's looking for willing people.

 **Cross Reference: Exodus 3-4** When God called Moses, Moses immediately focused on his inadequacies:

- "Who am I...?" (3:11) | "What if they don't believe me?" (4:1) | "I am slow of speech..." (4:10) | "Please send someone else." (4:13)

Yet, God never answered Moses by telling him how qualified he was. Instead, He repeatedly reminded Moses who He was:

- "I will be with you." (3:12) | "I AM WHO I AM." (3:14) | "Who has made man's mouth?... Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth." (4:11-12)



? Question #4 | (Ephesians 3:14-19) What stands out to you about Paul's prayer for the church?

Possible Answers:

- Paul prays for inner strength through the Spirit (vv.16-17)
- He prays that Christ would dwell deeply in believers' hearts (v.17)
- He prays they would be rooted and grounded in love (v.17)
- He prays they would better understand the vastness of Christ's love (vv.18-19)
- He prays they would be filled with all the fullness of God (v.19)



Optional Follow Up:

- Why do you think Paul prays for inner strength and a deeper understanding of Christ's love instead of praying for people's circumstances to change?

Digging Deeper

(v.17) The word for “dwell” is *katoikeō* (κατοικέω) and it means to settle down, make a permanent home or reside fully. Paul isn't praying that Christ would just visit believers, but he's praying that Christ would be fully at home in every area of their lives.

Optional Follow-Ups

- Have you ever noticed that God was doing a deeper work in you before He changed what was happening around you?

Optional Leader Share

Share a time when Christ became “more at home” in an area of your life that you had been holding onto. What changed as you surrendered that area to Him?



? Question #5 | (Ephesians 3:20-21)

**What do you think
Paul means when
he says God is able
to do**

**“immeasurably
more than all we
ask or imagine”?**



Possible Answers:

- God’s power is greater than our expectations (v.20)
- God often works in ways we could never anticipate (v.20)
- God’s ability isn’t limited by our imagination (v.20)
- God works according to His power already at work within us (v.20)
- Everything God does ultimately brings Him glory (v.21)

Optional Follow Up:

- How do these 2 verses challenge the way you think about God or the way you pray?

Zoom Out (Us)

Sometimes we limit God by:

- what we’ve experienced
- what seems possible
- what we can understand
- what we’ve stopped praying for

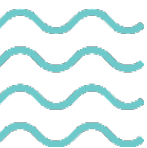
But, Ephesians 3 reminds us that God’s ability is never limited by our finite minds or imaginations.

Theologian Insight

“God is always doing 10,000 things in your life and you may be aware of three of them.” — John Piper

Optional Leader Share

Share a brief story (1–2 minutes max) of a time when God answered a prayer in a way that was far better (or completely different) than you expected. Looking back, how did it grow your trust in Him?



PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to **Facilitators**

Throughout Ephesians 3, Paul reminds us that God's plan has always been bigger than any one person. He invites ordinary people into His extraordinary story.

The same God who revealed His mystery, strengthened His Church and worked through Paul's life is still at work today.

Our role isn't to build God's Kingdom by our own strength. Our role is to faithfully participate in what He is already doing.

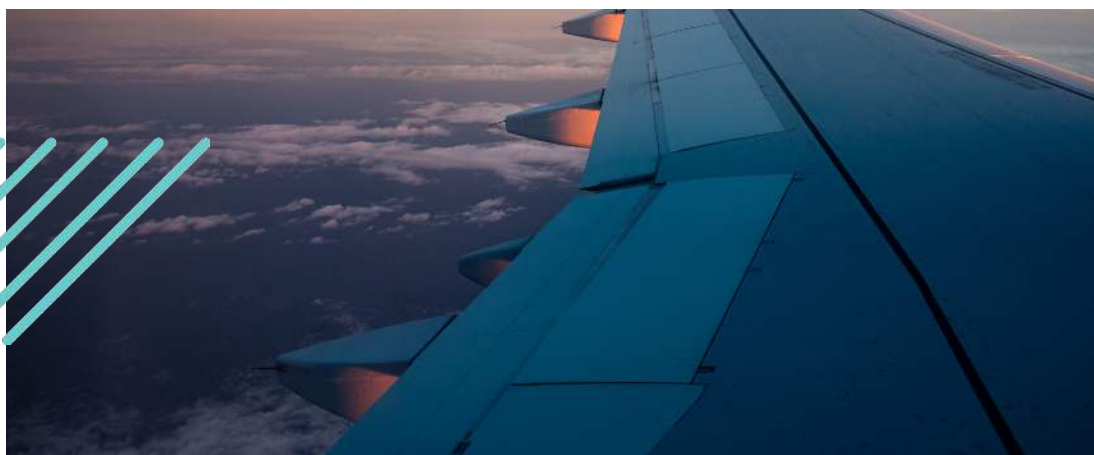
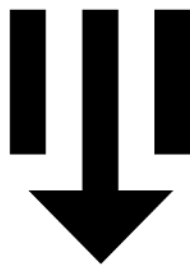
💬 Application Moment

Have everyone at the table complete this sentence:

"This week, I want Christ to be more at home in _____".

Allow several people to share if they are willing.

Then remind your group: God isn't looking for perfect people. He's looking for hearts that are fully surrendered to Him.





Thursday AM Application

Before your day starts tomorrow re-read **Ephesians 3:20–21** slowly and throughout the day as yourself:

“Am I relying on my strength today, or trusting the power already at work within me?”



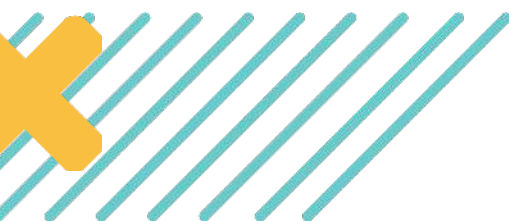
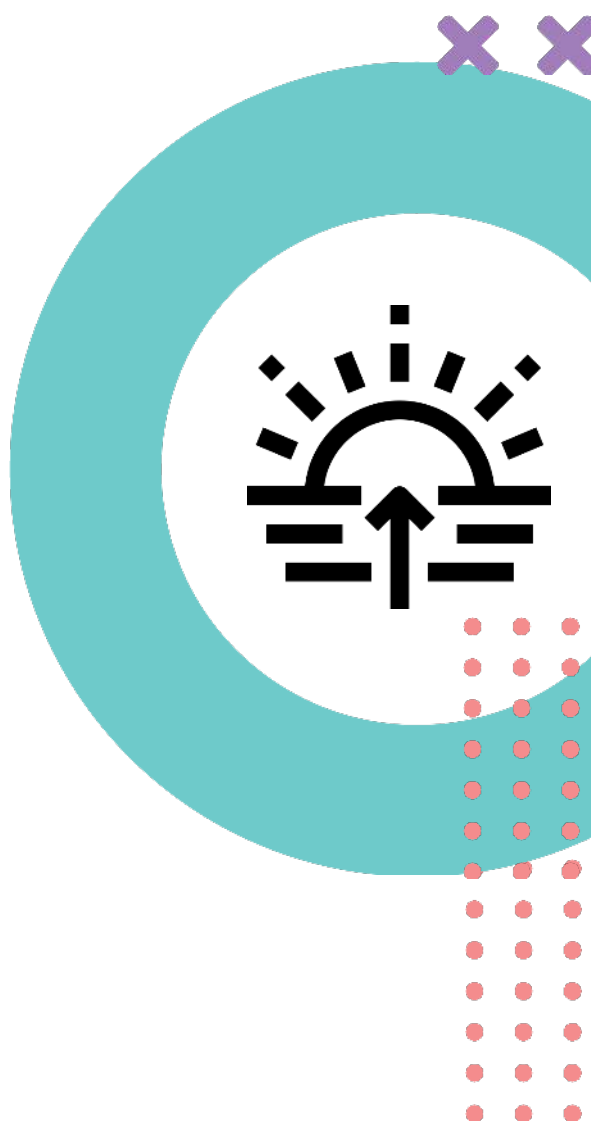
Rhythm Reminders

Before you pray, encourage everyone to lean into these 3 rhythms throughout this Ephesians journey this week:

- 🗣️ **Sunday = Proclamation**
- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🤝 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**

Each rhythm plays a different role in spiritual growth, but together they help move truth from: only being heard → to actually being lived.

And remember, you don't have to be perfect at this.
Just: stay engaged, stay connected and keep showing up!



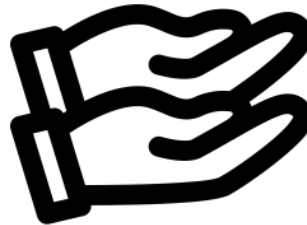
PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:50-7:55 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables into short time of prayer then hands off to **Facilitator***

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

- personal needs
- one another
- truths from tonight's text



Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



✌️ **Dismissal**

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
- come back and connect afterward if possible

Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

Table Connectors especially should:

- notice isolated or lingering people
- follow up with new guests
- help bridge conversations relationally



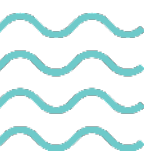
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

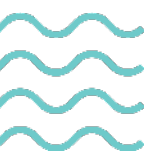
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



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● PHASE 2 | NEW FAMILY

💡 **WEEK #7 | SEPTEMBER 23**



WEEK 7 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: Equipped To Build**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 4:1-16

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

Main Focus:

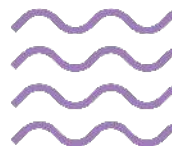
Because we share *one* Savior, *one* faith and *one* calling God invites us to pursue unity with humility, maturity and love.

Big Themes:

- walk worthy
- humility
- maturity
- gentleness
- patience
- the gift of grace

Midweek Emphasis:

Helping people see that unity isn't something we create, it's something we protect.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

Moderator: moves groups into table discussions and hands off to **Facilitators**

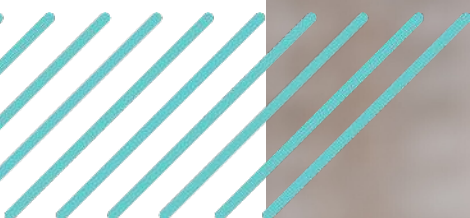
💬 Table Discussion | Opening Thought

For the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul focused on what God has done, who we are in Christ, the grace we've received and the new life we've been given through Jesus. Now, Paul begins answering a new question: "*If all of that is true... how should we live together in this family of God?*"

He doesn't tell believers to *become* worthy of God's calling. Instead, he urges them to *live in a manner worthy* of the calling they've already received (4:1). The Christian life is about allowing the Gospel to shape the way we live, love and relate to one another.

📖 Set The Scene | Background of the Text

Ephesians 4 marks a major turning point of this letter. After spending three chapters explaining what Christ has accomplished, Paul now moves to some of the practical implications of the Gospel. The first application isn't about spiritual gifts, marriage, parenting or spiritual warfare. It's unity. Before Paul addresses what Christians should do, he reminds them how they should treat one another: with humility, gentleness, patience and love. Healthy churches aren't built merely on right doctrine, but on people whose lives reflect the character of Christ to one another.





Read The Text | Ephesians 4:1-16

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

Have someone in the group pray. Ask God to help your group not only understand His Word, but also live it (*James 1:22*). Pray for humility, unity and a willingness to reflect Christ in the way you relate to everyone.

PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday or from this passage?

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: *"Why do you think that stood out to you?"*



Setup

Paul has been building toward this moment, here was his setup:

- God *chose* us.
- God *adopted* us.
- God *redeemed* us.
- God *brought us near*.
- God *made us* one.

Now Paul explains how we protect what Christ has already accomplished.

Unity isn't just a nice idea for the Church, but it is one of the clearest demonstrations of the Gospel.





You may recall that Jesus once prayed that His followers would be *one* (*John 17:20–23*). Why? Because when believers walk together in humility, patience, forgiveness and love, the world catches a glimpse of Christ. That’s why Paul begins the practical half of Ephesians with unity.

Before he talks about marriage, parenting, work, or spiritual warfare, he reminds believers that how we treat one another matters. The unity of the Church doesn’t create the Gospel... but, it certainly displays the Gospel.



Zoom In (Text)

Before we rush to application or try to “figure everything out,” let’s slow down and sit in what Paul is saying.

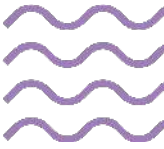
Read the Text Again Together

Ephesians 4:1–16 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the passage slowly and carefully.

Before jumping into interpretation, simply notice the text:

- repeated words or ideas
- commands Paul gives to believers
- qualities that strengthen unity
- different roles and gifts mentioned
- words or ideas that point toward spiritual maturity

Then ask your group again: “*Now, what stands out most to you from this passage?*”



? Question #2 | (Ephesians 4:1-3) What do you think Paul means when he says to “walk in a manner worthy of the calling” you’ve received?

Possible Answers:

- Live in a way that reflects your identity in Christ (v.1)
- Let your daily life match what you believe (vv.1-2)
- Pursue humility, gentleness, patience and love (v.2)
- Make every effort to protect the unity of the Church (v.3)
- Honor Christ in the way you treat others (vv.2-3)

Theologian Insight

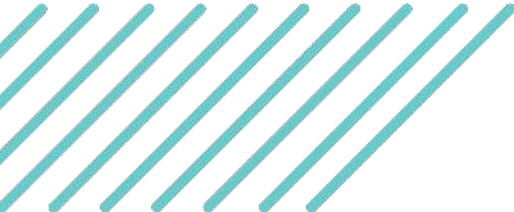
“Your life is the theology people read every day.” — Voddie Baucham

Optional Follow Up:

- If someone watched your life for one week, what would they conclude you *truly believe* about Jesus, based on how you behave?

Zoom Out (Text)

Notice that Paul doesn’t say, “Walk worthy so you can receive God’s calling.” He says, “Walk worthy of the calling you have received.” That order matters. We don’t obey to become God’s children, but we obey because we already are.





? Question #3 | (Ephesians 4:4-6) Why do you think Paul repeats the word “one” seven different times?

Possible Answers:

- Our unity is rooted in God, not ourselves
- We have more in common than what separates us
- Every believer shares the same hope and Savior
- The Gospel unites people from different backgrounds into one family
- Christian unity is built on shared truth, not shared preferences

Digging Deeper

Paul uses the word “one” seven times:

- *one* body
- *one* Spirit
- *one* hope
- *one* Lord
- *one* faith
- *one* Baptism
- *one* God and Father of all

Paul isn't saying believers are all the same in uniformity. Rather, he's reminding the church that their deepest identity is found in what they share in Christ, *not* in their personalities, opinions or backgrounds.

Optional Follow Up:

- Which of the seven truths do you think Christians are most likely to forget in everyday life?





Zoom Out (God)

At the center of this text is a God who:

- calls people into one family
- unites believers through one Savior
- gives one shared hope
- invites His people to reflect His unity

...because God's desire has always been to bring people together in Christ.

Unity was never our idea, it's always been God's design.

And it's part of why the Gospel doesn't just reconcile us to God, but it reconciles us to one another.

Optional Follow Up:

- What are some "walls" people tend to build today that the Gospel tears down?

Possible Answers:

- politics
- race/ethnicity
- denominational barriers

Zoom Out (Us)

Many people build relationships around:

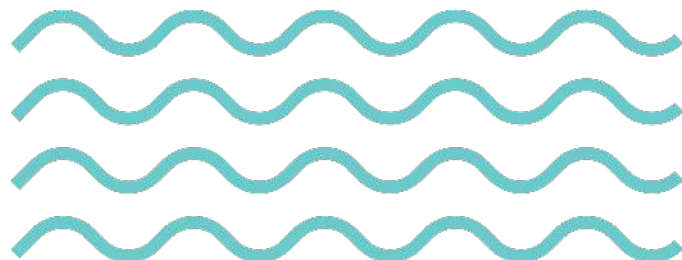
- similar personalities
- common interests
- shared opinions
- personal preferences

And while all those things may be good, ... those things alone cannot produce lasting unity.

 **Cross Reference | John 17:20–23:** We mentioned earlier that Jesus prayed that His followers would be one "*so that the world may believe that You have sent Me.*"

Discussion Prompt: From that verse, what does Jesus say is at stake when believers pursue or neglect unity?

 **Optional Group Share:** Think about someone in your church or at work who is very different from you (do not name names). What is one thing you both share in common because of Christ?



? Question #4 | (Ephesians 4:7-13) Why do you think Christ gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers to the Church?

Possible Answers:

- To equip believers for ministry (v. 12)
- To help the Church grow into spiritual maturity (vv. 12-13)
- To build up the body of Christ (v. 12)
- To help believers grow in unity and truth (vv. 13-15)
- To prepare God's people to continue Christ's mission (vv. 11-12)



Digging Deeper

In verse 11, Paul describes five leadership roles Christ gave to His Church, here's a snapshot of these:

- **Apostles** — Those uniquely commissioned by Christ to establish the early Church and lay its doctrinal foundation (*Ephesians 2:20*)
- **Prophets** — Those who faithfully communicated God's truth to strengthen, encourage and guide the early Church before the New Testament was complete
- **Evangelists** — Those especially gifted in proclaiming the Gospel and helping people come to faith in Christ
- **Shepherds** (Pastors) — Those who lovingly care for, lead and protect God's people
- **Teachers** — Those who faithfully explain and apply God's Word so believers grow in truth and maturity

Paul's emphasis isn't simply on these individual roles, but it's on why Christ gave them: "*to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ*" (v. 12). Christ's leaders are meant to prepare God's people, *not* replace them.

Optional Follow Up:

- How does this passage challenge the idea that ministry is primarily a "Pastor's," responsibility?



? Question #5 | (Ephesians 4:14-16) According to Paul, what does spiritual maturity look like?

Possible Answers:

- Being rooted in truth instead of easily influenced (v. 14)
- Speaking the truth in love (v. 15)
- Growing to become more like Christ (v. 15)
- Every believer doing their part (v. 16)
- The whole Church growing together in love (v. 16)

Theologian Insight

"Truth becomes hard if it is not softened by love, and love becomes soft if it is not strengthened by truth."

— John Stott

Optional Follow Up:

- Which is more difficult for you: speaking the truth or speaking it with love?

Zoom Out (Us)

Many people think they have to choose between:

- being honest or being kind
- standing for truth or preserving relationships
- conviction or compassion

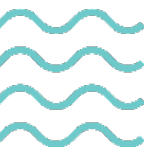
...and often we end up sacrificing one for the other.

But, Ephesians 4 presents a better way!

As we speak the truth in love, God uses our relationships to help us become more like Christ.

Spiritual maturity isn't just about knowing the truth. It's about living the truth with love.

 **Optional Leader Share:** Tell a brief story (1–2 minutes max) about someone who lovingly spoke a difficult truth into your life. Looking back, how did God use that conversation to help you grow?



PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to Facilitators*

In Ephesians 4, Paul reminds us that the Christian life isn't just about believing the right things, it's about living in a way that reflects the Gospel.

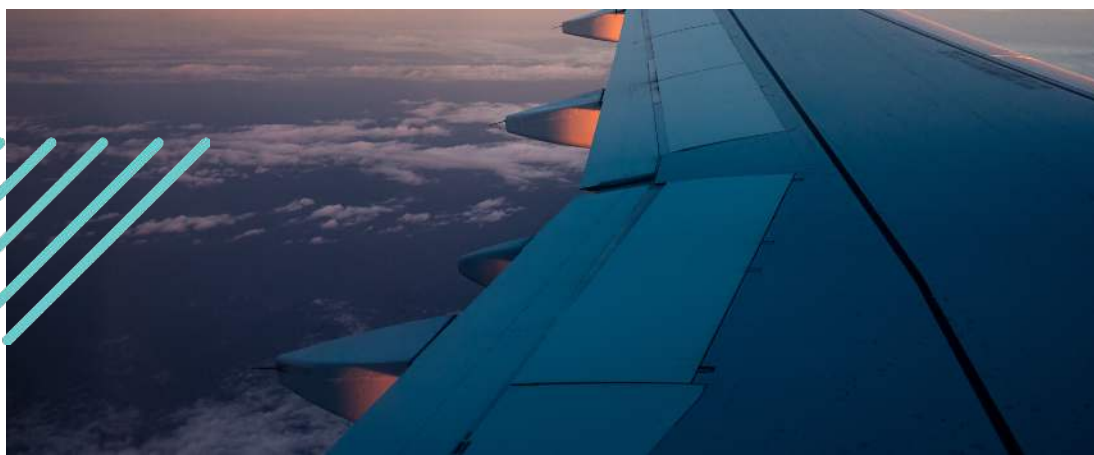
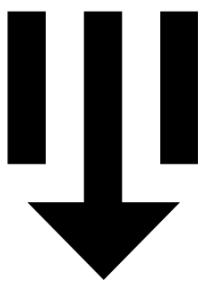
As followers of Jesus, we're called to protect the unity Christ has already created, encouraging one another toward maturity and speaking the truth in love.

Every believer has a role to play as Christ builds His Church. And it's part of why spiritual maturity isn't measured by how much we know, but it's seen in lives that increasingly look like Jesus.

The beautiful picture Paul gives is of a Church where every believer is growing, every believer is serving and every believer is helping someone else become more like Christ.

That's how the body grows. That's how Christ is put on display.

Walking worthy isn't about walking in perfection. It's about taking the next faithful step of obedience as Christ continues to shape us into His image... together as *one*.





Thursday AM Application

Before your day begins tomorrow, pray this simple prayer: “***Jesus, help me to walk worthy of the calling You’ve given me. Make me more like You in the way I think, speak, love and serve others today.***”

Then spend a few minutes in worship listening to the song, “*More Like Jesus*” by One Voice Worship (or another worship song that reminds you of this week’s big ideas).

As you worship, ask yourself:

- Where is Jesus inviting me to become more like Him?
- How can I protect unity and reflect Christ in my relationships today?



Rhythm Reminders

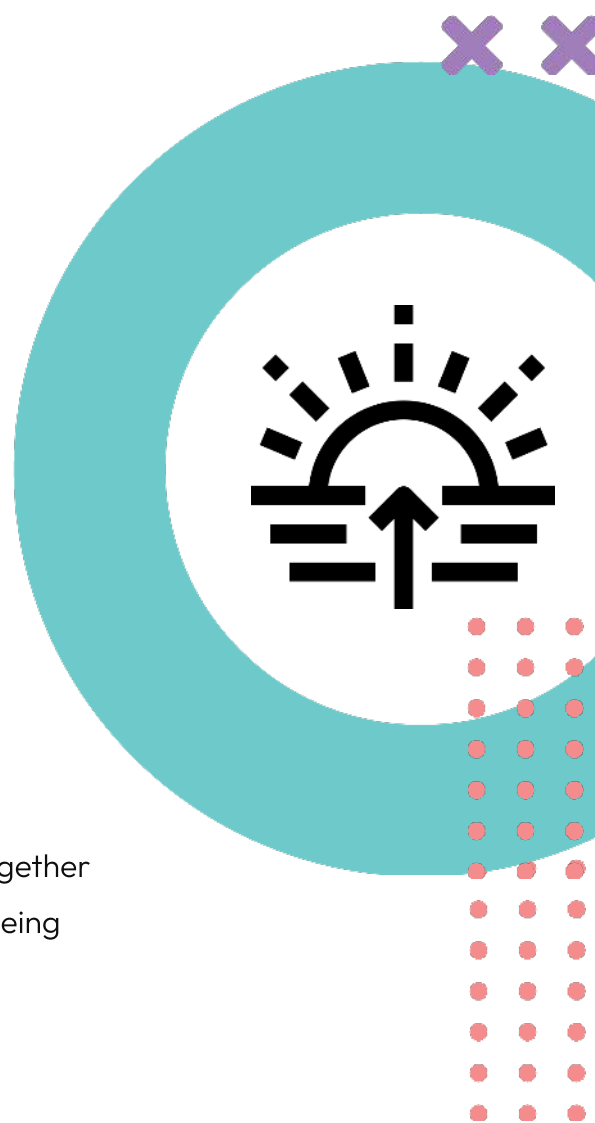
Before you pray, encourage everyone to lean into these 3 rhythms throughout this Ephesians journey this week:

- 🗣️ **Sunday = Proclamation**
- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🤝 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**

Each rhythm plays a different role in spiritual growth, but together they help move truth from: only being heard → to actually being lived.

And remember, you don’t have to be perfect at this.

Just: stay engaged, stay connected and keep showing up!



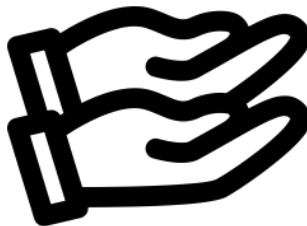
PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:50-7:55 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables into short time of prayer then hands off to **Facilitator***

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

- personal needs
- one another
- truths from tonight's text



Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



✌️ **Dismissal**

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
- come back and connect afterward if possible

Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

Table Connectors especially should:

- notice isolated or lingering people
- follow up with new guests
- help bridge conversations relationally



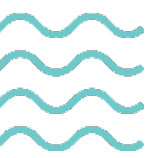
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

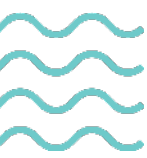
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



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● PHASE 2 | NEW FAMILY

💡 **WEEK #8 | SEPTEMBER 30**



WEEK 8 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: New Looks Good On You**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 4:17-32

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

Main Focus:

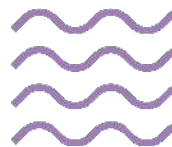
Because we have been made new in Christ, God calls us to put off our old way of living and put on a new way of life that reflects His character.

Big Themes:

- new self/old self
- renewed mind
- holiness
- truth
- forgiveness
- Spirit-filled living
- transformation

Midweek Emphasis:

Helping people see that following Jesus isn't simply about avoiding sin, it's about becoming a new kind of person. The Gospel doesn't just change our end destination; it changes our desires, our relationships and the way we live every day.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational, and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

Moderator: moves groups into table discussions and hands off to **Facilitators**



Table Discussion | Opening Thought

Have you ever tried to break a bad habit or change something about yourself? Most of us know that lasting change is difficult. We can modify our behavior for a while, but eventually we tend to drift back into old patterns. Paul understands that struggle. 😊

That's why, in Ephesians 4, he doesn't just tell believers to *stop* doing certain things, but he points them to something much deeper. The Christian life isn't about becoming a better version of your old self. It's about living as the new person Christ has already made you to be.

As you read today's passage, notice how often Paul contrasts the old self with the new self and how true transformation begins with a renewed mind before it changes our actions.





Read The Text | Ephesians 4:17-32

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

Have someone in the group pray. Ask God to renew your minds, reveal any areas where you're still holding on to your old way of life and help your group increasingly reflect the character of Christ in both words and actions.

PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday or from this passage?

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: *"Why do you think that stood out to you?"*



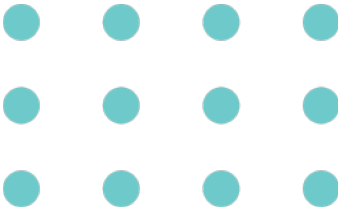
Setup

Every day, we're being shaped by something. Our culture tells us to follow our hearts, define our own truth and become whoever we want to be.

But, Paul reminds believers that lasting transformation doesn't happen by looking inward...it happens by being renewed in Christ.

The Christian life isn't about managing bad habits or becoming a better version of our old-selves. It's about continually putting off the old self, renewing our minds through God's truth and putting on the new self that reflects the character of Christ. Real change *isn't* produced by willpower alone. It's the result of God's Spirit transforming us from the inside out.





Zoom In (Text)

Before we rush to application or try to “figure everything out,” let's slow down and sit in what Paul is actually saying.

Read the Text Again Together

Ephesians 4:17–32 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the passage slowly and carefully.

Before jumping into answers, simply notice:

- the contrasts Paul makes
- the repeated pattern of put off and put on
- any reasons Paul gives for changing our behavior
- how each command points back to our identity in Christ

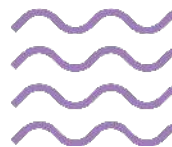
Optional Follow Up:

- From the commands in this verse which one feels most challenging personally for you?

Digging Deeper

At first glance, **Ephesians 4:25–32** can feel like a list of unrelated commands. But, notice Paul's pattern. He doesn't just go “Hey, stop sinning.” Instead, he repeatedly calls believers to put off the old way of living and put on a new way of living that reflects Christ.

Biblical transformation isn't just about removing sinful habits, it's about replacing them with Christlike ones. Every “put off” is followed by a “put on.”



? Question #2 | (Ephesians 4:17-32)

According to Paul, where does lasting change begin?

Possible Answers:

- In a renewed mind (v. 23)
- By putting off the old self (v. 22)
- By putting on the new self (v. 24)
- By learning Christ and His truth (vv. 20–21)
- By becoming who God has already made us to be (vv. 22–24)

Optional Follow Up:

- Which part of the “old self” is hardest for people to leave behind? Why?

Digging Deeper

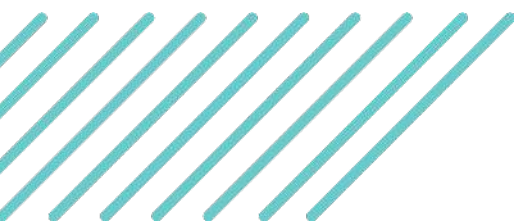
The word for “*renewed*” (v. 23) is *ananeoō* (ἀνανεόω), meaning to be made new again or continually renewed. It’s written in a way that describes an ongoing process, *not* a one-time event.

Paul challenges believers that transformation *begins* with a renewed mind. As God’s truth reshapes the way we think, it begins to reshape the way we live.

💬 **Theologian Insight** “*Holiness is not merely the absence of sin; it is the presence of Christlike character.*” — **Sinclair Ferguson**

Optional Follow Up:

- What’s one area where God is inviting you not just to stop a sinful habit, but to grow in Christlike character?





? Question #3 | What patterns do you notice in the commands Paul gives throughout this passage?

Possible Answers:

- Paul tells believers what to put off and what to put on (vv. 25–29)
- Every sinful habit is replaced with a Christlike one (vv. 25–29)
- Our words and actions should build others up, not tear them down (v. 29)
- God cares about both our hearts and our relationships (vv. 25–30)
- Spiritual growth is seen in everyday choices (vv. 25–30)

Optional Follow Up:

- What do the patterns you see teach us about how God changes people?



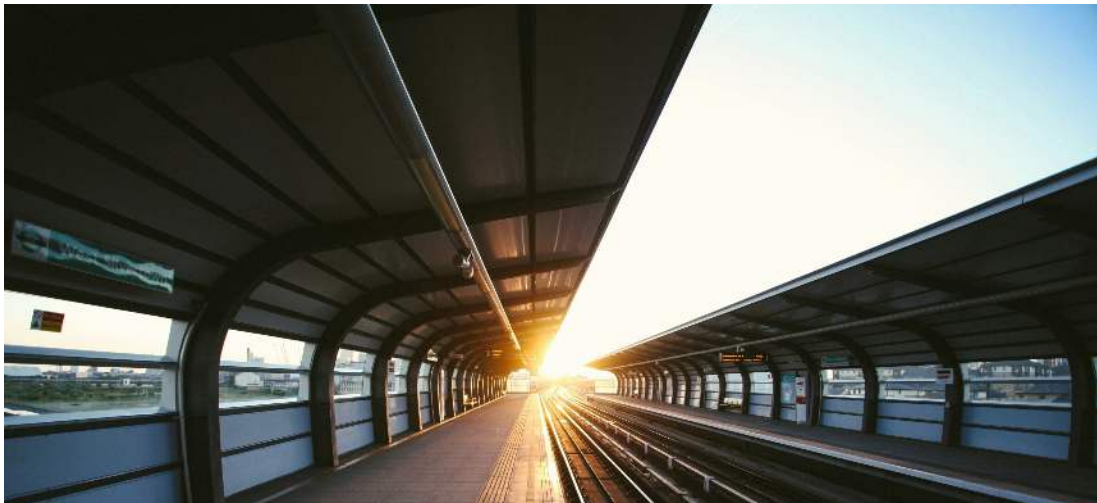
Digging Deeper

One thing that should stand out in this text is how relational these commands are. Nearly every instruction Paul gives affects someone else: our words, our anger, our honesty and our forgiveness.

Paul is reiterating that spiritual maturity *isn't* measured only by our private devotion to God but by the way we treat the people around us.

Option Follow Up:

- If someone experienced Jesus *only* through the way you treated them this week, what would they learn about Him?





Zoom Out (God)

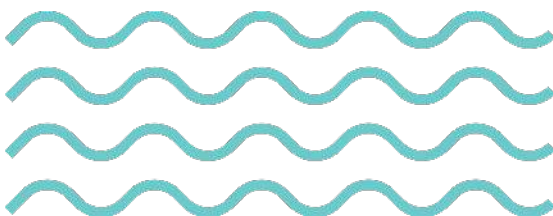
Make no mistake, God *is* in the business of restoration.

He doesn't just remove what is broken, He replaces it with something that reflects His character.

Throughout Scripture, God's work is never just about saying "*no*" to sin, but it's about transforming people into the image of His Son.

Therefore, the Gospel isn't merely about what God saves us from, but it's also about what God saves us for.

 **Optional Share:** Share a time when God transformed one of your responses, such as: anger, speech, generosity or forgiveness. What helped you move from the "old self" to the "new self" in that moment?



Zoom Out (Us)

It's easy to think spiritual growth is measured by all the things we've *stopped* doing.

But following Jesus *isn't* simply about avoiding sin.

It's about becoming the kind of person who naturally speaks truth, extends grace, works with integrity and builds others up.

When Christ changes your heart, new habits will surely begin to follow.

Non-Theologian Insight

"You cannot microwave sanctification. God forms Christlike character in us over time through faithful obedience in walking with Him."

Optional Follow Ups:

- Why do you think it is often easier to be patient with ourselves, or with others... but *not* both?
- Which sanctification process do you struggle with most (yours or others)?

? Question #4 | (Ephesians 4:30-32) Why do you think Paul connects forgiveness with remembering what Christ has done for us?

Possible Answers:

- We forgive because God has first forgiven us (*Matthew 18:21-35*)
- Forgiveness reflects the mercy we've received in Christ (*Colossians 3:12-13*)
- Bitterness gives way to healing when we choose forgiveness (*Hebrews 12:14-15*)
- Kindness and compassion reveal the heart of God (*Luke 6:35-36*)
- Forgiveness frees us to love others as Christ has loved us (*John 13:34-35*)

Optional Follow Ups:

- Which is more difficult for you: letting go of bitterness or actively extending forgiveness? Why?



Zoom Out (Us)

Forgiveness becomes incredibly difficult when we minimize our own sin and magnify everyone else's.

The more we see ourselves as "*basically good people who deserve better*," the harder it becomes to extend grace to others.

But, the more we grasp the depth of our own sin... and the incredible mercies God shows us through Christ... the more our hearts are softened toward others.

We forgive *not* because others deserve it, but we forgive because we know we didn't deserve the forgiveness we received in the first place.



? Question #5 | (Ephesians 4:30) What do you think Paul means when he says, “Do not *grieve* the Holy Spirit of God”?

Possible Answers:

- God the Holy Spirit is a Person who can be grieved, *not* merely a force or influence (*John 14:16–17*)
- Sin damages our relationship with God and others (*Isaiah 63:10*)



Digging Deeper

The word “*grieve*” means to cause sorrow or deep distress. Paul isn’t saying believers “*lose*,” the Holy Spirit when they sin. Instead, he’s reminding us that the Holy Spirit is a Person who loves us, dwells in us and is personally invested in our Christ-like growth.

Because we belong to Jesus, our choices don’t just affect us, they either cooperate with or resist the Spirit’s transforming work in our lives.



Zoom Out (Us)



Theologian Insight

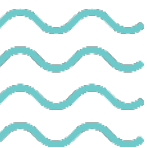
“*The Spirit who indwells us is not merely the source of power, but the presence of a Holy Person.*” — **Sinclair Ferguson**

Paul reminds us that **sin is also relational**. That our sin grieves the God who has loved us, pursued us and made His home within us through His Spirit.

Living by the Spirit (*Romans 8:4*) *isn’t* about trying to avoid making God angry. It’s about responding to the God who has chosen to make His home in us.

Optional Follow Ups:

- Is there an area of your life where you’ve been saying “*yes*” while the Holy Spirit has been gently saying “*no*”?
- How might your relationship with God change if you responded to His conviction instead of resisting it?



PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to **Facilitators**

In Ephesians 4, Paul reminds us that following Jesus is more than changing our behavior, it's becoming a new kind of person.

As our minds are renewed by God's truth, we begin putting off the old way of living and putting on the character of Christ.

This kind of transformation doesn't happen overnight. It's a lifelong journey of daily surrender, where the Holy Spirit patiently shapes us into the image of Jesus. As we become more like Christ, our words become more truthful, our hearts become more forgiving, our relationships become healthier and our lives become a clearer reflection of the Gospel.

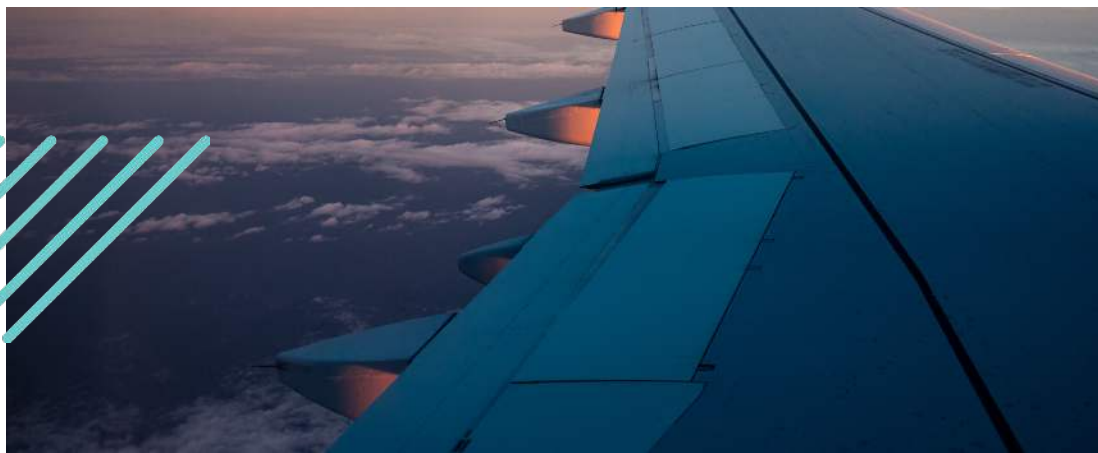
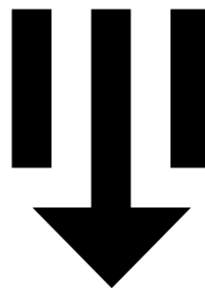
💬 Application Moment

Have everyone at the table write down and complete this sentence:

"This week, I want to put off _____ and put on _____."

Examples:

- fear → trust
- bitterness → forgiveness
- selfishness → generosity
- harsh words → encouragement
- dishonesty → truth





Thursday AM Application

As you start your day tomorrow, pray this prayer: “**Holy Spirit, renew my mind today. Help me to recognize what needs to be put off and give me the strength to put on the character of Christ.**”

Then spend a few minutes re-reading **Ephesians 4:22-24**. And throughout the day, ask yourself: “**Am I responding like my old self... or living like the new person Christ has made me to be?**”



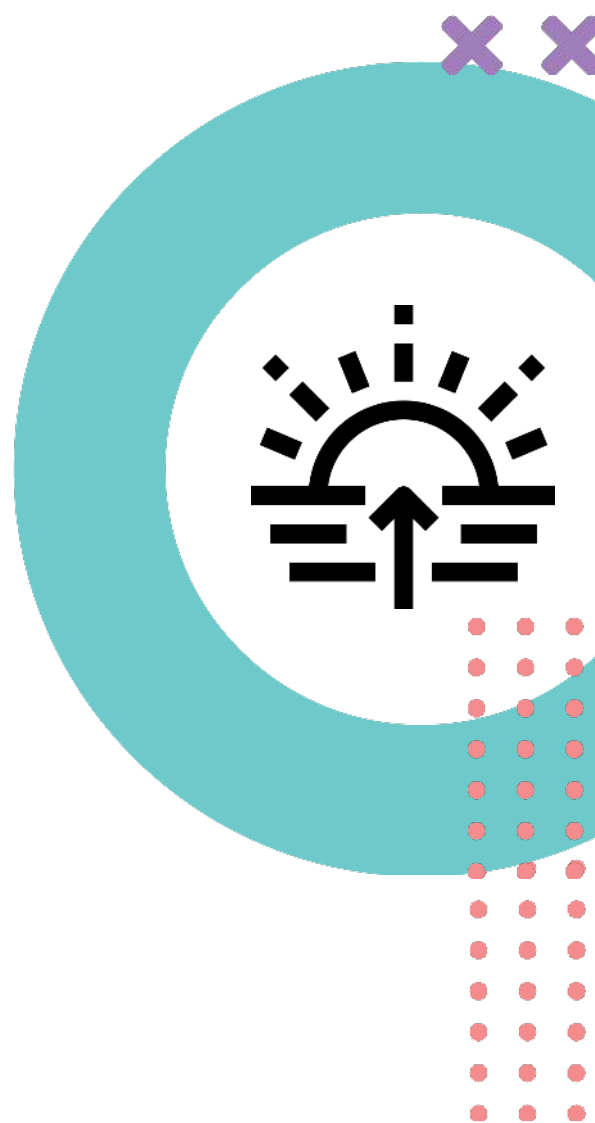
Rhythm Reminders

Before you pray, encourage everyone to lean into these 3 rhythms throughout this Ephesians journey this week:

- 🗣️ **Sunday = Proclamation**
- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🤝 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**

Each rhythm plays a different role in spiritual growth, but together they help move truth from: only being heard → to actually being lived.

And remember, you don't have to be perfect at this. Just: stay engaged, stay connected and keep showing up!



PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables into short time of prayer then hands off to **Facilitator***

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

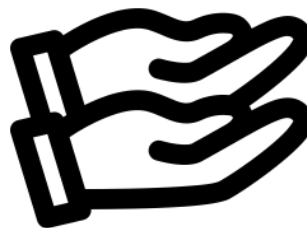
- personal needs
- one another
- truths from tonight's text

Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



Dismissal

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
- come back and connect afterward if possible

Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

Table Connectors especially should:

- notice isolated or lingering people
- follow up with new guests
- help bridge conversations relationally



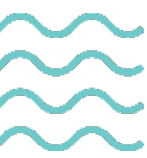
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

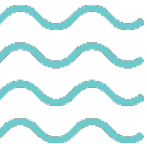
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



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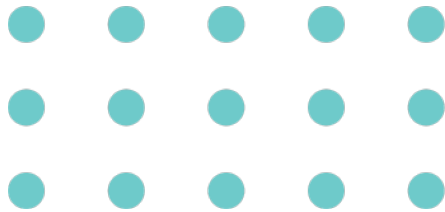




● PHASE 2 | NEW FAMILY

💡 **WEEK #9 | OCTOBER 7**





WEEK 9 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: Walk It Out**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 5:1-21

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

Main Focus:

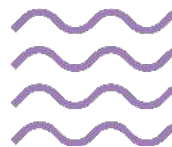
The Gospel doesn't just make us children of God, it teaches us how to live like members of His family. As we grow closer to our Father, our lives should begin to look more like His Son.

Big Themes:

- walking in love
- walking in the light
- wisdom
- making the most of every opportunity
- being filled with the Holy Spirit
- gratitude

Midweek Emphasis:

Helping people understand that when God adopts us into His family, He also begins shaping us to reflect His character. As beloved children, we learn to love what He loves, walk in His ways and represent Him well in the world.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational, and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

Moderator: moves groups into table discussions and hands off to **Facilitators**



Table Discussion | Opening Thought

Have you ever noticed how children often pick up the habits, expressions or mannerisms of their parents without even trying?

Whether it's the way they laugh, talk, respond to people or handle difficult situations, families tend to develop a certain resemblance over time.

Paul begins Ephesians 5 with a simple but powerful reminder: because we've been adopted into God's family, our lives should increasingly look like our Heavenly Father's.

As you read today's passage, notice what Paul says God's family should look like and how our everyday lives can reflect the character of our Father.





Set The Scene | Background of the Text

In the first century, Ephesus was a city shaped by idol worship, sexual immorality and pagan values. New believers had spent much of their lives being formed by that "parental" culture, but now they belonged to a different family with a different way of living.

Paul reminds them that following Jesus isn't only about leaving behind an old lifestyle; it's about learning the values, character and priorities of their new Heavenly Father.



Read The Text | Ephesians 5:1-21

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

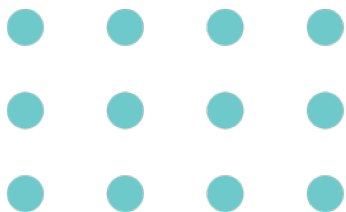
Have someone in the group pray. Ask God to help you reflect His character as His children, to reveal any areas of your life that don't honor Him and to fill you with His Spirit so your love, choices and daily life point others to Christ.

PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday or from this passage?

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: *"Why do you think that stood out to you?"*





Setup

Whether we realize it or not, **the way we live reflects the family we belong to.**

People should be able to look at our love, our words, our bank statements, our choices, our priorities and be able to catch a glimpse of our Heavenly Father.

Paul challenges believers to represent God's family well in a world that desperately needs to see Him. As we read this passage, notice the practical ways Paul describes what it looks like to represent our Father's character in everyday life.



Zoom In (Text)

Before we rush to application or try to "figure everything out," let's slow down and sit in what Paul is actually saying.



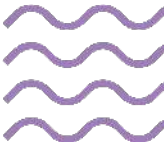
Read the Text Again Together

Ephesians 5:1-21 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the passage slowly and carefully.

As you read the passage again, simply notice:

- every time Paul describes how believers should walk
- the characteristics that mark God's family
- the motivations Paul gives for living differently
- what surprises you?

Then ask your group again: "*Now, what stands out most to you from this passage?*"



? Question #2 | (Ephesians 5:1-7) What do you think Paul means when he tells believers to “*walk in love*” by pointing them to Christ’s example?

Possible Answers:

- Jesus loved us sacrificially (*John 15:13*)
- Love is the defining mark of Christ’s followers (*John 13:34–35*)
- God’s love moves us from self-centeredness to self-sacrifice (*1 John 4:9–11*)
- True love is shown through action, not just words (*1 John 3:16–18*)
- Christ’s love becomes the pattern for the way we love others (*Romans 5:8*)

Optional Follow Up:

- Who has shown you Christlike love in a way that’s been difficult to forget? What made it so impactful?

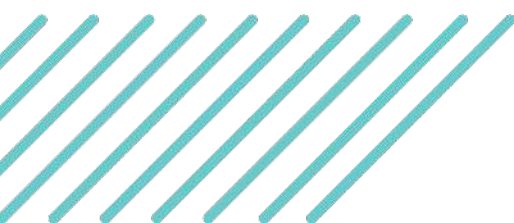


Digging Deeper

The word “imitate” (v. 1) doesn’t only mean copying someone’s actions, but it’s describing a learning process by closely following another person’s example.

(*Galatians 5:25*) Think about walking through deep snow behind someone else. Instead of making your own path, you simply place your feet where they’ve already stepped. It’s easier, safer and it keeps you moving in the right direction on the right path.

Paul isn’t telling believers to imitate the world around them. As God’s beloved kids, they are called to learn from their Heavenly Father and model their lives after Jesus, whose sacrificial love is the ultimate picture of what God’s family looks like.





? Question #3 | (Ephesians 5:8-14) What do you think Paul means when he says, “Live as children of light”?

Possible Answers:

- Our lives should reflect the character of Christ (*Matthew 5:14-16*)
- We should pursue what is good, right, and true (*Philippians 4:8*)
- Following Jesus should be visible to others (*1 Peter 2:9-12*)
- God’s truth exposes sin so that it can be healed, not hidden (*John 3:19-21*)
- We are called to shine in a dark world (*Philippians 2:14-16*)

Digging Deeper

In Scripture, "light" often represents God’s presence, truth, holiness and life... while "darkness" usually represents sin, deception and separation from God.

In the ancient world, light wasn’t something people took for granted. Once the sun went down, homes and streets were often illuminated only by small oil lamps. Therefore, even a small single flame could provide guidance, safety and hope in an otherwise dark environment.

Notice that Paul doesn’t simply tell believers to walk in the light, but he says they *are* light in the Lord (v. 8). That’s an identity statement before it’s an instruction. Because we’ve been brought into God’s family, our lives should naturally shine in ways that point others to Him.

Optional Follow Ups:

- What does it look like to be “light” in your everyday life, *not* just at church?





Zoom Out (God)

God doesn't call His kids to reflect something He isn't.

Throughout Scripture, He reveals Himself as holy, truthful and full of light. As we draw closer to Him, His character becomes increasingly visible in our lives.

Theologian Insight

"The church is called not merely to condemn the darkness, but to shine the light of Christ into it." — **John Stott**

Cross Reference | Mt. 5:14–16

"You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Optional Follow Up:

- According to Jesus, what's the purpose of letting our light shine?

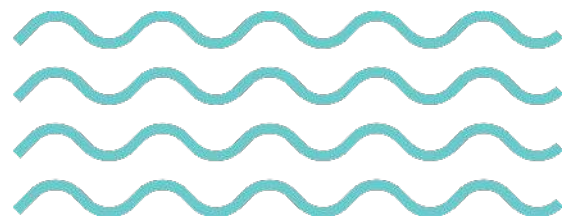
Zoom Out (Us)

Light doesn't have to fight the darkness to win... it simply has to show up and shine.

The same is true for followers of Jesus. God hasn't called us to argue our way into changing the world, but to faithfully reflect His character wherever He has placed us.

As we walk in love, truth and wisdom, our lives become a light that points others to our Heavenly Father.

 **Optional Leader Share:** Share a brief story (1–2 minutes max) about a person in your life whose everyday life consistently seems to reflect Christ. What was it about their character that points you toward Jesus?



? Question #4 | (Ephesians 5:15-17) What do you think it means to “make the most of every opportunity”?

Possible Answers:

- Live carefully, not carelessly (v. 15)
- Choose wisdom over foolishness (v. 15)
- Recognize that the days are evil, so every opportunity matters (v. 16)
- Seek to understand what the Lord wants rather than simply following your own desires (v. 17)
- Live intentionally instead of drifting through life (vv. 15–17)



Optional Follow Ups:

- If someone looked at your calendar or your priorities, what would they say matters most to you?

Digging Deeper

The phrase “*make the most of every opportunity*” literally means “*to redeem the time*” or “*to buy up every opportunity*.” Paul pictures time as something valuable that should be invested wisely, *not* wasted. That means every conversation, decision and ordinary moment is an opportunity to reflect Christ and participate in what God is doing.

Zoom Out (Us)

TBH it's easy to spend our days reacting to whatever feels most urgent. Wisdom helps us distinguish between what is urgent and what is important/eternal.

Following Jesus means learning to invest our time, attention and energy in the things that matter most to God.



? Question #5 | (Ephesians 5:18-21) What do you think Paul means when he says to be “filled with the Spirit”?

Possible Answers:

- Living under the Spirit’s influence rather than other influences (v. 18)
- Encouraging one another through worship and God’s truth (v. 19)
- Living in humility and mutual submission (v. 21)
- Allowing God the Holy Spirit to shape every area of life (vv. 18–21)

Digging Deeper

The command “*be filled with the Spirit*” is written in the present tense, describing an ongoing way of life rather than a one-time experience.

Paul contrasts being controlled by wine with being controlled by the Holy Spirit. His point *isn’t* primarily about alcohol, it’s about influence.

Because whatever fills us will eventually shape the way we think, speak and live.

Zoom Out (Us)

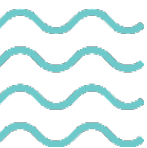
Every day we’re being shaped by something or someone...

Our schedules, entertainment, relationships, social media, work and habits all influence the direction of our lives.

Paul invites us to continually place ourselves under the influence of God the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to shape our thoughts, our worship, our gratitude and our relationships.

Optional Follow-Up:

- What tends to compete with the Holy Spirit for your attention and affection in terms of urgent VS eternal?



PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to Facilitators*

When we place our faith in Jesus, we don't just receive forgiveness, we're welcomed into God's family. And like any family, God's family has a distinct way of living.

Throughout this chapter, Paul reminds us that God's children are called to reflect their Father's character. We do that by walking in love, choosing what is pleasing to Him, living wisely and depending on the Holy Spirit each day.

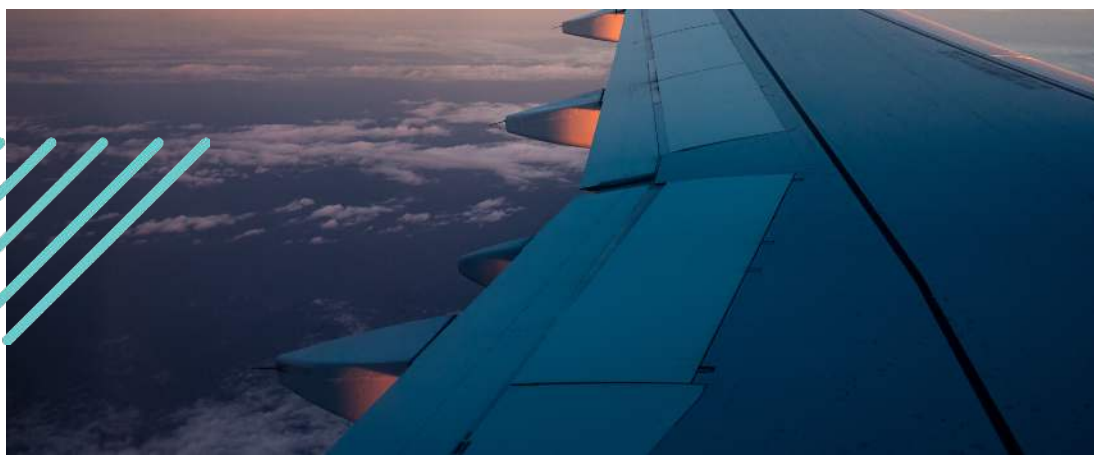
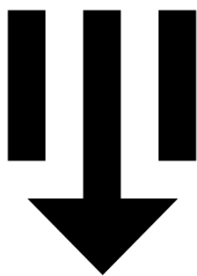
The truth is that none of us perfectly reflects our Heavenly Father, but as we follow Jesus, others should increasingly see more of who He is through our lives.

💬 Application Moment

Go around the table and have each person answer or write down:

"What's one area of your life where you want to better reflect your Heavenly Father this week?"

Allow several people to share if they are willing.





Thursday AM Application

Tomorrow morning, before reaching for your phone, spend a few minutes reading **Ephesians 5:1–2**.

As you begin your day, pray: “***Father, help me reflect Your character today. Let my words, choices and relationships point people to You.***”

Consider asking throughout the day: “***Does this response reflect the family I belong to?***”



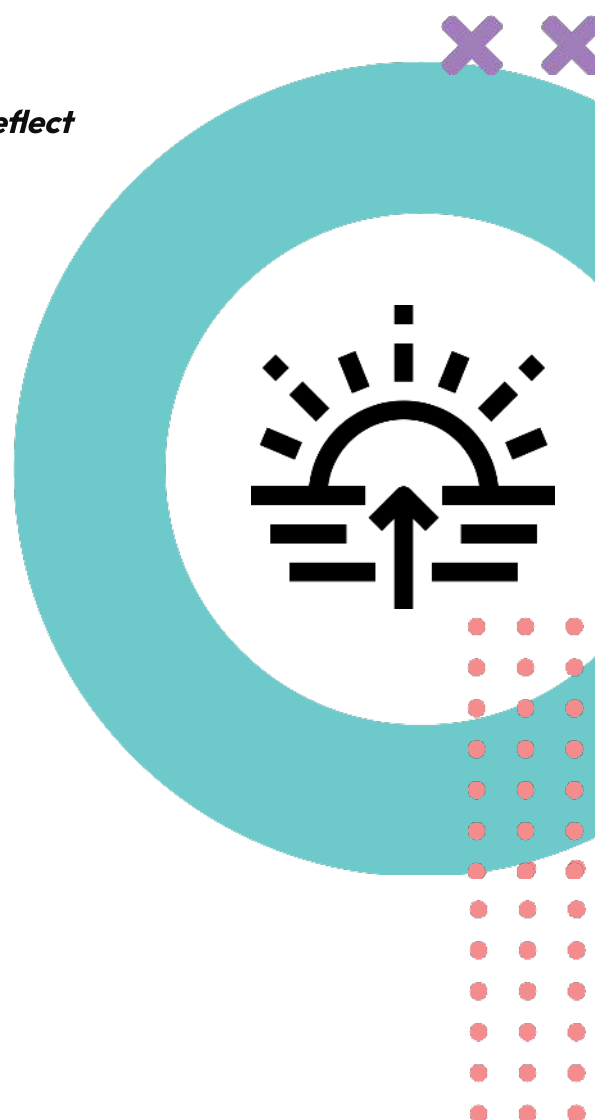
Rhythm Reminders

Before you pray, encourage everyone to lean into these 3 rhythms throughout this Ephesians journey this week:

- 🗣️ **Sunday = Proclamation**
- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🤝 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**

Each rhythm plays a different role in spiritual growth, but together they help move truth from: only being heard → to actually being lived.

And remember, you don't have to be perfect at this. Just: stay engaged, stay connected and keep showing up!



PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:50-7:55 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables into short time of prayer then hands off to **Facilitator***

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

- personal needs
- one another
- truths from tonight's text

Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers

✌️ **Dismissal**

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
- come back and connect afterward if possible

Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

Table Connectors especially should:

- notice isolated or lingering people
- follow up with new guests
- help bridge conversations relationally



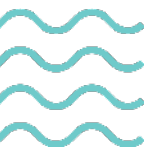
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

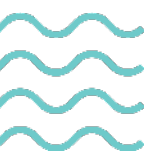
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



NOTES



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● PHASE 3 | NEW LIVING

🧠 WEEK #10 | OCTOBER 14

WEEK 10 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: Love That Lays Down**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 5:22-33

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

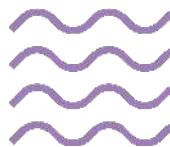
Main Focus:

Christian marriage is meant to reflect the Gospel. Marriage is the context, but Christ and the Church are the point. Through sacrificial love, honor and covenant faithfulness, God gives us a picture of how Jesus loves His people.

Big Themes:

- God's design for marriage
- sacrificial love
- servant leadership
- mutual honor
- Christ and the Church
- covenant

Midweek Emphasis: Helping people understand that Christian marriage isn't merely a social institution, it's a living picture of the Gospel. Whether married or single, every believer can learn from the way Christ loves His Church and calls His people to love one another.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational, and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

Moderator: moves groups into table discussions and hands off to **Facilitators**



Table Discussion | Opening Thought

Have you ever seen something ordinary that reminded you of something so much greater?

A wedding ring, a family photo, or a national flag can all point beyond themselves to something deeper. Their value *isn't* found in the object itself, but in what it represents.

Paul says marriage works the same way. While it certainly benefits husbands and wives, its greatest purpose is to point people to the relationship between Christ and His Church demonstrating the sacrificial love, forgiveness, covenant faithfulness and unity that the Gospel creates.

Optional Follow Up:

- Whether you're married or not, if marriage is meant to point people to Jesus, what aspects of Christ's love for the Church should be most visible in our relationship with His bride?





Set The Scene | Background of the Text

In the first-century Roman world, marriage was often shaped by power, status and social expectations. Husbands typically held nearly all authority, while wives had few legal rights or protections.

Into that culture, Paul presents a radically different vision. Instead of focusing on power or control, he points both husbands and wives to Jesus.

Marriage is no longer centered on what each person can get from the other, but on reflecting the self-giving love of Christ and His relationship with the Church.



Read The Text | Ephesians 5:22-33

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

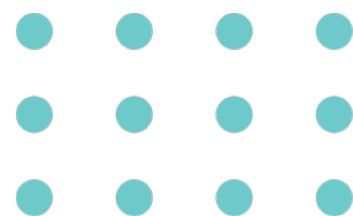
Have someone in the group pray. Ask God to help you see His design for relationships through the lens of the Gospel, to grow in Christlike humility and sacrificial love and to help all of us (whether married or single) reflect the love Jesus has for His Church.

PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday or from this passage?

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: *"Why do you think that stood out to you?"*





Setup

When most people think about this passage, they immediately focus on the roles of husbands and wives (which is okay). But, before we ask, “*What does this passage require?*” we need to ask, “*What is this passage trying to reveal?*”

Paul’s primary concern isn’t just giving marriage advice, but it’s revealing the Gospel. He points to marriage as a living picture of Christ’s sacrificial love for His Church.



Zoom In (Text)

Before we rush to application or interpretation, let’s slow down and sit in what Paul is actually saying.



Read the Text Again

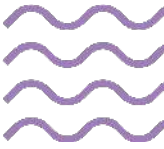
Ephesians 5:22–23 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the passage slowly and carefully.

Before jumping into answers, simply notice:

- how many times Paul mentions Christ or the Church
- the different instructions given to husbands and wives
- repeated words or ideas that stand out (love, submit, body, church, mystery)
- the reasons Paul gives for each instruction
- what this passage teaches you about Jesus’ love for His people

Then ask your group again: “*Now, what stands out most to you from this passage?*”

Leader Reminder: This passage has often been misunderstood or misused and some in your group may carry hurt because of that. Encourage everyone to let the text speak for itself, remembering that Paul’s goal is to point us to Jesus and the Church, not to bring shame (*Romans 8:1*).



? Question #2 | Why do you think Paul spends so much time comparing marriage to Christ and the Church?

Possible Answers:

- Throughout Scripture, marriage is used as a picture of God's covenant love for His people (*Hosea 2:19–20*)
- Jesus identifies Himself as the Bridegroom who came for His bride (*Matthew 9:14–15*)
- The Church is described as the Bride of Christ, awaiting His return (*Revelation 19:6–9*)
- God's love is marked by covenant faithfulness, not temporary feelings (*Jeremiah 31:3*)
- Marriage points beyond itself to God's eternal plan of dwelling with His redeemed people (*Revelation 21:1–4*)

Optional Follow Up:

- How does seeing marriage as a picture of the Gospel change the way you read this passage?

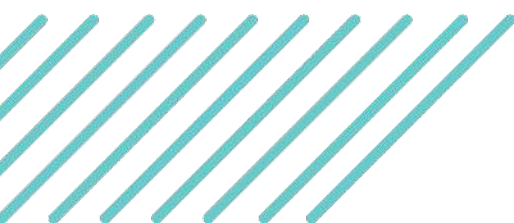
Digging Deeper

Paul quotes **Genesis 2:24**, (v. 31) reminding his readers that marriage has always been part of God's design. But then he reveals something unexpected: "*This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church.*" (v. 32)

From the very beginning, marriage wasn't only about bringing a husband and wife together. It was also designed to point forward to something greater, the covenant relationship between Jesus and His people.

Marriage is a temporary earthly relationship that tells an eternal story.

 **Optional Share:** Has a healthy marriage you've witnessed ever taught you something about God's love? Briefly share.





? Question #3 | (Ephesians 5:25-30) How does Jesus *redefine* what Biblical love and leadership look like?

Possible Answers:

- Christ's love is **sacrificial**, giving Himself for the good of His bride (v. 25)
- Christ's love is **transforming**, helping His people become holy and mature (vv. 26–27)
- Christ's love is **selfless**, caring for His Church as His own body (vv. 28–30)
- Christ's love is **faithful**, nourishing and cherishing His people (v. 29)
- Christ's love becomes **the model** for how husbands are to love their wives (vv. 25, 28, 33)

Optional Follow Up:

- Which characteristic of Christ's love do you find most challenging to practice in your closest relationships?

Digging Deeper

When Paul tells husbands to love their wives “as Christ loved the church,” he sets an incredibly high standard... as it should be.

Christ's leadership wasn't expressed through control or self-promotion, but it was demonstrated through humility, sacrifice, service and laying down His life for others.

Biblical leadership always asks, “*How can I serve?*” long before asking, “*How can I be served?*”



Paul Pro Tip: The next time you're in an argument, pause and ask yourself:

“Am I trying to serve this person, or am I trying to have them serve me?”





Zoom Out (God)

God's love isn't passive or self-centered, but it is active, sacrificial and it *always* seeks ultimate good.

Jesus didn't simply tell us He loved us. But, He demonstrated His love by giving Himself for us, pursuing us (when we didn't deserve it) and He remains faithful even when we are faithless. (*Romans 5:8*)

That is the kind of love that defines God's heart and becomes the standard for His people.

Optional Follow Up:

- Where is God inviting you to move beyond saying "*I love you*," to actually showing up in love through your actions?



Zoom Out (Us)

Our culture often defines love by feelings, attraction or personal fulfillment.

But, Biblical love is measured by sacrifice.

Whether we're married, single, parents, friends or neighbors, we're called to love the way Christ loved us... choosing humility over pride, service over selfishness and faithfulness over convenience.

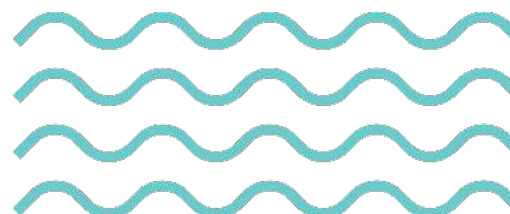
The more we understand how deeply we've been loved by Jesus, the more naturally we'll begin to love others the same way.

Theologian Insight

"The essence of sin is we substitute ourselves for God. The essence of salvation is God substitutes Himself for us." — **Tim Keller**

Optional Follow Up:

- How does Christ's sacrifice reshape the way you think about serving the people closest to you?



? Question #4 | (Ephesians 5:22-24) What do you think Biblical submission *is* and what do you think it *is not*?

Possible Answers:

- Submission is a willing response to God's design, not forced obedience (vv. 22–24)
- Submission reflects the Church's trust in Christ (vv. 23–24)
- Submission does *not* imply inferiority or lesser value (cf. *Galatians 3:28*)
- Submission is *never* permission for abuse, manipulation or sin (*Acts 5:29 demonstrates that obedience to God always comes first.*)
- Biblical marriage calls both husband and wife to put Christ above themselves (vv. 21–24)



Optional Follow Up:

- What misconceptions about Biblical submission have you encountered, and how does this passage help clarify them?

Digging Deeper

The word translated “submit” (hypotassō) was often used to describe voluntarily placing oneself under the leadership or order of another. It carries the idea of willingly arranging yourself under God's design rather than being forced into submission. It's less about waving the white flag in defeat and more about choosing humility for the sake of God's reputation.

It's also important to remember that verse 22 flows directly from verse 21, where Paul tells *all believers* to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Christian marriage isn't built on selfishness or power, but on humility, love, mutual honor and respect under the lordship of Jesus.



? Question #5 | (Ephesians 5:33) Why do you think Paul ends this passage by emphasizing love and respect?



Possible Answers:

- Love should mark every follower of Jesus (*John 13:34–35*)
- We are called to honor one another above ourselves (*Romans 12:10*)
- Christlike relationships are marked by humility and selflessness (*Philippians 2:3–4*)
- Love is patient, kind and it seeks the good of others (*1 Corinthians 13:4–7*)
- Healthy relationships reflect the unity and peace God desires for His people (*Colossians 3:12–15*)

Digging Deeper

Paul doesn't end this passage with a new command, but he does end it with a summary.

After pointing to Christ's sacrificial love and the Church's response, he brings everything together in two simple words: **love** and **respect**. These aren't competing virtues but complementary expressions of the Gospel. When both are present, they create a relationship that reflects Christ's covenant love for His people.

Zoom Out (Us)

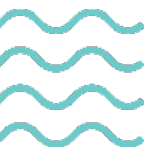
No matter our relationship status, every relationship is an opportunity to reflect the character of Christ. The people closest to us should experience the Gospel *not* only through what we believe, but through the way we forgive, honor, serve, love and respect them.

Theologian Insight

"The Christian life is the visible portrait of the invisible Christ." — **John Stott**

Optional Follow Up:

- If the people closest to you described your relationships, what picture of Jesus would they say they see most often?



PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to **Facilitators**

Marriage is one of God's clearest illustrations of the Gospel. While Paul gives practical instruction to husbands and wives, his ultimate goal is *much bigger* than improving marriages.

Paul wants us to see the relationship between Jesus and His Church. Jesus loves the Bride/His people/the Church... with a sacrificial, faithful and covenant-keeping love.

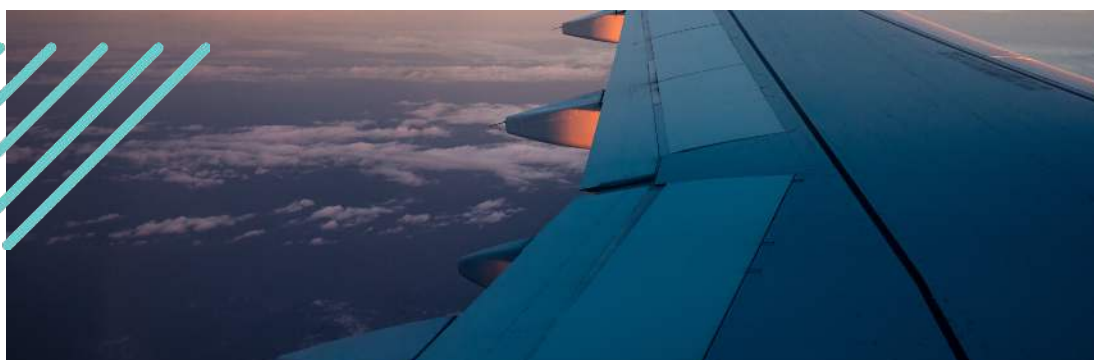
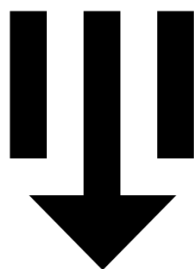
The more we understand how Christ has loved us, the more our homes, our friendships, our workplaces and churches begin to display His character.

💬 Application Moment

Go around the table and have each person answer (out loud or by writing it down):

“What’s one relationship where God is inviting you to better reflect the love of Christ this week?”

Encourage everyone to be specific. It could be a spouse, a child, a parent, a coworker, a neighbor, a friend or an enemy.





Thursday AM Application

Tomorrow morning, **re-read Ephesians 5:25** and spend a few moments thanking Jesus for the way He has loved you.

Then ask God: “***Who can I love today the way Christ has loved me?***”

*Before your day ends, intentionally take one sacrificial step toward another person, whether through forgiveness, encouragement, service, generosity or simply being present.



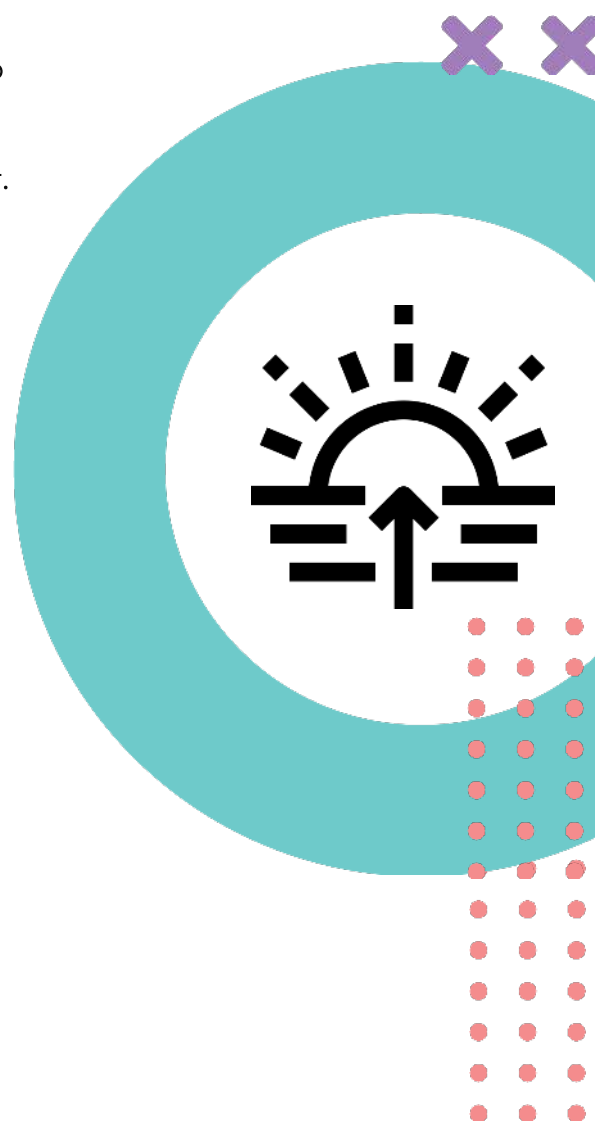
Rhythm Reminders

Before you pray, encourage everyone to lean into these 3 rhythms throughout this Ephesians journey this week:

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- 📖 **Devotional = Meditation**
- 🤝 **Midweek = Formation + Relationship**

Each rhythm plays a different role in spiritual growth, but together they help move truth from: only being heard → to actually being lived.

And remember, you don't have to be perfect at this.
Just: stay engaged, stay connected and keep showing up!



PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:50-7:55 (5 min)

Moderator: *Invites tables into short time of prayer then hands off to **Facilitator***

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

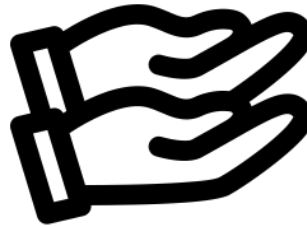
- personal needs
- one another
- truths from tonight's text

Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



Dismissal

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
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Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

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- follow up with new guests
- help bridge conversations relationally



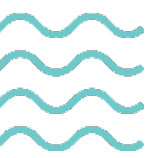
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

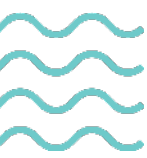
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



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● PHASE 3 | NEW LIVING

🧠 **WEEK #11 | OCTOBER 21**



WEEK 11 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: Everyday Obedience**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians 6:1-9

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

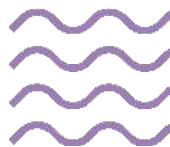
Main Focus:

The Gospel changes the way we live in every relationship... *not* just at church, but in the home, at work and anywhere authority and responsibility exist. In Christ, obedience, leadership, parenting and work are no longer about power or performance. They become opportunities to honor Jesus and reflect His character.

Big Themes:

- Gospel-shaped obedience
- honoring God in our relationships
- authority and responsibility
- Christ-centered parenting
- integrity and faithfulness
- the Gospel in everyday life

Midweek Emphasis: Following Jesus *isn't* just about what we believe, it's about how we honor Him in our everyday relationships.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational, and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)



Table Discussion | Opening Thought

Before we begin, it's hard to believe tonight is our final Midweek gathering of the season! Thanks for investing these past 11 weeks as we've journeyed through Ephesians together.

It's often said that who you are is revealed most clearly in the ordinary moments of life. It's one thing to honor God in church or around other believers. It's another to reflect Christ at home, at work or in the everyday relationships where life really happens.

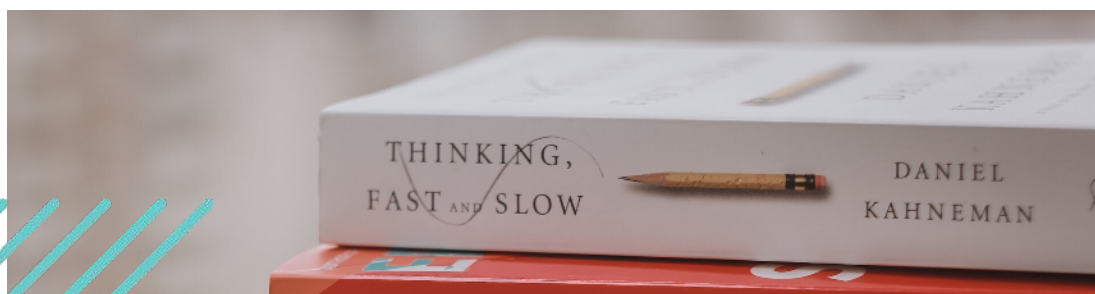
In tonight's text, Paul shows us that following Jesus isn't limited to Sundays, but it transforms the way we live in all of our ordinary relationships.



Set The Scene | Background of the Text

In the first-century Roman world, the household was the foundation of society.

A typical home included not only husbands, wives and children, but often servants or slaves as well. The head of the household held significant authority over everyone under his roof. Rather than simply reinforcing the culture around Him, Paul transforms it by placing every relationship under the lordship of Jesus. Children, parents, servants and masters are all reminded that they ultimately answer to the same Lord. The Gospel doesn't eliminate authority, but it does transform the way authority is exercised and the way it is received.





Read The Text | Ephesians 6:1-9

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

Have someone in the group pray. Ask God to help you honor Him in your everyday relationships, to give you a heart that willingly obeys His Word, and to help your home, work and daily interactions reflect the character of Christ.

PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday or from this passage?

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: *"Why do you think that stood out to you?"*

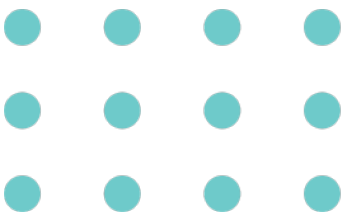


Setup

Motives Matter... People can do the right thing for the wrong reasons. We can obey because we're afraid of consequences, or we're trying to earn approval or we're just simply doing what's expected.

Throughout this passage, Paul keeps redirecting our motivation. And instead of asking, "What do I *have* to do?" he asks, "*Who is it*, that I'm ultimately serving?"





Zoom In (Text)

Before we rush to application or try to “figure everything out,” let's slow down and sit in what Paul is actually saying.

Read the Text Again Together

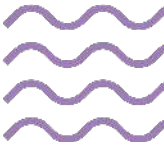
Ephesians 6:1–9 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the passage slowly and carefully.

Before jumping into answers, simply notice:

- the different groups Paul addresses
- how often Paul points people back to the Lord
- the motivations Paul gives for obedience and faithfulness
- repeated words or phrases that stand out
- what this passage teaches you about serving Christ in everyday life

Then ask your group again: “*Now, what stands out most to you from this passage?*”

Leader Note: Paul keeps saying “*in the Lord*,” “*as to Christ*,” “*the Lord* will reward,” “*your Master in heaven*.” The repeated emphasis isn’t just on what to do, but *why* we do it. Noticing this observation will naturally support the rest of your discussion.



? Question #2 | (Ephesians 6:1-4) Why do you think honoring parents is so important to God?

Possible Answers:

- God established the family as the primary place where faith and character are formed (*Deuteronomy 6:4-9*)
- Honoring parents reflects a heart that learns to honor God (*Exodus 20:12*)
- Parents are called to disciple their children, not simply discipline them (*Deuteronomy 6:6-7*)
- Children and parents both have a God-given responsibility in the home (*Proverbs 22:6*)
- The family is one of God's primary places for passing faith from one generation to the next (*Psalms 78:4-7*)

Optional Follow Up:

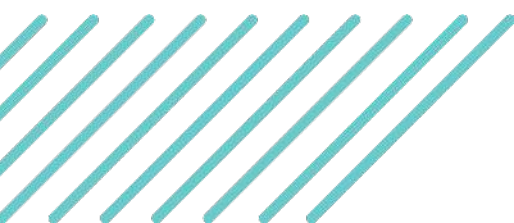
- Who has had the greatest spiritual influence on your life and what made their influence so significant?

Digging Deeper

To "*honor*," someone means more than simply obeying them or speaking politely. It means treating them with value, dignity and respect because of the position God has given them.

In a culture that often celebrates independence, criticism and self-expression above honor... this command can feel foreign to us. Yet, throughout Scripture God consistently calls His people to be people of honor... *not* because others are perfect, but because honoring others reflects our trust in God's perfect design.

Honoring people doesn't mean approving of everything they've done or ignoring sin or allowing abuse. It means choosing a posture of respect that recognizes God's authority, even when relationships are difficult or imperfect.





? Question #3 | (Ephesians 6:4) Why do you think Paul tells parents not to “provoke” their children?

Possible Answers:

- Parents are called to nurture their children’s faith, not discourage it (*Colossians 3:21*)
- Discipline should be rooted in love, not anger (*Hebrews 12:7-11*)
- Parents are called to consistently teach God’s truth (*Deuteronomy 6:6-7*)
- The goal of parenting is to help children know and follow the Lord (*Proverbs 1:8-9*)
- Godly parenting balances truth, grace, and instruction (*Ephesians 4:15*)

Optional Follow Up:

- Looking back, what is one quality of a parent or mentor that has helped you grow in your faith?

Digging Deeper

The word “provoke” carries the idea of unnecessarily stirring up resentment, anger or discouragement. Paul isn’t telling parents to avoid discipline, he’s warning against parenting in a way that crushes a child’s spirit.

Instead, parents are called to “*bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.*” Biblical parenting isn’t about controlling behavior; it’s about shepherding hearts. Discipline and instruction are *both* expressions of love, helping children know not only what is right, but also who God is. Ultimately, Paul’s command isn’t, “*Don’t provoke.*” it’s, “*Raise your kids to know and love Jesus.*” That’s the bigger vision.





Zoom Out (God)

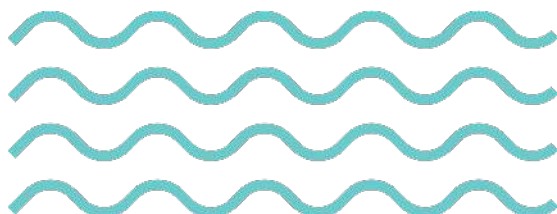
God isn't interested in outward obedience alone, but He desires hearts that delight in honoring Him (*cf. Matthew 23:25*).

Throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself as a loving Father who doesn't simply give commands but faithfully teaches, disciplines and cares for His children. Every instruction He gives flows from His love and is intended for our good.

💬 Theologian Insight “*Don't evaluate God by your earthly father. Evaluate your earthly father by your Heavenly Father.*” — **Tim Keller**

Optional Follow Up:

- How does seeing God as the perfect Father shape the way you think about either parenting or being His child?



Zoom Out (Us)

Our greatest influence isn't found in the positions we hold but in the examples we set. Whether we're raising children, leading at work, serving others or simply living faithfully each day, people are always learning something from our lives.

When Christ becomes the reason behind our obedience, even the ordinary moments become opportunities to point others to Him. Paul isn't telling us, “*Be a better parent*” or “*Be a better employee.*” He's saying, “*Let Christ become the motivation behind every relationship you have.*”

💬 Theologian Insight

“*If I teach my son to keep his eye on the ball but fail to teach him to keep his eyes on Christ, I have failed as a father.*” —

Voddie Baucham

Optional Follow Up:

- What are some good things that can unintentionally become more important than helping the next generation know and follow Jesus?

? Question #4 | (Ephesians 6:5–8) How does knowing you're ultimately serving Christ change the way you approach your work?

Possible Answers:

- Work with sincerity, not just outward appearances (v. 5)
- Serve wholeheartedly, even when no one is watching (vv. 6–7)
- See your work as service to the Lord, not just for people (v. 7)
- Trust that God sees and rewards faithfulness, even when others don't (v. 8)
- Let Christ shape your attitude more than your circumstances (vv. 5–8)



Optional Follow Up:

- How would your attitude toward work change if you viewed every task as an opportunity to serve Christ?



Digging Deeper

Paul isn't saying every job we have is enjoyable or every authority figure is good. He's reminding believers that their ultimate employer is Jesus and when you think this way it transforms even ordinary work.

Whether the task is noticed or overlooked, exciting or repetitive, our motivation shifts from earning the approval of people to honoring the Lord Jesus. Work then becomes our spiritual act of worship. (*Romans 12:1-2*)

Optional Follow Ups:

- We often find ourselves thinking, "*I'll be content when...*" So, what "*when*" are you tempted to believe will finally satisfy you? i.e. - "*I'll serve God better/more WHEN.... I get the job, get married, have kids, the kids leave home, I can retire,*" etc.,
- Is there an area of your life where dissatisfaction has made it difficult to faithfully serve Christ right where He has you?



? Question #5 | (Ephesians 6:9) Why do you think Paul reminds those in authority that they also have a Master in heaven?



Possible Answers:

- Leadership is stewardship (*Mark 10:42-45*)
- Those who lead are accountable to God for how they treat others (*James 3:1*)
- God calls leaders to reflect His justice, mercy and humility (*Micah 6:8*)
- Every believer, regardless of position, ultimately lives under the lordship of Christ (*Colossians 3:23-24*)

Optional Follow Up:

- Whether you're leading at home, at work or influencing others... what does it look like to lead in a way that reflects Christ?

Digging Deeper

Paul's words would have been startling in the first century. He reminds those with authority that they are *NOT* the highest authority. Masters have a Master. Parents have a Father. Employers have a Lord. The Gospel doesn't eliminate authority, it transforms it.

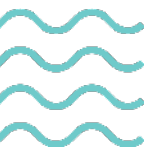
Biblical leadership is *never* about demanding privilege but about humbly stewarding the responsibility God has entrusted to us.

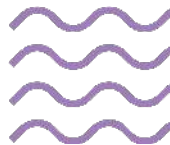
Zoom Out (Us)

Whether we have great influence or very little, every one of us will one day give an account to God. That reality changes the way we lead, serve, parent, work and treat others. We don't use our position to elevate ourselves, we use it to reflect the character of the One we ultimately serve.

Optional Leader Share:

Share about someone who has led you with humility instead of power and how it impacted your life.





PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Moderator: Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to **Facilitators**

Over the past 11 weeks, we've seen that **because of Jesus everything changes**. In Him, we have: a new identity, a new family and a new way of living.

Tonight's text reminds us that following Jesus isn't reserved only for Sunday mornings or spiritual moments. But, the Gospel transforms our everyday lives: our homes, our work, our relationships and every place where God has entrusted us with influence.

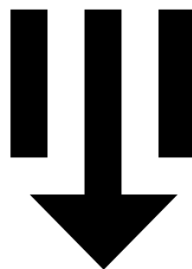
As we finish this study of Ephesians, remember that God isn't just calling us to know His Word. He's calling us to live it out, allowing the Gospel to re-shape every part of who we are.

 **Final Reflection:** Go around the table and have each person answer: "**Over the past 11 weeks, what's one truth from Ephesians that you hope stays with you long after this study ends?**" Allow everyone who wants, an opportunity to share.

End-of-Quarter Midweek Survey

Before you leave tonight, please have everyone take 2-3 minutes to complete our **Midweek Group Survey**. This feedback will help us continue improving Midweek and will also help us prepare groups for next quarter.

<https://rest.churchcenter.com/people/forms/1264927>





Thursday AM Application

Tomorrow morning, re-read **Ephesians 6:8**

NLT, because you know that "***the Lord will reward each one for the good they do...***"

As you begin your day, pray: "***Jesus, help me to serve You faithfully today, no matter where You've placed me.***"



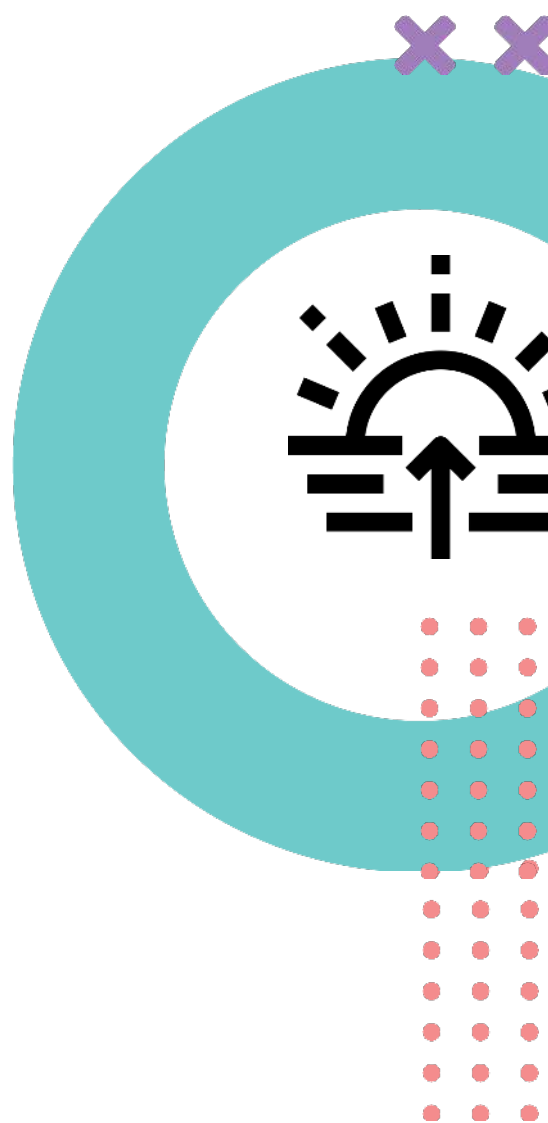
This Week's Challenge

Before you pray and dismiss, remind your group that while our Midweek study is ending for this season, the study of God's Word and meaningful Christ-centered relationships shouldn't.

Continue meeting together, encouraging one another, praying for one another and growing in God's Word.

It feels right to end this with a reminder from Paul, "***I therefore... urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling... with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.***" - **Ephesians 4:1-3**

Midweek may be ending, but Paul's call isn't. Continue bearing with one another in love. Continue pursuing unity. Continue walking together as God's family. After all, that's the message of Ephesians: **Jesus changes everything.**

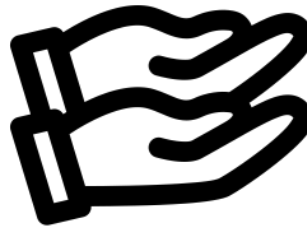


PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

- personal needs
- one another
- truths from tonight's text



Avoid:

- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



✌️ Dismissal

Moderator: *Prays over groups and dismisses.*





Weekly Post Group Connection

This matters a lot! Don't rush people out, instead remind them:

- go grab kids first (unless you're in a conversation that needs to happen immediately)
- come back and connect afterward if possible

Encourage: conversation, prayer follow-up, coffee/lunch plans and continued connection outside of Midweek.

Table Connectors especially should:

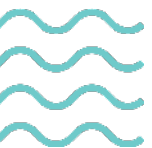
- notice isolated people
- follow up with new guests
- help bridge conversations relationally



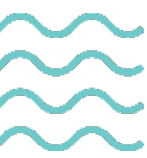
After Night | Leader Check-In

This matters a lot too!

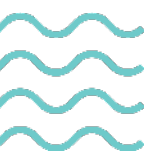
Email Pastor CJ (cj@restchurch.net) simple feedback: attendance, concerns, wins, struggling people, prayer needs, anyone needing pastoral care or follow-up, etc.,



NOTES



NOTES





● PHASE 3 | NEW LIVING

💡 **WEEK #12 | *BONUS CONTENT**



WEEK 12 Table Guide

 **Sunday Message: Suit Up**

 **Sunday Text:** Ephesians Ephesians 6:10-24

General Flow Reminder

1.  Connect + Food | 6:50-7:05 | 15 min
2.  Open + Background | 7:05-7:10 | 5 min
3.  Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 | 35 min
4.  Land the Plane | 7:45-7:50 | 5 min
5.  Prayer + Dismissal | 7:50-7:55 | 5 min

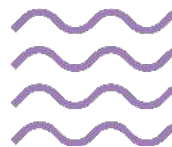
Main Focus:

Following Jesus isn't a passive journey. Every believer lives in the middle of a spiritual battle, but God has not left us defenseless. He has given us everything we need to stand firm in Christ.

Big Themes:

- spiritual warfare
- standing firm
- the armor of God
- prayer and perseverance
- victory in Christ

Midweek Emphasis: The Christian life isn't lived in our own strength. God equips His people to stand firm in every spiritual battle.



PART 1: CONNECT + FOOD | 🍴 6:50-7:05 (15 min)

Transition Thought: Keep this light, relational, and pressure-free. Move naturally from casual conversation into spiritual conversation.

PART 2: 📖 OPEN + BACKGROUND | 7:05-7:10 (5 min)

💬 **Table Discussion | Opening Thought**

Have you ever prepared for something you hoped would never happen?

We wear seatbelts hoping we never need them. We buy insurance hoping we never use it. Athletes spend countless hours training for moments that may only last a few seconds...

Preparation is good, but it shouldn't be driven by fear, it should be driven by wisdom.

Paul ends Ephesians the same way. He reminds us that followers of Jesus live in a real spiritual battle. The goal isn't to make us afraid, but to make us prepared with wisdom. And the good news is that God has already provided everything we need to stand firm in Christ.





Set The Scene | Background of the Text

As Paul closes his letter, he shifts from how believers should live, to what they're living against. After calling the church to walk worthy of their calling, live as God's family and reflect Christ in everyday life, he reminds them that their greatest struggle isn't against people but it's against spiritual forces of evil.

This isn't a change of subject... but it's the conclusion to everything he's been building toward. The Christian life requires faithful living, but also steadfast standing.



Read The Text | Ephesians 6:10-24

*Optional: Have multiple people read different verses.



Pray The Text

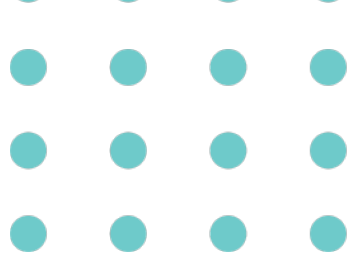
Have someone in the group pray. Ask God to open your eyes to the reality of the spiritual battle around you, to strengthen your faith and to help you stand firm in the strength He provides rather than your own.

PART 3: Main Discussion | 7:10-7:45 (35 min)

? Question #1 | What stood out most to you from Sunday or from this passage?

OPTIONAL FOLLOW UP: *"Why do you think that stood out to you?"*





Setup

First off, *our strength* isn't enough for this fight. Most people assume that if they're strong *enough*, smart *enough*, or disciplined *enough* they can overcome whatever comes their way. Paul says the Christian life works inherently different.

Victory isn't found from self-confidence but in God-confidence. So, before describing the armor, Paul begins with one command: "*Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.*" As you read this passage, remember that *IS THE FOUNDATION*. Take notice where Paul tells us our strength comes from and why every piece of armor points back to Christ.



Zoom In (Text)

Before we rush to application or try to "figure everything out," let's slow down and sit in what Paul is actually saying.

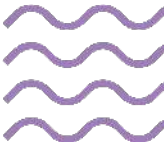
Read the Text Again Together

Ephesians 6:10–24 | *Optional: Have a different person re-read the passage slowly and carefully.

As you read again, notice:

- every command Paul gives
- what the armor protects or represents
- who our real enemy is
- how often Paul points us back to God's strength instead of our own
- the essential role that prayer plays in standing firm

Then ask your group again: "*Now, what stands out most to you from this passage?*"



? Question #2 | (Ephesians 6:10-13) Why do you think Paul reminds us that our struggle is “*not* against flesh and blood”?

Possible Answers:

- Our greatest battle is spiritual, not merely physical (vv. 11–12)
- Satan seeks to deceive, divide and discourage God’s people (1 Peter 5:8–9)
- Many of our visible conflicts have a deeper spiritual reality behind them (2 Corinthians 10:3–5)
- God calls us to stand firm against the enemy, *not* fight against one another (vv. 11–13)
- Victory comes through God’s strength, *not* our own (v. 10)

Optional Follow Up:

- Have you ever realized that a conflict you thought was about a person was actually revealing a deeper spiritual battle? (*Don’t name names*)

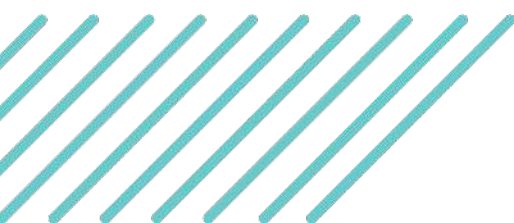
Digging Deeper

Paul doesn’t say people are our enemies, he says they’re not. That’s an important distinction we need remember.

The enemy often uses fear, temptation, deception, division and discouragement to pull us away from Christ. And when we *forget* who our real enemy is, we begin fighting the wrong battles and we start fighting people.

Recognizing the true battle changes how we respond. Instead of attacking people, we learn to stand firm in Christ, while loving those around us.

💬 **Theologian Insight:** “*The devil’s greatest success is not when he makes us think too much about him, but when he makes us forget he exists, or blame everyone else instead.*” — adapted from **C.S. Lewis’ The Screwtape Letters**





? Question #3 | (Ephesians 6:13-17) Why do you think Paul describes the Christian life as putting on armor?

Possible Answers:

- God equips His people for the spiritual battles they face (vv. 13–17)
- Each piece of armor represents a truth God provides, *not* something we earn (vv. 14–17)
- The armor helps believers stand firm rather than be overcome by the enemy (vv. 13–14)
- Every piece points us back to Christ and the Gospel. (Isaiah 11:5; 52:7; 59:17)
- We must intentionally “put on” what God has already provided (vv. 13–17)

Optional Follow Up:

- Which piece of the armor do you find yourself needing most in this season of life? Why?

Digging Deeper

God's armor *isn't* primarily about developing spiritual strength, as much as it *is* about depending on God's strength.

Many scholars note that the armor Paul describes echoes **Isaiah** (11:5, 59:17, 52:7, 49:2) where these are first pictured as God's own armor. In Christ, God shares His armor with His people, equipping them to stand firm in the battles they face.

How amazing is that?! The God who fights for His people also equips His people with His own armor. 🤖 🙌





Zoom Out (God)

God has never called His people into a battle without providing *everything* they need.

He doesn't ask us to manufacture truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation or His Word. But, He supplies them all through Christ.

💬 Theologian Insight “*The armor of God is not merely protection for the believer, it is Christ Himself, worn daily by faith.*” — **John Stott**

Optional Follow Up:

- What does it practically look like for you to “*put on*” Christ each day instead of relying on your own strength?



Zoom Out (Us)

Too often we try to fight spiritual battles with human strategies. We rely on our own wisdom, initiative, emotions or determination... only to find ourselves discouraged and defeated.

Paul reminds us that lasting victory comes as we daily clothe ourselves with the truth of the Gospel and depend on Christ alone.

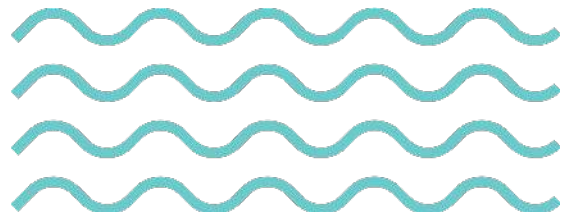
The Christian life calls us to stand firm in what God has already provided.

Optional Follow Ups:

- Where do you think the enemy most often tries to attack your faith: your thoughts, your relationships, your identity or something else?
- How can you tell the difference between a difficult circumstance and a spiritual battle?

Leader Reminder: Avoid the extremes.

We don't see Satan as the one behind every inconvenience we face, but we also don't minimize the spiritual battle Paul clearly describes.



? Question #4 | (Ephesians 6:14–17) As you look at the armor of God, what piece stands out to you the most right now? Why?

Possible Answers:

- The **belt of truth** reminds us to reject lies and stand on God's truth (v. 14)
- The **breastplate of righteousness** protects us as we live in the righteousness Christ has given us (v. 14)
- The **shoes of the Gospel of peace** prepare us to stand firm and bring peace wherever we go (v. 15)
- The **shield of faith** helps extinguish the enemy's attacks and trust God's promises (v. 16)
- The **helmet of salvation** guards our minds with the assurance of what Christ has done (v. 17)
- The **sword of the Spirit** is God's Word, our only offensive weapon in the armor (v. 17)
- **Prayer** keeps us dependent on God and connected to the One who gives us strength to stand (vv. 18–20)



Digging Deeper

Notice that every piece of the armor points back to something *God provides*. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation and God's Word aren't things we manufacture, but they're gifts we receive and daily put on. The armor is ultimately about living in the reality of the Gospel rather than relying on our own strength.

 **Theologian Insight:** “*The best way to resist the devil is to become so occupied with Christ that there is little room left for anything else.*” — **Warren Wiersbe**



? Question #5 | (Ephesians 6:18-24) Why do you think Paul ends his letter by calling believers to *pray*?

Possible Answers:

- Prayer reminds us that our strength comes from God, not ourselves (vv. 18–20)
- Prayer keeps us alert and spiritually watchful (v. 18)
- Prayer isn't just personal, it includes praying for other believers (v. 18)
- Even Paul asked others to pray for boldness in sharing the Gospel (vv. 19–20)
- Prayer keeps us connected to the One who equips us to stand firm (vv. 18–20)

Optional Follow Up:

- How has prayer strengthened you during a difficult season or spiritual battle?

Digging Deeper

It's interesting that after describing the armor, Paul doesn't say, "*Now go fight.*" Instead, he says, "*Now go pray.*"

The armor prepares us to stand, but prayer keeps us dependent. It reminds us that the Christian life isn't won by self-sufficiency but by continual reliance on God's strength and presence.

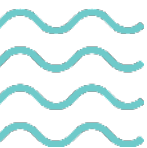
Zoom Out (Us)

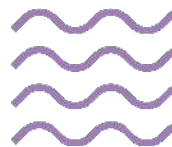
God never intended His children to fight spiritual battles alone. He *not* only provides the armor we need but also invites us into constant communion with Him through prayer. His strength, wisdom and presence are always available to those who call on Him.... *yet*, too often, prayer becomes our last response instead of our first.

Theologian Insight:

"Prayer is not preparation for the greater work; prayer is the greater work." —

Oswald Chambers





Optional Follow Up:

If prayer reveals our dependence on God, what does your prayer life currently reveal about what you're depending on most?

PART 4: LAND THE PLANE | ✈️ 7:45-7:50 (5 min)

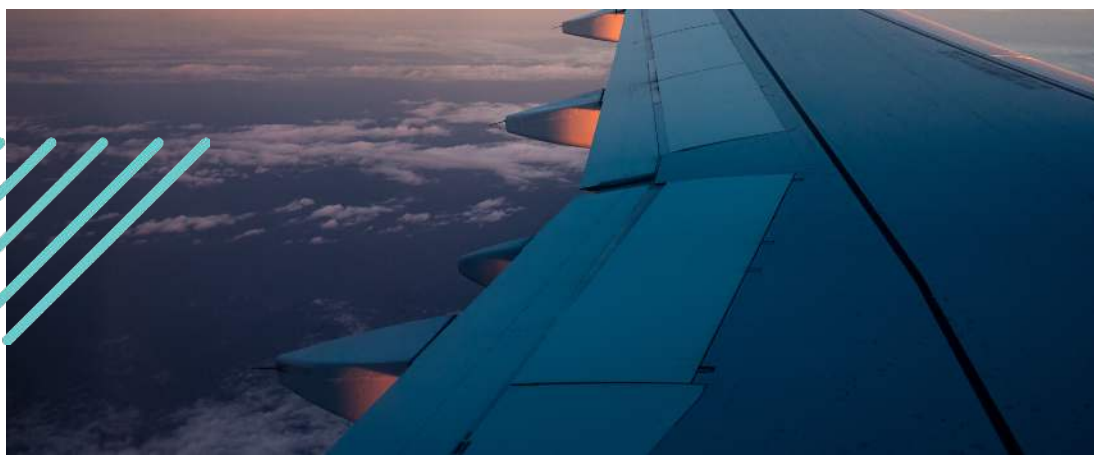
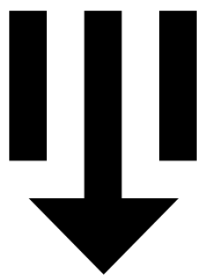
Moderator: Invites tables to close discussion and reflect on big ideas. Hand off to **Facilitators**

Over the past 12 weeks, we've seen that **because of Jesus everything changes**. In Him, we have: a new identity, a new family, and a new way of living.

Tonight, Paul reminds us that this new life *isn't* lived without opposition, but neither is it lived without hope.

💬 **Reflection:** Go around the table and have each person answer:

If you had one minute to summarize the message of Ephesians for someone who never studied it, what would you say?

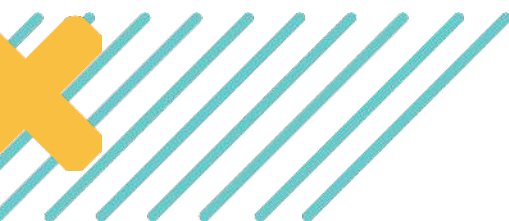
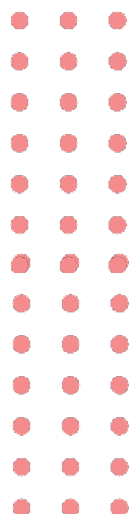




Thursday AM Application

Tomorrow morning, before you begin your day, **read Ephesians 6:10–18** one more time.

As you pray, intentionally thank God for each piece of the armor He has provided.
Then ask: “***Lord, help me stand firm today, not in my own strength, but in Yours.***”



PART 5: PRAYER + DISMISSAL | 🙏 7:50-7:55 (5 min)

Keep prayer SIMPLE.

You can pray for:

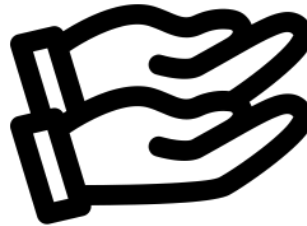
- personal needs
- one another
- truths from tonight's text

Avoid:

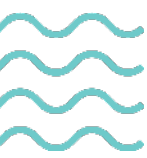
- forcing vulnerability
- marathon prayer sessions
- pressure praying
- being weird

Leaders should model:

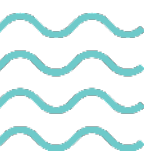
- short prayers
- warm prayers
- honest prayers
- simple prayers



NOTES



NOTES





The "**Midweek Leaders Guide**" is a transformative resource designed to cultivate genuine Christ-centered relationships within Midweek Groups, emphasizing the importance of community, Scripture processing and shared spiritual rhythms. This guide encourages leaders to create a safe and accessible environment for all believers, helping them to grow spiritually while also fostering authentic connections. Success is measured not by attendance or perfect answers, but by the depth of relationships and the collective journey toward following Jesus together.

This e-book is a resource developed by rest Church solely for the express purpose in training, equipping and supporting its Midweek leaders. It is intended for internal ministry use and is not to be reproduced or distributed outside of rest Church without permission.

