

Small Group Meeting week 2 Prayer for Holiness

Review [20mins]

Reflect together on your experiences over the last week. What has God been teaching you? Where have you been growing in your walk with Him? Had you set yourself a challenge in your discipleship? How is that going? Share those experiences with your small group.

Read [10mins]

Recap on the sermon from last Sunday. Try to give a summary to those who were not able to be present.

Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21

Read the Bible passage for this week, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene as this was read in the Ephesian church. 'Setting the Scene' below gives some background information, while the two prayers are laid out side by side at the end of these notes.

In an appendix the two passages are listed side by side.

As you read, look out for *shockers* and *blockers*.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

Setting the scene:

- Ephesus was a cosmopolitan port city, with a massive temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis (Diana). A city where all sorts of religious experience was on offer. The church was a real mix from different cultures, ethnicities and religious backgrounds – yet in Christ they are brought together (2:13ff)
- Paul’s ministry there over a period of more than two years is described by Luke in Acts 19 and 20.
- Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is typical of his letters whereby the second part of the letter describes the practical outworking of the theology of the first part. However, as the old saying goes, ‘you can’t have one without the other’. Without the theological grounding of who God is and what he *has* done in our lives the practical actions are an impossible task list.
- Across the scriptures we find God’s injunction to his people to ‘be holy because I am holy’ (Lev 11:44, 45; 1 Peter 1:14, 16) – holiness is a call to become more like God in all that we are.

Reflect [20 mins]

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your *shockers* and *blockers*. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

- Q1. In both passages Paul prays that his hearers may ‘know’ things. Look at what those things are – how do you grow in such knowing? How might such knowledge transform your character?

- Q2. Archbishop Justin has asked that we pray to be more effective witnesses; in these prayers Paul talks a lot about God's power. How do these two go together?
- Q3. In both prayers (but particularly the second) there is an emphasis on 'all God's holy people'. A community 'rooted and established in love' is a powerful testimony to God's character. How might we grow deeper in this area?

Respond [20mins]

As you draw near to the end of your session, consider how you might respond to your reading and reflection by "walking the talk". What are you going to be doing this week that will help you stretch the faith you have? It may be a challenge or activity that you are currently engaged with over many weeks. Be prepared to share how you are growing in that.

Some new challenge ideas

1 "I have not stopped giving thanks' (1:16)

Review your prayer life. What is the balance between adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication? What place does adoration and thanksgiving for who God is and what he has done shape your confession and supplication as you seek to grow in holiness?

2 "I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power with all the Lord's holy people [to grasp and to know the immensity of God's love in Christ] (3:16b-19)

Where has your love grown cold and distant for another church member? Seek them out this week and look to repair the relationship.

Group Prayer

As a group, pray for one another this week that you will grow in knowledge of what God has done for you/us in Christ and that you may increasingly know his power to do his will.

The two prayers

1:15-23

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

3:14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

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