

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 25
Ephesians 1-5

This week's reflections were written
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General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter
and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God
(including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
 - What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
 - Is there something here I'd like to learn
more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your
prayer today.

Monday

Ephesians 1

Years ago, Watchman Nee gave a simple outline for Ephesians – Sit, Walk, Stand. Nee wrote that in Ephesians, Paul is outlining what it means to live the Christian life not on our own strength, but with the strength and help God provides.

Notice how many times the phrase “in Christ” or “in Him” appear in this chapter. All of God's riches of grace, mercy, love are our inheritance. We are ‘seated in the heavenly realms’ – by grace, we don't have to earn acceptance from God but have all God's resources at our disposal; chapters 3-5 explore how to walk as a Christian in this world; and 6 tells us how to stand our ground against evil forces at work in the world.

Today, take time to reflect on all God offers you through his son, Jesus. Take time to give thanks and reflect on one “in him” which catches your attention. And pray for someone else the prayer beginning in verse 15.

Tuesday

Ephesians 2

The author of life is at work to defeat death and the things that lead to death in our lives and in the world. For Paul this worked on several levels:

- personally, the deathly and destructive habits and patterns of our life are defeated when Christ died for us.
- The rules and regulations of religion which lead to guilt and condemnation are destroyed.
- And so to are the worldly rules of who is “in” and who is “out” – who's an alien and who's chosen. Jesus came to ‘reconcile’.

Notice the famous vs. 8-10 – we can't do this alone or earn it by being good (works). Instead we're ‘seated’ – given a place at the table ‘by grace’.

To think about:

Paul uses the image of a house built on a solid foundation. Are there ‘dead’ areas of your spiritual life? Your relationships? Are there any walls that need to come down between myself and another? Is there someone excluded you could reach out to? Offer grace to? What good work might God have prepared in advance for you?

Wednesday

Ephesians 3

In the previous chapter, Paul says God has prepared each of us for a good work. Paul begins sharing the work for which he has given his life – proclaiming to those excluded from the God of the Jews that they can be reconciled through what Christ did on the cross. There's no more barrier: we can approach God with freedom "in him".

In heaven, God has deposited a rich bank account for us to draw upon: The prayer beginning in 3:14 is rich and deserves lots of time: God's glorious riches of strength, power, and love.

Take time to pray this prayer for yourself, for others. And finish thanking God that he will and can do more than you could begin to imagine or pray.

Thursday

Ephesians 4

Living the Christian life isn't a solo sport. Right from the beginning, as Paul's letters show, there were fighting and factions in the church. But, that seems to be part of how we grow up; how we learn to grasp the long, deep and wide love and grace of Christ: we have to practise loving each other.

Does verse 2 bring a person or situation to mind? Who is God asking you to practise loving?

Vs. 7-16 capture the vision of the church – to honour different gifts and work together to help each person become mature and deeply connected to Jesus.

What gift has God given you to prepare others?

Like Colossians 3, vs. 17-32 get practical, listing areas to pay special attention to as we "walk after Christ". The trick is to read these keeping chapter 2's stress on grace: Walking after Christ is about responding to his love, not trying to earn it.

Friday

Ephesians 5

When you turn a light on in a dark room, it is no longer dark. Paul continues to list what living "as dearly loved children" looks like. Paul's passionate– this isn't a game and there is much we're exposed to that can destroy our faith, our relationships with others, and our ministries.

For years, I focused on trying not to do these things with limited success: Like thinking about not scratching a mosquito bite. Paul's solution really helped: Instead, focus on God who dearly loves us and focus on learning what pleases God.

Wives and Husbands: this is a tough one. "Wives submit" has been used to justify terrible abuse. For Paul's time, he was raising the standard for husbands – to love their wives with a sacrificial love that goes all the way to the cross. Our marriages are meant to be a picture of God's love for his bride, the church. Still, it's a tough one.