

Read and Pray Through Ephesians, Part II

Faith Baptist Fellowship Bible Reading Initiative for February 15 – March

We recommend you have a notebook and pen for answering questions and recording your thoughts and insights. Bring this notebook with you to Faith Group for discussions and prayer times. Select a quiet place and consistent time to read and pray. We also recommend you pray for a moment before you read God's word and ask for his illumination by the power of the Holy Spirit as you read. Be prepared to think carefully about what the author is conveying in the passage, what God's word is saying, and how you might apply it.

Abbreviations:

TAI – *Think About It*

PP – *Prayer Point*

Sunday, February 19 – Romans 11:33-36 “The end from the beginning.”

TAI: Today Pastor Dana begins our series on Romans 9-11, *Inscrutable*. What does “inscrutable” mean? (Dictionary time!) This closing passage of the section is a call to worship, a reminder of God's transcendence and glory. On what occasions in life have you tried to “counsel” God? What do you think Paul means when he says “from him and through him and to him are all things”?

PP: Pray a prayer of worship acknowledging God's rich wisdom and knowledge. Honor him as your God and thank him for his grace to you. Ask him to help you glorify him in every aspect of your life. Ask God to speak powerfully to you during the weeks of this series of sermons on a serious subject: God.

Monday, February 20 -- Ephesians 2:11-13

TAI: To help you understand: Gentiles = non-Jews = the uncircumcision; Jews = circumcision. What remarkable change has taken place, so that Gentiles no longer have to feel alienated? Would this transformed status be possible apart from the blood of Jesus Christ? How did Jesus fulfill the covenant of promise and give hope to the whole world, that is, to both Jews and Gentiles?

PP: Sing a song you know about the blood of Jesus – perhaps “Nothing but the Blood” or “The Blood Will Never Lose its Power.” Rejoice in prayer that through Jesus' shed blood you have been brought near to God, forgiven and restored to your Creator. Pray for Jews and Gentiles in your sphere who do not yet have Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Pray about your own witness to them.

Tuesday, February 21 – Ephesians 2:14-16

TAI: Jesus has made peace by knocking down the wall between Jews and Gentiles. How did Jesus knock down this wall? Two great dividers are eliminated by the cross of Jesus, the wall between God the Creator and sinful humanity, and the wall between Jews and Gentiles. What does this reconciliation mean to you? How is this peace experienced in your life? Do you feel “one” with believers who are different from you, perhaps by race or culture, language or religious background?

PP: Ask God to help you be a peacemaking communicator of the gospel. Ask him to work powerfully in the life of your church so that gospel peace overcomes any manmade barriers to reconciliation. Celebrate the truth that God's kingdom will have some from every tribe and tongue and nation (Rev. 7)!

Wednesday, February 22 – Ephesians 2:17-22

TAI: Peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ is for all, Jews and Gentiles, the near and the far. Do you see the Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in v. 18? How are all three persons of the Trinity involved in your salvation? Is your church a reflection of the reality that in Christ, all of us (every people group, Jew and Gentile) are part of the household of God? Is Jesus the Cornerstone of your unity? What does it look like when the church is truly “a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (v. 22)?

PP: Praise God for his Triune work of grace in your life. Ask God to build a remarkable spiritual unity in the life of your church. Pray that by grace you would be a contributor to unity and not a detractor from it. Pray that the Lord Jesus Christ would truly be the Cornerstone of your church’s life and ministry.

Thursday, February 23 – Ephesians 3:1-6

TAI: In what way was the Apostle Paul “a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles”? What evidence from the book of Acts backs Paul’s claim to a “stewardship of God’s grace” given to him by revelation? (Need help? e.g. Acts 22:3-21) What is the “mystery” now made known? How has that mystery, now made clear, impacted your life? Are you a gospel man or woman?

PP: Tell God how much the good news of the gospel has changed your life. Praise God that the truth of Jesus the Messiah and Savior to both Jews and Gentiles is now clearly known and understood by all who believe. Ask God to help you live the gospel truth on a daily basis and share it openly. Intercede for those who today are, as Paul was, prisoners for the sake of the gospel.

Friday, February 24 – Ephesians 3:7-13

TAI: Why do the grace and power of God always go together? Why do you think Paul calls himself “the very least of all the saints”? Do you feel that way sometimes? Put into your own words “the unsearchable riches of Christ” – what are they? It’s easy to be frustrated with the local church sometimes, but what great calling does the church have? Faith in Christ yields what great gifts to us?

PP: Express to God your adoration for the glorious riches of Christ. Pray with thanksgiving for his grace and power. Express to God your love for the local church. Tell God that you will not lose heart (v. 13) over your personal frustrations with your local church or over your suffering for the faith.

Weekend, February 25-6 – Romans 9:1-13

TAI: What great gifts has Israel received from God? So why does Paul have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in his heart over them? Has the word of God failed with regard to unbelieving Jews? What is the difference between children of flesh and children of promise? Study these verses (10-13) carefully, then explain why God chose Jacob but not Esau. What is election (v. 11)?

PP: Pray for Pastor Dana as he preaches Sunday. Ask God to give you anguish over the lost people you love and care about, an anguish that expresses itself in fervent prayer and loving witness to them. Pray for your Sacred 7.

Monday, February 27 – Ephesians 3:14-21 Day one.

TAI: This paragraph is one of the grand prayers of the Bible. Why do you suppose Paul got onto his knees to pray for this church? Jot down the series of phrases which comprise Paul's requests in this prayer. Study them. How is the Trinity evident in this prayer? What is the fullness of God?

PP: This is a wonderful prayer to pray often, for yourself and for others. Pray through it once, phrase by phrase, for yourself. Then pray through it again for members of your family. Then pray through it a third time on behalf of the brothers and sisters in Christ at church.

Tuesday, February 28 – Ephesians 3:14-21 Day two.

TAI: Yesterday we focused on the requests of the prayer. Today, focus your thoughts on the stunning benediction. How much can God do as we pray? Why do you think we often struggle to truly believe that? What is the power at work within us? What would "glory in the church" look like? How long will it last?

PP: As yesterday, pray through the entire prayer (vv. 14-21), only this time take extra moments to worship God as you pray through the benediction section. Do you doubt that God can do "far more abundantly" than you can ask? Tell him of your doubts. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Then ask God to boldly work in your life, your family, our church, and our world. Glory forever! Amen.

Faith Group Discussion Ideas: What concepts have helped you understand the "immeasurable riches" of Christ's love, its breadth, length, height, and depth? Do you think you have ever experienced the "fullness of God"? Tell us about it. What keeps us from experiencing that fullness more often? Do you find it difficult or easy (or in between!) to believe that God is able *to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think*? Tell us about a time when God truly did far more than you had asked.

PP: After sharing these things as a group, have a time of praise to rejoice in God's fullness and grace! And pray through the entire prayer, asking God to do this in the life of our church by his Holy Spirit.

Wednesday, February 29 – Ephesians 4:1-6

TAI: Paul, writing from prison, urges readers to "walk in a manner worthy" of their calling in Christ. Make a list of the words and phrases he uses to flesh this out (vv. 2-3). Circle the one which you find most difficult. How do each of these contribute to peace in the church? How do all the "ones" (vv. 4-6) help us maintain unity and peace in the church? Did you make note of the Trinity in these verses?

PP: Pray slowly through each of these "worthy walk" words and phrases, applying them to yourself. Ask God to help us build a unified and peace-loving church family, all centered in the "ones" of this passage. Express your praise to God your heavenly Father *who is over all and through all and in all*.

Thursday, March 1 – Ephesians 4:7-16 Day One

TAI: In the previous verses, Paul's emphasis was oneness. Now he describes diversity, also essential in understanding God's grace work in the church. Quoting Psalm 68, he reveals that the ascended Jesus distributes spiritual gifts to the church for its ministry. What five types of leaders are mentioned here? Is it their calling to "do" the ministry? What is the goal of the leaders equipping and the saints doing the work of ministry?

PP: Pray for the leaders God has given our church. Thank God for the rich variety of leaders who equip us for ministry. Thank God for the gifts he gives to believers. Ask God to help us be more effective in our equipping of the saints, so that more ministry gets done which strengthens the body, unifies it and helps us know Jesus better, and fills us with God's very fullness and the maturity we need.

Friday, March 2 – Ephesians 4:7-16 Day Two

TAI: Can you think of examples of false doctrine, the kind which immature people fall for, childish things which deceive and lead astray? Who does "maturity" look like for Christians? What does speaking the truth in love have to do with Christlikeness? Why is it essential that you use your gifts in the church? Why does Paul relate all this to love?

PP: Ask God to protect his people from false doctrine by helping us grow more mature in Christ. Ask God to help us "speak the truth in love" to one another. Pray for our church family to find great joy and love by using our spiritual gifts to build each other up in Christ. "God, help me use my spiritual gift."

Weekend, March 3-4 – Romans 9:14-21

TAI: Upon hearing that God chooses some (like Jacob, for example) and not others (Esau came to mind), a common accusation against God might be "That's not fair!" How does Paul answer the charge of injustice against God? For what purpose did God raise up Pharaoh? What is God's goal in this? How does Paul answer the charge that "God shouldn't find fault if we can't resist his will!" These are deep things, but take your answers directly from the passage. God is the Potter.

PP: Pray for Pastor Dana preaching on this Scripture. Ask God to move powerfully in us by his Holy Spirit, and that we might know the Potter better and trust him in a deep and full way. Ask God to clear away any cobwebs of misunderstanding, that you might fully grasp the truth God is communicating.

Monday, March 5 – Ephesians 4:17-24 Remember to pray today for the Prayer 1st Gathering of Pastors and Leaders, beginning at supper time tonight and continuing until Wednesday noon.

TAI: What characterizes the life of the unbelievers (unsaved Gentiles) in this passage? Do you know anyone who lives this way? Contrast that way of life with following Christ. What does that life look like? When you became a Christian, what "change of mind" came over you? How have you experienced the "new self"? How do we know what this new life should look like?

PP: Earnestly ask God to help you put on the new self and live a life pleasing to him. Ask God to teach you his way of holiness, through the word of God. “Free me from deceitful desires, God, and give me a renewed mind!” Pray for others in your Faith Group and circle of friends to put off the old and put on the new, through the grace of Christ. “Let them know true freedom, Lord!”

Tuesday, March 6 – Ephes. 4:25-28 Please continue to pray for the Prayer Gathering today at Faith.

TAI: Now Paul explains some of what the “new self” will look like by God’s grace. Why is telling the truth so crucial in godliness? How can we be angry and yet not sin? What does that look like? Why is unsettled anger an opportunity for the devil? What is the goal of good, honest work? What are some common forms of stealing in our day, tempting even to Christians?

PP: Pray for integrity for the believers at Faith Baptist. Ask God to help us be a people distinguished by our honesty, righteous anger but not bitterness or temper, and good, hard, honest work. Ask God to help you resist the temptations to cut corners, such as obeying the traffic laws, paying taxes, putting in an honest day’s labor for your employer, and the like. Admit to God where you feel most tempted.

Wednesday, March 7 – Ephesians 4:29-32

TAI: Have you ever felt dragged down by corrupt talk? Can you think of a time when gracious, helpful talk built you up and encouraged you? What kinds of things do you think would grieve the Holy Spirit? (The context of the passage will greatly help you answer this question!) Can you define the terms used in v. 31? **Special note: v. 32 is absolutely crucial for married couples.** What is the basis for our forgiving one another?

PP: The book of James likens our tongues to fire. Ask God to help you tame your tongue. Tell God of your desire to build others up and not tear them down. Ask God to give you a forgiving, kind heart to others, and especially to your family members. Pray for the married couples you know, that v. 32 would characterize their life together. Thank God for his forgiveness in Christ Jesus.

Thursday, March 8 – Ephesians 5:1-2 Why not memorize these two verses?

TAI: Do dearly loved children imitate their parents? How could a person imitate God? 4:1 said “walk in a manner worthy” of your calling, and now 5:2 says “walk in love.” Are these the same thing? What is the greatest example of love in all history? How should we imitate Christ?

PP: Suggestion: that you might more effectively walk in love, why not pray through the great love chapter, I Corinthians 13, today. Rejoice in the greatest love of all, Christ’s love for us when he died for us on the cross. Ask God to give you that kind of sacrificial love, in imitation of God’s own love. Thank him for making you his child.

Faith Group Discussion Ideas: Of all the practical examples of putting on the new self (from the readings this week) which do you find most frustrating and challenging for you? What do you find is hardest about living out Ephesians 4:32 in your personal relationships? Which concept is more difficult for you to live out: being an imitator of God or walking in love? Pray about these things together.

Friday, March 9 – Ephesians 5:3-5 Are you memorizing 5:1-2? Keep at it! It will be worth it.

TAI: Why do you think Paul puts sexual immorality and covetousness together? Why are those “not proper” for saints (i.e. believers)? Why does he contrast crude talk with thanksgiving? Why does Paul equate covetousness with idolatry? Idolatry is a grave danger, for it excludes a person from inheriting the kingdom of God and Christ. Why? Explain why these sins are so accepted in our society today.

PP: Pray for a true revival in our nation. Pray that the lies of sexual sin and covetousness would be exposed as to their evil source, Satan himself. Pray that Christians, including yourself, would see the profound truth of these verses and flee immorality and cling to Christ. Pray for those injured by these lies of the devil, for gospel repentance and healing. Pray a prayer of thanksgiving.

Weekend, March 10-11 – Romans 9:21-33 (repeating v. 21 on purpose)

TAI & PP: It is absolutely crucial to see here that God is displaying two key attributes of his glory in creation: wrath and mercy. God could not display his wrath prior to creation. Neither could he display his mercy then, since there were no creatures needing mercy. There was only perfection in the Godhead, in the Trinity. No vessels for the dishonor of wrath, nor vessels for the honor of mercy. Thus, creation displays the glory of God in ways not possible prior to it, and God’s glory is magnified in its display. *Pray for God’s wisdom and grace to understand what the Apostle Paul is saying here!*

Monday, March 12 – Ephesians 5:6-14

TAI: First “walk in a manner worthy”, then second “walk in love”, and now third “walk as children of light.” Paul is continuing to contrast the bad (the deception of darkness and what goes with that) and the good (good and right and true, v. 9). Why are so many sinful things done under cloak of darkness? Does anything good happen after midnight? (other than hospital work, etc.) What is Paul’s point in quoting from Isaiah about “Awake, O sleeper...”?

PP: Pray for men (and some women!) who are caught in the dark evil of pornography. Ask God to set them free through the gospel of Christ. Ask God to help you live in the light, glorifying Christ and pointing others to him. Ask him to help you stay awake spiritually when so many are asleep.

Tuesday, March 13 – Ephesians 5:15-21

TAI: Add to the previous list of “walks” this one: walk wisely. What things does Paul align with unwise living here? What things with wise living? What does worship (v. 19) have to do with being filled with the Holy Spirit? Be very practical: name the ways that worship helps one be filled with the Holy Spirit. Also, what does thankfulness have to do with being submissive to one another in our relationships?

PP: Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Ask him to help you be a whole-hearted worshipper, so that worship becomes a time when you are filled with God’s Spirit. Express your thanks to God right now. “Father, help me detect foolishness and evil, and instead prefer your will and worship.” Also, pray for those who lead us to the throne of grace in worship each week, and especially planners Caleb and Scott.