



The Wife of Christ, part 1

The Church at Ephesus

WestWay Christian Church

“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ...He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so the the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love”-Ephesians 1:3, 4:16.

Series Study Guide

Wife of Christ

This Series will be in two parts. Part 1 will be Fall 2019 and will cover Acts 18:19-20:38, Revelation 2:1-7, and Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Part 2 will be our Spring 2020 series, and will cover Paul's two letters to Timothy.

This Study Guide will discuss the larger themes found in the text from a general perspective and is designed to be done with others. The letter of Ephesians in particular was written to a group of believers; it was designed with a group in mind and is going to be best understood in that way. This guide is designed to help you dig deeper into the scripture for a given week. It's meant to be a starting point for discussion and conversation about God's heart for his people, first as the church, then as individuals.

Additionally, each week you'll find sermon-specific thoughts and questions available in the weekly bulletin.

Background on Ephesus: Ephesus was a port city and major urban center of trade between Asia Minor and Italy. Ephesus was home to a 25,000 seat amphitheater and the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. In this Temple, Artemis was served by a eunuch priest and assisted by virgin women.

Ephesus was ruled by a council made up of 100 aristocrats who governed the city as a favor to the Romans. They owned much of the land and major industries and were very wealthy. Most of the people lived out their roles, whether free or slave. Occasionally riots or strikes took place and the Romans were always close enough to end them quickly.

There were many temples dedicated to the gods and goddesses of Greece, Rome, Egypt and beyond. The religion of the people was often mixed together, accepting what they liked from some, while rejecting what they did not from others. Temple worship and participation was not daily, and the people lived for the many festivals, processions, games the different religions used to get attention to their particular belief system.

The authorship of Ephesians is historically attributed to Paul; you can learn more about him in Acts 9:1-13, Acts 22:3-16, Acts 26:4-18, and Galatians 3:5-6. Not mentioned in these texts is Paul's education in Greek rhetoric and literature, which helped him make disciples of all nations.

Paul was an incredibly wise and knowledgeable Christian, theologically sound and culturally intelligent. He knew who he was in Christ and what his life post-conversion was to be about. He was humble, bold, and confident, and this combination of mission, purpose, and character put him at odds with a great many people- religious leaders, common people, business owners (see Acts 19), and eventually, the Roman Empire.

This is one of Paul's *prison epistles*, written from a prison cell.

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Here are a few things to keep in mind as you read, study, and discuss:

- The Bible was not written in English, we are reading a translation from the original Greek. Some of the words chosen by the translators may not necessarily express everything the original authors meant to express.
- If you've ever wondered, "Why is the Bible hard to understand?"...remember that Paul had no idea that this letter, or any of his letters for that matter, would be read by us. It was written almost 2000 years ago.
- When you read the word "you" in Ephesians, he means the corporate body of the church, rather than the individual.

There are a number of resources that have been used in prep for this guide and series. Here are just a few:

Crabtree, J. (2009). *The Complete New Testament Resource for Youth Workers* (Vol. 1). El Cajon, CA: Youth Specialties.

Ephesians In Him. (2019). *The Lookout*, (06).

Ephesians: A Double-Edged Bible Study. (2006). Colorado Springs, CO: The Navigators.

Foulkes, F. (2009). *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*. Nottingham: InterVarsity Press.

Hawthorne, G. F., Martin, R. P., & Reid, D. G. (2015). *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Jesus-Centered Bible. (2015). Carol Stream, IL: Lifetree.

Phillips, Richard D. *Ephesians - a Mentor Expository Commentary*. Christian Focus Publication, 2016.

Wiersbe, W.W. (1979). *Be Rich: Gaining the Things That Money Can't Buy: NT Commentary, Ephesians*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook.

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This study guide will follow our Fall 2019 message series on the Church at Ephesus.

Each week, usually by Sunday afternoon, you'll find the message online at westwaychurch.com/media.

August 18 2019-	Acts 18:18-20:38
August 25 2019-	Revelation 2:1-7
September 1 2019-	Ephesians 1-6
September 8 2019-	Ephesians 1:1-14
September 15 2019-	Ephesians 1:15-23
September 22 2019-	Ephesians 2:1-10
September 29 2019-	Ephesians 2:11-22
October 6 2019-	Ephesians 3:1-13
October 13 2019-	Ephesians 3:14-21
October 20 2019-	Ephesians 4:1-16
October 27 2019-	Ephesians 4:17-32
November 3 2019-	Ephesians 5:1-17
November 10 2019-	Ephesians 5:18-6:9
November 17 2019-	Ephesians 6:10-24

Sunday, August 18 2019- Acts 18:8-20:38

Theme: The Most Important Thing

Primary Verse: “So guard yourselves and God’s people. Feed and shepherd God’s flock...I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following”- Acts 20:28-30.

Conversation Starter: Talk about some of the ways you’ve grown in your faith over the past 3 years. What kinds of things have you learned? Who has helped you grow? How have they helped you grow?

Read Acts 18:18-23.

- In this text, we are introduced to Ephesus. As was his standard practice, Paul began teaching in the Jewish synagogue. Why do you think this was?
- In verse 21, Paul tells them that he would be back, “Lord willing”. Why might he have included that phrase? See also James 2:13-17.

Read Acts 18:24-27.

- How did maturity of understanding make Apollos more beneficial to the spread of the Gospel?
- What does it look like to be “taken aside” and have the “way of God explained more accurately” to someone? Have you even been “taken aside”? Do you need to be “taken aside” now?

Read Acts 19:1-20:1.

- How did the Gospel threaten the preferences, power, place, and position of the citizens of Ephesus?
- What in your life is currently being threatened by the Gospel? What will you do in the face of this threat?

Read Acts 20:13-38.

- What reminders did Paul give the elders at Ephesus?
- How did Paul describe what was most important to him?
- If we asked Paul the question, “What is the key to growth and success in life?”, what do you think he would say?
- How do we know that Paul really loved these people?

Sunday, August 25 2019- Revelation 2:1-7

Theme: A Church Zealous in Doctrine Will be Zealous in Love

Primary Verse: “But I have this complaint against you. You don’t love me or each other as you did at first!”- Revelation 2:4.

Conversation Starter: Talk about a time when someone spoke truth to you, but did it in an unkind and unloving way. Now, talk about a time when “being right” was more important to you than being loving with someone else.

Read Revelation 1:19-2:1.

- What can we learn about Jesus’ presence within the church from these verses?
- How is Jesus’ presence felt and experienced in this way at WestWay?

Read Acts 20:28-31 and Revelation 2:1-3 (Note, almost 40 years passed between the events of Acts 20 and when John was given this Revelation).

- How’d the leadership in Ephesus do? How were they faithful (or not) to Paul’s instructions?

Read Acts 19:1-7 and Acts 19:17-20, then Revelation 2:4-7.

- What “works” did the Ephesians do “at first”?
- How did these initial behaviors (from the Acts texts) indicate a love for Jesus and one another?

Read Revelation 7:5-7.

- What needs to be done by the church at Ephesus to “fix” their problems?

Read Matthew 7:21-23, 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, and James 2:14-17 and talk about the tension between having correct doctrine and loving Jesus, and others, well.

As a group, seek repentance of when you’ve placed being theologically correct as a priority over loving Jesus and others.

Sunday, September 1 2019- Ephesians 1-6

Theme: The Big Picture

Theme Verse: “I am writing to God’s holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus”- Ephesians 1:1b.

It would be ideal to read the entire letter *before* small group and spend time responding to the below questions., then come prepared to discuss them.

Conversation Starter: This letter would’ve been read aloud in the various house churches in Ephesus. Instead of just sitting there, listening to it being read, there would’ve been active participation- by men and women, slaves and free. Maybe a question would be asked about something Paul wrote, or someone would ask for a line or section to be repeated. The key is that this would have been engaging.

Before you read, take a look at the following questions so you are prepared for discussion of the entire letter afterward.

- What is the overall tone of this letter? Why is Paul writing it?
- In one brief sentence, state Paul’s main message in Ephesians.
- What repeated words do you keep seeing in Ephesians? Do they tie into any theme you detect?
- What do you think Paul was trying to accomplish with this letter?

Open your Bible, and take turns reading the entire letter. When you’re done, re-visit the above questions and discuss.

After reading and answering those questions, what are you excited to learn about during this study?

If you are able, take a look at the Ephesians video from *The Bible Project*: <http://bit.ly/WWephesians> .

- How did this help give you a better understanding of the book?

As a group, ask God to speak to you through this series, that you’d desire to be more like Jesus as a result of it.

Wife of Christ

Sunday, September 8 2019- Ephesians 1:1-14

Theme: “There are many spiritual blessings available to you.”

Theme Verse: “All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ”- Ephesians 1:3.

Conversation Starter: According to glookup.com, there is over \$58 billion in unclaimed money in the United States. The most common unclaimed money is “no owner contact” for forgotten checking and savings accounts, as well as security deposits, IRS unclaimed refunds, uncollected insurance checks and even inheritance. Have you ever checked online for “found” money in one of these accounts? Why or why not? Did you have money? Talk about your experience.

Read Ephesians 1:1-3

- Why did Paul identify his readers as “God’s holy people”? Do you think of yourself in this way?
- How important is it for us to be “united with Christ”- how does it affect who you are and how you live?

Don’t miss the transition Paul makes in verse 3. Every spiritual blessing is dependent on our relationship and unity with Christ. This is NOT works. We don’t receive the blessings because of what we’ve done or do; Paul seems to be implying that when we are unified with Christ, these blessings are made available to us. Our responsibility is to accept them.

Read Ephesians 1:4-13

- Why did God choose you to receive these blessings?
- Why does it matter that He chose you before He created the world? What can we learn about Him through this? What can we learn about us?
- How are all three persons of the Trinity involved in our salvation?

Which of these spiritual blessings mean the most for your life today?

How do you see these spiritual blessings at work in your life?

How are you talking full advantage of these spiritual blessings?

Suppose there was a “spirituallookup.com” website you could access to tell you which spiritual blessings you are leaving un-accessed. What might it say?

Are there people in your life you might talk to about what you’re missing and why?

As a group, thank God for reminding you of what you have because of Jesus.

Wife of Christ

Sunday, September 15 2019- Ephesians 1:15-23

Theme: “I’m praying for God to give you the wisdom to take advantage of those blessings.”

Theme Verse: “I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly...”- Ephesians 1:16.

Conversation Starter: Spend a few minutes writing down a prayer for your small group/Bible study, then for the church body at WestWay. Use 6 sentences.

Read Ephesians 1:15-21.

- In what ways is Paul’s prayer different from the prayer you wrote?
- What can we learn about prayer from reading Paul’s prayer?
- In your prayer, did you ask to get to know God better? How often do you ask God for that?
- Paul wants us to know the hope God has called us to—what is that?
- What do you need to do to improve your prayer life?

Christians often have a stunted prayer life. Many of us still pray like we did as children, asking God for what we want and need. According to what you’ve read in Ephesians 1, what does God really want to give to his people?

God says, “Get to know me.” God created us to be in relationship with him. What have you learned about God in the past month? How would this compare to what you’ve learned about your friends, spouse or children over the past month? This is why Paul tells the church he is praying for God “to give them spiritual wisdom and insight so they might grow in their knowledge of God.” To know about God, we *need* spiritual wisdom and insight. It won’t just happen.

Time to grow up in God. From the time we meet God, we are to keep growing in wisdom and knowledge of God. Growing requires focused attention. Paul’s letter to the Ephesian church is a blueprint for healthy, Spirit-filled and led Christian living.

This week, personalize Paul’s prayer for you and for WestWay. Write it down on a piece of paper or on your phone. Faithfully and consistently pray it.

Close your time in prayer, modeled on Paul’s prayer.

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Sunday, September 22 2019- Ephesians 2:1-10

Theme: “Before you met Jesus, you were dead and completely separated from God, but no more.”

Theme Verse: “But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised us from the dead”- Ephesians 2:4.

Conversation Starter: On May 5 1951, Walter Dixon was declared dead. Dixon’s field jacket was found amidst multiple body parts in a bomb crater during the Korean War. His wife would receive a letter from President Truman, along with a death certificate. Only...he wasn’t dead; he had actually been captured and was held in a POW camp for 2 years, three months and nineteen days. When he returned to the United States as a part of Operation Big Switch, he learned that his wife had remarried and had a child. He would later marry the woman who wrote his obituary in the local paper.

Which more accurately described Walter:

- Dead but really alive?
- Alive but really dead?

Give reasons for your answer.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Often, the word *saved* is used to describe those who are in Christ. According to Ephesians 2:1-10, is this word appropriate? Why or why not?

- Why does Paul tell his readers that they “were dead”? What is he hoping to communicate?
- There are lots of unbelievers who live moral lives. How can a person live to satisfy themselves and still live a basically moral life? Does this mean they are “saved”?
- How do you respond to the idea that basically decent people are disobedient and under the influence of the Devil?
- How does this concept of being alive connect with the spiritual blessings listed in Ephesians 1?
- How does God make dead people come alive?

Jesus says in John 10:10 that his purpose was to give people a “rich and satisfying life.” What did he mean by this?

Are you living this rich and satisfying life? Are you more alive than the unbelievers you know?

Does “being alive” mark your life? How? If not...why?

As a group, pray and ask God to show you, and our body at WestWay, what a rich and satisfying life in Christ looks like, and for the courage to live it.

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Sunday, September 29 2019- Ephesians 2:11-22

Theme: “Before you met Jesus, you were completely separated from man, but no more; you have all of the rights associated with a child of God.

Theme Verse: “For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the hostility that separated us”- Ephesians 2:14.

Conversation Starter: We weren't just brought back to life to be right with God; we were given new life to be in real and right relationship with others- especially other Christians and especially with people who are different from us. How have you seen this work in action in your life and in the lives of others?

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

- How does Paul describe a non-Jewish person's relationship with God?
- What happened to change that relationship?
- How did Jesus “bring peace” to a people divided? What was the result of this?
- Paul uses three different images as a vision of the ideal church. What are these images and what do they teach us about our human relationships within our church?
 - Ephesians 2:15-16
 - Ephesians 2:19
 - Ephesians 2:20-22
- How does this week's passage connect with last week?

What does it mean to be reconciled to another person?

Why is reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles significant? How does this affect your daily life?

How does God's peace contrast with the way people refer to “peace” today?

What are ways that you are actively pursuing reconciliation and peace with others?

What are you doing to help people be reconciled to God?

As a group, spend time in prayer asking God to help you: 1) see him as a reconciler, 2) be willing to reconcile with others, 3) be willing participants in helping others reconcile with God, and 4) be willing to be a source of reconciliation at WestWay and among the other churches in Scottsbluff.

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Sunday, October 6 2019- Ephesians 3:1-13

Theme: “As for me, Paul, I get to tell you all of these things so don’t feel badly that I’m in jail; I don’t want your pity.”

Theme Verse: “God’s purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rules and authorities in the heavenly places”- Ephesians 3:10.

Conversation Starter: Talk about a current difficulty in your life. What is your attitude and spirit in the midst of this hardship? How are you doing with it?

Read Ephesians 3:1-13

- What is Paul’s attitude toward his ministry?
- What can we learn about how we might serve God?
- In verses 9-10, God shares his timetable for bringing about his plan. What is his timetable?
- What’s God’s purpose in this plan?
- What is Paul’s attitude toward the suffering he’s living through because of Christ?
- What’s the main message of this passage?

Read Ephesians 3:8 and 2 Corinthians 1:1:3-7. Do you ever feel this way about God? How has God particularly equipped you to deliver his message?

Read 1 Corinthians 4:9-13 and 2 Corinthians 11:24-29. What did Paul “do” with his hardship? What are you “doing” with yours?

As a group, spend time in prayer asking God to help you as individuals and as a group to use what you’ve been through in your life to point others to God.

Sunday, October 13 2019- Ephesians 3:14-21

Theme: “What I want, and what I pray for is that you’ll know what you have access to.”

Theme Verse: “Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think”- Ephesians 3:20.

Conversation Starter: What if there were some kind of medicine you could take that would boost your confidence in anyway you wanted? Afraid of public speaking? Take this, and suddenly you’re the most gifted orator in the world. Want to be a fighter pilot, but you’re afraid of heights? One drop and you’re “feeling the need for speed.” What would you take? Why?

Read Ephesians 3:14-21.

- Think about your prayers the past several days. How would God evaluate them? Why?
- Re-read 3:14-19.
 - Why did Paul kneel in prayer?
 - What did Paul want his reader to have the strength to do? Why did they require strength?
 - How does the Holy Spirit strengthen our inner beings?
- Why is it necessary for Christians to be rooted in love?
- How does a person grow in their awareness of Christ’s love for him or her?
- What is God’s fullness and how can Christians experience it? How do you know you’re living in the *fullness* God offers, and not just running on empty?

As a group, spend some time in prayer for each other, much in the same way Paul prayed for the church at Ephesus. Lift up one another in prayer and pray for the strengthening of WestWay, and the church in Scottsbluff, as a whole.

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Sunday, October 20 2019- Ephesians 4:1-16

Theme: “You have access to real life, real relationships, and real maturity.”

Theme Verse: “Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God”- Ephesians 4:1.

Conversation Starter: Have you ever been a part of a church body that was not unified? What was that like? How did this affect the mission of the church? Why

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

- In verse 2, Paul lists three character traits necessary for unity within the church body. What are they and why are each necessary? How do they prepare us for the command in verse 3?
- In verses 4-6, Paul shares the *basis* of our unity- the things we are to be unified around, what our unity stems from. What are they and why are they the things we are to be unified around?
- In verses 7-13, Paul lists other things God has given us. What are they and why were they given?
- According to verse 13-15, what are the chief signs of spiritual maturity and immaturity? Are you spiritually mature? Is WestWay? How are you contributing to the maturity (or the immaturity) of WestWay?
- How might someone tell the truth *not* in love? How does this affect reconciliation? How does it affect the proclamation of the gospel?

How do you see the role of “apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers”? Are you making it easy for them to equip you? Are you making yourself available to be present? Are you equipped for this work? How are you pursuing this equipping?

Specifically, how are you building up the body of Christ at WestWay? In Scottsbluff and beyond? How are you contributing to the unity of the body?

As a group, spend time in prayer: confessing where and how you’ve been immature and asking him to place people in your life to help you become more mature. Also, pray that God would give you the desire to make yourself available to this maturing process.

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Sunday, October 27 2019- Ephesians 4:17-32

Theme: “Be new.”

Theme Verse: “Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy”- Ephesians 4:24.

Conversation Starter: Have you ever watched (or are you familiar with) the show “Hoarders”? How do things like this happen? Why might someone live in this lifestyle? What kind of things do you hoard? Are they physical things? Emotional ones? Can you hoard spiritual things?

Read Ephesians 4:17-32.

- How did Paul Paul compare the old, or unsaved, man with the new, or saved?
 - How does this compare with descriptions of unsaved and saved people in Ephesians 2:1-9?
- Why should believers live differently than they did before they were saved?
- Look at the sins listed in verses 25-32. How does each of these sins actively undermine the body of Christ at WestWay? In Scottsbluff?
- Paul talks about how our sins might “bring sorrow” on the Holy Spirit. What might this look like?

What are the three things Paul mentions in 4:22-24 about the way God changes our lives? Do you think Paul intends these as three consecutive steps? Why or why not?

How can you put these things into practice in your personal life? In your small group? At WestWay? In Galatians 6:2, we are urged to share our burdens. With this in mind, which trait(s) in Ephesians 4:25-32 do you personally struggle with? How might we encourage and help each other?

How does a person get a new attitude and a new self created to be like God?

As a group, thank God that you are no longer in darkness! Thank God that the old things of your life can be, and have been, cast aside and replaced with the newness of Christ.

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Sunday, November 3 2019- Ephesians 5:1-17

Theme: “Be different.”

Theme Verse: “So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise”- Ephesians 5:15.

Conversation Starter: What are some ways a child imitates his or her parents? How does this happen? Talk about ways that you are like your parents. If you have children, how are they like you?

Read Ephesians 5:1-17.

- When God tells us to be careful how we live, what does he want us to do and to avoid?
- Describe and compare how an unwise person lives versus a wise person.
- In 5:8-14, Paul describes the concepts of light and dark. What are the characteristics of each?
- How is the way you are living right now going to determine what you’ll do and accomplish next in your life?
- What do you do with your time that is positive and productive? What is negative and a waste of time?
- Why is it important for believers to walk in the wisdom of God?
 - How can we live wisely?

How would you like to grow in your faith over the next 6-12 months? What kinds of spiritual disciplines would you like to see in place over the next year? What steps do you need to take to make sure that happens?

How will this help you grow in your relationship with Christ? How will this help our church unify and become mature in the Lord?

As a group, praise God for making available to you the ability to know what pleases him.

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Sunday, November 10 2019- Ephesians 5:18-6:9

Theme: “Love well.”

Theme Verse: “And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”- Ephesians 5:21.

Conversation Starter: What is one challenge to harmony that you face in your relationships? What is most difficult about this?

Read Ephesians 5:18-6:9.

- Why does Paul compare wine with the Holy Spirit? What is the fruit of too much wine? What is the fruit of “too much” Spirit?
- Look carefully at 5:21. How is this important to evaluating the rest of this section (through 6:9)?
- What does it mean to be submissive to another person?
- Why is submission to others important to unity?

Go back and re-read Ephesians 4:11-16.

- How do you see submission present in these verses?

Is a God-honoring submission one-way or mutual? Why?

What steps do you need to be taking to build harmony in your relationships with others?

What steps do you need to be taking in order to build unity within the church?

As a group, ask God to give you a spirit of submission, to him, to others, and to church leadership.

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Sunday, November 17 2019- Ephesians 6:10-24

Theme: “Be ready to fight the real battle. You’re in Christ, and love is on your side.

Theme Verse: “A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power”- Ephesians 5:10.

Conversation Starter: “The Christian life is a battleground, not a playground.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why or why not?

Talk about a time when you viewed Christianity as a playground.

Read Ephesians 6:10-24.

- Thinking back through the entire book, what does Paul mean to “be strong in the Lord”?
- What sort of fight are we in? What’s the end goal?
- How does Paul tell us to prepare?
- How are truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation weapons in the fight against the Devil?
- Why is the “word of God” (of all things) described as a sword- possibly the most indispensable of our entire outfit?
- How is prayer both a preparation for battle and the battle itself?
- How does Paul ask for the people to pray for him?
- Read verses 21-24; what can we learn about relationships between Christians in the early church?

Paul wrote this to entire congregations, not individuals. What value does this place on the instructions for you? How can you be more involved and engaged in body life?

As a group, thank God that the scriptures have been faithfully passed down for centuries as a communication of his heart for his people. Praise God that he is faithful to us, even when we are not faithful to him. Thank God that we have all that we need through him for right belief and right practice. Thank God that the things he provides to us are enough to take on our spiritual enemies and win.