

Ephesians 1:15-19

How Do You Stay Inspired?

Image Church // Ephesians 1: God's Calling on Our Lives wk 3

Intro

Image Family, I hope you're doing well!

***Celebrate GroupLink:** 40 ppl signed up last week- we have over 100 people in Groups!

- **10** Groups with potentially 1 on the way...

If you have your Bible, Ephesians 1...

- We've been in a series where we've been walking through chapter 1 of Ephesians with the goal of having a transformed perspective on who God is, and what He's extended to us, and, ultimately, what that means for our lives...

We looked at **who's you are-** and we talked about **identity**... And last week, we looked at, what we've **inherited** in our *new identity*...

This week we're going to see Paul do something unexpected... Something that's unique but profound...

Build the tension: Before we look at it, let me ask you this... *How many of you want to grow in certain areas in your life? All of us right?*

But here's the thing, it's easy in the journey for us to stall out and become stagnant in the process... *Right?*

Especially with all we have going on, and the fact that we have multiple areas we want to excel in... *School, your job, parenting, leadership, sales, finances...*

- It's easy to turn around only to realize that we're stagnant in our growth...
- You've gotten distracted, you've become overwhelmed, you've lost interest...
- And at the end of the day you're not where you want to be...

And when you realize where you are, you go back to the drawing board... Another book, another tool... Get a new planner, download a new app, make a goals sheet, put sticky notes all over your house...

- You start making changes- I'm going to get up early, I'm going to earmark everything in my calendar, I'm going to set new family rhythms, I'm going to make a chores chart for my kids...
 - And most of the time, those things don't last, and if they do, they're not really working as well as you'd hoped...
 - And even if it does work- eventually, it has to be tweaked or you move on to something else so the emphasis and impact changes...

This is the journey of life in so many ways... We want to grow, we try to grow, we get distracted, we lose momentum, we try something new... Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't... Priorities shift, focus changes...

The same's true for us Spiritually... Down deep, we're interested in growing, we want to see changes in our lives...

- We try to make some changes, but so often, we get distracted with everything else that we have going on in life, or we become complacent, or we just get tired...

What's the answer? How do we experience spiritual growth? How do we not get distracted or complacent?

- *How do we keep Christianity from becoming stale?*
 - *When it's stale, we stall out...*

How do we see change actually take place in our lives?

Here's the thing, we've talked about some rich truths over the past **2 weeks**... Some *incredible implications of who God's made us to be and what He's extended to us*...

How do we keep what we know about God from just being information that we know instead of inspiration that we experience?

Ephesians 1:15-19

¹⁵ This is why, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ I never stop giving thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers.

So, Paul's been writing a theological masterpiece... He's been unloading content that's deep and rich, and then, he stops mid-flow, and **he writes out a prayer for the church in Ephesus**...

And what we see from the start of Paul's prayer is that the church is doing pretty well!

- They're having faith in Jesus and loving one another...

But here's the thing we're going to see, Paul doesn't just stop at a prayer of thanksgiving... He's going to pray some specific things over the church as it relates to their **spiritual growth**...

And here's the thing we need to see in this... No matter where you are, no matter how well you think you're doing, no matter how long you've been a Christian, we never stop growing in the gospel!

- No one's arrived in the Christian life...

See, the reality is that, as John Calvin puts it: *The heart and mind of man is a perpetual forge of idols. Our hearts and minds are idol factories that operate 24/7, churning out molten gods.*¹

And here's the thing, so often complacency feeds the flame that creates the idols!

¹ John Calvin, *The Institutes of Christina Religion*. Sourced via Bradely Gray, *Christ For You*.

At the core of complacency for the Christian is when you know the right **information** about God and what Jesus has done for you, but you're not **inspired** to live in light of it...

Which is why, I think, Paul's about to pray what he does next for the Church in Ephesus...

Look at **verse 17**... Paul says:

¹⁷ I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

Paul's desire is for **a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God**...

He wants depth, intimacy and growth... He wants us to **experience** God, not just know **information** about Him...

*Here's the thing that we have to understand, there's a **difference** between knowing about God and actually knowing God*...

Illustration: I can look at the facts and know that Michael Jordan is the best basketball player to ever play the game, but it's not until I watched him play that I got to experience it...

- I will never forget it I was about 12... A buddy of mine had invited me to an Orland Magic game versus the Bulls...
- Had no idea where the seats were, turns out they were on the floor... One of the coolest experiences of my life watching Michael Jordan do his thing...

I can know how a zipline works and that it can hold my weight, but I don't actually know what ziplining is like until I put on the harness and **experience** a ride on the zipline...

I knew the facts about what having a baby entails... But it wasn't until I was present at the birth of my first child Adalyn, that I **experienced** it and really knew what having a baby was like...

When Paul prays for *a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God*, he's praying for more than knowing information about God, he's praying for us to experience God...

The **Hebrew** understanding of the word **know** was used to describe **sexual intimacy** when a man and a woman become one through the experience of sexual intimacy...

- The Bible would say that the man **knew** his wife...
- That doesn't mean that the man knew facts about his wife- she's pretty, nice, funny...²
- *No, it means that they EXPERIENCED one another in a deep and intimate way...*

*The kind of Knowledge that Paul's talking about is the kind of knowledge that we gain through **deep connection** and **experience...**

Here's why this is so important for us to understand the difference between knowing *facts* about God and actually knowing and experiencing God...

You can know things about God, and you can even be around the things of God, and yet not really KNOW Him...

An example of this was the **Pharisees**... They were experts in the things of God... They **knew** scripture, they **knew** the law, and they **knew** about God... But they missed **Jesus**...

- **John 5:39-40** *You pore over the Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, and yet they testify about me. ⁴⁰But you are not willing to come to me so that you may have life.* [Reference]

Or Judas...

- He literally followed Jesus, did things for Jesus, **knew** facts about Jesus...
- But his knowledge didn't make it to His heart- there was no trust and surrender to Jesus...

It's possible to **know things about God, even be around the things of God, and not really KNOW God for who He is!**

- *Because you've never really experienced Him through what He's done!*

To really know God comes through experiencing God by seeing, believing, and surrendering to the person and work of Jesus...

- That God came down to do what we could never do for ourselves... That when we were separated from God because of our sin, God stepped in and made a way for us to be with Him...
- Jesus would come and live perfectly in our place, and then He would die in our place...
- And He would raise from the dead to prove that He was God and offer us NEW LIFE through HIS FINISHED WORK that we receive through FAITH!

And when you surrender **in faith** to the finished work of Jesus, you receive the power of the **Holy Spirit**, we talked about this last week.

- You have access to the presence and power of God...

*And it's through the power of the Holy Spirit that you **EXPERIENCE TRANSFORMATION**... Where the truth of Jesus begins to shape your life...

- *It's through Jesus that you come to know and experience God!*

What Paul's after is **not** some sort of emotional encounter with God... He's after a lifelong experience with God where He's working to shape you to be more like Christ!

You see this in what Paul prays next... Look at verse 18...

¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints,¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength.

² JD Greear, *Love Incorruptible*.

Let's walk through this... Paul prays that the eyes of the heart would be opened to **experience the hope to which God's called those that are in Christ to...** [Highlight verse 18a]

- What is that hope? It's the hope of glory...
- We need to talk about this. What does that mean?!?

The **hope of glory** is established now by **Christ in you** through the power of the **Holy Spirit**...

- **Colossians 1:27** God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. [Reference]

The **hope of glory** is also what **Christ** has **obtained** and **secured** for you...

- **Romans 5:2** We have also obtained access through him by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we boast in the hope of the glory of God. [Reference]
- **Colossians 3:4** When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. [Reference]
- **Ephesians 5:27** He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless. [Reference]

The hope is found in the glory of Christ that gives you **access** to the things of God for all of eternity!

*And here's the thing I want you to see, Paul doesn't just want this to be facts about the future that you know but something that you **EXPERIENCE NOW!**

- When you experience this kind of hope that's found in Christ it changes the way that you see the world around you...

Illustration: When I know I am going to have a good meal for dinner... I plan my day around it...

Something else Paul prays for here is that we would **experience the glorious wealth of His inheritance**, [Highlight verse 18b]

IOW: Would we experience the incredible implications of being God's inheritance...

- Don't miss that, the text says that we're **God's inheritance**...
 - You've been given value and worth!

What makes something valuable is the one who made it...

Illustration: Me and **Michael Angelo** could both throw paint on a piece of paper- his is going to be worth way more than mine... **The value is determined by the creator**...

- God's the one that's made us His- through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus... It's His blood-stained work that saves us...
- There's a value and worth that we now have as sons and daughters of God... We're part of His family!

Paul's desire is that we would **experience the **value** that God's placed on those that are His...

- And here's the thing when you experience the value that's been placed on you, it changes how you view yourself... It allows you to be content with who God's made you to be...
- You don't have to try to find it in other people, or work for it in your job...
- When you experience the value you've been given, it changes your perspective...

Illustration: Let me ask you this... What do you do with the things that are most valuable to you?

- Put them in a safe, hide them somewhere wrapped up and preserved... OR...
- **Fine China Cabinet**...
- Here's the problem- when you do that you don't get to experience the things you value...
- The way that you experience it is by using it or wearing it...

This is what we do when it comes to the value that God's given to us through Christ... We **know** it, but **we don't walk in it**...

- *Appeal...*

The last part of what Paul prays, **verse 19**, is that we would **experience** the [immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the mighty working of his strength](#). [*Highlight verse 19*]

***What Paul's praying here, is that we would **experience new life and transformation** through the power of the **Holy Spirit** that you **receive** when you **BELIEVE!**

- *When you have faith in the finished work of Jesus you receive the power of the Holy Spirit... Gives new life and brings transformation...*
- *Appeal... God takes dead hearts and gives them life... He take sinful people and makes them more like Christ...*

That's the immeasurable greatness of God's power at work!

Now, *what if you don't see God transforming power in your life?* What if you don't see Him pressing on idols...

Don't see any fruit in your life...

- There's a good chance that's an indicator that you've never experienced the power of **salvation!**
- *I want to give you a chance to do that today...*

OK, so back to the question we started with... **How do we keep from all that we've been walking through in Ephesians 1 from just being information that we know, but not inspiration that we experience?**

The answer is right here, and it's so easy to miss... You ready?!?

Prayer! Paul is praying this for the church!

Prayer is what releases the power that opens our eyes to experience the things of God.³

- The reason why Paul prays what he does, is that it's not something that we can manufacture. It's something that God gives through the power of the **Holy Spirit**...

The Holy Spirit makes the truths of God's Word come alive in us!

- **Prayer** is the tool that God's given us to lean into the power of the **Spirit** that makes the truths of God's Word come alive in us!

Illustration: *A cookbook...*

- Think of having a cookbook with amazing recipes. Knowing these recipes is great, but you don't truly understand their beauty of them until you actually cook and taste the dishes.
- What Paul lays out in **Ephesians 1** is like recipes. Just knowing them isn't enough. It's when we apply these teachings to our lives, like cooking a dish from a recipe, **that they go from information to inspiration that we experience.**
- In the same way cooking turns a recipe into a nourishing meal, **PRAYER** turns information about God into a lived experience. Active engagement in **prayer**, like preparing a dish, brings the **WORD OF GOD** to life in us!

So:

- Do you feel like what you know about God isn't impacting you?
- Do you feel complacent in the Christian life this morning?
- Do you feel unmotivated?
- Do you feel stalled out?
- Do you feel stagnant?
- Do you feel unmet or still empty after your time in the Word?
- Do you feel like you can't sense the presence of God in your life?
- Do you feel like you don't see any transformation in your life?
- Do you want to grow?
- Do you want to experience God more?

³ JD Greear, *Love Incorruptible*.

PRAY what Paul prayed! *Lean in and ask God to do what you can't!*

God, would you help me experience you? Would you take me deeper in my understanding of who you are and what you've done? Would you open the eyes of my heart so I can experience the hope you've given me as your glorious inheritance? And would you help me experience your transforming power?

The Christian life starts with this prayer Paul prays, and it continues in this prayer that Paul prays...

- There's a word for what this is... DEPENDENCE
- *Dependance is the mark of the Christian life...*

Challenge to the Christian... I want to challenge you to pray Paul's prayer each day this week. Pray it before you read your Bible, and pray it when you wake up...

- This isn't an incantation. This is you depending on God for what you can't manufacture on your own...

Conclusion [VAMP]

For some of you, you're here, and you're not a Christian... You've known things about God, maybe even grown up around the things of God

- But you've never surrendered your life to Christ experience the power of God at work in you...

I think so often why Christianity is so unattractive because people assume that it's knowledge-based... When in reality, it's about experiencing God and His transforming power right now!

- The goal isn't simply to know facts about God...
- That's unmotivating and will cause you to stall out...

Christianity is an invitation to experience the presence and power of God right now!

For some of you, you need to do that this morning for the first time...

- Paul's prayer needs to be your prayer of surrender...
- *Chance to do that...*
- *Card in seat...*

PRAY

Outtake:

Illustration: *Old painting in your grandfathers attic...*

- Imagine finding a masterpiece in your attic, covered and forgotten for years. This stunning painting, always part of your inheritance, was unnoticed, much like our spiritual inheritance in Christ. *Uncovering it doesn't increase its value; it has always been priceless. But our discovery changes how we see ourselves and our place in the world. Our inheritance in Christ, like this masterpiece, is about realizing the richness and beauty that's been ours all along.*