

LIFE GROUP LESSON

Hot Topics-Studying Ephesians - Week of September 20

Introduction

The computerized modern era in which we live has us all depending on technology on some level. Electronics, hand-held devices, the internet are part of everyday life. In fact, we can hardly fathom how humanity ever lived without it. Think about it, cell phones, like an added appendage, are attached to our bodies. We call to check in on family, work, and other appointments. We need to quickly retrieve knowledge, we ask Siri. We watch tutorials for how to design a project. We shop online, go to school online, and share favorite venues for spiritual renewal with teaching, preaching, and other 'holy' entertainment. We check weather apps to plan the day and what to wear. We are constantly 'connected'.

Yet, "... do people know where to find wisdom? Where can they find understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all humanity" (Job 28:20-21a). No generated data, no form of technology, no amount of being 'connected' on the world-wide-web will ever be able to connect us to God on a soul level. God alone gives wisdom, faith, love, hope. Artificial intelligence will never be able to substitute for that. Anything that tries to replace an authentic life-long relationship with Christ will leave us bankrupt. For when we set out to sidestep, outwit or outshine the living God, chaos is sure to follow. Take it from the people of Babel, the 'latest technology' and worship of self always leads to confusion and division.

Read Genesis 11:1-9

- Share briefly how our culture today is much like the people on the plain of Shinar uniting to "build a great city for ourselves with a tower that reaches into the sky" and trying to make themselves famous?
- Because they did not put God first, the LORD put a stop to their plans by confounding their languages. How does God reverse Babel on the day of Pentecost, according to Acts 2:1-4)? What can we learn from these polar accounts?

Background

Paul served the church in Ephesus for three years. Upon his first visit, he knew at least two things: he wanted to come back (Acts 18:19-21) and his work would be cut out for him (Acts 19:1-2). The baby Christians at Ephesus hadn't

even heard of the Holy Spirit. They were poor, not materially, but in spirit. Ephesus was filled with affluence – terraced homes overlooking the Mediterranean, houses with tiled mosaic floors, painted frescoes on grand walls, indoor plumbing, heated floors, and natural air-conditioning provided through the 'latest technology' ... you name it. They were extremely wealthy – a city bustling with commerce, politics, prestige – but no knowledge of Christ. Thus, Paul had a heart to love the people coming to faith in Christ and he served them well, despite imminent persecution.

Read Ephesians 3:1-13, 14-21

Discussion:

- When there is real friendship, there are also all the emotions that go along with it. What emotion do you hear in Paul's words (particularly in vv1, 7, 8-9, 13, 14, 21)?
- When Paul shares: 'And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is' (v18), we see how limited A.I. is when it comes to expressing the deep love of one's heart to another person. Though we cannot always rely on 'feelings' the Lord did create us with emotion. How is life, breath, emotion, feelings of joy and sadness, love, and a will to act on one's love a reflection of God's image stamped upon the human heart?
- We live in an age of knowledge. But wisdom is very different from knowledge. Refer to the following Scriptures. Alongside this week's theme in our Hot Topics Series "Is A.I. just Tower of Babel 2.0", name a take-away you glean from each passage –

Job 28:23-28 Proverbs 1:1-7 Psalm 49:1-9
Daniel 12:1-4 Malachi 3:14-18

Consider This

A.I. is a tool. It can certainly assist us, but it can never complete us. Only a living breathing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ can complete us. Also, the future does not belong to those who build great towers like Chat GPT, Gemini, or any other 'artificial' voice that wields itself as though it will be our utopia. God alone holds the future and eternal hope is found solely in a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Would you like direct access to true wisdom, empowerment, and inspiration? Then tap into the flow streaming from the indwelling presence of God's Holy Spirit at work in our lives.

HOT TOPICS

STUDYING THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

Text: Ephesians 3

Plain Truth:

Stop chasing after artificial _____ of
_____ and follow the _____
savior _____ who _____ creation in
his _____.

1. Honestly assess how the use of technology is either
_____ you in _____, or
_____ you from _____.
2. While AI can imitate knowledge, God grants wisdom
to those who _____ Him.
3. AI can _____ us, but AI cannot complete us.
4. The church's calling is not to _____ our
_____ great but so others may _____
the great _____ of _____.

- We open the door to all sorts of streaming information ... into our homes, our minds and hearts. But have you ever opened the door of your heart to Jesus and invited him in?
- Ask: "What do I need to declutter (get rid of) to make room for the Lord Jesus, my new permanent guest?" _____

Faith is not about having information or spouting off all the right answers. Faith is an authentic lived-into encounter with Jesus and following him daily. Faith is about loving the Lord with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Then, loving your neighbor as yourself. And loving your neighbor means praying for your neighbor and sharing Jesus with them.

- Re-visit what Paul prays in vv14-19. According to his own prayer, briefly outline the list of specific requests he prays over his Ephesian brothers and sisters.
- Close by reading together (and aloud!) the apostle Paul's words as though you just received the parchment – not from the internet or A.I. – but from swift messengers arriving from Rome where Paul is being held:

"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. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen"
(Ephesians 3:20-21).

One Year Bible Reading

Sept. 20: Isaiah 33:10-36:22, Galatians 5:13-26, Psalm 64:1-10, Proverbs 23:23
Sept. 21: Isaiah 37:1-38:22, Galatians 6:1-18, Psalm 65:1-13, Proverbs 23:24
Sept. 22: Isaiah 39:1-41:16, Ephesians 1:1-23, Psalm 66:1-20, Proverbs 23:25-28
Sept. 23: Isaiah 41:17-43:13, Ephesians 2:1-22, Psalm 67:1-7, Proverbs 23:29-35
Sept. 24: Isaiah 43:14-45:10, Ephesians 3:1-21, Psalm 68:1-18, Proverbs 24:1-2
Sept. 25: Isaiah 45:11-48:11, Ephesians 4:1-16, Psalm 68:19-35, Proverbs 24:3-4
Sept. 26: Isaiah 48:12-50:11, Ephesians 4:17-32, Psalm 69:1-18, Proverbs 24:5-6

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