



made for more

STUDY GUIDE

WEEK ONE - JANUARY 8

FROM MORE EFFORT TO MORE JESUS



Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as you come to study. Pray: ***“What do You want to teach me/us in these moments?”***

Opening question:

“How have you followed the Spirit’s lead this past week?”

READ: Ephesians 1

Theme: We need to create a culture of mobilization. The Apostle Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus reveals truths we need to embrace and shifts we need to make. The theme of Ephesians chapter 1 is **“Only Jesus can fill everything in every way.”** He chose the church and His followers to be His ambassadors to carry His fullness into every nook and cranny of society! A core commitment of every local church is to continually illuminate this mystery: Jesus is more. THE CHURCH IS MADE FOR MORE and is chosen by Jesus to express His fullness in every corner of culture and every sphere of society. We’re called to embrace this truth and mystery.

Critical Shift 1: FROM MORE EFFORT TO MORE JESUS

Do you remember the Home Depot commercial slogan, *“You can do it. We can help”*? That’s the slogan of any healthy church who desires to create a culture of multiplication and mobilization. The painful truth, however, is most churches don’t function that way. Instead, their attitude tends to be: *“We can do it. You can help.”* This has led to the immobilization of God’s people and ministries that are internal and self-serving. The church runs like a giant machine, where the members are all just small cogs in a big wheel. It’s time to get those wheels turning again! Consider the two approaches below to illuminating the mystery of more, and reflect upon which approach most represents the way you’ve been thinking:

1) The ***“We can build it—you can help”*** approach—In this approach, we illuminate the fullness of Jesus in our worship services. You can volunteer to help us or attend a service. We deepen our understanding of Jesus and proclaim the Gospel by providing great teachers and curriculum. You can receive this wonderful teaching and bring a friend. The primary place to experience the mystery of more is at the church building through programs and events. The bias and direction of this kind of church is **“COME AND DO!”**

2) The ***“You can build it—we can help”*** approach—In this approach, the goal is to equip someone as a disciple of Jesus, to illuminate the fullness of Jesus in a lifestyle of worship and mission where we live, work, study, and play. We’re equipped to live in the Lordship of Jesus daily in every area of our lives—and as we are, we’ll be ready to share the Gospel with others and help them understand the Lordship of Jesus where they live, work, study, and play. The primary place to illuminate the mystery of more is in every corner of culture and every sphere of society by mobilizing all God’s people to reveal the fullness of Jesus there. The bias and direction of that kind of church is **“GO AND BE!”**

We're called to make the shift from ceasing to depend on our own effort in order to bring about results concerning the sharing of the gospel and the building of the Kingdom to leaning more on Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit as we move out into the world as active disciples of Jesus Christ.

So which kind of church are we? COME AND DO—we can build it, you can help? Or GO AND BE—you can build it, we can help? More importantly, what kind of church does Jesus desire us to be?

As we look to this first chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, let's consider these lessons:

Lessons from Ephesians 1: Ephesians 1:3-14 is called "The Doxology" because it expresses what God has done for us in Jesus and sparks our worship of Him. It's actually one long, run-on sentence in the original Greek. The highlights of this passage are as follows:

- **JESUS HAS BLESSED US (1:3).** The Hebrew concept of "blessing" is recognizing God's kindness and provision. Jesus has made every SPIRITUAL BLESSING possible for us through His life, death, and resurrection.
- **JESUS HAS CHOSEN US (1:4-6).** We understand that to be chosen or predestined means we've been created with a God-shaped hole in our hearts—we're created to desire God—we're born with all the capacity we need to respond to His offer of relationship—but we need to respond.
- **JESUS HAS SAVED US (1:7-10).** God in Christ has done all the work on our part, but we must accept the gift. When we do—when we realize our need for God—when we surrender our will to His will—when we place our faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, He redeems, forgives, and saves us. When we accept Jesus, we come to understand He's not only our Savior—He's the Savior of the world—and all things (including every area of our lives) come under His authority and rule.
- **JESUS HAS FILLED US (1:11-14).** When we recognize we're blessed, chosen, "pre-approved," and saved by Jesus, we're filled with His Spirit who enables us to see our place in His world and His place in our world. The Spirit begins to bring us into conformity with His will and live with the assurance of eternal life—here and there.
- **JESUS HAS CALLED AND EMPOWERED US (1:15-21).** This passage shifts from "The Doxology" (our praise) for all God has done for us in Christ and begins to shift to what being FILLED WITH MORE JESUS means for us. Paul couches this in terms that he's been praying the followers in Ephesus wouldn't stop at just being saved—knowing Jesus as Savior—but they would begin to recognize Jesus is not only Savior, but also Lord. As Lord of our saved lives, Jesus calls and empowers us to do His work. We're not saved to consume. We're saved to be filled with Jesus and pursue the mission of Jesus in and through our lives.
- **JESUS WANTS TO FILL ALL THINGS—THROUGH US (1:22, 23).** The resurrected Christ is calling us to go everywhere! He wants to fill us with His Holy Spirit who empowers and equips us—calling us to join Him in what He's doing in the world. We need MORE JESUS—and JESUS WANTS MORE OF US.

The Apostle Paul was a wise leader who wanted the church to illuminate the mystery of more for themselves. In the book of Ephesians, Paul uses the word mystery for that very reason. When we begin to uncover a God and Savior who loves us madly and wants to be more to us, things start to change. Uncovering the mystery of “Jesus is more” will cause Him to fill you first. Once you’re filled with Jesus and His love for you, you’ll begin to fill the world with Him and His love more naturally—perhaps even supernaturally.

As we think about making the shift from “more effort” to “more Jesus,” take some time to ponder these questions:

- How would you instinctively characterize this shift, “*From more effort to more Jesus,*” in your own words and from your own experience?
- As you look at, think about, and get in touch with this first shift, what needs to happen for this shift to take place? In your life? In the life of the church?
- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you concerning this shift?
- Are there actions you already know you need to take that can be identified now?
- How will you as an individual/group put them into action?
- What are some ways we can prepare the way for Jesus?
- How seriously do you think we take our role in doing so?

WEEK TWO - JANUARY 15

FROM VOLUNTEERS TO MASTERPIECES



Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as you come to study. Pray: ***“What do You want to teach me/us in these moments?”***

Opening question:

“How have you followed the Spirit’s lead this past week?”

READ: Ephesians 2

Theme: The Church is made to be more! This starts with every individual disciple. The church can’t move together corporately unless each individual realizes they have an individual role to play. In a mosaic, each piece is beautiful on its own—but likewise, their individual beauty contributes to the corporate beauty once they’re all put together. Stop and ponder for a moment: Have you ever contemplated the powerful expression of God within yourself? Have you ever wondered what Jesus looks like when He clothes Himself with you?

Jesus will fill the world with His church, but He wants to fill us first! Every disciple is a unique, handcrafted-by-God vessel for expressing the fullness of Jesus into every corner of culture and into every sphere of society. A core commitment of the local church, then, is to help disciples investigate and get in touch with their personal calling to a one-of-a-kind, Masterpiece Mission for More.

Critical Shift 2: FROM MORE VOLUNTEERS TO MORE MASTERPIECES

We must shift our culture from seeing people as volunteers to seeing them as unique masterpieces with a mission. When that happens, we’ll see a shift from people simply being asked to fill in places so that ministry happens to individuals utilizing their unique, God-given talents and abilities to truly be the hands and feet of Jesus—to be people who Go and Be!

We’re called to have our eyes opened to the design God has crafted—both in us and in the church. As we take a closer look, we’ll discover God has placed passions, burdens, and even unique callings into every individual. These callings have individual benefits as well as corporate. A core commitment of the local church is to help disciples investigate their masterpiece—their personal calling to a one-of-a-kind, Masterpiece Mission for More. Every disciple is a unique, handcrafted-by-God vessel for expressing the fullness of Jesus into every corner of culture and into every sphere of society.

Lessons from Ephesians 2:

- **REMEMBER WHO AND WHAT YOU WERE (2:1-3).** At one time or another, everyone who follows Jesus came face to face with their spiritual condition—dead in their sin, objects of wrath, gratifying the cravings of their sinful nature, lifeless and without eternal purpose. Jesus didn't come to offer us this kind of life—it pales in comparison to what follows! God had so much more in mind when Jesus came—not just mere existence, but abundant and vibrant life with each of us living into our God-designed potential and living into a greater purpose.
- **CLAIM WHO AND WHAT YOU ARE (2:4-7).** God has given us new life in Christ. This is purely an act of grace. There's nothing we could've done to forgive our sin, restore our life, and improve our spiritual condition. Do you understand what God has done for us? He's rescued us from certain death to eternal life—from a Christ-less eternity to eternal life—from the agony of hell to the bliss of heaven. We're called to live like a King's kid. The question is: do we?
- **LEAN INTO GRACE AND LIVE FAITH (2:8, 9).** Too often, we try to do it on our own as we seek to earn our salvation or good, moral standing with God—by the religious things we do or the moral code by which we live. As we do, we can easily forget it's by grace we're saved through faith. The spirit of volunteerism is born in a sense of trying to earn our own way—but we were created for more!
- **YOU ARE A MASTERPIECE! (2:10-13)** The things we do in the name of Jesus aren't done out of a sense of duty or moral obligation, but in response to grace. Every follower of Jesus is made to BE the unique masterpiece God designed them to be within the context of a healthy, biblical community of faith. When we simply look at others as potential volunteers, we diminish a significant portion of who they are in Christ because we look at them in terms of what they can do for us—rather than who they are in Christ. Anyone can fill a spot or be a cog in a production line—but what if God has something incredible of divine design and intent for each of us to do? What might happen if we began to look at ourselves and others as a unique masterpiece made by God? We're called to lay claim to the grace God has lavished on us and to lean into the identity He gives us as His children.
- **BE AT PEACE (2:14-18).** One of the gifts God give us is shalom—His peace—peace with God and one another. Peace isn't the absence of conflict, but rather the presence of God in the midst of conflict. Personal peace also gives us the ability to be agents of reconciliation in our lives and to use them to draw other people to Him. One of the ways we live into our identity as children of God is by sharing our faith in the relationships God gives us and through the unique contribution we make to His Kingdom's work.
- **CLAIM YOUR PLACE (2:19-22).** By God's grace, we're citizens of the Kingdom—God's people—God's children—who are being built on the foundation of the Apostles and being built up into the fullness of Jesus. The key to making our unique contribution is to live into the fullness of God's workmanship in us as His masterpiece!

As we think about making the shift from volunteers to masterpieces, take some time to ponder these questions:

- Is this a shift that's worth the effort to pursue and to see put in place?
- How might this change the way we utilize people for ministry?
- If we began mobilizing God's people, God's way with an approach rooted in "more masterpieces" rather than "more volunteers," what would that look like?
- Read Ephesians 2:10. What, in particular, about the passage convicted you personally about something in your life and leadership?
- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you?
- What do you need to do in order to live out the masterpiece God has created you to be?

WEEK THREE - JANUARY 22

FROM MORE GUILT TO MORE LOVE



Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as you come to study. Pray: ***“What do You want to teach me/us in these moments?”***

Opening question:

“How have you followed the Spirit’s lead this past week?”

READ: Ephesians 3

Theme: The church is made to love more! God’s love is the only sufficient motivation for our desire to love more. You have a primary (general) calling and a unique (secondary) calling as we previously learned. This week, we’ll further examine those callings in the light of the incredible motivating factor of God’s love.

“God loves each one of us as if there was only one of us.” ~ St. Augustine of Hippo

Critical Shift 3: FROM MORE GUILT TO MORE LOVE

- More **GUILT** means we’re made to feel compelled to volunteer to fill needed spots of ministry. We’re made to feel ministry is something we “should” do. The shortcoming here is it doesn’t take into account individual giftedness or calling.
- More **LOVE** means...the first concern is we’re abiding in the presence of Jesus and resting in Him. The call here is to equip people to know how to abide in Jesus. When this happens, we feel ministry is the natural overflow of our life with Jesus, and it’s the highest honor to join Jesus on His mission where we live, work, learn, and play. We’re constantly taking new steps in ministry without the need for big external pressure. We practice daily, weekly, and annual rhythms of work and rest that keep us in sync with God’s design for us—embodied in the life of Jesus.
- The key is learning to motivate with love. We’ll find that, as we dwell in the love of God for us and in us, it’ll overflow through us. His love is the only sufficient motivation for our mission to MORE. To express the fullness of Jesus to others, we must have the fullness of Jesus in us.
- We grow in this fullness by being disciples ourselves (BE), who make disciples of others (DO), wherever we go (GO). This is the primary (general) calling all disciples have in common. Our personal (unique) calling, on the other hand, distinguishes us from all other disciples. The personal calling **ONLY** finds its significance within the context of our primary calling to be disciples, who make disciples, wherever we go.

Love isn’t just a thought or an idea. Love changes who we are, what we do, and therefore to whom we go. Paul said, *“For the love of Christ compels us.”* Love is a powerful motivator when it comes to our calling.

Discovering our calling involves all three of the factors—Be, Do, and Go. Knowing we were madly loved from eternity will radically change how we embody all three. We have two different callings:

- 1) **Our Primary (General) Calling:** To express the fullness of Jesus to others, we must have the fullness of Jesus in us. We grow in this fullness by being disciples ourselves (BE), who make disciples of others (DO), wherever we go (GO). This is the primary (general) calling all disciples have in common.
- 2) **Our Secondary (Unique) Calling:** Our personal (unique) calling, on the other hand, distinguishes us from all other disciples. The personal calling only finds its significance within the context of our primary calling to *be* disciples, who *do* disciple-making, wherever we go.

If we're to love more, then we must first come to grips with how loved we are by God. As we come to understand and embrace the love God has for us, we'll find it'll motivate us to love others more than we do now as we seek to live out our call. Understanding God's love for us and abiding in it will cause us to make the critical move to being motivated by that love—rather than guilt. Once that happens, we're ready to make the essential shift from more guilt to more love. In order to do so, however, we must move away from the "We can do it - You can help" operating system to the "You can do it - We can help" mentality.

Lessons from Ephesians 3: Ephesians chapter 3 begins with a section (3:1-13) in which the Apostle Paul describes and defends the legitimacy of his apostleship to the Gentiles. In today's text, Ephesians 3:14-21, Paul's prayer helps us discover the height, depth, and width of God's love for us, the church, and the world! Love is THE FOUNDATION for any calling to BE, DO, and GO. The text tells us:

- **ALL FOLLOWERS OF JESUS ARE ON THE SAME TEAM (3:14, 15).** In these verses, Paul provides an important preamble to the prayer that follows—reminding us God is the God of anyone and everyone who calls on His name. When we approach ministry from a competitive angle, we do nothing but hurt our witness to those who live far away from Jesus. Loving one another is imperative if we're going to be a credible witness to the world around us.
- **ALLOW YOURSELF TO BE FILLED WITH GOD'S LOVE! (3:16-19)** When we realize how much God loves us and His Spirit begins to fill us with His *agape*—His selfless, perfect, all-forgiving love—it gives us a deeper understanding and complete infilling so we can comprehend just how wide, long, high, and deep God's love is for us. When we're filled with God's love, we come to understand the things of God—and we're able to love like God loves. The purpose of God's love isn't just to make us feel good about ourselves but to help us love others the way Jesus loves us.
- **WALK IN THE POWER OF JESUS THROUGH THIS LIFE TO THE NEXT (3:20, 21).** These verses are a "benediction"—intended to release people to live the kind of life that's just been described. When we're filled to overflowing with the LOVE of GOD, it'll make our witness more compelling than we could ever ask for or imagine.

When you experience the love of Jesus, you can't help but start loving Jesus more. When you're certain of Jesus' love for you, the Apostle Paul says it's like the foundation of a building or the roots of the tree (Ephesians 3:17). Carrying the fullness of Jesus into every corner of society is our goal when

mobilizing God's people, God's way. Ephesians 3:16-21 says a foundation in love positions us to be filled with the fullness of Jesus.

As we think about making the shift from our culture of "more guilt" to "more love," take some time to ponder these questions:

- Why is it vitally important to distinguish our primary (general) and our secondary (unique) callings?
- Why is it important to understand these two callings go hand in hand?
- What happens when we focus on our secondary or unique calling and fail to see or understand it must support our primary calling?
- How does love bind our primary and secondary callings together?
- What happens when other motives drive our pursuit of calling?
- What happens when our motives for mobilization are rooted in anything other than love?
- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you concerning this shift?

WEEK FOUR - JANUARY 29

FROM MORE HIERARCHY TO MORE MISSIONARIES



Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as you come to study. Pray: ***“What do You want to teach me/us in these moments?”***

Opening question:

“How have you followed the Spirit’s lead this past week?”

READ: Ephesians 4

Theme: The church is made to do more! Jesus provided a mosaic of unique gifts given to the church that He might fill all things...through the church! If that’s true, then the church has a lot to do! Just as the human body has systems that work together to allow for health and reproduction, Jesus gives organizing systems to His body for fullness, for more impact, and for the mobilization of every member. Jesus provided a mosaic of unique gifts as represented within the five-fold gifting of Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd (pastor), and Teacher.

We’re called to see the unique roles and gifts given by Jesus as an important organizing system in the body of Christ—lest we miss key functions He intended. As we do, we’ll find it leads every believer to do his or her share to help fill the world with the presence of Christ. Yes, the church is made to do more—and in doing so, it must embrace the truth our organizational structures need to be equipping and deploying everyday missionaries.

Critical Shift 4: FROM MORE HIERARCHY TO MORE MISSIONARIES

We must shift church leadership culture from professional clergy doing the work of ministry to equipping and deploying everyday missionaries on mission. Consider the two approaches below and reflect upon which best describes your thinking regarding the organization of the church:

- 1) More **HIERARCHY**—The pastors and staff lead and define most of the ministry, and the members support their leadership. New “ministries” of the church always have to “go up the chain” before anything can be done. The staff is evaluated the effectiveness of their ministry.
- 2) More **MISSIONARIES**—All members see their lives—where they live, work, learn, and play—as their main ministry. Additionally, they’re excited to contribute to the shared ministry of the church through centralized organizations. Members are launching new ministry initiatives all the time without expectation “the church” will do it for them, pay for it, or centralize it. The staff is evaluated by how effectively they’re equipping others in their ministry to the body and their mission in the community.

Lessons from Ephesians 4:

- **BEAR WITH ONE ANOTHER (4:1-3).** Paul likely wrote this letter under house arrest awaiting his trial and eventual execution at the hands of the Emperor Nero in Rome. He has become the leading proponent of the Gospel in the first century and the second-most important figure in Christian history. He earned the right to speak words of truth and instruction to the believers in Ephesus (whom he had pastored for three years) and to us. Paul begins this chapter by claiming his right to say what follows and then sets the tone for how Jesus followers are to live with and treat each other. They're called to be humble, patient, to bear with each other in love, and to make every effort to keep unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace—meaning whatever internal conflicts we may have in our little “c” church or differences of opinion we might have with the Big “C” Church, we need to be Christ-like in our differences. Why? Because our infighting—our negative speak—our squabbling—damages our witness and diminishes the effectiveness of our witness to those who don't know Jesus. Paul understood division inside the body of Christ sent an uncertain and conflicted message to an unsaved world that doesn't look like love.
- **BE ONE WITH THE BIG “C” CHURCH (4:4-6).** In these three power-packed verses, the Apostle Paul speaks about the major places of agreement we have as followers of Jesus—regardless of denomination. John Wesley said, “In essentials—unity; in non-essentials—liberty; in all things—charity!” We would benefit from these words as we shift our focus from caring for those found to be seeking and saving the lost. While inside the Christian community we may differ on non-essentials, to the world around us, we must be unified in the essentials and gracious in our disagreements.
- **WE HAVE ALL THE GIFTS WE NEED—USE THEM (4:7-10).** In these verses, Paul quotes portions of Psalm 68:18 and alludes to the authority Jesus had in heaven before His incarnation—as well as the authority given to Him in heaven after His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. As Paul states in other places—like Colossians—Christ is above all, in all, and through all. Nothing happens without His approval and authority. THEREFORE, Jesus—the ultimate authority—has distributed the gifts of grace as He chooses. We need to understand—we don't get to pick and choose which gifts we get, but we do need to decide whether we're going to discover and obediently use them in accordance with the intent for which Jesus gave them.
- **SOME ARE GIFTED TO LEAD (4:11).** These are sometimes called the APEST gifts—apostle, pastor, evangelist, shepherd, and teacher. While we may not have agreement across the Big “C” Church about their scope and use today, we can all agree these functions need to be present for any little “c” church to accomplish its God-given mission in a community. Apostolic means pioneering, sending, extending, and entrepreneurial. Prophetic means questioning systems of power, seeking justice, critiquing mission drift, and protecting the marginalized. Evangelistic includes reaching out, including the seeker, proclaiming the Gospel, and including new people. Shepherding includes nurturing, caring, developing community, and health. Teaching encompasses sound doctrine, clear teaching, effective processes and systems, and strong values.

- **ALL ARE GIFTED TO SERVE IN MISSION (4:11, 12).** The truth of this text is some are called and gifted to lead—not to do all the work of ministry, but to equip the “saints” to do the work of ministry of “building up the body of Christ.” Implicit in Paul’s writing is the entire body is gifted by Jesus to serve in mission. We all have some purpose to accomplish—some mission to pursue—and some calling to fulfill. We need to understand the Kingdom—the Big “C” Church—is lacking and incomplete unless or until we figure out our mission. We’re not to sit back and watch the APEST leaders do everything. APEST leaders aren’t to do everything. We all have roles and functions. Now is the time for all of us to do what Jesus has called us to do.
- **GROWTH TO MATURITY IS THE GOAL (4:11-15).** Paul uses two interesting illustrations to help us discern spiritual immaturity: 1) The instability of the Ephesians in what they believe that they get tossed back and forth in the waves—like children body surfing at the beach, and 2) they get blown back and forth with every wind of doctrine—like a sailboat unable to set its course because of the prevailing winds. We’re called to grow to maturity in our spiritual lives. Paul makes the case if individual Jesus-followers don’t discover and use their gifts, they’re spiritually stunted and immature—but if they begin to discover and use their spiritual gifts, their goal is to grow to maturity under the headship of Jesus.
- **LIVE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF JESUS (4:15, 16).** Jesus is the head of the Church. Our maturity is ultimately determined by our fidelity to and alignment with Jesus. We can help one another in this effort by allowing love to reign in our relationships and speaking the truth with and to one another when we see a brother or sister drift off course.

As we think about making the shift from “more hierarchy” to “more missionaries,” here are some questions to ponder:

- If we were to begin mobilizing God’s people God’s way with an approach rooted in “more missionaries” rather than “more hierarchy,” what would that look like?
- Do you think people are open to this kind of a shift?
- What would success look like if this shift were to take place? What would be the benefits?
- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you concerning this shift?
- What are some steps that need to take place in order for this to happen?
- How can the group help?

WEEK FIVE - FEBRUARY 5

FROM MORE PROGRAMS TO MORE MISSION FIELDS



Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as you come to study. Pray: ***“What do You want to teach me/us in these moments?”***

Opening question:

“How have you followed the Spirit’s lead this past week?”

READ: Ephesians 5

Theme: The church is made to go more! Mission begins by expressing the fullness of Jesus where we live, work, study, and play. The people of God have already been sent and placed strategically by Jesus. Our “GO” is to embrace our mission field and “make the most of every opportunity” to express the fullness of Jesus to others. Every disciple is a missionary with a unique mission field, their mosaic of mission. All those overlapping mosaics of mission are Jesus’ plan to express—bringing His fullness into every corner of culture and every sphere of society—expanding the footprint of the Kingdom.

Critical Shift 5: FROM MORE PROGRAMS TO MORE MISSION FIELDS

We need to move our thinking in terms of more programs to discovering new mission fields if we’re going to create a culture of multiplication.

- **MORE PROGRAMS**—In this approach, it’s believed we best reach the world through great, centralized programs started and maintained by the organized. Likewise, it’s believed we’ll have the greatest impact by making sure the pastors and professionals decide what’s best when it comes to impacting the community and creating a discipleship pathway.
- **MORE MISSION FIELDS**—In this approach, it’s believed we best reach the world by equipping great missionaries who start and maintain communities on mission addressing needs and making disciples in new contexts. It’s also believed we’ll have the greatest impact by allowing the Holy Spirit to lead people to what’s best for the community to which He has sent us. This is encouraged and supported with coaching from church leaders.

We must streamline centralized programs to maintain focus—which will yield excellence and impact. The result is a discipleship pathway that equips and releases people to live as missionaries in their context where new ministry will emerge that we don’t control. The question then becomes: More programs? Or more mission fields?

In light of that question, let’s dive into Ephesians chapter 5 in order to reinforce the critical move we must all embrace: activating all people on purpose and making the shift from more programs to more mission fields.

Lessons from Ephesians 5: Today's text comes in the middle of a long discourse (Ephesians 4:17-6:9) in which the Apostle Paul gives a comprehensive list of instructions for Christian living—living as children of light, putting on your new self, putting off your old self, getting rid of sinful and destructive habits, imitating God by living a life of love, and avoiding immorality.

Amidst this list of instructions, Paul says, *“make the most of every opportunity”* (5:15). Let's explore what Paul meant by looking at the verses around that statement:

- **REMEMBER WHAT WAS (5:8a).** There was a time when all of us lived in spiritual darkness—in our “natural” state—unawakened and unaware of just how lost we are. When we get a taste of God's grace and respond with saving faith, we don't have to walk in darkness any longer.
- **LIVE AS A CHILD OF THE LIGHT (5:8b-10).** Once we've been forgiven and awakened out of our “natural” state, we must be careful we don't slip back into our old sinful ways where we allow sin to have control that it has no business having. We need to seek righteousness, goodness, as well as the habits and relationships that please the Lord.
- **WAKE UP AND LIVE IN THE LIGHT (5:11-14).** Paul is clear in his admonition we're to have nothing to do with our former way of life. As we walk in the light, sin is exposed. We're called to make sure we don't settle for less than God's best for our lives by continuing in unrepentant sin or by failing to help those entrusted to our care to find and invest their lives in the mission to which God has called them. When we allow this to happen, we find ourselves asleep spiritually. We're called to WAKE UP!
- **LIVE ON PURPOSE (5:15-17).** Make the most of every opportunity to live ON MISSION—focus on fulfilling God's will with and for your life. Don't live a carnal life, but live a spiritual life in the fullest sense of the word—in personal conduct, interpersonal relationships, and missional focus. To live this life, we must be filled with the Spirit. The Greek here means to be filled over and over and over again—and live a life centered on fulfilling God's purpose for you.

Paul follows this text with more instruction about Christian Living and mutual submission in relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and slaves and masters—implying there's not an area of the Jesus-follower's life that doesn't come under the leadership of Jesus.

As we think about making the shift from “more programs” to “more mission fields,” take some time to ponder these questions:

- What would it look like for our church to focus on disciple-making and see its core strategy as mobilizing everyday missionaries who are living out their calling to unique mission fields where each person works, lives, studies, and plays?
- What are the benefits of this type of approach?
- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you concerning seeing the places where you work, live, and play as your mission field?

- What steps do you need to take in order to begin to live out your call in these areas?
- How can the group help?

WEEK SIX - FEBRUARY 12

FROM MORE STRATEGY TO MORE SURRENDER



Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as you come to study. Pray: ***“What do You want to teach me/us in these moments?”***

Opening question:

“How have you followed the Spirit’s lead this past week?”

READ: Ephesians 6

Theme: We need to embrace the truth: we’ll face spiritual opposition when seeking to mobilize God’s people, God’s way. We’re called to be prepared for battle! There is one guarantee—if we’re going to seek to be mobilized on mission, the enemy is going to align himself to deal a punishing blow. If we put him on the defense, he’ll launch an offense attack to stop us.

The enemy will do everything possible to thwart God’s plan for MORE—mobilizing God’s people, God’s way, as described in Ephesians. But in Christ, we’re called to win this battle. To do so, we must consecrate ourselves for Jesus and His mission. Individually, the enemy will attempt to hinder the fullness of Christ in us—restricting the expression of this fullness carried to others.

Critical Shift 6: FROM MORE STRATEGY TO MORE SURRENDER

Let’s go back to our Home Depot analogy. The “WE CAN BUILD IT - YOU CAN HELP” approach to preparing for battle understands most people see church as a building, event, or program. Some believe the church needs professionals on whom the people can depend to minister to them. We all have temptations, and the professionals equip us to say, “No!”—we need to pray regularly against the attacks of the enemy—and each of us must fight the battle against the enemy.

The “YOU CAN BUILD IT - WE CAN HELP” approach to preparing for battle regularly declares and trains others to understand the church is NOT a building; it’s the people, and that the church isn’t driven by events but by an everyday mission in all of life. The church is not a program but the people of God.

We need to recognize language builds culture, so we’re careful to communicate “you can’t go to Church, you can only be the Church”—understanding that accepting the “normal definition” of Church is actually giving ground to the enemy as we perpetuate the clergy/laity divide.

As elders and leaders in the church, we tend to measure our success by how successfully we equip all God’s people to minister and be on mission. The very real battle in every temptation isn’t at the activity level but at the identity.

Only through a biblically shaped, spirit-empowered healing of our image of God and our self-identity can we win the battle against temptation. As we do, we come to understand the gates of Hell will not prevail against us. We're on the offense in strategic prayer and the prophetic use of the Word of God in teaching and equipping. We understand we can only win this battle together as a body!

The struggle is real! We must make the shift from strategy to surrender.

- **MORE STRATEGY**—In this approach, we plug people into our discipleship strategy. We plan and pray for God to grant success to the plan. And we understand any strategy is going to be difficult to enact, so we work hard to work the plan.
- **MORE SURRENDER**—In this approach, we plug people into their identity in Christ, a sense of rest in the Gospel, healing from being wounded, and freedom from captivity. This is essential to the beginning stages of discipleship for all. We pray and seek to discern what the Spirit is saying to our community. All planning stems from listening to the Spirit and is sustained through prayer. We understand we're in a spiritual battle with principalities and powers that we won't be able to beat through mere human efforts—producing mere human results. We actively use the armor of God as a community to win this spiritual battle.

The question we must wrestle with is: Are you ready to make the final shift? More Strategy? Or more surrender? The choice is yours, but it won't come without a fight!

Here are some principles to keep in mind as we change our mindset:

- **SPIRIT-EMPOWERED HEALING FROM BEING WOUNDED AND FREEDOM FROM CAPTIVITY ARE ESSENTIAL IN THE BEGINNING OF DISCIPLESHIP.** The church exists to see people saved, healed, set free, discipled, equipped, empowered, and serving. It's a process statement. It's a discipleship statement. In our experience, Spirit-empowered freedom from captivity and healing from being wounded are essential to the beginning of discipleship. Many churches are missing the healing and freedom components in their discipleship. These two steps are a necessary bridge for most people to cross over into deeper discipleship.
- **REST IS THE GREATEST NEED FOR MOST PEOPLE IN A CULTURE OBSESSED WITH BUSYNESS.** We want to minister out of a place of rest, of deeply knowing our identity in Christ. Ministries of healing and freedom are essential to restoring a Gospel-centered identity in people's souls so they can work from a place of rest. Otherwise, the church and its programs just add to the sense of busyness and fatigue in their lives.
- **FREEDOM STARTS WITH THE LEADER. YOU CAN'T GIVE AWAY WHAT YOU DON'T HAVE.** The first step to the church finding freedom is the Church's leaders finding freedom in Christ. Each leader needs to create a safe place in order to hear God. We need to learn how to "sit down" inside of ourselves and learn to receive from God. Prayer isn't a monologue but rather a dialogue. Silence and stillness are necessary for us to find freedom in Christ.

- **NORMALIZE THE NEED FOR FREEDOM.** We're called to create a culture of freedom where seeking freedom from areas of captivity isn't stigmatized but celebrated. Admit, especially at the leadership level, we're "messed up." We all have permission to admit that, but we don't have permission to remain there. Create a "freedom pathway" where people know the vehicles they can ride toward freedom.

These are just some practical principles and insights—but the bottom line is we need to be prepared for battle—especially if we're going to be liberated ourselves and liberate others.

Lessons from Ephesians 6: We tend to try to avoid any conflict—especially conflict we have within ourselves when it comes to living our lives focused on and being obedient to Jesus. As the Apostle Paul begins to wrap up his letter, he seems to be saying conflict may be unavoidable—so we might as well surrender to God's will and get ready for it. Let's dive into today's text from Ephesians 6:

- **BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS (6:10).** This theme is repeated often in the Scriptures. God told Joshua to be strong and courageous when he stepped into leading God's people after Moses (Joshua 1:9). David told the Israelites to be strong when he told them he had been anointed to be king after Saul (2 Samuel 2:7). David told Solomon to be strong as he prepared Solomon to take the throne as David was dying (1 Kings 2:2). These are just a few examples of the instruction God's Word gives to His people when they're called to do something beyond their capacity. When we discover God has called us to do something we can't do in our own strength, we have two choices: we can wring our hands in despair—or we can fold our hands in prayer and be strong, trusting God's power, and doing what He calls us to do. God rarely if ever calls the qualified, but God always qualifies the called.
- **THE BATTLE IS REAL—GET DRESSED FOR BATTLE (6:11-13a).** We're in a fight for our soul—the souls of our children—the souls of our neighbors—the soul of our community, nation, and world. We have an enemy who wants nothing more than for us to continue doing what we've been doing—watching a few "professional Christians" do the work of the Kingdom for us. But God has called us to MORE—to make the shift from more effort to more Jesus—from more volunteers to more masterpieces—from more guilt to more love—from more hierarchy to more missionaries—from more programs to more mission fields—and from more strategy to more surrender. We need to surrender our self-will and self-centered spirituality and begin to fight the battle God needs us to fight.
- **ONCE YOUR DRESSED—STAND (6:13-14).** Sometimes the most important thing we can do to stop the flow of direction in our lives is to STAND for what we believe to be true. Too often, we're quick to back down when confronted. We need to treat those with whom we disagree, with dignity and respect—but likewise need to learn how and be willing to take a stand.

- **UNDERSTAND AND USE YOUR ARMOR (6:15-19).** Paul uses a very familiar image to the first-century audience—the battle dress for a Roman soldier—the full armor. Stand firm with the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, feet covered with the Gospel, the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation. To this point, all the elements of armor are for protection. Their primary function is defensive in nature—to protect. But the last two are offensive—the sword of the Spirit (the truth of the Scripture) and prayer in the Spirit. The future God to which is calling us is totally dependent on our fidelity to Scripture and perseverance in prayer.

As we think about making the shift from “more strategy” to “more surrender,” take some time to ponder these questions:

- If our church began mobilizing God’s people, God’s way with an approach rooted in “more surrender” rather than “more strategy,” what would that look like?
- What challenges and obstacles would we face?
- What did you notice about the armor of God?
- What does the armor of God have to do with surrender?
- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you concerning making this shift to more surrender?
- What needs to happen in your life for this to happen?
- How can the group help?