

## Ephesians Week Two Study Questions [Ephesians 1:15-23]

The letter to the Ephesians was written by Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome – this was after he had established the church in Ephesus. Paul left the city of Corinth; he had been there for one and a half years and then went to the city of Ephesus. Paul would spend a total of three years in Ephesus, the longest time spent with any of his church plants.

Ephesus was an impressive city. It was only second in size to Rome. It was a powerful city with a lot of wealth. It was a major cultural center in the ancient world with amphitheaters, shopping centers, and temples designated as places of worship for Greek goddesses. Located on the Aegean Sea, it had a lot of trade, commerce, entertainment, debauchery, and hedonism. Comparatively today we could see it rivaled by London, New York, or Los Angeles. In terms of social and civic terms the city was powerful and was set to become even more so.

Yet Ephesus is the city that teaches us more about the church than any other city. Ephesus was also a center of religious power. Seven of the New Testament letters were either written to, or about, the church in Ephesus. (Ephesians, 1,2 Timothy, 1,2,3 John and Revelation).

Paul had a great love for this city and the gospel's proclamation there. And he wanted to make sure believers understood what God has done for them as well as the blessings that everyone who is in Christ is guaranteed. If you look at the team of preachers/pastors that served the church in Ephesus, they are legendary. It's like the annoying L.A. Lakers. They always just get everybody good, (Wilt Chamberlin, Magic Johnson, Kareem, Shaq, Kobe, etc.) but I digress. The church at Ephesus had Paul, Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos. Then Paul appoints his protégé Timothy to pastor, after which John the Apostle of Jesus became the pastor.

As you think about the power of the city and the "firepower" that Paul sends to minister there you can see why Paul would unleash this powerful prayer over the believers. Their identity would be rivaled by such a powerful city. Yet the power of God available to them would be sufficient to live out their God given identity. Reflect on the following questions...

1. The letter to the Ephesians was intended to be read to the assembled church in Ephesus. Read Ephesians 1:15-23 aloud and imagine that you are in the original audience. How would you have responded to these words? What would have been your biggest takeaway from what Paul wrote here?
2. What were some of the things he prayed for them? How can these requests transform the way you pray for others? The way you pray for yourself?
3. According to Paul's prayer, we acquire wisdom as we get to know God. How does knowing Jesus more help us see things differently?
4. Paul encouraged the Ephesian Christians by commending their faith and love (v. 15). Some of the most important words we can speak into someone else's life are the words,

"I see in you \_\_\_\_\_. " Who is one person you can encourage this week? What blessing can you speak into their life?

5. What are some ways we filter our identity today? In what ways have you allowed how other people see you to affect how you see yourself? How do Paul's words here in Ephesians chapter 1 help us recast our identity in terms of how Jesus sees us?

6. Pastor Adrian spoke of growing in HOPE. He listed five specific hopes we need to grow in:

1. Hope of salvation
2. Hope of our righteousness
3. Hope of a resurrection and incorruptible body
4. Hope of eternal life
5. Hope of the Glory of God

Which one of these resonates with you most? Which one do you think you need to grow in the most?

7. The greatest display of power the world has ever seen was resurrecting Christ from the dead (vs 20). How does this encourage you to live your life? Have you experienced this power in your life? Reflect with your group on ways you can.

Digging deeper: King Jesus is the head of the body of believers. It is "His body, the fullness of the One who fills all in all." How can we, His church, given the power available to us, act as His agents within this present world?