WHO AM I?
WHERE DID I COME FROM?
WHY DO I EXIST?
WHO DO I BELONG TO?

Identity Theft Help:

The Book of Ephesians!!!
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There are two words that bring about so much pain and so much sorrow to millions of Americans and people across the world. These two words have cost people their house, their reputation, their families and even their jobs. The two words I am thinking about are “Identity Theft.” The Javelin Strategy and Research Center indicated that in 2008 there were approximately 10 million victims of identity theft which was up 22% from 2007 (www.javelinstrategy.com). Most people do not even realize they have their identity stolen until it is too late. Consider this story below:

I have been away from the United States since the past 4 years. Recently, I wanted to sell my house in California and contacted several real estate agents to discuss with them a listing for the house. I was informed by these realtors that my house has been rented to individuals that I am not aware or have agreed to rent my house. Someone is collecting the rent amounts on my house, further more I have also found out that upon checking with our county records a certain individual has used my name and arranged to fake my signature, made a power of attorney in my name and received loans on my property, bought a business in my name and has accumulated a huge amount of financial burden on my name (Source: www.privacyrights.org).

How can someone do that? How can someone have the audacity to steal your identity and then use it for their own profit? My answer is simple: “We probably are not careful enough with who we are and sometimes we let people steal our identity because we are not protecting it!”

Teenagers, you are at crossroads in your life because you are in the process of finding out who you are and, perhaps more importantly, whose you are. Have you ever stopped in the
HECTIC SCHEDULES OF SOFTBALL PRACTICE, RECITALS, FOOTBALL GAMES, AND ASKED THE QUESTION, “WHO AM I?” HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT JUST HOW PROBING A QUESTION LIKE THAT REALLY IS?

IN THE SPACE BELOW I WANT YOU TO WRITE AND ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION: “WHO ARE YOU?”

DID YOU STRUGGLE TRYING TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION? I WONDER HOW YOU ANSWERED THE QUESTION. SOME OF US TEND TO DESCRIBE WHO WE ARE BASED ON WHO WE ARE ASSOCIATED WITH AND WHO WE HANG OUT WITH. THE TRUTH IS THAT MOST OF US DO NOT KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION. WE DO NOT KNOW WHO WE ARE.

ONE OF THE EARLIEST MEMORIES OF SCHOOL I HAVE WAS WHEN I WAS IN THE 1ST GRADE AT MOUNTAIN VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN MARIETTA, GEORGIA. MY TEACHER WAS MRS. SELTENRICH AND, I THINK, THE FIRST THING WE DID AT SCHOOL WAS ALLOW THE SCHOOL TO FINGERPRINT US SO THAT WE COULD BE IDENTIFIED WHEREVER WE WENT. FINGERPRINTS ARE UNIQUE AREN’T THEY? IF YOU ARE A FOLLOWER OF THE SHOW C.S.I. THEN YOU KNOW THAT FINGERPRINTS ARE USED TO IDENTIFY AND LINK CRIMINALS TO A SPECIFIC CRIME.

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Each fingerprint is unique and has its own oddities that allow experts to differentiate between individuals. Our DNA operates the same way in that it identifies who we are because nobody else has our exact DNA. We are unique. That uniqueness comes from something different than this world and begs the question, “Where did we come from?” The answer for Christians all across the world is that we come from God who created the heavens and the earth and mankind that walks on the earth. Any identity question must first seek to discover who we are in the eyes of God Almighty.

The Book of Ephesians is like no other in that from the beginning to the end it seeks to answer the personal question, “Who am I?”, but also the group question, “Who are we?” “In many respects Ephesians reads more like a sermon than a letter written to meet some special need in a church or group of churches” (Francis Foulkes, Ephesians, 19). Reading the book it is evidently clear that the book comes across as a sermon so reading it like that is beneficial to us. To study the book we must first read the entire epistle at once to gain an understanding of what Paul is trying to accomplish. Please do that at some point in this study to gain an appreciation for what Paul is doing.

It is my desire that you grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ to understand who you are and whose you are. Ephesians is just the beginning of your study of God’s word as there is so much out there that will allow you to grow in an amazing relationship with God and with others. Allow the word to penetrate your minds, your hearts and the very depths of your soul! Be blessed and grow.

Psalm 119:14-16 - I rejoice in following your statutes as one rejoices in great riches. I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word.

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A Guide for Teachers

Each lesson will have three sections: Warm up, Work Out and Cool off. The warm-up section will be 5-10 minutes and will simply introduce the lesson in a hands-on manner. The Work Out section is 20-25 minutes and is the bulk of the discussion. You will probably not be able to ask every question so it is ok to not have to ask everything. Allow the students to answer the remaining questions at home! The Cool Off section is to bring everything to a close. Allow 5 minutes for this.

Each lesson will be unique and so adequate preparation is a must. These lessons are based on engaging the students in discussion. It is my experience that discussion classes are harder to direct because there are so many people who simply want to ramble about things instead of staying on topic. Please try to know the material and, most importantly, know the verses. Students have different learning styles (lecture-based, discussion-based, activity-based, etc.) so these lessons are created to involve all learning styles. Feel free to adapt, add or take-away from anything that will or will not be helpful for your group dynamic. The important thing to understand is that the student must be engaged.

Be sure to begin class with a prayer asking God to be with the class and be with the discussion. Prayer requests are great but sometimes they take up too much time so it would be wise if you simply pray at the beginning (or ask someone to pray) and say if there is someone or something specific, for them to see you after class!

In the words of Paul, “Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible” (Eph. 6:23-24).

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Introduction to the Book of Ephesians

AUTHORSHIP:

When someone says, “AUTHORSHIP” that simply means that they are trying to see who was the one who wrote the document. For example, we could ask, “Who is the author of the famous Harry Potter books?” Most of you know that the answer to that question is J. K. Rowling. How do we know that? Her name is attached to the documents and furthermore there is external evidence (from media and other sources) that proves she is the author.

Finding out authors in the New Testament is a little more complex than that but it is very similar. Ephesians 1:1 says, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (See also Eph. 3:1). We are led to assume that Paul is the author of this document because it bears his name. Sometimes Paul would use a secretary (fancy word is amanuensis) to write his letters (see Rom. 16:22) but that did not mean that he was not the author. He would often pick the pen up himself to show special significance so we can assume that he was closely monitoring what was written (see 1 Cor. 16:21; Gal. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Thess. 3:17; Philem. 19).

Paul spent a long time in Ephesus (see Acts 19: 20:17-38) so he would be well-acquainted with the brethren there and it would be necessary for him to write to them. Most scholars admit that the early church accepted Ephesians as written by Paul, the Apostle. So, for arguments sake, the book of Ephesians was written by Paul the Apostle.
BACKGROUND OF EPHESUS:

Why would Paul spend time working in Ephesus to establish the church there? Four reasons come to mind:

1. **Economics** – It was situated in a perfect position that allowed many different people to come and go through the city.

2. **Size** – Ephesus was the largest city in Asia with estimates of up to 300,000 people.

3. **Culture** – There was a huge theatre in Ephesus that allowed 25,000 people to pile in and watch plays and see different aspects of the culture at that time.

4. **Religion** – The Temple of Artemis (see picture below) or Diana at Ephesus ranked as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Artemis was the moon goddess and was the twin sister of Apollo and daughter of Zeus in Greek mythology. It was supposedly supported by 127 columns and each of them was 197 feet high. Worship of Artemis was encouraged by the Roman Empire and coins were minted with the image of Artemis on the coins (R.F. Youngblood, editor).
So you may ask yourself, “Why do I need to know all of this background information about Ephesus? Why can’t I simply read Ephesians and try to learn lessons like that?” That is like trying to understand to set up a church in São Paulo, Brazil without researching Brazilian culture. Yeah you may get some lessons out of it but how effective are you going to be without understanding where Brazilians are coming from.

In our context we are trying to, as best we can, walk in the footsteps of Paul and see what he sees and hear what he hears. Both are difficult but, as I learned from Dr. Clyde Woods at Freed-Hardeman University during graduate school, sound application comes from sound exegesis (look up what exegesis means).

Theme of Ephesians:

The resounding theme for Ephesians is the relationship of Christ and the church. One can think of it this way as Christ being the groom and the church being his bride. When I saw my wife coming down the aisle I could not help but to cry knowing that I had sacrificed everything for her because I loved her so much.

“He died so that he could give the church to himself like a bride in all her beauty. He died so that the church could be pure and without fault, with no evil or sin or any other wrong thing in it” (Eph. 5:27, New Century Version).

This is the theme of Ephesians. We have lost our identity and it has been stolen by the world. We are wandering around lost and confused like a sheep without a shepherd. Ephesians gives us identity and allows us to understand who we are and whose we are.
Outline for Ephesians:

If you are the organizational type and like things to be outlined then this is for you but if you are not then ignore it and move on!

Who are we?

I. We are blessed in Christ (1:1-14)
II. We are wise in Christ (1:15-23)
III. We are new in Christ (2:1-10)
IV. We are reconciled in Christ (2:11-22)
V. We are informed in Christ (3:1-13)
VI. We are strong in Christ (3:14-21)
VII. We are one in Christ (4:1-16)
VIII. We are alive in Christ (4:17-32)
IX. We are holy in Christ (5:1-20)
X. We are submissive in Christ (5:21-6:9)
XI. We are warriors in Christ (6:10-20)
XII. We are beloved in Christ (6:21-24)
XIII. A call to arms!
Lesson #1: We are Blessed in Christ (1:1-14)

One of the words that are tossed around the world of Christianity is the word, “Blessed.” We hear it all the time from statements like, “I am so blessed to be a citizen of this country,” and (if you live in the south), “That little baby is ugly...bless his little heart.” (Ask the class for more examples of these. Have fun with it or some up some serious examples.). Ask this question (either by writing it on the board or saying it audibly) and tell them not to answer it just yet: What does it mean to be blessed?”

Warm Up1

(This is the section that introduces the lesson) – 5-10 minutes.

Give each student 1 pebble and 1 sucker and tell them not to do anything with it until you give them instructions. Tell them to put the pebble in their shoe and then put the sucker in their mouth. Then have them walk around for about 30 seconds. This should be

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1. Many of the object lessons and illustrations that are in this study come from a helpful site called www.mormonshare.com. This is not an endorsement of the Mormon Church rather it was a helpful site that had many neat ideas for Biblical study.

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A good memory is one that can remember the day's blessings and forget the day's troubles.

Anonymous

**WORK OUT**

(This is the heart of the lesson where most discussion will be held) – 20-25 minutes.

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**Ephesians 1:1-14**

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we have obtained an

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2. All Scripture used is from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Holy Bible (Crossway: 2001) unless otherwise noted.

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inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the
counsel of his will, \(12\) so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. \(13\)
In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were
sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, \(14\) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession
of it, to the praise of his glory.

The verses ring true for most of us who read them and it is hard not to get a little sentimental when reading this. Huge words
like blessings, forgiveness, predestined and inheritance all are rich in thought and meaning. In the questions below allow
the class to think about them and really probe their minds in thought.

What are some blessings we have in Jesus Christ (Hint: Look at Verses 3-6)?

This would be an awesome opportunity for you to share personal stories of how you are blessed more so being a Christian. Teenagers appreciate transparency and value a person who can be “real” with them. Talk about what it means to you personally being blessed. The text indicates that we are blessed with EVERY spiritual blessing (v. 3). Theoretically we can look at all of the blessings and promises in Scripture and see just how we have received them.

A blessing is that we are chosen in Christ before everything was made. This was the plan from the very beginning. We are blessed with holiness and blamelessness. What does it mean to be holy and to be without blame? It means that not only are we clean and pure but in a court system we have been found “not-guilty”! What an amazing truth that is! We also have his grace. How is grace a blessing? Grace (Greek word is charis) means “unmerited favor” or, “getting what we do not deserve.”
What is so special about the forgiveness of sins (Verse 7)?

Should be an obvious answer but if not you could illustrate it this way. Say two people got in an argument and one person was wrong and the other person was right (as if all arguments are this easy 😊). The person who was right knew it and had something against the person who was wrong. The person who was wrong felt bad and wanted to be forgiven but the person who was right would not let things go. He would make him feel like junk and badger him and belittle him all because he was right in an argument and the other person was wrong. Think about this...what if God was that way and held things against us? (LET THEM ANSWER THIS!) But he is not!!! Forgiveness of sins means God has “released” us from our bondage and has set us absolutely free (see Acts 2:38 to see how this is done)!!!

Verse 8 says he “lavished” these things upon us. What does that mean?

The word used here (perisseuo) is the word that is typically used in the New Testament to mean something that is more than enough or something that is extremely rich. Paul is saying that all of the blessings that God has given he has made us rich with them! It would be like the
difference of a teenager and a teenager who has just down three 5-Hour Energy Drinks! The New Living Translation puts it this way: He has showered his kindness on us! What a feeling!

**Why is God’s will a mystery? How has that mystery been revealed (verse 9)?**

Because it has not been made known or clearly seen. Ask anyone on the street who has not encountered the Bible or has not been a part of church and they will tell you that, for the most part, God’s will is a mystery. Why? Because it has not been revealed! You may want to involve them by asking if they have ever been clueless about something or have ever seen a movie about mysteries. Ask them what it felt like to be clueless.

The mystery has been revealed in Christ. Christ is the one who has fulfilled all things and now that mystery has been transformed through the letter of Ephesians and other documents (for more on “mystery” see Rom. 11:25-26, Col. 1:26-27; 2:2).

**God predestined us which means he chose us from the beginning to be blessed? How did he do that? (Verses 11-12)**

Let them struggle with this for a little while. There is a false notion in some denominations that God specifically chooses individuals to be Christians. That is not the case from this text. Ask them “why?”
The answer is that we are specifically chosen not as individuals but as a group “in Christ.” Ask them to look at all of the times the words, “in Christ” or, “in him” occur. Count them as a group. The point: We are chosen since the beginning to be redeemed through Christ!!! This is open to all who believe! Think of how amazing this is.

Ask them if they have ever to think of a plan that was “fail-proof.” You can give examples like the Titanic, or other supposed fail-proof plans or even come up with a personal story. How hard is it to come up with something that does not fail? But God, through Christ, did that!

What does it mean to be chosen by God? Why is that important to you?

To me this gives me identity and ownership. In this world there are so many people who call us losers, nerds, jocks, air-heads, preps, emos, Goths or whatever. It is in Christ where we find our true identity for he accepts us for who we are. This gets back to Genesis 1:26-27 where it says we were created in the image of God. We are not created in the image of man to be like man but we were created by God as God-bearers.
According to verse 13 we are guaranteed an inheritance. Why is important to have a guarantee?

The trademark statement from George Zimmer on the Men's Wearhouse commercials is: “You’re going to like the way you look; I guarantee it!” The question is, “How does he back his guarantee?” A guarantee is only as good as the product you sell. You cannot guarantee something if what you have is not worth squat. Ask the students to come up with false guarantees they have been experienced (Example - a boyfriend guaranteeing he will never break up with his girlfriend). Then ask, “How are those guarantees different than the one discussed in verse 13? The answer is that Christ was given as a guarantee (his death) and the Holy Spirit was sent to seal the promise. How do we receive the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2:38...again)?
COOL DOWN

(This is the section where you come to a close and bring it all home) – 5 minutes

Read the following illustration:

Mark Cuban, owner of the NBA’s Dallas Mavericks, recently offered WGN Chicago Radio sports-talk host David Kaplan $50,000 to change his name legally to “Dallas Maverick.” When Kaplan declined, Cuban sweetened the offer. Cuban would pay Kaplan $100,000 and donate $100,000 to Kaplan’s favorite charity if he took the name for one year. Despite some soul-searching and email bombardment from listeners, who said he was crazy to turn down the money, Kaplan held firm. “I’d be saying I’d do anything for money, and that bothers me,” Kaplan said. “My name is my birthright. I’d like to preserve my integrity and credibility.”

Skip Bayless, “Radio Host Prefers Class over Crass,” Chicago Tribune (January 10, 2001)

So we swing full circle and ask the question, “Who are you?” Today may you go to your homes, your jobs, your schools and every aspect of your life and be able to say, “I am blessed!”

Something to work on during the week:

□ What am I doing to focus on the blessings of Christ rather than the sufferings of this world?

□ What does being blessed look like in the daily aspects of my life?

□ How can I share the blessings I have with others?
Lesson #2: We are Wise in Christ (1:15-23)

Wisdom is something that is treasured in many cultures as the crème-de-la-crème of traits. Consider the Chinese proverb, “A nation’s treasure is in its scholars.” Various people are wise in various things. For example, an auto mechanic may be foolish when it comes to nuclear physics but ask him how to fix a complex issue on a 2009 Cadillac Escalade and he can do it within hours. Some people are wise in that they absolutely know the Scriptures left and right but some people are even more wise in that they live the Scriptures left and right. If our identity is, as Ephesians maintains, “in Christ” then to be wise as a Christian means we must be wise in Christ! This lesson is all about wisdom but it is not wisdom of this world (see 1 Cor. 1:18-31 for more information on this) we are concerned with but we are concerned with the wisdom of Christ!

Warm Up

(This is the section that introduces the lesson) – 5-10 minutes.

Students always like a good challenge so challenge them in this quiz. You can have a reward incentive (like candy or something else) for the winning team. Divide the groups up into two...usually groups like to do boys against girls but divide
Ask them questions until one team reaches 3 points and then that team will win! If one team misses the question the other team gets the opportunity to answer it and steal a point. If no team answers the question correct then no point is awarded. Make sure they work as a team.

What belligerent man ran to meet his brother and kissed him after a long separation? A) Esau Genesis 33:4

Where in the Bible do you find where a battle was won because a man stretched out his hands? A) Joshua 8:19

What was the first animal out of the Ark? A) The Raven

Saul was the first king of Israel. Who was the second? (It wasn’t David) A) Ishbosheth 2 Sam. 2:10

Who did the angle of the Lord break when he wrestled with Jacob? A) His Hip

Who ate honey out of a lion’s carcass? A) Samson

What rich man sat in a pile of ashes? A) Job

Who are the only three angels mentioned in the Bible by name? A) Gabriel, Michael and Lucifer

How many books are in the Old Testament? A) 39

Who was the only woman judge in the book of Judges? A) Deborah

How much wood could a wood-chuck-chuck, if a wood-chuck-chuck-wood-chuck would?

Ask the following questions:

Was this exercise difficult or easy? Why or why not?
What would have made it easier to accomplish?  
(Hopefully their response will be that the Bible would have made it easy)

Transition by saying something like: Last week we learned that our identity is found in Christ and from Ephesians 1:1-14 we know that in Christ we are blessed. Today’s lesson we will learn that in Christ we are wise!

WORK OUT

(This is the heart of the lesson where most discussion will be held) – 20-25 minutes.

Ephesians 1:15-23  
15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,  
16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,  
17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,  
18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,  
19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might  
20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,  
21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.  
22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,  
23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

From verse 15 Paul says that he has “heard of their faith”...what does that mean? How important is it for people to hear about our faith?

“Mama always said faith was like a virus, it spreads everywhere!”

Oh...that wasn’t in the movie Forrest Gump but you get the picture.

Hearing about their faith could mean one of two things: 1) It was simply a report about their faith and Paul (see also Col. 1:4 for the same concept)
was relaying the fact that the report made it to him or, 2) Their faith was so powerful, so impressive that Paul was letting them know how amazed and proud he was of them. Although #1 is possible it seems it could be a mixture of both because, in the next verse he is so thankful of them and wants to let God know about it.

What does it mean to be contagious? What are some of the most contagious diseases in the world (example – West Nile, Swine Flu, HIV, etc.)? One of the most contagious diseases in the world is the common cold and there is still no cure.

The common cold can lead to the flu and eventually kill someone with an abnormally weak immune system.

What does it look like to be a contagious Christian? What if we spread like a disease and infect everyone we come in contact with? A disease shows no partiality and goes everywhere and this is exactly what the apostle Paul applauded. People need to hear loudly that we are Christians and need to understand that we believe in God and they can see it because of our love!!!

The number one cause of death in the world is coronary heart failure resulting in 12.2% of all deaths!!! (Source: World Health Organization)
Why is it so important to give thanks for your brothers and sisters in Christ (1:16)?

This seemed to be Paul’s custom (see Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:9) in praying for his brethren and being thankful for them. Ask this: How often do you pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ? Wait for them to answer...allow some awkward silence until somebody answers.

We need to be about the business of praying for one another!!! When you know your friend in the youth group is having a tough time...pray for them! When you know that are about to take a tough test...pray for them! When things are going well and you are grateful for them...pray for them!

James 5:16 would apply in this instance but Paul’s main concern is with his brothers and sisters in Christ! What would our churches look like if we all had this mindset?

Essentially verses 15-23 can be classified as a miniature prayer. What are some aspects of these verses that make it such a beautiful prayer?

It has God as the center! It is concerned about the spirituality and welfare of his brothers and sisters in Christ! Its theme is

“Friendship is the only cement that will ever hold the world together”
Woodrow Wilson
Thankfulness. It acknowledges God’s power and authority! It embraces the love of God through Jesus by the saving act of the cross! It introduces the concept that there is not one like Jesus in whom we can place our trust and hope! It lets us know of the plan of redemption through the church!

What a prayer!

Reread verses 17-18. Where does our wisdom come from? How is that so different than what the world tells us?

God the Father! Read Proverbs 2:6. I have a bachelor’s degree in Bible and a Master’s of Arts in New Testament. I am about to finish a Master’s of Divinity which means I will have a total of 230 hours of college courses which is close to 80 total classes. In all of that schooling I have realized one thing...the more I study, the more I realize there is so much I do not know! We revere people who get a 1500 on their SAT or a 36 on their ACT and we think they are wise! The wisdom of God is completely different than this world because it does not focus on the capacity of information one can hold in their brains but focuses on the intent and purpose of their hearts! 1 Corinthians 8:1 says “knowledge puffs up but love builds up.” There is a reason for that.
Being wise does not mean knowing the fact that the basic ingredients of beer are water, a starch source, such as malted barley, which is able to be fermented, a brewer’s yeast to produce the fermentation and a flavoring such as hops. Wisdom means that we have the power and presence to resist the temptation of drinking the beer and letting it consume us.

FROM VERSES 19-23 WHAT DO WE SEE ABOUT WHO GOD IS AND WHO CHRIST IS?

Allow them to answer first! You may want to draw this on the board:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God is...</th>
<th>Christ is...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giver of wisdom (17)</td>
<td>Seated at the right hand (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeper of immeasurable power (19)</td>
<td>Ruler with authority and dominion (21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider of great works in Christ (20)</td>
<td>Head over all things (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head over the church (22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How is the body a helpful metaphor for the church (1:22-23)?

What does it mean that Christ is head over the body?

Ask them to describe how important our heads are for our survival? We think, see, act, feel, perceive, laugh and cry and so much more with our brains! This is how we control our whole body is with our head! This is essentially the same thing with our spiritual head in Jesus Christ! He controls all things and everything is created for and through him! This means that no church can call herself a church unless Christ is the head. To say they believe in God and disbelieve Christ is error (I know... a harsh term but it is the truth!).

Ask this question: Why do some people struggle at placing Jesus as the head of the church? Allow them to answer! I would say people struggle at placing Jesus as the head because they want to be in control of things. Their pride seems to take precedence above and beyond the cross. Instead of allowing ourselves to submit to Jesus they want people to submit to them. How many splits and church schisms have been made because of disagreements stemming from a displacement of authority. I think Paul is telling us to hide behind the cross and place Jesus at the head instead of ourselves, an eldership, a minister, someone who has a lot of money or whoever.
COOL DOWN

(This is the section where you come to a close and bring it all home) – 5 minutes

Read the following illustration:

Before Bill Curry was an ESPN analyst, he was a college football coach, and before that he was a lineman in the National Football League. Today he wears two Super Bowl rings. But in the spring of 1965, it was unclear whether he would ever wear an NFL uniform. He had been drafted in the twentieth round by the Green Bay Packers of the Vince Lombardi era but was convinced he would never make the team unless he gave himself an edge.

So, a few months before the tryouts, Curry began lifting weights and taking steroids. He went from 220 to 240 pounds in just a few weeks.

When his father, a weightlifter, came to visit, Curry talked about his remarkable improvement. “It’s just incredible what these pills can do, Dad!”

His father asked for the pills, walked to the bathroom, and poured them down the toilet. The younger Curry panicked. “What are you doing?” His father warned his son about steroids and how they would eventually destroy his body. Curry was shaken but convinced, and he never took steroids again.

Today he simply says, “I’m so glad I had a father who loved me like that.

Mark Galli, Jesus Mean and Wild (Baker, 2006)
Once again we ask, “Who are you?” Last week we learned we are blessed in Christ. This week we learned that we are wise in Christ. Wisdom is not the ability to memorize enormous facts but the presence of mind to think about what you are doing with what God has given you.

Something to work on during the week:

☐ In what ways am I increasing in wisdom?

☐ What am I doing to allow God to reveal things to me that I do not already know?

☐ In what ways has the world caused me to be foolish? What am I doing about that to remedy the problem?
Lesson #3: We are New in Christ (2:1-10)

When I was growing up one of the best times of the year was Christmas time because I could always look forward to the following: new clothes, new tacky pajamas, new nasty smelling cologne that I would never wear and, my personal favorite, new shoes. You know the drill, you could tell which present was the shoebox and I would generally save it for the last and then I would rip through it like it was my last present ever. Then...I would put the shoes on immediately and walk around showcasing them like I was a model on the catwalk. Good times! Usually when we receive new stuff that means it is time we throw the old stuff away. If I get a new car that means the old one will either be sold or given to someone else.

What about our Christian lives? When we invite Christ into our lives that means that this new way of thinking, living and breathing changes us completely!!! This lesson is about welcoming Christ into our lives and embracing the newness of a relationship with God. Be ready for this lesson and allow God’s Word to penetrate your heart!

Warm Up

(This is the section that introduces the lesson) – 5-10 minutes.
Supplies Needed:

- A small, clear jar with a tight screw-on lid.
- Water colored with five to ten drops of food coloring.
- Vegetable Oil
- A bottle of grease-cutting dish soap like Dawn.

This idea is awesome and more than likely students have already been exposed to it. But it will keep their attention throughout the lesson. Give one student the colored water and one the container of vegetable oil (do not show them the dish soap). The colored water represents people. Ask the person holding the water to pour it into the empty jar, filling the jar halfway. Then tell the students that the vegetable oil represents God, and ask the student holding the vegetable oil to finish filling the jar with oil. The water and oil will separate leaving two distinct layers. Have teenagers pass around the jar and ask:

- How does this experiment represent people’s relationship with God?

If nobody answers talk to them about how a relationship with God is often incompatible with our lives. Talk about how we are often separated from God but there must be a way to get back or get to God.

**Keep the dish soap hidden until the lesson comes to a close**

WORK OUT

(This is the heart of the lesson where most discussion will be held) – 20-25 minutes.

Ephesians 2:1-10 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Wow...what a lot to think about!!! As you think about the answers to the questions below try to imagine what life was like without God and without a saving relationship.

What does it mean to be dead in our trespasses or sins?

You may want to ask them specifically what sins and trespasses are. There is probably no difference between the two nouns as sin is simply “missing the mark” and trespass is “sliding.” A helpful way to illustrate this is by drawing a bull’s-eye on the whiteboard and then missing it on purpose. Paul is describing what the Ephesians used to be. To be dead in something means to be stuck without an option to get out. They were absolutely stuck in their sins with no hope and no chance.

To be honest and forthright you may want to talk about a time when you were dead in trespasses and felt like there was nowhere to go. However, when disclosing things use caution because sometimes our rough stories in the past may be interpreted as a license to do the same things. Be sure to tell them why you believe you were DEAD in those trespasses.
In what ways have you seen sin kill or destroy people?

In 2005, it is reported that there were about 17,000 murders in the United States alone.

This part is very personal but it is designed to get the teenagers thinking about the ramifications of sin. Allow them to think about how sin ruins people’s lives. Think about the divorces, the STD’s, etc. Ask them to list crimes on the board: assault, burglary, grand larceny, rape, murder. Ask them how much of this you think is due to sin?

According to verses 4-7 what motivated God to save us?

It was God’s mercy and his immense love that motivated him to love us! When we are dead the only desire that one has is to be alive. My son (Kaleb — 3) was sitting on the ledge of a pool and I can see him getting closer to falling in and he got excited about something and fell into the shallow end. The problem is that Kaleb has no clue how to swim. One of my friends was closer to him and saved him but something interesting was happening between the period of Kaleb falling in and my friend rescuing him. Kaleb was moving his arms and kicking his legs just enough to where he had his face just above water breathing. In essence, Kaleb’s “fight-or-flight” kicked in and Kaleb was choosing to fight.

In the moment we were dead we needed something to hold on to and we were essentially swimming just gasping for air! God looks at us gasping for air and out of his mercy and grace pulls us up through Christ!
In what ways have you received the “immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness” (verse 7)?

Allow them to brainstorm in what ways they have experienced grace and forgiveness. It could be a time where they did something horrible or it could be a time where they felt completely at peace. Ask them what it means for them to believe in a God of kindness.

If God were not merciful, what would our lives look like?

This lesson involves a lot of introspection but it is important for them to realize (like the Ephesians) that without Christ there is nothing. Without an active relationship in Christ we are nothing. For me, my life would be a lot like those bobble-head dolls you can buy. They only move when prompted by someone else. Without a relationship in Christ I would let the world tell me how to live instead of living according to God.

What does it mean to be saved by grace (verses 8-9)?

What does grace mean (Look back at Lesson #1...page 13)? We are saved by grace meaning we are not saved by only what we do! It means that no
mater how hard we work at our relationship with God, no matter how many times we think we have it all figured out it is still nothing without God looking at us. Ask them if they have ever been at the mercy of a judge or a parent before. What did it feel like? Then when they looked at you and said, “dismissed” even though you were guilty what does that mean? It means I get another chance!

“Grace is given to heal the spiritually sick, not to decorate spiritual heroes.”

Martin Luther

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS DO GOOD WORKS (VERSE 10)?

Imagine what it would look like if we had a cure for AIDS or for CANCER and we simply did nothing with it. We sat at home and looked at ourselves and did nothing. Is that fair? We should do good works because this is who we are! We are God’s handiwork (Psalm 19:1)! The word for “workmanship” in Greek is poiema and literally means God’s unique craftsmanship. That is where we get the word “poem” from and you can think of us as his amazing poem!

Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are saved by grace but verse 10 says we are to work. Why is there a contradiction? It isn’t…it means that those saved by grace will naturally do good things (see James 2:14-26). The disciples were saved by grace but they followed Jesus and worked because of the grace. Look at the illustration on the next page. Faith, works and grace all work together in our salvation. We are not saved by faith alone, by grace alone or even by works alone but by all three. An important
The factor to keep in mind is that it is God who even sets these things in motion. The chart below is not as easy as it looks but is a starting point to at least understanding the differences.
COOL DOWN

(This is the section where you come to a close and bring it all home) – 5 minutes

Ask them to look back at the jar that has the two liquids in it. Ask them to look again at Ephesians 2:8-9. Take the dish soap out and ask a student to pour a few drops of soap in the mixture. Then screw the top on really tight and shake the jar. After a while the two liquids should mix to form one complete mixture. (If it is not working simply add more soap). Tell them that the soap represents Christ and how he unites us with God!

How do we welcome Christ in the mix? Having faith in him and the belief that he takes away our sin!

So where are you? What is your relationship with Christ? Are you in Christ or are you out of Christ? It seems like most of us are like my son who fell into the pool gasping for air and struggling to survive. You see, we all are trying to reach for God. He is sticking his arm out there to help us. His graceful hands desperately want us to take hold! Won’t you grab it? Won’t you live?

Something to think about during the week:

□ Do you, like the Ephesians, feel dead in your trespasses?

□ What would it feel like to really trust in the grace and mercy of God?

□ What steps do you need to take to do good works and to live a life being made new?
Lesson #1: We are Reconciled in Christ (2:11-22)

Break-ups are some of the most awkward phases in a relationship. In the words of the famous 1962 Neil Sedaka hit, “Breaking up is hard to do!” Have you ever had the weird feeling of talking to someone soon after the relationship ended? It feels weird because there is so much tension that it causes the friendship to diminish. There usually is no reconciliation. Ask them: “What does reconciliation mean?”

Have you ever heard someone say the following, “You two should reconcile your differences”? According to the all-knowing Dictionary.com, reconciliation means, “to bring to an agreement.”

Part of our identity in Christ means that at some point we should realize that God reconciled the world to himself through the blood of Jesus Christ. This means that sin caused a major break-up in our relationship with God (Isaiah 59:2) but through the blood of Jesus we can have access to that relationship (Rom. 5:10). Through Jesus we not only are new but we have a reconciled relationship!!!

Warm Up

(This is the section that introduces the lesson) – 5-10 minutes.
**Supplies Needed:**
- A New Comb
- Two Volunteers

This lesson is to show the necessity of relying on someone else because there are things we cannot do on our own.

Invite a student to comb his hair, with the stipulation that he cannot bend his elbows. This is quite a hilarious sight to see them trying to comb hair with straight arms. It's basically impossible unless the person has very long hair and can bend over very far. Then give the same comb to a neighbor and again with only straight arms, have the neighbor comb the hair. It is possible for this to happen.

Ask them these questions:

**What lessons did you learn about teamwork?**

**What does this tell you about relying on someone else?**

**Work Out**

(This is the heart of the lesson where most discussion will be held) – 20-25 minutes.

_Ephesians 2:11-22_ 11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands - 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole
In verse 11 Paul is looking at Gentiles who make fun of the Jews calling them “circumcision.” What sort of name-calling do people engage in now?

In extreme cases, bullying can be devastating for teens, with long-term consequences. Some teens feel compelled to take drastic measures, such as carrying weapons for protection or seeking violent revenge. Others, in desperation, even consider suicide. Researchers have found that years later, long after the bullying has stopped, adults who were bullied as teens have higher levels of depression and poorer self-esteem than other adults.

Source: FamilyFirstAid.com

Name-calling is one form of bullying people. If it is true that hurt people hurt people then those who make fun of others are doing so because they also have a low self-esteem.

The point you are trying to emphasize is that being RECONCILED to God means that you run a completely NEW life (remember Eph. 2:1-10). We do things differently and have different mindsets and that includes (ESPECIALLY) how we treat other people.

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Look at the four phrases in verse 12 where Paul sets them in their place: separated, alienated, strangers and “having no hope.” Talk about a time when you felt this way. How did it make you feel?

Again...this may be a time where you want to share a personal story to get them motivated. What Paul is doing here is to show them that it was part of God’s will that Gentiles and Jews reconcile their differences for the greater glory of the church. Feelings of isolation and alienation among teens can be a very deep and wounded journey so allow some necessary sharing that is in a loving and welcoming atmosphere.

My (Robbie) journey has been full of ups and downs as I reflect on 10 years of Christianity. I would say that my journey has been around the spiritual world and back again ranging from hypocrisy to full-hearted commitment. But I remember the time I was baptized March 7, 1999 when I never felt so alone in my life. I felt like I had made a “good” choice but I was not convicted enough with my decision. To make matters worse, the youth group at the time did not make an effort to reach out to me and to welcome me. The youth Minister was amazing but some of the kids really turned me off from God and I felt confused about God. I felt...separated...alienated...like I was a stranger with...well...no hope!

When we have lost everything, including hope, life becomes a disgrace, and death a duty.

W. C. Fields
Look very hard in verses 14-18...what two reconciliations (remember what that means) does Christ achieve?

First of all, Christ reconciles us to each other (verses 14-15). That means Christ is the one who brings all groups together. The concept is that if you are rich, poor, white, black, weak, strong, young or old it does not matter. What matters is that what reconciles us to each other is Christ.

Secondly, Christ reconciles us to God. John 14:6 says, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me!” So how does one get “in” Christ? By following his commands (John 14:15). But the first step is to understand that we can do nothing on our own with the saving grace of Christ on the cross (remember Eph. 2:8-9?). By one act Christ reconciles us together.

When you think of fellow citizens what does that mean? How does that apply to the church (verse 19)?

I (Robbie) was born in Toronto, Ontario, Canada but when I was 18 months old we moved to Marietta, Georgia. I remember that we had a card called a “Resident Alien” card (essentially a green card). It allowed me to exit and re-enter the United States with no issues. However, in 1995 that card expired and when we went to Acapulco, Mexico as a family the airport security almost did not let me back in the country. They seriously were considering deporting me to Canada. Shortly after that my
dad drove me up to Louisville, Kentucky one morning and I was sworn in by a representative and in 1995 I became a citizen of the United States of America. My dad was so proud of me because he thought that the best chance for me to have a good life was in this country.

He was half-right...the best chance for me to have a good life is to be a citizen of Jesus Christ. Being a citizen means (theoretically) that we have equal rights and equal opportunity. In God’s kingdom we are ALL equal. In churches ministers are no better than the members. Elders are not “holier” than the women in the church. We are all equal. This means that we should treat each other as equal. What does this mean about treating visitors in the youth group? How do we treat the junior-high kids? Are they fellow-citizens or are they second-class babies?

Paul says that part of our reconciliation process means we have the right foundation (verse 20). What foundation do we build from according to that verse? What does it mean for Christ to be our “chief cornerstone”?

Kaleb, my son, sings this song often: “Jesus you’re my firm foundation. I know I can stand secure. Jesus you’re my firm foundation, I put my hope in your holy word. I put my hope in your holy word.” The corner stone was the “critical stone in the corner of the foundation that ensures that a stone building is square and stable” (ESV Study Bible). If the cornerstone was not aligned accurately then the whole building
will be off. Jesus Christ is the foundation upon which our lives are squared and leveled.

That means no matter how we think we can run our lives...Christ has a better way and a better design for it. If we lay a foundation that is apart from Christ our building will fall down and become worthless.

Paul describes Christians as the temple of God. What does that mean? What sort of responsibility does that bear?

Temples in the Old Testament were constructed to be a place for God to live or dwell (Exodus 26). The Christians have God dwelling in them as a sort of temple. That means when we become Christians somehow the Holy Spirit dwells in us (Acts 2:38). This also means that we have a lot of responsibility for God's tent. It is more than just treating your bodies with respect as it also means not letting anything delude your minds and your thoughts. It is a recognition that where we go so does...GOD!!!
COOL DOWN

(THIS IS THE SECTION WHERE YOU COME TO A CLOSE AND BRING IT ALL HOME) – 5 MINUTES

Supplies Needed:
- Enough cardboard boxes to build a human-sized wall.

Have someone re-read Ephesians 2:14. Stack the boxes up making a wall. Talk about how walls are made to separate people kind of like when someone builds a fence around their yard. Talk about how sometimes we build up walls that keep us from growing closer to each other. Sometimes we build walls that separate us from growing closer to Christ. Either way...we have many walls in our lives. Once you have made the wall (high enough to wear they cannot see you) talk about how impossible it is to have a relationship with someone when there is a wall in between them.

Then, as dramatically as possible (😊), kick the wall down and end with this, “Christ has come to divide the walls of hostility...isn’t it time you tear down your walls?”

End the class with that, leaving them the moment to reflect.
Lesson #5: We are Informed in Christ (3:1-13)

Have you ever been lost in the woods before? My wife and I went hiking one time in South Carolina at a place called the Whitewater Falls. It was a gorgeous scene as we looked at the falls and listened to the roar of the waters cresting over the mountain. On our way back I decided that we should take the “rough” path back to the car. I had glanced at a map and I had a pretty good idea of where the path went. The problem was that the path was 2 miles long and went up and down steep slopes of the mountain. I went into that pathway essentially with no information about where I was going or what I was doing. To make matters worse was that my wife was 6 months pregnant at the time. Talk about your all-time blunders!!! She forgave me but I remember this story because it would have been helpful if I would have had an accurate understanding of the path. It was, for intensive purposes, a mystery to me! This was very important information that would have allowed me to make a better judgment on whether I should have taken that path.

Warm Up

(This is the section that introduces the lesson) — 5-10 minutes.

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Supplies Needed:

- A briefcase that locks or something that requires a combination or a lock to get into.
- Something to put in the briefcase as a prize (chewing gum, money, etc.)

Put the briefcase in front of the class and ask for a volunteer. Tell them that there is a prize in this briefcase that is worth a lot and whoever opens this briefcase will in turn receive the prize. Hopefully, by now, you will have a volunteer so ask the volunteer to come up and start opening the briefcase (make sure it is locked or the illustration will fail). As they are struggling ask them why it is so difficult to open the briefcase. “It is locked,” or, “I don’t have a key,” are probably the answers you will receive. Give them the key or combination and allow them to open the briefcase. Give them the prize and thank them for their participation.

Ask these questions:

What lessons did you learn from this?

How is the gospel like the briefcase?

WORK OUT

(This is the heart of the lesson where most discussion will be held) - 20-25 minutes.

Ephesians 3:1-13 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles - assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was
given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, \(^9\) and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, \(^{10}\) so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. \(^{11}\) This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, \(^{12}\) in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. \(^{13}\) So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

**WHAT IS SO SIGNIFICANT ABOUT PAUL BEING A MINISTER TO THE GENTILES (VERSE 1)?**

God declared that Paul would be a “chosen vessel” to the Gentiles if you remember the story in Acts 9:10-19. Ananias did not want to go to Paul (Saul at the time) but God insisted (as he usually does) because this was the path chosen for Paul. Keep in mind this was occurring before Paul even realized it. Now, in Ephesians 3:1 Paul is acknowledging the fact that he is the minister to the Gentiles.

This was important because many Jews at the time thought that Jesus was exclusively reserved for them and that the coming Messiah meant the Jewish nation would be restored and he would reign forever from Jerusalem. Partially true. Jesus came for all (Luke 19:10) and shows no partiality to whom he serves (see John 4). Paul was a radical Pharisee who accepted the “lowly” role of serving the Gentiles. What this says to me is that when it comes to service we should recognize that God’s original plan was that all would be included in salvation (see Romans 1:16-18).
What is a mystery (verse 3)?

I think it would be neat to ask students the definition of a mystery and write it on the board. The Greek word for mystery is musterion (like moosterion) and means something that was previously unknown but has now been revealed. Then ask them some of their favorite mystery movies or TV shows. Hollywood makes a killing off of this as shows like NCIS, CSI, Criminal Minds and others all build off of the theme of mystery. There is a crime and the suspects are unknown but through the means of investigation the answer to the crime becomes revealed (all in 1 hour)!

How is the gospel of Christ a mystery to some people?

Paul’s mission was to “inform” the Gentiles about Christ (verse 4). What does that say about our mission and about who we are?

We are to be about the master’s business (Luke 2:49). By reading the letter they would then understand the mystery so that they could move on with their relationship with God. Have you ever thought that this is what we should be doing as well? How many of you have a list of people who you regularly pray for so that there can be a moment you can share Jesus Christ to them?

We have hardly anytime on this earth and we hardly know who we are but one thing is for sure and that is we KNOW that Christ died for our sins, we KNOW, that he rose after three days and we KNOW he will come again
someday. The problem is that we do not UNDERSTAND the implications of that knowledge. It is useless knowledge that does nothing but sits in our heads. Our brains become storage sheds for information like a hard-drive instead of a factory that produces new things and new results like a printer.

Paul is pretty inclusive in verse 6 claiming that the Gentiles are now “fellow heirs”? What is the significance of that and give some contemporary application in our cultures?

It means the people we normally do not include in our services. We think ministry to the poor is a good idea but when you glance across our auditoriums all you see (generally speaking) are middle-class Caucasians. There is still much racial animosity in some of our congregations and there is even much social tension when it comes to including the poor and afflicted. They are seen as “liabilities” on an insurance policy instead of people who need shelter and who need a place to eat. Treating people as “fellow-heirs” means we are no better than them and they are no worse than we are.

We are united with Christ (I can’t wait until we get to Ephesians 4:4-7) and that means no railroad tracks, governmental housing or even the color on someone’s skin does not separate us! They are fellow heirs!
Re-read verses 7-10. What do the verses say about Paul’s mission as an evangelist?

Make a list: This was mine!

- It was a gift of God’s grace!
- It was wrought with power!
- He was to preach to the Gentiles!
- He was to bring light for everyone who lived in the mystery!
- So that the church may get the glory!

What it would look like if we had a similar mission/conviction on our hearts?

Think about the last conversation you had with someone who was not saved. What were some significant topics you discussed? Was anything said (REVEALED) about the “unsearchable riches of Christ”? Why or why not?

This is more to get them thinking about the worth of what they say and where their priorities are at. This question is more about introspection but I would ask them to write down the time when they last talked to someone about Jesus. This can be very humbling so be prepared to answer yourself and you might find that maybe you as a teacher have not been in an important mindset. If so, be confessional with them and let them know that it is not just a teenager struggle.
What is so important about boldness and confidence when it comes to informing others about Jesus Christ (verse 12)?

The difference between preaching my first sermon in 2001 and the sermons I preach now is boldness and confidence. Where does it come from? Some of it comes from Scripture but a lot of it comes from God himself. I guess that sometimes we do not inform others about Christ because we are not that convicted about him right now! Maybe we are not informed about Christ either and have lost our identity because we do not understand the mysteries. Maybe nobody has told you!

Boldness and confidence allows us to be persistent with people when others give up on them. It allows us to demonstrate our love for them because what is most important stays most important.

People often say that motivation doesn’t last. Well, neither does bathing—that’s why we recommend it daily.

-Zig Ziglar

Why do you think he tells them not to “lose heart” in verse 13?

In this context Paul is writing from prison in Rome. The Ephesians might think that what he is doing is pointless because he is suffering. Paul is saying that the opposite is true. To make the point he must suffer. We should not be discouraged over informing others especially when we suffer for it (see 1 Peter 4:12). We must be persistent in our love for them even when they aggressively resist us. That is why we should never “lose heart.”
COOL DOWN

(This is the section where you come to a close and bring it all home) – 5 minutes

READ THE FOLLOWING STORY!

ON MY DESK I LIKE TO DISPLAY, ON A BOOKSTAND, THE KIND OF GIFT BOOKS YOU PUT ON THE COFFEE TABLE — THOSE FILLED WITH PROFESSIONAL PHOTOS OF NATURE OR TOURIST DESTINATIONS. MY CURRENT BOOK IS AMERICA’S SPECTACULAR NATIONAL PARKS BY MICHAEL DUCHEMIN. FOR SEVERAL DAYS I HAVE HAD THE BOOK OPEN TO A PHOTO OF THE GRAND TETON MOUNTAINS, AN EXTRA-WIDE PHOTO THAT FILLS THE LEFT PAGE AND CROSSES THE FOLD TO TAKE UP HALF OF THE RIGHT. IT IS A MAJESTIC DISPLAY OF DEEP BLUE SKY, RUGGED, GRAY, SNOW-CAPPED MOUNTAINS, AND A CALM LAKE IN THE FOREGROUND.

THIS MORNING I DECIDED TO TURN THE PAGE TO THE NEXT PHOTO, AND AS I DID I DISCOVERED THAT I HAD MISSED SOMETHING IMPORTANT. THE RIGHT PAGE OF THE GRAND TETONS PHOTO WAS AN EXTRA-LONG PAGE FOLDED OVER, COVERING PART OF THE GRAND TETONS. SO WHEN I OPENED IT UP, IT ADDED SOME SIXTEEN INCHES TO THE WIDTH OF THE PHOTO. WOW! THE GRAND TETONS BECAME EVEN GRANDER.

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE HAS UNFOLDING MOMENTS LIKE THAT, WHEN WE DISCOVER THERE IS MUCH MORE TO GOD AND HIS KINGDOM THAN WE KNEW, MUCH MORE TO HIS PURPOSE FOR US THAN WE IMAGINED. ABRAHAM EXPERIENCED THAT AT AGE SEVENTY-FIVE, MOSES AT AGE EIGHTY, THE APOSTLE PAUL ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS. AGAIN AND AGAIN IN THE BIBLE, WHEN GOD MET PEOPLE, HE OPENED A GLORIOUS PAGE FOR THEM THAT HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN FOLDED.

- CRAIG BRIAN LARSON, ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS

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So what are you missing that has yet to be revealed? Maybe God’s mystery has been revealed to you but you are not sharing it with others. It is now time you unfold the next page in your life and find that identity in Christ means you live a life that is INFORMED!!!

Write down, in the time we have left, what things in your life have now been revealed and what God is calling you to do about it.
Lesson #6: We are Strong in Christ (3:14-21)

I go to the YMCA to work out every now and then and the thought is that I am building up muscle to stay in shape. I can never devote hours of my life to look “cut” or to have six-pack abs but I at least try to stay healthy. In the YMCA that I go to there are mirrors everywhere and often people look at themselves flexing when they think nobody’s looking (I even do it) to see how strong they are. After a year of working out and increasing my bench press max from 185 to 250 I thought I was something. Then, one afternoon, this guy came in and put three plates on each side (1 plate = 45 lbs) as his warm-up! This guy was bench pressing 315 lbs. 10 times as his warm-up and I couldn’t even do that once! The point is that no matter how strong we think we are there is always someone who is stronger. In our Christian lives no matter how strong we think we are or how “impenetrable” we think we are to Satan’s devices there is always going to be a time when we are supremely weak. All we can do is day-after-day go to the “spiritual gym” and work out and become stronger.

But wouldn’t it be nice to have a work out partner? Wouldn’t it be nice to have someone encourage you and spot you when you are trying to lift too much weight? This lesson is about your identity in Christ as one who is strong. We are not strong on our own but through the strength of Christ we become strong. Paul learned that as well in these verses so open up, read on and let’s get fired-up about these verses.
WARM UP

(THE IS THE SECTION THAT INTRODUCES THE LESSON) – 5-10 MINUTES.

Supplies Needed:

- 50 pencils
- Rubber Band big enough to go around the pencils

This illustration is given to show strength in numbers and has more than likely been done before. Ask for a volunteer from the group (preferably someone who is strong or even better...thinks they are strong). Ask them to come up and give them one pencil. Tell them to break it. Give them two pencils and tell them to break it. Now tie a rubber band around the remaining pencils and ask them to break it. More than likely they will not be able to do it. Ask them, “But I thought you were strong. Why can’t you break these pencils?” The answer is simple: there is strength in numbers.

Ask these questions:

What lessons did you learn from this?

How is God like the group of pencils?

WORK OUT

(THE IS THE HEART OF THE LESSON WHERE MOST DISCUSSION WILL BE HELD) – 20-25 MINUTES.
Ephesians 3:14-21  

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith - that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Most scholars agree that what Paul is doing here is offering up a quick prayer to God. If you look at verse 18 “bow my knees” and verse 21, “Amen,” it is clear that Paul is praying. I would recommend that as a group maybe you stop at this point and offer up a prayer to God. Sometimes it helps (like with the Psalms) to actually pray what you are reading and since this is a prayer it would be great if you would pray these words to God.

If you are like me sometimes you get so busy trying to understand the meanings of certain words and phrases and sometimes you miss what is occurring in the verses. Paul is praying and maybe this is the right time for you as a group to pray as well.

“For this reason” meant Paul had something specific to pray for in verse 14. What is significant about being specific in our prayers?

Often we offer generic prayers that are routine and quick to the point. Our prayer lives diminish because we lack the specificity which Paul was so amazing at exemplifying! In this context he is speaking about 3:12-13 because he just asked them not to lose heart so this called him to prayer. Ask the class, “What are some areas in our lives we need to pray to God more about?” In my life I need to specific when it comes to prayer like with my children’s spirituality. Praying that God will create a fire for the church at Main Street and everywhere else. Choices, relationships, school, sports are all areas we need to pray about in our lives. Being
specific in our prayers allows us to get out what is really on our hearts to let God know about our struggles (see 1 Peter 5:6-7).

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “STRENGTHENED WITH POWER” (VERSE 16)? SPECIFICALLY IN OUR “INNER BEING.”**

Anyone who has been associated with sports knows that when you go up against someone who is stronger than you it is fairly obvious that you know the difference between strong and weak. What Paul is speaking to here (specifically with the inner being) is a holistic approach at being strong. The inner man is one that does not perish but is being renewed day by day (2 Cor. 4:16-18). It means that one who has strengthened the inner man can fully attend the world that he lives in. Warren Wiersbe has a helpful look at the inner man (Bible Exposition Commentary, Vol. 2, p. 32):

The inner man:

- Can see (Psalm 119:18)
- Can hear (Matt. 13:9)
- Can taste (Psalm 34:8)
- Can feel (Acts 17:27)
- Must be exercised (1 Tim. 4:7-8)
- Must be cleansed (Psalm 51:7)
- Must be fed (Matt. 4:4)
What does it look like to have Christ dwell in your hearts (verse 17)?

This may be the time to ask them (rhetorically) if they think Christ is dwelling in their hearts right now. Can they say their thoughts, their actions, their relationships, their work ethic, their worship or their whole existence comes from the sphere of Christ in their hearts? For Christ to dwell in our hearts means that you and Him are eternally inseparable. When Paul says that “nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:31-39) he is saying that based on the FACT that Christ is dwelling in his heart. A heart that has Christ in it is a strong, loving and compassionate heart!

How does strength help us comprehend things (verse 18)?

Strength gives us endurance and endurance gives us time to understand. Ask them if they need strength to study for a test? Why? Because endurance allows us to understand more and to soak more in. Ask them if they have ever tried to study while being completely exhausted. It is virtually impossible and that is why cramming is usually one of the most ineffective ways to study. Strength allows us (keep in mind Paul is including all the church now) to understand the works that are being done in the name of Jesus and to take it all in from a reading and living standpoint. We read God’s word and gain knowledge from that strength but also God is seen in the lives of his people. All of which requires HIS strength.
What does it mean to know the love of Christ (verse 19)?

It means to understand it where it changes your life! The Greek word for “know” (ginosko) here means “to know,” or, “to come to a knowledge.” The tough part is the road it takes to come to know the love of Christ. John 15:13 is pretty clear and we can see from the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus that he practiced what he preached. We know God’s love since he gave us Jesus as an atonement for our sins (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16; 4:9-10). So from a knowledge standpoint we can appreciate these things literary facts on a page.

But that’s not it…to know Jesus Christ’s love is to become so encapsulated in that love that every breath or step you take is done so in the name of Jesus Christ! To know the love of Christ is to share that love with others. Paul’s prayer was for the Ephesians to know the love of Christ and we too ought to be about the specificity of that prayer and pray that we know his love!

What does it mean to trust in a God and believe that he is “able”?

The world looks down on Christianity and casts a cynical scowl at the church because it perceives that they believe in a God who does nothing for them. In essence they are saying God does not exist and is not able to help those who follow him. There is a Greek word for that:

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“HOGWASH!” When one says “I am able” it means they have the power to do something. God has the power to take a mustard seed and make it into a huge tree. God has the power to divide the Red Sea, to bring water when there was none, to take five loaves and feed 5,000, to heal the blind and make the lame walk, God has the power to raise the dead, save Jonah, to call down the prophets of Baal, to tear down the walls of Jericho, to defeat the powers of Satan...when the whole world says, “No God can’t,” is the exact point God says, “Yes I can!”
COOL DOWN

(This is the section where you come to a close and bring it all home) – 5 minutes

Have the students think about tough situations in their lives and ask them to write them down on the left side of their paper (Example below). They could be situations of doubt, uncertainty and fear. Then ask for a few volunteers to write theirs down on the board. Be sure to be able to write some of your own on the board as well.

After the last person finishes writing on the board get up and write beside each of those three words: GOD IS ABLE! Then tell them to write on their own papers beside each example: GOD IS ABLE! When we think things are impossible that is the exact point where God says it is possible.

Close with a re-reading of verses 20-21 and a prayer!

| Tough Financial Situations | GOD IS ABLE!!! |
| Children’s Spirituality | GOD IS ABLE!!! |
| Relationship with my family | GOD IS ABLE!!! |
| Work | GOD IS ABLE!!! |
| Society | GOD IS ABLE!!! |
| Many who are unbelievers | GOD IS ABLE!!! |
| Lack of Involvement at church | GOD IS ABLE!!! |
| Declining Membership | GOD IS ABLE!!! |
| Personal Spirituality Issues | GOD IS ABLE!!! |
Lesson #7: We are United in Christ (4:1-16)

I remember the first year I directed camp at Main Street church of Christ. It was 2005 and I had never even considered directing camp as it was one of those things that was not listed as one of my job responsibilities. However, in January of 2005 I was told that I would be directing camp this year and I was to get my help in order. This was the first year Main Street was doing camp on their own and I was responsible for leading this endeavor and I had 6 months to throw it all together. I knew that I could not do it on my own. I found people to be counselors, to cook, to speak, to teach class, to nurse, to do crafts and to come up with activities. One word comes to mind in this whole process: “Chaos!” What I did though was meet with the staff on a consistent basis and communicated via e-mail and made sure we were all on the same page. The first year was a blast but the funny thing about it all is that I still am using the same approach 5 years later and it still works fine.

What about our churches? What about our youth groups? Are we all on the same page when it comes to our journey with God? Unity is one of those abstract ideas that looks good but nobody believes it can really be achieved. The problem I sense is that most people are selfish and unwilling to work with others to shape unity in the church. This lesson is all about our identity in Christ which is shaped and formed by unity. The lesson begs the question: “Do we want to work together for the good of all or do we want to remain selfish in what we have always done?”

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WARM UP

(This is the section that introduces the lesson) - 5-10 minutes.

Supplies Needed:

- Belts to go around the entire group. You can ask guys to take their belt off but make sure you have extra to fit around the entire group.

Ask the group to get in the middle of the room and get real close together. Tell them that we are going to talk about unity and what it means to be unified as a group. Proceed to latch the belts together and then pull them around the group. Make sure they are squeezed together and then tie the final belt together and make sure they are all latched together. You may want to have fun with this and tie it real tight to make them feel uncomfortable.

Ask these questions (while they are still tied together 😊):

How does this illustrate what unity is?

How does this illustrate what unity is not?

Let them go and have them sit down in their seats.

WORK OUT

(This is the heart of the lesson where most discussion will be held) - 20-25 minutes.
Ephesians 4:1-16  I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call - 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." 9 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?) 10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

There is much to discuss in these verses so when you leave and go home be sure to think of more questions to ask from this text. A bit of organizational framing before we begin. Scholars state the chapter 4 represents a shift in thought from chapters 1-3. Most sat that Ephesians 1-3 is the doctrinal foundation and chapters 4-6 is the application of that doctrine put into practice. This is true in many aspects as there seems to be a cycle of thought in much of Paul’s writings but it does not mean that there are no doctrinal affirmations in chapters 4-6. It simply means there are less than chapters 1-3. At any rate...keep this information stored somewhere in your hippocampal formation (part of the brain that stores facts).

What does Paul mean when he says that we are called in verse 1?

This is an area of great confusion in Christianity as some people believe that they were called to do specific things by God himself (like Paul in Acts 9) and some people espouse that God did not have any bearing on their decisions. The truth is somewhere in the middle and contextually it is safe to say that God called them here differently than he even calls us.
Romans 11:29 says that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. God calls us, through his son, to cohabitate in peaceful unity. 1 Corinthians 1:26 Paul asked the Corinthian brethren to “consider their calling.” It seems that the “calling” can mean both the way of life as a Christian in general but also the specific ministries one participates in. We will discuss more about this in verses 11-12.

What 5 ways in verses 2-3 does Paul say the Ephesians should walk? Why is it so important to walk this way?

Write these 5 on the board and discuss them individually as to how they relate to being unified!

Humility - Nobody can be unified without some shedding of personal pride. Sometimes that means getting rid of our opinions to welcome something greater for the church as a whole. James 4:10 emphasizes the process of humility. Christ too was humble in his approach to death (Phil. 2:5-11).

Gentleness - The Greek word here (trautes) means one is “meek or calm in spirit.” Jesus is seen as one who was meek and gentle according to Matthew 11:29. It calls us to be lenient with our judgments of others and to give them the benefit of the doubt.

Patience - It means “long-suffering” or “forbearance.” When you are with people for long periods of time sooner or later you are going to pick...
up on little nuances that annoy you about them. Patience means we work with them no matter what. This calls us to realize that the Church is greater than idiosyncrasies and disagreements.

Bearing with One Another - The word literally means we “put up with” people in love (see 2 Cor. 11:19). Sometimes we have to endure things with people for the sake of unity. This must be done though “in love.” When we talk about people and make fun of them this is not bearing with them. It is bearing against them. Bearing with one another in love means sometimes we have to speak to them the truth (we will get here later in verse 15).

Eager to Maintain the Unity of the Spirit - Some people at the core are the type of people who are not happy unless there is a disagreement. They like to stir the pot and get people angry at each other. Paul says we must be diligent, we must make every effort to preserve (literally keep) the unity of the Spirit. Unity in Greek (henoteta) means oneness! We must keep the oneness of the Spirit for the church.

Why are the seven one’s mentioned in verses 4-6 important theological anchors for unity?

This is difficult but equally important to understand. You may ask each of the seven individually like, “Why is it important to have one baptism when it comes to unity?” All of the seven seem to point towards uniting
us with God. The things we do here on earth either brings us together with God or separates us with God. The seven one’s clarify what is to be expected of Christianity. It erases ambiguity. Think of what it would mean if there were many gods, or many faiths, or many bodies. Unity would be impossible. Below is a Biblical diagram of unity from Ephesians 4:4-6...it shows how all work together for the common good.
WHAT SPIRITUAL GIFTS DO YOU HAVE (VERSE 11)?

This is very important to understand for these verses. If our identity is about unity, students need to understand how they participate in that unity. Part of participation means they need to discover what gifts God has given them for the work of the church. In verse 11 he said that some were apostles, some preached and some pastured (elders). This means that different people do different things. Ask the class to come up with gifts...make sure you let them know that some gifts are not as upfront as others. Below is a list of different gifts:

Speaking, teaching, singing, encouraging, artistic gifts, cooking, cleaning, organizing, listening, making people laugh, visiting, mechanic work, carpentry skills, etc. Now ask how these can be used to help the church?

“I'm not really religious but very spiritual. I give money to this company that manufactures hearing aids on a regular basis. More people should really hear me sing. I have a gift from God.”

Christina Aguilera

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF OUR GIFTS ACCORDING TO VERSES 12-13?

To equip others (leadership), to build up the Saints and to work towards spiritual maturity. Think of it as a house. A house needs a foundation but a foundation alone is not enough to make it a house. There needs to be carpenters, electricians, interior designers, painters, etc. But even when the house is built-up it still needs repairs and constant maintenance. Our gifts are for the purpose of helping the church as a whole. You may not have the gift of speaking to 330 people in an
Why do you think Paul is so concerned about false doctrine (verse 14)? Should we be as concerned?

Because he is trying to grow them up to be mature. It seems that false doctrine is appealing to those who do not know it is false. Things in this generation are so appealing and the desire to keep certain doctrines seem less and less important among teenagers. Teenagers are more willing to be open (which is not necessarily a bad thing) about their faith and to accept new things without studying about it. A church (and youth group) must be open and honest about different doctrines and discuss them using the Scriptures. We must continually revisit doctrines in light of exegesis and discussion. Paul’s statement is a warning against accepting things without careful (and prayerful) consideration. The false doctrine would be one that would tear apart unity instead of bring together.
Verse 14 is a warning against false doctrine and verse 15 is a plan at how to address it. How so?

Many churches brag about how they are “doctrinally sound” and they could rattle off 15-20 verses on any given biblical subject. Were you to be in “error” on these biblical subjects they could forcefully show you the right verse for you to understand the error of your ways. Some churches (and institutions) even publish articles relaying information on who is doctrinally wrong and how they have misrepresented Scripture in the most blatant ways. My question is this: “Is this really love?” Love means we speak with people one-on-one. Would I want somebody to throw my name out for everyone to see because I am in “error”? Of course not! I would hope they would come to me privately and discuss things in love. How many times does Paul talk about love in this book alone? 15 TIMES!!! Why love? Love edifies and encourages. We don’t slam someone because they are young in the faith...we approach them in love.

This also means we cannot simply ignore the issue. Ask them to discuss why we do not approach someone when we know they are doing things in error. Odds are you will get responses like: “it’s not my place or”, “what should I say?”, or, “they will hate me!” Do you love them though? Love does not let someone get destroyed in sin and error...it seeks to address the tough issues where sin and salvation collide.

Currently (2007), just 16% of non-Christians in their late teens and twenties said they have a “good impression” of Christianity.

Barna.org
COOL DOWN

(This is the section where you come to a close and bring it all home) – 5 minutes

Read this story and ask the questions below:

The best arguers don’t point their fingers. That’s according to a study reported in Psychological Science. The study also said the person who says “we” the most during an argument suggests the best solutions. Researchers from the University of Pennsylvania and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill studied fifty-nine couples. Spouses who used second-person pronouns (you) tended to be negative in interactions. Those using first-person plural pronouns (we) provided positive solutions to problems.

The study concluded, “‘We’ users may have a sense of shared interest that sparks compromise and other ideas pleasing to both partners. ‘You’-sayers tend to criticize, disagree, justify, and otherwise teem with negativity.”


What does this say about unity?

Maybe when it comes to unity we need to look in the mirror to find the problem!
Lesson #8: We are Alive in Christ (4:17-32)

Not many people can say that they have lived two lives! Go up and tell that to someone and odds are they will treat you like you have some mental issues but a Christian can say that with confidence. Why do people go to the doctor and take medications for years? Because they want to live! Life is so important and when it comes to being a Christian our lives are even more important. Christ wanted us to live a life with no regrets and no repercussions (John 10:10). But how does one live two lives at the same time? It is impossible yet some of us try to follow things of the world and Christ at the same time. Paul wrote to the Ephesians to tell them that their old ways were crucified and that they have the benefits of walking the new life (see 2:1-10). So how have you been acting lately? Has your life been a glory to God or maybe you are stuck in a rut and you feel like dying! Or maybe you feel dead all together. What if I told you that in these verses contains the key to understanding how to really live a life content with Christ, would you be interested? If so...read on and let’s study together and learn that our identity in Christ means we are ALIVE!!

WARM UP

(This is the section that introduces the lesson) - 5-10 minutes.

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Supplies Needed:

- An old nasty clothing item that smells or looks really disgusting (like a sock, or wash cloth or something like that).
- A new clothing item exactly the same as the first one

Begin by describing how nasty things can get with sin and with our lives. (Take out the old sock) It is a lot like this sock in that it wears us out and makes us look disgusting. You can pass it around if you want to make them laugh (or cringe). Then discuss what it means to get rid of old things like that. (Take out new sock) Pass it around...allow them to see and smell (hopefully it is good) the new sock. Discuss the importance of being new in Christ.

What application do you get from this illustration?

In what ways do we carry around our old clothes?

Ephesians 4:17-32  
17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus. 21 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 22 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 23 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. 24 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 25 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 26 and give no opportunity to the devil. 27 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 28 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 29 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 30 Let all bitterness and
wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

WORK OUT

(This is the heart of the lesson where most discussion will be held) – 20-25 minutes.

There are many questions we could (should) ask from these verses but it is difficult to get everything in a short lesson. Please be sure to take this lesson and and go over all the verses on your own! You will be blessed.

What does it mean to have a hard heart? In what ways do we develop hard hearts?

Having a hard heart means you do not let things in and you do not let things out. Both are counter-productive and both are self-destructing. A hard heart develops when we become desensitized by the sin we see and, unfortunately, we commit. If we do not address the sin immediately then it has the tendency to make us calloused. I notice this in my own life by the shows that I watch on television. Often I hear cuss words and degrading jokes and it slides past my mind without a thought or even comment. Shame on me!!! How often do we become hard-hearted about a lot of things?
How does Paul describe the Gentiles (verses 17-19)?

List them! Futility in mind, darkened in understanding, alienated from the life of God, ignorant, hardened heart, callous, sensual, greedy and given up to every kind of impurity. It is amazing how things really do not change over a period of 2,000 years. Ask, “How is it we get this way?” We tend to self more than we tend to others. When we get addicted to sin it becomes a hard habit to break.

Why do you think Paul was adamant about telling the Ephesians they did not learn Christ in that manner (Verse 20)?

When you train some in a certain manner you expect them to perform based on their training. Paul is saying to them they did not learn Christ in the way the Gentiles are living. Christ calls us to a different lifestyle. Jesus, in Matthew 11:28-30, said, “Come and learn of me!” Learning means it is a process and sometimes the process is conflicted, painful and even leaves scars. But we learn.

Perhaps Paul was exercising his Rabbinic ways in trying to re-emphasizing what had been previously taught. Whatever the case may be Paul wanted them to know what was a right way to live and what was a wrong way.
**What does it mean to “put off” our old selves (Verse 22)?**

In the spring time my mother used to always have us pack up our winter clothes and put them in the attic. She said we were “putting them away” until next winter. Paul means something different here. The Greek word literally means to take something off. It is almost as if we have nasty clothes on and we need to put on clean clothes. It means we destroy the old stuff or put the old stuff out of its misery. But why talk about the old stuff? Apparently they were struggling with old ways and were not paying attention to the new walks of life. There is a tendency sometimes to talk about our “wild days” as if they are trophies or something. We think of how fun it was and how much we did and we laugh. Now there is a time and a place for sharing our story but to revel in it like it is something to brag about is missing the point. Paul says to “take off” the old ways.

**What are the differences between the old self and the new self (Verses 23-24)?**

Ideally there is a sense of holistic newness. New speech, new attitude, new actions, new ways in which we date people, new perspectives on what we watch/listen to, new everything. From Paul’s Perspective (write on board):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Old Self</th>
<th>Vs.</th>
<th>New Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrupt by Deceitful Desires</td>
<td>Renewal of the spirit of your minds (Rom. 12:2)</td>
<td>Likeness (Image) of God, True Righteousness and holiness,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why is it so significant to speak truthfully to each other?

The Ephesians struggled with falsehood just like the church struggles today. Although the specific circumstances change the general principle remains the same. Speak the truth! The bible is clear about those who deceive and lie (Gen. 3:1; Deut. 11:2; Prov. 14:5; 1 Cor. 15:33). The specific point Paul is concerned with is love for his neighbor. How can a church grow if it is not honest with each other? The verse goes back to how one does speak truth and that is done in love (see Eph. 4:15).

What does it mean to be angry and do not sin (verse 26)?

This is a tough verse considering the Bible’s overwhelming witness against anger (e.g. Prov. 15:18; 16:32; 27:4; 2 Cor. 12:20; Col. 3:8; James 1:9). Paul here seems to be quoting the Psalmist in Psalm 4:4. It seems there are some instances in our lives which allows us to be angry (see Jesus in Mark 3:5 and John 2:13-17). Ask them to name a circumstance in which anger is justified. The problem with anger is that so often it consumes us and we act on our anger. How does Paul say we should deal with the anger? By not letting the sun go down on our wrath! “Passionate feelings against people or their actions are not to be kept long, lest they break down the love that seeks to bring good out of evil” (Foulkes, Ephesians, 141).

According to SafeYouth.com more than 1 in 3 high school students, both male and female, have been involved in a physical fight. 1 in 9 of those students have been injured badly enough to need medical treatment.
In what ways do we give the Devil opportunities?

Notice I said, “we” because too often (using 1 Pet. 5:8) we tend to say it is the Devil’s fault. “Satan tempted me” is not an excuse or crutch to use as God was highly against it when Eve tried it in Genesis 3:13. It’s time we own up to our stupidity and tell it like it is. The Devil gets in our lives because WE LET HIM!!! We put ourselves in tempting situations then we fail miserably. I think it is ridiculous when a teenager says, “I didn’t mean to get drunk…it just kind of happened.” HOGWASH!!! You get drunk because you put yourself in that position. Paul is saying, “Do not let Satan have an opportunity!” One translation says, “Do not give the Devil an opportunity!” Why? He will take it!!!

How do we grieve the Holy Spirit?

Ask them what it means when someone grieves? It means they are in sorrow! The Holy Spirit experiences pain when we are living like the old self. We cause God sorrow and pain when we continue to walk in darkness (much like Israel in Isaiah 13:10). It strains our relationship and causes love to be removed.
What is the solution to anger for Paul?

The way to remove anger, wrath, malice and bitterness is to be kind. In what ways can we be kind to one another (write them on the board)? Forgiveness is a vital aspect of being kind as it allows us to let things go and to not hold grudges against people.

The opposite of kindness is anger. Describe a time when someone was kind towards you. How did it make you feel? What were the circumstances? We need to be about the business of being kind to each other.
COOL DOWN

(This is the section where you come to a close and bring it all home) – 5 minutes

I want you to write down 5 ways in which you have been living like the old self. Then write down beside them 5 ways in which you could put these away in order to put on the new self.

1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

5. 
Lesson #9: We are Holy in Christ (5:1-20)

Bible School Teacher: Students, what is your favorite book in the Bible?

Johnny (sarcastic): I think Leviticus...

(Class Laughs)

Bible School Teacher: I couldn’t agree anymore. What a wonderful book in the Bible!!!

Johnny (Confused): ARE YOU KIDDING ME!?!?!?

You probably have never encountered that conversation when you have been in Bible class but I can’t help but to agree with the Bible school teacher. Leviticus is an amazing book that is filled with an image of God’s people that captivates the entire story of His word. The image is encapsulated in Leviticus 11:44, “For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy.” The word “holy” is mentioned in Leviticus some 80 times in the ESV. What’s the deal? God wanted His people to be special and unique and different from the rest of the world. He wanted the people to be those who are set apart for a specific purpose. Ephesians 5:1-20 addresses the very same thing. We are to be holy and set apart for a specific purpose. So let me ask you something, “Are you holy?” Could you say that your actions reflect those found in God’s Word? Would you like to learn how to change? Read on...

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WARM UP

(This is the section that introduces the lesson) — 5-10 minutes.

Tell the students that you are going to read three quotes from celebrities who think their actions are not that big a deal. Then ask them to respond to each statement discussing the ramifications of each statement.

I've been clean for almost three years now. I don't do caffeine or nicotine or anything, except smoke pot. (Rollingstone.com)

Omar A. Rodriguez-Lopez

Lead Guitarist for Mars Volta
“That’s why I’m there. To bring smiles, even if I have to show a little cleavage.”
Jessica Simpson

“No, not at all. There are no rules [with one-night stands]. Sometimes it can be really fun. But it can also be awful...It’s never really that bad. I mean, you’re sleeping with somebody, right?”
Vince Vaughn
Ephesians 5:1-20  Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.  
2 And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.  
3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.  
4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.  
5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.  
6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.  
7 Therefore do not associate with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.  
11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.  
12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret.  
13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."  
15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.  
17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.  
18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

WORK OUT

(THE HEART OF THE LESSON WHERE MOST DISCUSSION WILL BE HELD) - 20-25 MINUTES.

Wow! That is a lot to unpack! As you are reading this it may be good to say a quick prayer to allow God to clear your mind so that you can really grasp this lesson. Allow the word to penetrate in your hearts and instead of fact-finding discover what God wants you to do with the message you are discussing (cf. Psa. 1:1-2).

What does it look like to imitate God (Verse 1)?

Paul said in another place, “Imitate me as I imitate God” (1 Cor. 11:1). My daughter Amelia has some of the funniest facial expressions I have ever seen! Sometimes she lowers her eyebrows and tightens her lips and

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gives some of the sassiest looks I have ever seen. I asked her, “Sweetheart, where did you learn to give those silly looks?” She paused for a moment, then smiled and looked at me and said, “Daddy!” I realized that she mimicked my facial expressions and gave them back to me. But how do we mimic God? By what he does and says in his word. We participate in the story of Scripture by placing ourselves in the narrative and walking as God prescribes for us to walk.

What does Paul mean when he says “walk in love” (Verse 2)?

When you walk somewhere you represent yourself wherever you go. It means that not only are you heading for a destination but you are also, in some ways, in a certain place while you are walking. For example, if I am walking towards an incorrect destination it means I am still walking in a wrong manner. Paul says that we have to walk in love! Everything we do is about love. I once heard someone say, “If I hear another sermon on love it will push me over the edge!” My response to that is maybe you need to hear just one more sermon on love. Love is mentioned 21 times in Ephesians so this is one of the dominant themes Paul discusses.
What does Paul mean by a fragrant offering (Verse 2)?

In the Old Testament they would offer burnt offerings and it would be a pleasing aroma to God (see Gen. 8:21; Ex. 29:18). It would smell pleasing to him. The same thing is applied to Christianity in that we offer up an aroma to God by our sacrifice (see 2 Cor. 2:14-16). Ask them if some of things we offer/sacrifice are pleasing to God. Ask them if they could look at their lives and say that their lives are a living sacrifice to God. Is there aroma sweet?

Why are fornication, impurity and covetousness so destructive in our Christian lives (Verses 3 & 5)?

They are mentioned twice and so it was really important to Paul and to God. If our bodies are the living temple (1 Cor. 6:19-20) it would seem that the three things mentioned would destroy our temple. Anything, in the Old Testament, that was unclean should be purged out and go through a purification process. In our days it seems impurity is one of the biggest issues teenagers face. Impurity has many different faces as it includes what we see but also what we listen to and what we are exposed to. Our thoughts and our intentions.
Is it a sin to joke around (Verse 4)? Prove it!

I think this calls us to focus on how we joke around and what we say. Making fun of each other is something that does not edify and does not bring about thanksgiving. Sometimes we joke around with each other and it does bring about some sort of thanksgiving (give an example). But we should be very careful and very cautious how we joke around considering Paul’s concern with speech in this book alone (3:17; 4:15, 25). I do think we take it too far sometimes when we participate at schools by making fun of other kids and belittling them. If we make fun of people then what does that say about our representation as ambassadors of Christ?

How far do we go with Paul’s claim to not associate with certain people (Verse 7)?

Read 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 15:33 and 2 Cor. 11:14-18. Sometimes it is hard to confront the people we love to hang out with especially if they are really close to us. On the one hand Paul does not say not to talk to anybody who is a sinner because we could not go into the world if that were the case (1 Cor. 5:10). There comes a time when we have to look at our friendships and really ask the tough question, “Is this friendship causing me to go away from God?” If we have tried to evangelize and help the situation with no avail then maybe we need to end the friendship in order to save something more important like our relationship with God. It is something hard to do so maybe a personal example would help in this instance.
Why do we hide the shameful things we do and what is Paul’s cure for that (Verses 8-14)?

We hide the evil things we do because they are dark. It is convenient to do things in secret because we think we are getting away with them. Just like the kid who thinks nobody is looking when he takes cookies so we too think God is not looking when we commit atrocities. We think nobody is looking when we look at porn on the internet. We think nobody is looking when we drink that beer. We think nobody is looking when we cheat on a test. We think nobody is looking when we give one dollar to the church but spend hundreds of dollars on an I-POD or new system in our cars.

Paul’s cure...expose them. It is hard to be defeated by sin when you expose it to others. Is it not interesting that the hardest things to do in life make things easier but often the easier things in life make it more difficult? This allows the forgiveness of Christ to start. Christ cannot forgive something we are not willing to confess (1 John, 1:6-9). When we expose it we let God know who we really are. This process is difficult but necessary in the sanctification process.

What does wisdom have to do with our holiness (Verses 15-18)?

Everything. Making the wise choices is the difference between life and death. Andy Stanley, in The Best Question Ever says that the greatest thing one could ask in any circumstance is, “What is the wise thing for me to do?” We already discussed wisdom in the second lesson but it cannot be
emphasized anymore that the difference between life and death, success and failure comes with one choice!!!

WHAT DOES WORSHIP HAVE TO DO WITH HOLINESS (VERSES 19-20)?

It allows us to proclaim a different message than the world. When we sing we encourage one another and we lift one another up. We are approaching the throne of holiness as his holy people. We are focusing on something higher and more sanctified than this world. It completely joins us with God. Whether it is prayer, singing or whatever when we are holy it creates in us a holy atmosphere (see Psa. 51:10).
COOL DOWN

(THERE IS THE SECTION WHERE YOU COME TO A CLOSE AND BRING IT ALL HOME) – 5 MINUTES

READ THIS STORY AND ASK THEM TO THINK ABOUT THE ISSUE OF IF THEY ARE HOLY. ASK THEM TO PAY ATTENTION TO THEIR HOLINESS AND TO SEE WHAT CHANGES THEY NEED TO MAKE. CLOSE WITH A PRAYER.

I CALLED HIM TWO-PHONE JOE. THE FIRST TIME I MET HIM, I WAS SITTING AT AN OUTDOOR TABLE AT MY FAVORITE COFFEE SPOT. HE CAME OUT, CELL PHONE PRESS BETWEEN SHOULDER AND EAR, TALKING A BLUE STREAK. HE HAD A CUP OF COFFEE IN ONE HAND, A COKE IN THE OTHER, AND ANOTHER PHONE ON HIS BELT. WHEN HE PUT HIS CUP DOWN TO HANG UP, I SAID, “MAN, YOU’VE GOT TO RELAX A LITTLE!” AND THAT’S HOW MY FRIENDSHIP GOT STARTED WITH ONE OF THE MOST HYPER GUYS I’VE EVER KNOWN.

JOE AND I TALKED OFTEN. ACTUALLY, JOE RANTED AND RAVED, AND I MOSTLY LISTENED. ONCE I WAS SITTING AT AN INSIDE TABLE AND HE CAME IN, ASSAULTING HIS PHONE AS USUAL. HE TALKED, LOUD AND ANGRY, THE WHOLE TIME HE ORDERED, AND THEN, AFTER HE SAT DOWN, HE KEPT ARGUING FOR THE WHOLE COFFEE SHOP TO HEAR. WHEN HE FINALLY GOT OFF THE PHONE, I SAID, “JOE, COME HERE.”

“What?” HE BARKED GUARDEDLY.

“Sit down here,” I REPEATED.

“Why?” HE ASKED, BUT HE SAT DOWN.

“Joe, I don’t know if anyone has ever done this for you before, but I am going to pray for you right now.” JOE’S EYES GOT BIG, AND HE LOOKED AT ME LIKE I WAS CRAZY. BEFORE HE COULD RUN, I JUST PUT MY HAND ON HIS ARM AND QUIETLY PRAYED FOR A FEW SECONDS, ASKING GOD TO QUIET JOE AND TO GIVE HIM PEACE.

“Thank you,” Joe said softly, and I wondered if that might have been the first holy moment in Joe’s entire tumultuous life.

Lesson #10: We are Submissive in Christ (5:21-6:9)

One of my favorite things to do as a parent is to tickle my children on their bellies. Kaleb, my son, is probably the most ticklish out of all of my kids. If you get him just right he lets out this hilarious laugh that comes from the deepest part of his body. It is truly contagious. As I am tickling him and he laughs hysterically he will inevitably ask me, “Daddy stop tickling me!” Sometimes I will stop but other times I will continue to do it and I will say to him, “I will stop but you got to say, ‘I love you daddy.’” Usually he is laughing so hard he cannot breathe enough air to say “I love you,” but somehow he gets the phrase in and he stops. At some point he has to submit to someone else in order to get something he wants.

Perhaps a more crude illustration of this is the rave that surrounds MMA or Mixed Martial Arts. I am not a big fan of this as it glorifies (in my opinion) violence but I am aware of it enough to know that some of the best fighters are those who are experts in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. This style of fighting utilizes ground tactics by causing someone to submit. When you submit it means you tap-out (or pass-out) and yield to the other fighter as the winner. When I think of submission my mind automatically is drawn to releasing what I want to allow something else greater. MMA submission is only a last resort when you cannot do anything where as Biblical submission is a first resort. Identity in Christ builds off of all that we have learned but if we think we can be in Christ based on our own initiative then we are missing the point. Submission means we
PLACE OURSELVES IN A “DIVINE YIELD.” AS TEENAGERS I THINK IT IS A CONSTANT STRUGGLE TO FOLLOW CHRIST BECAUSE WE HAVE NO CLUE WHAT SUBMISSION IS. WE THINK EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD HAS TO REVOLVE AROUND US.

WE BELIEVE OUR PARENTS ARE CLUELESS AND THEY DO NOT HAVE THE RIGHT TO TELL US WHAT TO DO AND NEITHER DO OUR TEACHERS, MINISTERS OR ANYONE ELSE WHO TRIES TO TELL US WHAT TO DO. “THEY DON’T KNOW ME? I KNOW WHAT IS BEST FOR ME?” MY QUESTION TO YOU IS, “DO YOU?” DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU? THINK LONG AND HARD BEFORE YOU GET TO THIS LESSON. MAYBE WE NEED A DOSE OF SUBMISSION PIE TO UNDERSTAND WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST.

WARM UP

(THERE IS THE SECTION THAT INTRODUCES THE LESSON) — 5-10 MINUTES.

THIS ILLUSTRATION IS EASY BUT INVOLVES A BIT OF DISCUSSION. GIVE EVERYONE A PIECE OF CLAY AND ASK THEM TO MAKE SOMETHING OF THEIR CHOICE LIKE A SMALL POT, CUP, BOWL OR ANYTHING ELSE THEY CAN COME UP WITH. MOST LIKELY THEY WILL NOT MAKE BEAUTIFUL MASTERPIECES BECAUSE MOST WILL NOT HAVE THE EXPERIENCE.

ASK THESE QUESTIONS:

How would you rate your masterpiece on a scale of 1-10?

Is your creation different than what you originally pictured it would be? How so?


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How does your creation reflect what happens when people try to take control of their own lives instead of depending on God?

Keep their comments in mind as you will return to this at the end of the lesson.

WORK OUT

(This is the heart of the lesson where most discussion will be held) – 20-25 minutes.

Ephesians 5:21-6:9

21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), 3 "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." 4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. 5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ, 6 not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, 7 rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man, 8 knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free. 9 Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.

If you like outlining then these verses split up nicely for you:

Submission Introduced (5:21)
Submission in Marriage (5:22-33)
Submission in Family (6:1-4)
Submission in Slavery (6:5-9)

Please study these verses on your own for it is too much to unravel in one study.

One the basic level, what does it mean to submit and what are some barriers to submission (Give examples)?

The Greek word used here for submit (hupotasso) is an old military term used to tell people to “fall in line.” Essentially when someone submits they are getting into line or subjecting themselves to authority. Some synonyms according to Thesaurus.com for submit are acquiesce, stoop, to concede, to grin and bear it and to give up. All of this absolutely misses the point of true Biblical submission. When we submit we are giving them the good seat and place of honor. You remember that Jesus was highly against those who took the best seat (see Matt. 23:6; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 11:43; 20:46). Jesus told us to take the lowest seat (Luke 14:7-11) and by this submissive act God will exalt us in the proper time!

The most blatant barrier to submission seems to be our own personal pride. When we feel we deserve this or deserve that then we leave no room for God. The famous Proverb serves well: “Pride goes before the fall” (Prov. 16:18). Another barrier to submission (which coincides with pride) is the whole concept of selfishness. When we are not submissive probably are the times when we just are not thinking about anyone else but us.

“He who makes himself his own master subjects himself to a fool for a master.”

Bernard
What does Christ have to do with us submitting to each other (5:21)?

Paul says to submit to one another “in reverence” or fear. We submit to each other because Christ’s submission was for the whole world (see Phil. 2:5-11). Christ shows us an example as he too submits to the father and does nothing in contradiction from what the father does (John 5:19; 8:28 et al). It is only by submitting to one another can we fully experience the love of Jesus and the realization of how significant his submission was.

Consider this quote: “If anyone had the right to command obedience, it would have been Jesus when he lived in the flesh. That, however, is not how he treated people. He present truth to them and in doing so gave them a simple option: They could follow his way or not. He let people have their journey because he wanted them to follow out of conviction of their conscience and not because he could threaten or cajole them into conformity” (Wayne Jacobsen and Clay Jacobsen, Authentic Relationships, p. 137).

What a Savior?

What picture of submission do you get from husbands and wives submitting to each other? In other words, why would you think submission is necessary (from your perspective) in a marriage relationship?

I know, I know...why in the world can teenagers talk about submission in a marriage? Truth be told, until you are married you cannot fully
grasp what Paul has in mind here so come back to these verses in a few years to completely understand what he means. However, in a generic sense we can say that submission in a marriage is crucial for it allows each spouse to have the right-of-way. When a wife submits to her husband she declares to him that she belongs to him but the same is true for the husband submitting to the wife. They both are lifting each other up.

Submission is necessary in a marriage because, again, it causes each spouse to approach the union with the understanding that they are not going to deem themselves as more important than each other. The marriage relationship is all about serving one another and lifting one another up. The husband serves as the protector of his wife and the wife serves as the servant of her husband. This does not in any way mean the husband is worth more than the wife. Not at all. It is different roles of submission.

**Give some reasons (other than the ever faithful Bible tells me so) why we should honor and obey our parents?**

1. It teaches us obedience,
2. It shows we know how to love,
3. It creates trust in the relationship,
4. It gives our families a good name,
5. It keeps us out of trouble.
6. It teaches us wisdom.
7. It unites us with God.
8. It allows us to be able to love our spouse more.
9. It gives us endurance.

Be sure to comment (or even add) to some of these. These are not hard fast rules but do paint a picture of why we should honor and obey our parents (even when we disagree with them).

Is it possible that sometimes we obey our parents without honoring them? Explain….

Of course it is. The word for “obey” in Hebrew and Greek both have the literal meaning of some type of audible hearing (which is figuratively applied to following or obeying). Sometimes we listen to our parents but we do not honor them. We do what they tell us and don’t do what they tell us not to do but we dishonor them by removing our love for them or criticize their every judgment. Sometimes parents are selfish and do not lead their children like they should. But to dishonor them would be to subvert what they are trying to do and to not listen to anything they see. The higher road is a road of honor in that it says we disagree with you but we submit to you nonetheless.
Come up with a list of ways we can honor and obey our parents.

1. Stay away from difficult circumstances.
2. Be good stewards with the money they let us have for movies and nights out.
3. Keep them updated about our relationships and whereabouts.
4. Give it our best effort in our studies.
5. Ask them to pray with you.
6. Listen to them when they give us instruction.
7. Do things for them without asking.
8. Grow in our relationship with God.

Why would Paul tell slaves to obey their masters (6:5-8)? I thought slavery was wrong.

Keep in mind that the slavery in the first and second centuries was different than those in the 19-20th centuries. Slavery is wrong but in New Testament times it was different. Paul goes from wives and husbands to children to slavery. These were probably household slaves and not the slaves that we in chains in a prison somewhere. These were probably treated very well and looked upon highly. The text does indicate that maybe some were mistreated (“threatening” in verse 9) but Paul implies that such treatment was unacceptable.
How is the golden rule applicable in submission (6:8)?

Whether you are a slave or not, submitting to someone is something that is done to help them but such is a desire for all of us. We too want respect and love and so by submission we allow ourselves to love and be loved. It is not obligatory but something we do because Christ did so for us. Whether we are sons, daughters, wives or husbands we submit to one another to set an example.

“You can get everything in life you want if you will just help enough other people get what they want.”

Zig Ziglar, “Secrets of Closing the Sale”
COOL DOWN

(This is the section where you come to a close and bring it all home) – 5 minutes

Have everyone look at their clay and ask them this: “What would this piece of clay look like if God formed it?” Probably a lot better. Tell them to allow God to shape their lives instead of them trying to shape their own lives.

“O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? Declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.” (Jer. 18:6).
Lesson #11: We are Warriors in Christ (6:10-20)

I remember watching the movie Braveheart for the first time when I was a freshman in high-school. It was a three-hour long epic portraying the life of Scottish hero William Wallace. Wallace was a Scottish knight and landowner who was frustrated with the way the English treated his people. He led a revolt and, for the first time in centuries, defeated the English at the Battle of Stirling Bridge. Who do you think about when you think of a soldier in battle? My father-in-law was a drill sergeant for the U.S. Army Rangers which is one of the most elite Special Forces units in the world. He is quick to tell me that a soldier is only as good as the equipment he or she carries. For William Wallace his weapon of choice was the massive claymore which is reported to be up to 55 inches in length (almost 5 feet!). For my father-in-law it was the standard issued M-16A2 Rifle. But what about Christians? Are we warriors as well? Sometimes we have weapons for offense but sometimes we have things that protect in defense.

I am scared that few of us are training ourselves to fight against the opposing forces of evil. We train for football, we train for band, we train for work, we train for college, we do all this training for things in our walk of life but we wonder why we give in to temptation so easily. I will tell you why, we are not training ourselves to be warriors!!! So what about you? Are you willing to train yourselves knowing that your identity in Christ means you must be a warrior? Read on as we learn what it takes to be a soldier for Christ.
WARM UP

(This is the section that introduces the lesson) – 5-10 minutes.

Supplies Needed:
- Balloons
- Straight pins
- Duct Tape
- Plutonium (Just Kidding 😊)

This illustration may take more time so try to balance this with the main part of your lesson. Be sure to try this at home before you do it in class otherwise the illustration may flop.

Give each teenager a balloon and a straight pin (Caution...warn them about horseplay). Have kids blow up their balloons as large as they can without popping and then tie them. Instruct them to cover one-half of their balloons in duct tape.

Say: “Having the right gear helps us when sin comes poking itself into our lives!” Have them stab their straight pins (only once) through the duct tape into the balloons. The balloon should slowly leak. Then, move quickly to the next step. Say: “When we do not have the right gear, sin can damage us and even destroy us.” Have them stab the other side of the balloon with no duct tape on it.

Ask these questions for discussion:

How does this object lesson illustrate the Christian journey?

What did this lesson teach you about sin and salvation?

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WORK OUT

(THE HEART OF THE LESSON WHERE MOST DISCUSSION WILL BE HELD) - 20-25 MINUTES.

Ephesians 6:10-20  10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. 14 Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, 15 and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. 16 In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; 17 and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

READING THE VERSES MAKES ME WANT TO BREAK OUT IN THE OLD CHARLES WESLEY HYMN, “SOLDIERS OF CHRIST ARISE.”  THIS IS A REAL CHARGE FOR CHRISTIANS AND IS SO APPROPRIATE FOR PAUL TO BRING HIS LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS TO A CLOSE.  BUT WE ARE NOT DONE YET...

GIVE SOME REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD BE STRONG IN THE LORD AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT (VERSE 10)?

The word used in 6:10 to “be strong” also means to empower. It is the same word Paul used in Philippians 4:13 when he said, “I can do all things through the one who strengthens me.” Notice that Paul is not asking us to be strong by ourselves rather he is telling us to be strong in God’s strength. Why do we need to be strong? 1) To grow closer to God through a living an active relationship. Why does a mother muster up so much strength to go through a painful process as in giving birth to her
children? Because the goal is a relationship with that child much like it takes strength to have a relationship with God. (2) To endure the hardships of this world. Sickness, calamity, wars, genocide, perversion and oppression all cannot be defeated with the strength of dedicated Christians. (3) To withstand evil. Jump to the next question.

What are some “schemes” the devil uses to infiltrate Christian teenagers (verse 11)?

First of all, it scares me to think the Devil has certain methods to his madness. One needs to look no further than Genesis 3, Job 1-2 and Matthew 4:1-10 to see that he methodically plans to destroy people. He schemes teenage women into thinking they have to wear low-cut shirts or tight form-fitting clothes (like spandex) in order to be accepted. He schemes teenage men into thinking that pornography is an accepted form of entertainment that most guys should view. He schemes teenagers into believing that it is ok to engage in sexual activity before marriage because, “everyone else is doing it.” He schemes people into believing that the Word of God is just an ordinary document that holds no more authority than the United States Constitution.

The myth about the Devil is that he does not really exist. That is exactly what he wants teenagers to believe,
Read verse 12 again. What's your reaction to Paul when he says we are “wrestling” against rulers, authorities, cosmic powers in this present darkness and spiritual forces of evil?

A lot of uncertainty lies in the meaning of this verse. Suffice it to say that Paul is not giving different classes of demons or spiritual opponents rather all of those mentioned in verse 12 works on the same side as the Devil. All are minions of the huge demonic scheme to thwart the powers of Christianity. Truly this is a battle of life and death with a struggle on both sides to gain victory. However, according to Eph. 1:20-21, Christ has dominion (i.e. “control”) over the powers and principalities. So whoever (or whatever) Paul is talking about it cannot be emphasized enough that God still has power over these evil forces. But that is our struggle today as we fight temptation, sin and evil injustices of this world we must keep in mind that our fight is a spiritual fight. We do not wrestle against flesh and blood.
From the six spiritual weapons in verses 14-18 (truth, righteousness, readiness, faith, salvation and the Word of God) which of these do you find yourself using the most? Why?

Personally, I tend to trust in the “Sword of the Spirit” more than I do anything. I intentionally look to Scripture as my guide and my rock. So many things are addressed by Scripture and it seems that Scripture is the life-giver of all things. Like Richard Foster said in his book Life with God:

“Our practice of Spiritual Disciplines is kept on course by our immersion in Scripture. And so it is, we come to see, that this reading and studying and memorizing and meditating is totally in the service of “the life that really is life” (p. 9; citing 1 Tim. 6:19).

Which of these do you find yourself using the least? Why?

Probably the “sandals of readiness.” The word for readiness means “preparation.” I find myself losing in my spirituality because I feel so ill-prepared. Because of my own laziness I do not prepare for things like I

“Failure is not our only punishment for laziness; there is also the success of others.”

Jules Renard

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should. Most of the time the Devil gets into my life at the points where I have the least amount of preparation (1 Pet. 5:8).

When was a time you were not fully ready for a spiritual battle?

Please be open and honest about this. Some disclosure about your spiritual struggles would help but also make sure that you do not let everything out. Write your story below so you can tell others about it.

What are some spiritual battles you see around you?

I see the media being the number one infiltrator of our spirituality. We are fools if we think we are not influenced at all by the media. Each day it is a struggle to try to subvert the false message society feeds us via the media. Relationships can also hinder our spirituality just as much as it can influence it. Our friendships and the people we associate all factor in and help to determine our relationship with God.
What are some ways you can “put the whole armor of God on” and respond to these spiritual battles?

Write these on the board. Make sure they are concrete ways to help the spiritual battles. Talk about making a game plan and executing the game plan.

“Go ahead as you waste your days with thinking
When you fall everyone stands
Another day and you’ve had your fill of sinking
With the life held in your...
    Hands are shaking cold
These hands are meant to hold

Speak to me, when all you got to keep is strong
Move along, move along like I know ya do
And even when your hope is gone
Move along, move along just to make it through
    move along”

“Move Along,” The All-American Rejects
COOL DOWN

(THE IS THE SECTION WHERE YOU COME TO A CLOSE AND BRING IT ALL HOME) - 5 MINUTES

READ THIS STORY:

The only way to ship fresh North Atlantic cod from Boston to San Francisco during the nineteenth century was to sail around the South American continent. That trip took months, so, as you can imagine, the first attempts to dress the cod in Boston and pack it in ice failed miserably. The fish was inedible when it got to California. In the next attempt, the cod were placed in holding tanks full of water, shipped to California alive, and dressed there. The results were also less than satisfactory. The fish didn’t get much exercise during the trip, so they were pasty and relatively tasteless. Finally, someone suggested, “Why don’t we put some catfish in with the cod?” That wasn’t such a wild idea, since catfish are the natural enemy of cod. Sure enough, when a few catfish were placed in the tanks with them, the cod kept swimming to stay out of eating range. When they reached San Francisco, they were in perfect shape.

— BILL MYERS AND DAVID WIMBISH, The Dark Side of the Supernatural (Bethany, 1999)

Have you ever wondered why the Devil exists anyways? Maybe the Devil is here to test us to see if we genuinely love God (2 Cor. 13:5). All the more reason to become a WARRIOR!!!
Lesson #12: We are Beloved in Christ (6:21-24)

One of the most anticipated days of the school year is the last day of school. Teachers went through the motions as the students knew that the only purpose of going to school that day was to sit and watch the little hand rest on the “3” and the big hand rest on the “12” to let us know that it was time to leave. One year sticks out to me and that was my 8th Grade year at Hightower Trail Middle School in Marietta, Georgia. The last day of school was also memorable because teachers would hand out the much-anticipated yearbooks. They would give us the last 2 hours of school and let us roam the halls signing each other’s yearbooks. I looked forward to it because it was the only time I would get to talk to the pretty girls and ask them to sign my yearbook (I have matured 😊). I moved that summer to Chattanooga and most of those people I have never seen nor talked to since. I still have my yearbook and I want to share some of the last things people ever said to me:

Tressa: “It was fun being your friend this year. I will miss you over the summer. See you next year.”

Lauren: “You seem very nice.”

Lance: “Captain to Spock...Captain to Spock. Spock reads loud and clear!”
Mrs. Kraatz: “I shall never forget you. Maybe it’s because I called out your name so many times this year. Really, you have great potential. Keep a lid on your behavior and you’ll do great.”

Tyler: “You are a very nice person. I think you should have stopped the arguing in P.E. Visit me sometime.”

Katie: “I’m sorry for all the things I’ve done to make you mad. You are one of the sweetest people I know, don’t ever change. I’m going to miss you a lot this summer so we need to keep in touch. I’ll never forget you. Stay sweet. I love you.”

Those are five people I have not seen or talked to in 14 years. It makes you think that the last thing I say to someone should be very important. We have come to a close on Paul’s letter to the Ephesians but he closes in a very unique way. Paul informs the Ephesians that whatever may happen he wants them to know something very important. Do you want to know what that is? Read on.

WARM UP

(This is the section that introduces the lesson) — 5-10 minutes.

Make sure everyone has a writing utensil before you begin with this opener. Instruct the students to pick out a friend, a parent or someone really close to them. Then say this: “What if that person had cancer or, maybe their parents has a job transfer and they had to move. If you had to write them just a few sentences to encourage them what would you say? What are some of the last things you would want this person to know?” Give them about 6 minutes or so to brainstorm and
Actually write some of them down. Ask for volunteers to read theirs.

Ask these questions:

Was this exercise difficult? Why or why not?

What are some of the reasons you have for what was written? In other words, why did you write what you wrote?

WORK OUT

(This is the heart of the lesson where most discussion will be held) – 20-25 minutes.

Ephesians 6:21-24  
21 So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. 22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts. 23 Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.

Looking at the verses above it is clear Paul’s intention is to let the Ephesians know how much they are loved.

Consider this in a paraphrase: “Tychicus, my good friend here, will tell you what I’m doing and how things are going with me. He is certainly a dependable servant of the Master! I’ve sent him not only to tell you about us but to cheer you on in your faith. Good-bye, friends. Love mixed with faith be yours from God the Father and from the Master, Jesus Christ. Pure grace and nothing but grace be with all who love our Master, Jesus Christ.”

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In what ways do you need to be a Tychicus?

He was described as a faithful minister. What a good title to have for someone. Say one of your friends were to give a report on who you were and they were to come up with one adjective. What would that adjective be? Sloppy? Funny? Sweet? Cute? What about faithful? When I look at characteristics of my closest friends, one thing that I value more than others is faithfulness. Faithfulness means dedication and when we decide to put on God in baptism that means we dedicated ourselves to bear the cross of Christ. The word for minister means we are special servants for the cause of Christ.

But Tychicus was more than a minister to Paul... he was Paul’s friend. The Scriptures said he was a “beloved brother.” You could literally translate this, “the dearest brother.” How many of us have someone so close that you would say they are beloved? We need to let our guard down to allow others to love us but also we must love others as well. To be a Tychicus means we must allow ourselves to become vulnerable to brothers and sisters in Christ by serving each other.

What was the purpose of Tychicus’ visit?

He was to tell of Paul’s status but something catches my eye more than anything. Paul says, “that he may encourage your hearts.” Barnabas was known as the son of “encouragement” (Acts 4:36) but here we see someone else whose characteristic is encouragement. He was beloved by
Paul and that is clearly why Paul trusted him to help the brethren. Paul just did not choose someone randomly to help the brethren as he was very methodical in whom he chose to help them. He probably chose Tychicus because Paul experienced firsthand what true encouragement was like. But aren’t we supposed to be about encouraging people everywhere we go? The Ephesians clearly were in a situation where they needed encouragement and there are so many people in this world who need encouragement. What does encouragement mean? To place courage within people! To give them the fight to live. To bring them up when they fall down. We all need courage to get through the days. “And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.” (1 Thess. 5:14).

What does Paul mean when he says “peace be with you” (Verse 23)?

Probably because it is one of the dominating themes in the book of Ephesians (2:14-18). But also this would be characteristic of Paul who was formerly a Jew in which they would wish each other well by saying, “Shalom” (Hebrew for peace). What is so special about peace? Peace is not necessarily the absence of conflict but it is more about a state of mind. He is essentially saying that no matter what happens or what may come I wish you peace.
Why is peace such an endearing quality to achieve? “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matt. 5:9). That is pretty clear-cut to me. To make peace and to strive for peace means we are, in some capacity, loving each other by making peace. Romans 5:1 says since we have been justified by faith only then do we have peace with God. Ask them to look at Romans 12:18. What does that say about our efforts towards peace? In Ephesians 6:15 we are supposed to have the shoes of readiness for the gospel of peace. Encourage them to look up how many times the word “peace” occurs in the Scriptures and then study those verses. It is a dominant theme.

Where does our love come from according to verse 23? Why is that important?

From God and Christ? Because it is not our own? We love, because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). That simple! By loving others we transfer the divine decree given to us in Matthew 22:39-41. It is our love that lets other people know who we are (John 13:35). God being the source of love knows how to minister to others in the pain and desperate cries of their hurt and anguish. We cannot minister to people without loving them. That means when the Scriptures says that God loves all people (1 John 4:1-12) we too must love all people. Love comes from the Master and then we transfer that love to each other.
How is love incorruptible and why is that noteworthy to you?

This may be the appropriate time to read 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. In this passage Paul proclaims why love is the redeeming quality that will never perish. The word for “incorruptible” (NIV “undying”) literally means “immortal.” The love with which Paul loved the Ephesians was a love that was immortal. Paul knew that even if they were separated that the love between them would last beyond the grave. “For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Death is not the end of love...oh no...it is only the beginning to a life where there is no end.

The very last thing he wanted the Ephesians to know was that no matter what...he loved them. Maybe this was why John on the island of Patmos recorded the words of Jesus who stated that the Ephesian church had left their first love (Rev. 2:4). Who knows? Regardless incorruptible love is what God has granted to those who live and walk faithfully after him.
COOL DOWN

(This is the section where you come to a close and bring it all home) – 5 minutes

Ask them to look at what they wrote at the beginning of class. Then instruct them to somehow tell this person how much you care about them. Ask them to tell their parents how much they love and appreciate them. The point is to be concerned about the last thing we say to someone and to make sure people know about the love we have for them.