

LANTERN TEACHING SERIES: AUTUMN 2019

A Study on Ephesians



'A family of God, sharing his heart to **reach** the lost,
grow the found, and **transform** our communities'

The **Lantern**

AN INTRODUCTION TO THIS SERIES

Ephesians is a stunning book of the bible, it's been called 'the Queen of the Epistles'. It's hard to read it as a Christian and not be moved to wonder and worship again at Jesus. But it doesn't leave you in awe, it moves you to action, challenging every area of your life. It's a remarkably concise articulation of the gospel and it's life-giving, church-envisioning, community-transforming impact. It gives God's vision for a new humanity, a new society, purposed by God in eternity and destined for eternity with him. A new humanity founded on and united by Jesus' saving love and called to lives of love in all of our relationships, at home, in church and at the workplace - even in prison - wherever God has placed us! The mandate for God's family is nothing less than to see the love of Jesus impact every area of life and our community.

John Mackay, former President of Princeton Theological Seminary, said this about reading Ephesians as a teenager, *'I saw a new world ... Everything was new ... I had a new outlook, new experiences, new attitudes to other people. I loved God. Jesus Christ became the centre of everything ... I had been 'quickenened'; I was really alive.'*

Ephesians speaks to our original created purpose for relationship with God and brings us to life. It might be the book that awakens faith for you. And Paul's letter also reminds the Christian of their identity in Christ as well as bringing personal challenges to holy living. As citizens of the world it speaks to all our relationships and how they are to bring glory to God. As a nation being rocked by 'Brexit' and the divisions in our society, Ephesians has a powerful message on unity - a message that speaks to the global and national church as well of course.

Ephesians also speaks with piercing insight into the spiritual battles we face in this world. It's a letter that invites disciples and churches to have their eyes enlightened and envisioned, their hearts expanded, their spirits inspired and their lives empowered and 'armoured' by Christ.

Finally, it's a book that is timely for us in helping us to ground in biblical authority the kingdom values that help form our particular vision to be "a family of God sharing his heart to reach the lost, grow the found and transform our communities."

Do make time to read it, make use of these notes, reflect personally, discuss in life groups and apply it to your lives. There are also some accompanying daily bible readings if that is of help through the *Made for More Devotional* PDF.



WEEK 1: ephesians 1

DIG DEEPER:

READ: Ephesians 1 (if not the whole book as we start the series!) and look at week 1 daily devotionals from 'Made for More' each day for even more...

TRUTH: *The church is God's vision to reach every part of our community.*

INTRO: We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms **because of Christ**, we have been united **with Christ**, chosen **in Christ**, adopted **through Christ** and at the right time everything will be bought together **under Christ**. Christ Jesus paid a high price, in order that we might become part of God's holy people, the family of God. We are adopted, chosen, redeemed, lavished with the riches of God's grace **all because of Jesus Christ**. This is all a gift of God's grace, a blessing - no effort required, we just receive the gifts that have been paid for.

'God is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.' (Ephesians 1:7-8)

This is all amazing, but we see in Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, that there's even more we can receive! We were made for more! He prays that they would receive wisdom and revelation, that they might know the Father better, that their hearts would be flooded with light, that they might know the hope to which they have been called and that they might know the incomparably great power accessible for all who believe, the same power that raised Christ from the dead!

As disciples of Jesus, we can **pray** as Paul did, **preach** truth over ourselves as he did, live a life of **praise** to the glory of God as he did, and as a church, **play our part** in reaching every corner of our community with the 'fullness of Christ' (v.21). Let's pray that we might know the Father better, so that we, as those found in Jesus can grow in the fullness of all he's created us for. Let's pray that we might know more confidently the hope to which we have been called, as we go and share this hope with the lost. Let's pray that we would know the incomparable power we have through Jesus, as we seek to see transformation and lives changed for the praise and glory of God.

'Rob Wegner, teaching pastor at Westside Family Church in Kansas City, says "As the Church, we should be obsessed with Jesus growing ever-larger in our minds and hearts."' (Erika Rizkallah, Made for More)

REFLECT: (no one's looking, try to be honest with yourself and God!)

- How forgiven do you truly feel? () *Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the most and 1 being the least...*
- Paul sounds 'obsessed with Jesus', doesn't he? How 'obsessed' do you think you are!?()
- How 'secure' does your life feel at the moment? ()
- How much do you feel you know who you are in Christ and what he has called you to in this season of your life? ()

DISCUSS:

1. Do you feel like you understand this passage? What truth blows your mind the most from this passage? What do you find hard to understand?
2. Paul says in Eph. 1:3 that we have been blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. What do you think it means to be blessed in the heavenly realms and how should that effect the way we live in the physical realm?
3. Eph. 1:13-14 explains that when we believe in Jesus, he identifies us as his own by giving us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that he's purchased us to be his own people, so we might praise and glorify him. How easy do you find it to identify with that and to stand out as people carrying the Holy Spirit in everyday life?

'Discipleship is an ongoing, ever-evolving process. "Shift work" is about making critical changes towards spiritual growth. We continually mature in Christ and as we do, our old self - our natural sin filled self - sloughs off.'

'Deep breath. Don't be discouraged! These shifts don't happen overnight.'
(Erika Rizkallah. *Made for More*)

SHIFT/APPLY: FROM MORE EFFORT TO MORE JESUS

REACH: When was the last time you took a chance and invited someone to Church, or perhaps to *The First Supper* or *Alpha* (starts on 25th Sept!)? It's not your job to get them to say 'yes', but it might be that God longs to use you to extend these amazing truths and the grace, hope and power on offer in Jesus. Never lose hope for the people God has put around you to find that hope, and pray God will use you for that?

GROW: How can we as a church work more from a place of resting in the amazing truths of the gospel and our identity in Jesus, than out of our own efforts and strength? How might we raise our eyes, become 'enlightened' more to the rich, lavish promises of God...? Remember that 'new set of gears' Mike spoke of... less 'effort', relying more on God's strength to go 'higher' and 'further'... what might that look like for you this term?

TRANSFORM: What could our community look like if Christ filled every part of our community through his church family (Eph. 1:23)? Pray and see if God puts a particular person or community need on your heart - how might God be calling you to make a difference? Pray for Spirit-led opportunities, courage and fruitfulness as you step out in faith.

NOTES/DOODLES(!)/PRAYERS:



WEEK 2: ephesians 2

DIG DEEPER:

READ: Ephesians 2 and look at week 2 daily devotionals from 'Made for More'

TRUTH: *Every follower of Jesus is a masterpiece of God.*

INTRO: Paul begins this chapter by reminding the Ephesians of their past. I don't believe Paul's intention here is to make them look back feel bad, I believe he's using this to make them look back and think WOW. To emphasis again the incomparable riches of God's grace, freely given to us through Jesus. They were dead in there sins, we were dead in our sins, completely lost and in need of resurrection, then comes this beautiful word in verse 4: **'But'**

*'But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much,
that he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead.*

(It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)' (Ephesians 2:4-5)

We were dead **but now** we're alive, we were lost **but now** we're found, we were living in sin **but now** we live in the power of the Spirit. This is nothing to do with who we are are what we've done, **but** because of God's richness we have been saved through Christ.

'You can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus.' (Ephesians 2:8-10)

We were dead in our sins **but now** we are masterpieces. Verse 13 says 'Once you were far away from God, **but now** you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.' How amazing is this grace?!?

This grace not only brings life, but Paul explains how it also brings a radical unity based *in* Jesus. Christ reconciled Jew and Gentile together as one giant global (and local) family of God *in* Jesus. We were excluded and apart from Christ **but now** members of the family of God, masterpieces, carefully joined together *in* Jesus to become a dwelling place for God's spirit here on earth! A family on mission: carrying God's Spirit to the world, through the power we have received *in* Jesus.

'Perhaps nothing testifies to Christ's presence more exquisitely than a willing assemblage of mismatched pieces grouted together by grace and grounded in love... In the Church of Jesus Christ, pieces fit because they're in the same hand, not because they have smooth edges.' (Beth Moore, The Quest)

REFLECT: (no one's looking, try to be honest with yourself and God!)

- Eph. 2:10 says 'We are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.'

How easy do you find it to believe the truth that you are God's masterpiece? ()

Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the most and 1 being the least...

If you're feeling brave, this might be a good thing to discuss in Life Group this week...

- How divided do you think we are as a society nowadays? ()
- What about within church? You could think global and/or local ()
How do you think that makes God feel? How should we respond?

- How easy or hard is it to be united within our church family? ()

Talk to God about why or why not. What are the causes of division, or unity?

Perhaps pray a blessing for those you struggle with and thank him for those who have been a help to you and your faith journey.

DISCUSS:

1. Paul reminds the church in Ephesus of their past in order to highlight what God has bought them from and into. Do a little study of the language and parallels he uses to describe the 'before and after' of Jesus... what metaphor jumps out to you? (eg v.1&5, 11-13, 14-18, 19)

Are there any specific examples you can share from your own life where, because of God's goodness and grace you can look back at what he's done in you or for you and say '**but now**'?

2. How does it make you feel to think of your family, friends and colleagues who don't know Jesus as 'the lost' and who are according to this passage, "separate... excluded... foreigners... without hope and without God in the world" (v.12)?

3. Jesus is the master craftsman and has created each one of us a **unique masterpiece**. We are responsible for discovering the unique gifts and skills He has given us for this purpose - they will likely form part of our unique calling. Spend some time sharing with one another the unique qualities and gifts you see in one another and how you see God using those for His glory.

This is not a time for 'false-modesty' and definitely a time to be as un-British as possible and be outrageously honest and affirming of one-another!

4. Eph. 2:19-22 explains that we are now part of God's family, a holy temple for the Lord, a dwelling place for God's spirit. What does this mean? And how should this truth change the way we live?

5. Like last week, this is **all about Jesus**, look back at the passage and pick out all the things you can praise Jesus for, in who he is and what he has achieved for us.

SHIFT/APPLY: FROM MORE VOLUNTEERS TO MORE MASTERPIECES

REACH: People who are 'lost' don't understand what it means to be spiritually dead because they don't know the One who gives life. How could our 'but now' stories help in reaching these people? When was the last time you asked someone, looking for a bit more depth, "what's your story?" What would you say if they asked the same question back?

Try and think of maybe 3 people this term who you could prayerfully and intentionally create the opportunity to hear their 'story' and share yours... for some that might be easy, for others the very thought is terrifying! Pray for each other in Life Group! Perhaps name the names and look back together at the end of the term... and pray again, or for more people!

GROW: Do you feel like you know a bit about your unique gifting and calling in Christ? What could you do to dig deeper into that? Because the bible suggests it is where you'll find your ultimate purpose and therefore joy in life...! Perhaps you know something of it already, but its been lost in the business of life... how could you reprioritise?

Rick Warren first started talking about this as someone's SHAPE - their unique mix of: Spiritual Gifting; Heart (passions); Abilities; Personality; Experiences... it's one way you might find helpful to begin to dig deeper on this, you could try our this online text as a Life Group: <https://www.freeshapetest.com>

How can we as a church family encourage one another, to not just serve, but to really thrive in our unique gifts, investigating our personal callings to a one-of-a-kind Masterpiece Mission?

TRANSFORM: How can we begin to make Jesus the cornerstone, not just of our church life, but the cornerstone of our community life?

Why not throw some kind of party or event this term that brings together your church and non-church friends, just to have fun together and pray God might use that fellowship, ultimately to bring them also to unity in Jesus... Perhaps this could be a creative way for your group to use the week after Sun 13th Oct, when it's an all-age, and there are no specific life group notes!?!?

NOTES/DOODLES(!)/PRAYERS:



WEEK 3: ephesians 3

DIG DEEPER:

READ: Ephesians 3 and look at week 3 daily devotionals from 'Made for More'

TRUTH: *Our primary motivation is love.*

INTRO: Ephesians 3 starts with Paul praying for the church in Ephesus, however he quickly interrupts himself to explain to them his role in proclaiming the mystery of Jesus, and all that this mystery means for both Jews and Gentiles as co-heirs of this rich inheritance. Pauls says:

'Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ.' (Ephesians 3:8)

We see such gratitude and humility in Paul, that God would use him to share this mystery! Paul understands he is totally undeserving, but because of God's love and grace we are all free to boldly and confidently come into God's presence. It's interesting how when we encounter God's amazing love and perfect grace there is no other way to respond than in complete humility and thanksgiving, there's no room for guilt or shame. We too are totally undeserving of God's grace but what a privilege that God loves us so much, we not only can freely come to Him, but He has also chosen us to partner with Him in sharing the Good New of Jesus.

'Our motivation for every aspect of discipleship must be rooted and grounded in the same infinite love Jesus has for us. Like He was sent to us, we are also "sent" to others.' (Erika Rizkallah, Made for More)

After his little side track Paul continues in prayer in verse 14. He prays that the church in Ephesus would understand and experience the fullness of this love he has experienced and been transformed by. That Christ would make his home in their hearts (what a lovely phrase in v.17). That they too would be made complete with the fullness of life that comes from God. That they would be rooted and established in love!

I believe Pauls prays all this because he knows that it is only by **God's love** we are saved, it's only when we encounter **God's love** we are transformed and it is only **God's love** that will rightly inspire and empower us in sharing the good news of Jesus.

What a beautiful prayer that we can use to pray for our church, for our friends and family outside of church and for our community! We can pray this with confidence as we trust that God will do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine (v.20)!

REFLECT: (no one's looking, try to be honest with yourself and God!)

- Do you feel that you can come boldly and confidently into the presence of God? If not, spend some time asking God to help you identify and remove any guilt or shame you may feel and to replace that with confidence and boldness.
- In your Christian life, do you feel like you most often act from a place of obligation or from a place of the overflow of God's love? Are you trying to 'repay' him, or 'enjoy' and 'worship' him?
- Paul falls to his knees when he thinks of God's goodness and grace to him! Spend some time thanking God for where he has been good and gracious to you in your life.

DISCUSS:

1. Paul is writing this letter from prison, literally, but what in v.1 shows that he sees his imprisonment differently? (see also chapter 4:1) If God can use even those circumstances 'for the sake of the lost/Gentiles', then think a bit about your 'networks and neighbourhoods', or the current circumstances of your life... In those, can you discern the purposes of God?

'Author Michael Frost says, "We are mobilised to fill everything everywhere with the fullness of Jesus. The resurrected Christ reminds us there is no place where we are not sent!"' (Erika Rizkallah, Made for More)

2. What does it mean to be a 'servant of the gospel' (v.7) - would you describe yourself in that way? Is that for all, or just some people?
3. In verse 10 Paul explains that it was always God's purpose to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. What do you think this means?
4. Share as a group times when you have seen God do 'immeasurably more' than you could have ever asked or imagined (v.20).

SHIFT/APPLY: FROM MORE GUILT TO MORE LOVE

REACH: If God's love is boundless and He has "sent" us to go out into the world to make disciples, what do you think holds us back? *Name any fears or other barriers, how could you together, prayerfully and practically overcome those for Christ?*

Pray for your '3' from last week...

GROW: How does understanding and experiencing God's love make a difference to the way you serve or even where you serve?

How can we ensure as God's children, that we stay in a place of abiding in Jesus and in his love and not slipping into doing things out of obligation?

TRANSFORM: What creative ways could you think of to bless our community in such a way that they might understand more of how wide, long, high and deep God's love is for them? Is there a person or need that the Lantern Love Fund might be able to bless? Let a member of the team know if so...

NOTES/DOODLES(!)/PRAYERS:

WEEK 4: ephesians 4



DIG DEEPER:

READ: Ephesians 4 and look at week 4 daily devotionals from 'Made for More'

TRUTH: *We are equipped and deployed to be everyday missionaries.*

INTRO: In chapter 4 Paul begins to move from 'doctrine' to 'practice', urging, in this chapter, the Church to work hard at unity (v.3ff) and holiness (v.17ff). You see, all these amazing truths should transform us, our relationships as 'family', and hence our community too. Not because he wants to see a nice cushty church all holding holds and getting on, but Paul understands that good relationships and unity is what we have been called to and it's a witness ultimately to the uniting work of Jesus - his peace (eg. Eph 3:14). Paul longs to see a church of people leading holy and mature-in-faith lives worthy of their callings, walking with one another in humility and gentleness, patience and love, making every effort to be united in the Spirit, bound together by peace.

Paul explains we have been called to **one** body, **one** spirit, **one** hope, **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God, **one** Father. That's a lot we have in common! However whilst we do have all this in common, God has equipped each of us special gifts, different gifts. No gift better than another, they are all to be used to equip God's family and to build up the body. We are called to use our different gifts in unity:

'Growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of the body, the Church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does it's own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.' (Ephesians 4:15-16)

Paul then instructs the Church that not only for their unity should look different, but also their everyday lives (v.17ff). We are to live differently from those who are 'lost', from those who wander far from the life God gives. We are to throw off our old sinful nature and allow the Spirit to renew our thoughts and attitudes, as we put on our new nature, created to be like God - truly righteous and holy. The body of Christ should look like Christ.

'In the Church, as in life, we can create and encounter problems because we're so busy working for Jesus that we forget to be like Jesus? Our calling is a high and holy one. To walk in a way worthy of that calling, we must walk in the way of Christ.' (Erika Rizkallah, Made for More)

REFLECT: (no one's looking, try to be honest with yourself and God!)

- You are gifted by God! And not just at knitting, administration, making a fantastic cuppa, cake or curry...or being able to lick your nose with your tongue... List a few of your *spiritual gifts* (as well as your best curry/cake recipe to give to Mike & Beth!)
- Paul lists some of the areas of gifting and ministry Christ gave to the church in Eph. 4:11 'apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers' (APEST) - which ministry strength(s) do you think best describe you? *If you want some help, why not try out the online survey here (<http://www.fivefoldsurvey.com>), and the descriptions of the different APEST roles afterwards.*
- Do you ever associate, if you're honest, with the 'infant' in v.14? Where do you need to grow? How can we, as the church, or in your Life Group, help?
- What areas of your life do you think you need to invite the Spirit into in order to see a renewal of unhealthy thoughts and attitudes? As you read vv.17-32, are there any areas of your life that might 'grieve the Holy Spirit' (v.30)? Ask God for his forgiveness and the Spirit to continue to work and empower you to live more like Jesus.

DISCUSS:

1. In Ephesians 4:4-6, Paul lists all that we as a Church family have in common. When we do share in so much, why do you think it can often be hard to work at unity with one another?
2. When you look at the 'APEST' areas of ministry/gifting, who do you think of that emulates them? What about the people in your Life Group? Here is another webpage that gives them a description if it helps:
<https://www.theforgottenways.org/what-is-apest.aspx>
3. Read through and pick out some of the really practical wisdom/challenge of vv. 17-32... like 'don't let the sun go down while you are still angry' (v.26) What ones do you particularly struggle with?
4. What do you think Paul means in Eph. 4:23 by '*let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes*' and how can we do this?
5. Can you share with one another a time when simply by acting or speaking differently to those around you, you have seen God impact others through you?

SHIFT/APPLY: FROM MORE HIERARCHY TO MORE MISSIONARIES

REACH: Why is it important to the world around us, that we as the body of Christ work hard at unity? Pray for areas of 'division' and 'conflict' in the world - are there any areas, causes or people groups that you feel particularly drawn to pray for?

GROW: What do you think a 'spiritually mature' Christian looks like? What about a 'spiritually mature' church? Perhaps draw the outline of a person, or a church building, and fill it with your answers... where can you grow? Where can we as a church grow?

TRANSFORM: How can we live differently within our community in a way that will challenge people with the reality of a Jesus-lifestyle? Is there one area of the way you relate to others that could be further transformed?

Most of the sins Paul urges the Church to stay away from in Ephesians 4:25-31 are those that destroy harmony in human relationships. What does that say to you about God's plan to use the Church to share the Good News?

NOTES/DOODLES(!)/PRAYERS:



WEEK 5: ephesians 5

DIG DEEPER:

READ: Ephesians 5 and look at week 5 daily devotionals from 'Made for More'

TRUTH: *Our primary mission field is outside the walls of our church.*

INTRO: *'Imitate God, therefore in everything you do, because you are his dear children. Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ.'* (Ephesians 5:1-2)

The chapter begins with an imperative verb, "Imitate God," which follows what has come before, "therefore"... This gospel of hope, grace and love is not to 'keep to Sundays' or 'to ourselves' as some in society would ask... it's to change every part of our hearts and lives. What difference does this gospel make to me, to my relationships, my work and career? What is the example of Christ that Paul is asking the church to follow? Well, Christ lived a life of love, light and of perfect submission to a perfect God (vv.1-2). Here Paul applies this example to a few practical areas of life:

- personal holiness once again (vv.3-20);
- in marriage relationships - *in a beautiful but often misunderstood passage* (vv.21-33)
- in parenting and even workplace relationships, serving our 'bosses' (6:1-9)

'Our lives contain nooks and crannies—pockets of time, spaces and seasons ordained for each one of us. Paul warned his readers to be very careful and pay attention to the way they lived their lives. He urges us to wisely use the time given to us, to avoid foolish pursuits, and to live for Christ.' (Erika Rizkallah, Made for More)

We've all have been given mission fields, places to serve God and His children outside of just our Sunday services. Our mission fields begin in our homes and most personal relationships. Husbands, love your wives. Wives, respect your husbands. This is just a really practical reflection in our everyday relationships of a lifestyle of love, honour, submission, unity. We find more relating to parenting at the start of chapter 6... Fathers, bring up your children with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord. If you are single, as Jesus was, as Paul was, then let the same attitude be reflected in all your relationships (see Philippians 2:1-11).

If you work, you have been given a fully-funded mission field in your work places. We are called to work with enthusiasm as though working for the Lord, respect and work to please those we work for and called to treat those who work for us in the same way, remembering that we have the same Master in heaven.

Our mission fields maybe the school gate, the playground, a sports club, the local pub, where ever they are we must follow Jesus' example, sacrificing our lives for a live that looks like His, living in a way that is pleasing to our God.

REFLECT: (no one's looking, try to be honest with yourself and God!)

- In Mark 24 we read the story of Mary breaking a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume over Jesus' head. What does it mean to you to pour your life out as a pleasing aroma to God? *If you're going to look at that passage too, perhaps light a scented candle one evening, so it permeates the whole space to help you meditate on it...*
- Read through the list of habits and characteristics in Ephesians 5. Which ones of these exist in your life now? Invite Jesus to bring his light into those areas where it's needed.
- What are the 'relationships' in your life that you could apply this week's teaching, in Eph 5:21-6:9?

DISCUSS:

1. It has been said that the main reason many people aren't attracted to church is because they don't really see the difference it makes to Christian's lives. Discuss!
2. Are there voices today that can "*deceive ... with empty words...*" (v.6)?
3. What do you think Paul means in Ephesians 5:16 when he says "*Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.*"?
4. Has there been a time when you've been very aware of the light that you're carrying? Or the 'darkness' around you? How difficult do you find it to live the Jesus-Lifestyle compared with the lifestyle other colleagues or friends might live? What reactions might you expect, perhaps some reminiscent of those in Mark 24?
5. What do you make of this application to marriage in vv.21-33? How does v.21 give a helpful foundation to the verses that follow? Why does Paul compare marriage to Christ and the church? How can verses like v.22 be misinterpreted in isolation? How are husbands to be like Christ? And how are wives to be like Christ?

SHIFT/APPLY: FROM MORE PROGRAMS TO MORE MISSION FIELDS

'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.' (Matthew 5:15-16)

REACH: If we truly believe what Jesus says, that we '*are the light of the world*' how should that effect our mission to reach the lost in the places God has put us?

GROW: How can we encourage and support one another in being lights in our individual mission fields?

In what ways can we challenge one another in not participating in the habits and characteristics listed in Ephesians 5, rather, encourage one another to continue being *'filled with the Holy Spirit, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs'* giving thanks to God in everything we do?

TRANSFORM: How do we challenge, transform and bring light to our culture, whilst staying away from and not participating in the things that are not pleasing to God?

What shifts might we need to make in order to engage more fully in being light bringers within our community?

NOTES/DOODLES(!)/PRAYERS:



WEEK 6: ephesians 6

DIG DEEPER:

READ: Ephesians 6 and look at week 6 daily devotionals from 'Made for More'

TRUTH: *We will face spiritual opposition when we seek to do things God's way.*

INTRO: Paul concludes this letter with a final word, urging the Ephesians to stand firm and fight against the powers of darkness and all the strategies of the devil. One key thing Paul reminds the Ephesians is that **we are not in a fight against flesh and blood**, but that this is a spiritual battle! Therefore we can not fight this fight with flesh and blood strategies, we need divine strategies. In Ephesians 6:11&13 Paul commands the Ephesians to put on **all** or **every piece of God's armour**:

'Put in every piece of God's armour so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm.' (Ephesians 6:13)

We are in a spiritual battle and we will face opposition if we are walking in the way of Christ. If we seek to live the way Paul has urged the Ephesians to live throughout the rest of his letter, then we can be sure opposition will come. **But** if we put on the armour we have been given through Jesus Christ and if we take up the weapons of the Spirit, the word of God and prayer, after the battle is done **we WILL be standing firm!**

As the family of God we are called to live differently on earth, as we've looked at in previous weeks: we've been empowered to walk in unity and love, in the confidence of who we are in Jesus and all he's done for us, called to live as children of the light, pouring our lives out as pleasing sacrifices to God. As the family of God we are called to live like Christ, the lamb of God, and just as he laid down his life as the lamb of sacrifice, we must surrender our lives and live as lambs on earth.

But in this chapter Paul is instructing us, that in the spiritual realms we are called to be lions! Walking in the authority of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, mighty warriors clothed God's armour, armed and prepared for battle!

We must stay alert, being persistent in our prayers, praying in the spirit at all times! Like Paul, God has assigned each one of us the task of preaching the good news, making disciples and to be God's ambassador's to transform our communities.

'So let's push fear aside and take comfort in Jesus' words in John as we go out to serve Him: 'I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid' (John 14:27).'
(Erika Rizkallah, Made for More)

REFLECT: (no one's looking, try to be honest with yourself and God!)

- In what way's do you see the Enemy's schemes play out in your own life?
- Do you feel clothed in God's armour, armed and prepared for battle? If not, go through each part of the armour and the weapon listed in Ephesians 6:10-18 and ask God to clothe and arm you.
- What is your natural response when you feel under attack and what could you shift in order to become more effective?

DISCUSS:

1. Is it easy to acknowledge that the battle we are in is not a flesh and blood battle, but a spiritual one? How do we 'stay alert' to the spiritual battle?
2. Jesus lived on earth and was sacrificed as a lamb, yet in the spiritual realm he is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, he carries ALL power and authority, conquering sin and death. What would it look like for us to live as lambs in the physical realm, yet be lions in the spiritual realm? And what difference would that have on the way we approach the battle?
3. What does it mean to '*pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion*' Ephesians 6:18?

SHIFT/APPLY: FROM MORE STRATEGY TO MORE SURRENDER

REACH:

'Upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.' (Matthew 16:18)

How does the truth that the powers of hell will **NOT** prevail against us, that we're on the winning side, armed and protected, effect the way we do mission?

How should the knowledge that we are in a spiritual battle change the way we seek to reach the lost?

GROW: What could we do to ensure we are preparing, equipping and empowering one another for spiritual warfare?

How do we regularly engage in the spiritual battle as lions, as more than conquerors, claiming ground for the kingdom of God and not just reacting from fear, only when we feel the enemy stealing our ground?

TRANSFORM: How do we, as the church, remain persistent in praying and fasting for transformation in our community?

What would it look like for us to use the weapons of the sword of the Spirit- the word of God and prayer to fight for our community?

NOTES/DOODLES(!)/PRAYERS:

FINAL REFLECTIONS:

- Reflect on your journey this term. How would you summarise the Paul's letter to the Ephesians?
- Has anything changed in your belief about yourself or God?
- If you were asked to share what difference God has made in your life through this term's teaching, what would you say?
- What is one thing you are going to shift in your own life in order to help reach the lost?
- What is one thing you are going to shift in your own life in order help to grow the found?
- What is one thing you are going to shift in your own life in order to help transform our community?