

Ice Breaker: (5 min)

When you count your blessings, what are the things at the top of your list?

Context and Series Emphasis: (10 min)

(Note to Leaders: If practical in your setting, watch The Bible Project - "Overview Ephesians" from 0:00 to 2:54 and/or consider these passages to answer the questions below.)

Introduction to Ephesians: (Read Ephesians 1:1-2)

Paul has heard of the faith and love of the Ephesians. He spent two year Ephesus and was responsible for establishing the Ephesian Church. Therefore, he was naturally concerned for their condition.

Paul experienced spiritual warfare in Ephesus when he built the church. (Stories found in Acts 19:11-20 and Acts 19:23-40.)

Question: What are gods or objects of worship to which we are drawn without being aware?

Sermon Emphasis: (30 min)

Opening Poem (Read Ephesians 1:3-14)

God's big story is to recruit you into his forever family by his death on the cross.

- Verse 3 tells us that we have been blessed by God in Christ with every spiritual blessing. What blessings does Paul include in Ephesians 1:4-14?
- What should be the result of these blessings? (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14)
- How can these blessings lead to worshiping and glorifying God's name?

**God doesn't just make the plan. He makes the plan work out in you.
(Ephesians 1:11-12) Satan is working to oppose God's will.**

- **From the sermon:** What three satanic messages of shame does the enemy use to convince you that God won't work it out in you?

The satanic message of shame can be described in three words:

- **Incompetent - You can't do it right.**
- **Insignificant - You won't amount to anything.**
- **Unimportant - You don't really matter.**
- What messages of shame do you see in your life?
- How does our hope in Christ protect us from these negative messages?
- In Ephesian 1:13-14 what are the truths in the message of Christ that counter the lies of the enemy?

Spiritual warfare is countering the devil's schemes by acting in the power of the Holy Spirit (the seal of God) with security, authenticity, a completed transaction and with His authority.

Opening Prayer: (30 min)

(Read Ephesians 1:15-23)

- What reasons does Paul give for thanking God for the Ephesians? (Ephesians 1:15-16)
- In what ways can we thank God for fellow Christians in our life, the church and the world?
- How could such a prayer be beneficial?
- For what are you thankful within the church, your Circle, and Christian relationships?
- What did Paul pray for the Ephesians? (Ephesians 1:17-18)
- Why is it important to know these things? (Psalms 34:8, 2 Corinthians 4:6, Psalm

119:18, Colossians 1:4-6, 9)

- Which of the things Paul prayed could you use in your life right now?

Praying Through the Scriptures

Either during Circle time or during your personal devotion, use this prayer to pray for people in your group. If you are speaking directly to the person, it is useful to use the pronoun "you", when in your prayer time you might omit the pronoun.

- (Having) heard about your faith, name, in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, (feel free to add other Christ honoring attributes that come to mind). I give thanks for you, name, I ask that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you name the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you name may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your name's heart may be enlightened in order that you, name, may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. (Ephesian 1:15-19 was slightly altered to fit the exercise.)
- How did God in Christ use his power toward those who believe? (Ephesians 1:19b-22)
- How does knowing that God has given this power in Christ to all who believe (including you) empower you to face the evil one and your own trials and temptations? (2 Cor 12:9, Psalm 55:22)
- What does the passage say about the church in light of His authority? (Ephesians 1:22-23)
- How does this truth express the importance of the church and the collective influence of Christians?
- Think about it. 99% of what most people pray for is trivial for God. What really big things could you pray for? (Eph 4:12-13, 15-16)

You have been RECRUITED as part of God's love and work into his big eternal plan.

Pastor Dave stated, "Our job is to tell people that through Jesus Christ there is freedom from becoming a casualty to the primary spiritual warfare...missing out on Heaven."