

Fall 2010 Community Group Study Guide :: The letter of Ephesians

Purpose and goal :: To begin seeing God, one another, the Church and the way of Jesus through the lens of Scripture. As a community that pursues intimacy with Christ and desires to live out the way of Jesus we want to have a Biblical worldview...a Re:Vision...to see the world the way God sees it.

Week 1 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: List verbs related to God the Father, God the Son or God the Holy Spirit

Examples :: Ephesians.1v4 "God chose us"

Ephesians.1v20 "He Raised Christ"

Discussion ::

1. Why does Paul use verbs to describe God?
2. Are any of these words that Paul uses to describe God new to you?
3. Paul uses so many words to describe God, why does He do that? Are you ok with that?

Pray :: Worship God for who He is. Thank Him for His many attributes and characteristics. Thank Him for who He is in your life.

Week 2 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: List references to the people of God, the Church

Examples :: Ephesians.1v1 "God's holy people"

Ephesians.2v2 "his body"

Discussion ::

1. Before reading the book of Ephesians, what was your definition of "church"?
2. How is your definition of "church" different from the way Paul describes God's people, the Church?
3. What does it mean to "be the church" rather than just "go to church"?

Pray :: Pray for the Impact church. Pray that God shows us and reminds us who we are. Pray that we seek God's will and hear his voice on a daily basis. Pray that He shows us what it means to be the Church on the campus of UNCC. Pray for the other churches, communities of faith, campus ministries on campus. Pray that they are seeking God's will and hearing his voice.

Week 3 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: List words and phrases related to time

Examples :: Ephesians.1v4 "before creation of the world"

Ephesians.2v2 "now"

Discussion ::

1. There's a famous quote that says, "God is never late, rarely early and always right on time." What are your thoughts about that quote?

2. What does it mean to you and how you relate to God that “before the creation of the world” you were on God’s mind?
3. What about God’s timing frustrates, confuses or leaves you scratching your head?

Pray :: Give thanks to God for being the Lord of history. Confess your frustrations and confusions about God’s timing to him. If you have questions about God’s timing then go ahead and ask them. Ask God to reveal His timing to you in a specific situation or circumstance.

Week 4 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: List of references to power

Examples :: Ephesians.1v19 “his incomparable great power for us”
Ephesians.1v21 “all rule, authority, power & dominion.”

Discussion ::

1. Paul uses the word power in different ways. For example, power given to us by God and the power of God Himself. Talk about the differences.
2. Is it intimidating, comforting or both to live in relationship with such a powerful God?
3. How do we use the power given to us in a positive way and not a negative way? What does it mean to use this power in a positive way? What does it mean to use this power in a negative way?

Pray :: Rejoice in Jesus’ resurrection power and ask for that power to be demonstrated in places you feel weak. Ask God to protect you from using any power given to you in a negative way. Thank God for His power that can change lives. Ask Him to allow you to reflect that power in a way that others will be attracted to it.

Week 5 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: Paul describes many gifts and promises to God’s people. List as many of these as possible.

Examples :: Ephesians.1v3 “blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ”
Ephesians.1v7 “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins”

Discussion ::

1. Why does God bless us, give us gifts and give us promises?
2. Some believe that God’s gifts are given to you when you are obedient and taken away when you are disobedient. What do you think about this? Do you believe this? Do you live like this is true?
3. We live in world where you must earn everything, fight for everything, work for everything. Is it difficult to believe and live as if God’s gifts, blessings, grace and promises are freely given?

Pray :: Thank God for His abundant grace, blessings, gifts and promises. Take time to thank Him for specific things. Ask Him to help you see His goodness all around you.

Week 6 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: Write down the times when Paul gives us a command.

Examples :: Ephesians.2v11 “remember”

Ephesians.4v3 “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit.”

Discussion ::

1. Most of the time we don't like to be told what to do. How does it make you feel when you read commands in the Bible?
2. Ephesians.5v1 says, “Be imitators of God.” Talk about what this means in practical terms. What does it mean on a day-to-day basis?
3. Ephesians.5v21 begins a section of submitting to one another and respecting one another. We usually fight to defeat one another and we fight to climb the social and professional ladder but Paul reminds us that the way of Jesus includes putting each other in front of ourselves. How can you live this out on campus, where you live, in class, at work, in the Impact community?

Pray :: Pray that God softens your heart so that you can accept His commands. Ask God to show you areas in your life where you are not imitating Him. Ask God to show you what it looks like to imitate Him on a day-to-day basis. Pray for someone who you struggle to respect, submit to and put ahead of yourself. Pray for one another...pray that you can be a community that puts the other above yourself.

Week 7 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: List the different references to prayer and what is being prayed for.

Examples :: Ephesians.1v16 “I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.”

Ephesians.6v20 “Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.”

Discussion ::

1. Prayer is a vital part of the Christian life and the way of Jesus. But, let's face it, most of us struggle with it, we struggle to pray consistently, talk about your individual prayer lives, your struggles, your frustrations, your questions about prayer.
2. Sometimes prayer become an outlet of our consumer and materialistic mindsets. We see God has a candy machine. We put the right amount of left over change we found in our pocket into the slot and out pops the reward. It seems that Paul is talking about prayer in a

different light. Talk about how our view of prayer is different from Paul's view of prayer.

3. In 1 Thessalonians.5v17 Paul says, "pray without ceasing", what does that mean? What does that look like for us today? What does that look like on a day-to-day basis? Could it be that prayer is more than just a few words we say as we drift off to sleep at night? Could it be that prayer is something that is happening all the time? What would that mean for you?

Pray :: In the book of Acts we find an early church praying "together". Communal prayer is an ancient tradition that we neglect. These past few weeks you as a Community Group have practiced this ancient tradition. Take time to thank God for the community He has surrounded you with. Pray Paul's prayer in Ephesians.1v16, "I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers." Pray for your Community Group. Choose another Impact Community Group and thank God for them and pray that God reveals Himself to them.

Week 8 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: List as many images and metaphors used in Ephesians as possible.

Examples :: Ephesians.1v7 "redemption"

Ephesians.2v20 "Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone"

Discussion ::

1. Pick one image from Ephesians and talk about it. Try to find other Scriptures that talk about this image.
2. Colossians.1v15 says, "He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God..." Hebrews.12v2 says, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus..." Our eyes are moving all the time, fixed on images, yet Scripture teaches that Jesus should be the image that captures our eye above all other images. Talk about what images have the tendency to capture your eye.
3. How can you begin to train your eyes to remain on Jesus?

Pray :: Begin by confessing through prayer the many things that capture your eyes. If those things lead to sin, a life pursuing other images above Jesus, ask God to forgive you. Ask God to reveal Himself to you as the ultimate image. Ask God to give you new eyes that will be fixed on Jesus. Ask God to give you new eyes that will begin to see Him in all things.

Week 9 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: Write down 3 questions you have about the letter of Ephesians

Discussion ::

1. Share your questions. Talk through a few of them. It's ok if you don't have answers. Not everything must have a resolution...in fact talk

about that statement. Are you ok with the idea that not everything needs a resolution, a closing, an answer?

2. As we read the Bible it has a way of changing us. In what ways has Scripture changed you these past 9 weeks?
3. The last verse of the letter of Ephesians is powerful and challenging. Ephesians.6v24 says, "Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love." What does it mean to love Jesus with an undying love? What does it mean to follow Jesus relentlessly?

Pray :: Thank God for using Scripture to shape you, mold you and change you. Ask God to continue revealing His ways, the way of Jesus to you. Thank God for his undying and relentless love for you. Ask God to give you an undying and relentless heart.

Week 10 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: Re:View your notes from Ephesians. What does Ephesians teach you about God?

Examples :: God is active. God is generous with His grace.

Discussion ::

1. What characteristics of God did you see for the first time by reading Ephesians?
2. How has God shown Himself to you this semester?
3. What about God leaves you with questions?

Pray :: Worship God for the way He revealed Himself to you this semester through Scripture. Thank Him for being so wide, broad and deep that you will always have something new to learn about Him. Ask Him to continue to reveal Himself to you.

Week 11 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: Re:View your notes from Ephesians. What does Ephesians teach you about the Church?

Examples :: The Church has received a great calling. The Holy Spirit lives in the Church.

Discussion ::

1. What is the calling of the Church?
2. How have you seen Impact live out this calling?
3. There are several people on our campus that do not like Christians or the Church. How can we redeem the reputation of the Church? What role do you play in that process?

Pray :: Pray for Impact as a whole. Pray for the staff. Pray for the student leaders. Pray that we will continue to pursue what it means to be the Church. Thank God that He has given you a church like Impact. Ask God what it means for you to serve the church rather than consume the church. Pray that God will continue to use Impact to bring God's Kingdom to UNCC

and that Impact will continue to be a place where people can pursue and seek God.

Week 12 ::

Read :: The letter of Ephesians

Write :: Re:View your notes from Ephesians. What does Ephesians teach you about the way of Jesus and living the Christian life?

Examples :: We aren't stuck in darkness anymore. God commands us to live holy lives.

Discussion ::

1. Why does it matter how Christians live? What does it mean to begin living in the light and not in the darkness?
2. Read Ephesians.2v11-13 out loud. These few verses are talking about life-change, transformation. Going from one thing to another. How have you experienced life-change this semester? How has God brought you nearer to Him this semester?
3. Read Ephesians.4v1-3 out loud. You cannot love God and hate your brother or sister. We must learn to love one another. This is difficult. It's difficult to be humble, gentle, patient, peace-makers. It's easier to give up on another. Talk about the connection between loving God and loving others. Why can't these two things be separated?

Pray :: Confess areas of your life that lack purity or integrity. Confess those to one another and pray for one another. Pray that God will show you what it looks like to love your neighbor. Pray that God will give you the courage and perseverance to not give up on your neighbor. Thank God for his life-changing power at work in your life. Thank Him for where you've been, where you are and where He's taking you.