

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

Above All

Memory Verse

“And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

Ephesians 1:22-23

Real-life Problems

Simply by watching the news, or listening to the stories of our peers, we can see that our world is full of injustices. We most often look to our authorities, such as parents, teachers, and governments to fix our problems or hurts. At times they can help. Still other times, they actually do not have the power to change anything. In this lesson, we will be reminded of the power and authority of Jesus in our world. We will learn that not only is Jesus alive, but He is reigning and His power is perfect.

The Good News

Because of God's power in the resurrection, Jesus did the one thing no other ruler ever could—He defeated death. Now, not only is Jesus alive, but He is ruling, forever. This is the hope we have in Christ. Not only is Jesus greater than all other powers, but everything is under authority. Jesus is in control of all things and has power of all things.

I. Introduction

OPENING QUESTIONS

Idea #1: If you could have one superpower, but only one, what would you choose?

Idea #2: If you could travel back in time to witness any event in history, what event would you choose to see firsthand?

Idea #3: Has there ever been a time in your life when you have experienced a problem or suffering, and felt powerless to do anything about it?

PRAY

Open your time together in prayer.

REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

What does gospel mean?

Good news

What's the good news?

Jesus died for my sins

Why did He die for your sins?

So that I can have abundant life in relationship with Him now and forever

What is grace?

God's love for undeserving sinners

REVIEW

1) Who was the original audience of this book?

The church, or followers of Jesus Christ, in Ephesus

2) Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

Paul was in prison for his work in spreading the gospel.

3) What are the two purposes of this book?

1) To remind the church of the power of the gospel 2) To encourage believers to live in light of their new identity as the church

What's going on?

REMIND

By the grace of God and through the work of Christ we have received a new identity as children of God if we believe in Him. As God's children, every blessing of God is now ours. Just like any good father, God is pleased to give those in Christ these blessings as free gifts. While we have to work for many things in life, the blessings and gifts of God are not one of them.

TODAY WE'LL LEARN

Today's passage begins with the phrase "for this reason" (or something similar, depending on your translation). Whenever we see a joining word or phrase like this (because, therefore, for this reason, etc.), we should stop and ask ourselves why it is there. What is it calling us to remember? In today's passage, Paul is connecting the truths we learned last week to what he has heard of the Ephesians. Paul is praising God for them through prayer.

- 1) We should thank God for other Christians.
- 2) We should ask God for the Holy Spirit to enlighten our hearts.
- 3) We should praise God for exalting Jesus to rule forever.

Read

Read **Ephesians 1:15-23** aloud in your group.

II. Questions for Discussion

A. WHAT?

1) According to verse 15, what are the two things Paul has heard about the Ephesian believers?

1) Their faith in the Lord Jesus 2) Their love for all the saints

2) What is the prayer request Paul asks God for the Ephesian believers in verse 17?

That the Father of glory (a reference to the glory of God Paul talked about in verses 1-14) would give them a Spirit of wisdom and revelation to deepen their knowledge of Him.

3) According to verses 18-19, what are the three things Paul prays the Ephesian believers will know when their hearts are opened? (Note: Look for the "whats.")

1) The hope to which He has called them 2) The riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints 3) The immeasurable greatness of His power toward those who believe

4) At the end of verse 19, Paul mentions God's great might or power. According to Paul, in the following verses, verses 20-23, in what ways has God demonstrated that power?

He demonstrated His power through 1) Raising Christ Jesus from the dead 2) Seating Him at His right hand forever (vv. 20-21) 3) Putting all things under Christ Jesus' feet 4) Making Him head over all things to the church (v. 22)

5) According to verse 21, what are the five things God placed Jesus over when He sat Jesus at His right hand? How long will His reign last?

God placed Jesus above every 1) Rule 2) Authority 3) Power 4) Dominion 5) Name that is named. That reign is for this age and the age to come, which means forever.

B. SO WHAT?

1) According to Paul's prayer, why is the Holy Spirit important in the lives of believers?

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is that they would receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. This is not to say that they have not already received the Holy Spirit, but Paul is praying specifically that the Spirit would help give them understanding so they can grow in their knowledge of God. Paul is specifically asking the Spirit for illumination of God to these believers. Simply stated, one of the Spirit's roles in the believer's life is to point him to God and help him understand His Word.

Seeing in Color

Watch the clip here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSD7-TgUmUY>

Being colorblind does not mean you have difficulty seeing; instead, it simply means you have trouble distinguishing between certain colors that you are seeing, such as greens, reds, or blues.

In this YouTube clip, a man who is colorblind receives a pair of glasses as a gift from his family. But they are no ordinary glasses. These glasses help to correct his vision in such a way that he can now see all colors for what they really are. His response tells us so much about what this gift means to him. You can tell in his response to the sunset. While he has seen a sunset before, he has never known the beauty found in its details.

This is exactly what Paul is praying will be true for the Ephesian believers, and for us. He knows by their faith that their hearts have seen God or believed in His Word, but his desire is that the eyes of their hearts would be opened to a new, deeper and more true understanding of the riches of God.

2) Why would Paul want the Ephesians to grow in knowledge of God if they already have faith in Him?

Being made in the image of God, we share many attributes with Him. However, God also has attributes that humans do not share with Him and are unique to Him alone. One of these attributes is that God is infinite, meaning He is endless and limitless. For us, this means there is always something more to learn about God. This is a gift to believers because, as we grow in our knowledge of God, we grow in our delight in Him. Knowledge of God will transform our desire for God, and our desire will grow our love.

3) Paul is encouraged by both the Ephesians' faith in God and love for others. In what ways would these two things go hand-in-hand (Gal 5:6)?

God is love, and as His children we are called to reflect Him in that love. When we are adopted by God, we are brought into His family. Our faith in God will be expressed in the way we love the things He loves.

4) How does Jesus' resurrection make His authority different than any other?

Every ruler, king, and authority on earth will one day face death. No matter how great their power is now, it will one day come to an end. This is why Jesus' resurrection matters so much. By raising from the dead, Jesus did the one thing that no other king, ruler, or power could do. He defeated the greatest enemy, death (1 Cor 15:26). So while every other kingdom, like Rome, will one day lose its power, because of Christ's defeat of death in the resurrection, Christ has guaranteed that His kingdom will never end. This means that we can know with certainty that there is nothing more powerful than the authority and rule of Christ, because it will never be defeated.

C. NOW WHAT?

1) What does it look like for you to pray for other Christians? How does the way Paul prays challenge you to change the way you pray?

2) How does the hope of Christ's resurrection and rule change the way you live your life? In what areas do you still need to grow in your trust of this hope?

3) When you find yourself powerless to solve a problem, what would it look like practically for you to trust Christ as the ultimate authority and head of the church?

Answers may vary. If students are having a hard time answering this, try asking for practical examples of problems they are facing. Then, use this as an opportunity to allow students to proclaim the gospel truths to one another.

4) How should knowing that God placed Jesus above all other authority affect the way we submit to the authorities in our lives and in the world?

When we remember that Christ's perfect rule is ultimately in control over all other authority in this world, it allows us to more faithfully submit to our earthly authorities. Even when our authorities let us down or when we do not agree with them, we can trust that God has appointed them in authority for His purpose and our good.

Main takeaway

God has shown His power in the resurrection of Jesus and exalted Him above all rule and authority. Paul encourages us to praise Him for this and to pray that the Holy Spirit would grow our understanding of that power.

III. Closing

REMEMBERING THE GOOD NEWS

Because of God's power in the resurrection, Jesus did the one thing no other ruler ever could, He defeated death. Now, not only is Jesus alive, but He is ruling, forever. This is the hope we have in Christ. Not only is Jesus greater than all other powers, but everything is under authority. Jesus is in control of all things and has power of all things.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

God, we thank You for showing your power through Jesus and for seating Him on the throne. We praise You that Jesus is reigning now and will reign forever. We ask that You would give us the same Spirit of wisdom that Paul asked for the Ephesians. Help us grow in our knowledge of Your promises and power. In the name that is above all names, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

Supporting resources

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1) When was the last time you thanked God for other Christians in your life and spent time praying for them by name? Who is one believer you could pray for and encourage this week?
- 2) Paul prayed for the knowledge of three truths for the believer—hope in the call, riches of the inheritance, and greatness of His power. Do you struggle to believe any of these truths in your own life? What would change if you embraced that truth?
- 3) In what ways does knowing Christ reigns now and forever change your response to hard times or moments of sadness? If you are having trouble answering this question, stop and pray that God would show you what this might look like in your current suffering or future suffering?

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- 1) What would it look like if God answered Paul's prayer in your own life. How might that change the way you live day to day?
- 2) Consider what it means for Jesus to be above all authorities and powers in the world. How should this change the way we react to injustices or challenges?
- 3) If the church is the body of Christ, how should that change the way we value the church? Pray that God would show you one new way in which you can specifically love and serve the church.