

Sermon-Based Small Group Bible Study

Union with Christ: Knowing God (Ephesians 1:15–23)

Open

Select one of these “ice breakers” to get the conversation going toward the study.

- Talk about a way in which you’re different now than you were a decade ago.
- We often talk about “learning things the hard way.” What’s something you *didn’t* have to learn the hard way?
- Do you have, or have you ever had, a membership card for a group or organization? What was it for?

Dig

After reading Ephesians 1:15–23 together, discuss these questions.

1. In verses 15–16 Paul says he gives thanks for the readers because he has heard of their faith and love. How do you think Paul could have identified faith and love in them from the stories he heard about them? What makes faith and love something we can tell as a story?
2. Compare verse 17 to verses 15–16. Because of the readers’ faith and love, for what does Paul ask God on their behalf? Do you see a relationship between what they have and what God will give them in response to Paul’s prayer? Describe that.
3. What does verses 18–19 add to Paul’s prayer in verse 17? How do these connect to each other? What is the new element in verse 18? In verse 19?
4. Verses 20–23 effectively tell the story of Christ up to the present. What are the key parts of that story? What are the results for the readers?
5. Think about this text from beginning to end. Where does the story begin for the readers? Where is it headed? What does that mean right now?

Summary: The gospel has transformed the Ephesian Christians, and Paul prays confidently that it will continue to do so. The Christian life is growth in faith and love, grounded in Christ’s death, and resurrection, his enthronement as king, and his promised return. In this we experience Christ’s victory over the powers of evil and have a taste of the eternal reign of Christ at his return.

Reflect

Use any of these prompts to encourage group members to apply the text to their own experiences.

- What word or phrase in the text do you find especially meaningful as a reminder of what you already have received in Christ? As a promise of what you will receive in Christ? [Note that the same expression can be both!]
- Who is someone whose growth as a Christian made an impression on you? What did you learn from that person’s example?
- In what area do you believe God has helped you grow in your faith and love? In what area do you sense a need for growth?

Pray

Invite the group to pray together using any of these suggestions.

- What needs have you heard from others in the group that we can pray about?
- What aspects of your salvation in Christ—past, present, or future—are you especially thankful for right now?
- What help do you need from the Lord right now to get on or stay on a trajectory of growth in your faith and love?