

# GLORIOUS **RICHES**

STUDIES IN EPHESIANS

Paul's letter to the Ephesians floods us with a majestic vision of the Christian life grounded in God's eternal, saving purposes in Christ. Written to ordinary believers trying to live faithfully in a complicated and challenging world, it reminds them that they are chosen, loved, and held securely in Christ. As we read through Ephesians, we'll be assured that God is at work in the world – uniting what is broken, strengthening what feels fragile, and doing extraordinary things through Jesus' church. Ephesians will therefore help us discover how the glorious riches found in Christ touch every corner of our life.

As with any study, you'll get the most out of them if you're able to read the relevant passage and answer the questions before your group meets. That will also equip you to best encourage the others in your group with what you say. However, if some weeks you don't get to prepare, please don't use that as an excuse to not go along. Just being there is a great way of showing the group that they're important to you. Plus, the studies are designed to be useful even if you're thinking about them for the first time at your group.

Study 1

## **Ephesians 1:1-14**

### **Getting started**

When are you tempted to feel that following Jesus isn't all that special?

### **Read Ephesians 1:1-14**

1) How does Paul describe both himself and his readers? What do these descriptions suggest about authority, identity, and belonging in the Christian life?

2) List out all the things that God has done for us

3) What do you think is the difference, if any, between spiritual blessings and spiritual gifts? Do you think one is more valuable than the other?

4) Is there any one spiritual blessing that particularly amazes you? Why?

5) If we are so blessed why do we often feel unhappy and discontent in our lives? How do these verses help?

### **Reread verese 3-14**

6) What role has Jesus had in our receiving of spiritual blessings?

7) What do you think it means to be "in Christ"?

8) What reasons does Paul give for God blessing us so much?

9) What is the "mystery" God has made known? How does this big picture of history help us make sense of the world and our place in it?

10) Paul repeats a key phrase three times (v6,12,14). Why is the praise of God's glory so central to salvation, and how might this reshape our view of church and Christian living?

11) How might truly grasping the truths of this passage change the way we think about ourselves, our struggles, and each other?

## **PRAY**

Study 2

## **Ephesians 1:15-23**

### **Getting started**

Do you find prayer enjoyable or a chore? Why?

### **Read Ephesians 15-16**

- 1) What reason does Paul give for his prayer? How does this compare to our reasons for prayer?
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What impression do you get from these verses about Paul's commitment to prayer? How does this compare to our commitment?
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What does Paul do first in his prayer? How does this compare to the things we often pray about first?
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) "I only pray when I feel like it. Otherwise it wouldn't be genuine." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

### **Read Ephesians 1:17-23**

- 5) What does Paul ask God for in v17-18? What reasons does he give for asking this?
  
  
  
  
  
- 6) How does Paul describe God's power, and how does he illustrate it? Why do you think the resurrection is such a key reference point?

7) Where is Christ seated, and what is he exalted above? How would this have encouraged believers living in a world of competing powers?

8) How does Paul describe the relationship between Christ and the church? What responsibilities and confidence does this give us?

9) What do you think is the main thing we can learn from Paul in these verse?

10) Look back at your "Getting started" answer. How might the truths of Paul's prayer change your answer?

### **PRAY**

Use Paul's prayer in Ephesians as a model to pray the same sorts of things for Christians you know, your group small group and BPC.

## Getting started

Do you have a favourite rags to riches story? What makes it so special?

## Read Ephesians 2:1-3

- 1) How does Paul describe life before Christ? What words or phrases stand out in highlighting the seriousness of our situation?
- 2) Who or what were people following before they were saved? How does this challenge the idea that people are naturally free or neutral?
- 3) What are some of the things that people say are wrong with the world? What do you think Paul would suggest?

## Read Ephesians 2:4-7

- 4) How does Paul describe the Ephesians after they have became Christians?
- 5) What do you think it means to be "raised up" and seated with Christ in "the heavenly realms"?
- 6) Paul writes verse 6 in the past tense as if it's already happened. How does this make sense? Why might Paul stress these truths to struggling Christians?
- 7) What reasons does Paul give for God treating us so wonderfully?

**Read Ephesians 2:8-10**

8) How does Paul explain the basis of salvation? What does he explicitly rule out, and why is that important?

9) Paul tells the Ephesians not to boast about their salvation (2:9). Why not? Why is it so hard not to boast?

10) What role do good works play in the Christian life according to this passage? How does this correct both legalism and indifference?

11) What are some of the solutions that people suggest to fix the world's problem? What solution do you think Paul would suggest?

12) How should the movement of this passage – from death to life, from grace to good works – shape our attitudes toward obedience, humility, and each other?

**PRAY**

Study 4

## **Ephesians 2:11-22**

### **Getting started**

Can you think of a time when you've been excluded by a group of people? How did that make you feel? How did you react?

### **Read Ephesians 2:11-12**

1) List the ways Paul describes life without Christ. Which of these highlights the seriousness of being cut off from God's people?

2) What do you understand by the phrase "covenants of the promise."

3) How is this different to the way Paul described the Ephesians before they became Christians, in the previous study?

### **Read Ephesians 2:13-18**

4) How does Paul describe the Ephesians now they have became Christians?

5) How is this different to the way Paul described them as Christians, in the previous study?

6) What role did Jesus have in this transformation?

7) What is the "dividing wall of hostility"?

8) What walls of hostility do we sometime build between each other? How does the cross also abolish these?

**Read Ephesians 2:19-22**

9) How does Paul redefine the identity of Gentile believers? What images does he use, and what do they communicate about belonging?

10) Who does God dwell in by His Spirit in these verse? How does this challenge the individualism of our current society?

11) What implications do these verses have for the way we should treat each other?

**PRAY**

Study 5

## Ephesians 3

### Getting started

What do you think of when you hear the word "church"? What feelings and emotions does it evoke?

### Read Ephesians 3:1-13

- 1) How does Paul describe his role in God's plan, and what does this reveal about the way God chooses to work through people?.
- 2) In verses 3-6, what is the "mystery" Paul speaks about? Why would this truth have been surprising—or even confronting—for first-century Jews and Gentiles?
- 3) According to verses 7-9, how does Paul understand his ministry? What does this teach us about the relationship between grace, gifting, and service?
- 4) Look at verses 10-11. What is God seeking to display through the church, and to whom is this display being made? How does this expand our understanding of the church's significance?
- 5) Verse 12 speaks of boldness and access to God. What is the basis of this confidence, and how might this challenge the way we approach God in prayer?
- 6) In verse 13, Paul refers to his sufferings. How does he reframe suffering in light of the gospel, and what does this suggest about hardship in Christian life and ministry?

7) These verses seem quite personal and specific to Paul. What do you think is their main relevance to us?

**Read Ephesians 3:14-21**

8) This is now the second time Paul records his prayers for the Ephesians. What does he pray for them this time?

9) What are the similarities and differences between this prayer and his previous prayer? (Look back at study 2).

10) How does Paul describe the use of "power" in his prayer? How is this different to what we normally associate with power?

11) Verses 18-19 describe dimensions of Christ's love that surpass knowledge. How can something be both "known" and beyond knowing?

12) How can we help each other "grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ"? Try and be as specific and practical as you can.

**PRAY**

Again use Paul's prayer in Ephesians as a model to pray for Christians you know, your group small group and BPC.

Study 6

## Ephesians 4:1-16

### Getting started

"To have unity we must all be uniform." Do you agree? Why or why not?

### Read Ephesians 4:1-6

1) What is the "calling" that the Ephesians have received?

2) Verses 2-3 list attitudes needed to maintain unity. Which of these do you find most challenging, and why are these qualities essential for unity rather than uniformity?

3) Look at verses 4-6. What repeated word structures Paul's thinking here, and how do these truths ground Christian unity in what God has already done?

4) What do you think is Paul's main lesson in this section?

5) These verses say a lot about unity. What role, if any, do you think exists for denominations?

### Read Ephesians 4:7-13

6) How does Paul hold together the ideas of unity and difference within the church? What does Christ's giving of grace tell us about our place in His church?

7) What goal did Jesus have in giving the church the people listed verse 11-12. How does this challenge common assumptions about "ministry"?

8) What sorts of "works of service" do you think Paul has in mind in v12?

9) In these verses Paul describes using our diversity so as to reach unity. Why is it that our differences so often tend to divide us rather than unify us? What practical steps can we take to ensure this doesn't happen?

**Read Ephesians 4:14-16**

10) What different images does Paul use to describe a mature church? What do each of these images teach us?

11) Paul calls on us to "speak the truth in love" (v15). When can this be difficult? Do you think there are times when we should just be quiet and not say anything?

12) Looking across the whole passage, what would a church shaped by Ephesians 4:1-16 look like? What is one specific way this passage calls you to change how you relate to BPC and/or small group?

**PRAY**

## Ephesians 4:17-5:14

### Getting started

What do you think makes real change last – external pressure or internal motivation? Can you give an example?

### Read Ephesians 4:17-31

- 1) How does Paul want the Ephesians to "live"? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) How did the Ephesians come to know Christ? How is this relevant to them not living as the Gentiles do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What things should the Ephesians put off?
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) What things should the Ephesians put on?
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) Is there any one verse that stands out to you in this section? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6) What are some practical ways that we can follow Paul's advice in these verse?

### Read Ephesians 4:32-5:7

- 7) What new way does Paul now describe how the Ephesians should "live"? Why?

8) In what ways does Paul emphasize identity before behaviour?

9) Is there any one verse that stands out to you in this section? Why?

**Read Ephesians 5:8-14**

10) What new way does Paul now describe how the Ephesians should "live"? Why?

11) Why do you think people often assume Christianity is mainly about rules for behaviour rather than a new, identity-driven, way of life? How does this study help clarify that misconception?

12) What practical ways can we help each other better understand our new identity in Christ?

**PRAY**

## **Ephesians 5:15-6:9**

### **Getting started**

What usually shapes the way you use your time and make decisions in everyday life – pressure, habit, or purpose?

### **Read Ephesians 5:15-21**

1) In the last study Paul listed 3 ways for the Ephesians to "live." What new way does Paul now describe? What reasons does he give for doing this?

2) What does Paul likened being "filled with the Spirit" to? What do you think is the point he is making?

3) Verses 19-21 are in fact one long sentence in the original language. In the sentence Paul lists four characteristics of being filled with the Spirit. What are they? How is this different from thinking of the Spirit mainly in terms of private experience?

4) How does Paul's description of being filled with the Spirit compared with many contemporary idea?

### **Read Ephesians 5:15-21**

5) Paul now lists four examples of what it means to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (v21). What example does Paul use in these verses?

6) How does Paul want wives to relate to their husbands? How does our relationship to Christ help us understand this role?

7) How does Paul want husbands to treat their wives? How does Christ's treatment of the Church help us understand this role?

8) Husband wife roles are a very sensitive issue in our current culture. Why do you think that is? How do you feel about Paul's teaching in these verses?

**Read Ephesians 6:1-4**

9) What new example does Paul give for "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ"?

10) Paul specifically mentions fathers in verse 4. Do you think it's equally valid to apply the verse to mothers?

**Read Ephesians 6:5-10**

11) What example does Paul now give of "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ"? (v21)

12) What relevance, if any, do these verses have for our modern day work environment?

13) Look back over the entire section. Paul very much grounds his teaching on leadership, authority, submission and obedience in the gospel rather than cultural expectations. Which area does this passage most challenge you to rethink?

**PRAY**

## **Ephesians 6:10-24**

### **Getting started**

Have there been times in your life when you've felt that following Jesus is a battle? When and how?

### **Read Ephesians 6:10-12**

1) What do you think being "strong in the Lord" involves?

2) What does Paul want the Ephesians to do and why?

3) "Flesh and blood" is a figurative way of talking about people. However if people are not our ultimate enemy (cf verse 12), how then should we approach conflict with one another?

4) What are some the examples of the "devil's schemes" that you've been especially conscious of in your life?

### **Read Ephesians 6:13-18**

5) List out the different pieces of the armour of God. What does each one represent?

6) What does Paul want the Ephesians to do with the armour? How does this relate to being "strong in the Lord"? (Verse 10)

7) What role does prayer have in being strong in the Lord?

8) What do you think it means to pray "in the Spirit"? How does verse 17 help us understand this phrase?

**Read Ephesians 6:19-23**

9) The final verses seem quite personalised and specific to Paul. What relevance if any do you think they have for us?

10) Once more skim back over these studies. Among all the things we've discovered are there any truths that have particularly stuck most in your mind? Why?

**PRAY**