

Youth Teaching Resources

November 3, 2019



Season After Pentecost (June 16-November 24)

All Saints Day

Ephesians 1:11-23 – “At Home with the Saints”

Random Readings

Luke 20:27-38 – “Trick Questions”

2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 – “Right Things”

Colossians 1:11-20 – “Blown Minds”

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At Home with the Saints

Ephesians 1:11-23

YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

PARENT PREP

We want to leave our children off better than we have been able to live our lives. We want to be able to provide opportunities for our students to succeed. But, can we do too much for our students? Can we provide too much to where they don't have to work? Can we smooth the road too much for them so they have no bumps in the road? How do you know the difference? Start with this question, "Would I do this for someone else's child or just my own?"

TEACHING THE LESSON

Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip "That is My Birthday!" from *Mr. Deeds*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What are the various responses when they find out who is the rightful heir of the company?
- 2) What does he say he is going to do with the inheritance?
- 3) What would you do with this much wealth?
- 4) What is the best gift that you have been given? What did you do with it?
- 5) How does your faith influence how you treat gifts that are given to you?

Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading Ephesians 1:11-23. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony's commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) How does Paul believe that God has blessed the people of Israel?
- 2) How does this text show that God has a place for every person who seeks to follow Christ?
- 3) What is the inheritance that we have gained from Christ?
- 4) How do we praise God outside of corporate worship?
- 5) How does God's promise through Jesus live through the Spirit?

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the "Digging Deeper" portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) What do we know about Ephesus?
- 2) How is inheritance different today than it was in biblical times?
- 3) Where does real power come from?

You may also want your group to discuss "The Hardest Question" if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as "The Hardest Question": Did Paul preach predestination?

Transformation

Conclude your session by having the students call out names of people that have had a major influence in their life. You may have the group do this "popcorn" style or have them list their responses individually. When they have had time to list their responses give them the opportunity to either write these people a note of thanks or create a social media post honoring them for what they have meant to their life. End the session with a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) How do you learn what to do and what not to do?
- 2) Christ modeled for us how to be in relationship with God. Of the people that you listed, what is it that they modeled for you?
- 3) Who do you knowingly model Christ for? Who do you unknowingly model Christ for?
- 4) How does your relationship with God influence the people around you?

Close with a prayer thanking God for sending Jesus to show us how to have a relationship with God.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

What do we know about Ephesus?—Ephesus was an important port city in the first century, located on the central coast of what was then called “Asia,” now the country of Turkey. Impressive ruins of the ancient city are located near the modern city of Selçuk and a 45-minute ride from the port of Kusidasi, from which busloads of cruise ship passengers come to admire what remains of its imposing public buildings, temples to various gods, ritzy “terrace houses” occupied by the rich, and public facilities that all could enjoy.

Ephesus currently sits several miles inland, but it was once a major port city. In the first century, the Cayster River brought a procession of ships to an accessible and protected harbor, but the river silted in long before modern dredging equipment was available. The loss of the harbor contributed significantly to the city’s demise.

During its heyday, Ephesus was a major city, perhaps second in importance only to Rome. Estimates of its population have exceeded 200,000, though 50,000 is a more reasonable figure. A large theater near the port could seat more than 25,000. The city had a rich history as a Greek and later Roman city. Like most port cities, it was quite cosmopolitan in nature, with inhabitants from a variety of nations and ethnic backgrounds.

Ephesus served as the capital of Asia under Roman rule and was famed as the home of a large temple to the Greek goddess Artemis, known to the Romans as Diana: Acts 19 describes how artisans who sold images of Artemis felt threatened by the Apostle Paul and sparked a riot designed to force him from the city. Today, only a single column remains from that temple: most of it was robbed and repurposed in antiquity.

The letter claims to have been written from the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians, beginning with the words: “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus (1:1). Paul describes himself as a “prisoner for Christ Jesus” (3:1) or “prisoner in the Lord” (4:1), suggesting that he was writing from prison after being arrested for his activities related to spreading the gospel. Paul was imprisoned briefly on several occasions (2 Cor. 11:23), and after being arrested in Jerusalem (Acts 21:27-36), he was held for trial in the coastal city of Caesarea (about 58-60 C.E., Acts 23-26) before appealing to the emperor and being taken to Rome, where he remained in prison for at least two years and may have been executed there (60-62 C.E., Acts 27-28).

Four of Paul’s letters are known as “prison epistles,” and include references to his captivity. These include Philippians (1:7, 13-14), Colossians (4:3, 10, 18), Ephesians (3:1, 4:1, 6:20), and Philemon (1, 9, 10, 13, 23). Second Timothy, more commonly regarded as a “pastoral epistle,” also claims a prison setting (2 Tim. 1:8, 16; 2:8).

Digging Deeper *continued*

Paul had worked among the Ephesians for quite a while (Acts 19), so it is surprising that the letter contains very few personal references, and the author speaks more of having heard about the Ephesians (1:15) than of having known them personally. This has led some scholars to suggest that the actual author was not Paul, but one of his companions or admirers. Thomas B. Slater, writing in the Smyth & Helwys Commentaries, calls the letter “deutero-Pauline” (*Ephesians* [Smyth & Helwys, 2012], 20), and Andrew T. Lincoln (*Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary [Thomas Nelson, 1990] is even more convinced that a disciple of Paul wrote the letter in Paul’s name, drawing heavily on Paul’s earlier letter to the Colossians for his imagery.

Other writers maintain that Paul was indeed the author, arguing that the stylistic differences may be due to his use of an amanuensis (scribe) who may have flavored Paul’s dictation with his own style. The lack of personal references may indicate that Paul was writing mainly for new converts who had come into the church since his time there, or that the letter was designed to be shared with multiple churches. For purposes of simplicity, we will refer to the author as Paul while remaining aware that Paul’s thought may have been reflected in the words of a close disciple.

The oldest and best Greek manuscripts do not include the words “in Ephesus” (1:1), leading some to believe that the letter was written as an encyclical, to be passed around and read among all the churches, with a blank space in the first sentence to be filled in with the name of each local church.

How is the letter to the Ephesians organized?—The first three chapters of Ephesians speak beautifully of how the church fits into God’s redeeming plan for the universe, with all things being brought together under Christ (1:9-10). Chapter three ends with a prayer and a doxology, as if it were the closing part of the letter.

The last three chapters consist of practical advice and encouragement for readers to live their lives in a way that is worthy of membership in the body of Christ, suggesting that the letter may have come from two hands, or that it may be a composite of two letters.

Here’s a suggested outline for the book of Ephesians.

I. Opening words

Salutation – 1:1-2

Blessing – 1:3-14

Thanksgiving – 1:15-23

II. God’s New People

God’s grace in Christ – 2:1-10

God’s people brought near – 2:11-22

III. God’s Mystery and Majesty

The mystery revealed – 3:1-13

The mystery indwelling Spirit – 3:14-21

Digging Deeper *continued*

IV. God's People in Community

Living in community – 4:1-16

Living as God's people – 4:17-5:2

Maintaining community – 5:3-20

V. God's People at Home

Husbands and wives – 5:21-33

Parents and children – 6:1-4

Masters and servants – 6:5-9

VI. Concluding Remarks

The army of God – 6:10-17

Prayer requests and blessings – 6:18-24

A major city—The theater at Ephesus, located near the ancient port, was capable of holding up to 25,000 people.

Inheritance—I still remember a summer, more than 20 years ago, when I was a pastor and accompanied a youth/adult mission team to Williamsburg, Ky., where we did construction work. While there, we visited Cumberland Falls. It was a beautiful and majestic sight. The Cumberland River runs quietly through the mountain valleys until it gets to just this spot, where it turns to thunder as it pours in a horseshoe shaped cataract that drops for almost 70 feet. A heavy mist rises from there and waters the plants clinging to life on bare rock across both sides of the valley. It is an impressive, heart-pounding sight.



As I stood and looked over the roaring falls, I thought of my young daughter, who had recently died, and said to myself, “I wish I could show this to Bethany.”

Then it occurred to me, “If only a fraction of what we believe about heaven is true, then Bethany has far more wonderful things than this to show me!” In this life we cannot know exactly what lies beyond this life, but in Christ we have the hope of an eternal *inheritance*, and that can give us daily cause for praise and for joy.

Heart visions—Paul uses vivid imagery to describe the result of spiritual insight in v. 18: “with the enlightening of the eyes of your heart.” What are some ways we may “see” with our hearts?

Digging Deeper *continued*

Real power—As Paul sought to magnify the power of God, he used no less than four words to describe it. Literally, v. 19 would read something like *“and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of the strength of his might.”*

The word translated “power” is from *dunameōs*, the root of English words like “dynamic,” “dynamo,” and “dynamite.”

The word for “working” is *energeian*, the root of our word “energy” and others derived from it.

The word for “strength” is *kratos*. The verbal form means “to rule.” From it we get the “democracy,” which describes rule by the people” and “autocracy,” where people are ruled by a single “autocrat.”

The word translated “might” is *īscuon*. It speaks of one’s ability to accomplish things, and is the same word used in Mark 12:30, where believers are enjoined to love God with heart, soul, mind, and *strength*. Christ’s capability goes far beyond ours.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Did Paul teach predestination?

Several verses in this chapter, especially vv. 4-6 and 11, are often cited by those who believe that God has chosen only certain people for eternal salvation, with all others being left out, and humans having little say in the matter.

Could this be correct? Volumes have been written either for or against the doctrine of predestination. It is one of the five cardinal beliefs of Calvinism, classically defined by the acronym “TULIP.” The five points are “Total depravity” (all humans are naturally sinful); “Unconditional election” (God “elects” only certain people to be saved); “Limited atonement” (salvation is limited to those God has chosen); “Irresistible grace” (those whom God has chosen cannot resist their call to be saved), and “Preservation of the saints” (those who are thus saved cannot lose their salvation).

Many modern adherents of Calvinism, also known as “the Reformed tradition,” might quibble a bit over doctrine, but this is the basic view, in which select scriptures such as Eph. 1:4-6, 11 are plucked out of context to support the idea that humans really have no free will when it comes to seeking salvation.

If one believes that God has picked out every individual who will be saved, of course, there is no point in spreading the gospel. In the mid-19th century, there was a great debate between “Particular Baptists” (who believed that Christ died only for those particular “elect” persons) and “General Baptists” (who believed that Christ died for all). Today’s “Primitive Baptists” still hold tightly to this predestinarian view, and are diminishing in number. Other Calvinists – including many Southern Baptists – have managed to work evangelism into their understanding of the doctrine, arguing that one should faithfully proclaim the gospel even to those who are predestined not to be saved.

As noted in the lesson, a better view of Paul’s teaching is to understand that God has “foreordained” that all who turn to Christ and seek salvation have a place in God’s kingdom. God saves us not only as individuals, but as a community of faith. Paul was not suggesting that God has a checklist of predestined believers, but that God has a place for every person who seeks grace and follows Christ. Those who believe this cannot help but give praise to God.