

# LIFE GROUP GUIDE

## **EPHESIANS: The Church has a future**

### **SERIES BIG IDEA:**

Ephesus was an important coastal city, well-known for its rich history, economic hubs, religious temples, as well as the arts, not unlike Cape Town. Paul's letter to the Ephesian church illuminates how the gospel grows our faith and discipleship, and gives practical insights into living a life pleasing to God, and shows how the gospel engages with culture.

For this second sub-series – The Church Has A Future – we are looking at a journey as life groups where we will work alongside the Sunday material and Ephesians, looking at some practical implications for us as Christ-followers and church. We will spend some time looking at spiritual gifts and hopefully create space to discuss these and even practice. All of the weeks guides are in this document so you can keep the full journey in mind as you lead your group.

## Week 6

### GOALS

- Deepen our understanding and love of Scripture
- Grow in relationship with each other

### TIPS

- This series is theological, it is preferable to have listened to the Sunday messages, especially the person leading the Life Group discussion.
- Life Group Leaders, we suggest doing a little more reading of Ephesians commentary over this series to equip yourself for leading well. It is our hope that over these series, our leaders are going deeper in Scripture to be able to lead out of a richer depth of pursuit and understanding of God and his word. Some good commentaries to consider reading over this time:
  - <http://www.slices.org.uk/Slicesforall/sfeEphesians.html>
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### PRAYER

Open in prayer.

### DISCUSSION

1. We are in the first week of our second sub-series in Ephesians – The Church has a Future. Let's start by quickly sharing our journey to church – what was your first experience of church? How did you land up in our church?

2. What comes to mind when you think of unity?

Collins dictionary defines it as the state of different areas or groups being joined together to form a single country or organization. When there is unity, people are in agreement and act together for a particular purpose.

3. What has been your best experience of unity? What has been your worst experience of unity?

Get some members to read **Ephesians 2:11-22**

4. How does this passage relate to church now? Who would the gentiles and Israel represent in our context of church?

5. Paul is specifically speaking to gentiles here and encouraging them to see that they are legitimate citizens of God's family due to the price Jesus paid with his blood. He says in verse 13-14 that he paid for the peace between previously separated communities – peace that is now not just in behavior – but peace and acceptance into one family, one people. How can we ensure that we are working towards this reality in our own hearts, home, church and city?

6. What does this passage teach us about how God views unity?
7. Are there any prayer requests?

## **PRAY**

Spend some time thanking God for the peace and opportunity to experience spiritual family that he won for us on the cross. Pray for each other, for stirred faith in God and for requests that came up in question 7.

## Week 7

### GOALS

- Deepen our understanding and love of Scripture
- Grow in relationship with each other
- Grow in your understanding of spiritual gifts

### TIPS

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#### TO DO

- Consider printing this following questionnaire out for the members of your Life Group – otherwise get them to open the link on their devices and answer on a separate piece of paper.
- <https://commonground.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/SpiritualGiftDiscoveryQuestionnaire.pdf>

### PRAYER

Open in prayer.

### DISCUSSION

1. Do a brief check-in – highs and lows from the week? Any updates on some of the prayer requests from the previous week.

Last week, we spoke about how, in Jesus, we are all part of the same family, considered one people under God. This week we are going to look at another section of Scripture that gives us some practical applications and implications to what we individually are gifted to bring to share and serve our spiritual family.

Get some members to read **1 Corinthians 12:1-27**

2. What do you feel God has gifted you in? Does anyone have a specific story where God gave them a skill or a gift for a specific moment that they didn't know they had?

3. We have a great measure that can help us work out what some of the gifts God has given us. These can change over time and depends on what God is doing with us – but it's still helpful to start a conversation – it is important to take these findings before God as well. Give the group 20 minutes to fill out the spiritual gifts form (maybe put some music on in the background).
4. Share your findings with each other. Do any of the findings surprise you/not surprise you?
5. Does it surprise you that Gods promise in your salvation and sanctification involves his working through you for building his church and advancing his kingdom?
6. How do you think you can best use some of the gifts you see God has given you for building his family?

## **PRAY**

Spend some time thanking God for gifts. Pray for each other and for clarity and opportunity to use your gifts to build up your spiritual family.

## Week 8

### GOALS

- Deepen our understanding and love of Scripture
- Grow in relationship with each other
- To grow in the Holy Spirit

### TIPS

- This may be a worship evening at your congregation, if not consider using this evening to allow your group to practice praying and prophesying

### PRAYER

Open in prayer.

### DISCUSSION

1. How has the last week been? Did anyone have any opportunities to see their gifts at work during the week?

Someone read **Ephesians 4:7, Ephesians 4:11-13 1 Corinthians 14:1-6**

These passages remind us that we are to use our gifts to build each other up. The Corinthians passage speak about revelations. There are various ways we can receive revelations - **See** - visions, pictures in mind; **Feel** - physical or emotional; **Speak** - start speaking and God fills you with words to say; **Hear** - a thought that's not your thought; **Know** - a sudden conviction of something.

If someone in your life group can lead you in a song of worship to start with, and continue playing during the evening, ask them. Otherwise, maybe put on some worship in the background and lead your group in a time of praying for God to impart his gifts.

One great way of starting this off is to go around the room and focus on praying for one person at a time. Wait for God to speak. This can be risky, especially if you have people who have never done it before, but remind your group that you are a family and part of being a family is learning together and risking together. Remind them that they may have a scripture of encouragement for that individual, or see a picture.

Encourage your members to follow their encouragements with a prayer each time.

There will be clumsiness, expect it. That's why we do this in family and smaller groups. If someone brings a tongue, create the space to wait for an interpretation.

Don't be afraid. If an interpretation doesn't come, then just move on - its fine.

Sometimes people are learning to interpret as well, sometimes the tongue bringer needs the space to learn to recognize when it was for public or when it was for private - this can only happen if they are allowed to learn in a safe space. Close the evening by thanking God for his work in your group.

## Week 9

### GOALS

- Deepen our understanding and love of Scripture
- Grow in relationship with each other
- Allow God's love for his church to deepen our love for him and his church

### TIPS

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### PRAYER

Open in prayer.

### DISCUSSION

1. Have you heard anything that surprised you, or was new, or reminded you of something you think important about the church during this series so far?
2. Why do you think God loves the church?

Get some members to read **Ephesians 1:22, Matthew 16:18-19, Ephesians 5:25-27, Revelations 19: 7-8**

3. What do these passages say about God's love and affection for the church?
4. What do you think our response should be to God's heart for the church? How should it affect how we relate and engage with the family of God?
5. Why do you think this is so hard to do?

We'd rather be consumers of relationships—taking the parts we want and leaving out the parts we don't—than face dealing with all of home's demands (and benefits). And so, unfortunately, we scratch our heads and wonder why we can't seem to find the kind of community experience we're looking for, all the while remaining wilfully adolescent in our relational habits. (Jesse Rice, *The Church of Facebook: How the Hyperconnected Are Redefining Community*)

6. Are there any areas you feel you'd like to change about how you think, engage, relate to church going forward? Any areas you'd like to pray about?

## **PRAY**

Spend some time thanking God for his love for Jesus' church. Pray for your group and their personal and communal walk with God and the people of God.



## Week 10

### GOALS

- Deepen our understanding and love of Scripture
- Grow in relationship with each other
- Develop a confidence in our calling to the people of God and unity.

### TIPS

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### PRAYER

Open in prayer.

### DISCUSSION

1. Open with some highs and lows from the week.

We are in our last week of looking at how the church has a future in Christ. We looked at the vision of the church, our specific gifting for building up the church, practicing those gifts in the safety of spiritual family and how Christ's love for the church should shape our love for the church.

2. Have there been any areas that you have felt particularly challenging over this time? Any growing excitement around God's view of church?

Get some members to read **Ephesians 4:1-16**

3. What calling is Paul referring to in verse 1?
4. Verse 2-3 shows some outward behaviours of a life led that is worthy of the calling of God on us as followers and his family. What of these do you think you find easier to do? Which are harder?
5. How do verses 12-14 spur us on to develop and use our gifts?
6. The freedom of not being overwhelmed by anxieties and false teaching seems like it's too good to be true, but verse 14-15 makes such a promise. How do you think we can add to the work of the Holy Spirit in helping each other grow?

7. Are there any prayer requests for this evening?

## **PRAY**

Spend some time praying for God's church. Pray for our part in building the church and loving her the way Christ calls us to.

Life Group Leaders, remind your group that the attractional series begins next week. It will be an excellent series to invite friends, churched or unchurched, please encourage your group to be praying and mindful of opportunities to invite people to church.