

## Jan 19/25 – Leader’s Guide

### Ephesians 1:15-23 “Eyes of your Hearts Enlightened”

1. Part of Paul’s reason for praying the way that he does is that he is thankful that their faith in Jesus has borne fruit in faith and love. In the same vein, what are you thankful for in our church community, in your small group community? Begin your time together in prayer thanking God for his work in our midst.

*This is simply a question to set the tone for your reflection on Paul’s prayer, a desire that you would embody the emotional landscape that he was embodying as he prayed.*

*As you make a transition to the reading of the passage perhaps say Paul is moved from thankfulness to a yearning for more.*

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

2. Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened. For the ancient listener the heart was the center of the human personality involving the will, emotions, and intellect all aligned that we would *know*... not in the western way of knowing with facts and figures, but in the Hebrew way of knowing, that is having an experiential knowledge. How does this understanding of our heart, and the nature of knowing, shape your understanding of the nature of Christian faith?

*We use the word heart to refer to our emotions. My heart was broken, grieved, moved... for the ancient listener the heart was the primer driver of the human personality. As a driveshaft is to our car, an operating system to our smart phone so was the heart to the human creature. It is the primary driver of everything that we do, involving our thinking, our feeling, our doing. Paul prays that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened, that we would see with every aspect of our being, consuming our thoughts, stirring our emotions, directing our wills – that we would KNOW*

*To know not in the western way of facts and figures but in the Hebrew way of having an experiential knowledge.*

*Perhaps this might help us with the distinction. Let’s say you are wanting to celebrate something with a dinner out and you ask a friend for a recommendation. They recommend a particular restaurant and tell you about the sights, the smells, the sounds. They tell you about the attentiveness of the staff, the renown of the chef and her specialties. In light of that conversation you could say that you now KNOW this restaurant, but when you go out to eat and smell, and taste and touch yourself you now KNOW in an entirely different way. Paul wants us to know in this way, to have an experience of the truth of what God has for us IN Jesus.*

*It may be helpful here to reflect on how western Christianity has often focused on the intellect and how that has not borne the full fruit of gospel transformation. It may be helpful*

*to reflect on how your emotions, intellect and will are meant to be engaged in your faith and how... It may be helpful to explore how each aspect of our hearts are engaged in faith and the transformation that brings about.*

*In terms of the different ways of “knowing”, I believe this invites us to think of our faith relationally we don’t just know about God, we know God, and in that relationship we experience the different aspects of our heart (mind, emotion, will) engaged.*

*It is also that case that when we move beyond a simply intellectual faith and put our faith into practice with the attending emotions involved, we have an experience of it that goes beyond the intellectual knowing.*

3. Paul wants us to know three things, the hope of your calling, the riches of his inheritance in the saints, the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us. What do each mean? How will it shape our lives to “know” these things?

A. *The hope to which you were called.*

*By hope we often mean nothing more than wishful thinking directed toward the future. By hope Paul meant that we have a confident expectation. Our expectations of the future shape how we live in the present, shape our calling.*

*Biblical hope is directed toward the promise that Jesus is coming again to make everything new, bringing about a future where there is no more pain no more sorrow no more injustice – where sin and death have been wiped away. A future where redeemed humanity are stewarding new creation to bring flourishing to all.*

*In light of that future our calling is to live in anticipation of it in everything we do and say and pray - heal the sick, liberate the oppressed, work for justice, lift up the poor etc.*

*All our “work” that is in keeping with this future will somehow mysteriously carry on into this new creation.*

B. *The glorious riches of his inheritance in the saints.*

*There is some debate as to what this means, for Paul has used this word in a few different ways already. Is it that we are God’s inheritance, his treasured possession – OR – that we have in Jesus an inheritance, the glories of his future kingdom are ours in Jesus. I’m not sure we need to decide for both are faithful.*

*You are God’s inheritance, his treasured possession. He loves you with an eternal lavish love, there is nothing you can do to make God love you more, nothing you can do to make God love you less, you are loved beyond imagining.*

*Paul is praying that we would deepen in our experience of this love that we would move out into the world not from an absence of love but with an abundance of love to pour into the lives of others, that we would navigate relationships secure in his love so that when relationships go sideways we can admit our wrong and move to reconciliation, so that our fears can be stilled by a love that will never leave nor forsake.*

*It is also true that Paul is praying that we would see the riches of his future kingdom for the more we see that kingdom the more we can live in anticipation of it.*

*One of the ways we can live into this truth personally is by asking ourselves questions whenever we are faced with a decision, a behavioral question, what to do with our time, our money – we can ask is what I'm doing here, investing in here, fostering here going to be a part of God's future. If so – press in. If not, then why are we doing it?*

C. *The immeasurable greatness of his power.*

*Paul in these verses is heaping up synonyms for power – all to bring us to understand that Jesus has the capacity, the ability, the authority, and the strength to bring about the fullness of new creation.*

*How can we trust this? We have already seen his power at work. In raising Jesus from the death he has broken death's hold over creation, so that rising again Jesus is the first born, the first fruit of a new creation. We have already seen his power at work. He ascended to the throne of the cosmos high above every power, every authority, every rule*

*This power is given to the church to animate our living in step with the kingdom.*

4. (vs. 20–23) What is the nature of Jesus' relationship with the church? How does this impact our community life? Your life personally?

*He is the head, we are his body, he fills us with the fullness of his life.*

*He is the head, we are his body, he infuses it with the fullness of his power*

*He is the head we are his body, we are directed by his heart.*

*He is the head we are his body, so that we might be God's demonstration community of his future rule.*

*There could be many impacts to explore here but here are some immediate thoughts that might guide your discussion.*

*Why do we make goals that we can achieve under our strength when Jesus' strength is at our disposal?*

*Why do we make plans for our own lives without leaning into his wisdom and direction?*

*Why do we give up on ourselves or others when the power of Jesus is at our disposal that is desiring to bring about new creation in us and through us.*

5. Close in prayer by reading Paul's prayer pausing after each line to allow for people to pray in step with Paul.