

Study Guide: **What is God's Unique Plan for Individual Christians?** Ephesians 4:17- 6:24

- **Renewing Mind** (Ephesians 4:17-24)
  - What does it mean to “learn Christ”?
  - *“Just as a Jew learned Torah, so now a Christian can be said to **learn Christ**. But the personal object in the latter case does make a difference. Since Christians believed that Christ was a living person whose presence was mediated by the proclamation and teaching about him, **learning Christ** involved not only learning about, but also being **shaped by**, the risen Christ who was the source of a new way of life as well as of a new relationship with God.”<sup>1</sup>*
  - Does Jesus’ illustration in Mark 7:18-23 underline the need for mind renewal?
  - Is this a one time renewal or an ongoing one?
  - *“The renewal of the mind (here in the Greek present continuous tense) suggests that we are to put off the old clothing and put on the new clothing of **a renewed mind daily, not just at conversion.**”<sup>2</sup>*
  - *“The change of clothing imagery signifies an **exchange of identities**, and the concepts of the old and the new persons reinforce this. These old and new persons are not simply Adam and Christ as representatives of the old and new orders (pace Barth, 539), nor more specifically Adam in the inner person and Christ in the inner person (pace Jervell, *Imago Dei*, 240–48)... **to put on the new person that they already are...**”<sup>3</sup>*
- **Do not grieve the Spirit** (Ephesians 4:30)
  - *“...the preceding verses show how community life the Spirit is building is frustrated...”<sup>4</sup>*
  - *“...Spirit is sensitive to rejection...”<sup>5</sup>*
  - *“When they believed, the readers of this epistle were sealed with the Spirit. Cattle and slaves were branded with their owners seal. And so the seal was a mark of ownership of preservation as the owner’s property...is therefore baptism of the Spirit...”<sup>6</sup>*
  - In what specific ways might you “grieve the Spirit”?

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<sup>1</sup> Word Biblical Commentary – Ephesians: Volume 42.

<sup>2</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1979), 182.

<sup>3</sup> Word Biblical Commentary – Ephesians: Volume 42

<sup>4</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary : Ephesians* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990) 308.

<sup>5</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1979), 189

<sup>6</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary : Ephesians* (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990) 39, 40

- **Be imitators of God...**Ephesians 5:1, 2
  - What does “live in love” mean to you? What is one way you personally do this?
  - What other scriptures might describe the fundamental nature of God?(1 John 4:7-21? Matt. 5:44, 45?)
  - Based on Christ’s evaluation of the Ephesian congregation in Revelation 2:4, 5, might a lack of “living in love” be added to the list of vices in Ephesians 5:5?
  - In the context of Ephesians, are there other fundamental characteristics of God to imitate?
- **Be filled with the Spirit:** Ephesians 5:18-20
  - *“The idea of being filled with the Spirit recalls that of being filled up to all the fullness of God in 3:19 and that of the Church as the fullness of Christ in 1:23 (Cf. also 4:13). Clearly, the Spirit mediates the fullness of God and of Christ to the believer. The command to be filled with the Spirit stands in the center of the passage and has links with what precedes—wisdom—as well as with what follows—worship. The Spirit provides the power for both aspects of Christian living. Believers, who have already been reminded of their sealing by the Spirit (1:13; 4:30) and enjoined not to grieve the Spirit (4:30), are now exhorted to allow the Spirit to have the fullest control that they are conscious of in their lives and to open themselves continually to the one who can enable them to walk wisely and to understand Christ’s will and who can inspire their worship and thanksgiving.”<sup>7</sup>*
  - Have you personally experienced a times where you definitely felt filled with the Spirit?
- **Sing** Ephesians 5:19
  - *“Hardly any musical scores exist from the ancient world (about fifty, and most of them are fragments)...Paul doesn’t see these hymns and songs as simply decorative, a pleasant embroidery around Christian faith and practice. Singing, whether aloud or in your heart, was, he thought an excellent way of actually practising the faith. If you don’t want your garden to grow weeds, one of the best ways is to keep it well stocked with strong, sturdy flowers and shrubs. If you don’t want your mind and heart to go wandering off into the realms of darkness, one of the best ways is to keep them well stocked with wise and thankful themes, so that the words of comfort, guidance and good judgment come bubbling up unbidden from the memory and subconscious.”<sup>8</sup>*
  - How often do you sing worshipful songs during the week apart from church services?

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<sup>7</sup> Word Biblical Commentary – Ephesians: Volume 42.

<sup>8</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul For Everyone: The Prison Letters* (Louisville, KY WJK 2004)62,63

- **A Great Mystery 5:31-32**

- “ Our final passage is perhaps the most difficult of the three: “We are members of his [Christ’s] body. ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ **This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church**” (5:30-32). Not a few scholars debate Paul’s quotation of **Gen 2:24** in 5:31. Does Paul really see the union of Christ and the church in the marriage of Adam and Eve in Eden, and, if so, is Paul reading the OT with hermeneutical integrity? Yes and Yes. **The first couple’s marriage is prototypical of all of marriage in the Bible (e.g., Deut 31:16-17; Mal 2:15). Even on a corporate level, Yahweh’s marriage to his bride Israel flows from Genesis 2:24. Paul’s quotation of Genesis 2:24 is not unwarranted but brilliant for it weaves together two important threads 1) Adam and Eve’s marriage serves as a model for the church in Ephesus (cf. Matt 19:5; 1 Cor 6:16), and 2) the first marriage provides a framework for understanding Yahweh’s marriage to Israel and, therefore, Christ’s marriage to the church. What makes Paul’s use of Genesis 2:24 “mysterious,” then, is probably the generally unforeseen, robust union between Israel’s messiah and his people.”<sup>9</sup>**
- What have you learned about the marriage of Christ and the Church from observing your own or someone else’s marriage?
- How do you respond to this quote from Mother Teresa?
  - *To me –Jesus is my God. Jesus is my Spouse. Jesus is my Life. Jesus is my only Love. Jesus is my All in All. Jesus is my Everything...Jesus, I love with my whole heart, with my whole being. I have given Him all, even my sins, and he has espoused me to Himself in tenderness and love. Now and for life I am the spouse of my Crucified Spouse. Amen.*<sup>10</sup>
- **6:1-4 Mutual love between children and parents**
  - Paul addresses children directly. What might that indicate about children in the Ephesian congregation?
  - What are some ways parents can provoke their children? Can this happen through well-intentioned actions?
  - Does this suggest that Jesus is the children’s master too?
- **6:5-9 Mutual love between slaves and masters**
  - Is it possible that some slaves and their masters attended the same congregation?
  - Try listing Paul’s admonitions to the slaves and apply as admonitions to the masters.
    - Why didn’t Paul preach against slavery?

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<sup>9</sup> <https://credomag.com/2019/10/how-to-read-ephesians-theologically/> accessed 210416

<sup>10</sup> <https://parishableitems.wordpress.com/2016/09/07/who-is-jesus-to-me/> accessed 210430

- “Paul could no more envision a world without slavery than we can envisage a world without electricity.”<sup>11</sup>
- Are there any points here that might apply to contemporary workplaces? In faith-based non-profits?
- **God’s Mysterious Plan** Ephesians 6:18-20
  - 6:18 What does it mean to pray in the Spirit?
  - 6:19,20 Was Paul in prison when he wrote Ephesians? Did he allow this condition to dull his ministry?
  - Why would it be so challenging for him to explain the mysterious plan to both Jews and Gentiles?
  - Might it be inferred that the complete equality of Jews and Gentiles was integral to the gospel message? Is it today?
    - “Jews didn’t know that Gentiles would eventually be fellow heirs with them...it was a secret until now....by the end of Eph 3:6 & 6:19) mystery is equated **with Gospel**... virtually.”<sup>12</sup>
  - Can Ephesians be helpful as a mature overview of Paul’s writings?
    - “(Ephesians) isn’t the longest or fullest of (Paul’s) writings, but it offers a breathtaking view of the entire landscape...the reader who comes to Ephesians after reading the rest of Paul will get a new angle on the way in which his thinking holds together.”<sup>13</sup>
  - Can Ephesians be helpful as summarizing core messages of the Bible? What do you think?
    - “Our goal here is to grasp a great deal of Paul’s theology of Ephesians through the rubric of three mysteries—the unity of the cosmos (1:9), the unity of Jews and Gentiles (3:3, 9), and the unity of man and woman in marriage (5:32)...The common denominator between all three is God’s unfolding plan of unity in Christ. Once we’ve grasped the heart of Ephesians, we will then reflect on how to read all of Scripture in light of it... Paul’s assertion that **Christ rules the cosmos from the Father’s throne, having subjected the entire created order through his death and resurrection (1:8a-10), is at the core of the Bible’s story.** Adam’s fall fractured creation’s relationship to God. But even before the fall, Adam and Eve were to subdue the entire created order by aligning it with God’s cosmic rule (Gen 1:28). Christ’s success as the last Adam and the divine Son of Man not only righted the wrong of the fall, it also achieves what God commanded Adam—the subjugation and unity of all things under God’s rule.”<sup>14</sup>

**Ephesians 6:23-24 (NLT2)**<sup>23</sup> Peace be with you, dear brothers and sisters, and may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you love with faithfulness.<sup>24</sup> May God’s grace be eternally upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>11</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul For Everyone: The Prison Letters* (Louisville, KY WJK 2004) 70

<sup>12</sup> John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity. 1979) 118

<sup>13</sup> N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Epistles* (Louisville, KY; WJK 2004), 3,4.

<sup>14</sup> <https://credomag.com/2019/10/how-to-read-ephesians-theologically/> accessed 210416