

## **Ephesians**

### Week 03 – Reason to Praise

**Transition:** Last week we switched our introductory view of Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus from the city's history and culture to the people in the church. In his greeting, Paul begins by reminding them of how God sees them—they are saints (holy ones) who are faithful. He then extends to them the blessing of grace and peace from God and Jesus. This is quintessential Paul...deep truths mixed with deep love for those under his care.

**Context:** This week we are delving into (arguably) one of the deepest and most profound passages in all of Scripture. But Paul's chief point is not to teach doctrine. Rather, he states one incontrovertible divine blessing about a believer's position before God in Christ after another, with little or no explanation. The cumulative magnitude of God's love and character that he develops is overwhelming and incredibly humbling for anyone who is honestly taking it all in. In turn, such a person cannot help but then freely offer heart-felt and exultant praise to God.

#### **Opening Questions:**

- When you think of the ways you've been blessed, what comes immediately to mind? How does being mindful of your blessings normally affect you?
- Think of an adversity that you went through as a family or a team. How did you get through it? What role did belief in family/team identity play in overcoming the difficulty?

**Scripture/Storying:** Ephesians 1:3-14

#### **Discipleship Questions:**

- What are your immediate feelings after reading (and thinking upon) the truths found in this passage? What are your feelings inclining you to do?
- Count how many times the phrase "in Christ" (or some variation) is used. What does the term mean? Why do you think Paul uses it so much?
- How does this passage impact your view of Jesus? ...your view of yourself?
- Of the spiritual blessings that Paul names, which one(s) stand out to you right now? Why?
- How does confidence in one's God-given identity impact his/her daily walk with the Lord? Of the blessings that are named, which ones do you confidently believe about yourself? ...which ones do you struggle believing about yourself?
- What are some ways that you can humbly express your gratitude and praise to God (and Jesus) for all the ways that He's blessed you?
- What is the Holy Spirit leading you to do in response to today's discussion?

**Prayer time:** This week we are praying for wisdom and clarity for our Sr. High ministry as they pray through the "what, when, and where" of their next mission trip.