

God's Priorities from Ephesians

Givens and Broad Concepts

God wants us to be able to separate reality from fantasy (i.e., deception).

God wants us to see that there is more to life that meets the eye: that reality includes a fundamental, eternal, and powerful spiritual realm. That realm includes dark forces of evil that seek our destruction.

God wants us to realize that we have all become subject to the life-destroying control of the forces of evil—(“. . . dead in our . . . sins”)

God wants us to understand that Christ reigns as Lord over all realms—that he is bringing all creation under the headship of Christ.

God wants us to know that he is starting earth/humanity over “in Christ.” Christ is the new creation of God—restoring the image of God to us. In Christ is the place for all spiritual blessings.

God wants to bring all people into the unity, love, and blessings of his new-creation community in Christ.

We are saved by grace through faith—no one can think they did it for themselves.

God wants us to understand what he wants to do in the church. He wants us to experience, understand, and live by his recreating love in Christ.

God wants us to live out the paradigm of overcoming hatred and building loving community in the church for all people for all time. (It's a keynote characteristic of new creation—the new world order.)

God wants us to love Christ and the church (with a faithful and forever love).

God wants us to understand some things.

God wants us to know that our vision/perspective as humans is very limited—thus, he is making known to us some extremely important things (through Paul and the church):

- that there is another realm where he and other spiritual beings exist
- that the spiritual and physical (human) realms impact each another
- that he is carrying out his plan in the spiritual realm through his son Jesus Christ

- that God, via Christ and the Spirit, interacts with us/earth through Christ in the church
- that we are constantly under attack from the forces of evil for our destruction
- that Christ is victorious and reigns over the evil forces of darkness
- that God wants to live in us through Christ in the church
- that he wants to encourage, defend, and empower us

God wants us to understand that he has a plan (for the universe) that he is carrying out through the church. He wants us to understand the nature of that plan:

- that there is order, structure, and purpose in his plan
- that he loves us deeply and wants us to be saved through faith in Christ
- that all spiritual blessings are in Christ, including “the hope of his calling,” “the riches of his glorious inheritance,” and “the surpassing greatness of his power”
- that the church is a key part of God’s new creation in Christ: through the church the many parts of God’s wisdom and plan are to be shown to everyone
- that the church has an essential characteristic of oneness—fostered by a love for and resulting peace between all types of people (“There is no Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female; for we are all one in Christ Jesus”)
- that God equips the church for service/ministry—for unity in purpose, stability, and growth toward the fullness of Christ—by giving grace gifts to each of us
- that being a part of God’s plan (God’s Kingdom) means learning to live “up to” the nature of God’s new creation in Christ, living by and growing in the values and actions of “new world” living—which means looking to and learning to be like God: learning to love, live by and reflect reality (“light”/“truth”), and to be wise
- that we are in a battle against the old world/ways and that we need to be constantly vigilant and empowering ourselves with his help (his armor) to stand against evil. God’s help (his armor) comes from
 - learning what’s real and what’s not
 - by acting/living according to God’s nature
 - by being proactive with the good news of reconciliation and peace
 - by knowing what we have in Christ and what we are in God’s eyes
 - by having what God says readily available to us (in our hearts and minds)
 - by communicating with God (in the Spirit) at all times.

God wants us to see the bigger picture and give ourselves completely to his purposes.

God wants us *to be* some things (that he has made us in Christ).

God wants us to know his love and grace in Christ so that we can be a part of his new humanity in Christ—he wants to live in us, to dwell in our hearts through Christ.

God wants us to be encouraged and strengthened through the knowledge of the blessings we have in Christ: the hope of his calling, the riches of his inheritance, and the surpassing greatness of his power (= a means of Christ living in our hearts through faith).

God wants us to be encouraged and strengthened by recognizing his sovereignty, by trusting in the Lordship of Christ, by receiving the guarantee of the Spirit—to experience the indwelling, enriching, and empowering presence of God in the church.

God wants us to be strengthened and encouraged through his empowering armor—that we overcome discouragement through his blessings, presence, and power in Christ.

God desires us to experience and express his marvelous plan in the church/Christ (God wants us to be the church).

God wants us to value the various parts of (roles within) the body and be a part of the grace-gifted interworking of the body of Christ.

God desires that we value the history of the church and each part of the church as an important piece of its unity and power.

God wants us to grow and mature together as the body of Christ.

God wants us to be like him.

God wants us to be/stand strong against the scheming attacks of Satan.

God wants us *to do* some things (live up to what we are).

God wants us to love the church.

God wants us to love the church, maintain its purpose and unity, and live according to the community-building values and actions of God's new creation in Christ.

God wants us to live up to who we are in Christ by working extremely hard to respect and maintain the essential unity of the church.

God wants us to be a part of the empowering grace upon the church—to receive and serve the church according to our gift(s).

God wants us to be like him—to put off the old, be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and be made new in Christ.

God wants us to live according to the values of his new creation community.

God wants us to live up to who we are in Christ by learning to live in love, light (truth and reality), and wisdom—as part of God’s new community in Christ.

God wants us to take those values into our families and daily lives (work, school, etc.)

God wants us to stand firm against the attacks of evil: to take up/be clothed with his armor.

God wants us to respond (and help others respond) to his will and purpose with worship.

God desires that we receive, respond to, and express the blessings of God in Christ with worship (that we might be “to the praise of his glory”), thanksgiving, and prayer.

What Does “Being the Church” Mean?

- ✓ For me?
- ✓ For my home and family?
- ✓ For our church community?
- ✓ For our city/community?
- ✓ For our government?
- ✓ For the world?

Ephesians Summary

Givens

The sovereignty of God (expressed as the “will” of God)

Jesus is the Messiah/Christ, the beloved son of God.

God is love and loves us greatly.

Jesus died and was raised for our salvation.

The existence and importance of the spiritual realm

Paul is an apostle by the will of God.

Paul seeks the salvation and spiritual growth of the Ephesian/Gentile Christians.

Points

All spiritual blessings are “in Christ.”

God is accomplishing his plan for the universe in Christ.

God’s will is for us to be holy and blameless before him.

God chooses us in Christ—in love and wisdom.

God’s plan has structure, order, or “steps,” which included his blessings upon “we who were the first to hope in Christ”: (1) chosen first for sonship (grace as redemption and forgiveness) and (2) wisdom/insight and the revelation of the mystery of his will (grace as wisdom/insight).

The mystery of God’s will and the goal of his plan: to unite/sum up all things in Christ.

God’s grace/blessings in Christ include being chosen (called), the rights/blessings of sonship (= inheritance), and gracious gifting of Christ and empowerment of God.

God calls us “to be for the praise of his glory.”

Gentiles/Non-Jews heard the message of truth, the good news of salvation, believed, and were added/sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the down payment/guarantee of our inheritance

Paul prays that God would open the eyes of their hearts to understand (1) the hope of his calling, (2) the riches of his inheritance among the saints, and (3) the surpassing greatness of his power upon us who believed.

God's surpassing power was on display [or was working after] God raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at his right hand.

Jesus reigns as Lord over all things (all spiritual power and authority) for the church.

Everyone is dead in trespasses and sins outside of Christ.

By God's great grace, Gentiles were made alive and seated with Christ through faith.

They were added to the Jews (far brought near) into one new humanity/body of Christ—thus making peace.

We are all saved by grace so no one can boast (think too highly of themselves).

God's plan included "the apostles and prophets" as the foundation of the church—Christ as the cornerstone.

As a part of God's new creation, we are God's artistic work for a new way of life.

Paul is the prisoner of Christ for the Gentiles—because of his ministry of sharing the good news with the Gentiles and making known to everyone the mystery of God's will—according to the working of God's power. In other words, Paul is not a prisoner because of the Gentiles or because of the Jews, but he is "the prisoner of Christ."

Paul's calling, ministry, and imprisonment is an example of God's power upon us who believed.

The Gentiles should not be discouraged because of Paul's suffering for them (which is for their "glory").

The mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, fellow-body members, fellow-partakers of the promises in Christ (inclusion of all peoples in the one new body of Christ/creation of God: so we get inheritance, new community, and promises)—this is because of the presence of God/Christ in the church (the Spirit's unity).

We can overcome discouragement by understanding the hope . . . , the riches . . . , and the power.

Encouragement and growth come via understanding—through Christ indwelled in our hearts through faith.

There is only one God, one Lord, one Spirit, one church, and one hope of God's calling. (There is an essential oneness in the new creation of God and hence in the body of Christ.)

Unity in the church is accomplished through grace gifts of Christ, through which God equips the church for ministry and growth.

When the parts work and grow together, the church grows toward the fullness of Christ, which provides stability and defense against false ideas.

Living up to the calling of God means being radically transformed in our minds and our behavior (putting off the old, being renewed in the spirit of our minds, putting on the new man/self of God, re-created in his image).

Living up to the calling of God means understanding (being "enlightened") and living by the fundamental values of new community in Christ (truth and truth telling, dealing with anger, etc.)

Living up to the calling of God means being like God by living lives of love

Living up to the calling of God means being like God by reflecting the light of Christ

Living up to the calling of God means being like God by leaning to live carefully and wisely

Living up to the calling of God means bringing the values and actions of new community into our homes and families, learning to love and care for each other the way Christ loves and cares for the church. Husbands Wives . . . Children

We are to stand strong against the attacks and tricks of the devil through the full armor of God (truth, righteousness, good news of peace, salvation, word of God), praying at all times and in all situations.

Our battle/struggle is not against people, but against spiritual forces of evil.

Paul asked for prayer that he would carry out his ministry as an ambassador of God to/for the Gentiles boldly.

Living up to his calling in such a committed fashion meant (at least for the time being), he was "in chains."

Paul sent Tychicus to tell his churches how he was doing and to encourage them.