

## **Sermon Series: Where to I Fit in? The Book of Ephesians for the Leavenworth Church of Christ**

### **Paul's Purpose:**

Paul's purpose in Ephesians is to promote a unified, growing, healthy church that fulfills God's purposes of being his vehicle for reconciliation in the world, and for growing in maturity and ministry in unity that demonstrates God's wisdom and character.

### **Paul's Strategy:**

To promote this vision of a healthy, unified, serving, evangelistic church, Paul's strategy was to begin by identifying God's cosmic purpose and how the church fits into that purpose (Eph 1). His next move was to move from the cosmic to the more concrete in an exposition of how God's purpose involved the reconciliation of both Jews and Gentiles through the Gospel into one in order to demonstrate the manifold wisdom of God (Eph 2-3). Paul then gets more specific and expands the idea of unity and how unity is indispensable for the church to carry out God's purposes, that of maturity and ministry (Eph 4:1-16). Following this, Paul expands on the idea of maturity with an exposition of holiness, a putting off of the old self and putting on the new self, which involves purity and love (Eph 4:17-5:14). The book of Ephesians uses love more than any other book in the New Testament except for 1 Corinthians and 1 John. Paul then moves to the principle of submission to one another (Eph 5:15-6:9). Although the principle begins with submission to one another in general, he spends most of his time expanding on the principle for marriage, family relationships, and slave-master relationships. Finally, Paul moves back to the cosmic picture again, only this time it is a picture of a cosmic battle in which we are the soldiers (Eph 6:10--20). What this does is re-characterize everything Paul had said previously in terms of military imagery.

Since Paul does not appear to be reacting to specific problems as he does in 1 Corinthians or Galatians, this letter appears to be a summary of God's purpose for the church. There is a possibility that this was originally a circular letter because some of the oldest and most reliable manuscripts do not contain "at Ephesus" in the address. It is possible that the letter either began, or wound up in Ephesus and thus had the name attached to it to identify it. There are other theories as to why "at Ephesus" was added to later manuscripts (or was omitted from older ones). There is evidence in the letter itself that it was written to a specific church. We do know that Paul desired to have letters passed around and read in more than one church. This letter seems to be the most general of Paul's letter, which gives more weight to the theory that this may have been intended as a circular letter, not meant for one church in particular. Since this is a text-critical problem and since my goal is to summarize the message of Ephesians, I will not spend any more time on this issue. It does not significantly affect the interpretation of the message of Ephesians if at all.

In Paul's conclusion, he returns to the theme of his mission as an ambassador to preach the Gospel. A church that lacks a sense its place in God's plan, and therefore lacks unity would not be able to effectively carry out God's purposes of mission, ministry and maturity.

### **Preaching Strategy:**

My strategy in preaching through Ephesians is to keep Paul's purposes in writing this letter central to the sermon series. I have heard a lot of sermons on Ephesians that disconnect the message of individual passages of Ephesians from this bigger picture, which is ironic because Paul begins with the big picture in Ephesians which overshadows the rest of the letter. Without this perspective, we miss what the book of Ephesians was designed to accomplish.

There are many "pieces" in the church, and without a sense of God's purpose and design, we could wind up putting those pieces together in such a way that God's purposes are only marginally being met if at all. In other words, we could wind up doing things that are right and good, but at the same time neglect focusing on what is of ultimate and central importance. What is peripheral could wind up taking center stage, and what is supposed to be central could wind up on the sidelines.

I believe that Ephesians tells us that it boils down to mission, ministry and maturity. This sermon series and the discussion questions will seek to discover what this means for the Leavenworth Church of Christ.

### **Sermons:**

#### **1) God's Definition (Eph 1:1-14)**

**Text Summary:** Paul begins his letter with a long sentence of praise for God that highlights God's cosmic plan, which was to sum up everything in Christ through election, adoption, redemption, forgiveness, and sealing of the Holy Spirit, which comes through the Gospel.

**Sermon Summary:** God identifies and defines us according to his everlasting purpose and his will, which is to purchase and adopt us as his children who will love and serve him. That should be the identifying mark that guides and defines every aspect of our life.

**Know:** We should define all our plans, difficulties, and relationships in light of God's purpose and will for us.

**Feel:** A need to reflect on who I am, and who we are as a church

**Do:** Reflect on your plans, difficulties and relationships at this time in your life and what role God's purpose and will plays in them. Evaluate how intentionally centered you are on God's purposes for you and for the church.

#### **2) The Eyes of your Heart (Eph 1:15-23)**

**Text Summary:** Paul moves from blessing God to a prayer for the church which involves both a thanksgiving and a request that they would be granted wisdom and insight concerning their hope, calling, inheritance, as especially the power and authority of Christ who is head over all power and authority. This thanksgiving gives a big picture perspective on the church. God's intent is that the church be the fullness of Christ on the earth, and it can only do that when it has wisdom and insight concerning its hope, calling, inheritance, and especially the nature of true power and authority.

**Summary:** God wants us to have discernment concerning our place in his overall, cosmic plan, and not get bogged down with peripheral things. This discernment begins with knowing the hope of our calling, the riches of our inheritance, and the greatness of his power in us. Only with this understanding can we as a church be the fullness of Christ in the world.

**Know:** God wants us to see the ourselves and the world with spiritual eyes in order to keep us from getting distracted and losing sight of our place and purpose to be the fullness of Christ in the world

**Feel:** Futility of placing hope in the things that belong to the sphere of this world.

**Do:** Reflect on the role of hope in your life and how it shapes your perspective, actions, and goals, and on how peripheral things compete with the central hope that lies in Christ. Formulate things to pray for to help "enlighten the eyes of your heart" concerning the world, and your place in it, and commit to pray for them this week.

#### **3) A Work in Progress - (Eph 2:1-10)**

**Text Summary:** Paul shifts from the cosmic scene to the earthly scene and looks back at our human past which was under the power of a contrary cosmic power. Because we were by nature dead children of wrath, only God through his mercy and grace in Christ could do anything about it. Therefore, we are saved not by our own works, but by his work in Christ. In fact, we are his workmanship, not our workmanship. As his workmanship, our purpose in God's plan was not merely for him to purchase us and give us a position in his plan, but for us to serve through "good

works." Paul says some incredible things about the church, and this section indirectly deals with the potential problem of arrogance, which there is no room for in the body of Christ.

**Summary:** God has transferred us from the dead, present course of this world to a Christ's course in the heavenly places because of his kindness and grace. As a result, his purpose in us can be met, which is for us to serve him. In order for us to carry out God's service, we need a Christian worldview that is no longer dominated according to the "course of this world," but by Christ. This will enable us to have the correct attitudes toward ourselves, each other, and the world.

**Know:** Since God has chosen a heavenly path for us, we need to realize that we are no longer to think of ourselves, each other, the world, and our goals as the world does, but as God does, which means constantly evaluating subtle views on these things that are contrary to God

**Feel:** A need to be guarded and alert to the subtle influences on our attitudes and assumptions about ourselves and the world in which we live

**Do:** Evaluate the messages of the world concerning the place of Christian faith in personal, daily, and public life and how that compares to God's perspective. Reflect on how this perspective affects your daily ministry and service to God and to others. Formulate a plan to inoculate yourself against the subtle influence of the "course/way of this world," and live daily according to the course of God.

#### **4) Breaking Down the Barriers (Eph 2:11-22)**

**Text Summary:** Paul becomes more specific on the nature of the redemption of his people. God broke down barriers between Jews and Gentiles to create a new man. Paul uses several vivid metaphors and contrasts to express various aspects of this truth. The old divided man of enmity, and the new man of peace. Strangers and aliens v.s. fellow citizens with the saints. The old temple in a place (implied) and the new temple in a people. This was a challenge for the church because there was a huge ethnic, cultural, and religious gap between the Jew and Gentile in which both groups typically found each other strange and the least, and offensive at the most. In these images, Paul emphasizes that division and enmity is contrary to God's purposes and plan. the spiritual reality is that they were one in spite of their differences, and they needed to reflect it as "one man" or "fellow citizens" or a "temple of God."

**Sermon Summary:** God wants us to understand that God destroyed barriers and divisions in his people in order to create unified church that is fitted together as the temple of God. As the temple of God, we are a dwelling place of God, and should demonstrate it through our mutual love, support, and acceptance so that our example will lead others to God.

**Know:** Jesus destroyed barriers that divide us so that we can be a unified, supportive people that demonstrates the presence of God in order to draw others to Him.

**Feel:** A desire to be grow deeper in relationships to each other

**Do:** Identify "walls," challenges to deeper fellowship and how it affects the church's ability to bring the lost to Christ. Reflect on ways to destroy these walls. core effectively carry out God's purposes as his "temple" in the world.

#### **5) Administration of the Mystery (Eph 3:1-13)**

**Text Summary:** Paul becomes has moved from God's overall cosmic plan, God's plan for the church, and now Paul reflects on his own place in God's plan and the place of his readers in God's plan. Paul refers to his place and ministry in God's plan as a stewardship, and as an administration of the mystery, which is that gentiles-all peoples can come to God through the Gospel of Christ. Paul's place was to preach the Gospel to the gentiles so that not only would they be united in Christ, but so that the wisdom of God would be made known.

**Sermon Summary:** Through grace we have been united as one body in Christ. But in order to meet our purpose, we need a more complete understanding of grace as a stewardship entrusted to us. We have been entrusted to administer a grace that will Reconcile the lost to God and his people, and give our lives a focus that leads to conviction and confidence in our walk with God.

**Know:** Grace is not merely unmerited favor, but a stewardship entrusted to us that must be lived out, proclaimed, and shared with those around us. Our whole life should be defined by this stewardship.

Feel: A sense of gratefulness and duty to take the grace God has given and share it with others

Do: Reflect on how God's grace would affect our purpose and ministry. Identify potential challenges to carrying out God's purposes and specifics on how to personally carry out his purposes.

## **6) Strategic Prayer (Eph 3:14-21)**

Text Summary:

Context: Paul has moved from God's cosmic plan summed up in Jesus, to the Gentiles being a part of that plan, to a unified church being integral to God's plan, to Paul's part in the plan as a steward. Paul now begins to attention his focus on the readers of the epistle and begins with a prayer that encourages the brethren to be strong in love and think big because God is stronger and bigger than we can imagine and will work in them.

Function: This prayer serves as a transition from what God has done to what the readers need to do about it. Through his prayer, Paul moves the focus from God's act to how Christians should act. Before Paul moves on to the practical application portion of his letter beginning with chapter 4, he prays. In essence, Paul provides a model for prayer. He prayed a similar prayer in chapter one, then prays here again in chapter three, then concludes with an exhortation to prayer in chapter 6 when he speaks of the armor of God. In effect, Paul shows that prayer should be an integral part of Spiritual warfare, and like any warfare, needs to have a strategy. His two prayers in Ephesians provide a model of the things this readers should not neglect to pray for in their prayer lives. What this means for his readers is this - before they try to figure out what to "do," they need to pray.

Content: Several features of his prayer are that God is the father of all families, which should remind the readers that God's plan includes all peoples on the earth. The main thrust of Paul's prayer is that the brethren would be filled and permeated with all the fullness of God through Christ. According to his prayer, this filling would bring an inner power and strength, a grounding in love, and a clarity of comprehensions that would bring the ability to see the big picture of God's plan in all that they are and all that they do. He concludes his prayer by focusing on God who does far more than we could think. In essence, he wants to expand the vision of the readers in such a way that they see themselves as a part of God's big plan.

Timeless Message: In our prayers, we should be sure to have a focus on the big picture. Like Paul, we should pray to be filled with Christ in order to have stability in this life where everything shifts and changes.

Sermon Summary: In our prayers, we should be sure to have a focus on the big picture like Paul does. We should pray to be filled with Christ and the power of his spirit in order to overcome the storms of this life. With focus on this kind of prayer, God will give us stability and the ability to fulfill his purpose for us.

Know: Before we mobilize for God, we need to pray strategically by asking God to fill us in such a way that we can keep his overall purpose at the center of what we are and what we do.

Feel: The need to bathe everything in prayer

Do: Examine what Paul asks for the church and how each of these things might affect us here. Compare this prayer to your prayer life. Determine if there is any adjustment that needs to be made in our prayer life individually and as a group. Formulate a big picture prayer for the group and for the church.

## **7) The calling for Christian canning - Eph 4:1-6**

Text Summary: Having laid a theological foundation of God's plan, Paul now explicitly begins to make applications to his readers. Since God's plan is to bring all believers in Christ together as one body to serve and to minister, then the readers themselves need to work and preserving what God has done. The readers don't create unity, God created it and the readers need to preserve it. Paul gives his readers only one command in this section, to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. Everything else that follows are participles and prepositional phrases that expand on this one command. Although Paul does not explicitly state what the calling is in this section, he has been talking about it all along up to this point. Believers were

called by the Gospel to be one body in Christ and to be stewards of the Gospel. Paul expands on what it means to walk in a manner consistent with this calling, which involves humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, love, and preserving unity and peace. Paul then goes on to lay another theological foundation for this unity by outlining the oneness of God in a list of seven things connected to God. Since the God who called his readers is one father to them, and since there is only one body, faith, and baptism, then they themselves need to preserve the oneness created by God.

**Timeless Message:** Since there is one father God over all his people whom he has called together as one, his people need to preserve that oneness through humility, gentleness, patience, and love.

**Sermon Summary:** Since we are our Father God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to be his one body, we need to preserve the unity that God created in Christ Jesus through the qualities of humility, gentleness, patience, and loving tolerance.

**Know:** God created us to be Christ's "body" on the earth, and the only way to function as Christ's "body" on the earth is to work hard at preserving unity and love among ourselves.

**Feel:** The need to pursue and preserve a unity that enables us to work together as one body in fulfilling God's purposes and mission

**Do:** Identify the character traits that help to preserve the unity God has created and evaluate which is strongest and weakest in your life. Formulate a plan to strengthen the character traits that are the weakest.

## **8) The Purpose of Unity (3 Parts) - Eph 4:7-16**

**Text Summary:** Paul begins this section with "but," showing that even though the body is one, there are differing gifts that Christ has given. Paul couches this in military terminology, casting Christ's sacrifice and victory over death as a military victory followed by a victory parade and the giving of gifts. Paul outlines the gifts that Christ gave as people with particular ministries. The word "as" does not occur in the Greek, so the text says, "He gave some apostles, and some prophets...etc." His gifts were people! Apostles, prophets, preachers, and shepherds were all to be seen as gifts. Using the metaphor of a body, Paul points out that the purpose of these gifts are to promote ministry, maturity and mission among his readers. He points out that the body, in order to do this, has to be held together by every joint in love. In other words, every Christian has a significant part to play in God's plan for the church.

**Timeless Message:** Christ gave people as gifts to his church in order to fulfill its purpose of ministry, maturity, and evangelism. Every person, therefore is a gift to the body from Christ.

### **a) The Purpose of Unity#1: Ministry**

**Sermon Summary:** We need to understand that preserving the unity that God has created at a great cost is for the purpose of carrying out God's purposes for the church, which involve ministry, maturity, and missions. Every single one of us has a significant role in holding together the body of Christ so that we grow in these three things

**Know:** The only way to fulfill God's purposes is together as a unified body. Each one of us is significant and has a significant role in fulfilling God's purposes in the body

**Feel:** The need to not only get along, but to work together towards God's purposes and focus on God's mission rather than our own pet things

**Do:** Reflect on the cost that Jesus paid in order to give the gifts that contribute to ministry and how that should affect our attitude toward the gifts. Identify in what ways you can and do minister to others and how it contributes to God's purposes for the church.

### **b) The Purpose of Unity#2: Maturity**

**Sermon Summary:** We need to understand that preserving the unity that God has created at a great cost is for the purpose of carrying out God's purposes for the church, which involves promoting maturity in the body. As a body, we must rid ourselves of what prohibits healthy growth, and add what promotes healthy growth. This takes growth in discernment of the word and the world.

Know: Bible study, application, and accountability are indispensable for the body of Christ to attain maturity in such a way that it carries out God's purposes

Feel: A need to do what it takes to press on to maturity in relationship with God

Do: Reflect on what stifles spiritual maturity in your life and what role the group and the church plays in promoting maturity. Identify ways personal study, the church, and the world interact to promote spiritual discernment and maturity.

### **c) The Purpose of Unity#3: Mission**

Sermon Summary: One of the purposes God brought us together as one body of Christ is to reach out to the lost with the Gospel. As God revealed the Gospel through Christ and his body, he continues to do so through Christ's body, the church, which is the people of God. This involves an understanding of grace as a stewardship so that we can truly speak the truth in love. The most basic truth in missions is the Gospel.

Know: One of the major purposes of the body of Christ is to bring the Gospel and those who are lost together.

Feel: A sense of purpose and direction toward God's purpose and mission

Do: Reflect on the place of evangelism in the church and in personal life and your personal attitude, fears and challenges toward it, and commit to being faithful and leave the results to God

## **9) Christ 101 or Multiple Personality Disorder - Eph 4:17-24**

Text Summary: Paul continues the then v.s. now perspective which he began the letter with. Since the readers have been redeemed to be a unified people of God with a mission, Paul goes on to remind them that they need to leave their former, futile, self-centered ways of thinking and living behind. Instead, Paul tells them they need to "learn Christ" through a renewal of the mind and a renewal of the self. By implication, Paul points out that this renewal will prevent the futility of worldly thinking that leads to corruption and deceit. Paul also points out that this renewal, or "new self," has been created by God. Therefore, his readers needed to submit totally to God in order to gain this renewal from God.

Timeless Message: In order to fulfill God's purpose, every Christian needs to allow God to renew their way of thinking and acting which means thinking and acting as Christ would in all of life.

Sermon Summary: In order to fulfill God's purpose, we need to put away futile, deceitful, worldly thinking and action, and allow God's true truth to enlighten both our mind and heart in order to transform our whole selves, not just our "spiritual and religious selves" into conformity with our creator.

Know: We should not buy into the secular-religious view of truth because all truth is God's truth and permeates every sphere of life and therefore makes every activity and every discipline "Christian." A godless discipline, science, math, or otherwise is deceitfully mission the foundational truth behind it.

Feel: A sense of awe toward the creator who is behind everything and every discipline.

Do: Reflect on the ways Christianity is both a religion of the heart and the mind. Discuss how Christian belief informs your jobs, activities, academic disciplines, etc. List and reflect on challenges to a Biblical worldview. Identify ways to both assimilate and communicate a Biblical world view.

## **10) The Remade Self or A New Change of Clothes - Eph 4:25 - 5:2**

Text Summary: Paul expands on what the self that has been renewed by God is to look like. Paul tells that that it involves honesty with each other, reconciliation, laboring in order to have enough to share, guarding speech so that words will edify rather than tear down, and striving for a general harmony in the body through kindness, forgiveness, and self-sacrificial love.

Timeless Message: As redeemed people, we need to incorporate the specific traits of Christ-like character in our relationships with each other. Without it, we cannot look or live like the body of Christ.

Summary: Renewal involves both inward renewal of the mind and outward renewal of behavior, which includes transformation in speech, transformation of work, and transformation of

attitude toward each other. It is only through thorough transformation that we can effectively carry out God's purposes.

Know: A transformation of mind when we are converted need to also be a transformation of everyday behavior, we it is not transformation at all

Feel: The inadequacy of partial transformation

Do: Reflect on how these instructions fit in with God's overall purposes for the church, and which of these instructions are most challenging. Identify ways to overcome the challenges.

### 11) Standards of Holiness or The Right Light - Eph 5:3 - 14

Text Summary (Eph 5:3-17): Paul expounds on what this renewal means when it comes to the reader's new relationship with the world. Immorality and impurity must be eradicated out of the life of the Christian and out of the life of the Christian community because not only does immorality bring wrath rather than inheritance, but the readers have been redeemed from darkness into God's light. Paul reminds the readers that when they walk with God by doing what is pleasing to him and refusing to participate with immorality, they will be a "light" which exposes the evil in the darkness for what it is. Therefore, Paul urges the readers to be wise in how they use their time in those evil days through doing God's will.

Timeless Message: Part of preserving God's work in our lives is to maintain the sanctification that God has accomplished in us. This means to set our hearts and minds apart from the world and walk with God in the light in all wisdom in a world that does not know him.

Sermon Summary: Since we have been redeemed as part of the body of Christ, we are no longer to be darkness by ceasing to commit immorality in action and speech and by not partaking with those who do such. As redeemed Christians, we are to be light that exposes sin, transforms sinners and causes growth. We can only do this through integrated faith and sharing the Gospel.

Know: As Christians, we are to conduct ourselves in such a way that we can lead and show the way to God

Feel: The need to be an authentic example of Christ

Do: Reflect on how your actions demonstrate your dedication to Christ to family and friends. Identify activities, friendships, or objects that darken your witness for Christ and make a plan to eradicate them.

### 12) The Principle of Mutual Submission or Stuffed Christianity (4 parts) - Eph 5:15-21

Text Summary and Thoughts: This paragraph is perhaps the pinnacle of the book of Ephesians. In order for each part of the body to function as part of God's instrument to carry out his purposes, there has to be an inner transformation with is possible only through the Holy Spirit. The body cannot be filled up to all the fullness of God and carry out his purposes unless it is first filled with the Spirit. Contrary to the way most English translations render this (in the interest of good English), there is grammatically only three imperatives (commands) in this section. (Paul liked long run-on sentences)

1) *Be careful (blepo - literally: look at) how you walk.*

2) *Do not get drunk with wine.*

3) *Be filled with the Spirit.*

*In Greek, the rest are participles, which describe or modify the commands. Outlining it would look like this:*

1) *Look (blepo) carefully at how you walk...*

*a) not as unwise, but as wise...*

*b) redeeming the time because the days are evil*

2) *Do not become drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but...*

3) *Be filled with the Holy Spirit...*

*a) speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs...*

*b) singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord...*

*c) giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God and/even the Father...*

*d) being submissive to one another in the fear of Christ*

In the next section, Paul will go on to expand on what the Spirit filled life looks like in the home.

**Reflection:** Paul gives no specific instruction on how to be filled with the Spirit beyond self examination in wisdom against God's will, which seems to indicate that transformation through the Spirit has a sense of mystery to it. It is not a product to achieve, but an ongoing process to submit to. It is not something that we can control or manipulate, but is something that we cooperate with. It is not something that magically happens as we passively sit by, nor is it something that we attain through our own effort. This is perhaps why Paul contrasts the "deeds" of the flesh and the "fruit" of the Spirit (rather than the "deeds" of the Spirit) in Galatians 5. Fruit is a natural by product of being filled with the Spirit. Law produces outward compliance and possibly "deeds." The Spirit produces inward transformation and "fruit." In Paul's theology, the former leads to bondage and death, while the latter leads to life and freedom. So, true transformation has to begin with creating a climate in our inner lives that is conducive to the Spirit taking up permanent and sole residence in every inch of ourselves. How do we do that? This question needs significant reflection.

**Sermon Summary:** In order for us to truly be transformed in Christ, we need to be filled with the Spirit. This involves careful self-examination against God's will and emptying ourselves of that which crowds God out of our lives. In this way, God is the one who transforms us from the inside out so as to avoid skin deep Christianity.

**Know:** True change has to begin with allowing God to fill every aspect of our lives, not through mere behavior modification.

**Feel:** Dissatisfaction with wrote religion and going through the motions

**Do:** Spend time reflecting on what role God plays in how you "actually" view yourself, relationships, and activities. Also reflect on the process you typically go through in making a decision and where God typically fits in. Formulate a plan to set aside to for introspection as individuals and as a group.

#### **a) For Marriage: Mutual Submission - Eph 5:21-33**

**Text Reflection:** Paul said to be filled with the Spirit, and one result of being filled with the Spirit is mutual submission. Paul could have used any number of different types of relationships to illustrate this principle in action, such as the relationship of one Christian brother to another. Instead, Paul chooses three common relationships where there is an obvious superior and inferior. To an ancient audience, "mutual" submission in the wife/husband, children/parent, slave/master relationships might have seemed revolutionary and went against the grain of popular culture. Paul points to Jesus relationship with the church as the paradigm for the relationships we are to have with each other. When Jesus humbled himself and came to earth as a bond-servant, he illustrated that there is not a "superior/inferior" dichotomy in his kingdom. Jesus never forced anyone to submit to him, but in his humility, love, and kindness, people chose to submit to him. In a similar way, no one ever forced Jesus to love them, Jesus freely chose to love. We need to have the same dynamic in our relationships with each other. In our freedom, we are to offer submission that expresses itself appropriately within the roles that we have been assigned, whether as a wife, husband, parent, child, etc. This mutual submission is integral for the body to carry out the purposes of God. It would be difficult if not impossible to carry out God's purposes if we do not have the outward focus of mutual submission in our lives.

**Sermon Summary:** Part of being filled with the Spirit is mutual submission. The paradigm for mutual submission is the relationship of Christ with the church. In marriage, this means wives submitting to the husband, and the husband loving the wife.

**Know:** The relationship between ourselves and Christ should serve as the paradigm for our relationship in our marriage.

**Feel:** A need to nourish and cherish in our marriages and each other

**Do:** Identify features of our relationship with Christ that are to be present in marriage. Relate how marriage is to be analogous to our relationships with each other. Choose two ways to strengthen your relationship with each other as a group, and with the brethren.



**b) The Children: God's Rules - (Eph 6:1-3)**

Sermon Summary: God's design for mutual submission in the church extends to the home. This means children are to obey and honor their parents, which will bring a blessing to their life. While obedience is directed more at children, honor is something that still applies to adult children as well.

Know: IF you follow God's plan in the home as a child, it will contribute to a life lived with prosperity

Feel: A sense of duty to obey parents, even though it may seem unreasonable, and a sense of duty to make it a life long duty to honor parents.

Do: Reflect on today's attitudes toward parents and the reasons for those attitudes, and on your personal attitude toward parents. List personal hindrances to honor and obedience, and ways to overcome them and increase in honor to parents.

**c) For Parents: God Based Parenting (Eph 6:1-4)**

Sermon Summary: Being a godly parent involves being both a nurturer and a disciplinarian. This fits in with the character of God, who is the model parent.

Know: As parents we need to look to God's instruction as well as his character to inform us on our style and manner of parenting.

Feel: The desire to demonstrate God's character as a parent to our children

Do: Describe what nurture and discipline are, and how these two concepts can be demonstrated in parents. Reflect on how God's character provides a model for parenting, and choose two characteristics to pray about and strengthen. Identify resources to help as a parent.

**d) For Employees and Employers: Your Vocation (Eph 6:5-9)**

Sermon Summary: God has called us together into one body, which redefines all our relationships, including relationships with those whom we work for and who work for us. We are all called as slaves of Christ, which means we need to serve our masters with obedient respect and sincerity in a spirit of good will, and our masters need to treat those under them with grace and good will. The reason is that all of our work is now done for Christ, not self or another person.

Know: Our "calling" redefines the work that we do as Christian service done to please Christ

Feel: A desire for pleasing God through doing a good job in my sphere of work

Do: Evaluate your attitudes toward your work and those you work with. Identify ways God recharacterizes your work and work relationships when you become a Christian, and how it serves Christ and serves as a witness to him.

**13) Spiritual Warfare - Eph 6:10-20**

Text Reflection: Paul had begun his letter with the cosmic picture of God's overall purposes. He briefly returned to the cosmic picture in chapter four when he alludes to Christ's cosmic victory over captivity and gave gifts to me. In this last part of the letter, Paul moves back to the cosmic picture again, only this time it is a picture of a cosmic battle in which we ourselves are the soldiers. What this does is re-characterize everything Paul had said previously in terms of military imagery. Carrying out God's mission and purposes will not happen without a struggle. There is a significant message here that reminds us that we live in enemy territory that does not have the same purposes as we do in our Lord. Vigilance, focus, perseverance, and loyalty are the words that describe what Paul is trying to get across in this passage.

**a) Reconnaissance on the Enemy (Eph 6:10-12)**

Sermon Summary: This text characterizes our Christian life in terms of a battle against an unseen enemy who is strong yet subtle, often working under the surface in crafty and scheming ways. We need to recognize that we are indeed in a battle for our minds and hearts and those around us who are lost every day.

Know: We need to recognize that there is a devious enemy that is content to let us go to church and be comfortable, so long as we don't have an effect on the world around us.

Feel: Dissatisfaction with Sunday religion

Do: Reflect on ways you might have misunderstood or fallen short of the battle. Evaluate your attitude toward the enemy. Identify ways the enemy shows up in your life and how the enemy deceives.

#### **b) The Armor of God (Eph 6:10-17)**

Summary: Because there are spiritual threats from Satan to our Christian walk, we need to see our Christian life as a struggle and incorporate truth, righteousness, faithfulness, the Gospel, salvation as a lifestyle and the word of God to combat the lies, deceit, and pressure that the enemy places on our faith. Every single one of these are imperative, and none are optional.

Know: We need to see our transformed lives, thinking, and activity as "armor" against the enemy who will try and undo God's new creation in our lives.

Feel: A sense of struggle, and a sense that there is a war going on to try and win our hearts away from God.

Do: Take inventory of the "darts" that Satan uses to try and draw your heart or mind away from God, and take inventory of how the various pieces of "armor" as a single unit can help you, and which pieces of the unity might be missing or weak. Commit to a plan to strengthen the weaknesses in the armor.

#### **c) The Quiet Battle (Eph 6:18-20)**

Summary: Paul gets more specific on the "way" to use the Spiritual armor. It involves a lifestyle of prayer, which is more than just asking him for things, but communing with him. A lifestyle of prayer means alertness to God's view on your surroundings, and understanding of our place and purpose in the world.

Know: The most important way to fight spiritual warfare is through a lifestyle of prayer with God, which is more than just asking him for things, but communing with him at all times

Feel: The desire to draw closer to God in all things

Do: Reflect on the nature of your prayer life, characterize it and the effect it has on your relationship with God. Identify ways to improve your prayer life.

### **14) Concluding Thoughts - Where do we go from here? - Eph 6:19-24**

Text Reflection: Paul closes his letter with an emphasis on prayer and mission. Paul's closing benediction is a reminder of what the overall purpose of the church is, which is love and glorify God. Paul's overall letter to the Ephesians spells out in more detail how this is done. To sum up, Paul's purpose in writing the letter was to promote a unified, growing, healthy church that fulfills God's purposes, which include being a vehicle for reconciliation to God (mission), growing spiritually into Christ (maturity), and to serve others selflessly (ministry), all in such a way that God's wisdom and character is manifest in the church (magnification). Boiled down, the church's purpose involves Magnification of God through Maturity, Ministry, and Mission.

Sermon Summary: In a sense, all of us are ambassadors for the Lord with all honor that comes with it from God. In order to be God's ambassadors, we need to realize that we are aliens in this life and in the world, and that we have a specific purpose to fulfill during our time on this earth. All that we are, say, and do is to be geared toward our overall purpose to love and magnify God.