

# Ephesians

Prayer: The Secret to Life Change

# TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of DISCIPLE, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11

Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to "discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." Since "Talking Points, Walking Points" is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to "dive deep" too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time", are perfect for private reflection.

## Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- Read Ephesians 1:15-16. Paul affirmed his gratitude for the Ephesians before he instructed them. Tell about a time when someone's affirmation of you then made it easier to receive their instruction.  
**or** Tell about a situation in which lack of affirmation shredded everyone's motivation for action.
- Paul cared deeply for the Ephesians, yet wrote them from a prison in Rome (Acts 28:16–31). Tell about a time you were unable to be with someone you love and who needed your help. How did you feel? What did you do to resolve that difficulty? What role did prayer play?

**Time for honesty!** How often is prayer your **last** resort? Mark the following scale.

● ..... Rarely ..... Often ..... ●  
Never ..... Rarely ..... Often ..... Always

What does that tell you about your beliefs about... God? yourself? prayer?

- What is the most remarkable answer to prayer you've ever witnessed? (either your own prayer or another's)
- Read 1 John 5:14–15. **How** can we have confidence that God will answer **every one** of our prayers?

**How** can we **know** if any given prayer is "according to God's will"?

Make a list of at least ten commands found in the Bible (*surely* they are "according to God's will").

Now, take some time now "to pray according to God's will" for yourself and for others in the group.

## Sermon Summary

Last week we looked at six spiritual blessings which God has lavished upon each of his children (1:3-14). Today we will be looking at Paul's prayer that we will live out those blessings (1:15-23). **We learn three important truths about prayer.**

**I. Before offering advice, we should begin with affirmation and prayer.** Paul began by commending their profound faith in, and obedience to, the Lord Jesus and their demonstrated acts of sacrificial love toward other believers. There were plenty of areas in which they needed to grow (Paul will get there in chapters 4-6), but he wisely began by praising them for their outstanding faith and love. I wonder—if Paul were to pen a letter to TCC, would he commend us for our faithfulness to God and our demonstrated love towards one another? Are those things true of us? Are we known for our sacrificial love and submission to Christ's Lordship? Paul knew that sincere praise makes counsel and correction easier to hear. Paul was physically absent from Ephesus, but he could minister to them through prayer.

**II. We can be physically absent yet still play a powerful spiritual role in peoples' lives.** God has given us the powerful gift of prayer. Prayer's power is only limited by the power of God; he can do things that we cannot. When we pray, we join our weakness to God's great strength (1 John 5:14–15). God has so designed prayer that when we pray, God causes things to happen that would not have happened had we not prayed. In order for the Ephesians to walk in the spiritual blessings God had provided, they needed both instruction and prayer. Most of us are unaware of the vast spiritual wealth God has deposited in our spiritual bank accounts through Jesus Christ, so Paul prayed that we will understand and walk in the riches that are ours in Christ! When you pray, do you pray mostly for physical or for spiritual blessings? For what did Paul pray (1:1-19)?

**III. We can enrich our prayer lives by praying biblical prayers.** Paul began by reminding us of the greatness of the One to whom we pray—who raised Jesus from the dead (v. 17 & 20)! Jesus taught us that we should remind ourselves of how great God is (Matthew 6:9). Paul prayed that the Holy Spirit of wisdom and of revelation would give us knowledge of Christ (v. 17 cf. Isaiah 11:2). Later in chapter three Paul notes that it was the Holy Spirit who revealed that God's salvation would be extended to the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:4–5 cf. Romans 8:4-5 & 13-14; Galatians 5:5 & 16). What exactly does Paul mean when he prays that the Father “may give us” the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation—the Bible teaches that the moment we come to faith in Christ we are given the Holy Spirit (1:13). I think Paul is praying here for a specific manifestation of the Spirit—that he would give us greater insight into who God is and what he is up to in the world. The word “wisdom” refers to insight into the true nature of things. “Revelation” means to unveil or disclose something that was previously hidden or unknown. Paul prayed that God would reveal himself to us in fresh, new, life-transforming ways! Paul wants us to know three things: [1] the hope of God's calling (1:18b), [2] the riches of God's glorious inheritance in the saints (1:18c), and [3] the surpassing greatness of God's power toward those who believe (1:19).

In the Scriptures, the word “hope” **doesn't** mean “I hope so”. It means just the opposite—an assured future (Romans 8:30)! Paul prayed that we will see things as God sees them. We do not desperately hold onto God—he faithfully holds onto us (John 10:27–29). The hope God calls us to is that we are God's glorious inheritance—we are valuable to Him! God considers us to be part of his great wealth. Personally, I wouldn't want to inherit me, but for some reason, God does! He certainly paid a high price to purchase us (1 Peter 1:18–19). Finally, Paul prayed that we would know the surpassing greatness of God's power toward us who believe (1:19). How great is that power? The Greek word is “*dunamis*”—from which we get our English word dynamite! God's *dunamis* is very practical—it comforts us in our afflictions (1 Corinthians 1:3-4), it strengthens us in any circumstance (Philippians 4:11–13), enables us to endure any temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13) and be content in any testing (2 Corinthians 12:8–10). The power of God, which is available to all of us, is incredibly practical.



## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*"Five Question Bible Study" (see next page) is a simple way to study any passage.  
Let's use it to study prayer as a means of growth...*

**Monday**— Study Philippians 4:6-7

**Tuesday**—Study Psalm 119:37

**Wednesday**—Study Luke 11:9

**Thursday**—Study Hebrews 4:16

**Friday**—Study James 4:2-3

**Saturday**—Study 1 John 1:9

Need blank copies for doing more  
"Five Question Bible Study"?  
e-mail: [Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com](mailto:Dan.Clement.TCC@gmail.com)

### Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]