

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

"STRENGTH OF STEEL"

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

This Week's Core Competency

Hope – I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ. Hebrews 6:19, 20 *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, 20 where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.*

"Hope" is a word with *subjective* and *objective* nuances much like the word "ambition." The question "Does Bill have ambition?" probes the subjective nuance of the word. On the other hand, the question "What is Bill's ambition?" probes its objective nuance. In Ephesians 1:18 Paul speaks of the "hope to which he has called you" referring to that hope shared by all Christians. The question "Do Christians have hope?" probes the word's subjective nuance. The question "What is the Christian's hope?" probes its objective nuance.

On the objective nuance of the hope of God's call, one author writes, "The call of God takes us back to the very beginning of our Christian lives. 'Those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified.' True, we called on him to save us, but our call was a response to his.

"The question now is: what did God call us for? His call was not a random or purposeless thing. He

*There is no higher knowledge
than the knowledge of God himself.*

-John R. W. Stott

had some object in view when he called us. He called us to something and for something. And it is this that is meant by 'the hope of his call' (verse 18, literally) which in 4:4 is referred to as the 'hope of your call'. It is the expectation which we enjoy as a result of the fact that God has called us.

"What this is the rest of the New Testament tells us. It is a rich and varied expectation. For God has called us 'to belong to Jesus Christ' and 'into the fellowship of . . . Jesus Christ.' He has called us 'to be saints' or 'called us with a holy calling', since he who has called us is holy himself and says to us 'you shall be holy, for I am holy'. One of the characteristics of the 'holy' or special people of God is liberation from the judgment of God's law. So we are not to lapse into slavery again, for we were 'called to freedom'. Another characteristic is harmonious fellowship across the barriers of race and class, for we 'were called in the one body' to enjoy 'the peace of Christ', and must live a life that is 'worthy of the calling to which we have been called . . . forbearing one another in love'. At the same time, though we may enjoy peace within the Christian community, we are bound to experience opposition from the unbelieving world. Yet we must not retaliate: 'For to this (this unjust suffering and this patient endurance) you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. Besides, we know that beyond the suffering lies the glory. For God has also called you 'into his own kingdom and glory' or 'to his eternal glory in Christ'. This is what Paul calls 'the upward call of

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God in Christ Jesus', for the sake of which he presses on in the Christian race toward the goal. All this was in God's mind when he called us" (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, TBST, 55, 56).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Ephesians 1:15-23

15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Cf., another translation

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (ESV)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Box "for this reason" indicating *reason* in v. 15.
- * Bracket "glorious Father" in v. 17.
- * Circle "Spirit" in v. 17.
- * Bracket "of wisdom and revelation" in v. 17.
- * Box "so that" indicating *purpose* in v. 17.
- * Circle "better" in v. 17.
- * Bracket "eyes of your heart" in v. 18.

- * Box "in order that" indicating *purpose* in v. 18.
- * Underline "hope," "riches," and "incomparably great power" in v. 18.
- * Box "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 19.
- * Circle "head" in v. 22.
- * Circle "fullness" in v. 23.

day **2** **EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Verse 15 begins "For this reason." What reason?
2. How long does Paul say he has been praying for his readers?
3. What *exactly* does Paul ask God to do for them?
4. Explain the relationship of the Holy Spirit to "wisdom and revelation."
5. Identify the *purpose* of Paul's request.
6. List the three things Paul wants believers to know.
7. Be prepared to talk about how knowing them contributes to knowing God.
8. Explain the two-fold *comparison* introduced in verse 19.
9. Put the point of verse 21 in your own words.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the sense in which the church is "the fullness of him."

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

The complexity of Paul's sentence in Ephesians 1:15-23—there's only one with 169 words!—is only surpassed by the complexity of the thought behind it. Needless to say, any brief explanation of its message will be selective to be sure. After all, one commentary devotes fifty-six pages to its treatment of Paul's prayer for his Christian readers, people who have everything, spiritually speaking (v. 3). The prayer, which ends in verse 23, can be analyzed this way. First he commends them (vv. 15-16a), then he makes his supplication for them in the form of a single request (vv. 16b-18a), and finally he gives the reason for his request on their behalf (vv. 18b-23) (Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 252, 53).

Paul typically opens his letters by giving thanks for his readers and then by offering a prayer for them. Ephesians is no exception. Ever since hearing of their faith and love—every Christian both believes and loves; they are basic Christian graces—the apostle did not stop giving thanks for them. His reason for giving thanks is contained in verses 3-14, especially verses 13 and 14. As one writer says, "In particular—as the opening wherefore signifies—he prays in light of the wealth of spiritual blessing of which he has just been writing. The thought of the purpose of God in Christ, the blessings of election, sonship, redemption, revelation, the gift of the Holy Spirit, leads naturally and inevitably to praise and prayer for the members of His Church" (Francis Foulkes, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, TNTC, 58).

In this letter, he goes on to ask God to give his readers "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation." This expression has been translated in at least three different ways although the gist of the request remains basically the same. He wants them to have spiritual wisdom and to understand God's revealed truth. Wisdom and understanding are not things we can obtain on our own; rather they are things that must come from the Spirit. So Paul is not asking that the Holy Spirit be given to those who already have him; instead he's asking that a ministry of the Spirit be given them. "Although RSV writes 'spirit' with a small 's', the reference is likely to be to the Holy Spirit, since Scripture speaks of him as 'the Spirit of truth', the agent of revelation, and the teacher of the people of God. Not that we

can ask God to 'give' the Holy Spirit himself to those who have already received him and been 'sealed' with him (verse 13), but rather that we may and should pray for his ministry of illumination" (Stott, 54). Paul prays this "so that" his readers might know God better—not just know more about God but know God more.

The apostle develops a three-fold reason for his single request to the end of the chapter. He tells his readers he wants them to know "*what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe*" (ESV, italics added). The hope to which he has called us is the expectation which we enjoy as a result of the fact that God has called us. It's a two-fold hope. In the first place, we experience hope and are not without hope like those outside of Christ. What's more, that hope is more than a mere emotion; it has content. The content of our hope is the new life we enjoy in Christ now which will culminate in resurrection glory with Christ when he returns in the future. The riches of our glorious inheritance refers to all that God has in store for the redeemed. According to Romans 8:16, 17, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." When Christ returns to rule over Israel and the Nations, we will be revealed in glory with him, and we will rule with him in his kingdom. Then when he turns the kingdom over to the Father, we will receive our inheritance in the new heaven and new earth. Finally, the immeasurably great power available to us who believe is the power God demonstrated in the resurrection and ascension of Christ. About the first, one author writes, "God has done what man cannot do. He raised Jesus Christ from the dead. First, he arrested the natural process of decay, refusing to allow his Holy One to see corruption. Then he did not just reverse the process, restoring the dead Jesus to this life, but transcended it. He raised Jesus to an altogether new life (immortal, glorious and free), which nobody had ever experience before, and which nobody has experienced since—or not yet. This was the first part

of the public display of God's power. He raised Jesus from the dead to a new dimension of human experience" (Stott, 59).

About the second, the same author writes, "Having raised Jesus from among the dead and out of the domain of death, God made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places (verse 20). That is, he promoted him to the place of supreme honour and executive authority. In doing so, he fulfilled the messianic promise of Psalm 110:1: 'The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand,

till I make your enemies your footstool'" (59). Thus the resurrection and ascension express the measure of the Father's power made available to us to live the Christian life. The apostle prayed that Ephesian Christians then and all Christians now might know this power and God its source.

The Message of this Passage

Ask God for wisdom and insight from the Spirit to know the hope to which you were called, the riches of his glorious inheritance, and the limitless power that is available to you.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 17 ***I keep asking*** Lit., "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" (ESV). The Gk. word [*hina*, trans. "that"] typically indicates *purpose* but in connection with prayers, it can denote content as it does in v. 17.

v. 17 ***glorious Father*** "In the immediate context God has revealed himself in election, predestination, redemption, revelation of his will, and the sealing with the Holy Spirit. All of these characterize gracious acts which bring praise of his glory (vv. 6, 12, 14) . . . The Father is characterized by his glory. He is not only a glorious Father but the Father to whom all glory belongs (NEB 'the all-glorious Father') or of whom glory is the characteristic feature" (255).

v. 17 ***the Spirit*** Cf., "a spirit" (ESV, NKJV, NRSV); "spiritual" (the NET Bible, NLT). "(1) If 'the Spirit' is meant, the idea must be a metonymy of cause for effect, because the author had just indicated in vv. 13-14 that the Spirit was already given (hence, there is no need for him to pray that he be given again). But the effect of the Spirit is wisdom and revelation [see Hoehner, 256-58]. (2) If 'a spirit' is meant, the idea may be that the readers will have the ability to gain wisdom and insight as they read Paul's letters, but the exact meaning of 'a spirit' remains ambiguous [in effect the Holy Spirit, see T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, ICC, 28]. (3) To take the genitives following [*neuma*] as attributed genitives (see *ExSyn* 89-91), in which the head noun ('S/spirit') functions semantically like an adjective ('spiritual') is both grammatically probable and exegetically consistent [see Foulkes, 60]" (the NET Bible, 45^{tn} on Eph 1:17).

v. 17 ***better*** Lit., "in the knowledge of him" (ESV); cf. "in your growing knowledge of him" (the NET Bible). "It is to know God intimately. This corresponds very closely with Col 1:9-10 where Paul prays that they will be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding and further that they will increase in the knowledge of God" (Hoehner, 259).

v. 18 ***eyes of . . .*** The "eye" is metaphorically the avenue through which the "heart," the seat of one's understanding at the center of one's person, is enlightened. "Hence, the 'eyes of the heart' denotes enlightenment of thought and understanding" (Hoehner, 261). The syntactical relationship of this clause to the verse is problematic. Rather than make it part of the request (NIV), perhaps it's better to make it an ancillary thought to the request (ESV) (see Hoehner, 261-63).

v. 18 ***hope*** Lit., "hope of his calling." Here Paul is referring *explicitly* to subjective hope, an expectation originating in God's call to salvation, and *implicitly* to objective hope, the reality entailed in that expectation. "It is the expectation which we enjoy as a result of the fact that God has called us . . . He called us to Christ and holiness, to freedom and peace, to suffering and glory. More simply, it was a call to an altogether new life in which we know, love, obey and serve Christ, enjoy fellowship with him and with each other, and look beyond our present suffering to the glory which will one day be revealed" (Stott, 55).

v. 18 ***riches*** Lit., "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (NASB). "The Greek expression, like the English, could mean either God's inheritance or ours, that is, either the inheritance he receives or the inheritance he bestows" (Stott, 56). According to one writer, the first is more probable. "Because of his choosing, redeeming, adopting, and sealing us, we are his possession. Thus, his possession is located in the saints. He will fully gain his inheritance when the saints are removed from this earth and come into his presence. Therefore, not only do we have an inheritance (v. 14) but he also has an inheritance (vv. 11, 18)" (Hoehner, 267; cf., F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT, 270). According to another, the second is more probable. "Certainly the Old Testament authors taught consistently that God's people were his 'inheritance' or 'possession', and in the last chapter we found a reference to this truth in verses 12 and 14. But the parallel passage in Colossians 1:12 strongly suggest the other interpretation here, namely that 'God's inheritance' refers to what he will give us, for we are to give thanks to the Father, 'who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light'" (Stott, 56; cf., Foulkes, 61, 62).

v. 19 ***power*** Paul heaps one word on another, four altogether, to express the greatness of God's power available to the believer: *dunamis*, *ischus*, *kratos*, and *energeia*. "By way of illustration, a bulldozer has the ability, capacity, and potential of routing out trees [*dunamis*]. By looking at it, one senses its inherent strength [*ischus*] but when its engine roars and it begins to move, its power of mastery becomes obvious [*kratos*]. However, when it comes to a tree and knocks it over one sees the activity of its power [*energeia*] . . . It seems that [*dunamis*] is the more general term and that the other terms support it, as is the case in this passage" (Hoehner, 271).

v. 23 ***fullness*** "The church is the fullness of Christ not because it fills him, but because he fills it. And he who fills it is described either as filling 'all things', 'the whole creation' (JB), which is precisely what he is said to do in 4:9, 10, or as himself being filled, i.e. by God as in Colossians 1:19 and 2:9. Putting the two parts of the clause together, it will then mean either that Christ who fills the church fills the universe also, or that Christ who fills the church is himself filled by God. The former is the more natural because God is not mentioned by name" (64; cf., Bruce, 275-77; Hoehner prefers the latter, 294-301).

Connect the **FAMILY**. During this series, Bible stories appropriate for children will be used that complement the adult teaching.

Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

Using only your breath, time how long it takes to blow a cotton ball across the kitchen table. Try it again, but use a hair dryer to blow it. The hair dryer was faster because it had so much more power. Read I Samuel 16:1-13. Just like with his new king, David, God always gives his people the power needed to accomplish His tasks.

Pray it!

As a parent you can teach your child to pray by using actual scriptures as a guide. Pray this scripture with them this week..

Father, I can do everything through You who gives me strength. Php 4:13

Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

Hope— Coping with the problems of life and death with the help of Jesus

Memory verse – "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus." Ac 4:13

Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

- *Why did Samuel travel to Bethlehem?
- *What characteristics did God instruct Samuel to look for in the new king?
- *Why was David not brought before Samuel like his older brothers?
- *After being anointed king, how did the Spirit of the Lord come upon David?

Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

Throughout June and July the ReGenesis kids will be joining PantegoKids on Sunday mornings. Despite all their differences, the one thing all the kids have in common is the hope found in Jesus! Begin talking to your child(ren) how they can intentionally befriend the ReGenesis kids in their class each Sunday.

Kids K through fourth grade receive Kid Pix Tokens for each discipleship activity completed.



Family completes **Experience It** _____
 Child memorizes kid-friendly **Core Competency** _____
 Family participates in **Live It** _____ and **Pray It** _____
 Child memorizes **Memory Verse** _____

Child's name _____

Parent's signature _____

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.