WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE

A Study of Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians and the Ephesians

MEDITATE: Ephesians 2:1-10

Quiet your heart before the Lord. This does not necessarily mean that your environment needs to be silent, although this can be helpful. Set aside a time free from distractions to focus on the passage as you read and meditate on it.

These instructions may help you develop a method for meditating on our passage each week. You may want to incorporate all or some of these ideas, whatever is helpful.

- Read the passage, slowly and prayerfully asking the Lord to speak to you from his word. Take several minutes to mull over the passage.
- Read the passage aloud and again take several minutes to give careful thought to it.
- Listen to the passage being read aloud. You may want to have someone else read it to you, or use a Bible program such as biblegateway.com or YouVersion, a free Bible app.
- Read the passage in other translations.

Finally, consider the following questions:

What words or phrases stand out to me? Why?

MEDITATE

"May we never lose the wonder found in sitting with passages we've heard time and time again and listening as if for the first time."

Charaia Callabrass

What questions does the passage raise that I want to know more about?

DIG IN: Review Ephesians 1. Read Ephesians 2:1-10.

- 1. Ephesians 1 is all about the glories of God's work in Christ for us. In chapter 2, Paul explains how great the Ephesians' need is for Jesus. Their need is the same as ours!
 - a. How does Paul describe our condition before we put our faith in Jesus? (v. 1)
 - b. What characterized our life? (vv. 2-3)

2. Before putting our faith in Jesus, we might have been rule keepers or rule breakers, but our neediness the same. Let's explore what Paul's phrases mean by using some cross references. How is neediness demonstrated by those without Jesus who are			
	following the ways of this world? Lk. 18:9-14		
	Gal. 5:17		
	Gal. 5:19-21		
	1 Jn. 2:15-16		
	Rev. 21:8	EXALTATION Take a moment to reflect on you own life before accepting God's gracious gift of salvation in Jesus	
	following the ruler of the kingdom of the air? Jn. 8:44		
	1 Jn. 3:8-15		
	1 Jn. 4:2-3		
3.	Okay, that's the bad news; it's not something we need to stay focused on because Jesus' blood cleanses us from all sin,¹ but it helps us to see just how good the good news (the gospel) is! With the little word "but" (at the beginning of verse 4), Paul now turns a corner. What two things bring hope to our hopeless state? (v. 4)		
4.	Verse 5 shows us why God needed to use "his incomparably great power for us who believe" (Eph. 1:19). What dramatic change took place when God saved us? (v. 5; 4 Jn. 5:24; 2 Cor. 5:17)		
	And there is more! "God raised us up with Christ, and seated us with him in the Jesus" (v. 6). What do you think this means for us currently and in the future?		

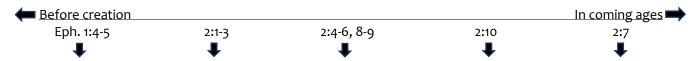
5. Paul says that "in the coming ages [God will] show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus" (v. 7). Can you imagine God showing us the countless ways that he demonstrated his undeserved kindness to us, ways we never

saw or understood? What are some of the "incomparable riches of his grace" that you can boast about now?

RAISED AND SEATED

We are so united to Christ that in his death we died, in his resurrection we were raised, and in his exaltation we are seated "with him in the heavenly realms" (Eph. 2:6). Now our "citizenship is in heaven" and so we "set [our] hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God [and] set [our] minds on things above, not on earthly things." 3

6. In Ephesians, Paul shows us the goodness of God from our perspective of time. Under each verse, jot down what's happening.



- 7. Why should we never boast or take pride in our salvation, or look down on others who have not yet believed? (vv. 5, 8-9)
- 8. Again, Paul emphasizes God's hand on our lives saying, "we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (v. 10). What are ways that you've seen God work through you (or others) that seemed like just the right "good work" for a particular need or occasion?

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

How do you respond to the idea that God has prepared good works for you to do? Is it welcome news or burdensome? Why?

9. Allow yourself to take in the wonder of God's hand on your life from start to finish and respond in a way that seems appropriate.

PAUSE TO WORSHIP

Re-read Ephesians 2:1-10. Take time to interact with the Lord about the passage.

"Once we've meditated to focus, understand, and remember, we will normally find our hearts inclined to worship. So, we pause to lift our gaze to the excellencies of Christ, to bend our eyes off of the world, to express thanksgiving and adoration when we pray. Meditation leads to delight when the Holy Spirit inclines our hearts to see and savor how

glor	ious God is." ⁴
*	How do I respond to the beauty I see in God's will, work, and ways in this passage?
*	In what ways do I see Jesus ,"the One [God] loves" (v. 6), more clearly through this passage?
*	Is there a song or hymn that comes to mind that helps express my response to the passage?
*	FLECT & PRAY How can I take what I'm learning from this passage and make it my own? Is there something specific to believe, do, not do, be grateful for, etc.?
*	How does this passage help me see myself and others differently?
*	Pray the passage: Use the passage as a basis to talk to God about the things you are learning, seeing, and longing for as well as ways the passage speaks to your current life experiences.
	Indicates passages for further study
¹ Jn. ² Phi	1:7 . 3:20

³ Col. 3:1-2

⁴ https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-steps-to-meditating-on-your-bible/