

## WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE

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

#### **MEDITATE:** *Ephesians 6:1-24*

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.

#### **MEDITATE**

“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”  
~James 1:12

Finally, consider the following questions:

What words or phrases stand out to me? Why?

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

#### **DIG IN:** *Read Ephesians 6:1-24.*

1. Paul continues his discussion of family relationships by addressing children directly.
  - a. What two commands does Paul give to children? (vv. 1-2)

- b. What reasons does he give for these commands?  
v. 1

vv. 2-3; Deut. 5:16

Col. 3:20


2. Parents are given the important responsibility of teaching and training their children in obedience. This is considered “the highest duty of Christian parents.”<sup>1</sup> Paul exhorts fathers as heads of their families not to exasperate or frustrate their children, but to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Why is this so important for parents to do properly? (v. 4; Mt. 7:8-10; Col. 3:21; 1 Thess. 2:10-12)

“Social distinctions, rigidly observed in the Roman empire and even in Judaism, are transformed by the gospel so that those previously dispossessed acquire new rights. ... It is a feature of Paul’s treatment of these domestic categories that **the stronger have obligations to the weaker**. The gospel introduced a fresh element into parental responsibility by insisting that feelings of the child must be taken into consideration. In a society where the father’s authority was absolute, this represented a revolutionary concept” (emphasis added).<sup>2</sup>

3. Next, Paul addresses the heart attitudes of slaves and masters. While Paul acknowledges the evil of slavery elsewhere (1 Tim. 1:8-11), here in Ephesians 6, his goal is to not to address slavery as an institution but to teach believers how they should live no matter what their station in life.<sup>3</sup>

- a. What are the qualities of obedience that Paul is commanding in verses 5-7?

- b. What is the reason that slaves/bondservants should obey in this way? (vv. 7-8)

- c. What significant commands does Paul give to masters and why? (v. 9; \* Mt. 20:25-28; Phil. 2:6-8)

4. What final instructions does Paul give to the believers? (vv. 10-11, 13, 18)

5. What does Paul want the believers to be prepared for? (vv. 11b-12, 16b)

6. What does each aspect of God's armor represent and how does it protect the believer against the enemy? (You'll need to use your imagination and understanding of other passages to help you fill in the third column.)

Piece of Armor	What It Represents	How It Protects against the Enemy
Belt (v. 14)		
Breastplate (v. 14)		
Footwear (v. 15)		
Shield (v. 16)		
Helmet (v. 17)		
Sword (v. 17)		

"These weapons against evil are what our God, not our hand, supplies; therefore we can and must trust our armor....The armor that we use God has already put in place. We stand firm *because* God has already supplied our armor, not *in order to* receive the armor. We stand because we are confident of what God has done, not because of our confidence in our doing what God requires. If my only armor in the battle against Satan is my sufficiency, then I am doomed. I am no match for him, but my God is. Safeguarded by his armor, I can and do stand against the Adversary."<sup>4</sup>

7. Current events demonstrate the destructive nature and evil of war. Even more destructive and evil are the often subtle ways that Satan works to deceive and attack us. Think of an area in your life where you are especially vulnerable to unbelief, temptation, or discouragement. In what specific ways can the armor God has provided help you? What verses of scripture have helped you stand firm against your temptations? Share one or more with the group so others can pray for you.

8. Paul now encourages the believers to pray.
  - a. How does Paul encourage us to pray? (v. 18; 📖 Rom. 8:26-27; Phil. 4:6-7)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. How does he ask them to pray specifically for him? (vv. 19-20)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Paul ends his letter with a beautiful benediction for the family of believers to have peace, love with faith, and grace – all themes that he has covered in his letter.
  - a. Where does this peace come from? (Eph. 2:13-18)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What blessing does love with faith grant to the believer? (Eph. 3:12, 17b-19)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- c. Paul signs off by praying for “grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love” (v. 24). Believers are transformed by God’s grace into lovers of God. Glance back at Ephesians 2:4-8 and take a moment to praise God for “the incomparable riches of his grace” (Eph. 2:7).

## PAUSE TO WORSHIP

*Re-read Ephesians 6:1-24. 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 glorious God is.”<sup>5</sup>*

- ❖ 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 more clearly through this passage?
  
- ❖ Is there a song or hymn that comes to mind that helps express my response to the passage?

## REFLECT & 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.
  
- ❖ Our study of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians and Ephesians is titled *Hope and Encouragement*. In what ways have you found greater hope and encouragement in God through this study? Please share any specific verses or themes that have been meaningful to you.

\*📖 For further study

<sup>1</sup> Foulkes, Francis, *The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries ed. R.V. G. Tasker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 166.

<sup>2</sup> Wood, A. Skevington, "Ephesians" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 80, 81.

<sup>3</sup> For a more in-depth discussion of slavery see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxuKKRh87jA> (YouTube: Ephesians 6:5-9 - Slaves & Masters, Honor THE Master)

<sup>4</sup> Chapell, Bryan, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2001), 340.

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