



Pictures of Us

Ephesians

Bible Study book— Term 1 2019

BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM – TERM 1 2019

Pictures of us Week commencing		Reading Plan	Page Number
<i>4th February</i>	A Masterpiece & A Temple	Ephesians 2:1-22	2
<i>11th February</i>	A Body	Ephesians 4:1-16	6
<i>18th February</i>	A Bride	Ephesians 5:22-33	11
<i>25th February</i>	A Warrior	Ephesians 6:10-20	15

Peacemakers Week commencing		Reading Plan	Page Number
<i>4th March</i>	The potential for conflict and conflict's potential	James 4:1-3 Galatians 3:26-29 John 17:20-23 1 John 4:7-21	21
<i>11th March</i>	Logs and eyes	Matthew 7:3-5 Philippians 4:2-9	24
<i>18th March</i>	Specks and eyes	Galatians 6:1-6 Matthew 18:15-20	28
<i>25th March</i>	Reconciliation	Colossians 1:21-23 Colossians 3:12-17 Luke 17:3-4	32

Pictures of Us: Introduction

In the early 60s AD, the Apostle Paul wrote a letter 'to God's holy people in Ephesus'. Paul was the great early missionary of Jesus Christ. Along with a team of co-workers, Paul had spread the message about Jesus (the "gospel") throughout the eastern part of the Roman Empire. But when Paul wrote his letter, he was in prison in Rome. He'd been chained up because powerful people opposed his gospel.

The churches planted through Paul's missionary work faced similar struggles. Persecution was increasing. Ancient racial tensions were bubbling to the surface. False teachers preyed on these young churches in Paul's absence. For many of the people who'd heard and believed the gospel that Paul and others had proclaimed and taught, it would certainly have looked like things weren't going to plan. So Paul penned this letter from his imprisonment, to these believers in and around Ephesus (in the Roman Province of Asia, which is modern day Turkey), to encourage them.

Our studies will not cover all of the book of Ephesians. Instead, we will look at 5 "Pictures of Us". We will look at 5 metaphors Paul employs such that the Ephesian church may come to see itself clearly. These metaphors speak of how precious and important the church is in God's recreation of the world. These metaphors remind us of the necessity of unity and service as we care for the church. These metaphors remind us not to take the church for granted, but to arm it with faith and maturity against the devil's schemes.

We live in an extremely individualistic culture. It is no surprise that for many, the goal of Christ's life, death and resurrection is their own personal salvation and fulfilment. In such a culture, it is easy to take the church for granted, treat it as optional and engage with church as a consumer. Ephesians tells a very different story. We are each called from death to life that we may take our place in a new type of humanity: the church. This new humanity is precious to God and is the front line of his plans to restore the world. Let's spend 4 weeks in Ephesians, looking at the church through God's eyes.

Pictures of Us: Study 1

A Masterpiece & A Temple: Ephesians 2:1-22

Talk

1) How might the non-Christians you know answer the question, “what is the church and what is its purpose?”

How might you answer the same question?

2) Has your opinion on the church changed over time? How?

3) Have your expectations of church changed over time? How?

Over the next 4 weeks we are going to look at our church through God’s eyes, using the images he provides in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. Our hope and prayer is that in doing so, we will see St Luke’s Miranda in a new and refreshing way.

Read Ephesians 2:1-22

4) What initial thoughts, questions or insights arise from the passage?

Investigate and Apply Ephesians 2:1-10

The first picture of the church we encounter is in 2:10:

- *For we are God’s workmanship (NIV)*
- *For we are God’s handiwork (NIV 2011)*
- *For we are His creation (Holman)*
- *For we are God’s masterpiece (NLT)*

The church is the careful creation of God!

5) What sort of 'raw-material' was God working with as he created the Ephesian church (What state were the Ephesian Christians in before being 'made alive', 2:1-3)?

6) While this is objectively true of all people who are not Christians, was there a time in your life you felt this to be true of you?

7) List the ways God transforms sinful people to form his masterpiece.

8) It may feel like an exaggeration to describe the church as a masterpiece, yet take a moment to consider the following verses from Ephesians. What does each tell us about the grand role of the church in God's plans?

- **1:9-10**

- **1:22-23**

- **3:6**

- **3:10-11**

9) Throughout this passage, Paul is referring to the gathered church, rather than each individual Christian (each 'you' is plural throughout the passage). If the church is as big a deal as the passage makes it out to be, how might this change our attitude towards our Church?

Investigate and Apply Ephesians 2:11-22

10) In 2:11-22 we are introduced to a new picture of the church: 'a building'. Considering Paul's reference to Jews, Gentiles and dividing walls in 11-14, in what sort of building are we immediately thinking? How does this make sense of the 'near' and 'far' language?

11) Who does the cross unite, according to Ephesians?

12) The Temple, once the focal point of Jew/Gentile division, is now Paul's chosen metaphor for the church, where Jew and Gentile are united. What are some of the architectural features of this 'new temple', the church? Do you think these are features of St Luke's as well?

13) This image of the church is a powerful exhortation to unity. Those previously divided are joined together in peace to become a dwelling place of God by his Spirit.

- What challenges to church unity does St Luke's face?

- What practices can we each engage in to best foster unity at St Luke's?

14) Are there age groups, racial groups or economic groups you struggle to feel united with at church? Are there individuals or families with whom you struggle to feel united? How may you work towards fulfilling the vision of Ephesians 2?

Pray

Pray for Brett and Mardi, Evie, Harriet, Olivia, and Willow Middleton. Pray for Brett as Focus Pastor for 10am. Pray for Brett as he leads and serves us as Acting Senior Minister.

Pray for Matt and Lauren, Ezra and Joanna Thomas and their mission work with OMF International to an unreached people group in South East Asia.

Pray for our Church Wardens: Colin Adams, Jack Normand and Joel Garlato. Pray for our Parish Councillors: Laurie Davidson, Amanda Garlato, Angela James, Nathan Pollock, Simon Veltmeyer (also our treasurer) and Kath Telfer. Pray for our Parish Nominators: Michael Easton, David Francis, Amanda Garlato, Louise Parkes, and Lloyd Zietsch. Pray for our Synod Reps: Michael Easton and Amanda Garlato.

Pray for the wide range of outreach opportunities that we have with local schools. Pray that our scripture teachers would be diligent and loving as they teach classes. Pray that our school chaplains would effectively model Christ in the way they love and support the school community. Pray that our Kids Hope mentors would be a loving and stable relationship for children with social needs. Pray that School Lunch program leaders will be bold in their example and witness to their school communities. Pray for the volunteers running Breakfast Club at Miranda Public and Port Hacking High School. Pray for all ministries and Bible studies as they start up for the year. Pray for our upcoming Parish Council elections. Pray that people would be open to being nominated to serve.

Pictures of Us: Study 2

A Body: Ephesians 4:1-16

Talk

- 1) Spend some time sharing the different ministries you have been part of at St Luke's or at other churches. Were these good experiences or bad?

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

- 2) What initial thoughts, questions or insights arise from the passage?

Investigate and apply Ephesians 4:1-6

- 3) Last week we ended the study discussing the different practices that would contribute to church unity. Did anyone put these into practice during the week? What are Paul's suggested practices in 4:1-6? Were these included in the list you made last week?

- 4) How does the language used here remind us of the high importance God places on unity within the church body? Can you say you have made every effort to maintain unity?

Investigate and Apply Ephesians 4:7-16

While the church is united, it is not uniform. Paul now begins to speak about the diversity of gifts you must find within any church. The picture of the church used to help us understand this is 'The Body'.

5) 'Grace' is the word we usually use when speaking of the undeserved kindness God shows to us in Christ. Here it is a way of speaking about the different 'gifts' or abilities with which God blesses the church. Why is it important to recognise all abilities are from God?

6) In speaking about gifts, Paul does some Christological interpretation of Psalm 68. Have a read of Psalm 68:18. What important change does Paul make to the Psalm as he reinterprets it in light of the cross and resurrection?

7) Paul lists some of the gifts Jesus showers upon his church. What are they?

8) Note that Paul makes a distinction here between what we might call the 'leadership team' within a church (pastors and teachers) and 'God's people' (literally translated as 'the saints').

- **What are those tasked with leading the church expected to do? Is this factored in to how you assess good leadership?**

- **How does this differ from the expectations some churches place on their leaders?**

- **What should we expect to happen with each ministry appointment we make at St Luke's?**

9) How, in verses 12-13, does our diversity serve our unity?

10) What risks are faced by churches where pastors and teachers are not diligently 'preparing God's people for works of service'?

11) Paul ends this section with a 'Picture of Us': *"the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work"*

- **What is the work you intend to do amongst God's people at St Luke's and beyond in 2019? What formal and informal ministries are you committing to this year?**

- **How are you feeling about these ministries? Spend some time praying for one another.**

Pray

Pray for Jennie and Don Everist. Pray for Jennie as Focus Pastor of the 8am congregation and as Pastoral Care Minister for St Luke's. Pray for Jennie's Pastoral Care ministries, especially in her work in visitation and Bible Study in our local retirement villages.

Pray for Shane and Ruth, Kye, Joel, and Finn Sparks and their mission work with Pioneers making disciples in Gijon, Spain.

Pray for our Prime Minister Scott Morrison, and his government. Pray for our state and federal members, Eleni Petinos, Mark Speakman. Pray for our Premier, Gladys Berejiklian and her government. We pray also for our local government including our Mayor, Carmelo Pesce.

Pray that the word of God we heard on Sunday might shape how we live Monday to Friday. Pray that we would be respectful of workplace boundaries, but that we'd also *"be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have"* (1 Peter 3:15). Thank God that we have the opportunity to represent Christ in how we speak and act in the workplace.

Pictures of Us: Study 3

A Bride: Ephesians 5:22-33

Talk

1) When you hear the word 'bride', what images or feelings arise for you?

Read Ephesians 5:25-33

2) What initial thoughts, questions or insights arise from the passage?

Investigate and Apply Ephesians 5:25-33

3) Let's spend some time understanding why Paul pictures the church as a bride. Where does this image come from? Investigate:

- Isaiah 54:5-8

- Jeremiah 2:1-3 and 31:31-32

- Hosea 2:14-23

4) How would you characterise the marital relationship between God and his people Israel?

5) How does this Old Testament back-story inform our reading of the following moments in Jesus life?

- **Mark 2:18-20**

- **John 3:27-30**

6) Returning now to Ephesians 5, we usually read this text to learn about God's will for the roles of husbands and wives within marriage. However, let's look at it today as a way to see the church through God's eyes? How does the church fit into that story we traced through the Old Testament and into the gospels?

7) How does Jesus prepare his bride, the church, in 5:25-27? How is this different from our wedding customs, yet perfectly suited to the gospel message?

8) What further attention does Jesus pay to his bride in 5:29? How do you see this take place at St Luke's?

9) Considering Christ's love for his bride, the church, how do our words and deeds declare to all how precious the church is?

- **How do you speak about your church to your friends and family?**
- **How might our attendance patterns reflect the importance of the church in God's plans for the world?**
- **How does your financial support reflect how precious the church is?**
- **How might our care and stewardship, of the physical spaces in which the church meets, be an indication of our attitude towards Christ's bride?**

10) How is the church expected to respond to Christ our saviour in verses 22-24? Could you describe St Luke's as a church that submits to Christ in everything? In what areas are we being pressured to submit to popular culture rather than Christ?

Pray

Pray for Tim and Shona, Annika, Hamish, Edward and Hugo Goldsmith. Pray for Tim as Focus Pastor for the Miranda North and Church at 5 congregations. Pray for Tim as he heads up our Local Mission profile for St Luke's and focuses on outreach and evangelism.

Pray for John and Jodi, Gemma, Amber, Zoe, Jasmine, Claudia and Elias Lovell. Pray for John as Pastor of Valencia Anglican Church and his work as the Regional Director for MOCLAM in Valencia, Spain.

Pray for Miranda North; that there would be many opportunities to connect with the local community through school and other activities.

Thank God for the many and varied resources available to us as a parish. As we seek to witness to the goodness of God daily. Pray that we might make the most of opportunities to invite people we know to events at church. Pray that God would be preparing the heart of people we could invite to an upcoming event.

Pray for those who might be thinking about joining Christianity Explored, that they'd have the courage to contact the office or a Christian friend.

Pictures of Us: Study 4

A Warrior: Ephesians 6:10-20

Talk

- 1) What are the biggest issues St Luke's faces at the moment?

- 2) Who would you consider to be 'enemies of the church'?

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

- 3) What initial thoughts, questions or insights arise from the passage?

Investigate and Apply Ephesians 4:1-16

- 4) In our passage, who must the church make its stand against? Is this a reality you are aware of day to day?

- 5) Have you ever seen a church lose in its struggle against the devil's schemes? What did the devil use to cause that church to fall apart?

- 6) In describing the battle, Paul uses the word “*pálē*” (translated in the NIV as ‘struggle’). *Pálē*, a type of wrestling, was the most popular organised sport in ancient Greece. Naked competitors would patiently try to find a weakness in each other’s defences before seeking to throw their opponent to the ground. Why do you think Paul would use this particular competition to describe the church’s spiritual battle?
- 7) Against the devil’s schemes, Paul calls the church to put on the armour of God. Have a read of Isaiah 59. What is the OT background of this image?
- 8) Considering the background in Isaiah, is the church called to defend its territory or launch an attack? Is this the attitude of St Luke’s?
- 9) How is the armour similar and different to that of the divine warrior in Isaiah 59?
- 10) Think through the different items of armour. Which items has St Luke’s already fixed in place? Which items need to be secured? Which items might we need to put on again?
- Belt of truth
 - Breastplate of justice/righteousness
 - Feet fitted with the gospel of peace
 - Shield of faith
 - Helmet of salvation
 - Sword of the Spirit: the word of God

11) What is the first task Paul gives the newly armoured Ephesian Church (19-20)? What may St Luke's learn from this?

12) How might our church need to change its culture and practices if we are to put on the full armour of God?

Pray

Pray for Sam and Jess, Percy and Lois Morton. Pray for Sam as Focus Pastor of Night Church. Pray for Sam as he heads up Youth Ministry at St Luke's – coordinating our youth groups on Friday nights and high school Scripture in our local schools. Pray for Sam as he also heads up Young Adults ministry and Young Adults Bible Studies.

Pray for our missionaries working in Universities:

Pray for Geoff and Liz, Johanna, Will, Tom and Zoe Robson and their work with Christian Union in Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand.

Pray for Rob and Jo, Lili, and Jemma Copland. Pray for Rob's work as the Anglican Chaplain at the University of Wollongong and for his work as Campus Director of the University Bible Group.

Pray for David, Kathryn and Reuben Luis. Pray for David as Campus Director of Geelong Christian Union at the Deakin University Campus in Victoria.

Pray for Peter and Katharine, Noah and Atticus Yock as they work amongst the students at the campus of Griffith University.

Pray for peace and wise leadership in our world. Pray that there would be opportunities for Christians to share the love, peace and saving grace that Jesus offers to all.

Thank God for his loving provision in drawing us to him and making us his children and heirs. Pray for members of our families and those close to us who do not know Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Pray for both wisdom and boldness in how to share the good news we have with those who are nearest and dearest to us.

Pray for Men's Breakfast on 2 March. Location TBA

Notes