

Cell Outlines Based on the
Book of Ephesians

PREFACE

These six cell outlines are designed to be followed in marriage with the systematic teaching in church on the Book of Ephesians throughout the autumn. Here are a few pointers so that your cell can get the best out of them:

1. As the outlines are topical, there are slightly less outlines than there will be sermons. As such, you will find the week commencing dates at the top of each outline so that, if you wish, you can follow the relevant outline in the week after the sermon on that subject in church.
2. In response to the fact that cells in the church vary enormously in terms of both styles of worship and where they are in their witness, these outlines only contain welcome and word sections.
3. The outlines follow a particular method of studying and applying the Bible. The aim of the first few questions is to foster an understanding of the text itself, each question helping to build up a picture of what the passage is conveying. The next few questions focus on application to our lives today, and most include an opportunity for personal or cell response.
4. Answers to the questions have not been provided in an attempt to allow the Bible to speak for itself. However, on some questions "pointers" for the leader have been given, which are in italics. These are to help ensure that relevant points have been drawn out from the passage which will be needed for the application questions.
5. The questions have been prepared in the conviction that the Bible is God's primary revelation to His creation. As such, they are not intended to be prescriptive, but to foster meaningful discussion leading to an application of the passage to the lives of those in cell.

WEEK 1 (Week commencing 11 September)

IDENTITY

WELCOME

How do you think others perceive you?

OR What things are important to you in creating your own identity?

WORD

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

1. Re-read verse 3. We are told that God has "blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ". On a large piece of paper, as a group list the spiritual blessings which are mentioned in this passage.

Predestined (v 4-5 and 11)

Adopted (v 4)

Forgiveness of sins (v 8)

Redemption (v 7 and 14)

Conformity with His will (v 11)

2. Discuss what each of these means. What does it mean that these blessings are described as "spiritual"? Why is this important?

3. What does the passage say about God's attitude towards giving us these blessings?

In love (v 4)

Gave Him pleasure (v 5; note in particular the New Living Translation "And this gave Him great pleasure")

Lavish (v 8)

Good pleasure (v 9)

In conformity with His will (v 11)

4. Why do we feel such discontent in our lives if these descriptions of God's attitude towards blessing us are true? How do these verses help us?

5. What pre-occupies your life at the moment? How do these verses help put your pre-occupations into perspective?

6. Reflect on, and praise God for each spiritual blessing he has given to you, and that he is in control of what gifts He gives you. Ask the Holy Spirit to make the gifts God has placed within you a reality in your life.

WEEK 2 (Week commencing 18 September)

PRAYER

WELCOME

What thing(s) do you do every day as a routine that you couldn't not do?

WORD

Read Ephesians 1:15-23 and Ephesians 3:14-21

1. Make a list of the things that Paul was praying for. Were these things the Ephesians were lacking? If not, why is Paul praying for them? What can we learn from this about the way in which we pray for each other?
2. Read Philippians 1:9-11, Colossians 1:9-14 and 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, which are all examples of Paul's prayers. What do you notice about the way in which Paul prays?
3. What does Ephesians 3:20-21 say about God's ability to answer prayer? Does this challenge the way in which you pray?
4. Share about some things you are praying for at the moment and the way in which you pray for them. How is the way in which you pray different from the way in which Paul prays?
5. Spend some time as a group praying for the things mentioned in answer to 4 above, attempting to put into practise what you have learned this week. Remember to pray throughout the week and feed back next week.

WEEK 3 (Week commencing 25 September)

GRACE

WELCOME

What makes you feel loved? Try to remember what makes each of your group feel loved and to use them to demonstrate your love for one another during the week and in future cell meetings.

WORD

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

1. Divide a large piece of paper into two. On the left hand side of the page, write down the metaphors Paul uses to describe the Ephesians before they became Christians and what they mean. On the right hand side, list the words Paul uses to describe the Ephesians now that they are Christians. Discuss the contrasts between the descriptions **Keep this piece of paper for next week's cell meeting.**

2. How does Paul say that this change has been effected?

3. What reasons are given for God doing this?

Salvation was given to the Ephesians so that they could do good works - see v 8-10.

4. Paul says that "Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done" (v 8, New Living Translation). What does this mean practically?

5. How does this affect your identity as a Christian as we discussed last week?

6. What is the link between salvation and good works (v 8-10)? How important is doing good works to your salvation, and how can you improve on this? (It may be useful for somebody to also read James 2:14-25).

WEEK 4 (Week commencing 9 October)

CHURCH: A NEW COMMUNITY

WELCOME

Give an example of a prejudice you hold against another group of people;

OR What type of people do you find it difficult to get on with?

WORD

Read Ephesians 2:11-3:21

1. Divide a large piece of paper into two. On the left hand side of the page, write down the metaphors Paul uses to describe the Gentiles before they became Christians. On the right hand side, list the words Paul uses to describe the Gentiles now that they are Christians.
2. Bring out the piece of paper you kept from last week. Are there any similarities? How did Paul say the changes had been effected? How does Paul say the changes in the Gentiles have been effected?
3. What does Paul say about Christ's purpose? What did He preach?
4. What can you deduce from this about how the barriers between the Jewish and Gentile believers have been broken down? Can you think of any general principles from what you have looked at so far for the breaking down of barriers in relationships in church today?
5. What barriers are there in living peaceful and honest relationships with (a) those in your cell; (b) those in SBV (c) those in the wider church. How do these relationships affect the relationships you have with people outside church? From what you have learned, how can we deal with these barriers?
6. Spend a time of prayer together asking God to come and bring unity in Christ and break any barriers that exist between you and others in church down. If there are relationships that need mending, ask God to begin the healing process this week and resolve to take the initiative. Remember to have a time to feed back on how things go next week.
7. Thought to go away with and ponder for the week:

"Jesus Christ is still preaching peace in the world today through the lips of his followers" (John Stott).

In what ways is this true, and in what ways is it untrue, of you. As you begin the healing process in those relationships that need it this week, keep this in mind. It is by our relationship with one another that non-Christians will know that we love one another and are disciples of Christ (John 13:35).

WEEK 5 (Week commencing 23 October)

EQUIPPED TO SERVE

WELCOME

Tell us a time when you did really well in something;

OR What do you enjoy doing (what gives you energy)?

WORD

Read Ephesians 4:1-16

1. Make a list of what Christ has given to "each one of us" and what he has given to "some". What is the difference?
2. What does the word "gift" imply?
3. Do you think that this list is exhaustive (See 1 Corinthians 12:4 and look at the following passages: 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Romans 12:6-8).
4. Why do you think that gifts have a tendency to divide rather than unite? How can we prevent this? What does Paul suggest (v 3 and 4)?
5. For what purpose are the gifts given (a) to those receiving them and (b) to the wider church?
6. Are the gifts a sign of Christian maturity? If not, what is?

The idea here is to make a distinction between the gifts of the Spirit, which we are studying here and which are not a sign of maturity, and the fruit of the Spirit which, in the nature of it being the fruit of the Holy Spirit's work in your life, is a sign of maturity. (See Galatians 5:22). The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit (Galatians 5:17).

7. Do you readily identify with any of the gifts? If not, think about your personality traits. Do they seem to lead to one of the gifts? Take time to pray that those who already know what their gifting is will increase in it and other gifts that God wants to give them, and for those who don't yet know, pray that God will reveal His will.

WEEK 6 (Week commencing 13 November)

RELATIONSHIPS

WELCOME

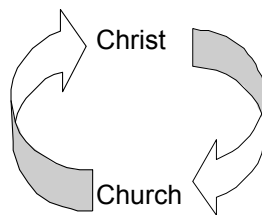
What is the best time you have ever had with your parents? /What is the best time you have ever had with your kids?

OR What one thing do you not understand about the opposite sex?

WORD

Read Ephesians 5:21 - 6:9

1. Draw a diagrams on a sheet of paper as follows:



Do the same for husband/wife, parent/child and master/slave.

2. Divide the group up into four smaller groups, and give each group one sheet. Looking at the passage, write on the right hand side of the diagram next to the relevant arrow the way in which the party at the top of the page should relate the party at the bottom, and write on arrow on the left the way in which the party at the bottom should relate to the party at the top. The group with the master/slave relationship should also try to explain how this is applicable to today's society.

3. What are the general principles which apply to all four types of relationship?

The idea behind this and the next question is to see that parties should be in mutual submission to one another (v 21) hence the circular diagrams above. However, these passages have often been quoted to justify oppression of one of the parties.

4. Many have used these passages to justify domination and oppression (note in particular where the sub-heading is placed in the NIV after verse 21: how does your immediate understanding of verse 22 change if you put the subheading before verse 21 as in some other versions e g NRSV and NLT?). What is your reaction?

5. Does submission equate to inferiority in standing? How is greatness in the Kingdom of God measured?

The point to draw out here is that there are different roles for each of the parties, neither of which should be seen as superior to one another in an eternal perspective.

6. Why is it difficult to put others first? Are there relationships in your life in which you need to apply the general principle you discovered in question 3? If so, pray for those relationships and take the initiative to take the first step in rectifying them this week.