

SYNERGY Ignite! Small Group Study #1

EPHESIANS: God's Word... A USER MANUAL for CHURCHES

TODAY'S PURPOSE STATEMENT: An invitation into God's Mystery, taken up by the awe and wonder and majesty of God.

PRECAUTIONARY INFO:

"One's destination is never a place but rather a new way of looking at things."

Playwright Henry Miller

ONBOARDING

- What does 'mystery' mean to you?
- "What would it be like if there was no mystery to God and his work in our world?"

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Synergy: "the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects".

CHARIS: Our Ministry partnership in Haiti; providing food and medicine, building churches and schools.

READING the INSTRUCTIONS

The New Testament Book of Ephesians is a letter. St. Paul spent 2.5 years in the large and important city of Ephesus. The church in Ephesus had lost its way. They have become exclusive to people of different cultural backgrounds. They are having trouble with marriages, families, and working relationships. Paul's letter is about teaching them to grow up!

How will they grow up? Paul says that growing up is entering the mystery. The mystery of God active in the world, present in the lives of people, and at work through the church. Our "firm foundation" is living into the mystery!

How would they grasp the mystery? By focusing on the blessing of God's marvelous grace...and by living that belief out in everyday relationships.

TOOLS FOR ENGAGEMENT AND CONTENT CLARITY

"SYNERGY is MYSTERY": Ephesians 1:3-14 (The Message Bible)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,^[a] ⁴ just as he chose us in Christ^[b] before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵ He destined us^[c] for adoption as his children^[d] through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely

bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. **With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.** ¹¹ In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, ¹² having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹³ so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹⁴ In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁵ this ¹⁶ is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

EFFECTIVE USAGE

Prompting Questions:

- *What are the 'blessings of God' in your life?
- *Re-read the emboldened Scripture. What is this saying to you?
- *What do you find this Scripture... Uplifting? Inspiring? Hopeful?
- *Why are these words such an important way for Paul to begin the letter?

PERSONALIZE YOUR EXPERIENCE

- What excites you most about your relationship with God?
- What happens in us when we have lost energy in our faith life? How can we find that energy and vitality? How important is energy in our church community?
- How might I embrace the awe and wonder (mystery) of God in my life this week?

LINK TO RELATED TOPICS

Stewardship for Daily Life:

Paul begins his letter with a Blessing. He blesses God for blessing us. Stewardship is not first about giving our time, talent, and treasures. It is most importantly, recognizing that all that I have is a blessed gift from God. Truly, our stewardship principle is "blessed **to be** a blessing". Leaning into the mystery of God is opening hands and heart to be generous with our lives... to be a blessing. We may never know the lives touched but God knows! The God of the cosmos is present and personal.

CUSTOMER SERVICE INFORMATION

- Next Week (October 8th) is "SNERGY in Community" with our focus on Ephesians 2:7-22
- Next Week between services and after the late service is a **MINISTRY FAIR**. Come and have breakfast and check out all the ways God works through the ministries and Shepherd of the Hills.
- Special Prayer Vigil on Sat. Oct. 14th. Sign-up for a 15-minute prayer time!

TROUBLESHOOTING

Sharing personal concerns and prayers

