

New Discovery

Key Verse:

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children.”

Ephesians 5:1

Level 5 lesson 5

Extra: How would you explain this ‘mystery’ to a friend?

Read: Ephesians 3:1-13

Further: Ephesians 3:14-21

When Paul wrote this letter he may well have felt a bit like Captain Kirk in Star Trek when he said those now famous words, “Beam me up Scotty - I think I’m in trouble!” After all, he was chained to a Roman guard awaiting trial before Nero, the powerful Roman Emperor who was almost certainly insane! Twice he mentions the fact that he is a prisoner (3:1; 4:1), but his real focus is on something far greater than his own immediate predicament.

The Holy Spirit of God had revealed a great ‘mystery’ to him - one of the greatest truths in the whole letter - and he wishes to explain it to his readers. This is the ‘mystery’ of the Church. ‘Mystery’ in the N.T. means a truth that was previously hidden by God but which is now revealed; a sacred secret that is understood and treasured by the people of God. This ‘mystery’ was that Gentile believers are now united to the Jewish believers in one new body, “The Church.”(Ephesians 3:6). This is important to four different groups of people.

IT WAS IMPORTANT TO PAUL (ch3:1-5)

When Paul met Christ on the Damascus road, He learned that God was sending him to the Gentiles. (Acts 26:17-18) For years, He had taught both Jews and Gentiles that the love, mercy and grace of God were meant not only for the Jews - but for all people. But because Paul’s specific ministry was as the apostle to the Gentiles, he was accused of being prejudiced against the Jews. And of course, this new ‘mystery’ which Paul preached, was seen by the strict Jewish leaders as undermining Judaism. This led to strong persecution - even hatred. Because of this Jewish hatred toward him, Paul’s faithful service (like Joseph in the Old Testament) resulted in his false arrest and imprisonment in Rome. To Paul however, the preaching of this ‘mystery’ was so vitally important, he was happy to regard himself as being a prisoner for Christ’s sake - in order to bring glory to God and salvation to Jews and Gentiles.

IT WAS IMPORTANT TO THE GENTILES (ch 3:6-8)

This ‘mystery,’ as Paul explained in the previous chapter, is that through Christ’s substitutionary death

on the cross, salvation is now available for ALL sinners - the barriers between Jews and Gentiles and God were now broken. This means Gentiles could now share the promises of God with the Jews and the spiritual riches God gave them.

The mystery reveals there is new, mighty, resurrection power available to believing Gentiles also (v7), and in addition, every believer has new riches.(v8) Not money, but something far greater - “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Paul, because of his past persecution of the ‘Church’ considered himself “less than the least of all saints,” hardly worthy of imparting such a wonderful, glorious message. Certainly, understanding the deep truths of God’s Word does not give a person a ‘big head’; rather, it gives them a broken and humble heart.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO THE ANGELS (ch 3:9-10)

Paul tells us that God’s intention, even from ages past, was that the depth and scope of His incredible wisdom might be displayed to all the heavenly beings by means of the Church! These heavenly beings already know about the power of God as seen in creation. But when they see Christ’s ‘Church,’ – an innumerable multitude of people from every race and nation, all saved by God’s grace alone [who we read a little later in Ch5 that “Christ loved and gave Himself for”] - they will marvel throughout eternity at the wisdom and grace of God in salvation. In stark contrast, the foolishness of Satan in opposing God and this wondrous work will be plain for all to see.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO CHRISTIANS (ch 3:11-13)

This great truth concerning the Church, as we have just seen, has been part of God’s wonderful purpose from long ago. When God saved Paul, He passed on to him the precious treasures of Gospel truth.(1 Timothy 1:11) Paul in turn, passed them on to others, encouraging them to pass them on to faithful men who would guard them and share them.(2 Timothy 2:2) The reason many Christians are weak is often because they do not understand their riches in Christ. Even many church leaders do not properly understand the spiritual wealth Christians have in Christ, and all that is available to them “in Him.” However, when we truly grasp the reality of our position in Christ, and have an understanding of God’s programme for our present time, we can have confidence toward God and courage in the difficult circumstances of life. These truths were once “hidden,” but God does not want it to be a secret anymore! Understand your wonderful position in Christ, then by His power, live in the light of it - and share the blessing with others!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. In the context of our lesson, explain ‘mystery.’
2. Why was Paul in prison?
3. Name one of the results of this ‘mystery’ for the Gentiles.
4. Why are many Christians weak?
5. Why do you think this study is called “New Discovery”?

My Name is Age

New Creatures

Key Verse:

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works.”

Ephesians 2:10

Extra: Aim to put at least one responsibility into action every day.

Level 5 lesson 6

Read Ephesians 5:1-14

Further reading: Galatians 5:13-26

WALK IN LOVE

In our passage today, Paul urges his readers to, “walk in love, as followers of God; as dear children.”(v1,2)Of course, ‘to walk’ simply means ‘to conduct your life.’ Jesus is our great example in this. He conducted His life in love, in every detail; finally giving His life for us - even though we were His enemies! (Romans 5:8-10) But such a standard seems impossibly high, doesn’t it? How can we measure up?

Plainly, of ourselves, we can’t. It is like a hen, gazing longingly at an eagle soaring overhead and pitifully trying to copy it; it’s impossible! But can you imagine an eagle which couldn’t fly? Of course not – and this is Paul’s point! We as Christians are new creatures - children of God! And we are to grow up to be like our Heavenly Father. God IS love and through His indwelling Holy Spirit, we are enabled (as we live in obedience) to “walk in His love”; firstly toward Him and then toward others.

WALK IN PURITY (ch5:3-7)

In the same way, the child of God will conduct his life in purity, for their Heavenly Father is pure. This purity will ‘stand out’ in three areas:

His Actions. A Christian will not live in immorality or sexual impurity. Paul specifically mentions fornication (sexual relationships between unmarried people) but any kind of act, thought or covetousness (impure desires) that caters to our sinful nature is to be avoided by Christians. Our natural appetites are to be under the control of the Holy Spirit.

His Speech. Some people are careful to avoid immoral acts, but their conversation is often ‘off-colour.’ This shows where their hearts really are - no matter what they pretend to be! Jesus said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Matthew 12:34) As His dear children, we should reflect His purity in the words we use - and don’t use; in the stories and jokes we tell - and don’t tell. We should not joke about sacred things, or gossip and slander others. Our speech brings either credit, or disgrace, to the name of Christ.

His Friendships. Many well-meaning people have been led astray by bad companions. A true Christian will find his deepest friendship and fellowship with other Christians. While always friendly towards our unsaved associates, to win them for Christ; we must be careful not to share in their evil acts.

WALK IN LIGHT (ch5:8)

Darkness hides beauty as well as danger. Before we came to know Christ, we walked in spiritual darkness. We had no idea of the terrible danger we were in, or of the filth of our sinful ways. Nor could we see the beauty of our Lord. But now we walk in the light of His presence!

A SPIRIT-CONTROLLED WALK (ch5:9,10)

This is only possible if we are truly God’s children through faith in Christ; indwelt by His Holy Spirit. It is He who enables us to lead lives that are righteous by God’s standards and reveals to us what is acceptable to Him. Also, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit “will guide ... into all truth.” [John 16:13] God does not leave a Christian in ignorance as to His will about anything, if we really want to know and obey. Sometimes though, it may involve giving up a practice or friendship that means a lot to us!

A SEPARATED WALK (ch5:11-14)

Jesus warned that, “If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”(1 John 2:15) That’s a serious statement! So how do we relate to the unsaved ones around us? What are a Christian’s responsibilities toward those who are in the darkness of unbelief? We will find we can no longer walk so closely with our former companions; there is a ‘difference’ now, that can be felt. We are no longer so ‘comfortable’ in their company. This is not unexpected, for we have been moved from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light! And as Jesus said, “What fellowship does light have with darkness?”

Sadly, it is sometimes hard today, to distinguish between non-Christians and professing Christians! We should never associate with practices that are best described as “unfruitful works of darkness.” Instead, we are to reprove, or speak against them - especially if they are endangering our spiritual life or the lives of other believers.

The Bible contains many such examples. The O.T. prophets spoke out boldly against the evils which tempted the people of God. In the New Testament, John the Baptist lost his life because he took a stand against immorality. Jesus Himself denounced sin, especially when He saw it in the lives of those who professed to be zealous for God (see Matthew 23).

When a Christian walks in the light of his new life in Christ, his conduct shows up the evil behaviour of those in spiritual darkness. An ungodly person may seem alright in his own eyes - until he is forced to compare himself with God’s standard; then he sees his works for what they are. What a responsibility we have as Christians, to display the “light of Christ” in our lives, so that others, still in darkness, will be attracted to the ‘light’ and see their need of salvation in Christ.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. How can we measure up to the kind of love that Christ has for us?
2. What will our speech be like if we walk in ‘purity of life’?
3. Is a sexual relationship between unmarried people right or wrong? Why?
4. Who did Jesus promise would ‘guide’ us? How does this happen?
5. What could be the effect on friendships? How have you found this?

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New Conduct

Key Verse:

“Be very careful then how you live.....making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”

Ephesians 5:15-16

Extra: Keep a diary of the things God speaks to you about when reading your Bible

Level 5 lesson 7

Read Ephesians 5:15-6:9;

Further reading: 2 Corinthians 6:14-18

A WISE WALK (ch5:15-17)

Young children often need to be restrained from running foolishly into danger, or into situations where their lives would be in danger. It is a sign of maturity when they see the dangers and avoid them for themselves. So it is in our lives as Christians. There is much in our world today that would ‘trip us up;’ spoil our testimony and walk with the Lord, and make us ineffective in His service. Our scripture passage today, mentions two areas where we need to be vigilant:

Use of our time. We are to “redeem the time” (v16 KJV) - make good use of it - knowing that we are accountable to God for the way we use the time He gives us. Do you set aside some of your time every day in order to meet with God by reading the Bible and praying? Do you make the most of time spent with friends, so that it is not just thrown away, but used for God’s glory?

Understanding God’s will. (v17)

Many people stumble through life, uncertain of its purpose and what they should be doing. Others simply desire to please themselves, or get as rich as they can. A Christian however, seeks to understand and obey God’s will for their lives; they want to please Him! To do that, we will spend time in His Word the Bible, meditating on it; prayerfully asking God to speak through it to our hearts, and to direct our lives each step of the way.

A SPIRIT-FILLED WALK (ch5:18-21)

We all know what happens to people who are full of alcohol - it controls them! A Christian should heed Paul’s warning and encouragement here, not to be filled or controlled by anything other than God’s Holy Spirit. The temporary euphoria and ‘happiness’ of a drug or alcohol-induced ‘high’ can’t compare with the real joy of a life totally filled, and controlled by the Holy Spirit. Satan would tell us that giving ourselves totally to God will ruin our lives, when in fact the opposite is true; joy is a natural effect of a Spirit-filled life. Such a person will find it easy to sing (v19) – if not aloud, at least in his heart! In fact, a Spirit-filled Christian will display all the fruit of the Spirit [Galations 5] in his life. Isn’t it interesting that the last attribute mentioned there is ‘self-control.’ It is something of a paradox, but unlike being drunk or ‘high’ on drugs, when we are filled and controlled by God’s Holy Spirit - we will also be self-controlled. That’s what He does. We should beware of anything or anyone, who

would require us, or encourage us, to give up our self-control in order to somehow experience God ‘more fully.’

OUR WALK IN RELATIONSHIPS (ch5:22-23)

Paul writes to husbands and wives, children and parents, and to servants (employees) and masters (employers). In each pair, one is to submit and the other is to take responsibility. A wife is to submit to her husband (v22), for instance - but the husband is to love his wife even as Christ loves the Church, and is to “cherish” her as he cherishes his own flesh.(v23) That’s a very different thing to a man dominating his wife and ‘ruling over her’; that was part of the effect of sin entering the human race.

Some men are quick to demand that their wife submits – but slow to love them unselfishly as God demands!

CHILDREN AND PARENTS (ch6:1)

Most young people look forward to the time when they are of legal age and can be independent. That’s perfectly normal, and every right-thinking parent is grateful when his son or daughter has reached maturity, both emotionally and physically. Until that time, however, a Christian son or daughter has a Scriptural responsibility to obey their parents. It is not always easy, but it is always right. You may feel that your parents are too strict, or in some way undeserving of your respect; but they are still responsible for your conduct, both to God and to the government. Be glad they care enough about you to make and enforce rules. Some young people would be grateful if their parents loved them enough to discipline and guide them! Incidentally, God promises to bless those who honour their parents. The fifth commandment, “Honour your father and your mother,” is the only one with a reward attached.

EMPLOYEES AND EMPLOYERS (ch6:5-9)

Paul wrote to “servants” or “slaves.” We could use the word employees today, to mean the same thing. These verses can really be applied to any relationship in life where one person is subordinate to another and must carry out orders. The duty of a Christian in these situations is obedience – unless disobedience to the clear will and instruction of God is required. Then as Paul said, “We must obey God, rather than men!” [Acts 5:29]

However, the object in view in these relationships, is not merely to please the employer or teacher - but to please Christ. You sometimes see people who behave or work well while the ‘boss’ is around, but who quickly revert to their true selves as soon as he is out of sight! The Bible calls that ‘eye-service’ and it displeases God, even though it fools the teacher or employer for a while.

Of course, if you are working to please Christ, you’ll always do the very best you can. Most employers will notice good service and reward it, but even if your boss doesn’t - remember that God is making careful note of your work and that He will reward you Himself, either in this life or in the life to come.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. Why is it important to use our time carefully?

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2. Describe a child’s first responsibility toward their parents? Why is this?

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3. How does reading the Bible and praying every day help you?

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4. What is ‘eye-service’?

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5. When ought we to “obey God and not man”?

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New Conflict

Key Verse:

“Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”

Ephesians 6:11

Extra: Study the subject of truth and its importance today.

Level 5 lesson 8

Read Ephesians 6:10-20

Further reading: James 1:2-18

THE SOURCE OF POWER: GOD (ch6:10)

As Warren Weirsbe, a noted Bible commentator, once wrote, “Many Christians fail to realise that the Christian life is a battle-ground - not a play-ground!” It’s true. As Christians, our earthly lives are now part of a spiritual battle between supernatural beings; God and Satan. But perhaps the most important truth for each Christian soldier to learn, is that victory is of God (2 Corinthians 4:7). It is easy to rely on our own strength, even in fighting God’s battles, but the Christian soldier is to “be strong in the Lord, and in His mighty power.”

THE UNSEEN FOE: SATAN AND HIS HOSTS (ch6:11,12)

As Christians we now have a great enemy. In scripture he is given several names including: the devil, Satan, the serpent, the great dragon, Beelzebub, and Belial (Revelation 12:9; Matthew 12:24; Deuteronomy 13:13). These names have various meanings - adversary, destroyer, prince of demons, slanderer - and combined together give us a clear picture of his character!

He is wily - in other words, cunning and full of tricks. He even disguises himself as an “angel of light” at times, and can appear beautiful, innocent, and wise (2 Corinthians 11:14) He was once God’s most trusted angel, until he became filled with pride and tried to set himself above God, his creator.(Ezekiel 28:12-17, Isaiah 14:12-15) He was banished from Heaven with other angels who chose to follow him, and ever since he has been absolutely opposed to the work of God in this world.

Whether men are openly wicked or appear good, he does not want them to obey and love the Living God. He still retains supernatural powers; that’s why our conflict with him must be on a spiritual basis if we are to prevail.

THE SOLDIER’S ARMOUR (ch6:13)

God’s purpose for His soldiers is that they resist Satan. (James 4:7) Accomplishing this purpose, will involve a battle; personal, hand-to-hand combat in fact! But God provides the strength we need and has made available the equipment each person needs. All we must do is put it on!

ITS PARTS (ch 6:14-17)

BELT of truth: The military girdle (or belt) was a sash worn around the waist, from which a sword was hung. The belt of the Christian soldier is ‘truth’. This word has a two-fold significance for us. First of all, we stand only for the truth as we find it in the Bible and as we see it in Jesus Christ. He said of Himself, “I am ... the Truth.” (John 14:6) Secondly, we are to be truthful ourselves.

BREASTPLATE of righteousness:

In ancient times, the breastplate protected all the vital organs - the heart, lungs, liver, stomach, etc. Our spiritual ‘breastplate’ is righteousness, or right living, but it is not our own righteousness. The righteousness meant here is “that which is through faith in Christ.” (Philippians 3:9). When we trust Christ as Saviour, God justifies us, or puts Christ’s righteousness on us. When we are dressed in this flawless righteousness, we are able to answer Satan’s accusations and resist his temptations.

SHOES of the Gospel of peace: The Old Testament describes the “beautiful feet of him that brings good news, that proclaims peace; that brings good tidings, that proclaims salvation.” (Isaiah 52:7). Our feet should always be ready to carry the Gospel message, everywhere we go.

SHIELD of faith: Satan is ‘the accuser’ and he will do his best to hurt you with his fiery darts of doubt, discouragement and despair. But that is the time to raise the shield of faith and say, “I believe God’s Word and I am going to trust Him no matter what!” As Job said, “Though He [God] slay me - yet will I trust in Him.” (Job 13:15) That’s faith! And that’s the only way to quench Satan’s fiery darts.

HELMET of salvation: It’s true that our affections and emotions are involved in our salvation, but it’s also true that our relationship to Christ must be more than mere emotion. John gives many reasons by which we may know that we belong to Christ (e.g. 1 John 2:3-5, 29; 3:10, 24, etc.) The most vulnerable part of our body, the head, is protected when covered with the helmet of salvation.

SWORD of the Word of God: Now we come to the only piece of offensive [attacking] equipment a Christian soldier has - his sword. But what a powerful weapon it is! “The word of God is quick [alive], and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” (Hebrews 4: 12) Armed with such a weapon, a Christian can defend against the thrusts of the enemy and drive the devil away also.

Of course, a soldier needs constant practice in the use of his sword or he will be overcome. Are you experienced in the use of your ‘sword,’ the Bible? Do you read and study it daily? Do you regularly commit to memory some of its great verses, so they will be ready when you need them?

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. We are engaged in a supernatural battle. Who is the battle between?

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2. What is one of the most important truths for the Christian soldier to learn?

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3. Why was Satan banished from Heaven?

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4. What is the ‘armour’ of the Christian?

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5. Name some ways a Christian can learn to effectively use his ‘sword.’

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Please complete and return by post to

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