

Christ Is Wisdom

Deisha picked up the last pile of Bible workbooks, placed them on the table, and rejoined her older friend and spiritual mentor. Serena, who was sitting in the almost emptied fellowship hall, had come to town early for the holidays.

"You did an excellent job in leading the women's Bible study," said Serena.

The words meant a lot to the younger woman. After five months, Deisha was still somewhat nervous in leading the group. Her pastor had asked her a year ago to help with the women's ministry. Deisha didn't think she was leadership material or wise enough. Her pastor disagreed.

"Deisha, I have noticed the steady growth you've made in Christ in the past six years," said Serena. "You have been walking and listening to the Holy Spirit. You have been faithful to the things of God."

"I remember some of our earlier conversations," Serena continued. "You were unsure and uneasy about so many more things. I prayed that the Lord would continue to keep you, and reveal His love, grace, power, and hope to you."

"Praise God for answering your prayers," said Deisha. "I have so much more to learn and know. But the Lord continues to open and stretch my heart and mind. I'm so grateful."

"We all are grateful for the gift of Deisha," came a voice from a sister on her way out of the back door.

1. How do power and wisdom go together?

2. When have you seen God's power and wisdom exhibited?

3. Why is it so easy to lose the focus of loving others when we've lost hope?

LESSON FOCUS: Let God open your heart to His wisdom, power, and hope.

Abundant Wisdom

Ephesians 1:15-17, KJV

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

Ephesians 1:15-17, NIV

¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Evidently, the Ephesian believers' faith in the Lord was so well known within their community and beyond that word of it had even reached Paul in Rome where he was imprisoned (see Eph. 6:19-20). They had demonstrated that the most important aspect of someone's faith is what they trust in—the object of their faith. Only faith in the Lord leads to abundant life, both now and for all eternity.

Along with their faith, Paul had also heard of their love for fellow believers. The Old Testament standard for loving others was to love them as we love ourselves (e.g., Lev. 19:18; Mark 12:29-31). However, it is not the highest standard, because it leaves out the willingness to die for others. So the Lord instituted a new standard and command: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35). Now, instead of loving one another as ourselves, the Lord's people are to love as Christ loves us.

Since Paul had heard of the Ephesians' faith and love, he had not ceased to pray and give thanks for them. Ceaseless

prayer epitomized Paul's everyday existence. When our faith is placed in the person and power of God, we can trust that He will hear and answer our prayer.

Paul's specific prayer for the Ephesians was for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to be upon them from the hand of the Father. Having been sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13), God's people were also blessed with wisdom, knowledge, and enlightenment not available to unbelievers. And a great blessing of this spiritual wisdom and enlightenment is that we can know our God better. The more we know Him, the more we can become like Him, which is the goal of everyone who truly loves Him.

4. *What had Paul heard about the Ephesian believers?*

5. *What did Paul continually do on behalf of the Ephesian believers?*

6. *To what end did the apostle pray for them?*

Abiding Hope

Ephesians 1:18-20, KJV

18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 1:18-20, NIV

¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.

There are truly great blessings that come with knowing our God. The first blessing discussed here is that our spiritual eyes will be enlightened to the wonderful hope we have as His children. Hope is so important, especially during these trying times. We have a hope that transcends the trials and tribulations of this world. And that hope of glory that awaits us in part has to do with the great riches that come with our inheritance as God's children. In this life, we have the promise that "God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19, KJV). The Lord takes care of His children, not in a miserly fashion, but rather in accord with His overflowing riches. From His inexhaustible treasury, God's grace abounds toward His children.

Along with the great hope and abundant riches that are ours as God's children, we have incomparable power to live as victorious overcomers. The power God gives us is to build and edify, not to tear down or destroy. The Greek word for "power" (vs. 19) here is *dynamis*, from which we get our words "dynamo" and "dynamite." And it is great power, indeed, for the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to those who are in Christ.

Faith in Christ releases the mighty resurrection power of God in our lives. So let our hearts' desire be the same as Paul's, who longed to "know him, and the power of his resurrection" (Phil. 3:10a, KJV). Knowing that one day we will be with Christ in heaven where He is currently seated at the right hand of the Father should give us every hope to live victoriously for Him in the mighty power that He gives those who love and trust Him.

7. *What is enlightened by the wisdom and knowledge of God?*

8. *What does this enlightenment help us know?*

9. *What example is given here on how this mighty power of God was used on behalf of our Lord Jesus?*

Awesome Power

Ephesians 1:21-23, KJV

21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Ephesians 1:21-23, NIV

²¹Far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

The power that is available to God's children for righteous living is the same power that raised Jesus from the grave. And by His divine power, our Savior reigns above every other authority in heaven and earth, both in this present age and in the age to come—when all His enemies will be made His footstool (Ps. 110:1; Matt. 22:44).

Additionally, along with all things being under the Lord's feet, He is the head of the Church, which is His Body. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead and placed all things under His feet is the power by which He rules and reigns over all things. With divine wisdom and power available to us, we know that our hope in Christ is sure, both for this life and the life to come. May this hope help us stand in these trying times to His glory.

10. *Above whom is our Lord seated in the heavenly realms?*

11. *What does being at the feet of Jesus mean for His enemies? For His people?*

12. *What is the Lord's place in His Church?*

Everyday Blessings of Knowing Christ

When Scripture speaks of “knowing,” it means much more than knowing facts about something or being able to describe it. When Paul said, “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection” (Phil. 3:10), he meant knowing Christ as a person. From the beginning of their relationship, it was personal! Knowing God involves a deep personal trust in God cultivated in ongoing conversation with Him throughout our day.

Wisdom. To trust God is to rely on Him to help us know important things and provide what we need. We rely on God to lead us in our choices instead of trusting in politicians, news outlets, social media, or self-appointed experts. God will give us wisdom when we ask (Jas. 1:5).

Hope. Faith, which is essentially confidence in God, creates hope, which is a confident anticipation of future good. Everything we need will be provided, even if we aren’t aware that what is provided is what we need!

Power. God provides spiritual power, which is evidenced not by high positions and titles or by forcing decisions but by accepting Jesus’ invitations (“Follow me,” “Learn of me”). It is accompanied by the personal companionship and wisdom of Christ.

These blessings will give us “enlightened hearts” that lead us to love others well, praying for them as Paul did. At the front of our minds is how we might seek the good of others instead of how we might advance ourselves.

13. *How does an “enlightened,” increased sense of wisdom, hope, and power help Christians love one another well?*

14. *What is most helpful to you in getting to know Christ?*

15. *Which of the three blessings—wisdom, hope, power—do you think Christ is most eager for you to embrace more of at this time?*

An Open Heart

All Christians should want to open their hearts to the wisdom, hope, and power that can only come through a close, personal relationship with Jesus. The world will promise you those three things, but only Jesus can bring those riches and blessings fully into your life.

► *Pray now and this week to have an open heart that knows the wisdom, hope, and power that comes from an intimate relationship with Jesus. List here three things you can do this week to increase the closeness of that relationship.*

KEY VERSE

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what [are] the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. —Ephesians 1:18, KJV

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people. —Ephesians 1:18, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of November 14 through November 20

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** 1 Timothy 1:1-4, 12-17—Grace Overflowed for Service.
- Tue.** 1 Timothy 2:1-8— Live in Peace and Godliness.
- Wed.** 1 Timothy 3:1-13— Qualifications for God's Servants.
- Thu.** Micah 6:1-8— Do Justice, Love Mercy, Walk Humbly.
- Fri.** Psalm 37:1-9, 37-40— Trust in God and Do Good.
- Sat.** Acts 4:23-31— A Prayer for Boldness.
- Sun.** Ephesians 2:1-10— Created for Good Works.