

Ephesians: Manual for the New Humanity
Lesson 1: The Profound Practicality of Story, Identity, and Weaponry
Sunday School, 8/22/21, 9am

Introduction:

- A. Three Descriptions of Ephesians: **Powerful, Practical, Strategic**
- B. The Book Summarized (**Eph. 1:1-2**)
 - 1. The *will* of God as story
 - 2. *Saints* as identity
 - 3. *Grace and peace* as weaponry

The Profound Practicality of Story, Identity, and Weaponry in Ephesians

I. **The Intention of our Study**

- A. In our study of Ephesians, we are Not interested in **Plastic platitudes** and **Hollow Beatitudes**
- B. Rather, we are interested in **Christ-Shaped Attitudes** forged on the anvil of sincere wrestling with the revelation of God in the company of the people of God (Eph 2:10).
- C. 3 Goals
 - 1. Learn how to practically engage the story, embrace the identity, and take up the weaponry of the riches of the gospel *in your own life*.
 - 2. Seek to help fellow Christians to do the same thing (i.e., discipleship/counseling)
 - 3. Having mastered this application in Ephesians, go on to use the same model of story, identity, and weaponry in the rest of the bible (Eph. 5:18-20)

II. **Finding our Place in God's Story: The New Humanity in Christ**

- A. We are interested in finding our place in the **story** of God's redemptive history
- B. Everyone lives according to a narrative, a story, a plot.
- C. The book of Ephesians tells us that story
 - 1. Out of love, God predestined us to share in Christ (chap 1).
 - 2. The Fall rendered us DOA; we were dead in our trespasses and sins (Eph 2)
 - 3. But God, by His grace, made us alive together with Christ (Eph 2)
 - 4. He did this for the Jews in the O.C. but the mystery was that he would bring the Gentiles into this group making them **one new man** (Eph 2 and 3)
 - 5. Christians are called to live out of the ethic of this new humanity (Eph 4-6)

III. **The New Humanity as the Solution to the Pandemic of Identity Crisis**

- A. Identity crisis?
- B. Union with Christ as Identity ("In Him," Eph 1)

- C. As the new humanity, we constantly **ground our ethic** (i.e., behavior, how we live) in the **indicative of the gospel** rather than in the **indicative** of felt needs, emotions, circumstances, or opinions
- D. The Practical is in the Profound

IV. **The Weaponry of the New Humanity**

- A. Ephesians will broaden our perspective (Eph 6:12–13)
- B. C.R. Wiley calls Ephesians a “handbook for guerrilla piety”
- C. What are we fighting for?
- D. Ephesians reminds us that there is a three-tiered universe—Heavenly places, the regions of hell, and earth in the middle
- E. Christ fought and overcame, and we are to fight and overcome
- F. We fight by waging guerilla piety
- G. Profound Practicality
 - A. Our **enemy** (Eph. 3:8–10)
 - B. Our **goal**=cosmos (Eph. 1:17-23)
- H. How do we sharpen the weapons of righteousness?
 - 1. Through Prayer (Eph 6:18)
 - 2. Through hearing Christ in the preached word (Eph 2:17)
 - 3. By putting off the old man and putting on Christ (Eph 4:22–24)

Questions for Discussion:

1. What is the indicative?
2. What is the imperative?
3. What is the connection between the indicative and the imperative?
4. How does losing sight of our identity in Christ tempt us to redefine the indicative?
5. What is the story that the new humanity finds itself in and how does that impact how we live our lives?
6. How can we be short-sighted in identifying our enemy?
7. How can we be short-sighted in identifying what is at stake in the Christian life?
8. How does our identity in Christ provide the profundity out of which the practical thrives?