Devotional Guide
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Session 1 – The One, The Only One
Ephesians 1:1-14

In my work in preaching and teaching, I have been called on to perform weddings. I’ve always tried to spend several sessions with each couple to offer them guidance for their married life together. I discovered in these sessions that there are a few individuals who get misled to believe that this person whom they want to marry is the only one on the planet for him or her. This misunderstanding can lead a person to marry someone for whom he or she is totally unsuited. This belief, “she is the only one for me”, causes the person to overlook any serious problems or incompatibility issues. Discovering this faulty thinking is critical before one gets married.

I have seen so many miserable people in my ministry who have similar thinking, “this is the only job for me”, “this is the only mate for me”, or even worse, “this is the only way I can be happy”.

“This is the one, the only one” thinking only applies in one situation. Paul describes that situation in Ephesians 1. “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.”

- Read Ephesians 1:1-14. How is Christ the only one?
- What do you think “when the times reach their fulfillment” in verse 10 means?
- In verse 11, the word “predestined” means “to decide beforehand.” Who is the one who did the deciding?
- When did he decide?
- Why did he decide beforehand?
- What important guarantee for every believe is found in this text?
Session 2 – He Won, He’s Always Won
Ephesians 1:15-23

As a child sitting in my dad’s lap listening to him read comic books, I was immediately drawn into these stories of fantasy like Superman, Wonder Woman, Iron Man, and the Avengers. These fantastical characters wielded great power in their drive to rescue and help all people. Their stories of victory pale in comparison to the story we read in Ephesians 1:15-23. In this story, God, our Father, wields great power to raise Jesus from the dead.

• Take a few minutes to read through Ephesians 1:15-23 two or three times. As you read, think about the times you have seen or experienced great power like a tornado, a storm at sea, a hurricane, an earthquake, a rocket launch, etc. What did you think or feel during the experience?

• Reflect for a few minutes on the mighty power required to resurrect Jesus from the tomb mentioned in Ephesians 1:19-20.

• Take a few minutes and read John 20:1-30. At each scene in this chapter, (at the tomb or the two scenes in the locked room/house), put yourself in the sandals of Mary, Peter, John or one of the other disciples as each character experiences the resurrected Jesus. What are you thinking? What are you feeling?

• What does Paul’s statement in verse 19 mean to you, “His incomparably great power for us who believe.”

• Read Ephesians 1:15-23 again and offer your prayer to God. What would you like to say to him? Are there blessings he has give you, maybe new blessings that you just learned about from this reading? Do you have requests for God’s power to be used in your life or the life of someone you care about?
Session 3 – Being the One that He Won
Ephesians 2:1-12

I think most of us would agree that we hold some beliefs that may not be reflected in the way we live. For instance, a person can believe that they should be faithful to their spouse, yet behave in an unfaithful way. Believing is no good unless our beliefs are reflected in our behavior or actions.

When EQUIP began in 1984, our theme was “Becoming What You Believe”. Even from the beginning of EQUIP, our goal has been to encourage and train fellow believers to live out what they believe.

- Read Ephesians 2:1-12 two times. When you finish, take a sheet of paper and write down what you can remember about your life before you choose to follow Christ.

- On this same sheet of paper, write everything you can remember about the day you chose to follow Christ. Who were the greatest influences on your life at that time? What events might have influenced your decision to follow Christ?

- Also, write down what your life has been like since you chose to follow Christ. What blessings have you received? What challenges have you faced?

- I know this is an exercise that can take some time but don’t give up. Once you finish this document, you have the beginnings of your own God story. In Ephesians 2, Paul is encouraging these believers to reflect on their lives before following Christ and their lives after they chose to follow Christ. He is doing this so these believers can consider their blessings but also so they can have their own God story clear in their heads. This story should be shared multiple times in a person’s life as they share what God has done for them.

- Being the One that God Won is more than church attendance, giving and communion. Being the One that God Won is sharing our God stories with every single person who will listen.
Session 4 – The Power of One
Ephesians 3:14-21

I would be willing to guess that every person reading this knows what “the devil working in you” means. We are very familiar with evil behavior. Our very nature leads us to evil behavior.

So I ask you to read Ephesians 3:14-21 two or three times. As you do, think on what Paul is asking the Father to do for every individual believer. Here are some phrases I jotted down as I reflected on this reading:

• “that he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being”

• “that you, being rooted and established in love”

• “know this love that surpasses knowledge”

• “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us”

The body of Christ has great power and each single part, each believer, has power, not our own power but God’s power.

• Take a few moments to reflect on this one truth – God is able to do immeasurably more that you can ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within you.

• Offer your prayer to our Father – what is in your heart or imagination that you want to ask of him. Do you need to confess your doubts to him? Can you ask him to open your heart to know his love and to fill your life?

Session 5 – The “Won” Church
Ephesians 3:1-12

• Take a few moments and read carefully through Ephesians 3:1-12.

Jesus’ victory over death and the grave through the resurrection power of God’s Holy Spirit guarantees that the “Won” body will be “one” body. The prophetic vision of all nations becoming one God-called family begins with Abram: “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you”. That vision continues throughout the Old Testament in texts like Joel 2:28-29, 32. “Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit. Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved . . .” Acts 2 quotes directly from this text indicating God’s intention for his Church Family to be comprised of every ethnic group upon the face of the earth.

• Write a summary of this text in your own words.

• What is the mystery that was hidden in previous generations but was made know to Paul by revelation?

• What does this revealed mystery mean to you?

• Take a few moments to reflect on this quote?
  “A Christian congregation is a company of praying men and women who gather, usually on Sundays, for worship, who then go into the world as salt and light. God’s Holy Spirit calls and forms this people. God means to do something with us, and he means to do it in community. We are in on what God is doing, and we are in on it together.” (The Jesus Way: A Conversation on the Ways that Jesus is the Way by Eugene Peterson, page 5)

• God’s purpose for all eternity, that he has accomplished through Christ Jesus our Lord is for us the “Won” one body of Christ to make the manifold wisdom of God known to all the world, to every ethnic group on the face of the planet.

• What would you like to say to our Father just now? What would you like to ask of him? How can the Father help you to join his people to spread his wisdom throughout the world?
Ephesians 4 outlines the core of the “Won”-derful life. The “Won”-derful life stands opposite to the me/my mentality original to the world. The me/my way of living is highly effective in getting ahead in a God-indifferent world, but not in the community of Jesus.

- Take a few minutes to read Ephesians 4:1-6.
- What qualities make up the called life?
- How do these qualities help maintain the unity of the Spirit in the body of Christ?
- Read Ephesians 4:7-16.
- What kinds of grace gifts does Christ give each Christ follower?
- What is the purpose of these gifts?
- How are you using your gift to help achieve this purpose (your gift may not be in this list since there are many gifts not listed here)?
- Would you now offer a prayer of thanksgiving to our Father for blessing us with a community of believers who seek to be unified, loving, and caring? Can you ask the Father to help you mature as you use your gift to help others?
Session 7 – The One, Won Message

John 17:20-26

Have you noticed how consistent the message and practice are for well run businesses? I continue to admire the consistent message and practice of almost all of the employees of Chick-fil-A and Southwest Airlines. Most businesses have a few of their outlets, restaurants, or offices that excel in customer service, for instance. But to have businesses who excel across every outlet they have is exceptional.

One message is difficult to maintain across a large group of employees. Equally difficult is to maintain and practice the “Won” message in any given church family. Think about it for a moment. What would you say is the message of your church family? Or how well are the members of your church family in practicing this message?

In his last words to his disciples before his death, Jesus stressed that his disciples must consistently practice one very important message - that the world may know that God sent Jesus to them because he loved them (John 17:23). Earlier during Passover, Jesus told his disciples how the world is going to know that God sent Jesus and that he loves them - By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (John 13:35).

The “Won” message can only be effective when the “Won” body of Christ demonstrates God’s “Won” love.

- How can you be an example of unity and love in your own church family?
- Offer your prayer now to our Father. Can you ask the Father to give you strength to share God’s message of love with a friend? Can you also prayer for your church family that this kind of love and unity will grow and be a witness to your community?
Session 8 – Won Love

Deuteronomy 7:6-9

Over the past several months, Cindy and I have invested quite a bit of sweat equity in our Texas house. We plan to live there for several months out of the year. The reason we have worked so hard on this house is that we love our granddaughter, who lives nearby, to the moon and back. Only love would move us away from our Florida home for months at a time. However, whatever sweat equity we have invested and love we have expressed pales in comparison to God’s love for you.

As a beginning, consider Deuteronomy 7:6-9. In this text, God wants to defeat any prideful arrogance Israel might have that they are God’s chosen people because they are more special than other people on the earth. This prideful arrogance would be Israel’s downfall in years to come and this same prideful arrogance would put Jesus on the cross.

This text begins a message that becomes much larger than Israel. God loves not just one people group but all people groups. His love story is not that he somehow loves Israel over all other people groups. No, he loves every person in every people group and his love story climaxes as he resurrects Jesus from the tomb to destroy the barriers that divide all people.

• Take a few moments now to read Deuteronomy 7:6-9.
• What do these verses say? What is going on in this text?
• What does this text say to you?
• What do you want to say to God about this text?
• What difference will this text make in your life?