



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: John 1:1-2,18; 1 John 1:3; Eph. 1:9-10;2:16-17

1. *The Mission of God*

a. Based on who God is—the triune God ‘in community’—*perichoresis* (Jn. 1:1-2, 18; 17:24)

- “In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was with God, & the Word was God. **2** He was with God... No one has ever seen
- God. The one & only *Son, who is himself God & is at the Father’s side*—he has revealed him.” (Jn. 1:1-2, 18)
- “Father...you *loved* me before the world’s foundation.” (Jn. 17:24)

a. *Perichoresis*—the circulation of divine life & love

- “Each person of the Trinity loves, adores, defers to & rejoices in the others. That creates a dynamic, pulsating dance of joy & love...The Greek word...*perichoresis*.”—[Tim Keller, *Reason for God*, p. 215]
- Some Church Fathers “described the nature of the Trinity using the image of dance or *perichoresis*. This metaphor describes the Triune God & proves helpful...*Perichoresis* suggests moving around, making room, relating to one another without losing, or taking, identity...This...[imp]lies mutuality or reciprocity...” [David Wesley, *A Common Mission*, p. 105]
- “*Perichoresis* is the circulation of divine life within the Trinity in mutuality & fellowship...” —M. S. Dehmlow Dreier

b. God’s Mission based on God’s Nature

- “God’s mission derives from God’s nature & God’s intention...‘Mission is...an attribute of God...It is *not the church that has a mission*...it is the mission of the [triune God] that includes the church...There is the church because there is mission [God’s Mission], not vice versa’.” [Roy E. Ciampa, “*Missio Dei...in Eph.*,” quote D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, p. 390]

b. God’s mission—to enlarge the circle of divine fellowship (1 Jn. 1:3)

- “What we’ve seen & heard we...declare to you, so that you may also have fellowship with us; & indeed our fellowship is with the Father & with his Son, Jesus Christ.” (1 Jn. 1:3)
- “The Trinity is, by nature, ‘sending.’ The Father *sends* the Son into the world to save it, & the Father & the Son *send* the Spirit into the world...Now...the Spirit is sending the church”—Tim Keller

c. God's mission includes the Son's mission (Jn. 3:16-17) & the Spirit's mission (Jn. 14:26; 15:26)

- "God loved the world in this way: He gave his one & only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will...have eternal life...God did not *send* his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." (Jn. 3:16-17)
- "The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will *send* in my name." (Jn. 14:26)
- "The one I will *send* to you from the Father—the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father" (Jn. 15:26)
- "The Son's primary mission is to communicate himself—his Spirit, his resurrection life—to others & so *enlarge the circle of triune fellowship*...The Father sends the Son (Jn. 17:18)...the Father sends the Spirit (Jn. 14:26)...The *purpose of the two missions...is communion & community: a sharing in...the very life of God*. The overarching plan—the *oikonomia* made known in Christ—is 'to gather everything together in Christ' (Eph. 1:10)." [K. Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, p. 70]

d. The church participates in God's mission (Jn. 20:21)

- "Jesus told them, '...As the Father has *sent* me, I also *send* you'." (Jn. 20:21)
- "God does not merely send the church...*God already is in mission, & the church must join him.*" –Tim Keller

2. The Mission of God in Ephesians (Eph. 1:10)

- "*Ephesians [presents] God's Peace-making Mission & the Church's Participation in it*"—Michael J. Gorman
- "In Ephesians, God's mission...is...demonstrated in sending Christ...to bring redemption & renewal to all creation & the *establishment of a harmonious peace* where there is division & alienation. God accomplishes his mission through the death & resurrection of Christ and through the preaching & living out of the gospel message." [Roy E. Ciampa, "*Missio Dei...in Ephesians*," in J. C. Laansma (ed.) *NT Theology in...the Church's Mission*, p. 242]

a. God's Peace-making Mission (Eph. 1:10)

- God's "plan for the fulfillment—to *bring everything together* in Christ...things in heaven &...on earth in him." (Eph. 1:10)
- God's plan is "*to bring everything together...both things in heaven & things on earth* in [Christ]." (Eph. 1:10) "The verb used here is an alternative to 'reconcile' (FF Bruce). In Christ the diverse elements of the cosmos are integrated & harmony restored...[This] removes the grounds for fear of hostile cosmic forces." [G Hawthorne (ed) *Dictionary of Paul & Letters* p]

b. Reconciling Fallen Humanity with God (Eph. 2:17)

- "[Christ] came & proclaimed the good news of *peace* to [those] far away & *peace* to those who were near." (Eph. 2:17)

c. Reconciling Fractured People-Groups with each other

- "[Christ] is our *peace*, who made both [Jews & Gentiles] one & tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In his flesh, he made of no effect the law consisting of...regulations, so that he might create in himself one new man from the two, resulting in *peace*...He came & proclaimed...*peace* to [those] far away & *peace* to those who were near." (Eph. 2:14-17)

d. Producing the Church (Eph. 3:10, 21)

- "So God's multi-faceted wisdom may...be made known through the *church* to...heavenly rulers & authorities" (Eph. 3:10)
- "Ephesians narrates the triune God's saving story...[God's Mission]; it invites the Church to participate in God's mission by becoming what they're called to be." [I Ninan, "*Spirit & Mission in Eph.*," in R George (ed) *Holy Spirit...Mission*, p 38]
- The use of "temple imagery [in Eph. 2:21, implies the church is] the place/people where God dwells; [as such,] it expresses the meeting—the *uniting—both of heaven & earth* and of the future in the present... This [is] an exalted vision of *the church* & its calling to be the place and people [which]...*displays in the present the unification of the whole cosmos* which is *yet to come*." [Stephen C. Barton, "*Unity of Humankind...in Biblical Theology*," in C. Bartholomew (ed.) *Out of Egypt*, p. 248]

- “The church has a role in the...cosmic plan of God...*The church does not exist for itself but for God & his glory*...[It has] the task of calling the nations back into relationship with Christ...The church participates in God’s gracious purpose to unite everything in Christ. [It] is the instrument of Christ to bring together all things...through preaching the gospel to those inside & outside of the community.” [T. van Aarde, “...*OIKONOMIA for God’s Missional plan*,” *Missionalia*, V. 43, #1, p. 60]

e. Reconciling the whole Cosmos—joining together Heaven & Earth (Eph. 1:10; Co 1:19-20)

- “God was pleased...through [Christ] to *reconcile everything to himself*, whether things *on earth or things in heaven*, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.” (Col. 1:19-20)
- “God’s mission is *to restore creation*, & the church is called to participate in the mission...[by] alerting people to the universal reign of God.” –Tim Keller
- “Christ [is] the means of God’s reconciliation (Col. 1:20)...The purpose of incarnation was reconciliation or making peace... This *reconciliation is cosmic in scope*, including the ‘all things’ of the creation [Eph. 1:10]...The implication is clearly that the universe...is estranged from God. Christ’s sacrificial death (his ‘blood’) not only provides forgiveness of sins, but...even somehow restores...all things to their divinely-created purpose (Col. 1:20).” [M Gorman, *Apostle of Crucified Lord*, p. 557]
- “*The earthly & heavenly spheres*...[are] in relational disunity as a result of the rebellion of mankind that brought evil & sin into both spheres. It is through the *oikonomia* work of Christ that unity [is] restored in relation to him...restoring the original blessing of God...The church...is the place where the process of unification is taking place...beginning.” [Timothy van Aarde, “*Use of OIKONOMIA for the Mission...of God in Eph. 1:3-14*,” *Missionalia*, Vol. 43, #1, p. 51]
- The “Hymn [Col. 1:13-19] suggests more than the mere restoration of creation, but a remaking...[Christ] forges a *previously unthinkable unity between heaven and earth*.” [Edith M. Humphrey, “*Reclaiming all Paul’s ‘R’s*,” in John A. Dunne (ed.) *One God, One People, One Future*, p. 427]

3. **God’s Peace-mission involves Warfare vs. Hostile Powers** (Eph. 6:10-18)

- “Ephesians...[presents] *the triune God’s peace-making mission*...Ironically, this divine peace-making mission [is] *expressed*, in part, [as] *divine warfare* and thus our warfare too...This...expresses a profound truth about the *Mission of God* & our participation in it.” [Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, pp. 182-183]
- “More than any other Pauline letter, Ephesians stresses the hostile role of the principalities & powers against the church.” [Gerald F. Hawthorne (ed.) *Dictionary of Paul & His Letters*, p.]
- “Put on God’s full armor...& stand...with your feet sandaled with readiness for the gospel of *peace*.” (Eph. 6:11, 15)
- “*The God of peace will...crush Satan under your feet*.” (Rom. 16:20) “Startling blend of war & peace imagery”-W. Swartley

a. Paul’s readers well aware of ‘spiritual forces of evil’

- “Paul wrote Ephesians to...Gentile *Christians [who] lived in a world where...power...belonged to ‘rulers,’ ‘authorities,’ ‘world rulers,’ & ‘spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places’* (Eph. 6:12; 2:2). They could see signs of it...in...statues, [wall] friezes, & inscriptions in the markets &...street corners...The gods, this propaganda proclaimed, had given Rome the eternal right to govern the universe. To...readers...perhaps Paul’s own troubles [in prison (Eph. 3:13)] were...a reminder [of] such a world. Paul wrote...to encourage them...The Creator was their Father [etc.]...Through his anointed king Jesus, he had already triumphed over all the ‘spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places’ (Eph. 1:20-22) & had made available to his people the same power that brought Jesus...victory...& [Paul hoped] to encourage them in their battle with the forces of evil around them (Eph. 6:10-20).” [Frank S. Thielman, “*Ephesians*,” in G. K. Beale, D A. Carson (eds.) *NT use of the OT*, p. 813]

b. Spiritual Warfare (Eph. 6) is *not* an appendix to Ephesians

- “The [need of] divine strengthening for...*engaging the spirit-forces of evil* (Eph 6:10–20) *is not an irrelevant appendix to the epistle*. It is a crucial part of the [application] to which the rest of the epistle has been pointing...The unique emphasis [is] on spiritual warfare & power: This is the only place in... Paul’s [writings] where believers are explicitly called upon to struggle against the ‘principalities & powers.’ The ‘struggle’ is not merely...a parenthetical aside. It is taken up in...ten verses...integrally connected with the foregoing.” [Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power & Magic*, p. 103]

- “Few would deny the significance of [Eph. 6:10-20 for] divine warfare in Paul, but the motif of *divine warfare can be traced back to earlier sections* of [Eph.] where Paul describes the lordship of Jesus (Eph. 1:20-23) & the conflict between God & Satan through the work of the cross (Eph. 2:1-22)...[plus] the earlier sections in which Paul describes the power of the Gospel message.” [David W. Pao, “*Holy War*’ & *the Universal God*,” in R. R. Cook (ed.) *After Imperialism:...*, p. 118]
 - “Although it could seem to be a new theme in this epistle, the conflict with evil spiritual forces has been touched on in nearly every chapter of Ephesians.” [Peter S. Williamson, *Ephesians*, p. 189]
- c. Delivering Humanity from ‘the Strong Man’s grasp,’ (Lk. 11:20-2) the ‘the ruler of the power of the air’ (Eph. 2:2; Col. 1:13)
- “If I drive out demons by God’s finger...then God’s kingdom has come...When a *strong man*...guards his estate, his possessions are secure...When one stronger...overpowers him, he [disarms him &] divides up his plunder.” (Lk. 11:20-22)
 - God the Father “rescued us from the domain of darkness & transferred us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col. 1:13)
- d. Jesus defeated Satan, the Devil, at the Cross (1 Jn. 3:8; Jn. 12:31-32)
- “The Son of God was revealed for this purpose: to *destroy the works of the devil*.” (1 Jn. 3:8 ESV)
 - “Now is the judgment of this world. Now *this world’s ruler will be cast out*...If I’m lifted up from the earth...” (Jn. 12:31-32)
 - “Jesus began his...career with a private battle against the real enemy [Satan @ the temptation]; this battle will continue ‘til its last great showdown, as the powers of darkness gather for their final assault (Luke 22:53 [at Jesus’ arrest: ‘this is your hour & the dominion of darkness.’])...Jesus’ task is to defeat the Satan, to break his power, to win the decisive victory [to] ...open the way for God’s new creation... The great victory [will] be completed on the cross.” [Tom Wright, *Luke for...*, pp.]
 - “Jesus came to end the cosmic war that had been raging from time immemorial & to set the Satan’s captives free...[In this view] atonement is...a salvation battled for, a powerful, real adversary overcome & a war actually won by the Victor God.” [Martyn J. Smith, *Divine Violence & Christus Victor Atonement*, Middlesex U./London Sch. of Theology (2015) pp. 133, 5]
- e. Abolishing the ‘Ordinances’ Dividing People-Groups, ending hostility (Eph. 2:14)
- f. Defeating the ‘Powers’ on the Cross, exalted & seated on God’s throne far above all (Co 2:15; Eph. 1:20-22)
- “[Christ] disarmed the rulers & authorities & disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them in him.” (Col. 2:15)
 - God raised Christ “from the dead & seated him at *his right hand in the heavens*—far above every ruler & authority, [&] power...He subjected *everything under his feet* & appointed him as head over everything for the church” (Eph. 1:20-22)
 - “This universal ‘uniting’ brings harmony or reconciliation to God’s universe. *It involves subjugation of the powers* (Col. 2:14)...But Cosmic reconciliation is not universalism...” [Robert A. Peterson, *Salvation Accomplished by the Son*, p. 309]
 - “Reconciliation applied to [the ‘principalities & powers’] means...pacification, the *imposing of peace*, something brought about *by conquest*.” [F. F. Bruce, “*Christ as Conqueror & Reconciler*,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, #141 (1984) p. 293]
- g. The Church armed for warfare hostile spiritual forces (Eph. 6:10-18)
- “Stand against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh & blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces in the heavens.” (Eph. 6:11-12)
 - “The church is caught up in a ‘war of the worlds’ and a conflict of ‘economies’...As Paul says, ‘our struggle is not against flesh & blood, but...against the cosmic powers of this darkness, against evil, spiritual forces...’ (Eph. 6:12) These powers include ideologies that compete for the hearts and minds of individuals and nations...[and the] unseen forces [which] compete for man’s allegiance.” [Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, p. 111 & #117]
- h. Application: Avoiding Extremes of Denial of– & Preoccupation with– hostile spiritual powers
- A “biblical understanding of spiritual warfare requires, as a central component, a *belief in angels, Satan & demons as real, autonomous, free agents*, [plus] a belief that the *activity of these beings intersects*

with human affairs, for better or for worse...However,...many modern people, including many Christian theists [who believe God exists,] find this belief inherently implausible.” [Martyn J. Smith, *Divine Violence & Christus Victor*, Middlesex U./London Sch. Theology, p. 189]

- Tim Mackie argues that modern science accepts the notion of multiple dimensions beyond those directly verifiable by our physical senses. The US Smithsonian Institute writes: “The world as we know it has 3 dimensions of space—length, width & depth—& one dimension of time. But there’s the mind-bending possibility that many more dimensions exist out there. According to string theory...the universe operates with 10 dimensions.” [SMITHSONIANMAG.COM, OCT. 8, 2018] Beyond the 4th dimension, the ‘real things’ that exist in those dimensions (which could overlap & intersect our dimensions) & are not perceptible by us. Tim Mackie suggests Paul’s “spiritual forces,” “principalities & powers” could exist in those dimensions
- “The idea of spiritual warfare is at odds with the secular [western] worldview that denies the existence of supernatural beings & therefore their involvement in human affairs...[etc,] the experience of evil leads even many secular people to suspect that there is something wrong with the world that is bigger than the sum total of human failures...After one senseless [US] mass murder...a *Newsweek* journalist commented, ‘*Somehow, somewhere, someone planted the evil seed in [the perpetrator]—if not the Devil himself.*’ Or to take another example, how else could Nazism have arisen & the horrors of the Holocaust occurred in one of the most educated & cultured nations of the 20th century? “The opposite error to denying the existence of spiritual evil is superstition & fear that sees the devil everywhere.” [P. S. Williamson, *Eph.*, p. 193]