
SERMON NOTES February 13, 2022

Today's notes also available at CCPL.life/Connect

Ephesians 1:15-23
Defined by Our Beliefs
Pastor Mike

- I. Paul's prayer for our _____ need
 - a. That we would _____, not just _____
 - b. That we would have a _____ in God's truth
 1. The challenge of _____ what we _____
 2. Believing means _____ God's Word to _____
 3. The gap between our _____ and our _____
- II. The _____ truths we need _____
 - a. Living for the _____ in life
 - b. Living with the _____ of yourself
 - c. Living through the _____ at your disposal
- III. The _____ of these truths
 - a. We need to _____ and _____ our need
 - b. Pray for _____ and _____ in relationship
 - c. Remember it's a relationship defined by _____

Questions for reflection, application, and discussion

1. A study of all Paul's prayers for the church through his letters (Eph 1, 3, Col. 1, Phil 1) reveal that his prayers never focused on the circumstances that people faced, but instead he always prayed that God would deepen their beliefs and strengthen their faith.
 - a. How important is strong theology (a right belief about God and about ourselves) in our Christian walk?
 - b. Is it possible to live a successful Christian life without a strong theology? Why or why not?
 - c. How much have you prayed for and pursued this in your own life? In other people's lives?
2. Many churches stress that they are unconcerned about theology beyond the basics, but want to focus only on the 'practical' teachings of the Bible.
 - a. Why do you think that this has become a popular theme in the modern American church?
 - b. What are possible long-term advantages and/or dangers for a church (and people in such a church) where all the teaching deals with 'practical' issues while avoiding theology?
 - c. If we could imagine the Apostle Paul writing a letter to such a church, what do you think he would say?
3. When most people think of their beliefs regarding God and the Bible, they think in terms of our mind, what we know and think intellectually. But in Ephesians 1 Paul describes belief not in terms of the mind, but he prays that we would have *"the eyes of your hearts enlightened."*
 - a. What is the difference between our knowledge of theology (our mind) and our functional belief in a truth (the eyes of our hearts)?
 - b. In his message, Pastor Mike said that our actual beliefs are always revealed in our actions. If we act as if something we say isn't true, then it reveals that we don't really believe it to be true. What does he mean by this? Is this always the case? Are there ever times that we act in a way that is inconsistent with what we really believe?
4. Often we have the right theology about God and who we are in him, but events in life expose a gap between the theology we claim to believe and our functional beliefs, as revealed by our thoughts and actions.
 - a. Can you think of times when the gap between your theology and your beliefs was exposed? What was that gap? How did you deal with it?
 - b. All Christians struggle with such a gap from time to time. In your experience, has the church been a safe place to talk about your struggle with this gap? Why or why not? How can it become so?
5. We all go through times where we know that we need more faith – when we struggle to apply our theology.
 - a. To what degree is greater faith a 'work' that we can accomplish through our desire or our effort, or to what degree is it something given by God.
 - b. Have you ever tried to make yourself have more faith? Did it work? Why or why not?
 - c. How would our pursuit of faith change if we saw it as a gift of God's grace, rather than a product of our desire or effort?