

Leaders Training for Liberty Leaders

Dear Beautiful Liberty Leader!

Thank you for listening through the 20 messages on “Making Disciples.” These messages are the heartbeat of our church. It may help you to know some history of our church BEFORE this ground-breaking series.

We had short courses in place for 20+ years before this course. Yet, because we did not make them the central part of our church vision and because we did not create an administrative focus of WHO will set up short courses and WHEN they will be set up, 90% of the short courses were set up by me (PJ) and if I didn't set up a short course, they didn't happen.

Everyone LOVED short courses and they produced all the fruit then that they do now. They just got lost in the busyness of life because we did not have a clear vision.

In addition, our small groups had slowly degenerated over years to hodge-podge of disinterested bored people who showed up to just “Chat.” As a result, 80% or more of our people no longer attended small groups.

This series truly was the birthing of Liberty Church. It was the time when we firmly, clearly and joyfully set a vision for small groups as the place where we train our people in Biblical literacy, share deepLEE & briefLEE and most of all launch them into individual opportunities to “Make Disciples!”

That is why this sermon series is the foundation of our Leaders training. In this document, we have arranged a lengthy list of questions and answers to try to make it easy for you to build a strong healthy small group. Please feel free to ask any additional questions and to ask myself or any of the pastors for help in any area.

Tons of Love,

PJ

Q. 1. How LONG should our small group last?

Answer: The general range is that small groups last between 60-90 minutes! It is pretty easy to have a full small group meeting with the chapter study and everyone sharing deepLEE and briefLEE in 60 minutes. However many groups also like to share a meal. Many groups also like to add times of prayer for each other.

One of the most important factors is to set a time when you will end and be consistent with that time. People need to trust you that you will end on time.

Q. 2. If we want to have a meal with our small group, how do we arrange that?

Answer: The main key is to talk with your welcome coordinator. They are fantastic at talking you through all of the details. We have a large warmer where your people can put the food they bring in to keep warm if your small group meeting is after service. In addition, your welcome coordinator can help you find the paper plates, etc.

Q. 3. How do we reserve a room or reserve Liberty Park for an outing for our small group?

Answer: Again your wonderful welcome coordinator will work with you on that.

Pastor Jessie Hutchins oversees all of the welcome coordinators so you can always include Pastor Jessie if you have any points of confusion.

Q. 4. How do I pick which chapters to study for our textual study?

Answer: You have unlimited options. However may we first give some cautions!

Beware of changing the PACE of one chapter per meeting. Shortening this pace to many meetings on one chapter or expanding this pace to doing large chunks of many chapters in one meeting will eventually decrease the energy and momentum in your small group.

One chapter per meeting has the following advantages.

- i. Digestible*
- ii. It's a WIN short term – one chapter completed!*
- iii. It's a WIN long term – one book completed!*
- iv. One piece of paper – easy to hand out to every person with NO homework expectations.*
- v. Over the YEARS it is the **ONLY** model that has ALL the following factors of → →→→→*

- Restful
- Productive
- Inclusive
- Fruitful
- Easy

Q. 5. What if we want to do a book of the Bible that has more chapters than we can finish in one semester like Hebrews (13 chapters) or Mark (16 chapters)?

Answer: In most cases you will NOT finish a book of the Bible in one semester. In most cases, your semester list will be PART of a book. Here are three examples of how your semester list might look: 1) Acts chapters 1-8, 2) Romans chapters 1-8, 3) Hebrew chapters 1-8 etc.

The beautiful thing is that you can continue your study the following semester. If it is a shorter book like Romans or Hebrews, you can finish the book in two semesters. If it is a longer book like Acts, it may take you four semesters or you may only study part of the book.

This also permits you do biographical studies in the Old Testament so that your semester list might look like these five examples 1) Study of Beginnings Genesis chapters 1-8 2) Study of Abraham pt. 1 Genesis chapters 12-18 3) Study of the early life of Moses Exodus chapters 1-7 4) Study of Gideon & Samson Judges chapters 6-8 & 13-16 5) Study of Eli the Priest I Samuel chapters 1-4 etc.

Of course there are 17 New Testament books that you CAN finish in one semester. They are: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon, James, I & II Peter, I, II, & III John and Jude, plus Ruth, Esther, Ezra and Jonah in the Old Testament.

Q. 6. How do I prepare the paper copies of the chapter?

Answer: This is a REALLY IMPORTANT part of the process. If you cannot do this, please find a faithful person who can do this. We ask you to print off this chapter in 4 version – NLT, AMP, MB & NIV.

We also ask that you print it off with really GOOD SPACING. At the END of this document we provide an example of Ephesians 1 in all four versions so that you can see what a big difference it makes to have quality spacing. By using Arial Narrow font and the narrowest margins possible you can make your sheet very readable for everyone.

Once you have your four copies you are welcome to use the church copier machines to run off multiple copies of each sheet so that you have plenty for everyone in your group. The welcome staff can assist you here.

These sheets make everyone feel extremely welcome – especially visitors. In addition, the different versions of the Bible more than double the level of interest in the study and make for fascinating insights.

Q. 7. When I pass out the sheets, what do I say to visitors?

Answer: Simply explain to visitors what you are about to do. Tell them how we study a chapter each time we meet. Explain how we have one or two people read out loud the entire chapter from one version and everyone follows from whatever version they choose.

Everyone keeps a pen and marks one verse that they will choose as their verse.

When it is their turn they share why that verse ENCOURAGES them or STIMULATES their faith. They can also share an INSIGHT the Lord gave them on that verse.

The MOST IMPORTANT thing is to always let the visitors be one of the last ones to share so that they can see how others share first.

Q. 8. Do we read out loud all four versions of the chapter?

Answer: Goodness NO! That would be exhausting. 😊 You pick the one version you like to have read out loud. The extra versions simply increase the discussion aspect.

Q. 9. Some of my people did not like having a different version than the one that was read out loud. They had a hard time following along. What do I do about that?

Answer: This is a great lesson learned. In the early stages almost everyone wants to hold the same version as is read out loud. That is why it is very important to first announce what version you are going to read and let people choose what version they pick. As people get more comfortable you will find increasing confidence for people to pick different versions for their paper copy than what is read out loud. However it always has to be their choice.

Also, some people want to have two copies. They want a copy of the version that is read out loud and they want a second version as a reference. This is a great thing and we always support this request.

Q. 10. Do we really need paper? Can't we just look up the chapters on our phones?

Answer: This is a great question. If you ask people to use their phones, you will cut the discussion and the enjoyment of the Bible study in half or worse. Here is an example of why paper is better.

In a normal situation, while the chapter is being read, the average person writes a star by 3 different verses; unsure which one is their main verse which they will share. They like all three verses and are constantly rereading all three & jotting notes by them. As the comments go around the room, they are able to look at all three verses while simultaneously looking at the other verses being commented on by each person.

They are able to write a few notes when they hear great comments by other people on other verses while still chewing on their three verses. If they had a phone, they would not be able to do any of this.

In addition, as they get more comfortable, they will often get a second piece of paper where they can have a second version of the Bible such as the Amplified or Message Bible. This permits this person to cross reference each verse that is commented between both versions and write more notes.

Again, all of this would be impossible on a phone.

Q. 11. What if some people want to study the chapter in advance in greater depth?

Answer: We recommend it! One of the most beautiful parts about this type of study is that it welcomes the baby Christian, the Christian who hates homework and the Christian who loves to study in advance and they all get a lot out of the study.

For the one who loves to study, we recommend that they look up the Blue Letter Bible where they will find an online source that gives commentaries and the Greek and Hebrew roots of words. Here is the link for John 1 www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/jhn/1/1/s_998001

Q. 12. When we transition to our personal sharing time do I always have to make the corny joke about sharing deepLEE and briefLEE?

Answer: We recommend it! You will find that your people will find comfort in the old joke. It also trains visitors.

If you stop the corny line, within three months, you will find yourself battling some long-winded people who want to talk for an extended time. This is a scary thought.

Q. 13. How do I graciously cut off a long winded person?

Answer: We are so glad you asked this question. There is a way that always works and does not offend anyone.

- i. Always compliment them on something they said. Make sure that your compliment is long enough to make them pause in their train of thought.*
- ii. If they are calm, simply call on the next person after you finish.*
- iii. If they are still fighting for time, graciously say: "We want to make sure we have enough time for everyone so let's move on to ____." (Name the next person)*

Q. 14. How do I help people decide which short course to tackle?

Answer: You have three great options.

- i. You always want to ask them to pick their favorite studies.*
- ii. You can ask them to look at the single sheet overview on the wall in both lending libraries. →*
- iii. They can look at the expanded explanation for each series on the back of each individual sign.*

Foundations 1. Bible Reading (1) 2. Prayer Coaching (1) 3. Armor of God - PAI (Book) 4. Righteousness - study (3) 5. Voice of God (14) 6. Filled with the Spirit (5)	Adults & Teenagers Topical 1. Angels and Demons (2) 2. Euphemism in Water (1) 3. Booses - what they wish you knew (2) 4. Chronicles of Namia (7) 5. Church - Why is it so important (1) 6. Conscience - I am going to heaven (3) 7. Deity of Jesus (1) 8. Disappointed with Christians, Church & Life (2) 9. Divorce (2) 10. Double Anointing (2) 11. Feasts of Israel (2) 12. Five Attitudes (9) 13. Forgiveness vs. Trust (1) 14. Healing and Miracles (1) 15. Insecurity - develop Godly Confidence (2) 16. Job and Career (19) 17. Leadership (6) 18. Legalism, License and Love (4)	Adults & Teenagers Topical 19. Men - how they are different (9) 20. Money Prayer (2) 21. Money Matters (2) 22. Parenting - Young Children (7) 23. Parenting - Teenagers (9) 24. Porn and Lust (2) 25. Personal Prophecy (2) 26. Predestination vs. Free Will (1) 27. Privacy (1) 28. Racial Reconciliation (9) 29. Science and Faith - how they agree (4) 30. Sex God Loves it (2) 31. Singles - how to find a Godly Mate (3) 32. Sin the Secrets (3) 33. Television Brain Waves Study (2) 34. Tithing (3) 35. Typology (19) 36. Typology (1) 37. Worship is... (7)	Adults & Teenagers Textual 1. Joseph (4) 2. Abraham (14) 3. Philippians (10) 4. II Timothy (6) 5. John (21) 6. Luke (68) 7. Proverbs (3) 8. Nehemiah (5) 9. Daniel (9) 10. I Samuel (2) 11. Joshua (5) 12. Elijah & Elisha (6) 13. Samson (3)
Marriage 1. Personality Gifts - DISC (12) 2. Conflicts (7) 3. Marriage - 3 bottom lines (3) 4. Blessing Verbally (7)			
Researching Jesus 1. Discern via Perfect Stranger (Book) 2. The Cross (12) 3. The Logic of Christianity (5) 4. Five Proofs of Christianity (2) 5. Hell the Logic (1) 6. Blood of Jesus (2) 7. The Rapture (1)			

Q. 15. What if a person doesn't have a cd player?

Answer: We will be constantly recommending our app which has every series and is a free download. Our lending library has multiple blue signs recommending our app.

In addition, we can loan a cd player in an emergency.

Q. 16. What if some people want to study different material like a book they both enjoy for their short course?

Answer: ABSOLUTELY!!! Please be EXTRA CAREFUL here! Sometimes one eager beaver is subtly PUSHING the other person to do something longer when the other really PREFERS a SHORT course of 2 half hour meetings in 2 weeks. However, in front of their eager beaver friend, they are hesitant to admit that they don't want to do a long book study. Thus, you may need to intervene and ask both of them repeatedly if doing this book study is truly their PREFERENCE or might they prefer a short cd study.

Q. 17. How do they do a short course in two weeks if the study is 5-7 sermons?

Answer: If the study is 5 sermons, they listen to and discuss 2 sermons the first week and three sermons the second week.

If the study is 7 sermons, they listen to and discuss 3 sermons the first week and four sermons the second week.

If the study is one of the longer ones like the 12 sermon DISC series, they can make it a three meeting short course of 4 sermons per week.

If they want to go a bit slower, please make sure that both parties want to go slower.

Q. 18. Can I arrange a short course match days BEFORE the small group meets?

Answer: That is BRILLIANT and so much EASIER!

If you would pray and send an email or text to those whom you would like to set up in short courses BEFORE the small group meets, they will be ready to be set up and you will find out about any problems with time to make adjustments. It is especially effective with the more quiet or hesitant members who don't like to be surprised.

Our guess is that you will do this technique most of the time of sending a text or email days before your small group with a few requests for people to consider for short courses.

Q. 19. When do I set up couples and when just man to man and woman to woman?

Answer: In general just man to man and woman to woman. Couples will usually request to be set up as a couple.

Q. 20. Do I try to set people up in short courses to match their prayer requests?

Answer: Not usually!

People generally ask for prayer on 3-5 subjects but hunger to study and grow in 100-200 different subjects.

Q. 21. I am unsure about all the details about setting up a short course. What do I do?

Answer: The back of the bright yellow cards on the wall in both lending libraries cover everything you need.

SHORT COURSES
2-4 People for 2-4 Weeks
For any visitor or member

MAKE NEW FRIENDS

HELP SOMEONE GROW SPIRITUALLY

SCRATCH A SPIRITUAL ITCH YOURSELF

Any Liberty Leader can set you up!

Check list for the leader

- Have all agreed on which study & have their cds in hand?
- Have all agreed on the # of weeks & how many cds per week?
→ Ex. 7 cd series = 3 meetings of 2,2 & 3 cds.
→ Ex. 12 cd series = 4 meetings of 3,3,3, & 3 cds
- Have all agreed on their dedicated activity for cd listening?
→ Warning - very important step.
→ Best times to listen to cds are: Exercise, Driving, Computer or Housework
- Have all agreed that the main goal is to Laugh & No Giving Advice unless asked?
- Have all agreed to keep the meetings Short & Sweet?
→ Half hour max for two people
→ Hour max for two couples
- Have all agreed to try to meet at the same time and place each week?
→ If meeting in the home - what day & time?
→ If meeting at church - before or after your service - have you read the sheet titled: "Short Term Courses - Space Available to Meet" hanging on the wall in the lending library.
- Have all agreed on which person is the Facilitator to guide the discussion?
- Has the Facilitator agreed to lead three times around the room w/ Equal Sharing?
→ 1st - Each share what you learned from the cds
→ 2nd - Each share what you liked about someone else's insights in the group.
→ 3rd - Each share about your week

Q. 22. What do I do if a short course fails? What if one of the two people doesn't follow through? Even worse, what if one of the two people violates ARP or is long winded , self-centered & draining?

Answer: Email me! (PJ)

We will work with the pastoral team to move cautiously with people like this to protect our people and gently try to give these people a chance to recognize their responsibility in a relationship.

Q. 23. Is the setting up of short courses something that is always done privately or can we talk about it in front of the whole group?

Answer: Early in the process, it usually backfires to talk about it in front of the whole group. You may have 3 enthusiastic people and 4 cautious people. However you will have one complainer who loves a stage. They will try to dominate the meeting.

Until short courses are part of the DNA of your group, it is better to handle them in a one on one situation.

Once they have become part of your DNA, you will find your group talking about them and joking about them constantly. In that situation, you may find a rare case where you publically mention that two people might do good in a short course together.

In general though, people want to be approached privately when asked to do a short course.

Q. 24. If someone wants to do the Foundations course, do I handle that or send them to PJ?

Answer: Always send them to me! (PJ).

It helps if you can send a partner with them who is willing to do the courses with them.

You are also welcome to join us when I set them up. It is quite exciting to watch two people go through the Foundations course.

Q. 25. How do I discern from the Holy Spirit who to set up in short courses?

Answer: This is very easy if you remember that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Wisdom & Understanding Isaiah 11:2

i. Start with visitors and new members to the group

You would almost always do the first short course with a new member or visitor. In two short meetings you will get to know this new person well and will be able to quickly discern which people in your group will most easily fit in a short course with them.

You would then fairly quickly set them up in a second short course with the person who fits them best.

If things flow you would like to set them up with more short courses with additional small group members until they have done 3-5 short courses over the first 6-8 months. This quickly and deeply integrates new people into your small group family.

ii. Pounce on People who have MISSED small group!

You are a shepherd. You are the first to notice straying sheep.

It would be wonderful if it was a complimentary joke among your small group that they knew that if they skipped a small group that you would be setting them up in a short course the next week at church.

iii. Keep connections rich and alive

As a shepherd, you will notice when some people don't seem to have the same level of connections with others.

It is very easy for you to put them through the same process that you do a visitor regarding short courses.

iv. Surprised by the Holy Spirit

Lastly, if you keep your ears open during the deepLEE and briefLEE sharing time, the Holy Spirit will often surprise you with an idea of connecting two people whom you hadn't considered before.

Q. 26. PJ's teaching on Teenagers is going to have a lot of parents very excited. Is it my job to help these parents set up their teens in short courses?

Answer: NO! Send them to me! (PJ)

When I meet with these parents, I would love to have you join me if you would enjoy that. I will greatly empower the parent to lead in this situation.

Q. 27. With all of the teenagers doing courses with adults in our church I foresee a lot of mature teenagers. I also foresee teenagers who want to be a part of our small group. How do I handle that?

Answer: Great question! This is so exciting.

Personally I recommend the following things.

- i. First, I recommend asking any teen who wants to join your group to first do at least two short courses with adults in your group.*
- ii. Second, I recommend a private meeting with you, the teen and the parent. I recommend that the teen must convince you that they will act responsibly and maturely in contributing in all activities as an adult.*
- iii. Third, if you have any confusion, I recommend including myself or your congregational pastors or the youth pastors in the dialogue.*

Q. 28. What about follow up?

Answer: You are not responsible for follow up. However many small group leaders ask both people to send them an email when they are completed telling them what the Lord did in their hearts or taught them during the course.

By asking both people to send you an email you have a good chance that at least one of them will email you. 😊

Q. 29. Should I keep a record of who does short courses in my small group?

Answer: Only if that blesses you. 😊

Ephesians 1 New International Version 1984

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--

6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

11 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,

12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.

15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,

16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

17 I 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.

18 I pray also 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 the saints,

19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength,

20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,

23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Ephesians 1 New Living Translation

- 1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.
- 2 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.
- 3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.
- 4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.
- 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.
- 6 So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.
- 7 He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.
- 8 He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.
- 9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan.
- 10 And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.
- 11 Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.
- 12 God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God.
- 13 And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago.
- 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.
- 15 Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere,
- 16 I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly,
- 17 asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God.
- 18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.
- 19 I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power
- 20 that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.
- 21 Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.
- 22 God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church.

23 And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

Ephesians 1 Message Bible

1-2 I, Paul, am under God's plan as an apostle, a special agent of Christ Jesus, writing to you faithful believers in Ephesus. I greet you with the grace and peace poured into our lives by God our Father and our Master, Jesus Christ.

3-6 How blessed is God! And what a blessing he is! He's the Father of our Master, Jesus Christ, and takes us to the high places of blessing in him. Long before he laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love. Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!) He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son.

7-10 Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. *Abundantly* free! He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need, letting us in on the plans he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, a long-range plan in which everything would be brought together and summed up in him, everything in deepest heaven, everything on planet earth.

11-12 It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.

13-14 It's in Christ that you, once you heard the truth and believed it (this Message of your salvation), found yourselves home free—signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit. This signet from God is the first installment on what's coming, a reminder that we'll get everything God has planned for us, a praising and glorious life.

15-19 That's why, when I heard of the solid trust you have in the Master Jesus and your outpouring of love to all the followers of Jesus, I couldn't stop thanking God for you—every time I prayed, I'd think of you and give thanks. But I do more than thank. I ask—ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for his followers, oh, the utter extravagance of his work in us who trust him—endless energy, boundless strength!

20-23 All this energy issues from Christ: God raised him from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but *forever*. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.

Ephesians 1 Amplified Bible

1 Paul, an apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed), by the will of God [that is, by His purpose and choice], To the saints (God's people) who are at Ephesus and are faithful *and* loyal *and* steadfast in Christ Jesus:

2 Grace to you and peace [inner calm and spiritual well-being] from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3 Blessed *and* worthy of praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ,

4 just as [in His love] He chose us in Christ [actually selected us for Himself as His own] before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy [that is, consecrated, set apart for Him, purpose-driven] and blameless in His sight. In love

5 He predestined *and* lovingly planned for us to be adopted to Himself as [His own] children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the kind intention *and* good pleasure of His will—

6 to the praise of His glorious grace *and* favor, which He so freely bestowed on us in the Beloved [His Son, Jesus Christ].

7 In Him we have redemption [that is, our deliverance and salvation] through His blood, [which paid the penalty for our sin and resulted in] the forgiveness *and* complete pardon of our sin, in accordance with the riches of His grace

8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and understanding [with practical insight]

9 He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ,

10 with regard to the fulfillment of the times [that is, the end of history, the climax of the ages]—to bring all things together in Christ, [both] things in the heavens and things on the earth.

11 In Him also we have received an inheritance [a destiny—we were claimed by God as His own], having been predestined (chosen, appointed beforehand) according to the purpose of Him who works everything in agreement with the counsel *and* design of His will,

12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ [who first put our confidence in Him as our Lord and Savior] would exist to the praise of His glory.

13 In Him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the good news of your salvation, and [as a result] believed in Him, were stamped with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit [the One promised by Christ] as owned *and* protected [by God].

14 The Spirit is the guarantee [the first installment, the pledge, a foretaste] of our inheritance until the redemption of God's own [purchased] possession [His believers], to the praise of His glory.

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people,

16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers;

17 [I always pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may grant you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation [that gives you a deep and personal and intimate insight] into the true knowledge of Him [for we know the Father through the Son].

18 And [I pray] that the eyes of your heart [the very center and core of your being] may be enlightened [flooded with light by the Holy Spirit], so that you will know *and* cherish the hope [the divine guarantee, the confident expectation] to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints (God's people),

19 and [so that you will begin to know] what the immeasurable *and* unlimited *and* surpassing greatness of His [active, spiritual] power is in us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of His mighty strength

20 which He produced in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places,

21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion [whether angelic or human], and [far above] every name that is named [above every title that can be conferred], not only in this age *and* world but also in the one to come.

22 And He put all things [in every realm] in subjection under Christ's feet, and appointed Him as [supreme and authoritative] head over all things in the church,

23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills *and* completes all things in all [believers]