

IMMEASURABLY MORE ..

learning from the letter to the Ephesians

“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, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! [Eph.3.20f]

The letter to the Ephesians sets out for us ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ’ (Eph.3.8), and assures us that God is ‘able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine’ (Eph.3.20): this study is intended to help us all enter into and enjoy that ‘immeasurably more’.

You can find the background to this series [here](#).

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No pressure!

As always there are 7 [sets of] questions in this study: that’s more to provide the option, however, of the material being used as a daily study guide. Don’t feel any pressure to answer *every* question in your Community Group – almost certainly there won’t be the time for that!

Priorities!

You’ll know your own group, so use what you’ll find most helpful. Although all the questions this week probably warrant careful study, the really key questions for us all as a fellowship are possibly 4, 6 & 7: try to cover all the questions, but ensure you cover at least these!

Prayer!

Do try also to make a point in your Community Group of leaving time for praying together!

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3. Eph.1.2 & Luke 15.11-32 [w/b Sunday 22nd January]

“..Grace and peace to you ..”

The whole of Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is well summarized in Eph.1.2 – *“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* There’s a sense, of course, in which the whole gospel is also well summarized in that greeting; so the intent of this study is to help us think through both the nature and the implications of the terms in which the gospel is here stated by Paul, by looking at one of the best-known parables of Jesus.

The parable’s central figure is ‘the father’: the story provides a vivid and moving expression of precisely that ‘grace’ and ‘peace’ which Paul speaks of as flowing from, and indeed characterizing, God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord Himself both illumine our minds and stir our hearts through this study!

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1. Read the whole of Luke 15. The parable we’ll be looking at is the last (and most extended) of three stories Jesus told in illustrating the grace and peace of God.

Why did Jesus tell this story of the father and his two sons?

What message/lesson did He want to communicate?

2. Read Luke 15.11-24. This is a parable which depicts, not least, the grace of God. The story helps us see the nature of God and at the same time, therefore, explains the ministry of Jesus.

In what different ways does 'grace' find expression in the manner in which the father relates to his younger son?

What does this teach you about God and the way He relates to you?

3. Read Luke 15.25-32. Although often called 'the parable of the prodigal son', the older son is just as key a figure in the story as the younger, more 'prodigal' son.

Why did the 'grace' of the father towards his brother leave the older son so angry?

How did the father display 'grace' towards his older son?

4. Read Luke 15.11-32. 'Peace' is often used in a relational sense to describe the reconciling of those who have been at odds with one another.

In what ways are each of the sons in the story initially 'at odds with' both the father and each other?

Why and how does a reconciled relationship with the father in the story impact on the sons' relationship with each other?

How would this have challenged and encouraged Jesus' first hearers? And how does this challenge/encourage you?

5. Read Luke 15.11-32. 'Peace' in the New Testament often carries with it the sense of the Hebrew word 'shalom', and suggests an all-round 'wholeness'.

In what ways, beyond the merely 'relational', does the story point to this 'wholeness'?

What might this look like when translated onto the canvas of our congregational life?

6. Read Luke 15.11-32. While the story is a wonderful statement of the grace of God towards us, it's also a powerful summons to a way of relating to others which is characterised by grace.

As you reflect on this parable what changes are we being challenged to make in our attitudes towards, and relationship with, others?

Read Col.4.5-6 and Eph.4.29 (where the latter part of the verses translates literally “.. *that it might give **grace** to those hearing*”). Learning from the father in the story Jesus told, how is ‘grace’ given to those with whom we’re speaking?

7. Read Romans 14.9-15.7. There’s a sense in which the story Jesus told, like the gospel itself, is about right relationships being restored, or ‘peace’ in its fullest sense being effected and experienced in our lives. It’s a great message to proclaim – but it’s a harder message to demonstrate in the life of a fellowship!

What did making ‘every effort to do what leads to peace’ (v.19) involve for the father in the story?

What does Paul suggest might be involved in our similarly making every effort to do what leads to ‘peace’?