

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will share from what they have learned from their quiet times. Every day during the past week we had a quiet time from a passage in the New Testament. Once a week we come together to share what we have learned. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. We will first explain how to have a quiet time. Then we will share the important truths and lessons from our quiet times and try to answer some difficult questions.

Today's topic is: A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM EPHESIANS 1-3.

(S) **POINT 1. HOW TO HAVE A QUIET TIME AND SHARE**

Have a time of fellowship with God or quiet time every day of the week from one of the seven assigned Bible passages. An easy quiet time method is called "The favourite truth" method. It has 5 steps.

Step 1. Pray and ask God to speak to you.

Step 2. Read one of the seven assigned passages.

Step 3. Choose your favourite truth. It is the truth, verse or passage through which God is speaking to you, stimulating your thinking or touching your heart.

Step 4. Meditate on your favourite truth. Meditate by doing the following four things. First. *Think* about the meaning of words. Second. *Ask* God what he intends to say to you. Third. *Relate* your favourite truth to your life by making a practical application. Fourth. *Write* the most important thoughts of your meditation in a notebook so that you may share them with others.

Step 5. Pray your favourite truth for yourself. Then pray your favourite truth for someone in your family. Then pray your favourite truth for someone nearby. And finally, pray your favourite truth for someone far away. When you meet together with one friend or with other Christians in a house fellowship or discipleship group, take turns to share the meditation of one of your quiet times. You may also try to answer some questions from the assigned passages.

(T) **POINT 2. SHARING FROM EPHESIANS 1-3**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Ephesians 1-3. Now we will use our quiet time notes to share truths and lessons from the assigned passages and discuss some questions.

**Sharing quiet times from Ephesians chapter 1.**

I want to share about **the phrase "in Christ Jesus"**, which occurs several times in Ephesians chapter 1. The phrase describes *the position* that people get when they believe in Jesus Christ. It describes the wonderful benefits Christians receive, because of the fact that Jesus Christ is their Mediator.

In Ephesians 1:4-5, Christians are *chosen* in Jesus Christ before the creation of the world. This means that before God created the earth and people on it, he already had a plan to choose people to become his family. God brings Christians into his family by *adopting* them.

In Ephesians 1:3, Christians *receive every spiritual blessing* from heaven in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ not only merited these blessings through his death and resurrection, but he also gives these blessings to us when we believe in him.

In Ephesians 1:6, Christians receive all these blessings, not because they deserve them, but only because of God's wonderful *grace* that he showed in Christ.

In Ephesians 1:7, Christians are *redeemed*. Redemption was a practice among the Greeks and the Romans, in which they set a slave free by paying a ransom. In the same way, Jesus Christ sets sinners free from the slavery of sin, the curse of the law and eternal damnation, by paying with his own life. The ransom or price of redemption is his sacrifice of atonement on the cross. Christ does not pay this ransom to anybody. But he pays with his blood, that is, with his death on the cross, in order to satisfy God's holy and righteous anger against sin. Thus, a person who has been redeemed is set free from the guilt, the enslaving power and the punishment or curse of sin. And the ransom is nothing less than the sacrifice of atonement, which Christ made.

In Ephesians 1:7, Christians are *forgiven*. Forgiveness is the result of paying this ransom. Because Jesus Christ paid the price, God forgives us our sins and declares us "not guilty" when we believe in Jesus Christ. The Bible says, that when God forgives us our sins, then he will also not remember our sins anymore. He will never hold those sins against us!

Thus, forgiveness means justification: God declares us completely righteous in his eyes and in the future he regards and treats us as completely righteous in his eyes. All these benefits give me great assurance of my position in Christ.

In Ephesians 1:9-10, Christians *know God's plan* with the created universe. God's purpose is to bring all things in the universe into a meaningful relationship under the headship of Christ. At the end of history, when Jesus Christ returns to earth, the wicked will be finally judged by Jesus Christ, the whole creation will be totally renewed and the kingdom of God in its final manifestation will be revealed. This is something I am really looking forward to!

(S) I want to explain some **difficult words** in Ephesians chapter 1.

The first difficult words are *chosen* and *predestined* in Ephesians 1:4-5. The Bible teaches that God chooses certain people to be saved and become his people for ever. Of course, no one deserves to be chosen. The Bible says, "All people have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). Not a single person is chosen because of any merit in himself. Without God's grace and love, no one could ever be saved! But God sets his love on certain individuals and elects them to eternal life and glory.

Moreover, God decided long before to what purpose he chose these people. His purpose is that they become his adopted children and that they will live a holy and blameless life. The word *chosen* focuses on the people God chooses, while the word *predestined* focuses on the purpose to which God chooses these people. God's *election* is therefore never a ground for boasting, but a stimulus for humility. It is never a licence to live in sin, but a responsibility to live a holy life.

The second difficult word is *adopted* in Ephesians 1:5. It was quite common in the Greek and Roman cultures to adopt a son. Adoption gave to this son all the privileges of a natural son, including all the inheritance rights. However, God's adoption of Christians far surpasses human adoption. When God adopts a person, he gets *a new name* and *a new legal standing* before the living God. He is called 'a child of God' and God regards him as completely righteous in his eyes. He also gets *many new family members*. God becomes his 'Father in heaven' and all Christians in the whole world become his 'brothers and sisters'! As the Christian grows within this family of God, he gets *a new character*, like love, righteousness and faithfulness. Finally, he gets *a new inheritance* that is unimaginably great and wonderful! That inheritance will never dissatisfy the Christian and it will never pass away!

The third difficult word is *sealed* in Ephesians 1:13. It says, "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." In the time of Jesus and Paul *a seal* consisted of wax with the imprint of an authoritative person imprinted in it. A seal denoted *ownership* and *genuineness*. The person wearing a seal is owned by the owner of that seal. Thus, when Christians are sealed with God's Spirit, it means that they belong to God. The Holy Spirit living in the Christian is the proof that he really belongs to God and the guarantee that he genuinely is a Christian. The seal also signified *protection*. Whoever wears the seal of God's Spirit, is protected by God! Thus, the seal of God's Spirit signifies three things: it signifies that a person, who has the Holy Spirit living in him, is genuinely a Christian, that he belongs to God and that God will protect him! This gives me great assurance and a sense of security!

### **Sharing quiet times from Ephesians chapter 2.**

(T) I want to share from Ephesians 2:1-3 about **the reason why people need salvation**. God says that people are *spiritually dead*. This means that by nature people are unable to understand or do spiritual good things. Because God's image has not been completely lost in non-Christians, they are by nature able to do *natural good things*. But they are unable to do *spiritual good things*. Romans 8:7-8 says, "Those controlled by the sinful nature do not submit to God's law, they cannot submit to God's law and they cannot please God"! Thus, by nature non-Christians will not and cannot do anything that God wants them to do. They often do not believe in God's existence. They are not grateful to God for anything. And they do not want to please or glorify God. Spiritually dead people are unable to discern the spiritual and moral good things that the God of the Bible requires. They do not yet know God or communicate with him. Spiritually dead people regard the spiritual truths that come from the Spirit of God as foolishness. They do not wish to understand the truth in the Bible and they do not accept the truth in the Bible. Why are people spiritually dead?

One. People are spiritually dead, because they gratify the cravings of the sinful nature.

Humans have legitimate natural desires for food, fellowship, expressing joy, etc. But humans also have wrong natural desires for wickedness, immorality, power, etc. These wrong desires are called *the corrupt human nature*. Sin fulfils the wrong desires of the corrupt human nature. The characteristics of the sinful human nature are *self-sufficiency*, *self-righteousness*, *self-indulgence* and *self-determination*. The root of sin is independence from God. It is missing God's goal. It is falling short of the standard of God. It is living outside the boundaries set by God. The fruit of sin is doing all kind of things that God forbids and neglecting to do all kind of things that God commands. When people by nature live independent from God, then they express their real nature by doing what God forbids or by not doing what God

commands. Even people, who think that they never do anything wrong, but neglect to do what the God of the Bible commands, are spiritually dead!

Two. People are spiritually dead, because they follow the ways of the world.

The world here means mankind alienated from the life of God, laden with sin, exposed to the judgement of God and in need of salvation. This world expresses itself in political oppression, a materialistic outlook of life, racial discrimination or any form of injustice. This world is often opposed to Jesus Christ and his teachings in the Bible. This world is the realm of evil, the society of wicked people who have set themselves up against Jesus Christ and his kingdom. When people follow the thinking and ways of this world, they are spiritually still dead.

Three. People are spiritually dead, because they follow the ways of the devil.

The devil is here called “the ruler of the kingdom of the air”. The devil cannot have influence in heaven, because he has been thrown out. He cannot yet be in hell, because his appointed time has not yet arrived. The devil and his evil spirits thus carry on their sinister work on earth and its surrounding atmosphere. The devil is also called “the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient”. He and his evil spirits are at work in the hearts of people who do not want to believe in Jesus Christ. This is the disobedience of unbelief or rebellion against God and his Word. The devil never rests. He is energetically engaged to make what is bad even worse. Nevertheless, the devil and his demons can only do what God in his overruling sovereignty permits them to do. These evil powers do not have this realm all for themselves, because Jesus Christ has now all the authority in heaven and on earth (Mt 28:18). That is why I have no reason to fear the devil or demons.

(S) I want to share from Ephesians 2:4-10 about how people are saved.

One. People are saved by God through Jesus Christ.

From what are Christians saved? *We have been saved* from the guilt and punishment of sin. *We are presently being saved more and more* from the power and corrupt influence of sin. *We will in the future be saved* from the presence and consequences of sin!!!

Ephesians 2:4-5 say that God “made us alive, raised and seated us” with Jesus Christ. His resurrection and ascension into God’s presence is the proof that his substitutionary atonement for our sins has been accepted. *Whatever happened to Jesus Christ has an immediate effect on all people who believe in Jesus Christ.* His punishment is counted as our punishment. His crucifixion on the cross means that our old corrupt human nature has been crucified. His resurrection and exaltation to the Father’s right hand means that we are raised up with a new spiritual nature now and that our mortal bodies will be raised up from the dead in the future! His sitting to reign in heaven means that we have become citizens of heaven and we have the guarantee that we will inherit the new heaven and the new earth.

Two. People are saved by grace, through faith and not by works.

Salvation is by grace. This means that God saved us, even though we do not deserve it.

Salvation is by faith. The responsibility to believe and the activity to believe are ours, but this is only possible after God gives us faith as a free gift. When we have received faith as God’s gift, then we have the responsibility to exercise it.

Salvation is not by works. We are not saved by our good works, but for the purpose of doing good works. The purpose for our physical creation and spiritual regeneration is to do good works. God planned that our existence on earth should have a very important purpose. Our existence should be very meaningful. Our whole life should be filled with the good works that God prepared for us to walk in. According to Romans 11:36, *God is the Author of good works, the Enabler of good works and the Goal of good works.* Therefore we give all the glory to him! God’s unmerited grace towards us calls for our response of faith. And God’s purposeful future for us calls for our responsible living and service.

Sharing quiet times from Ephesians chapter 3.

(T) I want to share from Ephesians 3:1-6 about God’s mystery that has been revealed to the New Testament apostles and prophets.

During the Old Testament period God promised that he would bless all the nations on earth in the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. But during the Old Testament period, non-Jews only became a part of the people of God when they joined the community of Israel. This was because God had revealed himself through the prophets in Israel and Israel possessed the Holy Scriptures. And this was because Israel was the kingdom on earth in which God Himself ruled through the institution of prophets, priests and kings.

At the first coming of Jesus Christ, the Jewish religious leaders and teachers thought that only Israel was God’s chosen people. They taught that if a non-Jew wanted to belong to God’s chosen people, he first had to become a Jew, that is, he first had to be circumcised and keep the whole law.

However, Paul said that God's Spirit had revealed to the apostles and prophets a mystery that was unknown during the Old Testament period. The first part of this mystery is that God's community on earth would no longer mainly consist of Jewish believers in the Messiah, but would consist of believers in Jesus Christ from every nation on earth. God's Old Testament community, Israel, would *continue on a higher plane and spread out* to all the nations in the world (Eph 2:11-22). The second part of this mystery is that the believers from the non-Jewish nations and the believers from the Jewish nation would from now on be *joint-heirs in God's community on earth and that on complete equal footing!* Together they would be members of one and the same Body, the Christian Church. And together they would share in everything Jesus Christ is, accomplished and brought. From the first coming of Jesus Christ, there is no longer any difference between Jew and Gentile (Rom 10:12).

(S) I want to share from Ephesians 3:20 about **prayer**.

It says the following about God: "Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us." God is able to do all what we ask him to do. He is even able to do all that we dare not ask him to do, but can only imagine. He can do much more than even that. God is all-powerful and he reveals his power especially in answering our prayers. My prayers are not limited by God's ability, but rather by my understanding of God's will and by my own inability to receive what he can give.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Divide Ephesians 4-6 into seven passages. Every day have a quiet time from one passage. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share from your quiet times.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on [www.dota.net](http://www.dota.net)

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".