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*Hey leaders! As we wrap up “Off Limits”, let’s continue to challenge one another, to glorify God with every part of our lives! On Memorial Day weekend, there will be a standalone message. Then we’ll begin a NEW series called “Summer Stories”, taking us through the end of July! Below is an overview of the series:*

*We all connect to stories, so we’ll spend the summer looking at stories in the Gospels. We want to help our church see the character of Jesus, see ourselves in these stories, and see that we all have impactful stories to share. Just like we’ll hear the Gospel in these stories, people can hear the Gospel through our stories!*

***Thank you for shepherding a group of people to Love God, Love Others, and Live Sent!***

NEED A RESOURCE, HAVE A QUESTION, OR WANT TO HAVE A CONVERSATION?  
*Let us know how we can help! Contact your groups director or [discipleship@rockbridge.cc](mailto:discipleship@rockbridge.cc)*

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***“God’s church is not a stage for us to perform on but a garden for us to grow in.”***

[Michael Horton]

**LEADER RESOURCES || [Leader Note](#)** *We do our best to equip, empower, and encourage you to shepherd your group well. Access a resource by clicking on the underlined title and share them with your group!*

- **[Passage Summary](#)**
  - After describing how he prayed for the church at Ephesus, Paul turns to the purpose of the church. This purpose is breathtaking and staggering. The church is the on-the-ground expression and demonstration of the supremacy of King Jesus. The church accomplishes this through the power of the Holy Spirit, advancing the gospel in distance and depth by developing and deploying disciples of Jesus.
- **[Ephesians Ch. 1 Commentary](#) & [Church Hopping & Shopping](#)**
  - Use the commentary and devotional reading for background and encouragement. These would be good resources to share with your group before you gather.
- **[Responsibilities of Church Membership](#)**
  - This would be a good resource to share with your group after you gather.

**ICEBREAKER || [Leader Note](#)** *The goal for the icebreaker is to build joy and gratitude together.*

What are you grateful for or how have you experienced joy in the past week?

**BEGIN WITH PRAYER || [Leader Note](#)** *Begin your time together by thanking God for his presence and praying His word back to Him. Ask a few people to pray, beginning in a posture of humility and dependence!*

Spend a moment praying this passage, beginning your time together in humility and gratitude!

*“Let the word of Christ dwell richly among you, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another through psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”*

[Colossians 3:16]

**BIG IDEA || Leader Note** Read this aloud so your group knows what the theme of today's discussion is.

Once we surrender to God's purpose for the church, we can participate in His purpose and faithfully fulfill our part.

**PASSAGE || Leader Note** Have a couple of people read about half of the passage aloud slowly.

- Ephesians 1:1-23

**DISCUSSION || Leader Note** Your role is to FACILITATE the conversation, so keep your group moving and encourage multiple people to share, looking for opportunities to point out the grace and glory of God! Here are two REMINDERS: 1) Every question does NOT have to be answered ... there is freedom to go where the Spirit leads! 2) The answers do NOT have to be read aloud ... they are simply there for guidance!

1. In the sermon we heard, *"However you and I define church, is how you and I will do church."* How have you "done" church in the wrong way or had an un-Christlike attitude toward church in the past? How did that impact your relationship with your church family? *This is a good opportunity to go first!*
2. What is the significance of Paul's greeting? *Paul's greeting, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ", sets the tone for the letter. "Grace" refers to God's unmerited favor, and "peace" signifies the reconciliation and well-being that come from a right relationship with God through Jesus. This greeting emphasizes the blessings of grace and peace that define the Christian experience.*
3. How does Paul describe the spiritual blessings in Christ (v. 3-14)? *Paul describes the spiritual blessings believers have in Christ, which include: being chosen by God before the foundation of the world (v. 4); being predestined for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ (v. 5); receiving redemption and forgiveness through His blood (v. 7); understanding the mystery of God's will (v. 9); and being sealed with the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of our inheritance (v. 13-14).*
4. What implications does being "in Christ" have for believers' identity and purpose? *Being "in Christ" means that believers are blessed with every spiritual blessing, chosen, predestined, redeemed, and sealed with the Holy Spirit. It defines their identity as God's children and their purpose to live for the praise of His glory. It provides a foundation of security, purpose, and hope.*
5. What does it mean to be "chosen" in Christ? *To be "chosen" means that God selected believers to be holy and blameless before Him out of His love and grace, not based on their works. This emphasizes God's initiative and purpose in salvation.* How does this make you feel, knowing that you are "chosen"?
6. What is the significance of being "redeemed" through Christ's blood? *Redemption through Christ's blood signifies the deliverance from sin and its consequences. It means that through the sacrificial death of Jesus, believers are freed from the bondage of sin and receive forgiveness. This act of redemption demonstrates the richness of God's grace).*
7. In the sermon we heard, *"A church is a community of Christ-followers who live as the on-the-ground expression of the supremacy of Jesus by advancing His gospel in distance and depth through disciple-making."* How does this definition compare to what your idea of the church is/has been?
8. What does Paul pray for the Ephesians in v. 15-23? *Paul prays that the Ephesians may be given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God (v. 17), that the eyes of their hearts may be enlightened to know the hope to which He has called them, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and the immeasurable greatness of His power toward believers (v. 18-19).* How could you more consistently and intentionally pray this prayer for your church family?

9. How does Paul describe the power of God at work in believers? *Paul describes God's power at work in believers as "immeasurable greatness," likening it to the power He exerted when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms (v. 19-20). This emphasizes the divine power available to Christians.*

10. How does understanding God's power help us as believers, according to Paul's prayer? *Understanding God's power helps believers by reassuring them of God's ability to accomplish His purposes in their lives and in the world. It provides confidence and strength, knowing that the same power that raised Christ from the dead is at work in them. This empowers believers to live faithfully and boldly for Christ.*

**STEP OF OBEDIENCE || Leader Note** *This is an opportunity for people to put into practice what the Spirit is inviting them to do and live in obedience to God for the sake of love! You can encourage your group to be accountable to one another and use these to follow up with one another throughout the week.*

What if we made God's definition of church our definition? Based on the Holy Spirit's prompting today, **what is a step of obedience that you can take?** Here are a few questions to consider as we prioritize God's glory and the gospel of Jesus Christ together as the church ...

- How can you pursue the "1" over the "99"?
- How can you practice "one-anothering" in community?
- How can you serve and edify others, building up the church?
- How can you value being a disciple of Jesus more intentionally?
- How can you be more dependent on the Holy Spirit in your everyday life?

*Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then have your group answer the question aloud. Feel free to separate into smaller groups of 3-4 for this question.*

**PRAYER FOCUS || Leader Note** *We want to commit to praying for OTHERS as a unified church who is dependent upon God for everything. Be intentional about saving at least 5-10 minutes for prayer at the end of your small group each week to pray for the focused area below.*

### **Off Limits: Relationships**

- The way of Christ is always to "consider others as more important than yourselves". Let's pray for the supernatural love of Christ to grow in our hearts towards all people, especially those with whom we struggle the most to love.
- Who are you currently struggling to love like Christ? Pray that the Holy Spirit will give you Jesus' eyes towards that person, and that He will give you the ability to love them well.

**SPIRITUAL PRACTICE \*Optional\*** *We include a monthly spiritual practice that can be shared with your group after you gather. Our hope is for this to enhance what we're learning and discussing together, so share about your experience with the practice at the beginning of your gatherings or throughout the week!*

Centering prayer is a practice that leads one into the inner room of the soul and can usher you deeper into prayer, opening yourself up to the transforming power of God's grace more readily!

- **Centering Prayer** or [rockbridge.cc/centering-prayer-2](http://rockbridge.cc/centering-prayer-2)