

Reading Schedule for August 21-27, 2017

These chapters in Ephesians are so significant to Christian living. It talks about our attitude, our mission, our relationships, and the battle that we face every day against the enemy of our souls. I hope that you can slow down a bit this week and absorb God's Word so that you may be more fully equipped to live for him and shine his light to this dark world.

August 21 – Ephesians 4:17-32: “They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.” (v.16) I mostly picked this verse because of the eclipse. Today we will see something that happens once or twice in a lifetime. The moon will block the sun. Obviously there is a spiritual implication to this phenomenon. When we are blocked from the light of Christ, our thinking can go astray and our lives will decline. It is a good thing that the eclipse will last for only a couple of minutes, because it would have an adverse effect on this planet if it lasted longer. You can ask the Egyptians, as darkness fell over the whole land and they were in total disarray. The title of this section is “Living as Children of Light.” We are meant to shine light into this dark world. It gives us some principles on how to do that. Which aspect of this reading caught your attention? It is interesting to realize that the devil can get a foothold if we are hooked by anger. What we say matters, so be considerate of the words you use. I pray for you today that you would be a child of the light as we link arms together to show Christ to the world.

August 22 – Ephesians 5:1-14: “Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.” (v.4) As a young disciple, many of my friends would say, “Ephesians 5:4.” We would sometimes do it in a more teasing fashion, but also we would use it seriously because we realized that what we were saying was not reflective of Christ's presence in our lives. There is a lot of coarse joking that goes on day-to-day in our world. It is hard to separate yourself from it. You may not be able to do that in totality, but you will be able to keep yourself from entering in. That is called self-control. Some have suggested that the kind of language you use is no big deal, but I disagree, because being a child of the light shows itself best through thanksgiving, encouragement, and wholesome talk. How do you respond to this principle? What else caught your attention in this reading that continues the message about being children of the light?

August 23 – Ephesians 5:15-20: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit . . .” (v.18) This is a very short reading today, but it is one that is very important to me. My last expositional sermon, along with research, was on these verses. I think they all surround the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit. How can I be wise; what will give me insight into using my opportunities to the best? How should I understand God's will? I need the Holy Spirit's help. The more he is filling my life, the more he will direct my steps. Do you remember what the Apostle Paul said to the Galatians? “If we walk by the Spirit we will not carry out the desires of the flesh.” I pray that you will be filled with the Holy Spirit today even as I open my heart to more of him. What does it mean to you to be filled with the Spirit?

August 24 – Ephesians 5:21-33: “However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” (v.33) There is a simple principle that makes such a profound effect in marriage, and in other relationships . . .

love and respect. Recently I officiated at my daughter's wedding. Hannah's my third child. She married a young man named Trevor. Today is her birthday and I am thinking of her as I look at this scripture, which is about marriage. These words are the most profound and helpful words about marriage in all the Bible. They show the distinction between a man and a woman, and how a man is blessed by respect more so than even love, and a woman is uplifted through the sacrificial love of her husband. These principles are often neglected and lead to dissatisfaction in marriage. If you are married, I am praying for these truths to be alive in your lives, as well as asking God to help me to love my wife as he loves me. How does this text challenge you in your relationships and especially in marriage?

August 25 – Ephesians 6:1-9: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (v.4) I thought it was interesting that it mentioned fathers in this verse, and not mothers. Isn't the tendency that fathers would be more stern with their children? My experience tells me that is so. However, this is really emphasizing the importance of parenting. If we discipline our children in anger, the effect of it will be minimal, and most likely even negative. Parenting is not easy. It takes lots of patience to raise children in a loving, Christ-honoring manner. May these statements renew your desire to be the kind of parent or grandparent that God has called you to be. This is a short reading, but it talks about some of our primary relationships, and it gives us instruction about how to treat those who are over us in the workplace. May God give you encouragement today in your relationships. How do you plan to apply this to your life?

August 26 – Ephesians 6:10-24: “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” (v.12) It is important to realize that some of the challenges in life aren't really flesh and blood, but they have a spiritual component to them. There is an enemy to your soul, and he has a host of fallen angels who are working with him. This verse gives a very clear message that we are in a battle. Satan is constantly battling against all who are on the Lord's side. We need power and assurance and truth to defeat the enemy. The armor is a very powerful depiction on how we can stand firm. Which aspect of the armor are you especially grateful for, and which would you like to be stronger in? How do you respond to this reading today? How did God use Ephesians to uplift you?

August 27 – Philippians 1:1-11: “. . . being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (v.6) This is always a special promise, telling us that when God has begun a work in your life and he will not give up until he has completed it. This is a picture of the importance of spiritual growth, but also a picture of the assurance that God will never let go. The idea is when God starts a project, he completes it. When you are discouraged, remember that God will not give up on you. He promises to finish the work he has begun. This is such a marvelous statement. How do you respond to it? Are there any other statements in this reading that stirred your heart? Why?

Prayers: Pray for our ministry to children and young people. God has given me a strong burden for our intentional love and discipleship of children and students. Are you with me?!