

## Called: Living as Children of the Light

## 2. Thanksgiving Prayer

## Ephesians 1:15–23 (NLT)

<sup>15</sup> Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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 <sup>20</sup> that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. <sup>21</sup> 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. <sup>22</sup> God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. <sup>23</sup> And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

## NOTES:

**1. Giving thanks for strong faith and love for God's people.**

*I have not stopped thanking God for you.*

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. *Philippians 1:3 (NLT)*

**2. Asking for spiritual wisdom and insight.**

*I pray for you constantly... that your hearts will be flooded with light.*

"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life." *John 8:12 (NLT)*

For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. *2 Corinthians 4:6 (NLT)*

For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. *Ephesians 5:8–9 (NLT)*

**3. Understanding the incredible greatness of God's power.**

*This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead... for the benefit of the church.*

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. *Ephesians 3:20–21 (NLT)*

**Next Steps:** Take four days this week to spend time alone with God—15 minutes in your favorite chair. Practice a rhythm of "reflect and write."

Day 1: Reflect on Ephesians 1:1-14. Write a prayer of thanksgiving. Who are we in Christ? How have we already been blessed?

Day 2: Reflect on 1:15-16. Write a prayer of thanks for the "strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people" demonstrated by your brothers and sisters at SBPC. Name people who come to your mind—who are they, and how have you seen them grow in their love for God and others? How have you grown?

Day 3: Reflect on 1:17-18. Write a prayer for wisdom and spiritual insight for yourself and for our church. What do you long to know more of about God, about what faithful steps to take?

Day 4: Reflect on verses 1:19-23. Write down emotions or thoughts that rise up in you as you read about the power of God in Christ. Write a prayer for yourself and the church—for God to fill us, make us full and complete with the power of Christ.

Bonus day: Reflect on how this rhythm of reflect and write is changing the way you see yourself, others, God at work?

## SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

As needed, refer to the Order of Worship and Resources at [solanabeach.church](http://solanabeach.church) for sermon video, message outline, and small group questions print version.

### CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Check in with one another about your daily alone time with God. Optional Question: What are you discovering during your alone time with God?

**CONNECT WITH GOD** (Use one of the below practices or choose a practice from a previous week.)

- **The Welcoming Prayer**: *The Welcoming Prayer consists of three parts or movements. First, we recognize what we're feeling. Secondly, we welcome these feelings as a means for recognizing God's presence. Thirdly, we let go of a need to control and simply embrace the moment.* ("Welcoming Prayer: The Spiritual Disruption Your Life Needs" from [umc.org](http://umc.org))
  - Feel and sink into what you are experiencing this moment in your body.
  - Welcome what you are experiencing in this moment and recognize the abiding presence of God.
  - Release (let go) of what feelings or sensations you have recognized or named during this time. Say a prayer of letting go such as:  
"Lord, who is with me and dwells in me, I give you my \_\_\_\_\_."
- **Practice of Gratitude**: *Select and Play a song from the Message Series Music Playlist (found on Quicklinks). <https://solanabeach.church/called-music-playlist>*
  - **As the song plays**:
    - Listen. Breathe. Attend to the presence of God in your life at this moment.
    - You may journal, draw, doodle, or simply close your eyes and breathe deeply. Let gratitude define the next few minutes.

### CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

- **Alone**: Spend a few minutes journaling and reflecting on the following prompt:
  - When have you encountered something unexpectedly powerful?
- **Together**: In pairs or as a whole group, share with one another what came to your mind from the prompt above. Then, read Ephesians 1:15-23. Also consider the following question together:
  - Which themes in Ephesians seem most relevant for your life and the world right now?

- **Together** as a whole group: Share your questions about the passage. Encourage one another to engage their curiosity, confusion, and bigger questions. (Remember: it's okay if the question doesn't find an answer!)
- **Pray**: Before digging into the scripture and message more, pray together. Ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate and enlighten, and to speak to each one of you through the passage.

### CONNECT WITH SCRIPTURE

If needed, **read** Ephesians 1:15-23 again before diving into the questions below. Select the best questions or customize the questions for your group.

- Review the main points from the sermon outline.
- Reflecting on the main points of the message, what will you continue to wrestle with in the coming days?
- What is the role of gratitude and thanksgiving as *children of light*?
- What does it mean to be "flooded with light" in verse 18?
- Which other other Bible passages come to mind that may help you understand Ephesians 1:15-23?
- How does knowing Jesus more help us see things differently?
- How does Paul describe power in the passage?
- What big ideas or questions will you continue to wrestle with this week?

### ENGAGE AND EXPLORE

Together: explore the quote below, in connection with Ephesians 1:15-23 and the message.

*"Exquisite Life. Suffering Life. All of life can be infused with the presence of God; all life matters to the God revealed in the Bible, the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ to love and heal us. The community of God's people—the church—is meant to be an agent of and evidence of that transcendence. This is the crisis and the promise of following Jesus today."*  
—Mark Labberton, Called.

### PRAYER

Let's continue to offer praise to "God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing." When we remember with gratitude who God is and who we are, we become people who reflect and embody the light of Christ in the world.