

*Nothing Replaces Face to Face Interaction!  
Elbow bumping is hardly a hug!  
Private worship is rich but it doesn't replace corporate worship!*

*Pray for a Sterry*

REUNION

*soon!*

**Lent**, February 26 - April 11 = Voluntary and personal pursuit of spiritual disciplines - private prayer, fasting, and meditation upon the Holy Scriptures. (time to journal!) Service of others with no strings attached.

**Coronavirus Quarantine**, March 17 - ? = Imposed opportunity to do all of the above listed practices!

**Stay Connected without Infection:**

1. Pray for one another without ceasing.
2. Call at least one Sterry friend daily on your phone.
3. Text 5 to 10 Sterry friends - dropping an encouraging note.  
Snail Mail! If you need cards & envelopes, then contact the Sterry office and we will supply you with as many as you wish. Snail Mail your way through the Sterry Directory and beyond.
4. Do you know someone with a particular need? Call or text the Sterry Office at (208) 722-6201 or Kristy Sterling, Chair of Deacons at (208) 861-3640 or Pastor Nathan at (503) 502-3026, and we will reach out and do our best to help.
5. Regularly visit the Sterry Church website to access resources and to keep up on updates. Click on every page and box to explore. [www.sterrymemorial.org](http://www.sterrymemorial.org)

On the front page of our website, at the bottom, you will find three boxes. The first one, "Upcoming Events," when you click on it, you will see the most current information about Sterry events. The middle box, "Bible Study Library," will help you connect to Right Now Media, a fine library of videos for all ages. Sign up for Sterry's free access. The third box, "Listen Now: Sermon Series," will connect you to live recordings of Pastor Nathan's sermons on the Gospel of Mark.

In the top right hand corner of the front page, in white font, is the "Menu." Click on it and a drop down table of contents will allow you to access more information and past sermon series preached at Sterry.

## Daily Bible Readings 2020

Read one text per day, then start over reading through the list again and again until year-end.

Day 1	Ephesians 1
Day 2	Ephesians 2
Day 3	Ephesians 3
Day 4	Ephesians 4
Day 5	Ephesians 5
Day 6	Ephesians 6
Day 7	Psalm 1
Day 8	Psalm 8
Day 9	Psalm 13
Day 10	Psalm 15
Day 11	Esther 1-2
Day 12	Esther 3-4
Day 13	Esther 5-6
Day 14	Esther 7-8
Day 15	Esther 9-10



Many of you have been reading through this 15-day list since January 2020.

On the following pages inserted and in subsequent mailings, Pastor Nathan supplies you with meditation notes and prayers to guide you through the Apostle Paul's Letter to the Church at Ephesus.

### **Benediction**

*May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God the Father,  
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,  
be with each and every one of you,  
both now and forevermore. Amen!*

*2 Corinthians 13:14*

Lenten Meditations for Sterry Memorial Presbyterian Church 2020  
*The Apostle Paul's Letter to the Church at Ephesus*

**Day One - Read Ephesians 1**

- (1) Paul is an Apostle *by the will of God*. All of us are placed with opportunities and authority to serve in the name of Jesus - by the will of God.  
saints = those set apart to be holy as God is holy.  
physical location of the saints = Ephesus....or Roswell, Parma, Idaho or....  
spiritual location = *faithful in Christ Jesus*. No matter where we are physically, we are united to Jesus Christ and have the opportunity to faithfully serve in his name.
- (2) Paul offers to us a blessing - a benediction! In prayer and over the waves, let us pass to each other the grace and peace of God.
- (3) We not only bless each other, but we bless God! Our God has blessed us with more than we deserve or can imagine - *with every spiritual blessing!* Here's the list of blessings:
- our union to Christ, who is already in heaven representing us.
  - God's love of us before we were even born - even before God created this world! (4)
  - God's working in us his holiness - because he loves us. (4)
  - God securing our destinies and freely adopting us as his beloved children forever. (5)
  - God's acceptance of us! (6)
  - redemption through Christ's blood - God buying us off the slave block. (7)
  - God's forgiveness - a free act of God apart from our deserving of it. (7)
  - God revealing to us his wisdom for our understanding. (8)
  - God revealing to us the mystery of his will - namely, our union to Jesus - the gospel message! (9-10)
  - God restoring all his creation through Jesus! (10)
  - our inheritance, which God has been planning and saving for us long before we were born! (11)
  - God transforming our trust in him to be our praise of him. (12)

(13-14) The Apostle Paul describes the Christian in Ephesus in terms that describe all Christians - those who trust in God having heard the gospel - the good news of Jesus uniting us to the Father's love, through his death, resurrection and ascension. Such a Christian possesses faith and has been sealed by the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus promised to every believer. The Holy Spirit guarantees that every Christian receives the Father's inheritance.

- (15-22) Paul prays for the church. What does he pray?
- he gives thanks for his sisters and brothers in Christ.
  - he asks God to give the church wisdom and to reveal himself to her.
  - he prays for God to enlighten our minds - to give us all his truth.
  - he prays for God to fill the church with hope of receiving his inheritance and to give her the same power that he used to raise Jesus from the dead and to enthrone him in heaven! -a power greater than any other power in this world - all of these powers placed under the dominion/authority of Jesus Christ!

**Prayer** = Almighty and infinitely gracious God, who has loved us before the dawn of time, and who has given to us an eternal inheritance, we ponder and cherish every gift you have lavished upon us and acknowledge that you have rescued us and established us like no one else could

do. With the Apostle Paul, our brother in the faith, we pray for the whole church in every epoch and from every people group. We pray that your spiritual blessings would be received and experienced by every person who has placed his/her trust in you. We confess that your power is greater than any other power in this world. As we are united to Jesus Christ, please, O gracious and heavenly Father, empower us to follow after him and to stand strong against all evil in this world. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## **Day Two - Read Ephesians 2**

In Chapter 1, Paul concludes his prayer, proclaiming the power of God, greater than any other power in this world. What does God do with this power?

(1-10) God uses his superior power to give us new life! -to transform us from spiritual death in our sins to spiritual life united to Jesus Christ. Our spiritual death is not merely our being sinful, but also, being controlled by Satan and his kingdom of darkness. All of our sins have roots planted in this dark kingdom and they serve this dark kingdom. The reason God rescues us, giving to us new life is that he loves us! The reason is God's mercy. The reason is God's grace. He not only restores us to right and free living in this world, but he also uses his power to establish us in heaven, the world to come.

God's salvation of us is a gift! (8-9)

God's purpose in saving us is that we might be his work of art and in turn, perform good works united to Jesus. Paul says something extraordinary - God prepared this purpose of our lives long before he created this world. (10)

(11-13) Most of the church at Ephesus were Gentiles and so Paul preaches the gospel to them - this amazing message that they have been included in God's covenant love, alongside of Israel. A major theme in this letter is our union with Christ Jesus. Paul mentions it in nearly every cluster of sentences. When Paul writes, "*in Christ*," he is referring to our union to Christ Jesus and thus our union to God the Father and his love.

(14-18) Jesus is our peace. And in this little paragraph, "peace" refers to Jesus uniting Jew and Gentile together. Our union to Jesus Christ unites us to fellow believers regardless of their race, gender, socio-economic status. When Paul writes about those "*who are far off*," he is referring to the Gentiles. When he writes "*those who are near*," he describes the household of Israel. In Jesus Christ, God has broken down this distinction so that all of us united to Jesus Christ are united to one another. This blessed union does not make us merely equals. This blessed union erases any difference between us - regardless of who we are by worldly classifications - our new and true identity is Jesus Christ.

(19-22) The work of Jesus, our Peace, has transformed Gentile believers from foreign aliens into citizens, along with Jewish believers - all of us together "*saints*," the holy ones of God. All of us together are sisters and brothers - *members of the household of God*.

The church is founded upon the apostles and the prophets - the apostles being the officers of the church in these last days and the prophets being the officers of the church in the epochs prior to the coming of Jesus Messiah. The foundation of the apostles and the prophets is aligned to the cornerstone, which is none other than Jesus Messiah. All of us Jewish and Gentile believers are the walls of this holy temple, the household of God. The Holy Spirit dwells in this temple - meaning the Holy Spirit dwells in us - not merely in each of us individuals but in us as a group - as the church. In nearly every New Testament text concerning the Holy Spirit,

it is the corporate body and organization/institution of the church in which the Holy Spirit dwells. Hardly ever does the New Testament speak of the Holy Spirit merely indwelling an individual. When the New Testament text does describe an individual filled with the Holy Spirit, the text mentions that individual by name. But when the text says, “you” are filled with the Holy Spirit, the “you” is almost always plural, referring to “you, the church.”

**Prayer** = Lord Jesus, our Peace, as you have broken down all distinctions and barriers between us, your followers, grant to us the grace and power to treat one another as true sisters and brothers, equal partners in the Father’s love forever. Bond us together as your one Body so that we might together be filled with the Holy Spirit, so that we might execute your power for the good. Put an end to our maverick behavior, our lone-ranger Christianity. Help us to work together in the mission you have given to us corporately. In your holy name, we pray. In our present season of quarantine, as we seek to do our part in containing the coronavirus, we offer this prayer for our unity, fellowship and equality, even though we are kept apart from each other. Restore us to one another in good timing. In the meantime, work in each of us individually, deepening our trust, faith, hope and peace. Amen.

### **Day Three - Read Ephesians 3**

(1-7) *The mystery* Paul refers to here and elsewhere is the gospel and particularly one part of the gospel message - that all people groups are included in God’s gracious gathering of his children through Jesus Messiah. In the writings of the Apostles, the mystery is God’s mystery revealed. In the Holy Scriptures and in our world, there is plenty of mystery. God has revealed to us in nature sufficient information about who he is a Creator as well as the beauty and order of what he has made good. God has revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures everything sufficient for our salvation.

The Holy Spirit is the Person of the Trinity, who reveals to us this *mystery of Christ* - all who are united to Christ are one with each other.

(8-15) Paul’s language is dense. In a serious study, the student has much to unpack here! But there is also a place to profoundly get the main gist of such a paragraph before chasing down the richness of the details. The gist = This mystery revealed by the Holy Spirit is to be the gospel proclamation of the Apostle Paul and of the church as a whole. We even declare it to the opposing and powerful forces in this world. After all, the dark side seeks to divide and conquer and so we declare the mystery of God’s gracious and powerful uniting of different people groups into one church. Paul encourages to persevere and not be discouraged in this important mission of proclaiming the gospel.

(14-21) Paul concludes this section offering pastoral encouragement to the church at Ephesus. Here is his pastoral encouragement in bullet points:

- I’m praying that God will strengthen you internally, working on your spiritual core, so you will be strong in faith and love.
- I’m praying that you will truly understand the scope of God’s love for you and for the entire church. The scope is so high and wide that it defies academic, philosophic definition and presentation.
- I’m praying that you will experience as much of God as he has given to you.

Paul concludes this section in (20-21) with what we call a “doxology,” that is, a formulated praise of God. On the flip-side, let’s unpack this pithy doxology.

(20-21) Doxology = Praise of God!

The first part of this doxology praises God for his powerful ability to do more than we could ever request or even imagine. Paul breaks grammar rules to pile up the superlatives. When he writes, “*exceedingly abundantly more...*” he is exaggerating grammatically. In actuality, there are not sufficient number of superlatives in the world that could be piled higher than what God is able to do or what he has actually accomplished. It is impossible for us to over-estimate or exaggerate God’s powerful actions for the good.

The second part of this doxology acknowledges that God empowers us to praise him! The source of all our doxologies is God working within us. This second part bleeds into the third part of the doxology.

The third part of the doxology is to praise God through the church. To give glory to God is to express in as many ways possible, the holiness, authority, power and love of God pervading all realms, just as a beam of light continues to shine and bounce. The church’s purpose is to express this glory of God. The only way the church can do so is *by Christ Jesus*, the only Head of the Church. As the church acknowledges, embraces and follows Jesus, she shines the glory light of God in all directions resulting in much praise of God - a doxology! The church does so in all generations and through out all eternity - even in heaven! As a doxology, this third part, praises God for setting up this relationship and conduit of praise - the relationship between God the Father, the church and God the Son, the latter two together praising the Father in heaven. -Trippy!

**Prayer** = Father, Son and Holy Spirit, our one, Triune God, we praise your holy name and proclaim your power and love throughout the whole world. With the saints of generations past, we pray the Te Deum (offered by St. Ambrose at the baptism of St. Augustine in 397):

“We praise thee, O God : we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.  
All the earth doth worship thee : the Father everlasting.  
To thee all Angels cry aloud : the Heavens, and all the Powers therein.  
To thee Cherubim and Seraphim : continually do cry, Holy, Holy, Holy : Lord God of Sabaoth;  
Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty : of thy glory.  
The glorious company of the Apostles : praise thee.  
The goodly fellowship of the Prophets : praise thee.  
The noble army of Martyrs : praise thee.  
The holy Church throughout all the world : doth acknowledge thee;  
The Father : of an infinite Majesty;  
Thine honourable, true : and only Son; Also the Holy Ghost : the Comforter.  
Thou art the King of Glory : O Christ. Thou art the everlasting Son : of the Father.  
When thou tookest upon thee to deliver man : thou didst not abhor the Virgin's womb.  
When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death :  
Thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers.  
Thou sittest at the right hand of God : in the glory of the Father.  
We believe that thou shalt come : to be our Judge.  
We therefore pray thee, help thy servants : whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.  
Make them to be numbered with thy Saints : in glory everlasting.  
O Lord, save thy people : and bless thine heritage. Govern them : and lift them up for ever.  
Day by day : we magnify thee; And we worship thy Name : ever world without end.  
Vouchsafe, O Lord : to keep us this day without sin. O Lord, have mercy upon us : have mercy upon us. O Lord, let thy mercy lighten upon us : as our trust is in thee.  
O Lord, in thee have I trusted : let me never be confounded.”