

Encouraged

with Paul's letter to the Ephesians

'So that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Eph. 3:10)'



Handouts to help you read & understand –
for personal Bible study, reading the Bible with a friend or with a group

14th Session **THEME: Equipped for Spirit-filled living**

1. Start with prayer. Then look at this icebreaker question. 10 minutes to get started

'Give thanks always and for everything' (Ephesians 5:20). What is something you are grateful for at this moment? And wherein is thanksgiving (a bit) hard for you currently? Take a few moments to share.

2. Read Ephesians 5 : 15-21 twice; today we focus on 18-20 30 minutes to understand the passage

Look again at verse 18 **'but be filled with the Spirit'**

The verb 'be filled' indicates duration, continuation; this 'filling' is not meant for one or few unique moments, but to be continual. Often the expression 'filled with the Spirit' is interpreted as though the Spirit is that which we are to be filled with. However, there is also much to say for the interpretation that the Spirit is the agent of filling – hence: be filled by the Spirit (with the love of Christ, with Christ, dwelling in your hearts).

- Behind addictions and the habit to intoxicate oneself with wine there can be feelings of sadness and pain, because of the 'evil days' (vs. 16) that we have experienced. How may the Holy Spirit offer us something better? (For an answer, you may also look at Romans 5:5, Ephesians 1:17-18, Ephesians 3:14-9)
- In verses 15-17 we found an appeal to 'walk wisely'. How is that related to the appeal to let the Spirit fill us?

Look again at verse 19 **'Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs'**

The translation 'addressing one another' is not optimal. The KJV 'speaking to yourselves' is the most literal translation. Neither is the translation 'making melody' very literal. Literally it says 'singing and Psalm-singing to the Lord'.

- How is verse 19 related to verse 18?
- Before you are able to sing with your heart, your heart may first need to be addressed with encouraging words. How are Psalms helpful for that?

Though the Word of God continues to inspire people to write and sing new hymns, in this verse with Psalms, hymns and songs of the Spirit possibly Paul only had the book of Psalms in mind. This prayer- and hymnbook is in a unique way from the Spirit (see II Samuel 23:1-2, Acts 1:16, 4:25, Hebrews 3:7), wherein some Psalms have the title 'a Psalm', some 'a hymn' and some 'a song', not indicating totally different things, but different aspects. A bit as when the Bible speaks of signs, miracles and wonders; or of commandments, precepts and laws.

- Are you acquainted with the book of Psalms? Wherein has the book of Psalms been a blessing for you? And wherein have you experienced it as difficult?

Look again at verse 20 **'Giving thanks'**

'Always and for everything'. Literally it says: 'always and above everything'. Not everything is in itself something to be thankful for. Yet the Psalms want to help you to process whatever circumstances you face, unrighteous, scary, hurting, discouraging.

- Can you give examples of how the Psalms were helpful and encouraging for the Lord Jesus to persevere?
- How may we also be helped by the book of Psalms, 'the Spirit's toolbox', to continue to be filled by the Spirit and so to be motivated and empowered to live in a Jesus-loving, God-honouring, wise (see vs. 15-17) way?

3. Apply and end with prayer. 15 minutes to make it personal and to pray

Look again at the Ice-Breaker question. Think of what you learned or want to keep with you from this Bible study. Take a few moments of silence, then share, then close with prayer.

4. Digging deeper

If you start to read Psalms 1, 2, 3, see first how these Psalms – before Jesus was born – prophesied who Jesus would be and what Jesus would pray. Jesus is the lead-singer of the book of Psalms. And his people from Old- and New Testament times may sing with Him – we may now do that without a veil, we know about Whom these Psalms all sing.