



# When Heaven Meets Earth (Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021)

## PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with this Study Guide.
- You can watch the 3Crosses sermon online [HERE](#).
- Spend some time in prayer before your group gathers.
- You **always** have the option to use some or all the questions and/or prepare your own questions.

**Welcome:** *Icebreaker* – What comes to your mind when you think of the phrase “God’s Will”?

**Study Tip:** The book of Ephesians is believed to have been written in the early 60’s sometime during Paul’s 2nd imprisonment occurring during his 3rd missionary journey (1<sup>st</sup> imprisonment is brief in Acts 16). This particular arrest led to a chain of legal events culminating at Paul’s 2-year house arrest in Rome (see Acts 21:27-36; 28:17-3). According to the book of Acts, the apostle Paul was an important fixture at the church of Ephesus. At first, Paul reaches the church at Ephesus in Acts 18:18-23 and ministers in the area by leaving some representative associates behind and reasoning with the Jews in the synagogues. The Ephesians wanted him to stay longer, but that would not occur until Paul’s 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey where he returns to Ephesus for a 3-year stay, one of the longest stays in Paul’s ministry recorded in Acts. Over those 3 years, Paul had become closely acquainted with the church at Ephesus. This can be seen in Paul’s powerful ministry in the area and the emotional letter written to the leaders at Ephesus recorded in Acts 19-20! One of the main issues Paul addresses is when a silversmith in the area is concerned about Christianity due to a decline in the “Artemis Idol-making” business. **What is important to remember is that Paul had deep relational ties to the church at Ephesus and was one of the churches he was deeply invested in.** With this in mind, we know that the letter to the Ephesians is penned by Paul (see vv. 1:1, 3:1). However, some of the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament letter do not actually include the phrase “in Ephesus” in the greeting (see v. 1:1). *This begs the question whether the letter was meant to be delivered to the Ephesians or if Paul had someone else in mind?* As it turns out, many scholars conclude that this letter uses Paul’s close relationship with the church at Ephesus to represent his voice to the wider region of churches in the area. How does one come to this conclusion of a “circular letter”? The book of Ephesians informs us that Paul sent a man named Tychicus who was also meant to continue to Colossians with a very similar message (Col. 4:7; Eph. 6:21-22). Travelling with Tychicus was a man named Onesimus, an important character in Philemon. Therefore, the assumption is that the true destination of Tychicus and Onesimus was Colossae and on the way, they would read circular letters like the one “to Ephesus” acting as a global word of encouragement to all the churches!

## What’s Going on This Week

This week, Pastor Danny opens our new series titled *When Heaven Meets Earth!* Pastor Danny drew our attention to *Ephesians 1* to introduce us to the concept of God’s will: to form heaven and earth into one holy and integrated reality. As your group wrestles with this week’s study guide, recognize that the same Holy Spirit that brought Jesus back to life lives in you as a follower of Jesus and ask that the Spirit would sweep you up into his powerful plan to transform the universe.

**“Jesus’ resurrection is the beginning of God’s new project not to snatch people away from earth to heaven but to colonize earth with the life of heaven.” – NT Wright, *Surprised by Hope***

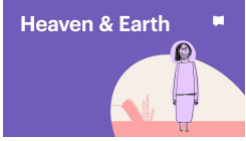


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## GROUP MEETING (60 – 90 minutes)

### Worship (10 – 15 minutes)

*Take time with your group and prepare your hearts as you enter the presence of God for this meeting.*

<p><b>Option 1: Worship Music</b> Have someone share their favorite worship song. You can find it online, play it, and sing along! Have them explain why the lyrics have impacted them!</p>	<p><b>Option 2: God Sighting</b> As we begin to speak about ideas surrounding the phrase <i>when heaven meets earth</i>, can you describe any instances in which you believe heaven met earth in your life this week?</p>	<p><b>Option 3: Bible Project</b></p> 
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### Word: Discuss the Importance of various Spiritual Blessings (15 – 25 minutes)

*Primary Texts: Ephesians 1:1-14* – Paul writes that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing. He then proceeds to list a variety of blessings that we have in Jesus *including* the revelation of his mysterious will; to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. **How does meditating on the mystery of God’s will (that is “uniting all things in heaven and on earth under Christ”) change the way you view the blessings listed in Paul’s opening section?**

**Prayer Tip:** Be prepared to pray for any way people are wrestling with the idea of God’s will defined as uniting all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

### Word: Unpack Paul’s Prayer for the Church (15 – 25 minutes)

*Primary Texts: Ephesians 1:15-23* – After Paul unpacks the mystery of God’s will and the spiritual blessings that come from the merging of Heaven and Earth (including the Holy Spirit), Paul writes a prayer to the church for the Spirit of wisdom so that they may know the Lord better. Paul wants to see the church enlightened (a) to know the hope of God’s calling, (b) to the riches of God’s inheritance (which *is* His holy people), and (c) the power that comes from the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. **Which one of these categories in Paul’s prayer stands out to you the most and why? How does thinking about each category challenge you to think about the ramifications of the merge between Heaven and Earth in Jesus Christ?**

**Prayer Tip:** Pay attention to any of Paul’s categories that stand out to your group and be prepared to pray for growth in those areas.



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## Witness (20 – 25 minutes)

*Considering this week's discussion, here are some different ways that your group can pray!*

- Pray for wisdom as we unpack the mystery of God's will!
- Pray that we would continue to grow to know the Lord on a deeper level!
- Pray for any individual prayer request that comes up in your group.
- **Pray for the entire group and how they may be able to contribute to future group meetings.**
- **Pray for an interaction with someone who you can invite into your next group meeting!**
- **Pray for God's hand in the multiplication and revival of your group!**

We invite your group to our churchwide [PrayFast](#) event (Tuesday 10/19 from 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM)

## THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

**-Stay up to date with Coronavirus Ministry Opportunities:** Help us out by pointing the people in your Life Group to [3Crosses.org/coronavirus](https://3crosses.org/coronavirus). If you or anyone in your group is looking to serve, access spiritual care, or seek financial assistance, you can find all you need at [3Crosses.org/neighborhood](https://3crosses.org/neighborhood)

**-Join relief efforts locally and around the world:** Looking to contribute to what is going on both locally and around the world? Visit our website and join one of the [relief efforts](#) being made available through our church partners or sponsor an [indigenous missionary](#)!

**-Read Ahead:** *Read Ephesians 2* As a Christian, you are one of the places where Heaven and Earth have come together. By living in renewal, you are his artwork, breathing life into the world.

**-Life Groups 2021:** For more information about joining a group, hosting a group, or general inquiries, contact AJ at [avanegas@3crosses.org](mailto:avanegas@3crosses.org)