THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS



Welcome!

As you study Ephesians over these next six weeks, here are some other ideas and resources to increase and enhance your experience!

Our prayer is that you hear God's voice as you study and reflect on this book over these weeks.

You may only have the margin to read through the chapter once and get a couple of questions answered in preparation for your time with your group or cohort. Or you may have lots of time that you are intentionally devoting to this study. Either way, we know God will meet you in the time and space you give Him!

How to go DEEPER in God's Word.

Reading the Bible is about having an encounter with God! Even if you only spend a few minutes reading a verse or two, God can meet you and bless your life through His Word. For those who want to peel back the layers and take a DEEPER breath, you can follow the DEEPER directions below.

Designate means to set aside time and make it a priority to read the Word. It could be first thing in the morning, during your lunch hour, or before you go to bed.

Enter into prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart to understand God's Word.

Explore the passage by highlighting words that stick out to you. Think about how the passage makes you feel. Put yourself into the story and imagine you are one of the characters.

Pursue and study the background of the passage. Use online tools like Bible Gateway or Bible Study Tools to give background. Use commentaries and read other translations to help make sense of keywords or themes in the passage.

Examine yourself as you read. Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight areas of your life that need alignment with what you are reading. Ask yourself if there are areas of your life where you need Him to help you think differently or act differently in light of what you read.

Release the Word by living out and applying what you read. Your time in God's Word will give you direction and show you steps to take. As you put those into action, the Holy Spirit will release the power of God's Word into your life. Release God's Word by sharing it with others through conversations, texts, or emails.



Here are ideas we curated from staff as additional ways to interact with Ephesians!

Bible Project

Overview Video
Podcast on Ephesians
Class on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians
New Testament Letters: Historical Context
New Testament Letters: Literary Context

YouVersion

Find an Ephesians plan

Podcasts

The Listener's Commentary on the New Testament
The Bible Recap
Unscripted with Simon Ponsonby

Right Now Media

Study Resources

StepBible
Precept Austin
Blue Letter Bible
Bible Study Tools
Bible Gateway

Note: You can click on an underlined link to go to the resource!


CORONA

Approaches to studying.

Head — What does this make me think? What is happening?
Heart — How does this make me feel?
Hands — What is this asking me to do?

Observation — Who? What? Where? When?
Interpret — What does it mean?
Application — What does it say?

SOAP

Scripture — Read a passage of scripture and write down a verse or two that jumps out to you.
Observation — What are your personal observations that you note from this scripture?
Application — How does it now apply to your everyday life? What can you do to apply this in your life today?
Prayer — Write a personal prayer based on your observation & application.

Lectio Divina ***learn about Lectio Divina***

Read
Meditate
Pray
Contemplate

Studying a Book of the Bible

Identify the type of literature.
Study the background and context of the book.
Make an outline of the book.
Look for keywords or phrases.
Identify the main themes, ideas, and key verses.
Look for the main applications.

At your first gathering.

Watch the Bible Project Overview of Ephesians.
Read through the Intro & Overview to this study together.
Read through the entire book out loud together.
Introduce yourselves — Key details and a fun fact!
Icebreaker question — Just to warm everyone up!
What sport would the apostle Paul excel in the most?

Weekly

Start by reading that week's chapter out loud together.

Question

Will this study work with my coworker, neighbor, or friend who doesn't know Jesus?

Response

Although we would usually suggest you start with a gospel and walk someone new to faith through the life of Jesus, Ephesians is a great book for understanding our position and identity in Christ and the promises of life in Christ. If you run into any questions, please reach out and let us know because we'd love to be able to help and support you as you invest in others!

If you have someone who you think it would be better to start in the gospels, there is a study guide for the book of Luke on the Vertical Pursuit app!

This study was a collaborative effort created by many of the Grace Chapel staff.

We used several translations in the creation of this study guide including NIV, NLT, CSV, ESV, and the Message paraphrase, MSG.



Ephesians - Intro & Overview

The letter of Paul the Apostle to the church at Ephesus is one of the most theologically profound writings in the Bible. Paul's writing here helps us better understand God's purpose in creation, our position in Christ, and how to live as believers in this world.

More than many other books in the Bible, Ephesians helps us understand God's big universal picture. It is like being given a peek behind the curtains in some ways. In it, we see God's purpose for creation, humanity and what His purpose for us is all about.

No specific occasion or problem inspired this letter, though Paul does mention that he desired the Ephesians to know how he was faring in confinement.

Ephesians articulates general instruction in the truths of the cosmic redemptive work of God in Christ; the unity of the church among diverse peoples; and proper conduct in the church, the home, and the world. Unity and love in the bond of peace mark the work of the Savior as well as Christians' grateful response to his free grace in their lives.

Grace is a central theme in Ephesians, mentioned eleven times. It is by God's grace that we experience salvation. And we are equipped for service by His grace. God's grace is indispensable for the Christian life.

Paul grounds much of our experience as believers in Christ. "In Christ" is a common expression in Ephesians. When I am in Christ, I experience the blessings of knowing God and being in a relationship with him.

Paul is very concerned about the church and our relationships in the body. Christ died to erase the distinctions that divide us in the world, bringing us together into one new humanity.

And Paul spends much of this letter giving instructions on living as believers. Together within the body, within the family, and standing against evil in the world. We are not just called to ensure our eternity, but also to live faithfully in the here and now.

Ancient Ephesus forms an appropriate background to the book of Ephesians because of the city's fascination with magic and the occult. This helps explain Paul's emphasis on the power of God over all heavenly authorities and on Christ's triumphant ascension as head over the church and over all things in this age and the next. The Ephesians needed to be reminded of these things to remain dedicated in their allegiance to Christ as the supreme power in the world and their lives.

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.”

Ephesians 1:18,19

Ephesians Chapter One

1."*Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" (v. 1)

Paul starts most of his letters with a this or a similar greeting. Paul prioritized the gift of grace and the importance of peace, acknowledging that those only come from and through our Father God and our Savior Jesus!

> **How do you greet your day? How do you greet others? How do you greet your family? Do you do the heart work of acknowledging God, expressing gratitude for the gift Jesus gave you on the cross, and do you declare the grace and peace of God over your day and your people? What might it look like to make that internal shift on a daily basis?**

2. Through Ephesians, the phrase 'In Him' indicates when someone becomes a believer, they take on the identity of Jesus and the promises attached to that new identity.

"*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*" (v. 3)

> **What spiritual blessings are listed in verses 4-14 as the truth of being "In Him"? What other "In Hims" do you see throughout Ephesians?**

3. Paul is writing Ephesians to Gentiles, who were historically not God's "chosen people." It took an effort to change the mindset that, because of Jesus, ALL people can join the body of Christ, not just Jews. He adopted anyone and everyone into His family. And we are all part of His master plan (v. 11-14).

> **Have you ever felt like an outsider in a space you really wanted to be in? What would it mean for you to be invited in, valued, and loved in that space? Could you extend that invitation to someone on the outskirts of your current space?**

4. Pray this prayer over someone whose faith you admire, just as Paul prayed for the Ephesians (v. 16-19).

> ***"God, give _____ intelligence and discernment in knowing you personally. Make their eyes focused and clear, so they can see what you are calling them to do.***
>
> ***God, let _____ see the immensity of the glorious way of life you have for your followers and how those who trust you get your utter extravagance, endless energy, and boundless strength."***



Ephesians Chapter Two

1. Ephesians 2:1-5 says that we who were once dead in our transgressions have been made alive with Christ. Our only requirement is to believe. It is in God's mercy and by His grace that we are saved.

Mercy: Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone who is within one's power to punish or harm.

Grace: The free and unmerited favor of God.

> **What does it mean for your life that you are saved instead of punished? What does that mean for how you treat others? Is it easy for you to accept the gracious gift of salvation from God? Or do you find yourself trying to earn your salvation? If so, how do you try to earn it?**

2. Testimony is a powerful tool God uses to do some of his best work.

"*God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us.*" (v. 7)

> **What is a piece of your testimony? What part of your life or story can you contribute ONLY to the grace and kindness of God? Write it down and share it with someone. Even if it is something seemingly small, God can still use that story as an example for others.**

3. "*For Christ himself has brought peace to us.”* (v. 14)

Jesus himself is our peace. Paul is reminding the Ephesians that Jesus came to bring peace. Peace in our relationships. Peace in our souls and with God through salvation.
The Greek word used here is 'eirene.' The definition of 'eirene' is harmony, concord, security, safety, the tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ.

> **What area of your life do you need peace right now? Do you need to experience it in your relationship with God? Are you struggling with internal peace? What are you trusting to fulfill that need for peace other than God? Do you need peace in any of your relationships?**

4. In Ephesians, there is much talk of unity within the house of God, in God's family. Only together are we the "*holy temple for the Lord.*" (v. 21)

> **How do we find ways to keep the Body of Christ working together as a unit in a world that seems to love Us vs. Them? How do we stay unified in the face of division? How do all followers of Jesus put aside differences for a common goal?**

"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Ephesians 3:17-19

Ephesians Chapter Three

1. "*His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.*" (v. 10)

One of the mysteries of God's plan is His desire to use the church to communicate His love, grace, invitation, and forgiveness.

> **What mysteries has God revealed to you? How are you walking in the truth of those mysteries in your daily life? How can we, as a church, walk in the revealed mysteries of God?**

2. "*In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*" (v. 12)

> **What hinders you from approaching God with freedom and confidence? What person or situation in your life do you need to carry to God with freedom and confidence?**

3. Read verses 14-21. Our capacity to be filled with all the fullness of who God comes from being rooted in love.

> **What does it look like for you to be rooted in love? What does it look like to be filled with all the fullness of God?**

You can walk through this quick list to check where your roots lie. In the places you find something other than Christ's love and perhaps sin blooming, do not respond in shame or judgment; receive it as an invitation for pruning and another opportunity to remember His vast love.

> *Mentally* - What thoughts blossom from receiving Christ's love for you and which thoughts shrivel from being rooted in something else (control, fear, pride, etc.)
> *Emotionally* - What emotions do you most often experience in an ordinary day? Which of those do you intentionally lead toward Christ's love, and which do you let lead you?
> *Physically* - If you have felt a physical response to Christ's love, what was it, and what was it like for you? If you have not, how does this idea of physically feeling Christ's love sound to you? What about Christ's love physically energizes you?

4. Paul blesses the Ephesians with a prayer. He prays they fully understand God's love (v. 17-19). What a beautiful thing to pray over someone! Being able to pray that blessing for someone else is most powerful when you have experienced the height, width, and depth of His love yourself.

> **How have you experienced an overwhelming love of God? How is that reflected in your testimony? Share that love story with someone to encourage them to seek that love for themselves. Use it as a blessing for someone!**



Ephesians Chapter Four

1. "*Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*" (v. 1)

> **Taking into full consideration all of the amazing truths of who we are and what we have in Christ (which Paul detailed in the first three chapters), what does it practically look like for you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called? What's easy for you? What's difficult?**

2. Read verses 1-4. Paul discusses the importance of "Unity & Maturity in the Body of Christ." In order to have complete unity of the Spirit in the body, we need to be unified individually.

> **Who might need to approach humbly to reconcile a relationship?**

3. "*Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*" (v. 2)

> **What are examples of "bearing with one another in love"?**

4. "*One*" is a big word in this chapter. As followers of Jesus, we are invited and implored to live as "*one*" with each other in unity. In chapter two we talked about how to stay one - united as the body of christ. Now let's talk about why that might be important. Read John 17:2-23.

> **What are some examples of how unity among believers (think your core family, your friend group, your church as a whole) could impact people around you do not yet believe? Who is someone in your sphere of influence that would benefit from seeing a community of believers who present as one, even in our differences? Pray for those people!**

5. "*So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*" (v. 11-12)

The Holy Spirit gave gifts to build up the church! (See Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 for a few more).

> **How have you seen these gifts used to build up the church around you - not just on a Sunday morning? Are there any gifts you see in the people around you?**

6. In verse 28, we see Paul giving an example of a full repentance and amends when it comes to stealing (learning to work with one's hands and giving to those in need).

> **What are some ways God can redeem your "former life" to bless, minister, serve, encourage, or equip others?**

In Ephesians 5, marriage is meant to be a beautiful and living reflection of the relationship between Jesus and the church. This imagery of Christ and the church serves as the backdrop to inspire what a healthy and vibrant marriage should look like. In other words, when marriage is aligned with this imagery, marriage serves as a relational gospel illustration to the world.

In a healthy Christian marriage, the husband and wife should lovingly and sacrificially put each other first before themselves, as fellow members of the body of Christ. This is what Paul refers to as "mutual submission" in this chapter. Faithful headship involves creating an environment of openness and communication in which the husband honors his wife and values her opinions, all the while recognizing her equality and the gifts God has given her.

When Paul tells wives to submit to their husbands, he does not mean that wives must endure abuse, neglect, or mistreatment of any kind by their husbands. Rather, Paul is reminding the church that a wife is under the headship, not tyrannical rule, of her husband. Headship is about protecting, covering, and serving, not dominating.

Some Christian women have been wrongly taught that they have to tolerate any kind of treatment from their husbands in order to be biblically submissive and respectful, and this instruction must be fervently rejected by the church. If a husband directs his wife to do anything that goes against Godly wisdom and her spiritual discernment, she always "must obey God rather than men."

Ephesians Chapter Five

1. "*Walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*" (v. 2)

> **In what specific ways can you walk in love toward others in light of how Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us?**

2. Paul lists those who will not inherit the kingdom of God - the immoral, impure, greedy, idolator, and deceiver.

> **What does it mean then in verse 7 when it says, "*Therefore do not be partners with them*"? How do we apply the wisdom of John 17:15-16 "*to be in the world, but not of this world*" to this idea of partnering or not?**

3. In verses 1-20, we are being asked to live in this new way, as imitators of God!

> **Are there aspects of your life that are difficult for you to switch to Jesus' way? Spend time reflecting on what area of your life you need Jesus to help you live in the light!**

4. "*Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (v. 19-20)

> **Spend time as a group sharing where you have seen God show up and what you are thankful for!**

5. "*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*" (v. 21)

Verses 21-33 talk a lot about submission - for everyone! Sometimes this section can cause some inner tension, and that is okay. Submission to others means elevating others above yourself - just like Jesus did.

> **How would your life look different if you submitted to the people around you? Your coworker? Your friend? Your parent? Your spouse? Your child?**

6. Verses 5:22-6:9 appear to place a heavy emphasis on a man's responsibility in three specific roles or positions; husband, father, and master or boss.

> **Men, if you are a husband, how do you love your wife as Christ loved the church? If you are a father, how do you avoid exasperating or provoking your kids to anger but instead bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord? If you are a boss or leader, how do you render service with a good will toward those you're overseeing without threatening them?**



Ephesians Chapter Six

1. In verses 5-9 Paul writes to slaves and masters. This is a descriptive passage based in the reality of life in Ephesus. This passage does not condone slavery. God does not condone slavery. That said, we all function in a world of power dynamic relationships. Coach-athlete, employer-employee, parent-child, lender-lendee.

How do these verses apply to those relationships?

2. When we live in this upside-down-Kingdom way (unified, building one another up, submitting to one another), it can feel overwhelming and like the world around us is going against this way of life.

How have you used the armor of God to fight off this pressure? (Truth, Righteousness, the Gospel, Faith, Salvation, and the Word of God).

3. Read about the armor of God in verses 10-18.

What is the hardest piece of armor for you to put on? Do you find yourself more focused on the struggles and battles that occur in the natural or the wars that are waged in the spiritual? How can you build a habit of shifting your mindset to allow for a heavenly perspective as you take on challenges?

4. *"In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication."* (v. 16-18 ESV)

Notice in the ESV that praying in the spirit is included in this passage about what to do in all circumstances - faith, the Word, and prayer.

When hard circumstances come, what is your first response? Is it to control, manage, and react, or is it to press into faith, the Word, and prayer? How could being in community help you respond differently?

5. "*Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*" (v. 18)

Spend time as a group praying for one another as you take the book of Ephesians to heart and allow the Gospel to reshape our hearts and how we live day to day.

What chapter in this study spoke the most to you?

What section in this study spoke the most to you?

What verse in this study spoke the most to you?




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