

praise  
unity  
mystery

a six-week study on the



© April 2009  
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book of ephesians

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is not like his other letters. He did not write to correct a specific error or to combat a particular heresy. He wrote to encourage the believers. He wrote to remind his fellow Christians of the grace of God in Christ. He wrote to motivate them to live in light of that knowledge—to live in unity.

Paul did not have only the Ephesian church in mind. When he used the word “church” in this letter he used a word referring to the universal church, not a localized body of believers. This makes sense when we consider Paul's emphasis on unity and the letter's destination.

Paul wrote this letter while imprisoned in Rome between AD 60 and 62. Evidence suggests that this letter was not intended solely for the Ephesians but was composed as a circular letter. The fact that early manuscripts lack the words “in Ephesus” and that the letter itself lacks personal references (despite the several years Paul spent in Ephesus on his missionary journeys) support a widespread understanding that this letter was meant to be distributed among several churches within the Province of Asia, of which Ephesus was the capital city.

The circular nature of the letter and the prominence given to the universal church together aid the modern reader. Paul is writing to us! He is reminding us of both doctrine and duty, who we are and how we should walk, how we have been called and how we should conduct ourselves. These themes offer the same invaluable insight to us as Dallas Christians living in the twenty-first century as they did to Ephesian Christians living in the first.

As we take each chapter one week at a time, let's remember an important division Paul makes in his letter. The first three chapters are characterized by *indicative* language. In other words, instead of telling us what to do, Paul tells us what God has already done for us in Christ. The only thing we are told to do in these chapters is to “remember” what we were (2:11) but no longer are in Christ! Paul wants us to be absolutely convinced of all that God has accomplished on our behalf!

Then, in the last three chapters, Paul brings in the *imperative language*—what we are to do, how we are to walk, and how we are to conduct ourselves. In other words, our behavior is a response to God's grace. What we do depends on knowing all that God has already done!

One more reminder before we get started: Be attentive to the attitude Paul communicates through his letter. He spends the first half of the letter primarily on doctrine but his manner is far from cold and impersonal. Paul is compelled by joy in the context of worship! He can't help but praise God as he shares all that God has done!

So let's approach this study with a similar attitude of worship. God's final purpose does not culminate in our salvation. Our salvation leads us to glorify God, to worship Him! This is the essence of doxology. So to the glorious Father who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ (1:3) let us pray: Lord, may we know You better (1:17)!

**EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1:**  
OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE TRIUNE GOD PROMPTS PRAISE AND PRAYER  
*from information to intercession*

**Spiritual Blessings in Christ**

**Read Ephesians 1:1-14.**

1. What do you think Paul means by the word “saints” (v. 1)? How can we reconcile this with the reminder in 1 John 1:8 that we are sinners?
  
2. Paul gives two locations for the saints (v. 1): They are in \_\_\_\_\_ and in \_\_\_\_\_. How do these two places reflect the two components of Paul’s letter?
  
3. Read Psalm 103:1-2. What do these verses have in common with v. 3?
  
4. Read John 8:38, 44. How does this contrast with what we’re told in v. 5? What is the import of our adoption?
  
5. Paul’s discussion centers around the Trinity: the selection of the Father (vv. 3-6), the sacrifice of the Son (vv. 7-12), and the seal of the Spirit (vv. 13-14). Why have these works been accomplished (vv. 6, 12, 14)? What does this imply about the purpose of our conversion and of our living as Christians?
  
6. What do these verses tell us concerning the assurance of our salvation (v. 4) and the presence of the Holy Spirit with us (vv. 13-14)? How do these truths impact our thinking?

**Thanksgiving and Prayer**

**Read Ephesians 1:15-23.**

7. Why do you think Paul transitions into prayer with the phrase “for this reason” (v. 15)? What does this suggest about Paul’s attitude toward prayer?
  
8. How does Paul characterize the Ephesians (v. 15)? Would anyone describe us that way? Why or why not?

9. Why does Paul ask that God give the Ephesians the “Spirit of wisdom and revelation” (v. 17)? What does this suggest about our priority as believers?

10. Read Romans 8:24-25. How do these verses help define the hope Paul speaks of in v. 18? What affect does this hope have on how we live and pray? How does our culture define hope today?

11. Paul equates God’s “incomparably great power for us who believe” (v. 19) with the same power responsible for the resurrection (v. 20), exaltation (v. 20), and victory (v. 22) of Christ. What implications does this have for us as believers?

13. What does Paul call the church (v. 23)? Read 1 Corinthians 12:27. How does this illustrate a central theme of Paul’s letter?

### **PERSONAL POINTS TO PONDER**

14. How often do you spend time praising God? For what do you typically praise Him?

15. How does meditating on the spiritual blessings we have in Christ affect you internally? How does it or should it affect your outward behavior?

16. What motivates you to pray for yourself and others?

17. What areas of your life do you believe God is leading you to pray about this week?

*“Our fundamental need is to see our privileges;  
for unless we see how great they are we will neither desire to enter into them fully  
nor will we be able to live in light of them...  
We live too often below the level of our privileges.  
Like mountaineers who reach high altitude we find it difficult to breathe in such rarefied atmosphere as this.  
Sadly we are tempted to descend to lower ground,  
where the climbing is more manageable for our spiritual lungs.  
But if we cease to climb, we will never see the glorious realities that await our vision.  
No wonder, then, if we remain short-sighted Christians.  
May God open our eyes to see!”  
Sinclair Ferguson*

## CHAPTER 2:

### WHAT WE WERE, WHAT GOD HAS DONE, AND WHAT WE ARE NOW BECOMING

#### *God's activity toward us in Christ*

#### *Made Alive in Christ*

#### **Read Ephesians 2:1-10.**

17. When we were dead in our transgressions what three things did we follow (vv. 2-3)?
  
18. What does v. 3 tell us about the nature of man? What does this imply about the character of God (v. 4)?
  
19. Who is the subject of vv. 4-6? Why is this fundamental?
  
20. Read Ephesians 2:4-6 in the New King James Version. What word is repeated three times? How does this remind us of Paul's intent?
  
21. Read Romans 5:6-8. What is the relationship between God's love and Christ's work?
  
22. How does Paul define faith (v. 8)? How is this different from salvation?
  
23. Consider vv. 8-10 and James 2:14-17. How should we understand the interplay between faith and works?
  
24. Summarize v. 10 in light of Ephesians 1:6, 12, and 14.

#### *One in Christ*

#### **Read Ephesians 2:11-22.**

25. What does Paul call the Ephesians to do in vv. 11-12? Why is it important to remember our Christless state?

26. Consider vv. 14, 17 and John 14:27. In what ways is Christ both our peace and the one who offers us peace?
27. Why does Paul use “you” in v. 13 and “we” in v. 18? What does this remind us about his purpose for writing?
28. Read Hebrews 11:13-16 and Philippians 3:20 in light of v. 19. Where is our citizenship?
29. What does it mean that Jesus is our chief cornerstone? (v. 20; Isaiah 28:16; 1 Corinthians 3:10-11)
30. What are the individual implications of being holy temples (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) for how we should live? What are the corporate implications of being “joined together” (v. 21) and “built together” (v. 22) as a holy temple (1 Corinthians 12:12, 27)?

### **PERSONAL POINTS TO PONDER**

31. How do you characterize your life before knowing Christ? Do you see yourself as being dead apart from Christ and as an object of wrath?
32. Consider your life right now. What might be some of the “good works” God has prepared for you to do specifically?
33. Do you live as a citizen of heaven or a citizen of the world?
34. Are living as if your body is a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit?

*“In the Old Testament the root concept of apostasy was the idea of forgetting.  
As long as God’s redemption was clear and fresh in the experience of the people,  
they were zealous in their worship and obedience.*

*But as the memory of God’s blessing faded, then their zeal began to fade as well.  
It is this link between memory and the motivating power of gratitude that produces the fruit of righteousness.  
Paul is reminding these Gentile converts that they are not to take for granted what God has done in them.”*

R.C. Sproul

**CHAPTER 3:**

THE MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH AND THE IMMENSITY OF CHRIST'S LOVE

*revelation of God and prayer for His people*

**Paul the Preacher to the Gentiles**

**Read Ephesians 3:1-13.**

35. What is unusual about how Paul describe himself in v. 1?

36. What is the “mystery” about which Paul speaks (v. 6)? Relate this back to Ephesians 2:21-22.

37. What is the difference between how Paul speaks of himself in Philippians 3:4-6 and how he describes himself in v. 8? Consider Philippians 3:7-9.

38. By God's grace, what has Paul been called to do (v. 8)? What is God's purpose in this calling (v. 10)?

39. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. Why can we “approach God with freedom and confidence” (v. 12)?

40. Consider v. 13 and Philippians 3:10-11. How are sufferings and glory related?

**Prayer for the Ephesians**

**Read Ephesians 3:14-21.**

41. Paul uses both agricultural and architectural imagery in v. 17. What do these images mean to you?

42. Do vv. 16-19 indicate past actions, continuing actions, or a combination of both? What does this communicate about the Christian life?

43. If height and depth are identical measurements why might Paul have mentioned both (v. 18)? Look ahead to Ephesians 4:9-10.

44. Consider v. 19 and Ephesians 4:13. What is required in order to “be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (v. 19)?

45. What is the result (v. 21) of God doing more than all we ask or imagine (v.20)?

**PERSONAL POINTS TO PONDER**

46. What do you consider the purpose of the church? How are you a part of that?

47. Have you grasped “how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ”?

48. Do you live as if God “is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine”?

*“Love—the love of God in Christ—is the soil in which Christians thrive.”*  
Sinclair Ferguson

## CHAPTER 4:

### WALK IN UNITY AND WALK IN HOLINESS

*transitioning “from doctrine to duty, from creed to conduct, from the Christian’s wealth to his walk, from exposition to exhortation, from the indicative to the imperative, from high society to high life...”*

R. Kent Hughes

#### **Unity in the Body of Christ**

##### **Read Ephesians 4:1-16.**

49. How does Paul summarize what he is going to talk about in the next three chapters (v. 1)? How might understanding “worthy” as “fitting or appropriate” help us rightfully follow this charge?

50. Read Colossians 3:12-13. What do these verses remind us about our motivation for heeding v. 2?

51. What word does Paul emphasize in vv. 4-6? How does this highlight a theme of his letter?

52. What are some of the gifts Christ gives to men (v. 11)? What is the purpose of these gifts (v. 12)?

53. What are some results of the building up of God’s people (v. 13)?

54. Read v. 14, Ephesians 6:17, and 2 Timothy 4:1-4. What is our weapon against false teaching?

55. Read v. 15, 1 Peter 1:22-23, and 1 John 3:18. What is the relationship between God’s Word, truth, and love?

#### **Putting on the New Self**

##### **Read Ephesians 4:17-32.**

56. Consider vv. 17-19 and Romans 1:18-25. What happens if people deny the evidence of God?

57. The Ephesians were taught to do what three things (vv. 22-24)? Why are these imperatives inseparable?



58. How does v. 25 relate back to v. 15? What does this imply about our responsibility to one another?

59. What aspects of the Ephesians' "former way of life" does Paul address (vv. 25-31)?

60. Consider the context of v. 30. How do we "grieve the Holy Spirit of God"?

**PERSONAL POINTS TO PONDER**

61. What gifts have you been given that can be used for the building up of Christ's body?

62. Do you identify with any aspects of the Ephesians' "former way of life"? Pray Psalm 139:23-24 and respond to God.

63. What would it look like to be kind, compassionate, and forgiving to specific people that come to mind who are in your life right now?

*"The new life Paul describes here may seem at first sight disappointingly mundane and unspectacular.*

*These verses do not describe mighty deeds wrought in great power,  
but humble lives transformed by the Holy Spirit...*

*Augustine reflects on the influence of Ambrose:*

*'It was not your great teaching – I scarcely expected to find that in the Christian Church in any case –  
but that you were kind to me.'*"

Sinclair Ferguson

**CHAPTER 5:1–6:9:**  
**WALK IN LOVE, WALK IN LIGHT, AND WALK IN WISDOM**  
*expressing the character of God*

**Imitators of God**

**Read Ephesians 5:1-6.**

64. Read v. 2 and 1 John 4:10-12. What is the relationship between Christ and living a life of love?

65. In what way do we as believers spread the fragrance of Christ? Read 2 Corinthians 2:14-16.

66. What does Paul command of God's people in contrast to the impropriety of the world (v. 4)? Read Luke 6:45 and James 3:9-12. Why is the source of our speech important to consider?

**Living as Children of Light**

**Read Ephesians 5:7-14.**

67. Read John 8:12. Why are we children of the light (v. 8)? Read Matthew 5:15-16. How do we live as children of the light?

68. Read Colossians 1:10-12. What pleases the Lord (v. 10)?

69. How should v. 12 and Philippians 4:8 inform our lifestyle and decision-making?

**Being Filled with the Spirit**

**Read Ephesians 5:15-6:9.**

70. What two ways does Paul give for how we can live wisely (vv. 16-17)?

71. Read Romans 12:1-2 and Psalm 119:97. What role does our mind play in living wisely and understanding the Lord's will?

72. In what way is the command to "be filled with the Spirit" (v. 18) both active and passive? How do vv. 19-21 and Colossians 3:16-17 help us with this?

73. How do vv. 19-21 guide both our vertical and horizontal relationships?

74. Read Philippians 2:3-4. How does this aid our understanding of v. 21?

75. How do the commands in vv. 22 and 25 complement each other?

76. What insight do vv. 26-27 give us concerning the purpose of marriage?

77. How does Christ feed and care for the church (v. 29)? How could this apply to our personal relationships?

78. Read Hebrews 12:5-11. How does this concept of discipline inform an understanding of training and instruction (6:4)?

79. What does Paul command of slaves and masters (vv. 5-9)? How do these principles transfer to our employee and employer relationships today?

### **PERSONAL POINTS TO PONDER**

80. What happens when you try to love another in your own strength without remembering you can love only because you are loved?

81. How can you shine with the glory of God (Isaiah 60:1-2) in your workplace?

82. In what ways are you serving “wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men” (6:7) in your own working environment?

*“So watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get.  
These are desperate times!”  
Ephesians 5:15-16, The Message*

**CHAPTER 6:**  
**STAND IN WARFARE**  
*overcoming the devil's schemes*

**The Armor of God**

**Read Ephesians 6:10-20.**

83. Read Romans 8:31-35. Why do these verses speak of “who” rather than “what”? What does this remind us about our daily spiritual battle?

84. Read Psalm 24:8; 2 Chronicles 20:14-15; and 1 Samuel 17:45-47. What do these verses remind us about our God? How do they give us strength in the battle?

85. What are the six pieces of spiritual armor mentioned in Ephesians 6:14-17?

86. Consider what Scripture says about each of these essential components:

i. 1 John 3:18

ii. Romans 1:17

iii. John 16:33

iv. Galatians 2:20

v. Philippians 2:12-13

vi. Hebrews 4:12

87. What are the three “alls” of Ephesians 6:18? What does this call us to do?

88. How does Paul describe himself in Ephesians 6:20? What does 2 Corinthians 5:20 remind us about our own role?

**Final Greetings**

**Read Ephesians 6:21-24.**

89. Why does Paul send Tychicus to the Ephesians (vv. 21-22)? Why is this important?

90. What four qualities of godliness does Paul include in his benediction (vv. 23-24)? How can these be reflected in our own relationships with each other?

**PERSONAL POINTS TO PONDER**

91. How can you be more intentional about putting on the full armor of God?

92. How are you an ambassador of Christ in your workplace? How can you become a greater ambassador of Christ in your workplace?

93. Do you impart peace, love, faith, and grace to those around you? If not, why not?

*The devil “specializes in mixing enough truth with falsehood to make it seem plausible,  
just as he did with Eve in the garden.*

*Heresy is truth out of proportion, and twisting the truth is his specialty...  
One of the devil’s most effectual methods is to instill doubts about God’s goodness”*

R. Kent Hughes

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