



EPHESIAN

FOR A GREATER MISSION



EPHESIANS

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A GREATER MISSION

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WHY THIS STUDY?



"We need to talk sometime. I'm an engineer, and I spend all day reading blueprints and operation manuals for multi-million dollar equipment. But when I open a Bible, I feel completely clueless. I have no idea what any of it means."

Does this sound familiar? When it comes to reading and understanding scripture, many of us feel confused, intimidated, or overwhelmed. So, outside of the occasional passage on a sign at Hobby Lobby, we simply don't read the Bible. And in our neglect, we are like the Sadducees, the religious leaders who Jesus rebukes by saying, *"You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God."* | **Matthew 22:29**

This link between knowing God and knowing His Word are clearly explained by Salvation Army Captain Shannon Martinez:

The truth is, we become what we behold. Our actions and lives are chiseled by what we study, observe, learn, and feast upon. Yet the most influential, life-changing book sits dusty on our shelves. There is nothing more transformative than beholding God in His Word. So how then can we conform to the image of a God that we have not beheld?

*I also believe that we cannot love what we don't know. And if we say we love God, then we should know His Word. If you told me that you absolutely love (fill in the blank with your favorite musician, actor, artist), you'd most likely be able to sing every lyric, tell me their best movie quotes, know their history, and follow their social media platforms. You would have learned everything you could about that group or person.**

**peermag.org/articles/unhidden-treasure*

The mission of any church is to make disciples, people who (to paraphrase a 13th century saint) know God more clearly, love Him more dearly, and follow Him more nearly, day by day. And that's the heart behind this book. Instead of simply listening to a sermon series during weekend worship services, we want to help you engage with the scriptures throughout the week. Our desire is to help you ask hard questions about the human condition, God's character, and His plans and purposes for His people.

The first sermon series book we produced was 34 weeks through the book of Deuteronomy. Admittedly, an Old Testament book like Deuteronomy was a big challenge, but proved to be extremely fruitful for us as a congregation. This time we are studying a New Testament book, Paul's letter to the Ephesians. You can read it easily in one sitting, and we hope you will do so before the series begins. We are planning on spending 36 weeks in this book. For those keeping score, it's composed of 155 verses spread over 6 chapters. Some weeks we will be meditating on, studying, and preaching on only a few verses.

Why? It's our hope that we will learn together and discover that every verse in scripture *"...is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work."* | **2 Timothy 3:16**

Let's be people who know and study the scriptures well, so that we can know, love, and follow Jesus well.

LETTER

FROM PASTOR JEFF WHEELER

Whenever I pray about the focus of our next teaching series at Central (for us that means studying a book of the Bible), I'm always asked, "Why that book?" And that's a great question! In this case, "Why Ephesians?"

Ephesians is a book about mission. God called Paul out of the futile life of a Jewish Pharisee, and radically transformed him on a dusty road outside of Damascus. But God didn't just save Paul **out of** something (a life of sin and darkness), more importantly he saved Paul **into** something (a life of mission and purpose). In Ephesians, Paul lets every Christian know they were saved out of the world for the purpose of mission.

And not just any mission, but a greater mission. A mission greater than wealth, social success, power, pleasure or recognition. A mission that not only spans the ages of human history, but of eternity. It is not just an individual mission, but a corporate mission for all those "in Christ." It's not just a part-time mission, but a mission that consumes every minute of our day. It's not a mission that enhances our identity, but one that gives us a whole new identity. And it's not a mission we've earned, but a mission we receive strictly on the basis of grace.

So why Ephesians? Because Ephesians is an invitation to God's mission. As we open the pages of this book and discover its truth, we will find ourselves on a mission beyond all others. An exciting mission. In fact, **a greater mission!**

Pastor Jeff



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

What you have in your hands is an opportunity to engage with the book of Ephesians in a unique way alongside fellow believers here at Central Church. We want you to write all over this book! We will give you some instructions, but feel free to write, highlight, draw, etc. as you follow the leading and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

We will be spending 36 weeks learning and preaching through the 155 verses of Ephesians. We have broken the book up into 13 sections. You can see the sections on pages 10-16. Ephesians is a theologically rich book, and there's a lot to glean from it. We want you to have this book with you as you study, as you sit in services, and as you attend your **LifeGroup**. It's our hope that you can look back through this book years from now and be reminded of all that God has taught you and done in you.

Each week there is a reading, a few questions, a place to write sermon notes, and an application question. There's a ton of great historical context resources in the front of the book, study tools in the back of the book, plus online content at centralsf.org/ephesians. As you read the scriptures, if you see an asterisk (*) next to a word or verse, you can find a Biblical definition of that word in the glossary on page 90.

BEFORE A WEEKEND SERVICE

Read

Read the whole section for that sermon and the specific verses.

Engage

Read articles. Watch videos. Answer the two questions based on the specific sermon verses.

ATTEND A WEEKEND SERVICE

Take Sermon Notes

Listen to the teaching. Make note of what the teaching pastor highlights.

Apply

Answer the weekly application question found on the sermon notes page. Make it specific to you!

AFTER A WEEKEND SERVICE

Discuss

Meet with your family, some friends, or a LifeGroup to discuss what God has been revealing to you.

You can find more information on how to write your own LifeGroup Bible study using this framework on page 98, a more comprehensive set of *Listen, Learn, Live* questions on our website, and a simple family devotional layout on page 101.

LISTEN

What is the passage saying in context?

Look at the verses before and after this week's sermon verses.

What was Paul saying to his audience?

LEARN

What did you learn about God? Circle it in the passage.

What is Paul trying to teach the church in Ephesus?

Put a question mark next to any passage you find confusing. (Ask someone to help you understand it!)

LIVE

What's one thing from this passage you can share with someone else?

What is God saying to you through this passage?

What are you going to do about it?



HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE CITY OF EPHEBUS

To better understand Paul's letter to the Ephesians you need to understand the city of Ephesus. Though the letter to the Ephesians contains universal truths about God, Christian living, and so much more, it was also written by a particular person (Paul in prison in Rome) to a particular people (the church in Ephesus in about AD 62).

Ephesus was a major metropolitan coastal city located in what is modern day Türkiye. Some called it the "Mother City" of Asia because of its influence on the politics, commerce, and religions of the region. Ephesus was a very ethnically diverse city. It was the headquarters of the Roman Proconsul and the seat of the "Confederacy" of the Greeks in Asia. Major Roman roads entered the city from the North, South, and East. With the port being on the western edge of the city. More than 200,000 people lived in the region around Ephesus during Paul's day. It's obvious why Paul would spend three years building the church in such an influential city.

Ephesus was very religious. The Temple of Artemis was located just outside the city walls and was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (for more about the Cult of Artemis see page 9). The city had smaller temples dedicated to worshiping about fifty other deities. It was home to a temple to the Cult of Caesar which ingratiated the city to the Roman Empire (for more about the Cult of Caesar see page 9). Magic and folk beliefs also held sway in the area. You can see in Acts 19 that even believers struggled to let go of their former magic and cultic practices. There was a sizable Jewish population in Ephesus. We don't know the exact number of Jews in the

city during Paul's time, but we do know that 2,000 Jewish families were relocated to Ephesus in the 3rd century BC.

PAUL'S LETTER TO EPHEBUS

Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians most likely while under house arrest in the city of Rome in about AD 62. Paul spent a little over three years total in the city of Ephesus, so he was very familiar with the church there. And yet, the letter itself contains very little in the way of personal addresses or specific issues. It is assumed that this was the case because Paul wanted the letter to not only be for the church in Ephesus, but for believers everywhere. The letter was delivered to the Ephesians specifically by Tychicus who was Paul's travel companion on his third missionary journey. Tychicus also delivered another letter (Colossians) to the church in Colossae.

Ephesians is a simple, yet profound letter. In less than 2,500 words, Paul covers what it means to be a Christian, issues of divine sovereignty and human free will, spiritual warfare, worship in the church, gender roles and marriage, God's design and plan for the church, how to contextualize theology, spiritual gifts, the importance of the local church and missions, intercessory prayer, and the nature of spiritual powers, to name a few.

The church in Ephesus was predominantly Gentile, but also contained some Jews who had converted to Christianity. The Gentile believers would have been former worshipers of Artemis, Caesar, and practitioners of magic. Even the Jews in the region practiced more of a "folk" type of Judaism that focused on angels, demons, and incantations to control them. This is evident in the letter as Paul addresses issues of the supremacy of Christ, spiritual authority, and spiritual powers.

PAUL TRAVELING TO EPHEBUS

Paul first visits Ephesus briefly towards the end of his second missionary journey in AD 52. He was traveling with Aquila and Priscilla at the time. He left them there to continue to share the gospel while he headed on to Jerusalem to complete a vow he had made, attend a religious festival, and maintain ties with the larger church. (see Acts 18:18-22)

Early in Paul's third missionary journey, he once again traveled to Ephesus. This time Paul would stay for about three years, from AD 53-55. He would spend his first three months in Ephesus preaching predominantly to the Jews in the synagogue. After things became contentious, he and the new believers left the synagogue. Paul would then spend most of his efforts in Ephesus preaching the Good News to the Gentiles and building the church there. (see Acts 19-20:1)

In AD 57 while traveling back to Jerusalem, Paul met with the elders of the church in Ephesus briefly in the city of Miletus which was about 60 miles from Ephesus. Paul was in a hurry to get back to Jerusalem, but wanted to speak one last time with these people who were precious to him. Paul asked for their prayers as he headed to a future where the Holy Spirit had warned him there would be great hardship and imprisonment. (see Acts 20:16-38)

These commentaries were used to inform our historical context resources

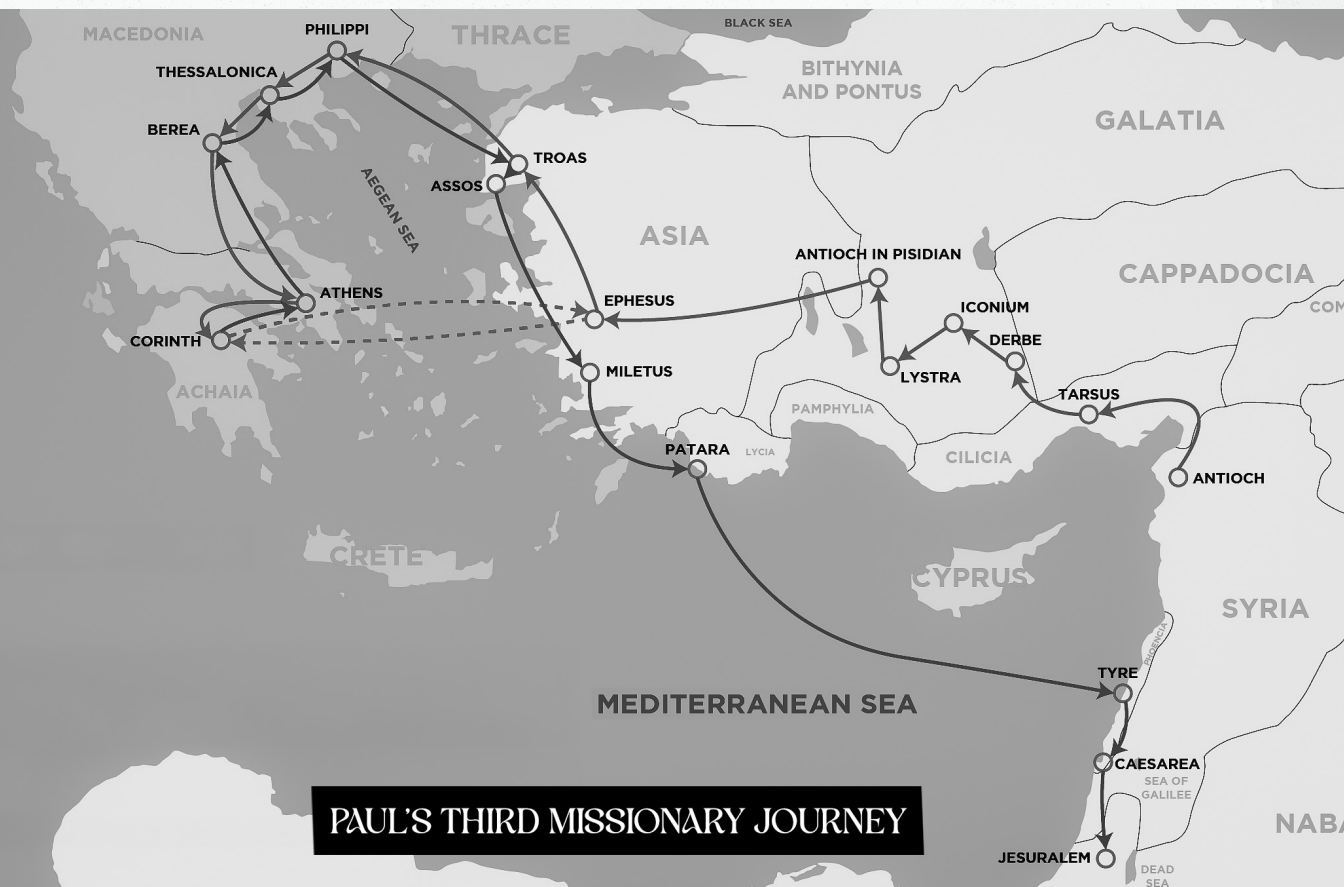
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APOSTLES, TEACHERS, AND PREACHERS

SAUL/PAUL

The Apostle Paul's Hebrew name is Saul. Saul had a rich Jewish lineage as he was a descendent of the tribe of Benjamin and had strong Hebrew ancestry. At a young age, Saul studied under a rabbi and soon mastered Jewish history and the Law of Moses. Saul went on to be a Pharisee and continued to be passionately devoted to his Jewish faith. After the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, a great move to persecute the church continued in Jerusalem with Saul in the middle of it. Saul became determined to persecute Christians and "began ravaging the church" (Acts 8:3), because of his zeal for the law and his fear of the followers of Jesus moving people away from Torah. Saul believed that he was doing the will of God by killing professing Christians.

In Acts 9:1-22, we see Saul's story take a pivotal turn because of his experience meeting Jesus on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus. Before this journey, Saul had received permission from the high priest to capture and imprison any Christians. On this journey, Jesus appeared to Saul saying, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." At this moment Saul was blinded and had his companions bring him to Damascus. In Damascus, Saul met with Ananias, and Ananias prayed for him. During this prayer, Saul received the Holy Spirit and regained his sight. He was then baptized and immediately began proclaiming Jesus as the Son of God. Saul once had the reputation of an evil man who persecuted Christians but now joined them in proclaiming the Good News. Jesus proclaimed Saul as "my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles and to kings, as well as the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Saul is first called "Paul" in Acts 13:9 signifying the

start of his ministry to the Gentile world by the use of his Greek and Roman name.

AQUILA AND PRISCILLA

Aquila and Priscilla were a married couple who fled from Rome to Corinth due to Roman persecution of Jews. In Corinth they pursued their trade as tentmakers. Paul, who also was a tentmaker for part of his ministry, heard of their faith and went to see them. Paul even lived with them during his time in Corinth. Eventually, Paul left for Ephesus and had Aquila and Priscilla join him. As Paul continued on his missionary journey, Aquila and Priscilla stayed in Ephesus and made it their new home. In Paul's second letter to Timothy, he mentions that Aquila and Priscilla are still working in the church, noting that they helped Apollos understand the gospel more fully.

APOLLOS

Apollos was a friend of Paul and an early church leader and preacher. Apollos was a Jew who was "mighty in the scriptures" (Acts 18:24). We find Apollos preaching in Ephesus in Acts 18:24-28. At this time, he did not have a full understanding of the gospel and only preached repentance and belief in the Messiah; he did not understand Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Aquila and Priscilla helped Apollos in his understanding of Jesus so that he could now preach the full message of the gospel. We know that Apollos arrived in Corinth after Paul had already planted a church there. However, because of the time Apollos spent in Corinth, the people disagreed about whether Apollos or Paul was their spiritual leader, which led to some conflict among the church. Apollos is also mentioned in the letter of Titus where Paul mentions that Apollos would be traveling to Crete, where Titus was ministering.

TIMOTHY

Timothy was born to a Greek father and a Jewish Christian mother (Acts 16:1). The faith of his mother and grandmother was formational for him. At a young age he became a companion and mentee of Paul's. Timothy joined Paul on some of his later journeys and was probably in his late teens or early twenties while they traveled together. Timothy served Paul in many ways, but eventually became a pastor in Ephesus. In his pastoral letters (1 & 2 Timothy), Paul instructed Timothy to correct false teachings and doctrine, appoint new leaders, and ultimately to lead the church.

JOHN

The Apostle John was one of Jesus' original twelve disciples and is believed to be the author of five New Testament books: The Gospel of John, the three short letters of 1, 2, and 3 John, and the book of Revelation. John was willing to serve and suffer for the sake of the gospel, which led to his exile to the Island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9). Writing over 30 years after Paul's letter to the Ephesians, John addressed the Church of Ephesus, calling them back to their first love (Revelation 2:1-7).

MAJOR CULTS IN EPHEBUS

CULT OF ARTEMIS

Artemis was worshiped throughout the Greek and Roman world, but was especially meaningful to the people in the region around Ephesus. The Temple of Artemis was located a little over a mile outside the city walls and was considered one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was four times the size of the Parthenon in Athens and had columns that stood sixty feet high.

In ancient mythology, Artemis was the twin sister of Apollo, born to Leto and Zeus. It was believed that Artemis was the founder and protector of the city of Ephesus. She was a virgin goddess, a divine huntress, and a fertility deity. Her titles were "Queen of Heaven," "Lord," and "Savior."

There were two major festivals held each year to honor Artemis. There were also two processions by her priests and devotees through the city each month. The wardens of the temple were a part of the city government, and the temple was a major banking center. Artemis' image was found on the city's legal tender. The worship of Artemis led to the Ephesians engaging in all kinds of occult-type practices and magic.

CULT OF CAESAR

The Cult of Caesar evolved from the Greek ruler cult. It was a tool used by city officials to demonstrate their loyalty to Rome. Members of the royal family were deified if they lived exemplary lives. Caesar was said to be their "Savior" and "Lord." In 29 BC the Ephesian city government declared Julius Caesar to be "god made manifest" and they built a temple for his worship. A generation after Paul's time in Ephesus, the city further embraced the imperial cult by building an even larger temple to Domitian to serve the entire region. Christians in this time faced major persecution because their belief was that Jesus is Lord, and if Jesus is Lord, then Caesar isn't.

EPHESIANS

PART ONE

Missions begins with identity

1 Greetings from Paul

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

2 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Spiritual Blessings

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. 4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. 6 So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. 7 He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. 8 He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. 10 And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. 11 Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance

from God,* for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

12 God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. 13 And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own* by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

PART TWO

Mission is powered by prayer

Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Wisdom

15 Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere,* 16 I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, 17 asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom* and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. 18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

19 I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power 20 that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. 21 Now he is far above any ruler or authority

or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. 22 God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. 23 And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

PART THREE

Mission is dependent on grace

2 Made Alive with Christ

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world.* He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.

4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) 6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. 7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a

reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

PART FOUR

Mission is about unity and reconciliation through the cross

Oneness and Peace in Christ

11 Don’t forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called “uncircumcised heathens” by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. 12 In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. 13 But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

14 For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. 15 He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. 16 Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

17 He brought this Good News of peace to

you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near.

18 Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

PART FIVE

Mission requires God's presence

A Temple for the Lord

19 So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. 20 Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. 21 We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. 22 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

PART SIX

Suffering must be seen through the lens of God's mission

3 God's Mysterious Plan Revealed

When I think of all this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of you Gentiles* ... 2 assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles. 3 As I briefly wrote earlier, God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me. 4 As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. 5 God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets.

6 And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's

children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.* 7 By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

8 Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. 9 I was chosen to explain to everyone* this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

PART SEVEN

Mission is lived out in public

10 God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

12 Because of Christ and our faith in him,* we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. 13 So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.

PART EIGHT

Mission is activated through prayer

Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Growth

14 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father,* 15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.* 16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. 17 Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into

God's love and keep you strong. 18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. 19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. 21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

PART NINE

Mission includes relational unity in the church

4 Unity in the Body

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. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. 4 For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. 5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

PART TEN

Mission requires that every member builds up the church with their spiritual gifts

7 However, he has given each one of us a special gift* through the generosity of Christ. 8 That is why the Scriptures say,

"When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people."*

9 Notice that it says "he ascended." This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world.* 10 And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

11 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. 12 Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. 13 This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. 15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. 16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

PART ELEVEN

Mission is motivated by inner transformation

Living as Children of Light

17 With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. 18 Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life

God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. 19 They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that isn't what you learned about Christ. 21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, 22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. 23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. 24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

25 So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. 26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you."^{*} Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

28 If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. 29 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own,^{*} guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

5 Living in the Light

Imitate God, therefore, in everything

you do, because you are his dear children. 2 Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us^{*} and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

3 Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. 4 Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. 5 You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.

6 Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. 7 Don't participate in the things these people do. 8 For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! 9 For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

10 Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. 11 Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. 12 It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. 13 But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, 14 for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said,

"Awake, O sleeper,
rise up from the dead,
and Christ will give you light."

PART TWELVE

The Spirit empowers the mission in everyday life

Living by the Spirit's Power

15 So be careful how you live. Don't live like

fools, but like those who are wise. 16 Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. 17 Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. 18 Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit, 19 singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. 20 And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Spirit-Guided Relationships: Wives and Husbands

21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

22 For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her 26 to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word.* 27 He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. 28 In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. 30 And we are members of his body.

31 As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."** 32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration

of the way Christ and the church are one. 33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

6 Children and Parents

Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord,* for this is the right thing to do. 2 "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise: 3 If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth."*

4 Fathers,* do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

Slaves and Masters

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. 6 Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. 7 Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. 8 Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

9 Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.

PART THIRTEEN

Mission is constantly under spiritual attack

The Whole Armor of God

10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm

against all strategies of the devil. 12 For we* are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. 14 Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. 15 For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared.* 16 In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.* 17 Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

18 Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

19 And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike.* 20 I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

Final Greetings

21 To bring you up to date, Tychicus will give you a full report about what I am doing and how I am getting along. He is a beloved brother and faithful helper in the Lord's work. 22 I have sent him to you for this very purpose—to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you.

23 Peace be with you, dear brothers and sisters,* and may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you love with faithfulness. 24 May God's grace be eternally upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

For a full visual overview of the book of Ephesians, scan the QR code.





WEEK ONE

EPHESIANS 1:1-2

1 This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ* Jesus.

I am writing to God's holy* people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

2 May God our Father and the Lord* Jesus Christ give you grace* and peace.

REFLECT

1. Read about the Apostle Paul and Ephesus on page 6.

2. How does Paul describe himself and the people he's writing to?

SERMON NOTES

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TWO

EPHESIANS 1:3-4

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord* Jesus Christ*, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms* because we are united with Christ. **4** Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy* and without fault in his eyes.

REFLECT

List the actions of God in the passage.

Compare Paul's introductions of Galatians, Philippians, and Colossians with Ephesians. Note Paul's greeting, themes, tone, and opening emphasis. How does Ephesians stand apart from the others?

SERMON NOTES

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK THREE

EPHESIANS 1:5-6

5 God decided in advance to adopt* us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ*.

This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. **6** So we praise God for the glorious grace* he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son.

REFLECT

How did our adoption occur?

Read Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:5-7. Write down your observations about being adopted into God's family.

SERMON NOTES

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK FOUR

EPHESIANS 1:7-8

7 He is so rich in kindness and grace* that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. **8** He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.



REFLECT

What did the blood of Jesus accomplish?

What do these verses tell us about God?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK FIVE

EPHESIANS 1:9-12

9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ*—which is to fulfill his own good plan. **10** And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. **11** Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan. **12** God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God.

REFLECT

Write out God's plan in your own words.

What do we receive as a result of being united with Christ?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK SIX

EPHESIANS 1:13-14

13 And now you Gentiles* have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ*, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit*, whom he promised long ago. **14** The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance* he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.



REFLECT

What is the Good News?

Read 1 Peter 1:4. What does the Holy Spirit guarantee for us?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK SEVEN

EPHESIANS 1:15-17

15 Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord* Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, **16** I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, **17** asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God.

REFLECT

What did Paul hear about the Ephesians?

What was Paul's prayer for the Ephesians?

WEEK EIGHT

EPHESIANS 1:18-20

18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy* people who are his rich and glorious inheritance*. **19** I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power **20** that raised Christ* from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms*.

REFLECT

Summarize what Paul is praying for.

What does the power of God accomplish?

WEEK NINE

EPHESIANS 1:20b-23

This is the same mighty power **20** that raised Christ* from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms*. **21** Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. **22** God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. **23** And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with



REFLECT

What are worldly and supernatural powers and authorities that Christ is above?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-28. What does it mean to be the body of Christ?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TEN

EPHESIANS 2:1-7

1 Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins.

2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. **3** All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.

4 But God is so rich in mercy*, and he loved us so much, **5** that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ* from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace* that you have been saved!) **6** For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms* because we are united with Christ Jesus. **7** So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

REFLECT

What kind of contrast between life and death do we see in the text?

Look up the definition of mercy in the glossary on page 91. What does it mean to be rich in mercy?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK ELEVEN

EPHESIANS 2:8-10

8 God saved you by his grace* when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. **9** Salvation* is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. **10** For we are God's masterpiece*. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus*, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

REFLECT

Look up the definition of grace in the glossary on page 90. What does it mean to be saved by grace?

Why do we have no reason to boast about our salvation?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TWELVE

EPHESIANS 2:11-18

11 Don't forget that you Gentiles* used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens*" by the Jews*, who were proud of their circumcision*, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. **12** In those days you were living apart from Christ*. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant* promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. **13** But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

14 For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. **15** He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. **16** Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

17 He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. **18** Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit* because of what Christ has done for us.



REFLECT

How does the "Good News" bring people together?

What can humanity now do because of what Christ has done for us?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK THIRTEEN

EPHESIANS 2:19-22

19 So now you Gentiles* are no longer strangers and foreigners.

You are citizens along with all of God's holy* people. You are members of God's family. **20** Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles* and the prophets*. And the cornerstone* is Christ* Jesus himself. **21** We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord*.

22 Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit*.



REFLECT

What is the significance of Jesus as the cornerstone?

What's the difference between being a foreigner and a citizen?

WEEK FOURTEEN

EPHESIANS 3:1-9

1 When I think of all this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ* Jesus for the benefit of you Gentiles . . . **2** assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace* to you Gentiles*. **3** As I briefly wrote earlier, God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me. **4** As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. **5** God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit* he has revealed it to his holy* apostles* and prophets*.

6 And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews* who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus. **7** By God's grace* and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

8 Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles* about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. **9** I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

REFLECT

Read Acts 9:1-18. What stands out to you about the conversion experience of Saul/Paul?

Why was it a privilege for Paul to serve?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK FIFTEEN

EPHESIANS 3:10-13

10 God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places*. **11** This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ* Jesus our Lord*.

12 Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. **13** So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.

REFLECT

How does the church display God's wisdom?

Read 1 Corinthians 4:9-13 and 2 Corinthians 11:24-29. Summarize the suffering Paul is referring to as he carried out his apostolic mission.

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK SIXTEEN

EPHESIANS 3:14-16

14 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, **15** the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. **16** I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit*.



REFLECT

What does the Holy Spirit do for the believer?

What does "When I think of all this..." refer to?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK SEVENTEEN

EPHESIANS 3:17-18

17 Then Christ* will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. **18** And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.

REFLECT

What do we have to do for Jesus to make His home in our hearts?

Listen and reflect on the song, "How Deep the Father's Love for Us."

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK EIGHTEEN

EPHESIANS 3:19-21

19 May you experience the love of Christ*, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. **21** Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.



REFLECT

Why do we say "amen" at the end of prayers?

What do we have to experience in order to be *"complete with all the fullness of life and power?"*

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK NINETEEN

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

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.

2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.

3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit*, binding yourselves together with peace. **4** For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.

5 There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all.

REFLECT

When you see a *"therefore"* in scripture you need to look at what comes before. What leads us into this week's passage?

List the characteristics of a "life worthy of your calling."

WEEK TWENTY

EPHESIANS 4:7-10

7 However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ*. **8** That is why the Scriptures say, “When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people.”

9 Notice that it says “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. **10** And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.

REFLECT

Read 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12:3-8. How are spiritual gifts related to unity in the church?

Paul quotes a portion of Psalm 68 in verse 8. How is this Psalm related to Paul’s use of it here?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TWENTY ONE

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

11 Now these are the gifts Christ* gave to the church: the apostles*, the prophets*, the evangelists*, and the pastors* and teachers*. **12** Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. **13** This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord*, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. **15** Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

16 He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

REFLECT

How does the church move towards maturity?

According to this passage, what is Paul saying the purpose of Christian community is?

WEEK TWENTY TWO

EPHESIANS 4:17-24

17 With the Lord's* authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles* do, for they are hopelessly confused. **18** Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. **19** They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.

20 But that isn't what you learned about Christ*. **21** Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, **22** throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. **23** Instead, let the Spirit* renew your thoughts and attitudes. **24** Put on your new nature*, created to be like God—truly righteous* and holy*.

REFLECT

Read about The Temple of Artemis and The Cult of Caesar on page 9. How did these local religions close their minds and harden the people's hearts?

Compare and contrast the "old sinful life" vs our "new nature."

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TWENTY THREE

EPHESIANS 4:25-32

25 So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. **26** And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, **27** for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

28 If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. **29** Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

30 And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit* by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. **32** Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ* has forgiven you.

REFLECT

What are we supposed to remove from our lives as followers of Jesus?

What are we supposed to add to our lives as followers of Jesus?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TWENTY FOUR

EPHESIANS 5:1-6

1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. **2** Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ*. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

3 Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. **4** Obscene* stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. **5** You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater*, worshiping the things of this world.

6 Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him.



REFLECT

Why does Paul call a greedy person an idolater?

What does it look like to imitate God like a child would imitate a parent?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TWENTY FIVE

EPHESIANS 5:7-14

7 Don't participate in the things these people do. **8** For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord*. So live as people of light! **9** For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

10 Carefully determine what pleases the Lord*. **11** Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. **12** It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. **13** But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, **14** for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said,

"Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ* will give you light."

REFLECT

Why is sin equated with darkness, and righteousness with light?

How do we "carefully determine what pleases the Lord?"

SERMON NOTES

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TWENTY SIX

EPHESIANS 5:15-21

15 So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. **16** Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. **17** Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord* wants you to do. **18** Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit*, **19** singing psalms* and hymns* and spiritual songs* among yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. **20** And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **21** And further, submit* to one another out of reverence* for Christ.



REFLECT

What does it look like to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ?

Compare and contrast the foolish and wise life.

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TWENTY SEVEN

EPHESIANS 5:22-33

22 For wives, this means submit* to your husbands as to the Lord*. **23** For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ* is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. **24** As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her **26** to make her holy* and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. **27** He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. **28** In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. **29** No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. **30** And we are members of his body.

to his wife, and the two are united into one." **32** This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. **33** So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.



REFLECT

How did Paul redefine the ancient household codes?

What does Jesus do for the church, and how does that compare to what a husband should do for his wife? What about the wife for her husband?

SERMON NOTES

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TWENTY EIGHT

EPHESIANS 6:1-4

1 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord*, for this is the right thing to do. **2** "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise: **3** If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth."

4 Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.

REFLECT

What is the benefit of honoring your parents?

What is Paul's challenge for fathers?

SERMON NOTES

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK TWENTY NINE

EPHESIANS 6:5-9

5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ*. **6** Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. **7** Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord* rather than for people. **8** Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

9 Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.



REFLECT

What's the difference between an ancient Roman and modern American understanding of slavery?

How does Christ transform the slave/master relationship?

SERMON NOTES

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK THIRTY

EPHESIANS 6:10-14

10 A final word: Be strong in the Lord* and in his mighty power.

11 Put on all of God's armor* so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. **12** For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places*.

13 Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor* so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. **14** Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth.



REFLECT

After reading the article, what does the Bible have to say about where truth comes from?

Based on what you know about Ephesus, why is this Paul's final word?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK THIRTY ONE

EPHESIANS 6:14b

14b the body armor of God's righteousness*. **15** For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. **16** In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. **17** Put on salvation* as your helmet and take the sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God.



REFLECT

Look up the definition of righteousness in the glossary on page 92. How have you experienced personal integrity and ethical actions in your life?

What part of the body does righteousness protect?

SERMON NOTES

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK THIRTY TWO

EPHESIANS 6:15

14b the body armor of God's righteousness*. **15** For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. **16** In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. **17** Put on salvation* as your helmet and take the sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God.



REFLECT

What does the Good News bring the believer?

What is the significance of the Good News being related to shoes?
(see Rom. 10:14-15)

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK THIRTY THREE

EPHESIANS 6:16

14b the body armor of God's righteousness*. **15** For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. **16** In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. **17** Put on salvation* as your helmet and take the sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God.



REFLECT

Read Hebrews 11. What stands out to you about the faithfulness of these characters?

How does faith protect us from the "fiery arrows of the devil?"

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK THIRTY FOUR

EPHESIANS 6:17a

14b the body armor of God's righteousness*. **15** For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. **16** In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. **17** Put on salvation* as your helmet and take the sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God.



REFLECT

What does the assurance of our salvation protect?

Read Romans 12:1-2. How does God change the way we think?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK THIRTY FIVE

EPHESIANS 6:17b

14b the body armor of God's righteousness*. **15** For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. **16** In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. **17** Put on salvation* as your helmet and take the sword of the Spirit*, which is the word of God.



REFLECT

Why is the Word of God the only offensive weapon for the believer?
(see Matthew 4:1-11)

Read Hebrews 4:12-13. What does God's Word do?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

WEEK THIRTY SIX

EPHESIANS 6:18-24

18 Pray in the Spirit* at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.

19 And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews* and Gentiles* alike. **20** I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador*. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

21 To bring you up to date, Tychicus will give you a full report about what I am doing and how I am getting along. He is a beloved brother and faithful helper in the Lord's* work. **22** I have sent him to you for this very purpose—to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you.

23 Peace be with you, dear brothers and sisters, and may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* give you love with faithfulness. **24** May God's grace* be eternally upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

REFLECT

What is the role of an ambassador (see 2 Corinthians 5:20)?

What are the things that Paul prays for and asks the Ephesians to pray about to close the letter?

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Based on the text and teaching, what did God say to you and what are you going to do about it?

GLOSSARY OF NLT TERMS

Adoption (1:5) - the legal and relational act of bringing an outsider into a family to enjoy full rights and privileges. The Bible primarily uses adoption as a powerful metaphor to explain salvation and our relationship with God.

Ambassador (6:20) - an official messenger or authorized representative sent by a sovereign, king, or government to act on their behalf.

Apostle (1:1; 2:20; 3:5; 4:11) - one who is sent out or an ambassador. Derived from the Greek word *apostolos*, the term primarily refers to the foundational leaders of the early Christian church who were personally commissioned by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel and establish the faith.

Calling (1:18; 4:1,4) - a divine summons or invitation. It is primarily not about a career, but about God personally choosing and inviting individuals into a restored relationship with Himself, transforming their character, and deploying them on a specific mission.

Circumcision (2:11) - primarily signifies a sacred, lifelong covenant between God and His people. This covenant was sealed by removing the foreskin from a male's genitals.

Christ (1:1-5,9-13;17,20,22-23; 2:5-7;10,12-14,16,20; 3:1,3,6,8,11-12,17,19,21; 4:7,9,11-13,15,20,31; 5:1,5,14,20-21,23-25,29,32; 6:5-6,23-24) - not a surname but a title. Derived from the Greek word *Christos*, it means "the anointed one". It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word *Messiah*.

Cornerstone (2:20) - symbolizes Jesus Christ and His foundational role in the Christian faith. Just as ancient builders laid a precious stone to align, bear the

weight of, and support an entire structure, Jesus is presented as the unshakeable foundation upon which the Church is built.

Covenant (2:12) - a binding, sacred agreement or partnership between God and humanity. Unlike a modern legal contract, which is purely transactional, a biblical covenant establishes a lifelong relational bond. It outlines mutual commitments, promises, and blessings, often sealed with an oath.

Evangelist (4:11) - a proclaimer of the "good news" (gospel) of Jesus Christ. Derived from the Greek word *euangelistes* (meaning "a bringer of good tidings"), it refers to a missionary or preacher whose primary mission is to spread the message of salvation and make new converts.

Gentiles/"Uncircumcised Heathens" (1:13; 2:11,14-15,17,19,22; 3:1-2,6,8; 4:17; 6:19) - any person who is not of Jewish heritage or part of the ancient nation of Israel. The term simply means "non-Jew" or "the nations."

Grace (1:2,6-7; 2:5,7-8; 3:2,7; 6:24) - the unmerited, undeserved favor of God. It is His free gift of love, forgiveness, and salvation, given to humanity despite our imperfections.

God's armor (6:11,13) - a metaphor in the Bible found in Ephesians 6:10-18. Written by the Apostle Paul, it describes the spiritual defenses and weapons believers must "put on" to resist temptation and navigate spiritual struggles.

Heavenly Realms/Places (1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) - the invisible, spiritual dimension where God, angels, and spiritual beings reside. It is not a distant sky, but an active,

unseen world that exists alongside our physical reality and directly influences it.

Holy (1:1; 4:18; 2:19,21; 3:5; 4:24; 5:26-27) - “set apart” for a sacred purpose, and absolute moral purity. It describes God’s total “otherness” and perfection, as well as people, places, or objects consecrated for His worship.

Holy Spirit (1:13-14; 2:18,22; 3:5,16; 4:3-4,23,30; 5:18; 6:17,18) - the third person of the Trinity (along with God the Father and Jesus the Son). The divine, active presence of God in the world, who empowers believers, convicts humanity of sin, and reveals God’s truth.

Hymns (5:19) - a religious song, poem, or chant specifically composed to offer praise, worship, and adoration to God.

Idolater (5:5) - someone who worships, serves, or places ultimate trust in anything other than the one true God. The practice, called idolatry, is viewed as a major offense and a betrayal of God’s command to be the sole object of humanity’s love and devotion.

Inheritance/First Installment/Pledge (1:11,14,18) - means much more than passing down physical property. While it encompasses historical land laws, it primarily represents a profound spiritual reality: God’s eternal promises, His blessings, and the ultimate gift of eternal life that believers receive as His children.

Jews (1:12; 2:11,14-15,17; 3:6; 6:19) - the descendants of the ancient Israelites, chosen by God to be in a sacred covenant. Tracing their lineage from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they are defined by their distinct ethnic origins, religious laws, and the historical records found in the Old Testament.

Lord (1:2-3,15,17; 2:21; 3:11; 4:1,5,13,17; 5:8,10,17,19-20,22; 6:1,4,7-8,10,21,23,24) - a

title of respect, authority, and ownership. Depending on how it appears in your English translation, it specifically refers to human rulers, God, or Jesus Christ.

Masterpiece/Craftsmanship (2:10) - a deliberate, artful creation crafted with divine skill. It emphasizes that believers are lovingly fashioned by God’s hands and designed with a specific purpose to do good works.

Mercy (2:4) - a divine attribute defined as the compassionate, undeserved kindness of God. It is most simply summarized as not receiving the punishment or condemnation that one’s sins rightfully deserve.

New nature/self (4:24) - the transformed spiritual identity given to a believer at salvation. It represents a profound spiritual rebirth, empowering individuals to move away from sinful human nature and live righteously in the image of God.

Obscene (5:4) - generally refers to “filthy language,” crude joking, or sexually immoral behavior rather than modern profanity. Rather than specific “swear words,” the scriptures condemn speech that degrades others, incites lust, or is devoid of moral goodness.

Pastor (4:11) - a spiritual shepherd who leads, feeds, and protects a local congregation. The word literally translates to “shepherd”. Biblically, this role is functionally the same as an “elder” or “overseer,” serving to guide believers in their faith and equip them for ministry.

Prophet (2:20; 3:5; 4:11) - a person chosen by God to serve as His spokesperson. Their primary role is “forthtelling”—speaking God’s truth, calling people to repentance, and denouncing injustice—rather than just predicting the future. Though Prophets sometimes do tell the future.

Psalms (5:19) - *an ancient sacred song, poem, or prayer designed to be used in worship.*

Reverence (5:21) - *a deep heart posture of profound awe, respect, love, and honor toward God. It is often expressed as the “fear of the Lord”—not a terrified dread, but a reverent awe of His supreme holiness, majesty, and authority.*

Righteousness (4:24; 6:14) - *the state of being in “right relationship” with God and others, aligning your life with His perfect moral character and justice. It involves both personal integrity (inward character) and ethical actions (treating others fairly).*

Salvation (2:9; 6:17) - *deliverance or rescue. It encompasses rescue from physical danger and, most centrally, liberation from sin, spiritual death, and God’s judgment. Through Jesus Christ, it signifies forgiveness and the restoration of a right relationship with God.*

Spiritual songs (5:19) - *Spirit-inspired expressions of faith, praise, and testimony.*

Submit/Submission (5:21-22,24) - *a voluntary, loving surrender to God’s authority and a willingness to honor the leadership of others. It is framed as an act of humility and trust, rather than a sign of weakness or inferiority.*

Teacher (4:11) - *an instructor of God’s truth, tasked with helping believers grow in spiritual maturity, understanding, and obedience. In the New Testament, the Greek word for teacher is didaskalos, and the role is deeply respected, foundational to church health, and gifted by the Holy Spirit.*

GLOSSARY TERMS

Versions other than NLT

Administration (3:2) - *the wise stewardship, organization, and guidance*

of resources and people to accomplish God’s purposes.

Predestination (1:5 & 11) - *God’s sovereign plan to determine certain events and destinies before the creation of the world. Derived from the Greek word proorizo (meaning to “determine beforehand” or “ordain”).*

Redemption (1:7) - *to “buy back” or restore something lost, typically by paying a price. Spiritually, it refers to God’s act of delivering humanity from the bondage of sin and death through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ.*

Revelation (1:17) - *refers to God’s supernatural disclosure of Himself, His will, and His divine truths to humanity. It means “unveiling” or “pulling back the covers” to reveal things that were previously hidden or unknown.*

Saints (1:1) - *any person who has put their faith in Jesus Christ. Rather than referring exclusively to deceased, exceptionally holy heroes, the biblical term means “a holy one” or one who is “set apart” by God for His purposes.*

Seal(ed) (1:13) - *an identifying mark or impression—often made with hot wax and a signet ring—that guarantees security, signifies ownership, and indicates authenticity. Metaphorically, it represents God permanently marking, protecting, and guaranteeing the eternal salvation of believers through the Holy Spirit.*

Wrath (2:3) - *refers to God’s righteous, just, and holy response to sin, evil, and injustice. Unlike unpredictable human rage, divine wrath is the deliberate and necessary consequence of a perfect God resisting whatever corrupts or destroys His creation.*



EPHESUS IN SCRIPTURE

ACTS 18:18-28

18 Paul stayed in Corinth for some time after that, then said good-bye to the brothers and sisters and went to nearby Cenchrea. There he shaved his head according to Jewish custom, marking the end of a vow. Then he set sail for Syria, taking Priscilla and Aquila with him.

19 They stopped first at the port of Ephesus, where Paul left the others behind. While he was there, he went to the synagogue to reason with the Jews.

20 They asked him to stay longer, but he declined. **21** As he left, however, he said, "I will come back later, God willing." Then he set sail from Ephesus. **22** The next stop was at the port of Caesarea. From there he went up and visited the church at Jerusalem and then went back to Antioch.

23 After spending some time in Antioch, Paul went back through Galatia and Phrygia, visiting and strengthening all the believers.

24 Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, an eloquent speaker who knew the Scriptures well, had arrived in Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt. **25** He had been taught the way of the Lord, and he taught others about Jesus with an enthusiastic spirit and with accuracy. However, he knew only about John's baptism. **26** When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.

27 Apollos had been thinking about going to Achaia, and the brothers and sisters in Ephesus encouraged him to go. They wrote to the believers in Achaia, asking them to welcome him. When he arrived there, he proved to be of great benefit to

those who, by God's grace, had believed.

28 He refuted the Jews with powerful arguments in public debate. Using the Scriptures, he explained to them that Jesus was the Messiah.

ACTS 19:1-41, 20:1

1 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior regions until he reached Ephesus, on the coast, where he found several believers. **2** "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them.

"No," they replied, "we haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."

3 "Then what baptism did you experience?" he asked.

And they replied, "The baptism of John."

4 Paul said, "John's baptism called for repentance from sin. But John himself told the people to believe in the one who would come later, meaning Jesus."

5 As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **6** Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied. **7** There were about twelve men in all.

8 Then Paul went to the synagogue and preached boldly for the next three months, arguing persuasively about the Kingdom of God. **9** But some became stubborn, rejecting his message and publicly speaking against the Way. So Paul left the synagogue and took the believers with him. Then he held daily discussions at the lecture hall of Tyrannus. **10** This went on for the next

two years, so that people throughout the province of Asia—both Jews and Greeks—heard the word of the Lord.

11 God gave Paul the power to perform unusual miracles. **12** When handkerchiefs or aprons that had merely touched his skin were placed on sick people, they were healed of their diseases, and evil spirits were expelled.

13 A group of Jews was traveling from town to town casting out evil spirits. They tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus in their incantation, saying, "I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, to come out!" **14** Seven sons of Sceva, a leading priest, were doing this. **15** But one time when they tried it, the evil spirit replied, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but who are you?" **16** Then the man with the evil spirit leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that they fled from the house, naked and battered.

17 The story of what happened spread quickly all through Ephesus, to Jews and Greeks alike. A solemn fear descended on the city, and the name of the Lord Jesus was greatly honored. **18** Many who became believers confessed their sinful practices. **19** A number of them who had been practicing sorcery brought their incantation books and burned them at a public bonfire. The value of the books was several million dollars. **20** So the message about the Lord spread widely and had a powerful effect.

21 Afterward Paul felt compelled by the Spirit to go over to Macedonia and Achaia before going to Jerusalem. "And after that," he said, "I must go on to Rome!" **22** He sent his two assistants, Timothy and Erastus, ahead to Macedonia while he stayed awhile longer in the province of Asia.

23 About that time, serious trouble developed in Ephesus concerning the Way. **24** It began with Demetrius, a silversmith who had a large business manufacturing silver shrines of the Greek goddess Artemis. He kept many craftsmen busy. **25** He called them together, along with others employed in similar trades, and addressed them as follows:

"Gentlemen, you know that our wealth comes from this business. **26** But as you have seen and heard, this man Paul has persuaded many people that handmade gods aren't really gods at all. And he's done this not only here in Ephesus but throughout the entire province! **27** Of course, I'm not just talking about the loss of public respect for our business. I'm also concerned that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will lose its influence and that Artemis—this magnificent goddess worshiped throughout the province of Asia and all around the world—will be robbed of her great prestige!"

28 At this their anger boiled, and they began shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" **29** Soon the whole city was filled with confusion. Everyone rushed to the amphitheater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, who were Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia. **30** Paul wanted to go in, too, but the believers wouldn't let him. **31** Some of the officials of the province, friends of Paul, also sent a message to him, begging him not to risk his life by entering the amphitheater.

32 Inside, the people were all shouting, some one thing and some another. Everything was in confusion. In fact, most of them didn't even know why they were there. **33** The Jews in the crowd pushed Alexander forward and told him to explain the situation. He motioned for silence and tried to speak. **34** But when

the crowd realized he was a Jew, they started shouting again and kept it up for about two hours: "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians! Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

35 At last the mayor was able to quiet them down enough to speak. "Citizens of Ephesus," he said. "Everyone knows that Ephesus is the official guardian of the temple of the great Artemis, whose image fell down to us from heaven. **36** Since this is an undeniable fact, you should stay calm and not do anything rash. **37** You have brought these men here, but they have stolen nothing from the temple and have not spoken against our goddess.

38 "If Demetrius and the craftsmen have a case against them, the courts are in session and the officials can hear the case at once. Let them make formal charges.

39 And if there are complaints about other matters, they can be settled in a legal assembly. **40** I am afraid we are in danger of being charged with rioting by the Roman government, since there is no cause for all this commotion. And if Rome demands an explanation, we won't know what to say." **41** Then he dismissed them, and they dispersed.

20:1 When the uproar was over, Paul sent for the believers and encouraged them. Then he said good-bye and left for Macedonia.

ACTS 20:16-38

16 Paul had decided to sail on past Ephesus, for he didn't want to spend any more time in the province of Asia. He was hurrying to get to Jerusalem, if possible, in time for the Festival of Pentecost. **17** But when we landed at Miletus, he sent a message to the elders of the church at Ephesus, asking them to come and meet him.

18 When they arrived he declared, "You know that from the day I set foot in the province of Asia until now **19** I have done the Lord's work humbly and with many tears. I have endured the trials that came to me from the plots of the Jews. **20** I never shrank back from telling you what you needed to hear, either publicly or in your homes. **21** I have had one message for Jews and Greeks alike—the necessity of repenting from sin and turning to God, and of having faith in our Lord Jesus.

22 "And now I am bound by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem. I don't know what awaits me, **23** except that the Holy Spirit tells me in city after city that jail and suffering lie ahead. **24** But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.

25 "And now I know that none of you to whom I have preached the Kingdom will ever see me again. **26** I declare today that I have been faithful. If anyone suffers eternal death, it's not my fault, **27** for I didn't shrink from declaring all that God wants you to know.

28 "So guard yourselves and God's people. Feed and shepherd God's flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as leaders. **29** I know that false teachers, like vicious wolves, will come in among you after I leave, not sparing the flock. **30** Even some men from your own group will rise up and distort the truth in order to draw a following. **31** Watch out! Remember the three years I was with you—my constant watch and care over you night and day, and my many tears for you.

32 "And now I entrust you to God and the message of his grace that is able to build you up and give you an inheritance with all those he has set apart for himself.

33 "I have never coveted anyone's silver or gold or fine clothes. **34** You know that these hands of mine have worked to supply my own needs and even the needs of those who were with me. **35** And I have been a constant example of how you can help those in need by working hard. You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

36 When he had finished speaking, he knelt and prayed with them. **37** They all cried as they embraced and kissed him good-bye. **38** They were sad most of all because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they escorted him down to the ship.

ACTS 21:29

(For earlier that day they had seen him in the city with Trophimus, a Gentile from Ephesus, and they assumed Paul had taken him into the Temple.)

1 CORINTHIANS 15:32

And what value was there in fighting wild beasts—those people of Ephesus—if there will be no resurrection from the dead? And if there is no resurrection, "Let's feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!"

1 CORINTHIANS 16:8-9

8 In the meantime, I will be staying here at Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost. **9** There is a wide-open door for a great work here, although many oppose me.

1 TIMOTHY 1:3

When I left for Macedonia, I urged you to stay there in Ephesus and stop those whose teaching is contrary to the truth.

2 TIMOTHY 1:18

May the Lord show him special kindness on the day of Christ's return. And you know very well how helpful he was in Ephesus.

REVELATION 1:11

It said, "Write in a book everything you see, and send it to the seven churches in the cities of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea."

REVELATION 2:1-7

1 "Write this letter to the angel of the church in Ephesus. This is the message from the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand, the one who walks among the seven gold lampstands:

2 "I know all the things you do. I have seen your hard work and your patient endurance. I know you don't tolerate evil people. You have examined the claims of those who say they are apostles but are not. You have discovered they are liars. **3** You have patiently suffered for me without quitting.

4 "But I have this complaint against you. You don't love me or each other as you did at first! **5** Look how far you have fallen! Turn back to me and do the works you did at first. If you don't repent, I will come and remove your lampstand from its place among the churches. **6** But this is in your favor: You hate the evil deeds of the Nicolaitans, just as I do.

7 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches. To everyone who is victorious I will give fruit from the tree of life in the paradise of God.



LIFEGROUP

STUDY TIPS

The primary purpose of engaging with Scripture is an encounter with God that leads to life transformation. We desire to fully interact with His Word and to understand its truth, apply it to our daily life, and be shaped by its divine power, which is given to instruct, convict, correct, and train us in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16). This journey of deeper application and lasting life change is realized when shared within the vital community of your LifeGroup.

We want the contents of this book to help you lead your LifeGroup in meaningful Bible study, discussion, and application of the book of Ephesians. This page is dedicated to helping you take a week's passage and couple it with the sermon in order to create a LifeGroup Bible study for the week. Beyond simply applying specific truths from Ephesians, following this

method for Bible study will help you and your LifeGroup members grow important skills in Bible reading and interpretation.

1. Pray that the Holy Spirit would help you in your Bible reading and that He would help illuminate areas of importance for you and your LifeGroup.
2. Read the passage for the week, watch/read any resources, and answer the observation questions
3. Listen to this week's sermon and take notes as you listen
4. Review the *Listen, Learn, Live* framework for personal study at **centralsf.org/ephesians**. Use the prompts on the next page to craft questions for your group discussion.



LISTEN

Between your observation questions, sermon notes, and the resources on the website, come up with 3-5 observational questions that will help you and your LifeGroup answer the question: "What is the passage saying?" Avoid application/reflection based questions at this point! Right now, we simply want to figure out what the author is trying to say. This will be easy in some passages and harder in others.

LEARN

After listening, now we want to see what this passage teaches us. You want to answer the question: "What does this passage mean?" Use sermon notes to ask what this passage says about God, humans, sin, Christian living, Jesus, or anything else that helps your LifeGroup discover the purpose of the passage. The goal of this section is to come up with a few questions for your LifeGroup to figure out what the author's intention is, or in other words, what Paul was trying to teach his Ephesian audience. At this stage, still avoid personal application. The goal is figuring out the objective meaning of the passage.

LIVE

The last step in Bible study is to live it. This is the section where we ask the question: "How does this passage affect the way you live?" In this book at the end of each 'Sermon Notes' page is the question: "What did God say to you and what will you do about it?" Remember that the goal of Bible study is to know God and allow Him to transform our lives. This is the section when you ask questions and consider how God is speaking to you through this passage and what areas of your life need transformation as a result. Discuss with your LifeGroup. Ask your LifeGroup this question and give space for everyone to share.

In addition to listen, learn, and live, each week we will post additional scriptures used in the sermon and a few questions for you to use online. For these resources, articles, and more go to:

centralsf.org/ephesians

Close in prayer for all that God is teaching you through this study and for the prayer requests of LifeGroup members.



FAMILY STUDY TIPS

Parents, any spiritual conversation with your children is a win. Your goal for this time is to be consistent and keep it simple. You are sowing seeds!

SET A TIME

Build a consistent time for your family to meet—after dinner, before bedtime, etc. With busy schedules, having a consistent time to meet matters more than meeting for long periods of time.

READ THE SCRIPTURE

Read the Scripture that was covered on Sunday. Even if you don't think that your children will understand fully what the Scripture means, over time, hearing Scripture will benefit their hearts.

Hebrews 4:12 says, *"For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit..."*

FIND THE MAIN POINT

Find the main point of the sermon and put it in your own words. Don't feel like you need to cover it all; one well-explained point is better than multiple points that they don't fully understand. Land on one thing to focus on for the week.

ASK QUESTIONS

If any questions came up in the sermon, ask those. Here are some additional questions you can ask about the passage.

What does this say about God?

What does this say about us?

What does this say about Jesus?

Is there a promise?

Is there a commandment?

MAKE IT PERSONAL

Connect the passage to your family's everyday life. This is where Scripture begins to move from their head to their heart.

What is a way that your family can live out this truth?

Is there someone you can forgive, show kindness to, love differently?

As a family, figure out how to connect and share the love of Jesus with your relational world. Find ways to connect with friends, teachers, coaches, teammates, etc.

PRAY

Pray through a few points that were covered during your time together, thank and praise God for all He's done, bring sins or convictions to the Lord that were brought up during your devotion time, and pray for the needs in your family.



KID CENTRAL

For additional content on Family Worship weekends, go to centralsf.org/ephesians

SERMON NOTES

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