

---

# EPHESIANS

## INTRODUCTION

The book of Ephesians is a letter (sometimes called an epistle) written by the apostle Paul to the church he planted in Ephesus. Prior to writing this letter, Paul journeyed to Ephesus and encountered some disciples who were baptized by John but did not really know about Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Paul explained the gospel to them and that one of Jesus' commands was to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They received this and Paul baptized them. Paul remained in Ephesus for a little over three years, and during that time he established a church and called his friend Timothy to pastor it.

We see these things from other books of the bible, primarily Acts (written by Luke – a firsthand account of the spread of Christianity and the rise of the early church), and we can construct an accurate timeline of Paul's journeys throughout the region. He went on several missionary journeys and wrote 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament as he did, all of them letters to either a specific church or a specific person, to address false teaching, encourage them, equip them, spur them on to good works, etc. – basically, he was teaching them how to be disciples of Jesus.

By extension, he is teaching US how to be disciples.

This letter is divided into two sections:

1. Chapters 1-3 focus on doctrine – what Christians should believe
2. Chapters 4-6 focus on practice – implications of this doctrine on how we should live

One thing to remember as we read this letter – Paul assumes that his readers are Christians, and the things that he calls them to can only be accomplished by God working in them. For example, Ephesians 5 is a fantastic chapter on marriage. But it has some hard truths in it that can only be understood in the context of a decidedly Christian marriage. I have seen non-Christians make fun of the advice Paul gives, and I have seen people who would call themselves Christian ignore parts of his advice that rub them the wrong way because they read it with the eyes of our modern, selfish, instant gratification culture.

Likewise, you cannot expect to succeed in applying the truth of Ephesians 5 in order to fulfill the design for marriage without being a disciple of Jesus and the working of the Holy Spirit in you.

Finally, as you read Ephesians, also remember that all of scripture is God speaking. Paul wrote this letter, but God inspired him to write it – Paul's words here are God's words as well. If Paul said it, God said it first. What you are reading are the very words of God, written 2000 years ago, to build up the Christians of that day.

They are just as valid for you now.

## CHAPTER 1

This letter is sometimes called “Romans lite” because it contains similar ideas and truths that Paul explains in detail in his letter to the church at Rome, but on a smaller scale. In the first chapter, Paul explains who we are in Christ, what God has done to put us there, what we gain because of it, and why we should be so thankful.

As you work through these questions, it is my prayer that you find your identity, not in the things of this world (jobs, money, status, things, relationships) that will fade, but in Jesus who promised to be with His people forever!

Also be prepared to go all over scripture. Even though the bible is made up of 66 books, it tells one story...not one part of scripture disagrees with any other part, and we’ll see that Paul repeats thoughts and teachings a number of times throughout Ephesians and his other epistles. And, since he was so familiar with the Old Testament (he was a Pharisee after all), he also explains those writings in the context of a Messiah, Jesus, who has already come.

So, here goes. Please don’t wait until Tuesday night or Wednesday afternoon to work through these. There are a ton of awesome applications and truths in Ephesians, and I’d love to see you all spend time each night working through these in prayer.

1. Paul calls himself an *apostle*. Look up that word and define it. Do you think that there are apostles in the church today?
2. How does Paul say that he became an apostle?
  - a. What does this tell you about the office of *apostle*?
  - b. What does this tell you about God? (also read Isaiah 46:8-11)
  - c. How does knowing this about God give you comfort? Concern?
3. Who did Paul write this letter to?
  - a. Paul uses the word *saints* to address the people he is writing to. How have you defined this word in the past? How does Paul define this word?
  - b. Paul uses the word *faithful* to describe them, what things does that word bring to your mind? Would you consider yourself faithful? To what or whom?
  - c. How does Paul describe their faithfulness? Is your faithfulness like theirs?
4. According to Paul, what is the source of *grace* and *peace*? What is *grace*? What is *peace*? Why are grace and peace so necessary for you?
  - a. Read the following passages to get some helpful insight into these terms:
    - i. Peace: Luke 2:8-14, Psalm 4, Isaiah 9:1-7, John 14:25-31
    - ii. Grace: John 1:14-18, 1 Corinthians 15:3-11, Romans 11:1-6
  - b. If you had a private investigator review your life from afar for a week, would they describe your life with words like *grace* and *peace* (either relying on *grace* and *peace* or extending *grace* and *peace*)?
5. In verse 3, Paul calls us blessed if we satisfy one condition – “who has blessed us ...”
  - a. Who are the ones who are blessed? What are they blessed with?
  - b. What does it mean to be “in Christ”?
6. In verses 4-10, Paul describes how a person becomes a Christian, and he uses some pretty “big” words to do it.
  - a. *chosen* – What does it mean to be chosen? When were Christians chosen? Why were Christians chosen? What comfort could this give you? (also read 1 Peter 2:1-9, 1 Thessalonians 1:2-5, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

- b. *predestined* – What does it mean to be predestined? (you can use a dictionary to look it up) God predestines *in love* – do you find that encouraging? (read Acts 4:23-30, Romans 8:28-39)
  - c. *adoption* – God predestined us for adoption according to His will. I love that picture. What does the word *adoption* bring to your mind? What does that show you about God’s love for His people? Since we need to be adopted *into* God’s family, what does that tell you about where we are before God adopts someone? What does this do to the common saying “everyone is a child of God?”
  - d. Who is the *Beloved*? Why should we sing His praises?
  - e. *redemption* – all of this results in redemption. What does it mean for something to be redeemed? Who redeems us? How? What does redemption accomplish for us?
  - f. *purpose* – God’s will and God’s purpose often refer to the same thing – whatever God purposes, He does, whatever He wills, He accomplishes. Does it bring you comfort knowing this about God? (Reread Acts 4:23-30 to see how the early disciples reacted to this truth) What must be true about God in order for you to be comforted by the fact that He does whatever He wants, whenever He wants, with whomever and to whomever He wants, for any reason He wants?
7. In verses 11-14, Paul gives us great hope as we are identified, not by our striving, but by Jesus.
- a. What have we obtained? (read 1 Peter 1:3-5)
  - b. Who is our inheritance sealed with?
  - c. Do you think you can lose this inheritance?
  - d. What is required in order to be sealed?
8. In verse 13, Paul uses the phrase “the gospel of your salvation.” The word *gospel* literally means “good news” and proclaims that God has sent the Savior, Jesus, to a people who were enslaved to sin, and at war with Him. Instead of wiping them out, which He would have been totally justified in doing, He offers *mercy* (not giving us the penalty that we deserve) to those whom He has chosen to receive it, with the purpose of rescuing them from their bondage to sin and death and giving them eternal life. This is only possible through Jesus, not by anything we can do or say or earn.

**Acts 4:5–12 (5)** On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, **(6)** with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. **(7)** And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” **(8)** Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers of the people and elders, **(9)** if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, **(10)** let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by him this man is standing before you well. **(11)** This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. **(12)** And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” **(ESV)**

Do you believe this “good news”? Have you received this gift? Is the inheritance yours?

**Romans 4:1–8 (1)** What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? **(2)** For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. **(3)** For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” **(4)** Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. **(5)** And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, **(6)** just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: **(7)** “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,

and whose sins are covered; **(8)** blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”  
**(ESV)**

9. All of this causes Paul to praise God in verses 15-23. And even in his praying, he teaches us things about God.
  - a. In verse 15, what does Paul commend the Christians in Ephesus for?
  - b. In verse 16, who does Paul thank? Why?
  - c. What do verses 15 and 16 tell us about how we are to see each other?
  - d. In verses 17-19, Paul reminds us that we can't expect to walk this walk alone – we'll fail. Who is our primary help? What does He give to us? Why?
  - e. In this section, Paul is calling us to remember things about what God has done for us. What specifically does He mention? Looking back on your life, what are some things that you personally can remember God doing for you, showing you, working things for you, saving you from trouble, etc.? How can remembering these things help you face the future?
10. Write down some of the ways Paul describes God in verses 15-23.
11. In verses 22 and 23, Paul gives us all the hope we could ever need by writing:

**Ephesians 1:22–23 (22)** And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, **(23)** which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. **(ESV)**

Who is the “he” Paul is referring to? What does “all things” refer to? To whom is “he” given? Does it bring you comfort that this “he” is your head?

12. Finally, write down some things you learned about God and about yourself from Ephesians 1. Write down anything that you'd like to hear more about or understand better. Write down anything that brought you comfort, joy, peace, hope. Also write down things that concerned you, confused you, or alarmed you.

As we work through this together, my prayer for you all is something that Paul also wrote:

**Philippians 4:4–9 (4)** Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. **(5)** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **(6)** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **(7)** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **(8)** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **(9)** What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. **(ESV)**