

# Ephesians

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## 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.

## Ephesians 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)*

## Ephesians 2:1-10

In chapter 2, Paul reminds his readers (remember, he assumes that they are Christian), who they *once* were, and the implications of that for them both because of their sin and because of their Christ. This chapter can be offensive to modern people because we tend to think that people are generally good. This chapter kills that idea. People are not basically good, people are basically dead. And there is only one way to become alive again.

Paul, even in proclaiming our *deadness*, also gives us hope that there is a way out. He often uses the word *once* to remind believers that we were *once* one way *but now* are another way. *Once* dead, *but now* alive. *Once* lost, *but now* found. *Once* enslaved to sin, *but now* free from bondage to sin.

And there is hope because Jesus holds the keys to life and death, to heaven and hell, and we, if we are “in Him”, He has raised us to life and has broken the chains that enslave us to the sin we hold so dear!

**Revelation 1:17–18 (17)** *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand on me, saying, “Fear not, I am the first and the last, (18) and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades. (ESV)*

1. In verse 1, Paul calls us dead in our trespasses and sins
  - a. What image does this conjure up in your thoughts?
  - b. In Romans 6, Paul describes this death:

**Romans 6:23 (23)** *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (ESV)*

- i. What is a wage? When Paul says “the wages of sin is death”, what do you suppose he means?
    - ii. What kinds of sin does he include as the wages resulting in death?
  - c. Define *trespass*.
    - i. What does Paul’s use of that word here imply about our sin? Who do we *trespass* against in our sin?
  - d. So, we are dead in our sin, what do dead people do? Are people “sort of” dead, “mostly” dead, or “dead dead”? Do you know anyone who is “sort of” or “mostly” dead?
    - i. How can that be if we are still walking, talking, and breathing? What kind of death do you think Paul is describing? (Read Romans 8:5-8; 1 Corinthians 2:14)
  - e. According to Paul, a person is either *alive* or *dead*, there is no middle ground. I have heard people, even Christians say things like “we aren’t *that* dead...” or “we aren’t so dead that...”. God would clearly disagree.
2. In verse 2, Paul reminds his readers what they *once* did
  - a. Paul says “in which you *once* walked”. How do we “walk” in our trespasses and sins?
  - b. What road do we walk that leads to this sin?
  - c. Who is the power on that road that leads us into sin? (See John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:4)

- d. Where does he work?
  - e. Paul uses the phrase “sons of disobedience” – to whom are the sons disobedient?
  - f. How does Paul’s use of the word *once* give you hope?
- 3. In verse 3, Paul reminds his readers where they *once* were
  - a. Where did we all *once* live (with whom did we *once* live)?
  - b. When we lived with them, what did we do?
  - c. How did we think?
  - d. Paul lists things describing the depth of our sin. What parts of humans are affected by sin?
- 4. In verse 3, he uses the phrase “children of wrath”.
  - a. Describe *wrath* after reading the following:
    - i. Exodus 22:21-24
    - ii. Isaiah 13:9-13
    - iii. John 3:36
    - iv. Romans 1:18-20
  - b. Who is he referring to with this phrase?
  - c. He says they are children of wrath “by nature”
    - i. What does it mean to be something “by nature”?
    - ii. There is an idea today that if someone is “born that way” that somehow it is OK for them to behave in accordance to that nature – according to this verse, what does God say about that idea?
- 5. Paul ends verse 3 with the phrase “like the rest of mankind”, do you suppose he really means every single person who has ever lived or who will ever live?
- 6. Verse 4 begins with a phrase that is often a source of great comfort for His people...“But God...”  
 There are positive and negative uses of this phrase: positive as here, where people are shown to be (justly) guilty of condemnation *but God* does something unexpected and offers grace and mercy instead of wrath and punishment. Negative uses include, for example, places where people falsely believe they are behaving righteously and deserve God’s favor, *but God* again does something they do not expect and withholds grace and mercy and instead (again justly) condemns them for their sin.
  - a. What qualities of God does Paul follow the phrase “But God” with?
  - b. What qualities of humans does Paul follow the phrase “but God” with?
  - c. In what ways does this show the difference between God and men?
- 7. Verses 4-7 show a sort of “chain” of salvation – Paul uses a similar construct in Romans.
  - a. Read Romans 8:28-30
  - b. What are the “links” in the chain of salvation in Ephesians 2:4-7 that start with the mercy of God and end with displaying his kindness to the universe?
  - c. Paul speaks with passion here, using qualifiers like “rich”, “great”, “immeasurable”. What do these words tell you about God?
  - d. Write down some things that encourage you about these phrases in verses 4-7:
    - i. “rich in mercy”
    - ii. “great love with which He loved us”

- iii. "even when we were dead, He made us alive"
  - iv. "together with Christ"
  - v. "by grace you have been saved"
  - vi. "raised us up with Him"
  - vii. "seated us with Him in the heavenly places"
  - viii. "immeasurable grace in kindness"
8. Look back...starting in verse 3, Paul switches from using the word "you" to using the words "we" and "us" instead.
- a. Who is the "you"? Who is the "we"?
  - b. Why do you suppose Paul did this? (What is Paul showing to the church at Ephesus by using "we" instead of "you"?)
9. In verses 8-9, in no uncertain terms, Paul tells us how salvation is accomplished.
- a. The first part of verse 8 tells us how it all starts. What initiates salvation?
  - b. What is the vehicle through which God uses to bring salvation?
  - c. Who is responsible for salvation? How is it given?
  - d. Can we earn salvation? Can we be good enough? Smart enough? Strong enough?
  - e. Why did God design salvation in such a way that we can't earn it?
  - f. Have you ever thought "I'm a pretty good person, I'll be fine"? What does God say to that idea in these verses?
10. Verse 10 tells us that when God saves a person, He also has expectations for that person.
- a. Look up the word *workmanship*. How does it make you feel that, if you are a believer, you are God's workmanship?
  - b. Read Romans 9:19-26. If you are a Christian, if you are "in Christ", verses 23-26 describe the kind of *workmanship* you are.
  - c. When God brings you from death to life, you become a new creation. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Who are you a new creation in?
  - d. God doesn't save you so you can sit on the couch and eat ice cream all day – He saves you for a purpose, to work.
    - i. When did He create the works you are to do?
    - ii. What does that tell you about God's plan and knowledge of you?
    - iii. What does he expect us to do with the work He has created for us?
11. Finally, see how often Paul uses phrases like "in Him/Christ" or "with Him/Christ".
- a. What does this tell you about your need of Him?
  - b. What does this tell you about God's desire for you? (reread Romans 8:29)
  - c. How are you comforted by Paul's emphasis on your position before God?
  - d. How does this help you live your life, knowing how secure you are "in Christ"?

The first half of Ephesians 2 covers some weighty, sometimes hard, truths – truths like "you aren't good enough to deserve salvation", "you can't work hard enough to receive salvation", "you are dead in your sin", "because you are dead, you are enslaved to sin, you love it, and God's wrath is on you."

And we must approach the text with the mindset of, as John Piper wisely said, “I don’t get it, but there it is, and I’ve got to bow.” We must approach God’s word as if God Himself is before us, telling us what we are reading – we must accept it, *all* of it, as true.

Because we can’t take the good from God without taking the bad...

**Job 2:7–10 (7)** *So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. (8) And he took a piece of broken pottery with which to scrape himself while he sat in the ashes. (9) Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die.” (10) But he said to her, “You speak as one of the foolish women would speak. Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not receive evil?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips. (ESV)*

And because we receive the hard truth, we can also receive the hopeful truth!

Because there is so much hope...

*But God...*

*But God...being rich in mercy*

*But God...loving us with a great love, even when we were dead*

*But God...made us alive together with Christ*

*But God...saved us by grace*

*But God...raised us up with Him*

*But God...seated us with Him in the heavenly places*

*But God...will show the universe the immeasurable riches of His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

As if we need further reason to hope in God’s work in us to bring us from the kingdom of death to the kingdom of life, read this:

**Romans 8:31–39 (31)** *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? (32) He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? (33) Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. (34) Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? (36) As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” (37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (38) For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (ESV)*

Are you “in Christ”?

Are you secure “in Him”?

Can you claim this promise, not because you think you worked hard enough for it, not because you think you have earned it, but simply and only because God has loved you with a great love?

Faith is an evidence of this, how’s your faith?

## Ephesians 2:11-22

In this section of chapter 2, Paul describes the greatest blessing that salvation brings – being one *in Christ*. This is a simple truth that has far reaching implications for everything from living life in the now to looking forward to the future...how to face trials now and how to appreciate blessings.

There are two types of people in the world, those *in Adam*, and those *in Christ*. There are no other types of people – you are either *in Christ* or you are *in Adam* – there is no middle ground. A person cannot be *sort of* in Christ or *sort of* in Adam. In this section, Paul explains *some* of what it means to be *in Christ*.

In order to truly appreciate the truth of being *in Christ*, we need to understand what it is like to be *in Adam*.

**1 Corinthians 15:20–24 (20)** *But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (21) For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. (23) But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. (24) Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. (ESV)*

**Romans 5:12–21 (12)** *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— (13) for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. (14) Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. (15) But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. (16) And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. (17) For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. (18) Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. (19) For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. (20) Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, (21) so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (ESV)*

In these two passages which are very similar, Paul is telling us that all people are born *in Adam*, and being *in Adam* results in death – “in Adam all die”. In order to live, you must be found *in Christ* – “in Christ, all shall be made alive.” Paul, in no uncertain terms, is saying that every human born is represented by one of two people – Adam or Christ, and in Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul showed us not only that everyone born is born *in Adam*, but how someone is moved from being *in Adam* to being *in Christ*, from being without hope and without God in the world to being filled with hope and adopted into the family of God!

In Ephesians 2:11-22, Paul tells us some of the wonders of being found *in Christ*.

1. In verse 11, Paul starts off with the word *therefore*. A good rule of thumb in understanding the bible is to remember this phrase: "When you see a *therefore*, you should find out what it is there for."
  - a. What is the *therefore* there for? (in other words, what is the *therefore* referring to?)
  - b. Why would Paul start his teaching on being *in Christ* by encouraging us to look back?
2. In verses 11 and 12, after the *therefore*, Paul calls us to remember two things.
  - a. What are the two things that he wants us to remember?
3. Because he starts with a *therefore*, Paul wants to connect the awesome things that God has done for us to those things that he wants us to remember.
  - a. Why do you suppose Paul wants us to remember those specific things (from question 2) while thinking about what God has done for us?
  - b. Does this bring you hope? Why or why not?
4. In verse 11, Paul uses the word *Gentiles*.
  - a. Look up that word. Who is Paul referring to when he uses the word *Gentiles*?
5. In verse 11, Paul uses the word *circumcision* to refer to two groups of people.
  - a. What is *circumcision*? Who performs the kind of circumcision that Paul is referring to here?
  - b. What significance does it have? (read Genesis 17:10-14; Acts 11:1-3; Romans 2:28-29)
  - c. Who are "the uncircumcision"?
  - d. Who are "the circumcision"?
6. In verse 12, Paul gives us some insight into the spiritual state of "the uncircumcision"
  - a. Paul uses the phrase "were at that time" to describe these people. What is the "that time" he is referring to?
  - b. He again talks about them in the past tense – what "were" they? What does that say about them now?
  - c. What are they "strangers" to?
  - d. What is a covenant? What is the covenant that Paul is speaking of here? (Read Romans 9:4; Genesis 17:1-8)
  - e. Who are these people separated from?
7. In verse 13, Paul brings the hope!
  - a. *But now*...Remember the "but God" from Ephesians 2:4? Here is another use signifying a transition from one thing to another thing. What is the transition?
  - b. They were once...what?
  - c. Now they are...what?
  - d. By...what?
  - e. In...whom?
  - f. Look up and define the word "Christ".
  - g. Who are we "brought near" to?
8. In verses 14-16, Paul discusses the *peace* that is given to those *in Christ*
  - a. Who is the "he" in verse 14? What does it mean that "he himself" is our peace?

- b. Who is the “us both”?
- c. What was demolished?
- d. What was abolished? (see also Colossians 2:14)
- e. Why is that necessary?
- f. Paul says that Jesus is “creating one new man in place of two”. This wording may seem strange, but think back to verse 11 (question 5).
  - i. Who are the two men (people)?
  - ii. Who are these two people in? (what “one man (people)” are they being made into?)
- g. Look up the word *reconcile*. How are we reconciled to God?
- h. What is the result of this reconciliation? (Note – this reconciliation is both to God and to others).
  - i. ... to God (read Romans 5:1-11)
  - ii. ... to others (read 2 Corinthians 5:16-20)
- 9. In verse 17, Paul says that Jesus preached peace to two different people.
  - a. Who are “those who are far off”?
  - b. Who are “those who are near”?
- 10. In verse 18, Paul tells us something about what Jesus is doing for us now
  - a. What does Jesus grant to those who are *in Him*?
  - b. Read 1 Timothy 2:5-6; Hebrews 7:20-24; Hebrews 9:15-18
- 11. In verse 19, Paul explains the new relationship(s) we have for those *in Christ*
  - a. What are we “no longer”? What does that say about who we once were?
  - b. What are we “now”?
  - c. Look at the words Paul uses to describe our “now”. Write them down. There are many ways to summarize these words, but what do these words make you think of?
  - d. How do you feel knowing that the description Paul uses is *only* true of those who, by faith, are *in Christ*?
  - e. Can you claim these promises? On what basis?
- 12. In verse 20 and 21, Paul compares this “now”, this “household”, to a building
  - a. What is the foundation of this building? What does that say about the existence of those groups of people today?
  - b. What is a cornerstone? Who is the cornerstone of the household of God? (Read Acts 4:11-12; 1 Peter 2:4-8)
  - c. What holds this “whole structure” together?
  - d. What is it being built into?
- 13. Finally, in verse 22, Paul connects this to those *in Christ*
  - a. What are Christians being built into?
  - b. Are we being built into that one by one or together with other Christians?
  - c. Positionally and relationally, where must we be in order for this to be true?

In Ephesians 2, Paul has shown us a lot about ourselves and a lot about God. He has shown us who we once were (or who we still are if we are not *in Christ*). He has shown us how God brings life to the dead, how God seeks us, and what happens when He finds us.

Have you been found?

Paul writes about how we are found by God, but also about how we are changed by God from one type of being into a completely new type of being. From “one man” into a “new man”. Given that, it’s safe to say that God finds us all in various states of sin and rebellion, some of us are “good people”, some of us are “bad people” – but only according to society because as he writes in Romans...

**Romans 3:9–12 (9)** *What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, (10) as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; (11) no one understands; no one seeks for God. (12) All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” (ESV)*

... and Jesus also says ...

**Matthew 19:16–17 (16)** *And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” (17) And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” (ESV)*

... none of us are “good”. And as such, God finds us “not good” and changes us over the course of our lives to be “more good” – not perfect, that happens after we die. But in either case, God finds us in various states of sin and rebellion and *changes us*. He is not content to leave us where we are.

He cares too much for His now adopted children to wallow in their sin...

**1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (9)** *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, (10) nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (ESV)*

Don’t see that list of vices as exhaustive, but as representative of all types of sin – sin against the self, sin against others, sin against God, etc.

Such *were* some of you...

...*but* you *were* washed.

All past tense.

If you are *in Christ*.

Are you *in Christ*?

How do you know?

## Ephesians 3:1-13

Paul concludes his teaching on the people of God, those who “are near” (Jews) and those who are “far off” (Gentiles), are made from two peoples into one people in Christ, because of the blood of Jesus, by the working of the Holy Spirit and is now transitioning to a discussion of the gospel.

Specifically, the *mystery* of the gospel.

We have talked about the gospel before – the *good news* – that though we were dead in our sin, that though we were enemies of God, that though we hated Him and ran from Him, that He, because of His great love with which He loved us, saved us by His grace. The *good news* is that God defeated sin, Satan, and death through His Son on the cross and has sealed His people for eternity with His Holy Spirit.

**Romans 8:1–4 (1)** *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. (3) For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, (4) in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (ESV)*

And now that Paul has given us this *good news*, he shifts focus a little bit...still talking about the good news, but a different aspect of it...a scandalous aspect of it.

The *mystery* of this good news.

Remember the time this letter was written. Remember the *wall of hostility* that Paul talked about in the previous chapter. Remember the *to people* who have been made *one person*.

Remembering those things will help you to see why the *mystery* of the gospel was at that time, both mysterious and scandalous.

1. Ephesians 3:1 starts with “For this reason...” which is pretty much the same thing as a *therefore*.
  - a. What is the “for this reason” referring to?
  - b. Why do you suppose Paul would refer to that as he starts teaching about the “mystery of the gospel”?
2. In verses 1-3, Paul describes himself in a few different ways
  - a. In verse 1, what does Paul call himself and how does that inform your idea of “freedom”?
  - b. In verses 2 and 3, what does Paul call himself and what is entrusted to him?
    - i. Why was it given to him?
    - ii. How was it made known to him?
    - iii. What does that tell you about the value of the thing given to him?
    - iv. Paul says that he has written about this before
      1. Paul’s writings: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, Galatians 1:11-16
      2. Luke’s account of Paul’s story: Acts 9:3-19, Acts 22:6-21, Acts 26:12-18

3. In verse 4 and 5, Paul again uses the term *mystery*. Even though we won't find out what this mystery is until verse 6, think about the context of that word, and answer these questions as if you don't know what the mystery is...
  - a. Look up and define mystery. Why would Paul use that word here to describe something he has already told us about?
  - b. Read Colossians 1:24-29. Write down the similarities between that passage and Ephesians 3:4-5.
  - c. To whom was this mystery NOT made known? Why?
  - d. To whom was it made known? Why? (see Ephesians 2:19-20)
  - e. Who grants understanding of this mystery?
  - f. What implications does that have for you as you enter into an unbelieving, hostile world with the gospel?
4. In verse 6, Paul finally defines what this mystery is
  - a. What is this mystery?
  - b. Why would this have been scandalous?
  - c. What comfort or encouragement could his readers at the time gotten from him using the word *mystery*?
  - d. Compare verse 6 with Ephesians 2:12-13; 18-19. Paul uses a specific word that he has not yet used to describe the people included in the community created by the gospel. What is that word?
    - i. Read Galatians 3:23-29, Romans 9:6-8; 30-33
    - ii. Why would this have been even more scandalous than when Paul said in Ephesians 2:11-22?
    - iii. How is the relationship specified by the word we see here even better than how Paul has described it to this point?
5. In verses 7-9, Paul tells us his mission
  - a. What is his mission? To whom?
  - b. How was he put on this mission?
  - c. Who called him to it?
  - d. Compare the first verses of all of Paul's letters (Romans 1:1, 1 Corinthians 1:1, 2 Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:1, 1 Timothy 1:1, 2 Timothy 1:1, Titus 1:1-3, Philemon 1:1). What stands out to you? How often does Paul tell his readers how he was sent on this mission of his?
  - e. Paul uses the word *gift* to describe his mission. Do you see your mission as a gift?
  - f. Paul also uses the word *grace*. Why is it important that Paul sees his mission as being a *gift of grace*? (verse 8 can help)
  - g. How does Paul consider himself in relation to "the other saints"? Why? (Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-11)
  - h. Why does Paul refer to the gospel as a mystery "hidden for ages in God"? (Read Colossians 1:24-29)
6. In verse 10, Paul tells us the purpose of his mission.

- a. He uses the word *church*. What is the church?
  - b. Who is God using to proclaim the victory found in the gospel?
  - c. What is God's purpose for the proclamation of the gospel?
  - d. Now do you see why that no matter how this news is received, it is good?
- 7. In verse 11, Paul gives us a glimpse into the mind of God regarding the gospel
  - a. The gospel is *purposeful*. Look up the word purpose.
  - b. When was the gospel *purposed*? Was it a reaction or a plan?
  - c. How is this purpose realized (made effectual)?
- 8. Finally, in verses 12 and 13, Paul reminds us of the hope we have in the gospel
  - a. List some encouraging words from verses 12 and 13
  - b. What is the only way we can claim to have this hope?
  - c. How is Paul's suffering related to our glory?

The hope we have in the gospel is not some nebulous hope. Not some "I hope the Cowboys win the Super Bowl" kind of hope. No...biblical hope is looking forward to receiving a promise that is guaranteed. Note the difference in the way the word *hope* is used in the following sentences:

- 1. I find hope in the gospel because my inheritance is guaranteed.
- 2. I sure hope the gospel is true so I can get my inheritance.

Worldly hope is like the second sentence – unsure, wishful.

Biblical hope is based in the promises of God – solid, firm, guaranteed.

Such hope should drive our lives to something better. If we are found *in Christ*, we *know* with certainty that God is guiding and guarding us, that He is holding our inheritance for us. And because of that, we not only *can*, but we *should* and *must*, approach this world with the boldness and confidence that Paul talks about in the closing verses of this passage, *even if we suffer for it*.

**2 Corinthians 1:3–7 (3)** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, (4) who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (5) For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. (6) If we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; and if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we suffer. (7) Our hope for you is unshaken, for we know that as you share in our sufferings, you will also share in our comfort. (ESV)*

Our hope is not blind, it is not lazy. Paul bases his hope in the gospel. The gospel that doesn't just make salvation possible...no...the gospel that actually accomplishes salvation for His people, even when they were at enmity with Him, were running from Him, were blind and deaf and dead towards Him.

This gospel, this good news, that God has won, that we who were once far off are now near having been raised from death to life, and having been adopted into His family, having been made heirs...even counted as sons...all by God, thorough God, and for God, is all to the praise of His wondrous grace!

And we benefit.

It reminds me of the song we sing during worship sometimes...

*Why should I gain from His reward?*

*I cannot give an answer*

*But this I know with all my heart*

*His wounds have paid my ransom.*

*- How Deep the Father's Love for Us (Stewart Townend)*

I should not gain from His reward. But I do. Why?

Because His wounds have paid my ransom.

This is the gospel - that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And his death and resurrection accomplished the salvation of His people.

Eternally.

The mystery of the gospel is that, from eternity past, it was never about who your earthly descendants were. It has always been about, not who your earthly father is, but who your heavenly father is. Jews and Gentiles both are promised the inheritance (made heirs) only if God is their father.

The scandal of grace, the scandal of the Gospel, is that it removes boasting of all kinds. It is by grace alone, through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, as revealed in Scripture alone, to the glory of God alone.

How often do we show up in that?

Yeah...nowhere.

The only thing we bring to salvation is the sin that makes it necessary.

And we are all sinners.

If there is no room at the cross for the worst of humanity, there is no room for any of us either.

Evan as Paul says of himself ...

**Romans 7:21–24 (21)** *So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. (22) For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, (23) but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. (24) Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (ESV)*

... he immediately proclaims ...

**Romans 7:25–8:4 (25)** *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin. (1) There is therefore now no condemnation*

*for those who are in Christ Jesus. **(2)** For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. **(3)** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, **(4)** in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. **(ESV)***

Thanks be to God indeed!

## Ephesians 3:14-21

In the previous verses, Paul talked about the mystery of the gospel, not that the gospel message is a *mystery*, the message that there is a victor who has defeated sin, Satan, and death, that's not the mystery. Paul talks about mystery a lot in his letters. But he never considers mystery as something to make us throw up our hands and say "Well, guess I can't understand it...best not to try." Quite the contrary, Paul uses the word mystery to tell us that the plans of God are unknown to us *until* He makes them known.

**1 Corinthians 2:6–10 (6)** Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. **(7)** But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. **(8)** None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. **(9)** But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"— **(10)** these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. **(ESV)**

**Ephesians 1:9–10 (9)** making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ **(10)** as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. **(ESV)**

And, according to Paul, God has now made the mystery known. And, according to Paul, that revelation has implications.

**Romans 1:18–23 (18)** For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. **(19)** For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. **(20)** For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. **(21)** For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **(22)** Claiming to be wise, they became fools, **(23)** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. **(ESV)**

Humanity is *without excuse*. No longer can we claim ignorance. No longer can we say, "but I didn't know!" Everyone knows. Everyone is guilty. Everyone has been caught red handed.

Why?

Because God has revealed Himself to us.

So, how does that truth affect Paul as he writes to the new believers in the church at Ephesus? Look at the encouragement with which he writes to them. Look at the wisdom he is imparting to them. Look at how he explains, even though he knows that he'll find himself on the wrong side of the religious authorities in that area, he says "see here...the mystery that has now been revealed is consistent with the plan that God has had from the beginning – that even Gentiles are heirs of the promises. It has

never been about who your earthly family is, what you accomplish, how well you follow the law...no...by *grace* you have been saved, through *faith*, and this is not even of yourself, it is all a *gift*, not by works, so no one can boast.”

And now that Paul has “imparted wisdom” regarding this mystery, he puts meat on it and shows what that truth means for how we ought to live.

1. Paul starts this section with “for this reason...” You can likely guess the question.
  - a. What is the reason that Paul is referring to?
  - b. What does he do because of that?
  - c. What does that show you about how Paul sees God? Himself?
  - d. When you ponder the mystery of the gospel, or even the gospel itself, is your reaction like that of Paul?
2. Paul’s use of the phrase “bow my knees” is important
  - a. What picture does that phrase conjure up in your mind?
  - b. When someone bows, there is an object to which they are bowing, to whom is Paul bowing?
  - c. Why do you suppose Paul uses the word Father (πατέρα - patera) instead of God (θεός - Theos) here?
  - d. People in our culture bow for various reasons. Read the following passages to get an idea of what bowing meant to the culture in which Paul was writing. How is that different from our culture?
    - i. Isaiah 45:18-23
    - ii. Romans 14:10-12
    - iii. Philippians 2:8-11
    - iv. Romans 11:1-6
3. In verse 15, Paul again uses the concept of *family*.
  - a. Paul says “every family.” Is he really talking about every family? What does he mean by “every”? (Think about the context of how Paul has used that image before, and how he describes that family in the following verses.) Sometimes, words like “every” don’t mean what we think they mean – the context defines the meaning.
    - i. “every family...in heaven” refers to whom?
    - ii. “every family...on earth” refers to whom?
  - b. What is the name that God gives to these families? (hint...read Acts 11:22-26)
  - c. How does knowing that you are in the family of God (if you are found *in Christ*) make you feel? How does it make you feel for those who are not in the family of God?
4. When Paul says that he is “bowing his knees”, he is telling his readers that he is worshipping and praying. In verses 16-21, Paul tells us his prayer. In verse 16, he tells those for whom he is praying why he can even pray to God
  - a. Paul starts with “according to...” This shows that Paul is appealing to a specific characteristic of God as he prays. What characteristic is Paul appealing to?
  - b. What does the word *riches* tell us about God’s glory?

- c. What is Paul's request in verse 16?
  - d. Who grants?
  - e. What kind of strength is Paul requesting?
  - f. How does God strengthen?
  - g. Where does Paul request that God strengthen them?
  - h. What is the importance of being strengthened there? Why not somewhere else?
    - i. Romans 5:1-5
    - ii. 1 Corinthians 15:58
    - iii. 1 Peter 5:8-11
    - iv. 2 Peter 1:5-11
5. In verse 17, Paul writes that his desire for them would result in something specific
- a. What is Paul's desire for them?
  - b. What does this tell you about where we, as Christians, receive our strength to "soldier on"?
  - c. How does Christ dwell in our hearts?
  - d. Paul prays that God would continue to grant faith to the church. Why would Paul pray that?
  - e. What does that tell you about the importance of faith...
    - i. ...as we struggle?
    - ii. ...as we face trials?
    - iii. ...as we rejoice?
    - iv. ...as we mourn?
    - v. What happens when we think we can strengthen our faith without relying on Christ who dwells in the hearts of His people?
  - f. What is the Christian life rooted in (1 John 4:19)?
  - g. Why must we keep that in the front and center of our lives?
6. In verse 18, Paul tells us something that is the result of being rooted in love
- a. What is the result of being rooted and grounded in love?
  - b. Paul prays for strength so that the people can do something...what is the something that strength required for?
  - c. Why would we need strength for that?
  - d. Paul mentions four things we are to comprehend – breadth, length, height, and depth in reference to something. What are those things in reference to?
    - i. Notice that Paul does not define the measurements of this area...why do you suppose he doesn't?
    - ii. When you think about incomprehensible measurements like how much the biggest stars weigh, or how vast the universe is, or how many atoms make up even a very tiny thing, does your brain start to grow weary? Imagine working in that world every day...you'd likely need mental strength to continue, right?
    - iii. So, do you see why Paul is praying for spiritual strength over physical strength?
7. Verse 19 is a great continuation of verse 18.

- a. In verse 18, Paul says we need strength so that we can at least somewhat comprehend the incomprehensible
  - b. In verse 19, Paul goes even further – he says that with this spiritual strength, we can know that which surpasses knowledge! What is unknowable?
  - c. Why would Paul say that this “surpasses knowledge?”
  - d. What does “know” mean in this context? Is it simply head knowledge or is it something more?
    - i. Think of someone who is very close to you, someone you love and trust – a friend, a spouse, a family member. In what ways do you *know* them? Do you know *things about* them? Do you *know* them?
    - ii. You can know about someone without knowing them. I know a lot of things about a lot of people I don’t know. But, you cannot know someone without knowing things about them. And the more you know someone, the more you will know about them.
    - iii. This extends to love – if you truly love someone, you will not only know things about them, you will not only know them, but you will, more and more, also begin to love the things they love.
    - iv. This whole passage is in the context of love, starting with family and ending with the love that Jesus shows us and the love we show Jesus. This *knowledge* is far more than factual, it is experiential (Psalm 34:8-10) - we can’t love a Jesus we don’t know.
  - e. As we fall more and more in love with Jesus, what does that result in?
  - f. How will that affect your life?
8. In verses 20-21, Paul breaks out in praise even as he finishes his prayer
- a. What is God capable of, according to Paul?
  - b. Why do you suppose Paul would express this to the people he is praying for?
  - c. What power is at work within us? (Romans 8:9-11)
  - d. Who gets glory?
    - i. Isaiah 42:6-9
    - ii. Isaiah 48:9-11
    - iii. John 5:41-44
    - iv. John 17:1-5
    - v. When people say that Jesus never claimed to be God, what do these verses say to that idea?
9. In verse 21, Paul writes about two places where God gets glory
- a. What is the first one?
  - b. What does that tell you about how our lives should be?
  - c. Is your life glorifying to God? All of us have them, so what areas of your life need to change that would bring glory to God?
  - d. We have already seen how Jesus glorifies God
  - e. So, how long does Paul say this glory lasts?
  - f. What does that tell you about your life “now”?

- g. What can you look forward to in your “forever”?
- h. To whom is this glory limited?

The Christian life is both easy and hard – it is easy in that we do not have to work to attain a goal that is impossible for us to attain. The impossible goal has already been attained for us who are *in Christ* by the very God who set the requirement at perfection. You don’t have to be perfect, and even if God gave extra or even partial credit, you still couldn’t earn enough credit to pass.

But there is also where the Christian life gets hard. The work is sometimes hard, exhausting, tiring, frustrating. It sounds simple, and it can be - when it’s joyous, it always seems easier. But that’s to be expected.

Paul knew this too, because he lived it:

***Romans 8:35–39 (35) Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? (36) As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” (37) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (38) For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (ESV)***

Which is why he prays for strength – for himself and for the church. Not physical strength, but spiritual strength, to persevere in this dark and cursed world. To face evil and wicked men with the armor of God. To go prepared into a world that will hate you because it hates your Jesus.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13) – I can face all obstacles; I can endure all trials and hardships.

Because I know that Jesus will never let me down or let me go.

## **Ephesians 4:1-7**

There are many kinds of unity...when you think of *unity*, what things come to your mind? What kinds of things can you be united with or to? We can have unity of purpose – if we share a common goal, we are united in achieving that goal. We can have unity of thought – if we think the same about an issue, we are united in our understanding of that issue.

But even though we may have unity in one or many areas, we may not always have unity in how those areas affect our lives. For example, we may be united in our goal of eradicating poverty, we may try to achieve those goals in different ways – one may advance a solution whereby money is taken from the rich and given to the poor while another may advance a solution whereby it is made easier for the underprivileged to get and maintain employment.

Even though there is *unity* regarding something being a problem, there is great *disunity* regarding proposed solutions to that problem.

Think of someone close to you. Think of ways you are united to that person. Think of ways you have disunity with that person.

In this chapter of Ephesians, Paul is building on what he has taught up to this point to exhort his readers to understand a certain kind of unity. But as always, Paul does not just teach with the goal of simple understanding, no, he teaches with the goal of changed lives, changes worldviews, changed actions.

He wants knowledge to lead to real change.

It's not an accident that he precedes this teaching with an exhortation to pray for spiritual strength – it's almost as if Paul thinks that not all of his readers will accept the fact that, in Christ, they are all united in a very real and unbreakable way.

As are all of you who are *in Christ*.

1. Paul begins this chapter with another *therefore*.
  - a. What does he want you to be thinking about as you begin? (what was he talking about prior to this?)
  - b. Why is that important?
2. Then, he calls himself a prisoner *for* the Lord.
  - a. Define *prisoner*.
  - b. What can prisoners do? What can't they do?
  - c. Notice that Paul says He is a prisoner *for* the Lord, not *of* the Lord.
    - i. Where do you suppose Paul was when he wrote Ephesians?
    - ii. Read the following passages:
      1. Romans 1:1-6
      2. 2 Timothy 1:8-12
      3. Philemon 1:23-24
      4. In these passages, does Paul call himself a prisoner/slave/servant *for* Jesus or a prisoner/slave/servant *to/of* Jesus?
    - iii. Read the following passages:
      1. Ephesians 3:1-3
      2. Philemon 1:1-3
      3. Philemon 1:8-10
      4. In these passages, does Paul call himself a prisoner/slave/servant *for* Jesus or a prisoner/slave/servant *to/of* Jesus?
    - iv. In some letters, including Ephesians, Paul refers to himself as both a prisoner *for* Jesus and a prisoner *of* Jesus. Given what you know about prisoners, what does that tell you about the relationship between Jesus and His people?
  - d. Read the following passages
    - i. John 8:31-38

- ii. 2 Corinthians 3:12-18
  - iii. Galatians 2:4-5
  - iv. Galatians 5:1-6
  - v. Galatians 5:13-15
  - vi. Romans 6:15-19
- e. When the bible talks about freedom, what does it say we are freed from?
- f. What does it say we are freed to be? (see Romans 6:18)
- g. How in the world does that make sense?
- h. Christians are always prisoners *of* Jesus. Some Christians are called to be prisoners *for* Jesus. Does it now make sense that Paul has preceded this section with a call to pray for spiritual strength?
- 3. Still in verse 1, after Paul calls himself a prisoner, he urges his readers to do something
  - a. Define “urge”. What does Paul *urge* his readers to do?
  - b. The Greek word used here is sometimes translated as “implore”, “beg”, “appeal”, “plead”, etc. Given that, do you think that Paul thinks this is a big deal?
  - c. Why does Paul think it important to mention that he is a prisoner *for* Christ before he makes this plea?
- 4. In verse 2, Paul mentions some things that flow out of us because of our calling.
  - a. What are those things? Define them.
  - b. Is your life marked by those things?
  - c. Would people who know you use those words to describe you?
  - d. What do you need in your life to make those words even more descriptive of you?
- 5. In verse 3, Paul says that we should be *eager*
  - a. What should we be eager to do?
  - b. We need to be careful with a verse like this, why? What could be some wrong application of this truth? Read the following passages for context
    - i. Jeremiah 6:13-15
    - ii. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-6
    - iii. Philippians 2:1-11
  - c. Think of something that Paul is *not* saying about unity and peace?
  - d. What are we as Christians to be united around?
    - i. John 17:17-19
  - e. What is “the unity of the Spirit”?
    - i. John 4:21-24
    - ii. John 16:4-15
  - f. What does “in the bond of peace” refer to?
    - i. Ephesians 2:14-15
- 6. In verses 4-6, after talking about unity and peace, Paul explains why
  - a. ... there is one body ... what is this body? (1 Corinthians 12:12-16)
  - b. ... one Spirit ... what is this Spirit? (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 15:26-27)
  - c. ... called to one hope ... what is this one hope? (Romans 5:3-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:8-9)
  - d. ... one Lord ... who is this one Lord? (1 Corinthians 8:4-6)

- e. ... one faith ... what is this one faith? (Jude 1:3-4)
  - f. ... one baptism ... what is this one baptism? (Romans 6:1-11)
  - g. ... one God and Father of us all ... who is this one God? (Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Timothy 1:17) How does Paul describe Him here?
7. Finally, in verse 7, Paul talks about grace
- a. Define grace.
  - b. Who is the “us”?
  - c. What is the basis of this grace given to us?
  - d. What is Christ’s gift?

Paul starts out chapter 4 by pleading with his readers to be united. But this unity is based in peace, in grace, in truth, and ultimately, in God. One warning...

**2 Corinthians 6:14–18 (14)** *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? (16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.” (ESV)*

There is no unity between light and darkness...there is no peace there. Sometimes we claim “peace” when there is no peace. Sometimes, in order to seek what we think is peace, we do not confront error with truth. Sometimes, we think that the best way to keep peace is to mold ourselves to the world and keep quiet about sin.

But that is not at all what Paul is pleading with us to do.

Paul expects everyone who calls themselves a Christian to call everyone to repent...to preach the gospel. The same Paul that wrote this paragraph also pleaded with his fellow Jews to repent and turn from their lie and believe the truth...believe the gospel. He wept over them and confronted them in love in the bond of peace *with Jesus*. Paul was bonded to Jesus, his only peace. He wanted to be united with the Jewish people, but he knew that no unity could exist as long as he was “of the light” and they were “of the dark.”

And he also knew that he could not bring them out of the kingdom of darkness. And he didn’t try.

He pointed them and us to Jesus, and he went to prison for it and was ultimately killed for it.

But that didn’t stop him. He knew his calling, he knew the grace that was extended to him, he knew his responsibility to preach Christ and Him crucified.

He knew the “one hope” that belonged to his call.

Do you know your hope? Do you know your call?

Do you know the unity you have with others who share your hope?

## Ephesians 4:8-16

Grace. Unmerited favor. A gift we do not deserve. Remember grace?

The gift of grace is a sweet gift indeed. It is the cause of our salvation, it is the way by which God blesses us. Grace, properly defined, is receiving a blessing that we do not deserve. Mercy, in contrast, is not receiving a punishment that we do deserve. When God gives us grace, He is choosing to bless us when we do not deserve to be blessed. All of humanity is born in sin, and constantly breaks God's laws, over and over again, sometimes willingly, sometimes unknowingly. And because of that, each of us is disqualified.

That's what we bring to the table. Our sin. Our disobedience. Our rebellion. We don't deserve grace. We deserve death. We deserve eternal punishment.

But God...

In the verse immediately preceding this passage, Paul writes:

***Ephesians 4:7 (7)*** *But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. (ESV)*

What was Christ's gift? How vast is Christ's gift?

How much grace did we receive?

In this passage, Paul introduces the idea that God's grace gives us more than just salvation. While salvation is the greatest gift we could ever possibly receive, God gives us even more – He gives us gifts to build up His church.

As you read this passage, as you think about the gift of grace that you have been given, think about the way that gift is being made manifest in your life – think about the other gifts you have, and think about how you can use them for building up the body and to glorify God.

1. Verse 8, you guessed it, another therefore! First, let's unpack the verse.
  - a. Paul writes "therefore 'it' says". What's the "it"? (Read Psalm 68:15-18)
  - b. Who ascended? (Read Acts 1:4-14)
    - i. Write down a few things that stand out to you about this ascension.
  - c. Who are the captives?
    - i. First, write down your first thought.
    - ii. Next, read Judges 5:12 and write down who the captives are when a nation is defeated.
    - iii. What "nation" was defeated (Read Colossians 2:15)?

- iv. Who are the captives?
  - v. What do conquering nations do with the riches of the nations they conquer?
- d. Who are the “men” to whom God is giving gifts?
- e. Paul quotes Psalm 68 in order to point out truths about God. What are some things you learn about God from how Paul uses this psalm?
- f. Psalm 68 talks about God “receiving” gifts from men (as a plunder from a defeated foe). What does God do with His riches?
  - i. When Paul switches the word “received” to “gave”, is Paul contradicting the Psalmist?
  - ii. Does it make sense that Paul would switch the word “received” to “gave”?
- 2. So, now that we have broken down the verse, why is the *therefore* there?
- 3. In verses 9-10, Paul explains why he quoted Psalm 68. He mentions Jesus’ ascending and His descending which implies where He came from and where He went.
  - a. Read John 3:9-15
  - b. Where did Jesus “descend from”?
  - c. To where did Jesus ascend?
  - d. What was the purpose of His ascending? (Recall Ephesians 1:15-23)
  - e. Why is it so important for us that Jesus descended and then ascended?
    - i. Read Hebrews 4:14; 7:26; 9:24
  - f. What may not be obvious is that this may be referring to two things – Jesus’ incarnation and/or Jesus death and resurrection. Think about both and why both may be in view here.
- 4. In verse 11, Paul talks about other things Jesus gave
  - a. What did He give?
    - i. Define each of those terms and/or give an example of what each does
    - ii. Read 1 Corinthians 12:5-6, 28; 2 Timothy 4:5; Jeremiah 3:15; Acts 20:28
  - b. What do these gifts mean for us given the truth that Jesus is sufficient?
- 5. From verse 12, what is the purpose of those gifts?
  - a. Who is to be equipped?
  - b. Does Paul single out certain kinds of these people?
  - c. What does this passage mean for you as a follower of Jesus?
- 6. In verses 13 and 14 Paul describes the goal of these gifts.
  - a. What are these goals?
  - b. How does Paul define *mature manhood*? (Read Hebrews 5:14)
  - c. How might this definition of *manhood* go against the culture?
  - d. Paul again uses the word *measure*, why do you suppose he keeps using this word?
    - i. What is the *measure* used here?
- 7. In verse 14, Paul tells us why this maturity is important
  - a. What happens to the immature?
  - b. What leads them astray?
  - c. How can you avoid that trap?
  - d. Read James 1:5-8; Jude 10-13

8. In verses 15 and 16, Paul gets practical about this.
  - a. When speaking to others, what are we to speak and how are we to speak it?
  - b. Are we to ignore or shy away from hard things?
  - c. How can you speak the truth in love?
  - d. What is the point of speaking the truth in love?
  - e. Read Romans 8:28-29
9. Finally, in verse 16, Paul once again talks about the body.
  - a. What is the body?
  - b. Read Colossians 2:19
  - c. Paul says that the body is *equipped* with joints. What do you think these joints are?
  - d. What makes the body grow?
  - e. How is the body built up?

There is a reason Paul has spent so much time talking about unity and how we are one body. In fact, this is not the only letter in which he does that. It seems that everyone needs to know that the Christian life is not one of loneliness or individualism, but it is a life intertwined with many other lives.

We are one body.

We are one people.

We are one family.

Joined by one faith, one Lord, one baptism.

We have one Father.

We have one Savior.

We have one Spirit.

We do not exist in a vacuum, rather, we exist as a very real family with one mind and one goal.

When God finds a lost sheep and brings him or her back into the fold, that sheep becomes part of a flock. The church is a flock, a group of people relying on their one God to *sanctify* them (to make them more and more like Jesus, more holy, more concerned with truth and love.)

And yet, we are all still sinners, prone to wander, prone to sin. Prone to forget that all Christians are part of the same family. We fight like family, sometimes even like enemies. But that just shows us how broken this world really is. Family is love. Family is unity.

There is a common passage read during weddings that I think is appropriate here, and it is also written by Paul. So remember, the same person who wrote this ...

***Ephesians 4:15–16 (15) Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, (16) from whom the whole body, joined and held together by***

*every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (ESV)*

... also wrote this ...

**1 Corinthians 13:1–8** **(1)** *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. (2) And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. (3) If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. (4) Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant (5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; (6) it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. (7) Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. (ESV)*

We are to build up the body with a love that bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

A love that never ends.

## Ephesians 4:17-24

Paul has talked a lot about what it means to be remade – to belong to a body of believers that have been made new. He has talked about grace, about mercy, about unity, all around the *mystery* that has now been revealed. Up until now, he has focused on what it means to belong to a body of believers that is striving to be whole in Christ.

But what about you as an individual? Does this gift of grace affect that?

I hope so!

And indeed, it does.

Paul now shifts from our work as a body, to what the gospel means to us as individuals, us in our daily comings and goings. In how we relate to others. In doing so, he addresses how we *ought not* to behave and how we *ought* to behave.

Yes, there are “rules” we must seek to abide by as Christians, but by no means do these rules don’t *make* us Christian...only God makes us Christian – by grace, through faith, as a gift as we read in Ephesians 2:1-10. These rules are for our flourishing, to set us apart, to show us how to reflect Jesus to the world, not to put us in a box or keep us put down.

So, what does Paul have to say about how we are *not* to behave?

Let’s find out...

1. In verse 17, Paul gives a command to us.
  - a. How do you know it is a command?
  - b. How does make it clear that the command he is giving is binding?
  - c. What command does he give?
  - d. What does it mean to “walk” here?
  - e. Define *futility*
  - f. How do you picture someone who is “futile” in their mind?
  - g. Who are the Gentiles? Why does God want Hos people to be different?
2. In verse 18, Paul describes what this looks like
  - a. What is the root cause of this futility? (Read Ezekiel 11:17-21; Romans 2:1-5)
  - b. What does Paul say this leads to here? (Reread Ephesians 2:12)
  - c. Do you know people who have what you would consider a “hard heart”? Who or what are they hard towards? How does that make them behave around others?
  - d. Is your heart sometimes “hard” towards something? How can/do you rectify that?
3. In verse 19, Paul continues with the effects of this state
  - a. Define *callous*
  - b. What (or who) are they *callous* towards?
  - c. Paul uses the phrase “given themselves up”, does this imply a sort of “victim” mentality or does this imply a willful choice?

- d. Read the following passages. What can you do to avoid these kinds of things?
    - i. Romans 1:24-28
    - ii. Hebrews 10:26-31
    - iii. 1 Timothy 4:1-5
  - e. What have they given themselves up to? In what ways have you sometimes “given yourselves up” to similar things?
  - f. Paul also uses the phrase “greedy to practice”, again, what does this imply about their sin?
4. Then in verses 20 and 21, Paul begins addressing them
- a. Notice what Paul says...he does not say “learned *about* Christ”, he says “learned Christ”. What does this say about our relationship with Jesus?
  - b. When Paul says “but that is not the way you learned Christ” he is telling them something about how they learned Christ. Do you remember how Paul would know this?
  - c. Paul sort of pokes them a little when he starts with the word “assuming...” in verse 21. How could what he writes be considered a sort of ribbing? Why would he do that?
  - d. Where does Paul say truth lies?
  - e. Do you need to sometimes be reminded about what you have been taught or what you know?
    - i. Read Colossians 2:6-8
  - f. How can that help you in your daily walk?
5. In verse 22, Paul begins to remind them of a few things specifically that they were taught
- a. What is the first thing Paul tells them to do?
    - i. Colossians 2:9-13
    - ii. Colossians 3:5-11
  - b. What is “the old self”? In what ways is your “old self” still hanging around?
  - c. Define *corrupt* and *deceitful*
    - i. What does Paul say is the cause of this corruption?
    - ii. You may have heard the idea that as long as you don’t actually do something sinful, that desiring it is not sinful. What does verse 22 have to say about that?
6. In verses 23 and 24 Paul gives us the solution to this corruption
- a. What is this solution?
    - i. Read Romans 12:1-2
  - b. Who renews us?
    - i. Read Romans 8:27-29
  - c. What are we to put on?
    - i. In contrast to the *old* self, what is this *new* self?
    - ii. Read Galatians 2:17-21
  - d. Who is this “new self” made to look like?
  - e. How is this “new self” made?
    - i. Define *righteousness* and *holiness*
  - f. What implications does this have for how you are to live?

7. In this passage, Paul has talked a lot about what we are NOT to do, and he has given us the reason we can do what we are supposed to do.
  - a. Given that the next passage is about what we are supposed to do, why do you think Paul ends this passage the way he does?
8. Paul has talked a lot about “the old self” and being enslaved to sin.
  - a. Is sin simply “doing bad things” or is there more to it?
  - b. What is the root of sin?
  - c. Can we simply choose not to stop sinning?
  - d. Why or why not?
9. How many times does Paul reference Jesus in this passage?

In this section of Ephesians, Paul has gotten pretty practical and has shown us how we used to be, and how we are now supposed to be. He begins this section by testifying in the Lord, and ends with being created after God’s likeness – it must be important then to realize that without Jesus, we can’t even begin to aspire to the expectations Paul lays on us!

When we think that we are doing well because “I haven’t killed anyone”, we set the bar very low indeed! Even when we say “I thought about it, but didn’t actually do it, so I’m OK”, we set the bar pretty much just as low.

**Matthew 5:21–30 (21)** *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ (22) But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. (23) So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, (24) leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (25) Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. (26) Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. (27) “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ (28) But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (29) If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. (30) And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. (ESV)*

Jesus said that desiring evil or thinking evil is just as bad as committing evil. Why?

Because desiring things that are against God is just as sinful as doing things that are against God.

Sin starts with a willful decision to do something that is wrong, or to desire something that is wrong. Our wills are not neutral, if they were, we could never choose anything. Because of this cursed creation, our wills are bent towards sin, and without Jesus working in us, we would never choose righteousness. But, because of Jesus’ work in us, we are “new creations” who can desire righteousness.

You might have heard me say something about “total depravity”, and this is what I am referring to – not that we are as evil as we could be, but that we are so radically corrupted that sin permeates every part of our being, even our wills, such that without Jesus’ work in us, we are utterly incapable of seeing any reason to turn from the sin we love to the God we hate.

That is what “the Gentiles” are.

But it is not what children of God are.

So, as Paul commands, we are not to be like them. At all.

We are to walk in the light as He is in the light.

And we can only do that with His help.

## Ephesians 4:25-32

Paul ends the previous section with these words:

***Ephesians 4:24 (24) and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. (ESV)***

We have learned that the *new self* is not the person that you become when you lose weight, when you workout, when you drop bad habits, when you keep New Year's Resolutions. No, the *new self* isn't someone you become because you try really hard to change. Contrary to popular wisdom and self-help books, you cannot make yourself new.

The *new self* is a new creation, one made by God Himself, through the work of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

***2 Corinthians 5:16–19 (16) From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. (17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. (18) All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; (19) that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. (ESV)***

Vast portions of the Word of God are about God changing His people...

***Ezekiel 11:17–20 (17) Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.' (18) And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. (19) And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, (20) that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (ESV)***

It's from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

And there is the command to "put on" this *new self*.

You might be thinking "that sounds great, but how do I do that?"

And, just like always, Paul tells us what that looks like. This section of Ephesians comes on the coattails of this idea "I have told you to put on the new self, here are some practical ways to do just that."

1. In verse 25, Paul begins to tell us about what this *new self* looks like.
  - a. First, he uses the verb *put away*. When you think of putting something away, what do you think about?
  - b. Do you expect that Paul wants us to put this thing away so that we can get it back out sometime later?

- c. What does he mean when he says “put away”?
  - d. What is the tense of the verb “put away” - past, present, or future?
  - e. What does that imply about Paul’s assumptions about his readers?
- 2. Paul assumes we have already put away something.
  - a. What is it that we should have already put away?
  - b. First, we are to speak something when we put this away.
    - i. Why are we to *speak*?
    - ii. What does this mean for you in your life, here and now?
  - c. Second, we are to speak something specific
    - i. What are we to speak?
    - ii. In Paul’s letters alone, he uses this word 45 times.
    - iii. Read the following
      - 1. Romans 1:18-23
      - 2. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8
      - 3. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-17
      - 4. 2 Timothy 2:15-25
    - iv. How important is this?
    - v. And John wrote much about this as well.
    - vi. Read the following
      - 1. John 4:21-24
      - 2. John 14:1-7
      - 3. John 17:14-19
    - vii. How does Jesus use this word?
    - viii. Why must we be told to leave something bad behind and replace it with something good?
  - d. Third, we are told to speak this thing to a specific people
    - i. Who are these people?
    - ii. This word is used in a lot of different ways in the bible, sometimes it means strangers who are near, sometimes it means friends, sometimes family, sometimes something more.
      - 1. What does it mean here? (Explain why you think this)
- 3. The “therefore” in verse 25, is there to point back to “putting on the new self”. Therefore, because we have put on the new self, we are to put away things. The first thing Paul tells us to *put away* is falsehood. And putting away falsehood necessarily involves *speaking the truth*, especially to other Christians.
- 4. But now Paul says something that may sound strange. You might expect Paul to say “don’t be angry”, but instead he says “be angry”, but qualifies that emotion
  - a. Paul doesn’t say “if you get angry, do not sin”, he says “BE angry but do not sin”. What’s the difference?
  - b. What guard does Paul put around anger?
  - c. Why do you suppose Paul thinks it’s OK to be angry, but it’s not OK to sin in your anger?
  - d. What does sinning while you are angry look like?

- e. Does the bible consider all anger sinful?
  - f. What do you suppose we are to be angry at?
- 5. Paul says this in a context
  - a. Given the context of putting on the new self and putting the old self to death, how do you think Paul expects us to not sin in our anger?
  - b. Do you suppose that Paul thinks it is possible to “be angry but do not sin?”
- 6. Read the following verses about anger
  - a. Jonah 4:9-11
  - b. 2 Corinthians 12:19-21
  - c. Colossians 3:5-11
  - d. James 1:19-21
  - e. 2 Peter 2:4-10
  - f. Matthew 7:1-5
  - g. James 2:8-13
  - h. Mark 3:1-6
  - i. John 2:15-17
- 7. After Paul tells us to “be angry but do not sin”, he says “not let the sun go down on your anger”
  - a. What does this word picture make you think of?
  - b. How often do you take your anger to bed with you?
  - c. What does it do to you?
- 8. If we don’t deal with our anger in a godly way, something horrible can happen
  - a. What is that horrible thing?
  - b. What could/does that look like practically?
  - c. Read the following
    - i. 1 Peter 5:6-11
    - ii. Matthew 4:1-11
    - iii. 2 Timothy 2:22-26
    - iv. 1 John 3:4-10
    - v. Revelation 2:8-11
  - d. Who is the devil?
    - i. 2 Corinthians 11:12-15
    - ii. John 13:21-27
    - iii. Luke 22:31-34
  - e. How can he get an opportunity? Why would letting the sun go down on your anger give him this opportunity?
  - f. But there is a great promise
    - i. Read Revelation 20:7-10
- 9. In verse 28, Paul addresses a certain kind of person
  - a. What kind of person does he address?
  - b. Why do you suppose he mentions this sin specifically?
  - c. What does Paul instruct this person to do?
  - d. Read the following

- i. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11
  - ii. Luke 15:1-7
  - iii. Romans 8:5-11
- e. Read Luke 15:11-32
- f. What does verse 28 in addition to all of these passages show you about God's character?
- g. What is expected of us when we turn to God in repentance?
- 10. In verse 29, Paul harkens back to verse 25
  - a. Reread verse 25
  - b. How do verses 25 and 29 relate?
  - c. Define *corruption*.
  - d. How does Paul tell us we should speak to one another?
  - e. What does Paul mean by *building up* here?
  - f. So, Paul tells us *what* we are supposed to do, *how* we are supposed to do it, and now tells us *why*. So, *why* does Paul tell us to talk that way?
  - g. Define *grace*
- 11. In verse 30, Paul again tells us to *not do* something.
  - a. What is the something we are not to do?
  - b. Define grieve
    - i. How have you heard this word used most often?
    - ii. How does Paul use that word here?
    - iii. In what ways can we Grieve the Holy Spirit?
      - 1. Genesis 6:5-8
      - 2. Psalm 78:35-43
      - 3. Isaiah 63:10
      - 4. 2 Corinthians 7:5-9
      - 5. 1 Peter 1:3-7
  - c. Who are we not to grieve?
  - d. Who is He and what does He do?
    - i. John 14:26
    - ii. 1 John 5:1-6
    - iii. John 14:25-26
    - iv. Ephesians 4:30
    - v. Galatians 5:16-25
  - e. What does it mean to grieve the Holy Spirit?
  - f. Why are we not to do that?
    - i. Recall Ephesians 1:20-22
    - ii. What has done to us by the Holy Spirit?
    - iii. Define *seal*. What does it mean to seal something?
    - iv. What does it mean to you that it is only by faith, not by any work you could ever possibly do or hope to do, that you are sealed by the Holy Spirit?
  - g. Define *redemption*

- i. What do you think that Paul means by the phrase *day of redemption*?
- 12. In verse 31, Paul tells us a few more things that we should *put away*.
  - a. Do you struggle with any of these things?
  - b. If so, what are you doing to put them away? What helps?
  - c. How are these things similar to other things Paul has told us to *put away*, even in this chapter?
- 13. Finally, in verse 32, Paul encourages us to behave in certain ways
  - a. Are these things easy or hard for you?
  - b. How about forgiveness? Is that easy for you?
  - c. Why should Christians be forgiving people?
    - i. Romans 5:6-11
    - ii. 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
    - iii. Matthew 9:1-8
    - iv. Acts 26:12-18

Paul has given us a lot of truth in this chapter. He's gone from talking about unity in the body, to what we should and shouldn't do as people who claim the name of Jesus, to how we should and shouldn't live, to how we should treat others, to how we should look at sin in our own lives.

As you think about unity, as you think about yourselves, as you think of how you treat others, both inside and outside of the body, think of the way Jesus has treated you, with grace, mercy, compassion, forgiveness. And think of how He calls you to something better – repentance and righteousness – a “better” that is impossible without Him!

## Ephesians 5:1-14

In chapter 4, Paul encourages us not only to be united with other Christians, but also some things that we should be doing and feeling now that we are made new. If you remember, he told us not to walk as Gentiles do (using Gentiles to represent unbelievers), and he uses the phrase “in the futility of their minds.” Paul often associates the new life with a new mind. This says something about the faith we have – it is not at all blind, it is reasoned, consistent, logical, and evidential.

The only problem with this is that no amount of evidence will convince an unbeliever that Jesus is worth believing in. Remember how often we have heard the following words applied to us in our unbelief – blind, deaf, dead, enslaved, enemies of God, futile, suppressing the truth, and so on. The clear testimony of scripture is that, unless God opens your eyes by raising you from the dead, you will never see the depths of your sin nor will you see the beauty of Jesus, whose name is the only name under heaven by which we must be saved.

And it is with that history that Paul brings us to his next thought – walking in love.

Love means many things to many people, and even for the Christian, love can play out in many ways. So, let's see what Paul would teach us about walking in love.

1. In verse 1, to what is the *therefore* referring?
2. In verse 1, Paul tells us to be imitators of God.
  - a. In what ways can we imitate God?
  - b. In what ways can't we imitate God?
  - c. Read
    - i. 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1
    - ii. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-7
    - iii. 3 John 1:5-12
    - iv. Genesis 3:1-7
  - d. What would it look like in your life to imitate God?
  - e. Why are we supposed to imitate God (the *therefore*)?
  - f. How are we supposed to be considered as we imitate God?
3. In verse 1, Paul uses the phrase "beloved children" to describe Christians.
  - a. Read
    - i. 1 John 3:1-10
    - ii. 1 John 5:1-5
    - iii. Romans 8:12-17
    - iv. Gal 3:23-29
  - b. Do children imitate their parents?
  - c. Define *beloved*. What images come to your mind when you hear the word *beloved*?
4. In verse 2, Paul tells us to "walk in love"
  - a. We have heard the phrase "walk in..." before, what does it mean to "walk in..."?
  - b. The word *love* is contextualized here – what kind of love is Paul referring to?
  - c. How did Jesus love us?
    - i. 1 John 4:7-11
    - ii. 2 John 1:4-6
    - iii. Romans 5:6-8
    - iv. John 10:7-18
  - d. What did love drive Jesus to do?
  - e. Define *offering*.
  - f. Define *sacrifice*.
  - g. Read
    - i. Hebrews 7:22-28
    - ii. Hebrews 9:22
  - h. Who was the fragrant sacrifice?
  - i. What does that mean for us as we imitate Jesus?
    - i. Read Romans 12:1-2
5. Right after Paul tells us to "walk in love", he talks about sexual immorality. Before we get into it, why do you suppose Paul would do that?
  - a. How do you see society defining *love* today?
6. In verse 3, Paul tells us how we should treat sexual immorality
  - a. Why does Paul connect *sexual immorality*, *impurity*, and *covetousness*?

- i. Defining them may help
  - b. You've heard the phrase "love is love" in popular culture.
    - i. When is love not love?
    - ii. Are we free to love however we want? Why or why not?
    - iii. Are we free to define love however we want? Why or why not?
  - c. Why do you suppose Paul addresses sexual immorality right after talking about love?
  - d. How severely does Paul command us to treat sexual immorality?
- 7. Verse 4 hits really close to home.
  - a. Why does Paul contrast this kind of talking with giving thanks?
  - b. Read
    - i. Ephesians 4:29
    - ii. 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11
    - iii. Philippians 4:4-9
    - iv. Matthew 15:10-20
  - c. We see that behavior is important. Why is it so important?
- 8. In verses 5 and 6, Paul states what seems to be a pretty harsh condemnation
  - a. What kind of people won't inherit the kingdom of God?
  - b. Is Paul talking about one time offenders or habitual offenders or both?
    - i. Is it the offense or the heart behind the offense?
  - c. In verse 6, Paul explicitly identifies the people he is talking about. Who are they?
    - i. Read
      - 1. Ephesians 2:1-10
      - 2. 2 Corinthians 7:9-10
    - ii. How does that give you hope? How does it lead you to repentance?
  - d. Define *inheritance*.
  - e. Read 1 Peter 1:3-7
    - i. Can you lose your inheritance?
- 9. Verse 7 starts with another *therefore*.
  - a. What does Paul tell us to do in the first part of verse 7?
  - b. Another way to read a *therefore* is something like "in light of that", or "for that reason". In this verse, what does Paul connect this *therefore* to?
  - c. Who are the "them"?
  - d. List one or two things that "partner" can mean.
- 10. In verse 8, after Paul tells us what not to do in verse 7, he tells us why we shouldn't do that. What is the "why"?
  - a. Notice how Paul uses the words *darkness* and *light*. Do you find anything interesting about that?
  - b. Finally, Paul commands us, once again, to do something. What is that?
  - c. In the ESV, if you do a search for the words *darkness* and *light*, you get a lot of hits. Read these examples:
    - i. John 1:1-5
    - ii. Isaiah 9:1-7

- iii. Matthew 4:4-17
  - iv. John 3:16-21
- 11. From verse 9...
  - a. What are some characteristics of those who “walk in the light?”
  - b. Read the following
    - i. Nehemiah 9:9-15
    - ii. 1 John 5:18-21
    - iii. John 14:1-7
    - iv. Psalm 119:160
    - v. John 17:14-19
- 12. From verse 10...
  - a. Another command – what is this command?
  - b. Define *discern*. Why is discernment so important? How can we become discerning?
  - c. List some things, either from this study so far, or from other things you have read, that are pleasing to the Lord. How do you know that those things are pleasing to the Lord?
  - d. Read
    - i. Romans 14:20-23
    - ii. Hebrews 11:1-6
    - iii. Micah 6:6-8
- 13. In verse 11, Paul gives another “do not...” and then a “do...”
  - a. What are we supposed to *do not*?
  - b. What do you suppose are some of the things that Paul is thinking about as he writes “works of darkness”?
  - c. What does he call these works?
  - d. What are we supposed to *do*?
- 14. Read the following passages about how darkness is exposed
  - a. Luke 12:1-3
  - b. Luke 8:16-18
  - c. 1 Corinthians 4:1-4
  - d. Ecclesiastes 12:9-13
- 15. In verse 12, Paul is very clear how we should view these things
  - a. What word does he attach to these works done in darkness?
  - b. If that is the way we should see even *talking* about such things, what do you think Paul would say about *practicing* such things? (Read Romans 1:26-32)
- 16. From verse 13, what exposes things?
  - a. How does it feel when things you thought were secret are exposed?
  - b. Given what we have read, how would you explain why nothing we do is truly secret?
- 17. Finally, in verse 14, Paul is referring back to Isaiah 60:1-3. Read that passage.
  - a. What is Paul’s desire for the people of God?
  - b. Why does God in both Isaiah and here tell us to “wake up”?
    - i. Read the following:
      - 1. Mark 13:32-37

2. Matthew 26:36-46
3. Matthew 25:1-13
- ii. What does it mean to be awake?
- c. Who raises us from the dead?

In this passage, we are told a lot of things about darkness and light. We are told what the light does, and how nothing we do is ever truly in secret. We are even told that talking about these things that are done in darkness, in any way other than to condemn and expose them, is shameful. Shameful!

Imagine then, if talking about them is shameful, what the condemnation is for those who not only think that there's nothing wrong with those things, but who also encourage others to do those things!

But Paul, knowing that we cannot be victorious over these things without Jesus, ends this section with this plea:

***Ephesians 5:12–14 (12) For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. (13) But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, (14) for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” (ESV)***

“Awake, O sleeper!”

But it's not just so we can see, because it is possible to wake up at night when it is still dark.

No, unless we have the light of Christ shining on us, we will be in the dark.

So, Paul is not telling us to simply wake up, because the very next statement...

... “and arise from the dead” ...

... points to something that no one but God can do for us.

God the Father calls and draws us, God the Son pays the price for sin, and God the Spirit applies that payment to our account, thus waking us from our slumber, raising us from the dead, and shining His light on us!

So, now that Jesus' light is shining on you, walk in that light so you don't stumble!

## Ephesians 5:15-21

It is fitting that as Paul teaches truth to us, as he explains what it is like to be a child of the light, to be driven by a holy pursuit of God, that he would also give us practical advice about what that looks like. He has already told us many things to do and many things not to do, and he always points to our motives...WHY are we doing what we are doing? Why do we seek righteousness? Why must we discern?

Why is it hard?

It's hard because what was true of Paul, and Peter, and John, and every human that ever lived is also true of us...

**1 Peter 2:11–12 (11)** *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. (12) Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (ESV)*

... the passions of the flesh *wage war* against our souls.

War.

We are in a real battle, and our battle is not only against our own flesh. As we will see soon...

**Ephesians 6:10–12 (10)** *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. (11) Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (ESV)*

So, not only are we fighting against our own flesh and blood, we are also warring against the rulers, authorities, cosmic, and spiritual forces of evil.

Welcome to the real world!

So, in light of that, Paul calls us to walk in wisdom.

Let's see how wisdom will help us in our battle.

1. In verse 15, the first thing Paul calls us to do is to "look carefully"
  - a. Note that "look carefully" is followed by *then*, which is like a *therefore*. Given that, why do we *look carefully*?
  - b. What are we supposed to *look carefully* for?
  - c. What enables us to *look carefully*?
  - d. Paul tells us to *look carefully* as we do something. What are we doing as we *look carefully*?
2. We have seen the use of the word *walk* before in this letter and in other places in scripture.
  - a. What does Paul mean here when he says *walk*?

- b. How are we to walk?
      - i. Matthew 11:16-19
      - ii. Psalm 37:30-31
      - iii. Psalm 104:24-26
      - iv. Psalm 111
      - v. Proverbs 1:1-7
      - vi. Isaiah 29:13-14
      - vii. Acts 6:1-4
      - viii. 1 Corinthians 1:17
      - ix. 1 Corinthians 2:11-16
      - x. James 1:5-8
      - xi. Revelation 5:11-14
    - c. What are some ways you can be wise as you walk?
- 3. Walking in wisdom then results in something, from verse 16, what is it to result in in our lives?
  - a. As you think about how you spend your day, what are some things about the time you spend that you'd like to change?
  - b. Do you feel like you make the most of the time you have?
  - c. Everyone needs downtime, but downtime is not wasted time if you do it for the right reason. What are some good reasons for "down time"? What are some bad reasons that are easy to justify?
  - d. What is the reason Paul gives for us to not waste our time?
    - i. Ecclesiastes 12:1
    - ii. Amos 5:10-13
    - iii. Galatians 1:3-5
    - iv. Proverbs 16:1-4
  - e. How have you witnessed the days being evil?
  - f. How can you make the best use of your time in these evil days?
- 4. In verse 17, after telling us to walk in wisdom, Paul tells us what we should not do. What is that?
  - a. Read the following passages:
    - i. Psalm 14:1-3
    - ii. Romans 1:21
    - iii. 1 Corinthians 1:20-25
    - iv. Titus 3:3
    - v. 1 Peter 2:13-17
  - b. I'm sure you have said some foolish things, and I'm sure you know some foolish people. A good way to think about foolishness is by contrast – think of someone being childish and someone being foolish. Being *childish* is based in ignorance, being *foolish* is knowing better but doing it anyway. Give some examples of foolishness.
- 5. Also in verse 17, Paul tells us how to combat foolishness. What does he tell us to do?
  - a. When you think of the will of the Lord, what do you think of?
  - b. Here are a few passages that show these different usages:
    - i. Psalm 115:2-3

- ii. Isaiah 53:10
  - iii. Romans 12:1-2
  - iv. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8
  - v. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-17
- c. How is Paul using “the will of the Lord” in this context?
- d. We see generally what the Lord’s will for our lives is. Do you know what the Lord’s will for you personally is? How can you find out if you don’t know? How are you fulfilling it if you do know?
- 6. In verse 18, Paul gives a command that seems a little out of place here.
  - a. What is the *do not* command?
  - b. Notice the comparison...what is alcohol sometimes called?
  - c. What kind of behavior does that “spirit” result in? (try to use words we have heard in this section of Ephesians)
  - d. What *Spirit* are we to be filled with?
  - e. What kind of behavior does that *Spirit* result in?
    - i. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11
    - ii. 1 Corinthians 2:6-8
    - iii. Galatians 5:22-26
    - iv. Isaiah 11:1-2
- 7. In verse 19, Paul gives more encouragement for our behavior that we can do because we are filled with the Holy Spirit
  - a. Do you sing? Are you embarrassed to sing? Did you know that singing is not just an act of worship, but it is also a way to encourage one another?
    - i. Acts 16:25
    - ii. 1 Corinthians 14:26
    - iii. Colossians 3:16
    - iv. James 5:13
    - v. Colossians 3:16-17
  - b. What emotion does singing in this way evoke in you?
- 8. In verse 20, Paul equates our singing with another response
  - a. What is the posture of our heart supposed to be?
  - b. How often is it supposed to be that way?
  - c. Why?
    - i. 1 Corinthians 1:4
    - ii. 1 Corinthians 15:57
    - iii. Ephesians 4:32
  - d. To whom do we give thanks?
  - e. Through whom do we give thanks?
  - f. In whose power do we give thanks?
- 9. Finally, in verse 21, Paul gives another command
  - a. What are we to do?
  - b. Why are we to do it?

#### i. Philippians 2:1-11

Paul has given us a number of powerful tools to fight the battle we are in, and here, right before he will give us instruction on the expectations of husbands and wives, he tells us to be wise, to seek wisdom, to be thankful, to submit to one another, to seek the will of God for our lives.

To shun foolishness and drunkenness.

To be filled with the Holy Spirit who grants wisdom!

The only way we can walk the path that God has set us on is by His power, and He gives us His Spirit to do so.

Are you relying on Him to walk beside you? To carry you when you can't walk? To live in victory?

Ask Him for wisdom.

He'll give it to you!

#### Ephesians 5:22-24

In the previous section, as Paul taught on love, he brought out a few points that could allow us to bypass a bunch of heartache and pain if we would only follow what the Lord was teaching through him. Just a few of the things he brought into the light that *walking in love* keeps forces us to be mindful of were:

- ... imitate God as children who are loved by Him
- ... love as Jesus loved (and loves) us
- ... flee *from* immorality, covetousness, crude and foolish talk, idolatry, unfruitful works
- ... flee *towards* wisdom, discernment, all that is good and right and true
- ... expose darkness
- ... do not be foolish, drunkards, seek debauchery
- ... seek God's will
- ... address one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
- ... give thanks always

And finally, he says something that is entirely counter to everything our culture teaches about relationships, something that is the basis and core of what he teaches in our passage for this lesson, something that the culture would call you foolish or backwards or even oppressive for believing or expecting.

He finishes his previous train of thought with these words in verse 21:

*"submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ."*

Submit.

And in verse 21, Paul has not yet even broached the subject of marriage – his use of the word “submit” in verse 21 applies to Christians submitting to other Christians *in general*, and the reason we should submit to one another is because we revere Christ.

And Paul uses that reverence for Christ as a great segue into applying the truths about seeking goodness and submission to the marriage relationship. Ephesians 5:22-33 is a wonderful guide for marriage as it lays out what marriage is, what its purpose is, roles, responsibilities, and expectations of both the husband and the wife.

It is also exactly the opposite of what you hear from our current culture.

But first things first, you can’t come to this passage on marriage with the expectation of applying what it is teaching without understanding or accepting what Paul has taught up to this point. You must be willing to submit, to address one another in holiness, to seek righteousness, to flee wickedness, to walk in love as Christ loves you, etc. And that’s just from chapter 5!

Of course, we can do none of this on our own. If we seek to make our marriages what God intended them to be, we must lean on Him and learn from Him. We must listen to Him instead of social media. We must, as Jesus said “seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

So, with that, let’s listen to what God has to say to wives, through Paul, about our marriages!

1. Paul begins this section in verse 22 by addressing wives.
  - a. What command does he give to wives?
  - b. How have you heard this idea misused and abused? Have you witnessed this command being abused?
  - c. What is your first reaction when you hear this?
  - d. How does the culture react to this?
  - e. Read the following passages to get some context around this
    - i. Colossians 3:18-4:1
    - ii. James 4:5-7
    - iii. Romans 10:1-4
2. In verse 23 and 24, after Paul gives a command, the “what”, he gives a reason for it, the “why”.
  - a. Why should wives obey this command?
  - b. Not only is the command hated by the culture, the reason is as well.
    - i. Read the following
      1. Genesis 3:16
      2. 1 Timothy 2:8-14
      3. Galatians 3:23-29
      4. Romans 8:12-17
    - ii. How do those passages illuminate the idea of submission and headship?
    - iii. How can you reconcile passages like Genesis 3 with the rest?
3. It’s amazing how three little verses can be so hated by the world.
  - a. Write down a few ways that the culture around us has misinterpreted these verses.

- b. Write down a few ways that you have seen the church misuse these verses
- c. What is the proper way to interpret these verses in light of the rest of the passages we have read?

## Ephesians 5:25-33

As the previous passage is foreign to the culture pertaining to wives, this passage is also foreign to the culture pertaining to the husband. Society is trying to make everyone the same, same roles, same responsibilities, even to the point of removing the idea of gender entirely. That runs 100% counter to the way God designed humanity and it is clear in passages like the last one and this one – the word of God is clear, husbands and wives, though equal in value and both equal image bearers of God, have different roles in a marriage.

A good compliment to Ephesians 5:22-33 is 1 Peter 3:1-7...

**1 Peter 3:1–7** **(1)** *Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, (2) when they see your respectful and pure conduct. (3) Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— (4) but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. (5) For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, (6) as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening. (7) Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered. (ESV)*

These two passages show us beyond a shadow of a doubt that husbands and wives, though they compliment each other, and are of equal worth and value, have different roles in a marriage. So before we get started, let’s talk about some practical ways Paul’s handling of the role of “wife” plays out...read Ephesians 5:22-24 again and write down some expectations of wives.

- For the wives:
  - What are some practical things you can do to begin to live up to these expectations and the calling that God has put on you as a wife?
  - What are some expectations you have of your husband in your pursuit of these things?
  - How can you pray for him in this?

But as you can expect, Paul does not just lay out God’s expectations for wives. He now turns his attention to husbands.

And though what God says about husbands is clear, society has its own definition of and expectations for what husbands should be, what men should be, what masculinity is or isn’t, and given the moral revolution of the past 40 years, it is increasingly evident that not an ounce of it comes from God’s word. As Christians, we need to let God speak into this, and let God define it because He created us as male and female, and purposed husbands and wives to have specific roles and responsibilities.

Read the article at <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/twelve-gospel-passages-to-soak-in>.

As a backdrop to looking at God's definition of and expectations of husbands, we should look at society and see how it treats this subject. We live in this world after all, and we need to see its influences.

1. Society and masculinity
  - a. What are some of the ways you have seen or heard society define "manhood" or "masculinity"?
  - b. From what you have read during this study (or personal bible reading) and what you have heard (sermons, podcasts, etc.) give some thoughts as to how God would respond to that and why.
2. Society and marriage
  - a. Write down some ways that society treats marriage
  - b. Write down some ways that society treats gender roles
  - c. What are some side effects of these treatments?
  - d. If you were to address society, what would you tell them to expect given their view of marriage?

And with that, let's dig into what God has to say on this topic!

1. Paul has laid out some expectations on the wives in verses 22-24, now he turns his attention to the husbands. Let's summarize some of it.
  - a. Read Ephesians 5:25-31
    - i. Summarize each of the commands/expectations to husbands into one or two words each
    - ii. How many did you count? (this may be different depending on how you break up the commands)
  - b. However many you counted, in what ways are they all related?
  - c. As you read this passage, always keep in mind that Paul is using Jesus and His work as a model for husbands to follow
  - d. The expectation on you as a husband is "be Jesus for your wife"
    - i. You are "being Jesus" for your wife. What Jesus are you being for her?
    - ii. Do you know who Jesus is well enough to "be Him" for your wife?
    - iii. Wives – do you know Jesus well enough to know what Jesus to expect your husband to show you?
2. In verse 25, what is the first command that God gives to husbands?
  - a. Before looking it up, each of you write down your thoughts on love as husbands and wives, as a couple, what love looks like, how you demonstrate it, etc. (do this without talking to each other before or during). When you are done, compare your answers.
  - b. Were you surprised at some of your spouse's answers?
  - c. Read 1 Corinthians 13. Is your definition of love consistent with this? Is the way you demonstrate love consistent with this?
3. In verse 25, Paul describes the foundation for the way that husbands are to love their wives
  - a. What is this foundation?
  - b. What is the church?

- i. 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
- c. What is the first way that Paul describes Jesus “loving the church”?
  - i. Romans 5:6-8
  - ii. Isaiah 53:4-6
  - iii. John 10:7-18
- d. What does Paul mean by “gave Himself up”?
- e. Who were we when Jesus “gave Himself up” for us?
- f. What excuses are there for a husband to not love their wife? How does this help you in those times when she may not be so loveable?
- g. How can we as husbands do this practically?
- h. Husbands, remember that your love for your wife will be measured against the standard of “love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.” You can’t do that without Jesus, so be seeking Him daily for forgiveness, for strength, for endurance, and for wisdom.

4. Jesus' love for His church results in action, He *died* for His people!
  - a. Husbands, how does your love for your wife show itself?
  - b. Wives, how do you receive this display?
5. Read the following passages to see some of the things that Jesus accomplished by His death on the cross. From each verse, write down the thing (or things) that Jesus accomplished and some specific things that you are thankful for or that you have come to understand in reading them
  - a. John 15:12-17
  - b. Romans 5:6-11
  - c. 1 Corinthians 15:1-4
  - d. John 19:30
  - e. Colossians 2:13-15
  - f. Hebrews 2:14
  - g. Hebrews 9:15-16
  - h. 1 Peter 1:18-19
  - i. 1 Peter 2:24
  - j. 1 Peter 3:18
6. Verse 26 gives the reason Jesus gave Himself up. What is that reason?
  - a. Define "sanctify"
  - b. How does Jesus accomplish this sanctification? (Read Titus 3:3-7 for more context)
  - c. Husbands, how can you do this "in the same way" for your wife?
  - d. Wives, how can you help your husband do this?
7. Verse 27 gives the goal of this sanctifying work.
  - a. What is the goal?
  - b. Husbands, is this your goal for your wife? How can we help each other in this?
  - c. Wives, what kinds of things would you like your husband to do/provide/set aside/take on in order to provide an environment where you can be washed by the word?
  - d. Husbands, what does "giving yourself up" look like in this context? What things do you need to "give up"?
8. Verse 28 tells husbands *how* they are to love their wives
  - a. This verse begins with the phrase "in the same way...". What is this referring to?
  - b. What would/should this "same way" look like in your marriage?
  - c. Does this encourage you? Frighten you? Make you feel unable?
  - d. The verse ends comparing a kind of love we must have for our wives. What is the comparison? Husbands, Is that true of you?
  - e. What is the result of loving your wife?
  - f. Wives, would you say that your husband loves you like this?
9. Verse 29 tells husbands what kind of environment they are to provide for their wives
  - a. What should this environment lead to in the wife?
  - b. Define *nourish*. How can your wife be nourished by you?
  - c. Define *cherish*. Does your marriage display a cherished wife?
  - d. Extra credit – find some passages that describe how Jesus nourishes and cherishes the church. You can use Google if you want)

10. Verse 30 uses the *body* analogy again to describe Christians. The reason Jesus cares for us is because we are members of His body.
11. Verse 31 makes it blatant – this is why the body analogy is used to describe love
  - a. There are two commands for the husband in verse 31, what are they?
    - i. Why do you suppose it is important for a man to leave his father and mother?  
What would that involve in the ancient world? What does it involve now?
    - ii. Why would Paul tell men to hold fast to their wives?
  - b. Now, here is where the body analogy that Paul has been using becomes so important – what happens in a marriage relationship to the couple...what do they become?
    - i. Read Genesis 2:18-23
    - ii. What implications does this have for your marriage?
    - iii. Do you see yourselves as “one flesh?”
12. Now comes probably the most important and challenging part of this passage, the purpose for marriage
  - a. According to verse 32, what is the purpose of marriage?
  - b. Read the following:
    - i. Revelation 18:21-24
    - ii. Revelation 19:6-10
    - iii. Revelation 21:9-14
    - iv. 2 Corinthians 11:2
    - v. John 3:25-30
    - vi. Who is the bridegroom?
    - vii. Who is the bride?
  - c. Read the following
    - i. Ephesians 4:12
    - ii. 1 Corinthians 10:14-17
    - iii. 1 Corinthians 6:15-17
    - iv. 1 Corinthians 12:12-13
    - v. Colossians 1:24-28
    - vi. What is the body of Christ?
  - d. Describe the relationship between Jesus and the church in terms of this body/union language.
  - e. Given that the marriage relationship is ultimately a picture of Jesus and His church, husbands, how are you fulfilling the role of “Jesus” in your marriage? Wives, how are you filling the role of “the church” in your marriage?
  - f. Are people seeing the right picture of Jesus and His church in your marriage?
13. Finally, Paul closes this with a somewhat subdued call to action
  - a. What is his command for husbands?
  - b. What is his command for wives?
  - c. How does that fit into the body analogy he has been using?

Ephesians 5 is a fantastic chapter to see how a husband and wife are to see themselves – as one body, as one flesh, and ultimately, as a picture of the relationship between Jesus and His church. He is called the bridegroom, and we are called the bride all throughout the New Testament, and that has implications for our everyday lives.

Jesus left His Father to redeem His bride, the church. He has sealed Himself to her through His life, death, and resurrection. He has sent the Holy Spirit to live in us as a seal of His promise. And He is preparing a place for us even now, until He returns to present His bride, the church, to His Father, unstained, without spot or blemish.

How can seeing our marriages as a very real picture of this relationship help us fulfill our purpose for why God brought us together in the first place?

What kind of world would it be if every Christian marriage reflected Ephesians 5 well?

## Ephesians 6:1-9

In Ephesians 5, Paul spends a lot of time talking about love - what love looks like, what walking in love means, what the implications of love are, etc. He finishes chapter 5 explaining what that means for marriage, and what marriage is ultimately about.

But the implications of love do not stop there - case in point, marriage often leads to children. How does love speak into the relationship between parents and children? And beyond that, love speaks into other relationships as well. It may seem odd, but Paul addresses how love impacts the relationship between masters and bondservants as well. It is telling that he adds that discussion to a discussion about family, but we'll get there when we get there.

Needless to say, love is an incredibly important concept that should be one of the main motivators in our lives, and it should impact every relationship we have. But it is not just any love, it is a specific kind of love. It is a love defined by God, not a love defined however we want.

It is the way Paul, who wrote Ephesians, defines it in another letter:

**1 Corinthians 13:4–8 (4)** *Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant (5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; (6) it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. (7) Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. (8) Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. (ESV)*

But before we get started, I want you to read our entire passage.

Now, read Colossians 3:18-4:1.

Notice any similarities? Write them down for later.

1. Paul gets right to the point in verse 1

- a. Who is Paul addressing?
  - b. What does he tell them?
  - c. The phrase “in the Lord” might mean a few different things. What do you read that “stipulation” to mean?
  - d. Define “obey” (or “obedience”)
  - e. How important is obedience? Read:
    - i. Deuteronomy 12:28
    - ii. Deuteronomy 28 (yes, the whole chapter, or enough of it to get the gist)
    - iii. Matthew 23:16-20
    - iv. John 3:36
    - v. Romans 2:6-11
  - f. Finally, from verse 1, what reason does Paul give that children should obey their parents?
2. In verses 2 and 3, Paul recalls the ten commandments
    - a. The ten commandments are found in Deuteronomy 5:6-21
    - b. What is the command for children in Ephesians 6:2?
    - c. What is the promise in verse 3?
    - d. Define *honor*
    - e. Why would God tie honoring parents to “living long in the land”?
  3. In verse 4, while still on the topic of children honoring their parents, Paul shifts his focus
    - a. Who does he address in verse 4?
    - b. What is the command he gives them?
    - c. Read Colossians 3:20-21
    - d. Define *provoke* (some translations use *exasperate* or *stir up*, so define whatever word your particular translation uses there)
    - e. Why is it important that he addresses them and not the mothers?
    - f. Whose job is it to lead in this way, and what is that job?
    - g. What does this tell you about God as Father?
      - i. Do another bible search for passages about God as father and write down some of them that give you comfort. Keep these verses in mind as you go through your days!
  4. In verse 5, Paul switches his audience again
    - a. Who is Paul addressing in verse 5?
    - b. Paul brings this up in the context of a marriage relationship and parents and children. Does this seem out of place here? Why do you suppose Paul would address this relationship here as well?
    - c. What is his command for them?
    - d. How are they to do this?
      - i. Colossians 3:22
      - ii. ... *with fear and trembling* ...
        1. 2 Corinthians 7:12-16
        2. Philippians 2:12-13

3. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5
4. Psalm 2:10-12
5. Luke 12:4-7
6. What is the kind of fear and trembling Paul is talking about here?
- iii. ... *with a sincere heart* ...
  1. 1 Timothy 1:3-7
  2. Hebrews 10:19-25
- e. Who are they to serve in this way for ultimately?
5. In verses 6 and 7, Paul gets practical in how this type of service looks
  - a. First, a *not*. What is that not?
    - i. Matthew 6:1-8
    - ii. Matthew 6:16-18
  - b. What does Paul mean by *people pleaser*?
    - i. Galatians 1:6-10
  - c. Rather, how are we to regard ourselves?
    - i. 1 Corinthians 7:20-24
  - d. Who should we seek to please? How can we do this?
    - i. Romans 8:5-8
    - ii. 1 Cor 1:20-24
    - iii. Micah 6:6-8
  - e. ... *doing the will of God from the heart* ...
    - i. What is the will of God?
      1. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18
      2. Romans 12:1-2
      3. Matthew 6:9-13
      4. Romans 9:14-20
  - f. ... *rendering service with a good will* ...
    - i. What does God judge when we do His will – our work or our motives?
    - ii. How is that encouraging to you?
  - g. ... *as to the Lord and not to men*
    - i. Paul puts an exclamation point on how we are to serve, who we are to serve, why we are to serve Him, and for what reason.
    - ii. As you think about what you do, do you believe that you work to serve the Lord in whatever you do? Do you labor for the Lord?
  - h. Read Colossians 3:23
6. In verse 8, Paul encourages the bondservants he is speaking to
  - a. Regardless of how their master treats them, no matter what they do or don't receive from their earthly masters, what do they receive from the Lord?
  - b. What motivation do we have in serving the Lord when times are hard or we are under persecution?
  - c. Paul regards bondservant and free the same way in Christ
    - i. Galatians 3:25-29

- d. Read Psalm 62
- e. Read Colossians 3:24
- 7. Finally, in verse 9, Paul switches his audience one more time
  - a. Who is he addressing now?
  - b. What command does he give them?
  - c. What does he tell them to stop doing?
    - i. Leviticus 25:39-43
    - ii. Colossians 4:1
  - d. Why should they do this?

In this passage, Paul has both told us and shown us how love should manifest itself in our relationships and our service. We cannot serve God without love. But beyond even that, he shows us that true service to God is not so much what we do, but why we do it and who we do it for.

The gospel, at its core, is a victory to proclaim. And the victory we proclaim is Christ and Him crucified.

**1 Corinthians 15:1–11 (1)** Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, **(2)** and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. **(3)** For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, **(4)** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, **(5)** and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. **(6)** Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. **(7)** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. **(8)** Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. **(9)** For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **(10)** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. **(11)** Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed. **(ESV)**

We cannot do God's will without this, we can't even know God's will without this. The gospel is the beginning and end of the Christian life - proclaim the victory and claim the promise, and seek to live and work for Jesus!

## Ephesians 6:10-24

One of the greatest things about studying the bible is that we get to see the heart of God in how He speaks through those who are writing His words. We also get an insight into ourselves because the words we read are the words of the One who created us and knows us perfectly – infinitely better than we know ourselves.

In this letter so far, written to a church 2000 years ago in the city of Ephesus, God (through Paul) has shown us many things about Himself and about us. And He has shown us things about the world we live in that would cause us to despair were it not for the encouragements we have also read in this letter. It

always strikes me at how similar the struggles that the people of God have suffered and endured throughout the millennia are not so different than the things the people of God suffer and endure today.

In this last section, Paul reminds us that we are in a battle, but he also reminds us that we have a victorious King leading us into that battle, and He has fitted us with armor and weapons to aid us as we go!

Welcome to the army!

1. Paul starts verse 10 with the word “finally”. He has made many points throughout this letter, and now, he has one last thing to tell them
  - a. What is Paul’s final command to the Christians at Ephesus?
  - b. Read the following
    - i. Deuteronomy 31:1-8
    - ii. Joshua 1:12-18
    - iii. 1 Chronicles 28:20-21
    - iv. 2 Chronicles 32:1-8
    - v. Psalm 27
    - vi. Psalm 31:21-24
    - vii. Romans 4:18-22
    - viii. 2 Timothy 2:1-2
    - ix. 1 John 2:12-14
  - c. How are we to be strong?
    - i. Read Psalm 28
  - d. In what ways have you been strengthened by God?
2. After Paul tells us to be strong in the Lord, he gives us another command.
  - a. What is this next command?
  - b. Warriors wear armor. Warriors wield weapons. Do you see yourself as a warrior?
  - c. Read
    - i. Romans 7:15-25
    - ii. 2 Corinthians 10:1-6
    - iii. 1 Peter 2:9-12
  - d. What kinds of things are we at war against?
  - e. Why are we to be outfitted for war?
3. In verses 11 and 12, Paul tells us who we are at war against.
  - a. Read 1 Peter 5:8-11
  - b. What kind of enemy do we face?
  - c. Given the readings so far about who and what we are at war with, what kinds of weapons do we need? How can we possibly be victorious?
  - d. Do you see yourself as a target of the devil (or his minions)?
  - e. Have you experienced this kind of attack before? Did you feel equipped to fight it?
  - f. How were you victorious?

4. Remember our discussions about how Jesus was received by His people. What kind of enemy were they expecting Jesus to defeat? How do these few verses describe the enemy Jesus came to defeat?
5. In verse 12, what word does Paul use to describe the kind of fight we are in? What does this word make you think of?
6. Verse 13 starts with *therefore*.
  - a. What is the command Paul gives us after the *therefore*?
  - b. So what is the *therefore* there for?
  - c. Why are we to arm ourselves?
  - d. Read the following
    - i. Psalm 9:7-10
    - ii. Psalm 77:1-3
    - iii. Proverbs 16:4
    - iv. Nahum 1:6-8
    - v. Ephesians 5:15-17
  - e. What does this armor result in for us?
7. Verse 14 begins the description of the armor we have at our disposal
  - a. ... belt of truth (read John 8:31-32; 17:14-19)
  - b. ... breastplate of righteousness (read Isaiah 11:1-5)
  - c. ... shoes of the gospel of peace (read Romans 10:13-15)
  - d. ... shield of faith (read Psalm 91:1-6)
  - e. ... helmet of salvation (read Isaiah 59:16-19)
  - f. ... sword of the spirit (read Hebrews 4:11-13)
  - g. Whose armor is this?
8. Verse 18 tells us how we are to use this armor
  - a. What are we to do to use this armor?
    - i. Mark 13:32-37
    - ii. Romans 8:26
  - b. Part of the battle is praying for one another
    - i. Why would this be so important in our battle?
9. In verse 19, Paul asks for prayer for himself
  - a. What does he request?
  - b. Read Acts 4:23-31
  - c. What is the mystery of the gospel?
10. In verse 20, Paul describes himself
  - a. Define *ambassador*
    - i. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-20
  - b. What does Paul mean that he is *in chains*?
  - c. Paul uses the word *ought* to describe what he needs to do. What does this show you about how he views his mission?
11. As is often true with Paul's writings, he closes with a greeting.
  - a. How can his final greeting be an encouragement to us today?

- b. What stands out to you in his closing?
  - c. Reread Ephesians 1:1-2
    - i. How is Paul's closing similar to his opening?
    - ii. What does Paul start us with?
    - iii. What does Paul leave us with?
12. What must we rely on to win the battle we are in?

Friends, we are in a battle, not against foreign nations, but against something far more sinister. As we read in this section:

***Ephesians 6:12 (12)*** *For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (ESV)*

There are physical battles you will fight for sure. But Paul's main concern is not that someone may slander you, assault you, or even kill you for being a Christian. No, his concern is the spiritual battle that is waged against the forces of evil in the heavenly realms. The war is real.

But the battle is already won.

***John 16:31–33 (31)*** *Jesus answered them, “Do you now believe? (32) Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. (33) I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (ESV)*

And because we need it, God has given us not only the victory in the end, but weapons and armor for the daily battles we fight now. Christian, the battle is already won, but our enemy is still fighting.

And because of that, Paul ends this letter with a great encouragement to the church at Ephesus – an encouragement that we should hold fast to and claim even today – that being that we do not go into the battle neither alone nor unarmed.

There is one final homework assignment for this study, and that is to simply remember what God has done for you, remember what God has provided for you, and keep your eyes on Jesus as your priest, your prophet, and your King. He will never leave you nor forsake you. He will save you to the uttermost as you draw near to Him. He is preparing a place for you in heaven.

And He will return to reign in paradise restored forever.

So, to kick start that, remember what we have read during this study. Think about the things you have learned about God and about yourselves. Remember the encouragements. Remember the struggles. Now, write down some of those things so you can use them as a way to remember all that God has done for you, with you, and through you.

**Deuteronomy 6:4–9** **(4)** *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. (5) You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (6) And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. (7) You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (8) You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. (9) You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (ESV)*

It is good that we remind ourselves of this!