

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

The book of Ephesians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul to the “saints who are in Ephesus.” Several times throughout the letter Paul references his imprisonment so it is widely accepted that he wrote it from a Roman prison around 60 AD.

In the year 51 AD, now on his third missionary journey (Acts 19), we read that Paul first encounters twelve believers at Ephesus that had only known of the baptism of John. Upon hearing this, Paul teaches them about Christ, baptizes them, and lays his hands on them giving them the Holy Spirit. For the next 2 and a half years, Paul finds himself in the Synagogue, the Hall of Tyrannus, and going house to house teaching the Gospel in Ephesus.

It was during this time that Paul developed a deep love and appreciation for the growing church in Ephesus. The city itself was a major city in Paul's day. It housed the temple of Diana and was a major port for trade and commerce. Because of this, Ephesus would become the epicenter for Christianity spreading throughout all of Asia Minor. Despite the idolatry that saturated Ephesus, the Gospel spread quickly throughout the area (Acts 19:21-20:1).

Ephesus is also mentioned in the second chapter of Revelation. There, they are commended for their perserverance and for their commitment to dispelling false teaching. However, at some point they lost that resolve and are condemned for having left their “first love.”

It is in Ephesians that we find the best summary of the letters of Paul. Everything is brought together and made right in the cross of Jesus Christ. Christ has united both Jews and Gentiles giving all of humanity access to the spiritual blessings that are found in Him (Ephesians 2:21-22). The church is the body of Christ and salvation of the body is found in having a relationship with Him (Ephesians 5).

EPHESIANS 1

The Power for Those Who Believe

What major cultural landmark was in Ephesus (refer to the summary on page one)?

How might the culture of Ephesus impact the content of Paul's letter to the Ephesians? What does it mean to be "chosen by God" in verse 4?

What does Paul mean when he writes that we have been "predestined for adoption through Jesus Christ?"

How does the life of someone who has been "predestined for adoption" look different from someone that doesn't believe in God?

How does your life look different from someone that doesn't believe in God?

In verses 15 through 23 Paul describes how he prays for the believers in Ephesus. What are some of the things that he is thankful for?

Who is the head of the church?

What does that mean and how does that impact us today?

Who in your life is most likely to pray for you in the same way that Paul prays for the church in Ephesus? Is there someone in your life that you can give thanks for the way that Paul does for the Ephesians? List their names and take some time to thank God for putting them in your life.

EPHESIANS 2

Unity & Grace Through Faith

How does Paul describe life for someone before they are in Christ (2:1)?

What does he mean when he says, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...”?

According to verse 8, by what are we saved?

How do verses 4-7 connect with Romans 6:1-11?

What two groups of people is Paul referring to in verses 11-16?

Why does Paul spend so much time talking about being one in Christ?

How is the Church divided today?

What can you do to help improve unity in the Church?

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Romans 5:1, 9

1 Corinthians 15:1-5

1 Peter 3:21

Romans 6:1-4

2 Corinthians 7:10

Ephesians 1:7

Each of these passages describes an aspect of how we are saved. How do they fit together and how does Ephesians 1:7 connect with them?

EPHESIANS 3

All In the Family

In chapter 3, Paul shifts gears from talking about unity to the mystery of the gospel. What is the mystery that Paul refers to in verse 3?

Why was it such a big deal that the Gentiles were now fellow heirs with the Jews?

How would you go about explaining the grace of God to someone that had no knowledge of God or the Bible? What would you consider to be the most important thing to share with them? Write down the lyrics to the song, "Listen to Our Hearts." Perhaps those words could be our prayer when we consider the depth of God's grace towards us.

Has there been a time in our country's history when there was animosity between two races of people?

What is the "gospel" that Paul refers to and how can it help in matters of cultural issues like race?

Also in verse 7, Paul says that he has been made a minister according to God's grace. How is God's power and His grace evident in your life?

According to verse 10, what is the role of the church?

Read verses 20-21 again. It has taken Paul three chapters to get to this one statement and this could be considered the most central verse of the letter. If God is truly able to do more than we ever ask of Him or more than we ever think of Him according to His power, then maybe we should be asking more of Him and maybe our requests of Him should be bigger. If you believe that God can use you beyond anything you've ever imagined, take some time to ask Him to ask more of you. Will you answer Him when he does?

EPHESIANS 4

Unity in Our New Lives

How does your attitude towards other people effect your desire for unity in the church? How does your desire for unity compare to Paul's desire for unity?

How do you "bear with one another" in love?

Verse 14 talks about growing up and not being tossed to and fro by "every wind of doctrine." What does that mean?

What are some some human teachings that people try to disguise as teachings of Jesus? List some things that you would consider modern day false teachings.

In verses 15 and 16 Paul outlines his desire for each member of the church to work together and grow up into the head of the church, into Christ. He explains in this that every member of the body adds value to the church. What are some things that you add to the church? List some things that you feel you offer to help the church grow and “build itself up in love.” It can be talents, abilities, special knowledge or interests, or even a certain skill that you have.

The last part of chapter 4 focuses on our actions and how we treat one another. What are some attitudes or actions in your life that you need to change?

Are there people in your life right now that you need to forgive or that you need to ask for their forgiveness? Take a few moments and write down how you are going to reconcile your differences and then take a moment and pray for God to bless your plans to make things right in those situations.

EPHESIANS 5

Love As Christ Has Loved

Chapter 5 begins with Paul telling the Ephesians to “walk in love, as Christ loved us...” How do you walk in love?

Did you know that the Bible talks about perverted jokes? Read verses 3 and 4 and think about your normal day at work or school. Do you encounter any of the things that Paul lists here? Are you a part of some of those things?

What does Paul mean in verses 5 and 6?

Do you think our culture would disagree with Paul that those things are unacceptable?

How does a Christian live in a culture without allowing that culture to completely define what is an acceptable lifestyle?

What does Paul mean in verses 11-12?

What is another verse in the New Testament that talks about walking in light?

How can we make “the best use of the time?”

What does Paul mean by, “the days are evil”?

Why do you think Paul chose the analogy of a husband and wife to describe Christ’s relationship to the church?

Paul talks a lot about submitting to one another. What does it mean to submit to someone/something and why is that so difficult for us to do?

How much of your day is spent serving or submitting to other people? Do you seek out those opportunities or do you avoid them at all costs?

EPHESIANS 6

Submit & Suit Up!

The final chapter of Ephesians begins addressing two groups of people that generally didn't have many rights: children and slaves. Paul says something that would be very uncommon at the time. He states that both children and slaves have rights as well as parents and masters.

What are some common responsibilities of masters and parents?

What are some common responsibilities of children and slaves?

One major theme throughout the book of Ephesians is that because of Christ's death on the cross, there is now no division in the church. All ages, all races, all social classes are united in His church. At this stage of your life, what are some of your responsibilities to the rest of the church?

How has this life stage prepared you to serve in future stages of life?

Starting in verse 10, Paul talks about the armor of God in order to withstand the spiritual attacks of Satan. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 Paul writes that God will not let anyone be tempted beyond what they can bear. Do you believe that?

MAKE THE APPLICATION

Write down the elements of the armor of God that Paul lists in verses 14-18. Explain how each of them help with protecting us against Satan today?

FINAL THOUGHTS

If someone randomly asked you what the book of Ephesians was about, what would you tell them? What are some of the highlights?

What were some of the major themes in Ephesians that had an impact on you?

What is your favorite verse in Ephesians? Why?

Does knowing where Paul was when he wrote this letter change the meaning of his letter? How so?

The book of Ephesians tells us how the church is united together in Christ and because of Christ. Paul challenges his readers to see as God sees, not by race or rank in society but rather by eternal value. It is our prayer that this study has been beneficial to you and helped you grow deeper in your walk with Christ.

-Madison Youth & Family Ministry Team