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# We Are Ephesians



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This study owes several helpful insights to *Ephesians For You* (The Good Book Company, 2015) by Richard Coekin, *The Message of Ephesians* (The Bible Speaks Today Commentaries, 1979) by John Stott, and *Walk This Way: 8 Studies in Ephesians* (Matthias Media, 1995) by Bryson Smith.



# SERIES OVERVIEW

The city of Ephesus, originally a Greek colony, was by the time of the New Testament, the capital of the Roman province of Asia and a busy commercial port. It was located on the Aegean coast in the southwestern corner of present-day Turkey. Roads from the city spread out in every direction along the coast and through the interior of the province. Ephesus was the 3rd largest city in the Roman empire, with an estimated population of 250,000 by the time of early Christianity. Ephesus was also the headquarters of the cult of the goddess Diana (or Artemis) whose temple, was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.



The apostle Paul first visited Ephesus on his 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys (Acts 18-20). It was in Ephesus that Priscilla & Aquila taught Apollos a more complete understanding of God (Acts 18:26). In Ephesus, Paul convinced twelve disciples of John the Baptist to receive Christian baptism (Acts 19:1-4), and he healed many diseases—even through his aprons and handkerchiefs (Acts 19:11-12). According to Acts 19:9, Paul had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus at Ephesus. The seven sons of Sceva attempted to use Jesus' name to conduct their exorcisms in the city (Acts 19:13-17). Newly converted Christians burned their magical books in the town of Ephesus (Acts 19:18-20). The riot of the silversmiths occurs at a theatre in Ephesus (Acts 19:23-40). The riot occurred because Christianity decreased the sales of the cult of Artemis.

Ephesus was the location from which most of Paul's letters originated—1 Corinthians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon, and the largest portion of 2 Corinthians.

## AUTHOR & AUDIENCE

The letter to the Ephesians was written by Paul between AD60-63 when he was imprisoned in Rome (cf. Acts 28:16-31). Some have suggested that the letter wasn't written specifically to the Ephesian Christians but may have been passed around many of the churches in Asia Minor. (cf. Colossians 4:16).

## PURPOSE

Paul wrote Ephesians to mainly Gentile Christians with the intention of informing, strengthening, and encouraging them by assuring them of their place within the gracious, saving purpose of God, and urging them to bring their lives into conformity with this divine plan of summing all things in Christ (1:7-10). Paul wants to 'ground, shape, and challenge' his readers in their faith. *In other words, the main purpose of his letter is 'identity formation.'*"

## STRUCTURE

The first half of Ephesians lists the believer's heavenly possessions in Christ Jesus: adoption, redemption, inheritance, power, life, grace, citizenship, and the love of Christ. There are no imperatives in chapters 1-3, which focus on the divine gifts to the believer. But chapters 4-6 include thirty-five directives that speak of believers' responsibility to conduct themselves according to their calling.

Thus, the two main divisions of the book are the **Position of the Christian (chs. 1-3)**, and the **Practice of the Christian (chs. 4-6)**. We have structured the letter and our series as follows:

### 1. The Position of the Christian: Ephesians 1-3

*Studies 1-4*

### 2. The Practice of the Christian: Ephesians 4-6

*Studies 5-9*

Our prayer is that through these studies we will all grow to become more mature disciples of Christ, secure in our identity as followers of Jesus and sincere in living that out to the glory of our heavenly Father.



# 1 We Are Sons & Daughters

## Ephesians 1:1–23

1. “I AM \_\_\_\_\_”. What are some things you would put in that blank space?

**READ** | Ephesians 1:1-2

2. How are the recipients described? What identity markers are given?

**READ** | Ephesians 1:3-14

3. How does this main section start and end? What does this reveal about the nature and purpose of this opening to the letter?

4. Paul says the Ephesians have been blessed in the heavenly realms with ‘every spiritual blessing in Christ’. What do you think this means?

5. List out the different ‘spiritual blessings’ we have according to Paul? Why does he list so many rather than just mention a couple?

6. What role does Jesus have in our spiritual blessings?

7. What do you think it means to be 'in Christ'?
  
8. *Predestined* or *chosen* appears a few times in the passage:
  - When were we predestined or chosen?
  
  - On what basis were we predestined or chosen?
  
  - What are we predestined or chosen for?
  
9. What is our primary identity in this opening chapter of Ephesians?

## REFLECTION & RESPONSE

10. If we are so 'blessed', why is that we so often feel discontent in our lives?
  
11. How can knowing you are a son or daughter of God (by adoption) help you?
  
12. Considering what God has done, how should we respond?



*Finish by reading and praying the prayer of Paul in vv.15-23.*

**REMEMBER** | Ephesians 1:3

Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens.



# 2 We Are Made Alive

## Ephesians 2:1–10

1. Brainstorm movies/books that are a ‘rags to riches’ story. What do you find compelling about these stories?

Our story as Christians is fundamentally a ‘rags to riches’ story.

**READ** | Ephesians 2:1–3

2. How does Paul describe the Ephesians before they became Christians?

3. What are some of the ‘ways of this world’, and who is the ‘ruler who exercises authority over the lower heavens’?

**READ** | Ephesians 2:4–7

4. How does Paul describe the Ephesians after they became Christians?

5. What does it mean that the Ephesians are ‘seated [with Jesus] in the heavens’? (cf. Romans 6 and Colossians 3).

**READ** | Ephesians 2:8–10



6. Paul says in v.8 that this 'rags to riches' transformation is because of *grace*. What does *grace* mean?

7. What would Paul say to someone who says that 'grace' is primarily God's infusing us with power to be the good people he wants us to be (cf. the 'good works' of v.10)?

8. What is the relationship between Faith & Grace and Good Works in salvation?

## REFLECTION & RESPONSE

9. What are some of the solutions that people suggest to fix problems in their life or others or the world? What do you think Paul would say?

10. Where would you be now if God had not intervened in your life and made you alive in Christ?

11. If the people of our world (without Christ) are fundamentally dead, how can our evangelism be effective? What must we do?

- Think about and write down the names of 2 people, who need to be made alive by Christ and pray for them.

12. What are the good works that God has prepared in advance for you to do?

**REMEMBER** | Ephesians 2:4-5

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions — it is by grace you have been saved.



# 3

## We Are Joined Together

Ephesians 2:11–22

1. Make a list of some people groups in our world that are hostile to one another.

- Are there people or social groups you find difficult to understand or get along with?

In Paul's world there was only 2 categories of people: Jews & Gentiles. There was no love lost between the two of them. Until . . .

**READ** | Ephesians 2:11–12

2. How does Paul describe the Ephesians before they became Christians?

3. What are the 'covenants of the promise'? What used to be the Ephesians' relationship to these?

**READ** | Ephesians 2:13–18

4. How does Paul describe the Ephesians after they became Christians?

5. What has Jesus done and how did he do it?

6. What does it mean that 'In His flesh, He made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations'?

**READ | Ephesians 2:19–22**

7. What is the result of this new peace for the Gentile Ephesians?

8. What is the significance of using the 'temple' (vv.21–22) as an illustration of this new reality?

9. What is crucial if God's people or the church is to have strong foundations?

**REFLECTION & RESPONSE**

10. Our world has so many broken relationships and hostilities. What are some of the solutions provided by people? What solution would Paul suggest?



**11.** What things can threaten the unity we have in our church/group today?

**12.** Given what we have seen in Ephesians 2, what place is there for difference of opinion or even denominations in the life of God's people?

**13.** What part can you play in overcoming these tensions? How?

**REMEMBER** | Ephesians 2:19

So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household.

# 4 We Are Loved

## Ephesians 3:1–21

1. What place does 'love' have in our world? What are some of the helpful and unhelpful ways our culture talks and thinks about love?

Paul begins this section with the words *For this reason*. His identity as one saved by grace has led to his role as a now-imprisoned apostle of Christ Jesus. Nevertheless, Paul knows he is deeply loved by God – and he wants the Ephesians (and every Christian believer) to know that this is true of them too.

**READ** | Ephesians 3:1–13

2. List as many things as you can concerning the 'mystery' which Paul writes about in these verses. How does this help us understand what Paul means by the word?

3. Paul mentions 'grace' at several points. What is he referring to?

4. Who do you think are 'the rulers and authorities in the heavens' (v.10)? (See also 2:2 and 6:12)

**READ** | Ephesians 3:14–21



5. What does Paul pray for the Ephesians?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Paul specifically mentions the three persons of the Trinity. What distinctive things does he say of each?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What does it mean to be 'rooted and firmly established in love' (v.17)?

## REFLECTION & RESPONSE

8. To whom is God calling you to proclaim his 'mystery'? How might you do this?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What sort of features would characterise a person who is 'rooted and established in love'? Try to be as specific as possible.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. How can we help each other 'to comprehend [...] the length and width, height and depth of God's love' for us in Christ/the Messiah?



**11.** If you truly believe vv.20–21, what difference will it make to your prayer life?

*Think of some Christians you know – either here at Minchinbury or elsewhere – and pray for them the way Paul does for the Ephesians.*

**REMEMBER** | Ephesians 3:17–19

I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, and to know the Messiah's love that surpasses all knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.



# 5 We Are Being Built Up

## Ephesians 4:1–16

1. Have you ever been part of a group that *wasn't* united and committed to each other? What was it like?
  - Have you ever been part of a group that *was* united and committed to each other? What was it like?

Having explained to the Ephesians in chapters 1–3, about their POSITION as Christians *in Christ*, he now describes their PRACTICE as Christians *in Christ*.

**READ** | Ephesians 4:1–6

2. What is the calling the Ephesians/we have received (v.1)? What are the ways Paul suggests we can live a life worthy of our calling?
3. Paul speaks in v.3 about 'unity in the Spirit'. In what ways are we already united? What does it mean to 'keep the unity of the Spirit'?
4. How do the attitudes expressed in the previous verse assist with this command?

**READ** | Ephesians 4:7–13

5. Given what Paul has said about unity in vv.1-6, what potential misunderstanding of this doctrine might Paul be addressing in these verses?
  
6. What specific gifts are mentioned in v.11? Why are these gifts essential to the life of the church?
  
7. What is the purpose of Christians exercising their 'gifts'?

**READ** | Ephesians 4:14-16

8. What different illustrations does Paul use to describe a mature church? How do the illustrations work?
  
9. What does Paul say are the core elements to a growing and healthy church? How are they related?

**REFLECTION & RESPONSE**

10. Why is it that so often our differences tend to divide churches rather than enhance churches? How can we help each other to maintain the unity of the Spirit?



**11.** 'You can be a Christian without going to church'. What would you suggest to somebody who said this?

**12.** How can we discover the part that God wants us to play in the body of Christ?

**13.** How can you better use the gifts God has given you for the building up of the church? Are there any needs in Minchinbury Anglican that you think you could help fill? How might you go about that?

**REMEMBER** | Ephesians 4:16

From Him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.

# 6

## We Are Not Who We Once Were

Ephesians 4:17–32

1. When was the last time you bought some new clothes? What did you buy and how did it make you feel?

- In what way does our clothing say something about our identity?

In Ephesians 4:16–5:20 Paul encourages Christians to live in a way that matches our new identity in Christ.

**READ** | Ephesians 4:17–19

2. How does Paul say Christians are no longer to ‘walk’ (i.e. live)?

3. Why do the Gentiles ‘walk’ this way? What does Paul say is the result of their walking this way?

**READ** | Ephesians 4:20–32

4. In v.22 Paul shifts the imagery from walking to wearing. List what Christians are called to put off and put on. What does each of these mean?



5. What do you think it means to 'grieve God's Holy Spirit' (v.30)?
  
6. What does this tell us about the Holy Spirit, and what comfort is there here?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. In v.32 what is the Christian's basis for 'forgiving one another'?

## REFLECTION & RESPONSE

8. Is there any one verse that stands out from this section for you? Why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How have you experienced the Spirit helping you to take off your 'old self' and wear your 'new self'? How has doing so changed your life for the better?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. When do you find it easier to live as a chameleon (i.e. blending in with the surrounding 'Gentile' culture, as it were)? What would it look like to be Christ-like in that situation instead?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Consider vv.26-27. What are some practical ways we can follow Paul's advice here?

**REMEMBER** | Ephesians 4:22–24

You took off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires [...] You put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of truth.



# 7

## We Are Children of the Light

Ephesians 5:1–21

1. What are some traits/habits you have picked up from your parents/family?
  - Are there any traits/habits you've actively tried to pick up or actively tried to avoid picking up? Why?

**READ** | Ephesians 5:1–7

2. In these verses Paul changes images from clothing to family likeness. What is the 'way' of the family of God? What *does* it look like? What *doesn't* it look like?
3. What reasons does Paul give for turning away from sin in these verses? Why are these reasons important?

**READ** | Ephesians 5:8–14

4. What new image is used here to describe our new life in Christ?
  - What do you associate with the image of darkness and light?



5. What is involved with living as children of the light?

6. How can we find out what pleases the Lord (v.10)?

### READ | Ephesians 5:15-20

7. What is the final image Paul uses to describe our new life Christ?

8. The primary way to be wise is to be filled with the Spirit. What are the marks of the Spirit-filled Christian according to these verses?

### REFLECTION & RESPONSE

9. Summarise the different motivations Paul uses to encourage this new Christian lifestyle? Which one encourages you the most?

10. Which of the images or commands do you find most difficult? Why?

11. How can Christians help each other to be like Christ?



12. If we're saved by grace anyway, why does any of this matter?

**REMEMBER** | Ephesians 5:8

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.

# 8

## We Are Sacrificial and Humble

Ephesians 5:22–6:9

1. What does our society teach us about marriage, children, and work? Where do you see weaknesses in the prevailing views?

In Ephesians 5:21–6:9 Paul encourages Christians to see how their new life 'in Christ' should affect some of the most important relationships in life.

READ | Ephesians 5:21

2. According to this verse, what is the basic principle for Christian relationships?

- What do you think it means? Why are we to have this attitude?

READ | Ephesians 5:22–33

3. How should Christian wives relate to their husbands? What do you think this means?

4. Does submission mean inferiority and headship mean superiority? How does the triune relationship between Jesus and the Father help us here?



5. How should Christian husbands relate to their wives? What example does Paul give?

- How might a husband's love make a wife's submission not just possible but a joy?

**READ | Ephesians 6:1–4**

6. What commands does Paul give to children and parents? Why?

7. Why do you think Paul specifically mentions 'Fathers' in v.4? Can it be applied to mothers?

**READ | Ephesians 6:5–9**

8. What different responsibilities does Paul outline for slaves and masters?

9. What might be a modern-day equivalent of the relationship between slaves and masters? How might this passage be used for these relationships?

**REFLECTION & RESPONSE**

**10.** What feature is common in all the relationships mentioned in Ephesians 5:21-6:9?

**11.** What are some specific day-to-day ways:

- a husband can lay down his life for his wife?
  
- a wife can submit to her husband's love?

**12.** How do you think a Christian married couple should work through disagreement (both trivial and substantial, e.g. holiday destination, where to live, schooling of children)?

**13.** Is ever right to disobey your parents, or your boss at work? Under what circumstances? How?

*There may be people in the group facing some hard issues at home and work at the moment; perhaps make these the focus of your prayer time.*

**REMEMBER** | Ephesians 5:21

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.



# 9

## We Are Soldiers

Ephesians 6:10–22

1. What do you think might be the attitude towards war from the following perspective?

*Soldier*

*Politician*

*Movie Goer*

*Gamer*

In Ephesians 6:10–24 Paul wants Christians to be under no illusion that their new life in Christ will be an easy life. In fact, it will be a battlefield!

**READ** | Ephesians 6:10–12

2. What principle do these verses reveal is important in fighting the battle?

3. How does our society think about dark spiritual forces? Why are we to think differently?

4. Why do you think these powers of darkness want to wage war on us? What are some of Satan's 'tactics' (e.g. what has Paul focussed on in this letter)?

**READ** | Ephesians 6:13–17

5. List the equipment that God gives us in our battle. What does each represent?
6. Why is the Word of God our offensive weapon? How does it work?

**READ** | Ephesians 6:18–24

7. Who does Paul want the Ephesians to pray for and what does he want them to pray?
8. What does it mean to pray 'in the Spirit'?
9. Why is prayer such a vital component in our battle?

**REFLECTION & RESPONSE**

10. What are some of the reasons why someone might abandon the faith?

**11.** Where have you seen the arrows of the evil one attacking you?

**12.** What hope and encouragement do we have as we fight this spiritual battle?

**13.** From these studies on Ephesians, what have you learnt about God, Jesus, and yourself? What is one thing that has stuck out to you and what is one thing you would like to do as a result?

**REMEMBER** | Ephesians 6:11

Put on the full armour of God, so that you can stand against the tactics of the devil.