

Ephesians: Intro

Introduction

About the city of Ephesus

Ephesus was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia. It was a port city, therefore it had become a center for international trade. Many people would come in and out. It was a melting pot of sorts for that time probably. It was also the home to the Temple of Artemis (or Diana) which was considered one of the seven wonders of the world. It was also the home of a Greek theatre/stadium, which could hold up to 50,000 people.

The Church in Ephesus

The beginning of the church in Ephesus is given in Acts 19. Read Acts 19:8-20. The church was planted by Paul on his 3rd missionary journey. He spent over 2 years there and this time was extremely effective and controversial. It is considered one of the biggest revivals of all time. During Paul's ministry there extraordinary and miraculous things happened—the sick were cured, demons were cast out, converted pagans burned their books of magic. Eventually a riot broke out in Ephesus over Paul and his ministry because it was hurting the business of the local cults.

Ephesians

This letter was written by Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit while Paul was in jail. This letter is one of the only Epistles, if not the only Epistle, that was written without a specific situation in mind. It is believed that it was written as a circular letter intended to be read by all the churches in Asia minor.

General Outline

	Section 1	Section 2
	Ch 1-3	Ch 4-6
Focus:	Doctrine	Ethics
Style:	Preaching	Teaching
Topics:	The new life In a new society	The new standards and and the new relationships
Tone:	These are the facts of our new situation	This is what we must do in light of this new reality
Concern:	The Christian faith	The Christian life

The book of Ephesians moves from theory to practice; from doctrine to duty; from what God has done to what we are to do.

Week 1: What We Have “in Him”

Read Chapter 1:1-14

How quickly we forget what is ours when we become followers of Jesus. We tend to look at the trees that are directly in front of us instead of step back and look at the whole forest. Paul delighted in reminding the believers about the spiritual blessings that were theirs because they belonged to Christ.

Verses 3-14 in the original Greek are one long sentence.

According to verses 3-6 what blessings are ours from the Father?

What blessings, according to verses 7-12 do we have in Jesus Christ?

What blessings do we receive through the Holy Spirit(v13-14)?

Three important word pictures in this passage:

Adoption—This was a common Roman (but not Jewish) custom in which a child given ALL the rights of the adoptive family by grace, not by merit (or birth).

Redemption—The setting free (originally of prisoners or slaves) by payment of a ransom (in this case, Jesus’ death in place of the sinner).

Seal—A mark placed by an owner on a package, a cow, a slave, etc. It is also like a king used to put his seal or insignia on a letter showing that it was from the king. In the Old Testament, this seal was circumcision for Christians today the Holy Spirit is our seal.

Which one of these is most significant to you? Explain.

Notice the repeated phrase, “to the praise of His glory” in verse 5-6, 12, 14. What do you think it means to live “to the praise of His glory”?

How does your life need to change so that you are living to the praise of God's glory?

Ephesians 1:15-23

"For this reason....I have not stopped giving thanks for you", what do you think the reason is?

He knew the fullness of what they had received when they got saved—all the spiritual blessings we just talked about and that caused him to give thanks!

Why would the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation (v17) help the Ephesians to know God better?

God uses the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself to us further and there are certain things we just can't know in the natural but they are revelations (like Jesus being the Son of God)—we need God to give us revelation, even as we read the Word—The Spirit is our counselor and teacher.

*****The whole Goal of the Christian life is summed up here—To know/experience God better/more fully*****

What are the 3 things that Paul specifically prays that the church would know about their salvation?

- 1) The hope to which they have been called—the past—God called us out of something (death) into a the eternal kind of life!
- 2) The glorious inheritance of the saints.—the future—Inheritance of heaven!
- 3) His incomparably great power for those who believe.—the present—Power for today.
- 4)

Why is the resurrection and ascension such a vivid demonstration of divine power?

It is an example of how God's power can take a life that is dead and give it new life. That is probably the ultimate show of power. If He can do that, He can do anything.

DO THIS: Pair up with someone else and pray for them that God would: 1) give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Him better, 2) would open the eyes of their heart so they might realize the hope to which they have been called, the glorious inheritance that awaits them, and the power they have to live today!

Pray this for that person through out the week!

Week Two: Our Heavenly Makeover

Share Question:

What's the best gift that you have ever received?

What do you think your life would be like right now if you would not have become a Christian?

Verses 1-3

How does the Bible describe the condition of fallen humanity?

Dead in transgressions and sins

In what ways are we truly dead? In the sphere that really matters supremely—the soul or spirit—there is no life an you can tell it.

What symptoms of being “dead in transgressions and sins” do you see in those you know are not Christians?

Under the rule of the ruler of the kingdom of the air

(May ask whose rule are those who are separated from Christ under?)

The spirit of this Kingdom is at work in those who are disobedient! Those who have not been redeemed off the slavery block by Christ (last weeks lesson talked about) are still slaves to this ruler.

They are by nature objects of wrath

What does this mean?

Verses 4-10

In contrast to the desperate fallen condition of human beings, what has God done for us?

He has made us alive! (We were dead) Raised us with Christ and seated us with

Him in the heavenly realms.

What does it mean to be made alive in Christ? We are regenerated—We

now have a different Spirit at work in us—The Holy Spirit.

What does it mean that we are seated with Christ in the Heavenly realms?

(Maybe ask this question, depending on time) We are seated in a place of authority(the right hand of God—a place of authority more than an physical location)—we now have authority over the ruler of the air! It is also a place of blessing. We go from being objects of wrath to objects of God's blessing.

What was God's motive in making us alive (v4)?

Love

According to verses 8-9 by what means does salvation come?

Grace!

What does grace mean? How would you define grace?

God's Riches At Christ's Expense

God's unmerited favor

Getting something that we don't deserve—mercy-not getting what we do deserve

Phillip Yancey—"There is nothing we can do to make God love us more, there is

nothing we can do to make God love us less"

Grace is what separates Christianity from all other religions in the world!

How do we receive this grace?

Faith—How would you define really faith? Putting trust in Jesus (more than

intellectual ascent). Trusting Him with our past, present and future.

What is the relationship between grace and good works?

Although good works do not save a person, they do flow from that person as a

result of salvation. There is a big difference between being a result verses the

cause!

Why can't man be saved by good works? By his own acts of goodness?

We need to remember we are in our fallen state by nature objects of wrath—we

are deserving of wrath, not to mention dead! The simple fact is doing good things can't make the dead alive!

(Use illustration of a pillar and where we rank on that pillar—we are all in the

same boat—we fall short of God's glory! His standard is far to high. One of the keys to understanding it all is understanding just how Holy God is. We could never match up to that)

What is the key to fulfilling our destiny according to verse 10?

It is interesting that the key to fulfilling the purposes which we were created for

rests in us being "in Christ". We can only fulfill the totality of our destiny in Christ.

We are His workmanship—His work of art or masterpiece.

What good works do you personally feel God may have in mind for you?

What has hindered you from doing these?

Week Three: The Church

Background for you to know & tell your small group:

Ephesians 2:11-22

V12-13

Former state: (Apparently some 2nd generation Gentile Christians were forgetting what it was like before their conversion to Christ.)

Separated from Christ (Messiah)—no expectation of Messiah to light up their darkness.

No rights of citizenship in His kingdom.

They lived in a world devoid of hope

They were ignorant of God and didn't believe in Him, so they were without Him.

Redeemed state:

In Christ—you have been brought near. Imagine going from outside and a long way away to being brought in to the inner circle.—this happened through the atonement.

We see this mentioned again in verse 17.

V14

We see that Jesus draws men to God and to each other in his own person.

He himself will be our peace (Micah 5:5) Shalom—not just lack of conflict but also wholeness.

New Humanity—He made the two one.—He produced a greater, not bringing one up to the level of the other. “As if one should melt down one statue of silver and another of lead and the two together should come out gold” Chrysostom.

V17-18

What unites us—the Holy Spirit is greater than what used to divide us!

V19—They all share the same privileges of God's new people as fellow citizens.

Cornerstone—refers to the capstone or binding stone that holds the whole structure together. It covered the right angle joining the two walls and often a royal name was inscribed on it. In the East it was considered even more important than the foundation.

The temple picture surely refers to the Jewish Temple imagery, but also we must remember that Ephesus was the place of the Temple of Artemis, one of the 7 wonders of the world....we are the church and the true temple. Not a building but a new humanity that live out the gospel as a family in which God dwells by His Spirit.

Text Questions:

What 2 or 3 adjectives come to mind when you think about the church?

Where do you think Christianity would be today if not for the church/ organized religion?

What does the word church really mean?

Called out ones. Called out of the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

Read Verses 11-18 (Christ brings reconciliation not only to God but to each other)

According to verses 11 and 12 what was the situation between the Jews and Gentiles before Jesus?

What dividing wall in our world would you most like to see come down?

In verses 1-10 we saw how Christ reconciles us to God, in these verses what other type of reconciliation do we see happens through Christ?

We are to be reconciled to one another.

How have you found that being reconciled to God through Christ affects your being reconciled to others? Are there any relationships that are different because of Christ.

What happens when you become a Christian that allows you to have better relationships?

What qualities as Christians should we possess that helps make reconciliation possible? *Grace—to him who much is given much is expected, forgiveness, love unconditionally, compassion.*

How well do you feel you do in these areas? Living a life of grace? Forgiveness? Compassion?

What relationships in your life do you need to let Christ knock down walls and do a work of reconciliation?

How do the images Paul uses in verses 19-22 emphasize the unity Christians have with one another?

Fellow Citizens—all have equal rights, we don't have to protect our own little kingdom, we are now in God's kingdom. We are all on the same team.

What is the difference between people who are great athletes who still want to play for their own fame/glory and athletes who are team players? There

is synergy, and the team players will win. How could the church be stronger if we took this approach with our Christian lives and not just focused on ourselves.

Same household—Family of God—The intimate relationships that we should have with others in the church. Instead we see sibling rivalries.

Temple—cooperation and dependence on one another (joined together used of a mason to describe how 2 bricks were joined together tightly.)

How does this differ from what you typically see in the Church? Why?

How can we make a difference?

Read Chapter 3:1-13

Exegesis on 1-13

This section is about Paul's imprisonment as it starts with talking about it and then ends with his suffering on their behalf. V2-12 is a digression into his call to the Gentiles and the implications of what God is doing in redeeming Gentiles and forming one new humanity.

He was not a prisoner of Nero or of Jews, but of Christ! He saw it as a mark of his apostleship.

V2 Administration—usually equivalent to stewardship or task. He is not referring to saving grace, but to the equipment that enabled him to fulfill his calling as a missionary to the Gentiles.

V8 All though I am least among all of God's people this grace was given me: I think this must be referring to the fact that Paul persecuted the church before his conversion. To touch the Lord's anointed was to touch God's property and to touch what was sacred and this brought the Lord's wrath in the OT as we see in the David story, his refusal to touch Saul and then what happened to Uzzah. So Paul looks at how he touched/persecuted the Lord's anointed, meaning the church, and how this was such a horrible sin that brought God's wrath, but God showed him mercy and revealed Jesus to him and saved him, the worst of sinners, or the least of God's people.

V10 The ultimate goal for creation and for redemption was to put God's glory and wisdom on display. Now the angelic hierarchy (whether fallen or not is not clear but I think it is the fallen because of ch 6:12) see the glory of God and His wisdom on display through the church! The church becomes the mirror through which they see God's glory.

As my commentary says "Manifold" is a poetical adjective meaning "very varied". Euripides used it of multi colored cloth and Eubulus of flowers. Now it is used of geology, of assorted crystals. The wisdom of God displayed in creation and embodied in Christ is a many-splendored thing, iridescent with constantly unfolding beauties.

V12—in freedom—not on our own merits but in Christ...freedom literally means "tell all" and we can have confidence because of Christ, not of ourselves, but in Christ and his sacrifice.

V13 refers back to v1.

According to verses 10-11, what purposes does God have for the church?

We are God's trophy to all the supernatural powers themselves. Manifold literally means multicolored—it was used to describe the color found in a greek

flower garden. As Paul has been talking about the wonder of the multiethnic church. How traditional enemies could be drawn together.

How does your attitude toward the church compare and contrast with Paul's?

Some people construct a Christianity, which consists entirely of a personal relationship to Jesus Christ and has virtually nothing to do with the church. Others make a grudging concession to the need for church membership, but they add that they have given up on the church as hopeless. Every church in every place at every time is in need of reform and renewal. But we need to beware lest we despise the church of God and are blind to his work in history—John Stott

What is the significance of Paul's reference to experiencing the love of Christ "together with all the saints"?

Knowing the love of Christ is vital to the whole church. Christ's love cannot, by definition, be known in isolation. Love, to be love, must be experienced and expressed. Love is the fuel by which the church is sustained and grows.

Application Questions:

In what specific ways are you encouraged and motivated by verses 20-21? How can you incorporate these this week?

Remembering this passage - spiritually speaking, how has your week gone and what can we pray for?

(More Notes on Ephesians)

The closing prayer to the first half of Ephesians

Trinitarian aspect

V16 Strength of the Spirit

V17 indwelling of Christ

V19 fullness of God

He is praying that they would appropriate their spiritual privileges to the full.

“Before” is a face to face preposition applicable to an intimate relationship.

Rooted and established in love—2 metaphors—One is of a tree with deep roots in the soil of love. The other picture is of a building with strong foundations laid on the rock of love. (Obviously it is speaking of the love of Christ)

Together with all the saints—in this letter concerned with the church and unity we must not let the corporate aspect of spiritual experience to be overlooked.

To grasp—literally to hold as ones own!—here is means to perceive and comprehend.

Quote from commentary “It is wide enough to reach the whole world and beyond (1:10). It is long enough to stretch from eternity to eternity (1:4-6) It is high enough to raise both Gentiles and Jews to heavenly places in Christ Jesus (1:13, 2:6). It is deep enough to rescue people from sin’s degradation and even from the grip of Satan himself. (2:1-5) The love of Christ is the love he has for the church as a united body (5:25,29-30) and for those who trust in him as individuals (3:17)

V19—He wants them to know (experience) a love that is ultimately surpasses knowledge. To overflow with the reality of God in their life!

V20—Doxology—the climax of the first half of Ephesians, perhaps the peak of the whole letter. And then it starts to concentrate on the practical outworkings.

Immeasurably more—God’s capacity to meet his people’s spiritual needs far exceeds anything they can either request in prayer or conceive by way of anticipation. I would also say to meet any of their needs.

He hits on themes already touched on—the abundance of God’s gifts, the power made available to the Christian, and the indissoluble like between Christ and the church.

The end of redemption is the glory of God!

Week 4: Unity and Uniqueness

Share: On a scale of 1-10, how had your spiritual life been the last few weeks?
Why? What has made it good or bad?
What themes has God been speaking to you?
How can we pray for you?

STUDY:

While Ephesians 1-3 provides a doctrinal foundation, Ephesians 4-6 shows in practical detail how to live out the Christian life. Paul now considers the quality of life that is demanded of believers individually and in the fellowship of Christ's church. We see a transition from the explanation of God's new society to its standards; from mind stretching theology to its down to earth concrete implications in everyday living.

Text Questions

How do you think unity is different from uniformity?

Unity is a picture of people who are not all alike but rally behind something very specifically or even share something in common. Uniformity is a picture of everyone being like the next person and no diversity.

Read 4:1-6

What does Paul BEG the Ephesians to do?

Live a life worthy of the calling

From verse 2 what are some characteristics of a life that is worthy of our calling?

How would you define them or how are they lived out?

Humility—in greek culture humility was not a virtue. It was viewed as cringing subservience. Humility is to be understood as the absence of pride and self assertion.

Gentleness—a quality of a strong personality who is nevertheless master of himself and the servant of others.

Patient—slowness in avenging the wrong or retaliating when hurt by another.

Bearing with one another in love—loving each other enough to tolerate each others faults.

Why are these virtues so important for maintaining unity?

Which do you demonstrate the best? Which would you like to see develop in your life?

Paul tells us to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in v3. In Greek it is a call for continuous, diligent activity. Why would Paul urge the Ephesians to make every effort just before he makes such a strong statement about being one?

Read 4:7-16

Summary of verses 7-10: In 2:1-10, Paul discussed saving grace. Here, his focus is on the grace by which these redeemed men and women serve Christ and his church (serving grace). In verse 8 Paul quotes Psalm 68:18, which describes the triumphal procession of a conquering Jewish king up Mt. Zion and into Jerusalem. The king is followed by a procession of prisoners in chains. As He marches up the hill, He is given gifts of tribute and in turn disperses gifts from His victory. Paul uses this verse to describe Christ's ascension into heaven. The captives which follow along behind him are principalities and powers which He has defeated (Colosians 2:15). The gifts which the conquering Christ disperses are gifts of ministry given to His followers.

Verse 11 gives us an example of some of the gifts/graces that Jesus gives people in the Body focusing on some of the gifts that have to do with the ministry of the Word. What does it say the primary purposes of these gifts are? So how would you describe the job of a Pastor?

What is the result of all believers being equipped and serving?

What is something that you would like to be equipped to do and then do for the Body?

What does it mean to "speak the truth in love"? How does that differ from just speaking the truth?

According to this passage what is the problem with trying to live the Christian life apart from the church? In what ways do we need others.

Application Question:

Who is one person who you would really like to see come to know Christ that we can pray for each week?

Week 5: Something Old, Something New

Share Question: If you were hooked up to a truth detector and asked the question, “how are you doing, really?” what would you say?

Text & Text Questions

This study continues to talk about what it means to live a life worthy of the calling. (It starts by saying that we are to live differently than other people)

Verse 18 says the Gentiles are afflicted with a spiritual condition known as hardness of heart.

What are the effects of this condition?

Loss of sensitivity....this is a key to living a holy life, being sensitive to the leading and conviction of the Holy Spirit.

How do people develop hard hearts? What are steps in our lives that might indicate movement toward a hard heart?

When we ignore the conviction of the Holy Spirit we develop a calloused heart which is what the word hard means—callous. By letting unholy things dwell in our minds that do not honor God, this causes us to lose sensitivity, then when we ignore what sensitivity we do have it becomes fainter and fainter until our hearts are hard and we don't even feel conviction or that there is anything wrong with our actions when we sin.

How have your attitudes and thoughts changed since you have turned your life over to God? *(For example towards money, or towards women, or towards priorities or just life in general, etc.)*

How do your attitudes affect the way you live (v.23)?

Our attitude is our outlook on life. Charles Swindoll says “The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts, it is more important than the past, is more important than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the past. We cannot change the fact that people will act a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we do is play the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it.

What are some attitudes that we need to develop in our lives? Attitude of gratitude, servant hood, etc.

In verses 25-32 what does Paul tell us to put off, what does he say to put on, and what reason does he give for doing these things? (If not specifically stated fill in what is implied)

Verses	Sin to put off	Positive Command	Reason
4:25			
4:26-27			
4:28			
4:29-30			
4:31-32			

How are you at putting v29 into practice (even during the past week)?

Application Question:

Of all the commands given here for Christian living, which seems to be the major command God is challenging you with in your life? How can we partner with you in prayer to address this even tonight? (Maybe pray & share in partners)

Week 6: A Thankful Heart & Mind

Share:

Does anyone have any thoughts or situations from this last week that they would like to share about concerning our exercise of having a new attitude this week?

*Start by doing the chart left over from last week.

Text & Text Questions:

How would you summarize verses 1-2? We are to imitate God and live lives of love.

What behaviors does Paul condemn in Verses 3-4? Why?

He condemns sexual immorality, impurity or greed.

(Why does he say not even a hint?)

What does verse 4 and 20 say about how we should live our lives?

Thanksgiving

What are some things that we tend to take for granted?

Bed, sunshine, freedom, water, our health—everything is so perfect for us to experience health.

Why do you think the poorest people in the world are often the most grateful?

Many times we bind people by our expectations on them. Then when people or God does do something for us it is hard to have a grateful heart, because we expected it. This generation is one of the most blessed generations, but also one of the least grateful—this is due to their high expectations or feeling of entitlement that they have. Some of the most grateful people in the world are those who have the least—because they don't have an entitlement mentality.

What are some of the results of being ungrateful?

Cynicism—become very cynical, discontent, doubt God and His goodness, breeds pride, you will probably become very critical—share the truth to hurt, decrease your revelation of God, hurt your relationships.

What are some of the blessings of being thankful?

2 Cor 4:15,

Psalms 69:30-31,

1 Thess 5:18

Builds our faith

Keeps us from being cynical

Glorifies God

Brings joy to God (Ps 69) more than sacrifice

It is God's will for our lives (1 Thess 5:18)

Makes us more depended on God—humble yourself and God will exalt you.

Application Question:

How can we make giving *thanks* a normal part of our day?

Conclude by writing thank-you notes to God or other people they can give them to.