

## **Ephesians Bible Studies – Leader Notes**

---

The following 10 studies are looking at the key themes of Ephesians and how we can apply these themes to our lives today. As you go through the series think:

- What do we learn about God?
- What do we learn about the people in the passage?
- And how can we apply what we learn to ourselves as individuals and as part of the body of Christ?

The first study is on Acts 19 to help give us context for Ephesians.

### **Biblical Background of Ephesians and the lead up to Acts 19**

In the beginning, God created the world. The world he created was good. In Genesis 1:26, God said “Let us make mankind in our image ...”. Us? God is Trinity; equal and perfectly one, but three persons, with different roles. “So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27). Humans lived directly in God’s presence in the Garden of Eden, in harmony with each other and with creation. However, in Genesis 3, the serpent (Satan), tempted Adam and Eve to eat from the tree God had commanded them not to eat from. As a result, humans were kicked out of the garden (out of God’s direct presence), and sin had entered the world as well as death, the punishment for sin. All relationships then became more difficult: between God and people; each other; and people and creation.

In Genesis 3:15 we see the first sign of hope, that God has not forgotten about the people he made. Evil will be defeated. But in Genesis 4-11 we see a continual repeat of Genesis 3, humans sinning and God punishing them. At the tower of Babel, humanity decides to build a tower to the heavens, to make a name for themselves (Genesis 11). But the Lord confused their languages and scattered them. In effect, God here creates the nations.

But how is God going to reverse the effects of the fall in Genesis 3? In Genesis 12:1-3 God makes promises to Abraham:

- To give Abraham’s descendants land
- To make his descendants into a great nation
- To make Abraham’s name great
- Bless his descendants and through them all the world

So Abraham is promised land, descendants to be blessed and to be a blessing to all nations. What has Abraham done to deserve this? Nothing. As God promised, Abraham has descendants, who due to famine, then go to Egypt. In Egypt, over many generations, they become as numerous as the stars in the sky. Pharaoh sees them as a threat and enslaves them and oppresses them. God hears the cries of his people and sends many signs and wonders to convince Pharaoh to let his people go to worship him. Finally, God sends death to all the firstborn in Egypt but saves the Israelite firstborn by the sacrifice of a lamb at Passover. The Israelites are saved from Egypt and Moses leads them to Mount Sinai, where they again are in God’s presence.

At Mount Sinai, God tells the people to obey Him; that they are to be “my treasured possession”, “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:4-6). He will take them to the land he promised Abraham and there they will live under his Law and be an example to the nations. He also commands Moses to make a tabernacle, in which God’s presence will dwell and lead them to the land. God teaches them how to be holy and be acceptable to him through sacrifices for sin.

## Ephesians Bible Studies – Leader Notes

---

Initially, though the first generation rejects God by sinning. Even Moses sins and won't be allowed to enter the Promised Land. God lets them wander in the wilderness until all that generation are dead (except Joshua and Caleb) and then they enter the Promised Land. God had asked them to kill all the people in the land because of their sin and because of the influence they would have over Israel due to their idolatry and evil practices. They partially obey God but many people are left in the land.

God's people then ask for a king, but God is their king! God allows this and the king they choose (Saul) is a failure. Saul is replaced by David, as God's choice of king. God promises David that his line will be eternal and reign forever (2 Samuel 7). In fact, he promises David that he, God, will be his father, and he, David, will be his son (2 Samuel 7:14). David makes his capital in Jerusalem. But David also sins. Solomon becomes king and builds a Temple for the Lord, which God's presence enters. Solomon is given wisdom and Israel is blessed and the nations come to hear about God and are blessed in turn.

However, Solomon has many foreign wives; is influenced by them to worship other gods and is overcome by greed for great wealth (all warned about in Deuteronomy). Because of this, God will split the nation in two. The ten tribes in the north will be called Israel and have Samaria as its capital. The two tribes in the south (Judah and Benjamin), will be called Judah (Jews) and have Jerusalem as its capital. They will be God's chosen people.

The northern tribe set up their own sites to worship God, against God's commands, and worship idols. God sends them many prophets to call them to repent but they reject these messages. Ultimately, God sends the nation of Assyria to destroy Israel.

A similar pattern occurs in Judah. The people disobey God by worshipping idols and neglecting the poor. To God, his relationship with his people is like a marriage. But when his people follow other gods, to him, this is like adultery. God sends the Babylonians to punish them. But the Jews think because they are God's people, he will protect them. God would never let Jerusalem fall and the Temple be destroyed, would he? He does. Many are killed, but many Jews go into exile in Babylon. There they cry out to God. God sends the Persians to conquer the Babylonians and the Persians allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem, rebuild the walls and rebuild the Temple. It is a poor copy of the original. But this is not what God ultimately intends.

The problem is sin. How will God solve this problem so that his people can once again be united with him in his direct presence like in the Garden of Eden? Jeremiah 31:31-34 tells us. God will make with us a new covenant in which he will write his law on our hearts and put his Holy Spirit in our hearts. Through this new covenant, we'll be able to enter God's presence in heaven, as part of the new creation. This new covenant will be inaugurated through a divine warrior or Messianic figure, who will defeat sin, death and evil.

Jesus comes from the line of David, he is the Messiah. Throughout his life, Jesus shows us through his perfect obedience and by the power of his miraculous deeds, that he is God. To pay the price for our sins, someone must die. Jesus takes this on himself and dies on the cross in our place. God also shows his power over death by raising Jesus to life again. By doing this Jesus defeats evil once and for all. Now those who accept Jesus will be able to enter his presence and live with him eternally, in heaven.

God's people now have the mission of telling the world about salvation through what Jesus has done. In Acts 1:8, Jesus says once the Holy Spirit has come on you, you are to "be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

## Ephesians Bible Studies – Leader Notes

---

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit promised with the new covenant, comes on God's people and now they speak in languages that others can understand. This is a reversal of Babel and the beginning of the spread of the Gospel.

Many Jews and many Gentiles believe. This creates a dilemma for the early church. How can the Gentiles be God's people? Don't they need to be Jewish? The council of Jerusalem in Acts 15, inspired by the Holy Spirit, determine that to be part of God's people is about believing in Jesus, not about being Jewish. But because of their background and the influence evil can have on God's people, the council recommends that Gentiles stay away from idols and sexual immorality.

Miraculously, Jesus also appears to a man named Paul, who was a Pharisee and persecuted the Christian church. He is converted when Jesus appears to him on the road to Damascus and becomes the Apostle\* to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). He is to be one of the key people that God will use to build his church. The mission of Israel has now become the mission of the church: to bring the nations to God. The book of Ephesians is all about how the church fits into God's plan.

The church in Ephesus was established on Paul's return from his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-21). A year later Paul returned and stayed in Ephesus for 3 years (Acts 19:1-20). Later Paul met with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:16-38) and eventually sent Timothy to teach them (1 Tim 1:3).

It is likely that Paul wrote Ephesians a few years after this while he was in prison in Rome (early 60's AD). The church at Ephesus is also mentioned in Revelation 2:1-7.

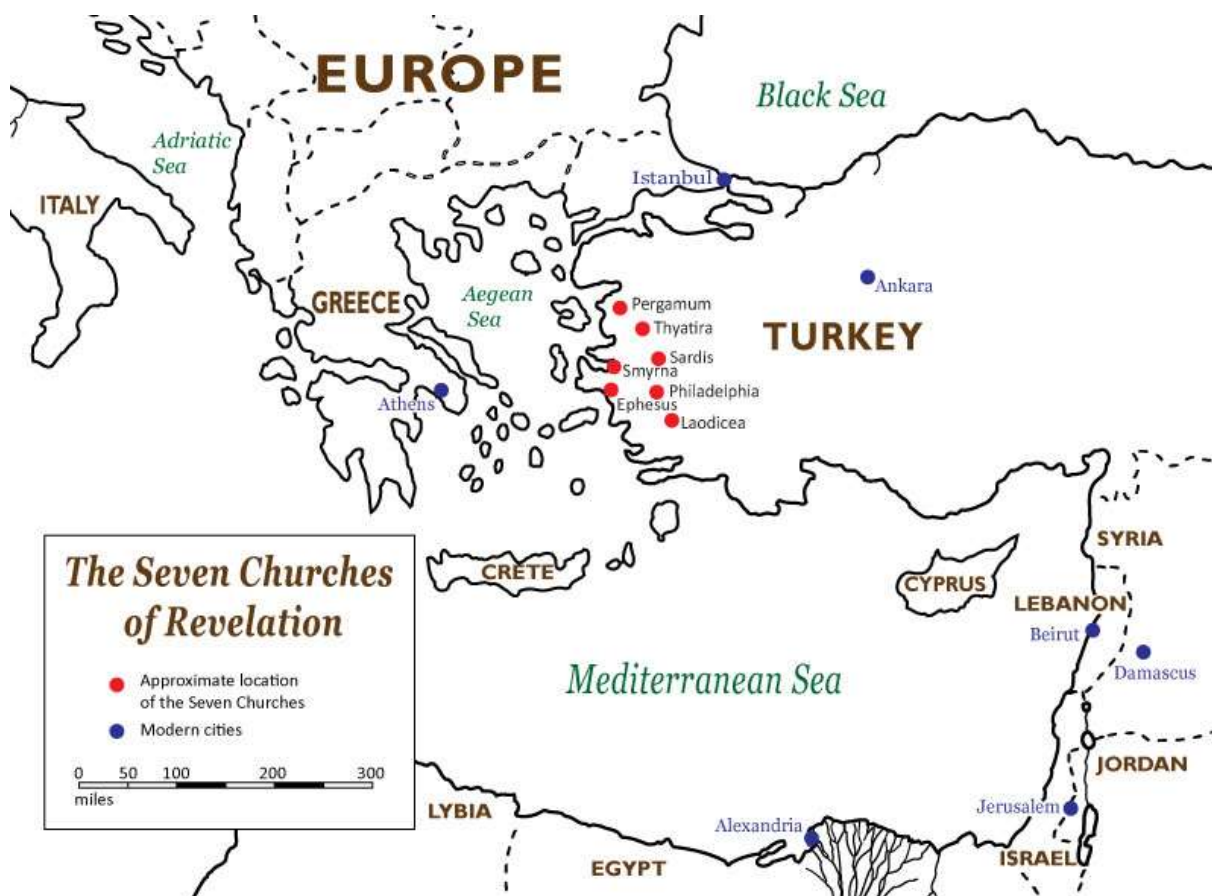
\*Apostle is defined as someone who has personally seen the risen Lord Jesus

## Ephesians Bible Studies – Leader Notes

### Study 1 – Acts 19 Introduction to Ephesians

#### Ephesus the Place

Ephesus was a very important and strategic city in the ancient world. It was a key port on the Mediterranean Sea and the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Also, it was part of the key route from Rome to the east. Ephesus contained the huge temple to the goddess Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The Ephesians saw themselves as the guardians of the goddess and the temple was much more than a place of worship. Thus Ephesus was an important trade, commercial and religious centre. Although part of the Roman Empire, Ephesus was a free Greek city, under its own rule.



1. In Acts 19, Paul gives four pictures of ministry in Ephesus. Let's look at each one in turn.

- 19:1-7 Paul meets disciples of John the Baptist
- 19:8-10 Paul teaches in the synagogue and the hall of Tyrannus
- 19:11-22 Magic in Ephesus
- 19:23-41 The riot in Ephesus

### Read Acts 19:1-7 – Paul meets disciples of John the Baptist

2. What other passages in Acts does this remind you of?
  - *See Acts 2:2-4; Acts 8:15-17; Acts 10:44-46;*
  - *Acts 15:7-9 is also relevant*
  
3. What is significant about Acts 2, 8 and 10? What is their connection to Acts 1:8?
  - *Acts 1:8 is like the contents page for the book of Acts.*
    - *The Gospel spreads in stages: from Jerusalem (Jews – Acts 2); to Judea-Samaria (Samaritans – Acts 8); and to the ends of the earth (Gentiles – Acts 10);*
  - *At each of these stages it is important that key apostolic witnesses see the same thing happening: Peter in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Acts 2); Peter and John in Judea-Samaria (Acts 8); and Peter ‘to the ends of the earth’ (Acts 10)*
  - *Each group of people have the same experiences when they become Christians. This shows that all are believers. There is no need to be Jewish to be a Christian.*
  - *These experiences are happening at these key points in the spread of the Gospel. Although every believer receives the Holy Spirit, the same manifestations do not occur every time, but in these examples, it was critical for the early church to realise that anyone can become a Christian*
  
4. Explain what is similar in Acts 19 to those previously mentioned passages and why?
  - *See the table on the next page for what is similar (which compares the four Acts passages)*
  - *Probably for two reasons why:*
    - *John the Baptist’s disciples represent Old Testament believers*
      - *These believers are also saved because of what Jesus has done and thus they experience the same manifestations of the Holy Spirit as the other groups to prove this*
      - *It also shows that Paul has the same authority in the church as Peter and John*
  - *So Paul can now write Ephesians 4:4-6 “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*

## Ephesians Bible Studies – Leader Notes

---

### Speaking in Tongues in the Book of Acts

Passage	Tongue-Speakers	Audience	Related to Salvation	Purpose
Acts 2:1-4	The 12 Apostles and others (Jews)	Unsaved Jews	After salvation	To validate (for Jews) the fulfilment of Joel 2
Acts 8:15-17	Samaritans	Saved Jews (Peter and John)	After salvation	To validate (for Jews) God's acceptance of Samaritans
Acts 10:44-47	Gentiles (Cornelius and his household)	Saved Jews (Peter and others) who doubted God's plan	The same time as salvation	To validate (for Jews) God's acceptance of Gentiles
Acts 19:1-7	About 12 Old Testament believers	Jews who needed confirmation of the message	The same time as salvation	To validate (for Jews) Paul's message

### Read Acts 19:8-10 – Paul teaches in the synagogue and the hall of Tyrannus

5. Paul first taught in the synagogue but when the Jews rejected his message, he then went to teach in a secular location, making his message more readily available for Gentiles. He taught there every day for two years. As a result, "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord." (Acts 19:10)

### Read Acts 19:11-22 – Magic in Ephesus

6. What evidence is there for the genuineness of the conversion of many people in Ephesus?
  - *They publicly burned their very expensive magic books, a rejection of their old lifestyle (v19)*
7. As a Christian, what have you given up or how have you changed? What do you struggle with? What evidence helps you to see that those around you are Christians?

### Read Acts 19:23-41 – The riot in Ephesus

8. What do we learn about the prevalence of idols in Ephesus?
  - *Idolatry was big business in Ephesus. Whole industries were built to support it. The temple of Artemis was in Ephesus, so idolatry was part of the fabric of society*
  - *It was so important that people would demonstrate against Paul's ministry because it was having a financial impact on society*
  - *Interestingly, even Demetrius could summarise some of Paul's message: "He says that gods made by human hands are no gods at all" (19:26)*
  
9. What is idolatry? What are some of the idols in our culture today? Why, or why not, is this relevant to our secular society today?
  - *An idol is anything more important to you than God*
  - *Tim Keller says "Idolatry is taking good things and making them ultimate things."*
    - *Perhaps a better definition is "Idolatry is taking anything and making it the ultimate thing."*
  - *Because an idol is anything more important than God, this is relevant to all of us*
  - *Although we may not worship idols as we commonly think, like carvings of gods made from stone or wood, our society puts other things before God eg career, wealth, health, beauty, popularity etc, and therefore effectively worships them*
  
10. What is the weakness and power of idols?
  - *Weakness – they are nothing, empty and powerless. Humans worship idols by choice.*
  - *Power – you see the violent response of those under the grip of idols*
    - *If you try to take a good thing from someone they'll be sad or maybe even mad, but if you take their ultimate thing from them they'll go ballistic. It controls you*

11. How do we smash idols?

- *The only way to smash idols is at a cost*
  - *Jesus destroyed the power idols have over people by dying for you on the cross. In doing this he has defeated sin, evil and death*
- *An idol is just a thing (something created), so sacrifices to idols are sacrifices to nothing. But they are accepted by demons (see 1 Cor 10:18-22)*
- *But we need to look not just at the idol but also at the culture behind the idol*
- *Paul taught the Ephesians for years to help them understand that idols have no power over them*
- *This is why the book of Ephesians focuses so much on the spiritual realm. It is real and it is our battleground*

12. What is the cost of smashing idols?

- *Jesus defeated the power of the spiritual realm on the cross (Colossians 2:15)*
- *He paid the price of our idolatry by dying on the cross*
- *But his resurrection shows how Jesus has defeated evil and defeated all idols*

13. What things do you or have you put before Jesus? How do you fight against this?

## Ephesians Bible Studies – Leader Notes

---

### Study 2 – Every Spiritual Blessing (Ephesians 1:1-14)

#### Ephesians Overview

Before we start the next nine Bible studies on the book of Ephesians, it would be helpful to get a good overview of where we are going. The Bible Project does this well. Have a look:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y71r-T98E2Q>

#### **The Structure of the book of Ephesians**

Understanding the structure of a book can help you see where it is going.

The letter neatly divides into two halves:

- Chapters 1-3 focuses on **doctrine (what we believe and why we should do things)**
  - *Paul proclaims God’s cosmic plan to unite everything under Christ (chapter 1)*
  - *by reconciling us to God and each other by his death and resurrection (chapter 2)*
  - *through the proclamation of the revealed mystery of the Gospel of Christ crucified for all nations, which is displayed in the spiritual realms in the church (chapter 3)*
- Chapters 4-6 focuses on **church practice (what we should do)**
  - *Paul calls us to respond by preserving our unity under Christ. This is done by continuing to gather people under Christ by preparing each other for ministry, growing in maturity, and speaking the truth in love (chapter 4)*
  - *in order to be made new in our minds and living distinctive Christ-honouring lives in the church, in the home and at work (chapter 5)*
  - *The climactic finale of the letter calls readers to stand firm in the armour God has given them in the Gospel against the lies of Satan, which threaten to divide us from God and from each other; and to keep on praying in the Spirit for world mission – which is the victory in spiritual warfare in our churches (chapter 6)*

Remember Paul is writing this letter to Christians, yet he devotes the first three chapters to telling them what the Gospel is.

There are forty-one commands in Ephesians: one in the first three chapters (‘remember’) and forty on chapters 4 to 6. So these last three chapters teach us how to live.

## Ephesians Bible Studies – Leader Notes

---

Another way to see the structure of Ephesians is through a chiasm. A chiasm is where points match and build on each other from the outside in. So the first section and the last section would be focused on the same theme, the second section and the second last section would be focused on the same theme etc. This is a Jewish literature style used to help make points clearer.

- *Paul's commission and greetings (1:1-2)*
  - *Blessing in heaven (1:3-14)*
    - *Paul's prayer for them (1:15-19)*
    - *The body in Christ – the members (1:20-2:10)*
      - *The new humanity (2:11-22)*
        - *Summary of grace now shown (3:1-13)*
          - *Petitioning the Father (3:14-21)*
          - *Beseeking the saints (4:1-6)*
        - *Summary of grace having been shown (4:7-16)*
      - *The new humanity (4:17-5:20)*
    - *The body in the Lord, the Head (5:21-6:9)*
  - *Warfare in heaven (6:10-17)*
    - *Their prayer for Paul (6:18-20)*
- *Tychicus' commission and farewell (6:21-24)*

### **Bible Study – Read Ephesians 1:1-14**

Sometimes being a Christian can seem pretty ordinary. That's why the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus is such a great part of the Bible. When we read Ephesians our eyes are opened to the awe-inspiring dimensions of what God has done for us in Christ.

1. There are twelve different titles for Jesus in Ephesians (Christ Jesus; Lord Jesus Christ; Jesus Christ; Lord Jesus; Christ; Christ Jesus our Lord; Jesus; Son of God; Lord; One; Master and Saviour). Each title communicates different things. In verses 1 and 2 we see two of these titles: Christ Jesus and Lord Jesus Christ. What point do you think the author is trying to make?
  - *Christ refers to his role as Messiah (the promised one who comes to save God's people)*
  - *Lord refers to his authority*
  - *Jesus refers to his humanity (his identification with us)*
  - *So Jesus is the authority (the leader of the whole universe), the Messiah (the Saviour of the world) and human, our perfect representative*

2. What do we learn about Paul from the first two verses?
  - *He is “an apostle of Christ Jesus”*
  - *So we learn about Paul’s authority as an apostle*
  - *An apostle was a leader in the church who had physically witnessed the resurrected Christ (as Paul did on the road to Damascus)*
  
3. What are the two great blessings for Christian’s (also two key themes) introduced in verses 1 and 2? What do they mean?
  - *Grace (11 references in Ephesians – 1:2, 6, 7; 2:5, 7, 8; 3:2, 7, 8; 4:7; 6:24)*
    - *God’s unmerited favour; we have been made right with God, at God’s expense*
    - *God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense*
  - *Peace (7 references – 1:2; 2:14, 15, 17; 4:3; 6:15, 23)*
    - *The comprehensive peace between God and man as a result of what Jesus has done on the cross*
  
4. What are the key different roles in our salvation played by each member of the Trinity?
  - *We are chosen (and adopted) by God the Father (1:3-6)*
  - *We are redeemed for unity by God the Son (1:7-12)*
  - *We are sealed for inheritance (assurance) by God the Holy Spirit (1:11-14)*
    - *Sealed – owned by God*
  
5. What is God’s purpose for those he chooses (v4)?
  - *To be holy and blameless (v4)*
  
6. Where in the Old Testament do we see the ideas of election (vv4-5) and redemption (v7)?
  - *Definitions:*
    - *Election – being chosen (elected) by God*
    - *Redemption – paying the price for something ie by Jesus paying the price for our sin, we are redeemed (saved)*
  - *Election – Abraham (Genesis 12); Israel (Deut 7). What did they do to be elected? nothing*
  - *Redemption – The Exodus (Exodus 6; 15), where Israel is saved from slavery to Egypt.*

7. If you are predestined, does it matter what you do (how you live)?

- *You are predestined and what you do matters*
- *Our motivation in what we do should be gratitude for what God has done for us and love for Him*
- *There are two things happening together: God's will and human responsibility*
- *In James it says that faith without deeds is dead (James 2:14-26). It is not that you are saved by your deeds, but your deeds indicate whether you believe in Jesus. If after accepting Jesus your life is not changed, did you really believe in Jesus?*
- *100% God's plan and 100% our responsibility*
- *Also, the best way to live is in obedience to God*
- *The first three chapters of Ephesians teach us a lot about God's character and the last three chapters teach us about how believers should act in light of the work of God*
- *It is also important to remember that most of the time God's method of saving people is to involve other Christians in that process ie by them telling the Gospel to others. As we are witnesses, it is important how we live.*

8. In looking at verse 10, what is the central message of Ephesians?

- *God's eternal cosmic plan is to bring unity to all things under Christ*

9. What are some of the spiritual blessings mentioned in this passage? Why are these important?

- *Elected v4 (God is Sovereign and chose us)*
- *Adopted v5 (we became part of God's family)*
- *Redeemed and forgiven v7 (our sins are forgiven and the price is paid for our sins)*
- *A knowledge of God's gracious plan v10 (God's word teaches us about his plan)*
- *Hope and glory v12 (hope in what Christ has done for God's glory)*
- *The gift of the Holy Spirit v13 (in the heart of every believer)*

10. Why are we given all the blessings in verses 3 to 14?

- *God's chief purpose is for the praise of his name (vv6, 12, 14)*
- *This is not egotistical. It is what God deserves as the God of all the Universe, the Creator of all.*
- *In understanding who God is the appropriate response is to praise him*

11. What do you think it means to be 'in Christ' (mentioned 15 times in the first 14 verses)?

- *It means we are redeemed by Jesus and adopted into his family*
- *This is due to the cross*
- *We are incorporated into God's plan*
- *It is only through a relationship with Jesus that we receive these great privileges*

12. Jesus is the ultimate example. But is that helpful or discouraging ('I can never be like Jesus')? How can Jesus help us?

- *Objectively: my fear and shame are removed*
- *Subjectively: we need to work that into our heart (to fully grasp the magnitude of what Jesus has done for us)*
- *He was willing to come to earth to take away the penalty for my sin, so when I look at what he has done for me, I should be filled with love, awe and gratitude*
- *For God to allow such a sacrifice for our sins is grace. For God to provide such a sacrifice for our sins is amazing grace. For God to become such a sacrifice for our sins is grace beyond our comprehension.*
- *The first three chapters of Ephesians explain what Jesus has done for us and the final three chapters outline how we should live in response to that*

### Study 3 – Thanksgiving and Prayer (Ephesians 1:15-23)

1. What things are you afraid of?

The passage today is the first of two prayers Paul prays for the Ephesians.

#### **Read Ephesians 1:15-23**

2. What is the basis of Paul's expression of gratitude in verses 15 and 16?
  - *He is grateful for their faith in the Lord Jesus (v15) – they are Christians*
  - *He is grateful for their love for all believers (v15) – they love other believers*
  - *How do we show our love for other believers?*
  - *The truths of the Gospel from verses 3 to 14, prompt Paul to pray*
3. What is his 'incomparably great power' (v19)?
  - *On the cross, Jesus has defeated all evil and death*
  - *Real power is power over death*
  - *God unleashes the greatest power in the world through sacrificial love*
  - *So why do you think sometimes we are still afraid?*
4. What is the supreme use of God's power (v20)?
  - *God rose Jesus from the dead and put him in full authority over all things. So Jesus will reign forever*

5. So what does Paul pray for us in verse 17, 18 and 19? Why?

- *He prays that God 'may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.'* (v17)
- *'that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you.'* (v18)
- *Know 'the riches of his glorious inheritance' – God values you as his child! Jesus defines who you are, no one else.* (v18)
- *Know 'his incomparably great power for us'* (v19)
- *But they are already Christians, like we are, so why does Paul pray for this?*
- *We need the Spirit's help to grasp the greatness of God, the supremacy of Christ and the rich benefits of the Gospel; to grasp the benefits of the Gospel*
- *The degree to which we know the hope is the degree to which we will see reality the way God sees it. This will then help us put into perspective what we face now (suffering) compared to what we will receive in the future (eternal joy).*
- *Remember the Ephesians faced the pressure of idol worship (Artemis cult and Roman Emperor worship) and magic, as well as the need to change their lives from the evil things they did as pagans*
- *This power should also give us confidence that God can save any person from 'spiritual deadness'*
- *Sometimes we fail to see the spiritual battle we are in (Ephesians 6 brings this out most clearly). We are still at war, even though the result of the war is clear – Jesus wins*
- *Paul prays that our head knowledge will become our heart knowledge (or become our heart knowledge more and more), meaning that our knowledge of Jesus, what he has done and who he is, will transform our lives to want to live more like him*
- *Think also about what Paul prays for and how that is similar or different to what you pray for*
- *We should pray to know God better (v17); to know God's riches (v18); and to know God's power (v19).*

6. What does the passage say about Jesus?

- *He was resurrected v20a*
- *He was enthroned, made King v20b*
- *He is far above ALL other rule and authority v21*
- *All things are under him v22a*
- *God appointed him head over everything for the church v22*

## Ephesians Bible Studies – Leader Notes

---

7. How are we, the church, connected to Jesus?

- *He is the head and we are the body v23*
- *So God's power is now linked to us because we are his body*
- *The church is not just a community whose sins are forgiven, as fantastic as that is, but it is also a new community that focuses on the possibilities of Jesus' reign. Every evil will be defeated and this gives us hope.*
- *We are his body and Jesus wants his body to serve him by loving God and loving others, for God's glory and so that more people can join the body of Jesus Christ*
- *See the table below for more information*

### How Christ and the Church are related throughout Ephesians

Description	Passage
Christ is the head of the church	1:22-23; 4:15; 5:23;
Christ is the cornerstone of the church	2:20
Christ is the Saviour and sanctifier of the church	5:23, 26-27
Christ gives the church ministry workers	4:11-16
Christ loved and sacrificed himself for the church	5:25
Christ nourishes and cherishes the church	5:29
The church and her members dwell and grow in Christ	2:21-22; 4:15
The church is a means through which God manifests his manifold wisdom	3:10
The church submits to Christ	5:24
The church is Christ's body, and individual believers are members of his body	1:22-23; 3:6; 4:4, 16; 5:23, 30;

8. How do the ideas of great power and being connected to Jesus effect our lives?

### Study 4 – Alive and One in Christ (Ephesians 2)

1. As Christians, who are we reconciled to?
  - *We are reconciled to God (this is what verses 1 to 10 talk about)*
  - *We are also reconciled to each other (this is what verses 11 to 22 talk about)*

The first part of Ephesians 2 (verse 1 to 10), can be broken up into three pieces:

- The life we were saved from vv1-3
- How do we get from the old life to the new life? vv4-7
- The life God wants to save you for vv8-10

### **Read Ephesians 2:1-10**

2. What does Paul say we were like? Why does he mention this?
  - *We were dead v1, 5*
  - *We followed the ways of the world v2 - influence*
  - *We followed the ruler of the kingdom of the air (the devil) v2 - temptation*
  - *We gratified the cravings of our flesh v3 - desire*
  - *So we were in bondage (enslaved) to three things: the world; the devil; and the flesh*
  - *We are deserving wrath v3*
  - *So we were dead, disobedient and doomed*
  - *He mentions this to highlight God's great love v4, mercy v4, grace v5, 7, 8, and kindness v7*
    - *Love = commitment to bless us forever*
    - *Mercy = without punishment*
    - *Grace = generously giving what we need at no cost to us*
    - *Kindness = compassion in becoming one of us*
  - *God's method for our salvation is grace and his love!*
3. How do we get from the old life to the new life?
  - *Jesus does it all – by accepting Jesus we go from the old life to the new life*
  - *God intervened*
  - *God raises us up and seats us with him in heaven*
  - *Seated in heaven? We are not literally there but we are legally there – so we have full assurance*

4. Verses 8 to 10 is a great summary of the Gospel. What does God want us to do?

- *Good works v10, out of gratitude*
- *These don't save us, so we can't boast*

### Read Ephesians 2:11-22

Here Paul describes how hopeless our situation was without Christ (vv11-12) but now because of God's grace (v13), God has completely transformed our situation in Christ (vv13-22).

5. What separated the Gentiles (us) from God? Vv11-12. This is prior to salvation.

- *Uncircumcised v11*
- *At that time we were separate from Christ v12*
- *Not citizens of Israel v12*
- *Foreigners to the covenants v12*
- *Without hope of salvation v12*
- *Without God v12*

6. How have Gentiles become part of God's people?

- *By Jesus' death and resurrection dealing with the problem of sin and death, universal problems for both Jews and Gentiles, having faith in Jesus is all that is required to be part of God's people*
- *Jesus' death and resurrection bring peace and unity (because there is now nothing that can separate us from God and from each other)*

7. What was the dividing barrier between Jews and Gentiles? Vv14-16
- *The Law v15*
  - *Between God and humanity, the barrier was sin, and the Law defines what sin is*
  - *Jesus brings peace between Jew and Gentile*
  - *Jesus fulfils the law perfectly, so now it can be set aside*
  - *He fulfils the Law in his earthly life of holiness*
  - *He fulfils the Law by taking the punishment of the Law at the cross*
  - *He brings to an end the Law as a barrier into God's people*
  - *He replaces the Old Covenant with a life lived in Christ*
8. What is different about what is happening here and what happened in the Old Testament when Gentiles joined Israel e.g. Rahab?
- *In the Old Testament, the Jews believed that Gentiles who believed in God, needed to become part of Israel*
  - *They were always second class Israelites*
  - *But here God sets up 'one new humanity' v15, so both are saved on the same basis, and both are equally part of God's people*
  - *Gentiles do not need to become Jews to be saved*
9. What metaphors does Paul use to describe our new status in Christ?
- *One new humanity v15*
  - *One body v16*
  - *One Spirit v18*
  - *Fellow citizens – same nation v19*
  - *Members of his household – same family, with the same Father v19*
  - *A building with Jesus as the chief cornerstone which is a Temple, the dwelling place of God vv20-22*
    - *This Temple imagery becomes even more relevant when you look at the setting of the book – Ephesus was dominated by the Temple of Artemis. God has made his own Temple out of his people, Christians.*
    - *God lives in us through his Holy Spirit. Therefore we are a temple!*
  - *There is a strong focus on unity*
  - *Citizens and household communicate the relational security that we have (a place in the Kingdom and then a place at the King's table).*
10. Which of the six metaphors made the biggest impact on you? Why? How do you think these metaphors promote peace and unity?
11. It has been established that Jesus is our peace (v14) by making us one new humanity. In question one in talked about being reconciled to God and each other. Are there relationships you need to reconcile?

### Study 5 – Now ... through the church (Ephesians 3)

1. For those of you who are Christians, how have you changed since becoming a Christian?

Here Paul starts to make a point in verse 1, but then goes off on a tangent to make clear another point: He is a prisoner of Christ for their sakes. So verse 1 to 13 explain why this is not a bad thing. He comes back to his point in verse 14 where he prays for the church. He explains in verses 2 to 5 to whom God revealed his glorious mystery, in verse 6 what that mystery is, and in verses 7 to 9 why this mystery must now be proclaimed to all the nations, whatever the cost.

#### **Read Ephesians 3:1-13**

Paul makes himself an example.

2. What is the mystery of verse 3, 4, 6, and 9?
  - *It is defined in verse 6 (Gentiles are equal heirs together with Jews)*
  - *That Gentiles are equal with Jews*
  - *They are saved in the same way, through Jesus*
  - *Grace is key v2, 7, 8*
  - *In the Old Testament, Jews looked down on Gentiles and Gentiles despised Jews*
  - *And at that time, the Jews believed that to become God's people you had to become Jewish*
  - *But here Paul says no. Jew and Gentile are equally condemned by the law and they are equally saved by what Jesus did on the cross and his rising again*
  - *They have now become one new humanity (not two separate groups, and not incorporated into Jewish Christians)*
3. Why does Paul say he is 'the least of all the Lord's people'? v8
  - *Probably because he used to persecute God's people, arresting and killing them, and yet God still showed him grace. What Paul did was forgivable.*

4. How do the 'rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms' know the wisdom of God? Vv10-11

- *Through the church*
- *Because of the existence and growth of the church, and the union of Jews and Gentiles, this means that evil has been defeated*
- *A united church shows the fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3)*
- *The church is a tangible reminder of God's victory and power*
- *It is like the church is God's trophy to show every cosmic creature (angels and demons) what he has done. They are watching the church.*

5. So why does Paul go off on this tangent?

- *Paul is pastoring to hurting people – both due to his suffering and their own*
- *If you know what he knows you won't be discouraged by suffering*
- *If you are in Christ, no suffering can hurt you (permanently), and all suffering is for his glory*
- *No suffering is for nothing – angels and demons are watching v10*
- *No suffering can really hurt you – he is a prisoner of Christ, not a prisoner of Rome*
  - *Where does this attitude come from? Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*
  - *Where is Paul's treasure? In Christ, therefore he is free v12, regardless of his circumstances. His faith is not based on his circumstances. It is based on what Jesus has done, which doesn't change in any circumstance.*
  - *For Paul, nobody, or anything, can touch his treasure*
- *Paul's suffering is for God's glory – the only suffering that really can permanently destroy you is being cast out from God and Jesus has taken that punishment on himself*
- *He is grateful for his suffering, not because he is a masochist, but because it shows he is part of a bigger plan, an extraordinary plan, God's plan (v2, 7, 8)*

6. Does Paul's example excite you or discourage you?

- *If it excites you, then go and imitate Paul. How? Make Jesus your treasure, first in your life*
- *If it crushes you, how do we overcome this?*
- *Focus on Jesus, not so much his example but what he has done for **you***
- *Once you understand what Jesus has done for you, in your heart, that will make you want to live for him out of love and gratitude*

### Read Ephesians 3:14-21

Here Paul resumes the prayer he started in verse 1. He kneels.

7. What does Paul ask his father to give his children?

- *Power – 3 times he asks (vv16, 18, 20)*

8. Power through what?

- *The Holy Spirit (v16)*

9. Power for what?

- *So that Christ may dwell in your hearts (v17)*
  - *The Ephesians are Christians, so the Holy Spirit is already in them*
  - *Dwell means to settle down, not to arrive, that the Spirit would make himself at home, changing you to be more like Christ. So he becomes as real to you like others in your life.*
  - *At one level they have all these things, but at another level, they haven't experienced these things*
  - *They have the Holy Spirit and have God's love but they are not drawing on them*
- *To grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of God (v18)*
- *Notice that Paul doesn't pray that the Ephesians will be protected from circumstances because if they have this they'll be able to handle any circumstances*
- *This power is unlimited and is already at work in us*
- *Both prayers in Ephesians focus on power:*
  - *1:19 that the Ephesians might know God's power toward them*
  - *3:20 that they might know God's power at work within them*

10. How would you describe 'how wide and long and high and deep is the love of God' v18?

- *Wide – God's accepting love is open to all*
- *Long – God's love lasts forever*
- *High – God's love exalts us in heaven*
- *Deep – God's love is sacrificial, costly, love*
- *God's power and love is unlimited*

11. From the passage what hints do you see as to how you get this power? What are the implications of this in your life?

- *Paul is praying for this, so we should pray also*
- *Paul kneels (v14), so we should humbly submit ourselves to God as well. This shows obedience to God's authority.*
- *This section started with Paul mentioning that he is in prison (v1). He can be faithful in all circumstances because his eye is on God's plan, so focus, as much as you can, on God's plan*
- *Remember God's faithfulness to his promises (v11)*
- *Remember what Jesus has done for you – grace (v2, 7, 8)*
- *'grasp' (v18) implies effort, you have to work at this (not to be saved but to understand the depth of your salvation)*
- *Do this with all the saints, in community (v18), we'll need others help*

### Study 6 – Unity in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:1-16)

1. What do you have in common with other Christians?

As a recap, we have just completed studies on chapters 1 to 3.

- Chapters 1-3 focuses on **doctrine (what we believe and why we should do things)**
  - *Paul proclaims God's cosmic plan to unite everything under Christ (chapter 1)*
  - *by reconciling us to God and each other by his death and resurrection (chapter 2)*
  - *through the proclamation of the revealed mystery of the Gospel of Christ crucified for all nations, which is displayed in the spiritual realms in the church (chapter 3)*

Now we are about to start looking at chapters 4 to 6.

- Chapters 4-6 focuses on **church practice (what we should do)**
  - *Paul calls us to respond by preserving our unity under Christ. This is done by continuing to gather people under Christ by preparing each other for ministry, growing in maturity, and speaking the truth in love (chapter 4)*
  - *in order to be made new in our minds and living distinctive Christ-honouring lives in the church, in the home and at work (chapter 5)*
  - *The climactic finale of the letter calls readers to stand firm in the armour God has given them in the Gospel against the lies of Satan, which threaten to divide us from God and from each other; and to keep on praying in the Spirit for world mission – which is the victory in spiritual warfare in our churches (chapter 6)*

### **Read Ephesians 4:1-16**

This passage looks at how churches grow and are unified. Gathering people under Christ is central to the purposes of the church because it displays the wisdom of God and glorifies God.

4:1 is a good summary of the second half of the book: chapters 1 to 3 sum up our 'calling' and sets up chapters 4 to 6 as a 'worthy life' in response to chapters 1 to 3.

2. What three attitudes are needed to lead a life worthy of our calling (v2)?

- *Humility – is not thinking less of yourself; it's thinking of yourself less. An internal disposition, how you view yourself.*
- *Gentleness – dealing with other people with kindness rather than roughness. How you treat others on the outside as a result of your humility*
- *Patience – longsuffering of the faults of others and slow in seeking to rebuke them*

3. What is the key point of verses 3 to 6?

- *Unity*
- *Think back to chapter 2 being reconciled to God and other believers leads to peace and unity*

4. How is Christian unity described?

*(as part of the next question, go into some or all of these in a little detail)*

- *One body – we all function together with different roles but for a common purpose (see also 2:16; 3:6; 4:25). One heavenly church to which all believers belong, with Christ as the head.*
- *One Spirit – we are united by the Holy Spirit in us (see also 2:18)*
- *One hope – our hope is in what Jesus has done by dying and rising again. There is certainty about the future.*
- *One Lord – Jesus is our Lord, our authority*
- *One faith – our faith is in what Jesus has done by dying and rising again. There is one understanding of the Gospel – saved by grace.*
- *One baptism – we are all baptised into the one faith and hope, in Christ.*
- *One God – who is our Father, who is Sovereign over all things. The Trinity is the model of unity for us (One Spirit, One Lord and One God the Father).*
- *Sevenfold oneness – seven in the Bible symbolises completeness. We have all we need to be unified.*

5. What description of unity speaks most to you? Why?

6. What is critical to this unity (v3)? What does this mean?

- *Peace*
- *As Christians, we are at peace with God and peace with each other*
- *This is a starting point in how we treat people (with humility, gentleness and patience)*
- *So live like we are at peace*

## Ephesians Bible Studies – Leader Notes

---

7. We see the Trinity working together, in unity, throughout the book of Ephesians:

Passage	God the Father	God the Son	God the Holy Spirit
1:13-14	We are God's possession	We are in Christ	We are sealed by the Holy Spirit
1:17	The glorious God the Father gives	God is Christ's God	The Holy Spirit is given to know him better
2:18-22	We are citizens and members of the household of God	Our foundation is Jesus Christ	We are built together by the Holy Spirit
3:14-17	We are to kneel before the Father and pray	So that Christ will dwell in us	With power through the Holy Spirit
4:4-6	One God and Father	One Lord	One Spirit
5:18-20	We are to give thanks to God for all	In Jesus' name	Being filled with the Spirit and singings songs from him
6:10-18	Put on the full armour of God	Be strong in the Lord	And use the sword of the Spirit (the word of God)

8. What is verse 8 talking about?

**Background:**

- *It is a quote from Psalm 68:18*
- *Here is a brief outline of what the Psalm is about:*
  - *68:1-3 A call to God to come and rescue his people from the wicked*
  - *68:4-6 God is to be praised as he frees the vulnerable*
  - *68:7-10 you saved your people through the Exodus and took them to the Promised Land*
  - *68:11-14 the kings scatter before God*
  - *68:15-16 God wants Mount Zion as his dwelling place*
  - *68:17 so he went from Sinai to his holy place*
  - *68:18 and he ascended on high taking many captives and received gifts from your enemies*
- *In Psalm 68 God receives gifts, but then gives those gifts to Israel Ps 68:35, but here Paul says Christ gives gifts, what is going on?*

- *Psalm 68 is about a victory of God over his enemies*

**Answer:**

- *Jesus wins the victory over his enemies through his death and resurrection*
- *As a result, his grace is a gift to his people*
- *And our spiritual gifts are also a gift to his people (to be used to build each other up)*
- *So when you use your gifts, their use is a demonstration that Christ has won the victory, which is shown to God's enemies*
- *We have become part of the conquest that Christ has completed, that's why we receive the gifts*
- *As you'll see more in chapter 6, we are in a war (albeit in war Jesus has already won)*

9. From verse 11, what is another key to unity (see verses 11 to 13)?

- *Good leadership*
- *Good leadership equips God's people for works of service*
- *So that the body may be built up*
- *To reach unity*

10. What is the 'body' metaphor in verse 12 and 16 trying to say?

- *We are all united to Christ (5:30)*
- *Christ is the head (5:23-24, 29-30)*
- *There is diversity in the body (2:14-16; 3:6)*
- *We are united to one another (4:25). In Ephesians, relational metaphors are used a lot to describe our relationship to Christ eg sons 1:5; household members 2:19; body 5:23, 30; bride 5:25-27*

11. What is the balance we need from verse 15?

- *To speak the truth in love*
- *What happens when there is no love? Those you speak to won't listen and will harden their hearts. What is the motivation here? To win. Concerned with yourself.*
- *What happens when there is no truth? We can't always know ourselves without others telling us. What is the motivation here? Fear. Fear of the other being mad at us or fear they'll be upset by what we say and we'll feel guilty. So our real motivation is selfishness.*
- *It is not that we should avoid issues but speak the truth in love, love for the other. What is best for them?*

12. What are the characteristics of a mature Christian?

- *Christlike v13*
- *Stability in what you believe vv13-14*
- *Truth and love (not one or the other) vv15-16*
- *Work together and build each other up v16*

13. How can we apply what we have learnt from this passage?

To sum up. The three marks of a healthy church are:

- *Spiritual unity, we are all one (vv1-6)*
- *Spiritual diversity, we have different roles (vv7-12)*
- *Spiritual maturity, we are all heading in the same direction, to understand and be more like Christ (vv13-16)*

### Study 7 – Living as Children of Light (Ephesians 4:17-5:21)

1. What motivates Christian people?

- *Fear (eg of hell or the consequences of sin or of not fitting in etc)*
- *Pride (I'm better than everyone else – I obey, they don't)*
- *Gratitude (for the grace God has given you) – Jesus!*

#### **Read Ephesians 4:17-32**

By serving one another, we change one another. The prayers in chapter 1 and chapter 3 emphasise our access to power, but it is as we apply and discipline ourselves for godliness, drawing on 'his great power' (1:19), that we see personal growth and change. Believers are called to live out their new identity in Christ with a lifestyle that is different from the world and different from their pre-Christian past.

The passage can be split up into three parts:

- 4:17-19 don't live in ignorance anymore (in light of what has been said in chapters 1 to 3)
- 4:20-24 because you have come to know Christ
- 4:25-32 how to put off the old self and put on the new self

2. What words describe the Ephesian's former lives vv17-19?

- *Futility in their thinking v17 (the way they look at the world gains them nothing)*
- *Darkened in their understanding v18 (not just wrong, but unable to see what is true)*
- *Ignorance v18 (not just lack of knowledge but lack of relationship with God also)*
- *Sexual immorality (any sex outside of marriage) v19 (no shame and a lack of self-control)*
- *uncleanness/impurity v19 (in many areas)*
- *greed v19 (unrestrained desire for more)*
- *summed up in 5:5*

3. Verses 22 to 24 talk about putting off the old self and putting on the new self. What does this mean?

- *It doesn't mean purely behaviour (put off your old behaviour and put on your new behaviour)*
- *It is talking about your whole self*
- *Once you are in Christ, you will want to live his way, and then that will change your behaviour*
- *Christianity is NOT about becoming moral. It is about a relationship with Jesus.*
- *You have a new set of motives (gratitude and love)*
- *Think: 30 years ago everyone in the West pretty much had the same Christian, based sexual ethics. Now they don't. Why? The 'Christian' West didn't put on a new self, they put on morality. From the outside, they met the culture. So now as the pressure of culture to change increases, so the actions change also.*
- *Be made new in the attitude of your mind, the direction of your thinking, which transforms your thinking*
- *Be captivated by Jesus, grasp what he has done for you (4:13, 32)*
- *When Christ calls us to himself it is always a call to leave the world, die to self, and live for God*

4. How should we live vv25-32?

- *Tell the truth v25*
- *Control your anger v26*
- *Be generous v28*
- *Use wholesome speech that is helpful for building up v29*
- *Don't grieve the Holy Spirit v30 (not working against the Spirit within us by living the old way)*
- *Be kind and compassionate v32*

5. What is the motivation in dealing with your anger v27? What do you think the outcome of not dealing with your anger is?

- *To not give the devil a foothold*
- *When you are angry you are not looking to build others up. It is all about you.*
- *This gives the devil an opportunity to tempt you to sin*

### Read Ephesians 4:32-5:21

The passage can be split up into four parts:

- 5:1-2 live a life of love
- 5:3-7 don't live in sin anymore
- 5:8-14 because you have come from darkness to light
- 5:15-21 live a wise life

6. What are the key motivations to unlocking the power of God?

- *4:32 that we are forgiven*
- *5:1-2 walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved you*
- *Understanding what God has done for you*
- *'Walking in love' is a good way to sum up how to live as a Christian*
- *So how do we grow in love for others? Think about how Christ has loved you*
- *What motivates your heart will be key to the impact you have on others*

7. What two warnings does Paul give for those not living God's way?

- *No inheritance v5*
- *Face the wrath of God (on your own, instead of Jesus Christ facing it for you) v6*

8. Does this mean that a Christian who sins in one of these ways is no longer a Christian?

- *No, the context of Ephesians is grace*
- *But the warning is for the unrepentant that they are perilously close to the behaviour of outsiders, who have no hope*

9. In what ways is a greedy person an idolater v5?

- *They are making their desire their god, ahead of God and the needs of others*
- *They are serving and investing their time in self-satisfaction in a way that resembles how the pagans spend time on their idols*

10. How can we reconcile Paul's serious warnings about God's wrath with his confidence in God's grace?

- *The warnings are both a motivation to repentance and holiness for believers, and a warning to those professing faith but whose lifestyle resembles that of outsiders*
- *Both push us back to the cross as a source of forgiveness and as a reminder of the 'light' (5:8-9, 13) which teaches us how to live faithfully in response to Christ dying for us*

11. How does Paul compare being drunk and having the Holy Spirit v18?

- *If you are full of alcohol, you lose control, and this may lead to sin and debauchery*
- *If you are full of the Holy Spirit, you are in his control, and this will lead to you loving God, loving others and building others up (of eternal value)*
- *Paul seems to have in mind a Gentile drinking party in someone's home: singing crude songs, debauchery and drunkenness; compared to Christian living: singing praises to God, sex only in marriage and full of the Spirit.*
- *Full of the Spirit means the Spirit dwelling in your heart. Dwell means to settle down, not to arrive, that the Spirit would make himself at home. Changing you to be more like Christ. So he becomes as real to you as others in your life.*

12. So what do you think are the key aspects of how we learn to live like Christ?

- *Knowledge of Christ*
- *Relationship with Christ and others*
- *Obedience to Christ*

13. What does it mean to be full of the Spirit 5:18-21? (1:23; 3:19)

- *At the heart of what it means to live as a Christian is joy*
- *Being filled with the Spirit gives you something similar to what people want when they get drunk – joy*
- *The results of being filled with the Spirit: praise v19; thanksgiving v20; submission v21 (submission is what comes of being filled with the Spirit)*
- *5:22-6:9 deal with specific instances where submission is required (see next week)*

14. How can you apply what you have learnt from this passage to your own life?

### **Study 8 – Out of Reverence for Christ – Part One (Ephesians 5:21-33)**

It is important to remember in living as a Christian the time you live in history. You are in the overlap of the ages. Jesus has come and defeated sin, death and evil, permanently. So his victory is guaranteed. However, we are not in heaven yet, in a place where there is no sin, no suffering, and no hardship. We live in a world where there is still sin, suffering, evil and death. There is tension.

Please note, this Bible Study focuses on the key principles of what it should look like in marriage when a husband and wife follow God's commands. There will be opportunity towards the end to discuss when things are not like this. If this study brings up any issues for you please talk to a friend or counsellor.

#### **Read Genesis 1:26-28**

1. How do you think people are like the Trinity?

- *People are created in God's own image v27*
- *People ('male and female') and God (Trinity = 'us') are plural and diverse (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) v27*
- *Within that, people are equal; each member of the Trinity is equal*
- *God and people are eternal*
- *For the parts that make up humans, male and female, there are some roles that are the same and some roles that are different. This is the same for the Trinity.*
- *There is a creation order (Adam then Eve) to humanity and an order in the Trinity (God the Father then God the Son and God the Holy Spirit)*
- *So order does not imply inequality*

#### **Read Genesis 2:20b-24**

2. What do we learn about marriage from this passage?

- *Man and woman are one flesh, the same flesh*
- *They are united*
- *They leave their parents*

#### **Read Ephesians 5:21-33**

Ephesians 5:21 is like a topic sentence for the section (5:21-6:9). Here we see three sets of relationships, each one with an example of submission.

3. What example is given to wives as to why they should submit to their husbands (5:22-24)?

- *The relationship of Christ and the church*
- *Using this metaphor, the husband has a role like Christ and the wife has a role like the church*
- *As the church submits to Christ so should wives submit to husbands*
- *Submit – to put the will of the other before your own*
- *Wives give a picture of the church to the world v24*

4. Do you think there are any conditions around this passage?

- *The question as to whether the wife is to submit to her husband regardless of what he commands is not addressed*
- *There are no conditions mentioned in the passage, but there are others throughout the Bible*
- *Submission is always conditional on obedience to God (submission is always to God first) – Acts 5:29*
- *Submission is not mindless eg Jesus submitted to God the Father in dying on the cross but thought about it a lot (Mark 14:36)*
- *Submission is not about ability but order*
- *Naturally, submission is much easier if the husband fulfils his role in Ephesians 5:25-33. When the husband is not fulfilling his role, it becomes harder to submit and the wife requires wisdom to know what to do in this situation.*

5. How is the role of a wife like that of Jesus?

- *The role of submitting is a role Jesus takes by dying on the cross. Here Jesus submits to God the Father because of his trust in him and his love for others (humanity)*
- *The Son defers to the Father, the Father accepts the gift but then exalts the Son to the highest place, each wishes to please the other, each wishes to exalt the other*
- *See 1 Corinthians 15:20-28*
- *Wives give a picture of Christ to the world*

6. What do you think Ephesian society understood as the role of the head and the body?

- *The body was to serve the head*
- *The head was the leader, with absolute authority*
- *The body did whatever it took to help the head eg Emperor (head) and Roman citizens (body)*

7. How does Paul twist this metaphor when he talks about Christian marriage?

- *The husband, as head, is to love the wife, the body*
- *Husbands are to love the wife sacrificially ie put her needs before his own, at a cost to himself*
- *The focus of the metaphor is not on headship it is on love*
- *The contrast is between submission and sacrificial love*
- *This would have been revolutionary for Ephesian society*
- *Paradoxically, sacrificing the head (Jesus) doesn't lead to the destruction of the body (the church) but rather the salvation of the body*

8. What 6 actions do we see Jesus Christ doing for the church?

- *He loved the church v25*
- *He gave himself up for the church v25*
- *He sanctified the church v26 (made her holy)*
- *He cleansed the church v26*
- *He presents the church v27 – one day we will be perfect*
- *He provides and cares for the church v29*

9. How is the husband to model Christ in marriage?

- *By sacrificially loving his wife*
- *This is commanded three times v25, v28, v33, which shows the importance of what Paul is saying*
- *Love – to put the needs of the other ahead of your needs*
- *Husbands give a picture of Christ to the world v23*
- *Jesus could have exercised his privileges of authority but became a servant instead*
- *Look at the principles that Christ establishes mentioned in question 8 and follow them*

10. What does this look like?

- *Strikingly, husbands are not told to rule over their wives but to love them v25*
- *When the Bible speaks of love, it measures it primarily not by how much you want to receive but by how much you are willing to give*
- *A husband should take the initiative in sacrificially giving himself for the good of his wife*
- *The husband's authority (like the Son's over him), is never to be used to please himself but only to serve the interests of the wife*
- *It is like the husband should be thinking in each situation, 'What will help my wife to be Christlike?'*
- *While a husband cannot atone for the sins of his wife, there is a sense in which Christ's sanctifying work is a pattern for husbands. You should love your bride in a way to help her grow in likeness to Christ. Be concerned with her spiritual well-being.*
- *His authority doesn't mean a husband simply makes all the decisions, nor should he get his way in every disagreement (the husband's primary concern is what is best for my wife)*
- *The wife is to be the husband's most trusted friend and counsellor*

11. What other understanding of marriage helps make this easier for the husband? See verses 29, 31.

- *In marriage husband and wife become one flesh v31 (see Genesis 2:24)*
- *So love your wife like your own body v28*
- *It is not simply a matter of loving someone else like he loves himself. It is more than that. The husband should love his wife because they are one!*

12. Why do you think the passage talks a lot more about husbands than wives?

- *Perhaps husbands need to learn a lot more about loving than wives do about submitting?*
- *Perhaps Paul thinks husbands are more responsible for the success or failure of marriage than wives are?*

13. What happens when things go wrong?

- *Christian marriages end when one or both parties are not following the pattern described in Ephesians 5 ie not loving each other*
- *This is an awful situation and not what God created marriage for*
- *The experience of Jesus' grace makes it possible to practice the two most important skills in marriage: forgiveness and repentance*
- *There is hope – the biggest problem in marriage is sin. The ultimate solution is the grace of Jesus.*
- *But also, although God hates it, he knows what divorce is like (Jeremiah 3:8), so he knows what people are going through*
- *Direct members to talk to a Christian counsellor if this study brings up difficult personal issues*

In marriage both men and women play a Jesus type role:

- Wives – sacrificial submission shown in love
- Husbands – sacrificial authority shown in love

14. How can we encourage each other from what we have learnt from this passage?

### Study 9 – Out of Reverence for Christ – Part Two (Ephesians 6:1-9)

From our last study and this one, we see that every member of an extended household is addressed. This is because in Christ, everyone has equal dignity and importance.

At the time of Paul writing this, it is estimated that one third of the Ephesian population was slaves.

#### Read Ephesians 6:1-9

1. How are children to treat parents? Does this matter if you are an adult child?

- *Simplistically, non-adult children should obey their parents*
- *Parents should receive honour and respect their whole lives*
- *What does honour look like? Give proper position to their voice and status*
- *Children must learn how to recognise authority, and they must learn that the one true authority is God*
- *Honouring your parents is important. It is mentioned six times in the New Testament (Matthew 15:4-6; Matthew 19:19; Mark 7:10; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Ephesians 6:2).*

2. What are the two challenges for a father v4?

- *Don't provoke your children to anger*
  - *Guiding them without crushing their spirit*
- *Bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*

3. What is the right balance as a parent in disciplining children?

- *Don't be harsh and abusive which leads to fear*
- *But neither under discipline which leads to a sense of entitlement*

4. How are slaves to behave?

- *They are to obey and respect their earthly masters like they would Christ v5*
  - *Even when their masters are not looking v6*
- *They are to serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord v7*

5. Why should slaves do this?

- *Because it is doing the will of God v6*
- *Because the Lord will reward you regardless of your status v8*

6. Does this apply now to a modern day work force? Why or why not?

- *There seems no reason that the same principles wouldn't apply today*
- *The key principle is to work as if you are working for the Lord and that is independent of your status or your type of work*
- *God has a high view of work – it was there in the Garden of Eden*
- *So by working with the right attitude, a hard work ethic, and a deep awareness of the Lordship of Christ, you glorify Christ*

7. What do you think the results would be if you worked like this?

- *It can be liberating because ultimately your master/boss doesn't control you (or isn't the ultimate authority)*
- *It can be practical because if you are both hard working and easy to manage, you'll be more desired by earthly bosses*
- *It should also improve your attitude to work*

8. How are masters to behave?

- *Treat their slaves well v9*

9. Why are masters to behave like this?

- *Because even masters have a Master – God in heaven v9*
- *Ultimately, we are serving the Lord not people and he treats everyone the same v9*
- *In this passage, the references to Jesus are using the terms 'Lord' and 'Christ', highlighting his authority and that he is the Messiah*

10. How do you feel about how Paul has chosen to tackle the issue of slavery?

- *Paul does not come out and call for the abolition of slavery*
- *In Philemon (a letter by Paul to the slave owner Philemon about his runaway slave Onesimus), Paul makes it pretty clear that he thinks Philemon should free Onesimus. But he never commands him to, hoping to persuade Philemon to come to that decision himself.*
- *Paul dissolves the slave/master relationship and replaces it with a brother/brother relationship (Philemon 17)*
- *Slavery in the Roman world probably comes in two ways:*
  - *Conquered people who were forced into slavery*
  - *Those in debt or starving that chose slavery as a way to deal with their immediate circumstances (an economic arrangement)*
- *It is the second form that is mostly spoken about in the Old Testament. The Jews could have Jewish servants not slaves, but it was the choice of the servant, for a set time only, and the conditions were meant to be good. They were freed after a set time and the owners were required to help them start a fresh. So the Bible condemns harsh slavery (Exodus 21:1-5; Leviticus 25:39-42; Deuteronomy 15:12-18).*
- *A runaway slave should not be returned to their master (Deuteronomy 23:15-16)*
- *Leviticus 25:44 does say that Israelites could buy foreign slaves. But the Bible is insistent on fair treatment (holidays, enough food, legal redress, sexual protection, no chains, no torture, not oppressed, and no physical abuse). Also, these slaves cannot have been kidnapped – so it is voluntary.*
- *It is a complex issue*
- *The Bible clearly teaches that all people are equal in the eyes of God (Genesis 1:26-28; 9:6). Owning Israelites was abhorrent (Exodus 21:16) and God freed his people from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 3-15).*
- *God's plan outlined in Genesis 12 is that he will bless his people and through them bless all the peoples of the earth*

11. How can you apply what has been taught in this passage?

### Study 10 – The Armour of God (Ephesians 6:10-24)

This text summarises the whole of Ephesians. It portrays the church as a community of 'divine warriors' who continue Christ's mission by extending the new creation inaugurated by his sacrificial death and resurrection.

#### **Read Ephesians 6:10-24**

There are three things we need in battle:

- We need God's strength vv10-12
- We need God's armour vv14-17
- We need to pray v18

1. What is the key thing God wants us to do?

- *Stand firm vv11, 13, 13, 14*
- *We are not urged to win, because we have already won 1:20-23; 2:4-6!*
- *This is our main strategy in surviving Satan's assaults*
- *Our goal is to stand firm as a Christian, because there is a battle going on*
- *Stand firm in your belief in Jesus as your Saviour, not giving the devil a foothold*
- *Christ decisively defeated Satan on the cross but will not destroy him until he returns in judgement. Until then, our struggle with Satan's forces will remain fierce, but our ultimate victory is never in doubt, because of the cross.*
- *Note: spiritual victory is not being freed from suffering, but maintaining faith in the Gospel despite it*

2. What does that mean to you?

3. Who are we actually fighting against vv11-12?

- *Satan and those that work for him*

4. What armour does God ask us to put on and what does it mean vv13-17? Choose a few to discuss.

- *Belt of truth v14*
  - See Isaiah 11:5
  - Recall Ephesians 1:13; 4:14-15, 21, 24-25; 5:9;
  - The Greek word translated here as 'belt', is more like a 'frame' than just a belt. This is underneath all the armour, the foundation of that holds all the armour in place.
  - Truth in Ephesians is God's truth, revealed in the gospel, seen in the lives of believers
  - So we stand firm by understanding the truth of the gospel and living a life worthy of it
- *Breastplate of righteousness v14*
  - See Isaiah 59:17
  - Recall Ephesians 4:24; 5:9;
  - Having Christ's righteousness will protect you from a fatal blow
  - Put on your new identity
  - In Ephesians the outworking of salvation is a reflection of God's own character
  - Again, we stand firm by understanding God's righteousness and reflecting it
- *Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace v15*
  - See Isaiah 52:7
  - Recall Ephesians 1:2; 2:14-18; 4:3; 6:23;
  - Put on your new identity
  - In Ephesians, peace can be both vertical between God and us, and horizontal between Jew and Gentile (or between each other)
  - This is a readiness both to preach the gospel and to show it in our unity
- *Shield of faith v16*
  - See Proverbs 30:5
  - Recall Ephesians 1:1, 15; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13; 6:23;
  - It doesn't say you need more faith, but get your faith out!
  - Satan's attacks are aimed at our faith – both in temptation and accusation (denying the truth)
  - By faith, we have access to God's grace and his power to stand firm
- *Helmet of salvation v17*
  - See Isaiah 59:17
  - Recall Ephesians 1:7, 13, 14; 2:5, 8;
  - A helmet communicates what team or side you are on, to identify you so others can see you
  - Our job is to proclaim Christ's victory and this can be identified by your helmet
  - Ephesians says we have already been saved by grace
  - So wearing our helmet is making our salvation prominent in our thinking and speech
  - So we stand firm by knowing our salvation is already secure in Christ
- *Sword of the Spirit v17*
  - See Isaiah 49:2
  - Recall Ephesians 1:3, 13, 17; 2:18, 22; 3:5, 16; 4:3, 4, 30; 5:18, 19; 6:12, 18;
  - Likely depicts the church's proclamation of the Gospel, an offensive weapon against cosmic evil

- *The church's preaching of the Gospel leads to the expansion of the new creation inaugurated by Christ*
  - *The Spirit makes the word of God effective and powerful*
  - *So Christians also have an attacking weapon*
  - *We stand firm as we make good use of God's word in defending against attacks*
  - *It is the Messiah's armour, like armour being passed from a father to a son*
  - *God does not send us into battle against Satan without divine assistance. In fact, he dresses us in his own armour.*
  - *There is no need to fear Satan while we remain dressed in this armour, because Jesus used it, and has risen from the dead to glory in heaven, which proves that it is effective.*
  - *Spiritual forces work in the opposite direction to Paul – trying to put the old self back on*
5. The Ephesians had grown up in an extremely superstitious culture, terrified of Satan and demonic powers. What two errors can we commit in fighting Satan?
- *Overestimating his power – unhealthy focus which leads to superstition, blaming everything on spiritual forces*
  - *Underestimating his power – disbelief in the supernatural*
    - *Note in verse 12 Paul doesn't just say demons. He says rulers, authorities, powers, and spiritual forces emphasising the power of the enemy.*
  - *The victory has been won, but the enemy is still fighting*
6. Satan's main weapons are temptation and accusation (like we see in Genesis 3). Can you give examples of how he may use these weapons?
- *Temptation (gets you to have too high a view of yourself, therefore you do things you shouldn't)*
    - *He shows you the bait but hides the hook (short term pleasure, hiding long term misery)*
    - *Rationalise sin as virtue eg I'm not greedy, I'm thrifty*
    - *The sins of Christian leaders – they did it, so I can too*
    - *Overstressing the mercy of God – do it, God will forgive you*
    - *Making you bitter over suffering – I deserve this!*
    - *Showing Christians how many bad people seem to be having great lives – playing by the rules doesn't pay off*
    - *Comparing one part of your life to another – I'm very good here, so it's ok to be bad elsewhere*
  - *Accusation (gets you to have too low a view of yourself, self-hate leads you to do things you shouldn't)*
    - *By causing us to look more at our sin than at our Saviour*
    - *By causing Christians to obsess over past sins where the damage can't be undone*
    - *By making Christians think the troubles they are going through must be punishments*

- *By making people think the inner struggles and feelings they have as Christians they couldn't possibly have*

7. Prayer is given more attention than any one piece of armour (vv18-20). Why?

- *Because it is foundational to the effectiveness of all the armour*
- *The importance of prayer for spiritual survival is expressed with the four 'all's of verse 18.*
- *On all occasions, with all kinds of prayers, with all perseverance, and for all the Lord's people*

8. What does Paul ask prayer for?

- *He asks for prayer to be courageous in his evangelism*
- *Paul twice asks for prayer to preach fearlessly*
- *This is what we should pray for, for each other*
- *The fact that we are in a battle drives Paul to pray and ask for prayer*
- *Believers are called to stand firm in the midst of spiritual warfare by God's power, with God's armour, and in constant prayer*

9. How can this be a model for our own prayer life?

10. In Paul's final greeting he deliberately mentions three major blessings of God. What are they?

- *Peace 6:23 = reconciliation with God*
- *Love 6:23*
- *Grace 6:24*
- *He signs off with the result (peace), the content (love), and the origin (grace) of God's glorious plan to unite everything under Christ*
- *We also see Paul use the term, 'the Lord Jesus Christ' v23, highlighting that Jesus is a person and so we can relate to him, that he is the Messiah (the Saviour), and that he is Lord, the ruler and authority*

11. How have we seen love throughout Ephesians (it's in every chapter)?

- *God loves us (1:4; 2:4; 5:1)*
- *God loves Jesus (1:6)*
- *Christians love each other (1:15; 4:2, 15, 16)*
- *Jesus Christ loves us (3:17, 18, 19; 5:2)*
- *Husbands should love their wife (5:25, 28, 33)*
- *Paul loves the Ephesians (6:23)*
- *We love Jesus (6:24)*

12. Paul's final greeting shows us his motivation for writing. How can you show encouragement, peace, love and grace to those around you? How has Ephesians helped you to do this?

13. So after the battle is over where do we end up? Read Revelation 21:1-4 and 22:1-5.

- *At the start of this set of studies, we heard an overview of the Bible leading up to Ephesians*
- *The Bible story started in the Garden of Eden, in God's direct presence*
- *It ends in a Garden City, the New Jerusalem, again in God's direct presence*
- *With no more tears, death mourning or crying or pain – for eternity*

14. What have you learnt that has most encouraged you or challenged you from the book of Ephesians? Is there anything in particular that you have put in to practice that you'd like to share?