



EPHESIANS

Biblical Identity & Community

Grace Christian Church

Book of EPHESIANS

THE STUDY

The purpose of studying Ephesians as individuals and a community was one of identity. The book of Ephesians tells us who we are, what we have and to whom we belong. Our identity as believers is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Understanding this is critical to a fruitful walk with our Lord. The word 'in' in reference to Christ occurs approximately twenty seven times. It stresses the truth of the believer's union with Christ in death, resurrection and ultimate ascension. The fact of the believer's position "in" Christ permeates the entire thought of the epistle.

Our hope is that as you read through and study the book of Ephesians, you will come to the realisation of your true identity as a Christian. It's not what we do, but what Christ has done. It's not who we are, but who Christ has made. It's not where we want to belong, but to whom we belong. Understanding who we are leads us to know what we should do. The beginning of your identity is in Christ, so then is also the beginning of your activity. From your identity comes your activity.

Introduction

The letter is addressed to the church in the city of Ephesus, capital of the Roman province of Asia (Asia Minor, modern Turkey). Because the name Ephesus is not mentioned in every early manuscript, some scholars believe the letter was an encyclical, intended to be circulated and read among all the churches in Asia Minor and was simply sent first to believers in Ephesus.

Author and Background

Paul affirms his authorship in the opening salutations (1:1, 3:1). The letter is written from prison in Rome (Acts 28:16–31) sometime between A.D. 60–62 and is therefore often referred to as a Prison Epistle (along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon). It may have been composed at the same time with Colossians and initially sent with that epistle and Philemon by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21–22; Col. 4:7–8). The fledgling church most likely begun by Aquila and Priscilla was later firmly established by Paul on his third missionary journey (Acts 19) and was pastored by him for some three years.

After Paul left, Timothy pastored the congregation for perhaps a year and a half, primarily to counter the false teaching of a few influential men (such as Hymenaeus and Alexander). Because of those men, the church at Ephesus was plagued by “myths and endless genealogies” (1 Tim. 1:4) and by such ascetic and unscriptural ideas.

Theological Theme

One of the key themes for the book of Ephesians is the Christian's riches in Christ. This is written to remind believers of their immeasurable blessings in Jesus Christ; and not only to be thankful for those blessings, but also to live in a manner worthy of them. The fact that Paul is writing about wealth would be significant to his readers. Ephesus was best known for its magnificent temple of Artemis, or Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. It was also an important political, educational, and commercial centre. Paul compares the church of Jesus Christ to a temple and explains the great wealth that Christ has in His church.

Another key theme of the letter is the mystery (meaning an unrevealed truth) of the church. A major truth emphasised is that of the church as Christ's present spiritual, earthly body. This metaphor depicts the church not as an organization, but as a living organism composed of mutually related and interdependent parts.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...” 1:3 (ESV)

OUTLINE of EPHESIANS

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. God's Purpose for the Church (1:3-3:13)
 - A. Predestination in Christ (1:3-6a)
 - B. Redemption in Christ (1:6b-10)
 - C. Inheritance in Christ (1:11-14)
 - D. Resources in Christ (1:15-23)
 - E. New Life in Christ (2:1-10)
 - F. Unity in Christ (2:11-3:13)
- III. God's Fullness for the Church (3:14-21)
- IV. God's Plan for Faithful Living in the Church (4:1-6)
- V. God's Son Endows and Builds the Church (4:7-16)
- VI. God's Pattern and Principles for Members of the Church (4:17-32)
- VII. God's Standards for Faithfulness in the Church (5:1-21)
 - A. Walking in Love (5:1-7)
 - B. Living in Light (5:8-14)
 - C. Walking in Wisdom and Sobriety (5:15-18a)
 - D. Filled with God's Spirit (5:18b-21)
- VIII. God's Standards for Authority and Submission (5:22-6:9)

Ephesians ONE:

RICHES IN CHRIST 1:1-23

AT a GLANCE

Paul begins this epistle with an expression of praise to God for the spiritual blessings that are in Christ (v.3). In this expression is a list of blessings divided into three sections; (a) those blessings related to the Father; (b) those blessings in relation to the Son; and (c) blessings related to the Holy Spirit. The key phrase throughout this section is "in Him" or "in whom" which stresses the point that all spiritual blessings come through Jesus Christ and are enjoyed by those who are "in" Him (v.3).

The prayer in this chapter is the first of two prayers in this epistle, focusing on their "enlightenment" (v.18); that their knowledge and understanding might increase. Paul especially desires that they might know God more fully; to know what is the hope of His calling; to know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and to know what is the great power of God toward those who believe (vs.15-19). This "power" is the same power God used to raise Jesus from the dead and seat Him at His right hand. The exalted position now enjoyed by Christ includes authority over all things, especially the church which is described as "...His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." (v.23)

OVERVIEW of CHAPTER

- The wonderful blessings God has provided in Christ
- Paul's desire for the Ephesians to "know"
- The greatness of God's power toward those who believe
- The exalted position of Christ and His church

IN the WORD

1. Read through Ephesians 1:1-14 and find every occurrence of "in Christ" or its variation, like "in Him", "in whom" or "in the beloved". What did you learn about your identity in Christ from these verses?

Outside of Christ I am a sinner; but in Christ, I am saved. Outside of Christ, I am empty; in Christ, I am full. Outside of Christ, I am weak; in Christ, I am strong. Outside of Christ, I cannot; in Christ, I am more than able. Outside of Christ, I have been defeated; in Christ, I am already victorious. How meaningful are the words, "in Christ." – Watchman Nee

2. What does it mean to be 'adopted' by God the Father? How is the world's view of adoption similar or different?
3. We are told in verse 3 that we are "blessed with every spiritual blessing". What blessings have we received that are attributed to God the Father (v.4-6), God the Son (vs.7-12) & God the Holy Spirit (vs.13-14)?
4. How do these blessings relate to the past (v.4), present (v.7) and future (v.10)?

5. What does Paul mean in verse 4 when he says God “chose us” before the foundation of the world? To what are we chosen for?
6. Paul repeats the phrase “to the praise of his glory” (vs.5-6, 12, 14). What does this tell you about why God created us?

“After each of the main sections in Ephesians 1:4–14, Paul added the purpose behind these gifts. Why has God the Father chosen us, adopted us, and accepted us? “to the praise of the glory of his grace” (Eph. 1:6). Why has the Son redeemed us, forgiven us, revealed God’s will to us and made us part of God’s inheritance? “that we should be to the praise of his glory” (Eph.1:12). Why has God the Spirit sealed us and become the guarantee of our future blessing? “unto the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:14). We often have the idea that God saves sinners mainly because He pities them or wants to rescue them from eternal judgment, but God’s main purpose is that He might be glorified.”- Be Rich, Warren Wiersbe

7. What had Paul heard that prompted his prayers on their behalf?
8. Paul prays that “the eyes of their heart might be enlightened” that they might know the “hope of God's calling,” the “riches of His inheritance” and the greatness of God’s immeasurable power” (v.18). What is the meaning of each of these spiritual truths?

Paul’s request is not that they may receive a “second blessing” but rather they may appreciate to the fullest

possible extent the implications of the blessings they have already received.

The essence of his prayer for them is “that they may know” (v.18). Growth in knowledge is indispensable to growth in holiness. The “knowledge” for which Paul prays, adds the knowledge of experience to the knowledge of understanding. More than this, it emphasizes “that they may know him better” (v.17) that is, come to know truths about Him. There is no higher knowledge than the knowledge of God Himself.” - Building a Community in Christ, John Stott

9. Describe God’s ‘immeasurable great power’ according to vs.19-22?
10. What is Christ's exalted position at God's right hand (v.21)? What has been placed under His feet? Over what is He the head (v.23)?

DISCUSSION

- How does being adopted into God’s family as a son or daughter affect you personally? How do you (or don't you) live out that identity in your daily walk with God?
- Verses 4-5, 11 indicate that ‘God chose’ and ‘God predestined’ us. This has been understood as either God foreknowing or foreseeing that He would save you or that God pre-ordained your salvation ahead of time. In other words, He purposely chooses some for salvation and not others.

How do each of these perspectives challenge your understanding of your own salvation, your Christian faith, evangelism, etc.? Can you think of other places in Scripture where these perspectives are represented? Where do you fall and on what basis?

Irrespective of the differing theological beliefs in reference to predestination, these views should do nothing to diminish or detract from the unity of the church. The Christian is such because of the finished work of Christ at Calvary, NOT because of a theological doctrine. It should always be remembered that it doesn't exempt our responsibility as believers to preach the good news of Christ & Him crucified.

- We have been “sealed” by the Holy Spirit which guarantees our inheritance (v.13). The word suggests a type of stamp that authenticates that believer will receive his eternal salvation and rewards. Do you live with that type of assurance regarding your salvation? Why or why not? How does that impact your day-to-day decisions?
- How could your life be more in keeping with the phrase “to the praise of His glory”?
- What are the implications for the church and for your part within the church to say that we are Christ's body and that He is the Head of the church? What does this image imply about the way that the church grows, how it functions, how it is lead, and the part that you play within this body?

- Paul often prayed for the congregations he planted and served in; giving thanks to God for these churches (and their members) and petitioning God that these churches might be strengthened. What is your level of intercession for your church, for its leaders, for members? Is this something all Christians should cultivate?

SUMMARY

2 Peter encouraged the people of God that “...according to the divine power we have all things that pertain unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 2:3); they lacked nothing and he wanted to remind them of this truth. So too was Paul’s desire for the Ephesian church, for them to know WHO they are, WHOM they belong, and WHAT they are to be doing.

This is the reality of the Christian life; to understand an individual’s ‘Sainthood’ in Christ, that they have been “blessed” with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, CHOSEN by the Father, REDEEMED by the Son & SEALED by the SPIRIT.

This is a believer’s identity individually, that we may live this reality corporately.

Ephesians TWO:

MADE ALIVE IN CHRIST 2:1-22

AT a GLANCE

After expressing his desire for his readers to know the exceeding greatness of God's power toward those who believe (1:19), Paul reminds them of their previous state outside of Christ (dead), but now have been made “alive” together with Christ. They are raised and made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places, that God might show even more riches of His grace in the ages to come. All this God did by His love, grace, and mercy. While it involved their faith, it didn't involve any works so no one could boast. The end result is that they have been created in Christ to walk in “good works”, as God planned beforehand (vs.1-10).

Paul also reminds them that through Christ Jesus, the Gentiles who were once strangers from the promises made to Israel and without God in the world, can now draw near through Jesus' blood. His death on the cross abolished the law of commandments that separated Jews and Gentiles. He reconciled them both to God in one body. The Gentiles can now be fellow-citizens and members of God's family; being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus as the cornerstone, in which they serve as a habitation of God in the Spirit (vs.11-22).

OVERVIEW of CHAPTER

- The riches of God's grace toward sinners, how we are saved by grace through faith
- The Gentiles' condition outside of Christ,
- The effect Jesus' death had on the Law and what Gentiles can now become in Christ

IN the WORD

1. Paul uses four ways to describe how we “were” prior to coming to know Christ (vs.1-3). What are these four descriptions? What do each of these four descriptions mean or imply about our former condition?
2. Paul describes another spiritual presence that exists in this world (v.2). How does Paul describe that entity and what is the effect it has in this world?

The unbeliever is not sick; he is dead! He does not need resuscitation; he needs resurrection. All lost sinners are dead, and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. This means that our world is one vast graveyard, filled with people who are dead while they live (1 Tim. 5:6) — Be Rich, Warren Wiersbe

3. Why is it significant that God not only saved individuals but also made them part of His church? What does this say about the role of the church in God’s overall plan?
4. What do verses 4-10 tell us about the character of God?

5. God made us alive and raised us up in Christ (v.4-6). What does it mean to be “made alive with Christ”?
6. What are we now in Christ Jesus and for what purpose? (v.10)
7. What did Jesus do specifically for Gentiles (v.12-14) for the Jewish people (v.14-15) and corporately (v.16)?

The word “reconcile” means to “bring together again” or to “re-establish friendly relations.” In Christ, both Jew and Gentile have become one. “He is our peace” (v.14). The consequences of Christ’s work then, is the destroying of the enmity by the abolishing of the law, and the creating of a new man - the church.

8. What does it mean to have access to the Father through one Spirit (v.18)?
9. What can Gentiles now become because of what Christ has done (v.19)?
10. Upon what are we being built (v.20) and what kind of building are we? For what purpose (v.21-22)?
11. Paul describes our equality in Jesus with three images: citizens, family and building. How are these three words descriptive of people before and after they become Christians (v.19-22)?

DISCUSSION

- Do you see your former life (prior to salvation) in the categories that are described in vs.1-3 and 11-19? Why or why not? Is vs.1-3 an accurate portrayal of your life prior to Christ?
- How is it important to you that Jesus has made reconciliation with God possible? In what ways does that bring you peace?
- What individual Christians or Christian groups do you separate yourself from (because of theological, cultural, denominational, racial or economic differences)? Why?
- Have you personally experienced division? If so, what steps did you take to reconcile those relationship?

“It would be hard to exaggerate the grandeur of this vision of the new community God has brought into being. But when we turn from the ideal portrayed in Scripture to concrete realities experienced in church today, it is very different and a very tragic story. For even in the church there is often alienation, disunity and discord. Now Christians erect new barriers in place of the old which Christ has demolished: now want of power and control, personal animosity, prejudice, jealousy, racism, arrogance and the unforgiving spirit separate the church.... ALL of which contradicts the unity of Christ’s church” - John Stott (edit)

- Do you experience the church as a dwelling for God's Spirit and as a holy nation in which you are a fully active and accepted citizen (v.19-22)? Describe your experience. None of us can control what other people do, but what is your part in building peace and holiness in the church?

“The Kingdom of God is not going to be advanced by our churches becoming filled with men, but by men in our churches becoming filled with God.” - Duncan Campbell

SUMMARY

The reality of Christ's church is that it is made up of a sanctified (but sin tainted) people; and yet, this is the means by which God chooses to reveal Himself to the world. To take people who once “...walked, following the course of this world...” (v.2) and “...were by nature children of [God's] wrath...” (v.3) and make them by God's grace in Christ, one body – the church. It is this body (the church) that the grace of God the Father is to be made manifest, the love of God the Son is to be displayed, and the reality of God the Holy Spirit is to be evidenced to the WORLD.

Ephesians THREE:

THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST 3:1-21

AT a GLANCE

Paul reminds his readers of God's grace that has been shown him regarding the revelation of the "mystery". Through reading what he had written earlier, they would have understood how the "mystery" pertained to Gentiles becoming fellow heirs in Christ, and Paul felt privileged to preach among the Gentiles what, for ages, had been hidden. Knowing that what he did was part of God's eternal purpose in Christ, to make His manifold wisdom known by the church, he asked his brethren not to be discouraged by any tribulations he experienced on their behalf (vs.1-13).

Paul's second prayer for the Ephesians focuses on their enablement; that the Father would strengthen them by His Spirit; that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith; that they may be able to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, and be filled with all the fullness of God. He concludes this prayer and this chapter by ascribing that glory be given to God in the church by Jesus Christ for all eternity (vs.14-21).

OVERVIEW of CHAPTER

- The "mystery" so long hidden that is now revealed
- The role of the church
- The prayer of Paul for their enablement

IN the WORD

1. How does Paul identify himself as he begins this chapter? Why would Paul consider himself a prisoner of Christ?
2. What dispensation or measure of grace was shown by God toward Paul (vs.2-3)?

Paul was not only a “prisoner” because of “the mystery,” but he was also a “minister.” God gave him a “dispensation” (stewardship) that he might go to the Gentiles, not only with the good news of salvation through Christ, but also with the message that Jews and Gentiles are now one in Christ.

The word dispensation comes from two Greek words: oikos, meaning “house” and nomos, meaning “law.” Our English word economy is derived directly from the Greek oikonomia, “the law of the house,” or “a stewardship, a management.” God has different ways of managing His program from age to age, and these different “stewardships” Bible students sometimes call “dispensations” (Eph. 1:9–10). God’s principles do not change, but His methods of dealing with humankind do change over the course of history. —Be Rich, Warren Wiersbe

3. What is the “mystery” to which Paul refers several times in this section? How did Paul receive this “mystery” (v.3)? What additional details or descriptions do verses 5, 9, 11 provide regarding this “mystery”?
4. What three privileges did the Gentiles attain (together with the Jews) in this plan (v.6)
5. In contrast to keeping this mystery hidden in the past, what is God’s intent now for His church (vs.10-11)?
6. What has Christ therefore made possible for us (v.12)?
7. What was Paul’s response to suffering (vs.13-14)?
8. Paul prays for three things for the Ephesian believers. What are these requests (vs.16-18)? In what role or capacity does each person of the Trinity appear in these requests?
9. In verse 21, Paul ascribes glory to God in at least two ways. What are those two ways? How exactly is God glorified in these two ways?

DISCUSSION

- Read verses 1–13 and underline some of the things that define the mystery of the church. What aspects of the mystery do you understand? What about the mystery of the church is difficult for you to understand?

- We now have boldness and confident access through faith in Christ (v.12). This is a description of our ability to approach God's throne without fear and trepidation to make our needs known to Him (See Heb 4:16). Does this accurately describe your approach to prayer? Why or why not?
- Why do you think Paul could encourage them in the face of suffering?
- What is your usual response when suffering? How do you discern whether your suffering is related to your faith in Christ or is a result of our own sin, folly, or general suffering due to the fall?
- Paul writes about having power “together with all the saints.” (v.18) Power to do what? How do we grab hold of this power?
- What role does the Holy Spirit play in leading us to discover the power of the saints?
- Why is love such an important element of Paul's prayer? What effect would it have on the church, if the prayer that we all could grasp “the love of Christ”, was answered?

SUMMARY

The lesson taught by the first half of Ephesians 3 is the centrality of the church. Some people construct a Christianity separate from the body of Christ – but that is not the theme of scripture. The church is to be the community where the purpose of the ‘mystery’ is revealed (vs.8-13) and appreciation of ‘mystery’ expressed (vs.14-21).

Ephesians FOUR:

UNITY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST 4:1-32

AT a GLANCE

Beginning with this chapter and proceeding through the rest of the epistle, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. Having described earlier how Jesus attained unity between Jew and Gentile through His death on the cross, Paul now pleads with them to "walk in unity". The unity of the Spirit is then defined as consisting of one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God (vs.1-6).

As motivation, Paul reminds them of the gracious gifts Christ gave His church following His ascension to heaven. Such gifts included the offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, which are designed to equip the saints for ministry and bring the body of Christ to maturity. In this way, it should not be misled by false doctrine, but instead by speaking the truth in love should grow in Christ as each member does it share (vs.7-16).

Finally the chapter addresses the need to "walk in purity", by contrasting how they once walked as Gentiles in licentiousness and greediness, they are reminded of the truth which is in Jesus. This truth calls upon them to put off the old man with its deceitful lusts, to be renewed in the

spirit of their mind, and to put on the new man that is created in righteousness and holiness. They are to speak with truth and grace, work hard to help those in need, and be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving just as God has forgiven them in Christ (vs.17-32).

OVERVIEW of CHAPTER

- The importance of walking in unity and purity
- The gifts Christ has given to build the church
- The conduct of our new life

IN the WORD

1. How is the Christian to walk (live) and what attitudes are consistent with the Christian walk (vs.1-3)?
2. In verses 4-6 Paul repeats the word “one” seven times and three of those allude to the person of the Trinity. How does unity of God relate to Christian unity?
3. What diversities exist with the unity Paul emphasizes in previous verses (vs.7-11)
4. What do we learn about the purpose and function of spiritual gifts? (vs.12-14)

“Ephesians 4:12 tells us these gifts are given to prepare God's people for service and for building up the body of Christ. Gifts are never given for the sole benefit of the recipient.

All spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit, but the functioning of these gifts are regulated by the Holy Scriptures. The Spirit of God will never contradict the Word of God.

5. As we speak the truth in love, what are we to be doing? What assists us in this (vs.15-16)?

The apostle John warned against welcoming false teaching (2 John); the local church cannot believe in peace at any price. God's wisdom is "first pure, then peaceable" (James 3:17). Purity of doctrine alone does not produce spiritual unity. There are many churches that are sound in doctrine but unsound when it comes to love, hence Paul joins the two... "speaking the truth in love" (Eph 4:15).

6. How does Paul describe the pagan mind and heart and what resulted from that thinking (vs.17-19)?
7. In contrast to the above, what truth have we learned from Christ. What does it mean to renew your mind (vs.20-24)?
8. What sorts of things are we to therefore put away? List the six examples of sin that we are to "put off", noting the positive command with each instruction (vs.25-32). What do they all have in common?

Ephesians 4 is a stirring summons to the unity and purity of the church. It is the integration of Christian theology, ethics and experience. It emphasizes that being, thought and action belong together and must never be separated.

For what we are governs how we think, and how we think determines how we act. We are a people who have put off the old life and put on the new; ...that is what He has made us. – John Stott

9. Why does Paul introduce the Holy Spirit in v.30 and what does it mean to ‘grieve ‘the Holy Spirit’?
10. What does it mean to “forgive one another as God in Christ forgave you” (v.32)?

DISCUSSION

- How is unity different from uniformity?
- Why is the unity of the church so critical to God? How does ignoring the traits in verses 1-3 contribute to the disunity of the church? Be specific.
- Paul begins to describe how we should live in light of our calling (vs.1-2). The first quality he highlights is meekness or humility. In Matthew 11:29, Jesus describes Himself as meek or “humble.” How was Jesus’ life an example of meekness and humility - *that is, power under control, used to serve rather than to dominate?*
- The church grows by truth and love. What are the extremes of being unbalanced in either? How have you seen this happen in some churches?

- Paul speaks of teachings and doctrines that circulate within the church (v.14). This verse addresses the deliberate and wilful distorting of the truth of God's Word to fit a person's own agenda or ideals rather than what scripture plainly teaches. What are the results of such teachings? By what criteria are you able to discern between good or bad doctrine?

‘Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman who need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth’. (2 Tim 2:15)

“Nothing makes a man so virtuous as belief of the truth. A lying doctrine will soon beget a lying practice. A man cannot have an erroneous belief without by-and-by having an erroneous life. I believe the one thing naturally begets the other”. – Charles Spurgeon

- Verses 13, 15 and 16 all speak of the growth of the body as the end goal of this work or ministry that the saints perform. Paul states that every joint and every part is important to that growth. What part are you playing in the maturing of the body of Christ?

“If the Church is a living body united to the same head, governed by the same laws, and pervaded by the same Spirit, it is impossible that one part should be independent of all the rest.”– Charles Hodge

- What is the “unwholesome talk” Paul is referring to in 4:29? Describe some experiences you’ve had with this sort of talk. How does this cause disunity? What are the best ways to deal with corrupt or inappropriate talk?
- Which of the areas of sin that we are to put off are you most vulnerable? What is the significance of the Holy Spirit in helping you overcome these areas?

“Preaching to the heart addresses the understanding first, in order to instruct it; but in doing so it also reaches through the mind to inform, rebuke, and cleanse the conscience. It then touches the will in order to reform and transform life and equip the saints for the work of ministry” – SB Ferguson

SUMMARY

Walking worthy of the calling in which we have been called (v.1) involves more than mental ascent, hence Paul writing specific instructions about the “putting off” of the old man and the “putting on” of the new man (vs.22-24). The only means by which this is attainable is through the power of the Holy Spirit, who is our Guarantee and Seal, and enables us to live in alignment with God’s ultimate design.

Ephesians FIVE:

IMITATORS OF CHRIST 5:1-33

AT a GLANCE

Paul continues to exhort Christians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling (cf. 4:1). Having described the need to walk in unity and in purity, he now urges them to imitate God and "walk in love" with Christ as their example. Such love requires that all forms of immorality and filthy speech not even be named among them. Since the wrath of God is to come upon the sons of disobedience, Christians must not be deceived by nor partake with those who engage in such evil deeds (vs.1-6).

Having passed from darkness to light in coming to Christ, we should also "walk as children of light". This includes producing the fruit of the Spirit such as goodness, righteousness and truth, thereby demonstrating what is acceptable to the Lord. We cannot participate in the shameful works of darkness, but instead must expose them. This we do by letting Christ's light shine in us, for such light will naturally make the darkness manifest by way of contrast (vs.7-14).

As the days are evil and the time is short, Christians must "walk as wise" and make the best use of their time. This requires an understanding of the Lord's will. Christians are also to be filled with the Spirit, as evidenced by singing together, praying with

thanksgiving, and submitting to one another in the fear of God (vs.15-21).

The chapter ends with what we might describe as a call to "walk in matrimonial harmony". Wives are exhorted to respect their husbands, submitting to them as to the Lord. Husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church, and even as they love their own bodies. In the course of such instructions Paul takes the opportunity to reveal the Lord's desire to present to Himself a glorious church, holy and without blemish, which is why He gave Himself for it (vs.22-33).

OVERVIEW of CHAPTER

- To see the importance of walking in love, light, and wisdom
- To understand the responsibilities wives and husbands have toward each other
- To appreciate the high esteem and great love the Lord has for His church

IN the WORD

"If we are the children of God, then we ought to imitate our Father. This is the basis for the three admonitions in this section. God is love (1 John 4:8); therefore, "walk in love" (v. 1-2). God is light (1 John 1:5); therefore, "walk as children of light" (v. 3-14). God is truth (1 John 5:6); therefore, walk in wisdom (v.15-17). Paul began with "walk in love" because love is the fundamental factor in the Christian life. If we walk in love, we will not disobey God or injure men because "he that loves another hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8).

The Holy Spirit puts this love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5).”- Be Rich, Warren Wiersbe

1. Believers are called to be “imitators of God” (v.1). What exactly does that require one to do according to verse 2? How does Christ's example further elaborate the command toward imitation?
2. Verse 3 continues the call for imitation, drawing out at least three major offences to avoid. What are these? Why would these three get singled out? *Hint: The first of these offenses comes from the Greek word porneia and encompasses a wide range of illicit sexual activity.*

“You are the only Bible some unbelievers will ever read, and your life is under scrutiny every day. What do others learn from you? Do they see an accurate picture of your God?” – John MacArthur

3. Paul uses the metaphor of light and dark to contrast two types of people (vs.6-15). List all of the elements which belong to those in “the light” and those in “the darkness.” Include characteristics, commands, and actions that you find in these verses.
4. What are the characteristics of a wise person (vs.17-18)?
5. What is either the means or the evidence of one filled with the Spirit (vs.19-21)?
6. What are the responsibilities of wives toward their husbands (vs.22-24)?

“The fact that I am a woman does not make me a different kind of Christian. But the fact that I am a Christian does make me a different kind of woman”. – Elizabeth Elliot

7. What instructions are given to the husband toward his wife (vs.25-31)?
8. Why did Jesus love and give Himself for the church (vs.25-27)?
9. What is Paul's summation regarding marital responsibilities (v.33)?

DISCUSSION

- Among the many offenses to avoid, this section includes: sexual impurity/immorality; greed or covetousness and unholy speech. Sexual impurity (according to the Scriptures) would include any kind of sexual activity outside of the bonds of marriage including addictions to pornography. Greed or covetousness would incorporate any type of unhealthy desire such as for money, power, control, etc.

How do you measure up in any of these three areas?

- In terms of our speech (v.4), why do you think this gets singled out so often in Scripture? (See Col 3:8-9 and the Book of James).

- What should submission look like in daily life? How do you react to the notion of submitting to someone else?
- What does this Scripture passage say about marriage (vs.22–27)? What are the most important takeaway points from these verses? In what ways do these passages portray a picture of Christ’s relationship to the church?
- How have we allowed the worlds view or our own theological bent, influence our understanding of submission and headship in the contexts of the marriage relationship?
- Paul says we should be thankful for all things (v.20). Paul spent a lot of time in prison, yet still found joy in his relationship with Christ. He wasn’t glad he was in prison but he found things to be thankful for in his painful and dangerous situation (Phil. 1:12–26). What are some of the challenges you face today that make it difficult for you to be thankful? How might you yet discover true joy in those circumstances?

In any trial, in any bitter situation, you are not alone, you are not helpless, you are not a victim. You have a tree, a cross, shown to you by the Sovereign God of Calvary. Whatever the trial or temptation, it is not more than you can bear. It is bearable. It can be handled. You can know as Joseph knew, "You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring

about this present result, to preserve many people alive"
(Genesis 50:20) - Kay Arthur

SUMMARY

A life walking in love, light, and wisdom, is the exhortation for all believers and only achievable as the Christian is not "drunk with wine" but controlled by the Spirit. Therefore the child of God is to make the most of the opportunity available to them and "redeem" the time God has granted them. This means to redeem ones marriage time, family time, work time, as a matter of fact ANY time for the glory of God.

Ephesians SIX:

WALK IN VICTORY 6:1-23

AT a GLANCE

"Walk in familial harmony." is the best way to describe the start of this chapter; children are to obey their parents, while fathers are instructed NOT to provoke their children to wrath but bring them up in the Lord's nurture and admonition. Many households in the first century A.D. contained servants, thus commands are given on the duties of servants and their masters as well (vs.1-9).

The last major section of this epistle is a call to "**walk in victory**", with a charge to stand strong in the power of the Lord's might; be able to withstand the wiles of the devil and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Therefore Christians need to adorn themselves with the whole armour of God, which includes elements as truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and the Word of God, it also requires fervent and watchful prayer, not just for one's self, but for all Christians (vs. 10-20).

A brief explanation is then given concerning Tychicus, who is to let them know how Paul is doing. The epistle then concludes with a prayer for peace to the brethren, love with faith, and grace for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ (vs.21-24).

OVERVIEW of CHAPTER

- The responsibilities of children and their fathers
- The principles governing servants and masters (can be applied to employees and their employers)
- The need to adorn ourselves with the whole of armour of God

IN the WORD

1. What responsibilities do children have toward their parents? What promise comes with the commandment to honour one's parents (vs.1-3)?
2. What responsibilities does a father have toward his children (v.4)?
3. In what way are servants to be obedient to their masters (vs.5-7)? Why?
4. How were masters to treat their servants (v.9)?

Jesus said the way to be a ruler is first to be a servant (Matt. 20:26). The person who is not under authority has no right to exercise authority. This explains why many of the great men of the Bible were first servants before God made them rulers: Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Nehemiah are just a few examples. Even after a man becomes a leader, he must still lead by serving. - Be Rich, Warren Wiersbe

5. Paul exhorts the Ephesian believers to “be empowered” or to “be strengthened” in the Lord and in His might. What reason then does Paul give for putting on God's armour? (See both 6:11 and 6:13)
6. The word translated as “schemes” in v. 11 carries with it the meaning of craftiness and deceit. How does this add to Paul's reasoning for putting on God's armour?
7. What does Paul mean that the Ephesian struggle is not against flesh and blood? Who then, specifically does Paul state their struggle is against (v.12)?
8. Go through and match each element of the soldier's uniform with the corresponding spiritual element that Paul assigns. For further study look up Isaiah 11:5; 52:7 and 59:17. It is likely Paul had these in mind when constructing his metaphor of the soldier's elements.
9. What does Paul enjoin the Ephesian believers to do in v.18 which he continues encouraging all the way to v.20?

DISCUSSION

- What are ways in which our society today is at odds with Paul's teaching in 6:1-4 (as well as 5:22-33)? How does the state of the family in our culture reflect the truth behind Paul's words?
- What does a servant-leader do that differentiates him or her from other leaders?

- Do you agree with the quote from Warren Wiersbe; “*The person who is not under authority has no right to exercise authority.*” Why or why not?

The authority by which the Christian leader leads is not power but love, not force but example, not coercion but reasoned persuasion. Leaders have power, but power is safe only in the hands of those who humble themselves to serve - John Stott

- Do you relate more to those in authority or under authority? How do you honour Christ in both situations?
- If you are a Leader, how well do you respect the authority of another Leader? How is this evident in your conduct toward them?
- How well do you submit to the authority of a leader who is younger than you?
- The call to stand firm and to resist evil / the devil are the reasons that Paul gives for “suing up.” Is this the approach you take, metaphorically speaking, in order to resist the devils “schemes”? Why or why not?
- What or who are the rulers, powers and forces of darkness in today's world?
- Paul's final prayer is that we would pray for those in the church (being alert for the saints) and specifically for those who are sharing the gospel. Would you take some time in your study now to do both?

SUMMARY

In the days in which we live, masses of professing Christians are almost totally ignorant of or indifferent to, the truths of spiritual warfare. This can partially be attributed to our materialistic culture, lack of vision for the 'long term' and lack of biblical understanding.

Paul addresses these and equips the church in looking beyond the culture, having their vision restored for the heavenly and be grounded biblically, regardless of the role you have.

These truths are just as relevant NOW for the church in the 21st century.

Ephesians: Biblical Identity & Community

Compiled from our own study of Ephesians as well resources from:

Warren Wiersbe (Be Rich - Study of Ephesians)

John Stott (Building a Community in Christ)

Mark Copeland (The Book of Ephesians)

Gustavo Karakey (Ephesians Bible Study)

ESV MacArthur Study Bible

Quoted Christian Authors <http://christian-quotes.ochristian.com/>