

UNITED

A STUDY IN EPHESIANS

UNITED: A Study in Ephesians

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Thank you for getting this guide and going on the journey with us. **UNITED** is designed to take you through the book of Ephesians over the next seven weeks. Whether you've never read the Bible before, or Ephesians is one of your favorite books, I believe God is going to speak to you.

To help you out, each week starts with a brief introduction to explain the biblical context of the passage. Next, I'll highlight our theme verse, followed by the entire chapter of the book of Ephesians. After each chapter, there's a summary and an explanation of the significance of that week's theme verse.

I've also included indicators for you to read each chapter over five days. Feel free to read a little bit every day, or read the entire chapter in one sitting—whatever works best for you.

I realize many people are intimidated to read the Bible or don't know how. You can do it—and I'm going to help you. My prayer is that through this guide, the book of Ephesians will come alive to you. It will change your life.

Take time to think about what you're reading. Underline things that stand out to you. I've given you plenty of room to write down thoughts, questions, or comments in the margins. This approach will help you really engage with what you're reading.

Most importantly, spend time talking about what you read with someone close to you. This could be with your Small Group, your spouse, or a friend at work. You'll get so much more out of this book if you take time to talk about it with others.

Finally, at the end of each week, you'll find some reflection questions to help apply what you've read.

This resource was designed with you in mind. My goal was to give you the best opportunity to engage with God's Word, hear God's voice, and experience God's presence.

Please know that I'm thinking about you and praying for you. I can't wait to see everything God is about to do in your life!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Little', with a stylized, cursive script.

Pastor Jeff Little

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Wk.

1

/ 7

'KNOWN'

For many people, reading the Bible can be intimidating, because while we know it's important, it can be really difficult to understand. But if you're willing to invest a little time, I'm confident you'll be amazed at what God will show you. You're not in this alone—we're going to do it together.

As we get ready to start reading the book of Ephesians, I want to help you by preparing you for some of the major characters and concepts.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER ONE

The book of Ephesians is a letter from a man named Paul to a group of Christians in the city of Ephesus.

Paul was the best-trained, most-passionate follower of strict, religious, Jewish Law. He persecuted the early church and followers of Jesus until he encountered Jesus Himself, radically changed, and became one of the most significant leaders of the early Christian movement.

Ephesus was a port city on the coast of modern-day Turkey and Greece with an estimated population of more than 200,000 people. It was known for the enormous Temple of Artemis, one of the seven ancient wonders of the world. The worship of pagan gods and the practice of black magic was rampant in Ephesus.

When Paul first came to Ephesus, what happened when he preached and prayed for people was so disruptive (especially to the temple worshippers and their business) there was a huge riot and Paul barely escaped with his life.

Through the process, one of the biggest and most significant churches in the ancient world emerged. Paul is a pastor who is writing to these Christians in this church to encourage them and help them continue to grow in their faith. Nearly all of chapter one is Paul's prayer for the people in the church. In this prayer, he gives a window into the incredible benefits of a genuine relationship with God.

Before we jump into each chapter, I'll give you a theme verse to help direct your reading and to prepare you for what we're going to emphasize.

I keep asking that the God
of our Lord Jesus Christ, the
glorious Father, may give you
the Spirit of *wisdom* and
revelation so that you may
know him better.

EPHESIANS 1:17 (NIV)

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

DAY 1

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love

vs. 5–10

⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—

⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

DAY 2

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding,

⁹ he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

vs. 11–15

DAY 3

¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,

¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

DAY 4

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people,

vs. 16–21

¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

DAY 5

¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,

¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength

²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,

²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not

vs. 22–23

only in the present age but also in the one to come.

²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,

²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY

1

We praise the Father because He's given us every blessing in Christ. *(v3)*

2

We've been adopted (added to His family) and redeemed (forgiven from all our wrongdoing) in Christ. *(v5-7)*

3

God's plan was to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth in Christ. *(v10)*

4

We're included in Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit when we believe and put our hope in Jesus to make us right with God. *(v13-14)*

5

When God opens our ability to see in the deepest part of who we are (the eyes of our heart), we'll know the hope He's called us to, the riches of His inheritance, and His incomparably great power for us who believe. *(v18-19)*

6

It's the same power that raised Jesus from the dead, placed Him at the place of highest honor, and gave Him authority above all other powers. *(v19-22)*

7

From this place, Jesus leads His Church, which is His body. *(v22-23)*

You may be wondering why we chose verse 17 as our theme verse. There are so many incredible things in this chapter, but verse 17 is a key.

Paul said he keeps asking the Father (he's continuing to do what he's already been doing) to give the people the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so we might know Him better.

Here's why this is so important: The goal is more than a better memory for spiritual information, to know about God, or to know someone who knows Him. The goal is for you to know Him.

What stood out to you from this chapter?

Read Ephesians 1:17. Why would Paul continually pray for us to know Jesus better?

How would you describe your relationship with God? How well do you know Jesus personally?

What's something you can do to grow in your relationship with God this week?

Notes



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Wk. 2/7

'STRENGTHENED'

We're on the way to the second chapter...which hopefully means you finished chapter one. My prayer is that you not only completed it, but you grew in your relationship with God. You don't just know about Him...but you KNOW Him. You heard His voice and you were strengthened in your faith.

Chapter one ends with this incredible description of how God raised Jesus from the dead, placed Him in the position of highest honor above every other authority, and made Him the head of the Church.

Chapter two starts with the phrase, "As for you..." Paul is going to tell us in detail what this means for us individually before he tells us what this means for us as a group.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER TWO

Paul is writing about all these blessings available to us in Christ—adoption, redemption, hope, faith, the Holy Spirit—from prison.

Therefore, our ability to receive these promises are not dependent on our circumstances.


Verses 8-9 of chapter two motivated Martin Luther to nail 95 theses on a door, which led to the Protestant Reformation and forever changed Western Civilization.

Verses 11-22 deal with the major tension between Jews (descendants of Abraham) and Gentiles (people from any other nation). They were hostile to one another—and had been for hundreds of years. This tension existed both in the city and in the church.

In the Jewish Temple there was a physical railing that kept Gentiles away from the inner courts. Crossing the barrier was punishable by death. But verse 14 tells us that Jesus “destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” that existed between Jews and Gentiles

These tensions were very emotional and violent in Ephesus—remember they led to riots (the story is in Acts 19). These actions were the result of feeling financially threatened, overlooked, and dishonored.

Paul is going to contrast man’s strategy of demanding honor, deserving God’s blessing, and fighting for what’s yours, with the generous grace of God. This grace makes family out of enemies.



And God raised us up with Christ
and seated us with him in the
heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

EPHESIANS 2:6 (NIV)

EPHESIANS CHAPTER TWO

DAY 1

¹ As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins,

² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy,

⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were

vs. 6–11

dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

DAY 2

⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus,
⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—

⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast.

¹⁰ For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

DAY 3

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision”

vs. 12–16

(which is done in the body by human hands)—

¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

DAY 4

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,

¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,

¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

vs. 17 – 22

¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

DAY 5

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,

²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.



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CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

1

We were dead in transgressions and sins—like anyone who follows the way of the world by disobeying God’s Word. *(v1-2)*

2

This isn’t a few bad people. This is the way human nature works in all of us. *(v3)*

3

Because of His great love and the riches of His mercy, God made us alive in Christ when we were dead in sin. *(v4-5)*

4

Doing spiritual things for God doesn’t make us right with God. If it did, we could brag about our holiness and judge others. *(v8-9)*

5

We’re saved by grace through faith. We trust Jesus and He offers it as a gift to us. *(v8-9)*

6

God has been working through His people since the covenant He made to Abraham—and now through Jesus, not just Israel, but all people can be included in God’s family. *(v11-13)*

7

On the cross, all the hostility between people from different ethnic backgrounds is destroyed because in Christ we become one people. *(v15-16)*

8

This new humanity, this new family, is His Church. *(v15-21)*

**Ephesians 2 is one of the richest chapters in the entire Bible.
So, what makes verse 6 significant?**

Remember the power, the honor, and the authority God gave Jesus? Paul’s making the point, when we’re in Christ we receive all of those things. We don’t have to fight to prove our worth and value. It’s all in Christ.

And when you’re strengthened with this power, you don’t fight to demand it from someone else. You’re free to love and serve people who are not like you.

What stood out to you from this chapter?

Read Ephesians 2:6. All of the power, honor, and authority that God has given Jesus, He has also given you. What is a current challenge you are facing, and how does this truth affect how you see that challenge?

Where do you find your value and worth? According to Ephesians 2, where should you find your value and worth?

Is there a relationship in your life causing tension right now? If so, take a moment to ask God, "How do You want me to serve this person this week?"

Notes



Wk. 3 / 7

'CONNECTED'

We're now moving to the third chapter of Ephesians—and I believe your confidence is growing. You learn how to read and engage with the Bible like you learn how to do anything: *someone who knows how to do it helps you!*

Chapter two ends with this miraculous picture of two groups of people who are at war with each other being unified as a family because of Jesus. That's the power of the Church—not one really unusual congregation, but the global family of God that Jesus promised to build.

This was more than a theory to Paul. He is so committed to this picture he starts chapter three with “For this reason...” He gave his life to this picture. He calls himself a prisoner of Jesus for the sake of the Gentiles.

Before he met Jesus, he despised Gentiles. Now he's willing to sit in a Gentile prison writing other Gentiles to inspire them to put their trust in Jesus and be added to the family of God, His Church, His people in the earth.

This is so crazy and unexpected that Paul repeatedly refers to it as a “mystery.”

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER THREE

When Paul uses the phrase “mystery” in this chapter, he’s referring to the fact that God’s plan was always to include the whole world in salvation.

The answer was hiding in plain sight, right in front of him, and he couldn’t see it. But it was always God’s plan, all the way back to the beginning.

This may seem obvious to us, but most Jews (especially the radical ones) saw themselves as “us against the whole world.”

Like most of us, the Jews took on this mentality after being tormented and mistreated. While it may have helped them, it also kept them from seeing what God was up to.

The last six verses of the chapter are a prayer Paul prays over the church.

The prayer is filled with some of the most encouraging and inspiring phrases in the whole letter, but it’s also clear Paul isn’t just giving information—he’s casting vision for what this kind of church looks like.

Although the phrase “the church” is only used one time, this whole chapter is about the incredible power of the Church—which is open to every family in the earth. The Church is the place where all people can truly be united to God and connected to each other through the power of Jesus.

His intent was that now,
through the church, the
manifold wisdom of God
should be made known to the
rulers and authorities in the
heavenly realms.

EPHESIANS 3:10 (NIV)

EPHESIANS CHAPTER THREE

DAY 1

¹ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

² Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you,

³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly.

⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

⁵ which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.

⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the

vs. 7–11

Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

DAY 2

⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power.

⁸ Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ,

⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

DAY 3

¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he

vs. 12–18

accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

¹³ I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

DAY 4

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father,

¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,

¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,

vs. 19–21

¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—
that you may be filled to the measure of all the
fullness of God.

DAY 5

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably
more than all we ask or imagine, according to his
power that is at work within us,

²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus
throughout all generations, for ever and ever!
Amen.

UNITED: A STUDY IN EPHESIANS | WEEK THREE

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CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY

1

Something new and historic is happening through what Jesus is doing in the earth. (v4-5)

2

It's not new to God, but it's a new understanding for His people, that all the other people of the earth could be heirs, members of the body, and recipients of the promises of Jesus. (v6)

3

Paul used to see himself as an expert of the law, and a master teacher. Now he calls himself a servant by the grace of God. This is how a growing relationship with God changes us. (v7-9)

4

Every family in heaven and on earth is given their name by the Father. God is not distant but present and active in every home. (v14-15)

5

In order for us to begin to understand how wide, how high, how deep, and how long the love is that Jesus has for us, we need power—we have to be strengthened with faith by the Spirit! (v16-19)

6

God is able to do immeasurably more beyond all we ask or imagine. (v20)

7

God receives glory when His Church reflects Jesus... especially throughout all generations. (v21)

You may be thinking, “Ephesians 3:10 seems a little abstract. Why is it our theme verse?”

One person can have a relationship with Jesus. One talented person can use their gifts to honor God by serving others. But if you're going to show the full measure of God's wisdom, if you're going to express His character and His nature, you need the Church.

You need people from all ethnicities, with all kinds of gifts and personalities, united together in the name of Jesus. When they come together people can't help but say, “I feel connected to God.”

What stood out to you from this chapter?

Read Ephesians 3:10. How does the Church display the manifold wisdom of God to the world?

People naturally gravitate to others who think, look, and act like themselves. (We see this occur in politics, race, economic status, etc.) What groups do you naturally identify with, and what barriers might those identities create between you and others?

God's intent for the Church is to be a place where people come together in unity. What is something you can do this week to fight for unity?

Notes



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Wk. 4 / 7

'EQUIPPED'

God's really smart. He knows what we need. We grow when we read the Bible. We grow when we pray. We grow when we worship and listen to preaching. But when we put them all together in the context of spiritual family (the Church), the impact is exponential.

Paul tells us that people experience God's presence and His power when His Church comes together as one. That's how chapter three closes. In chapter four, he gives us some great insights into how this works.

Because the tension and the challenges in Ephesus were well-known, Paul begs and pleads with them to fight for unity. And because of the way God designed His Church to demonstrate His love for the world, every follower of Christ needs to have the same laser-focus to be united.

We need it more than ever.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER FOUR

Paul expects each person to live in a way that pleases God. This starts with humility, patience, and bearing with one another in love—not with everyone else acting in a way that deserves our respect.

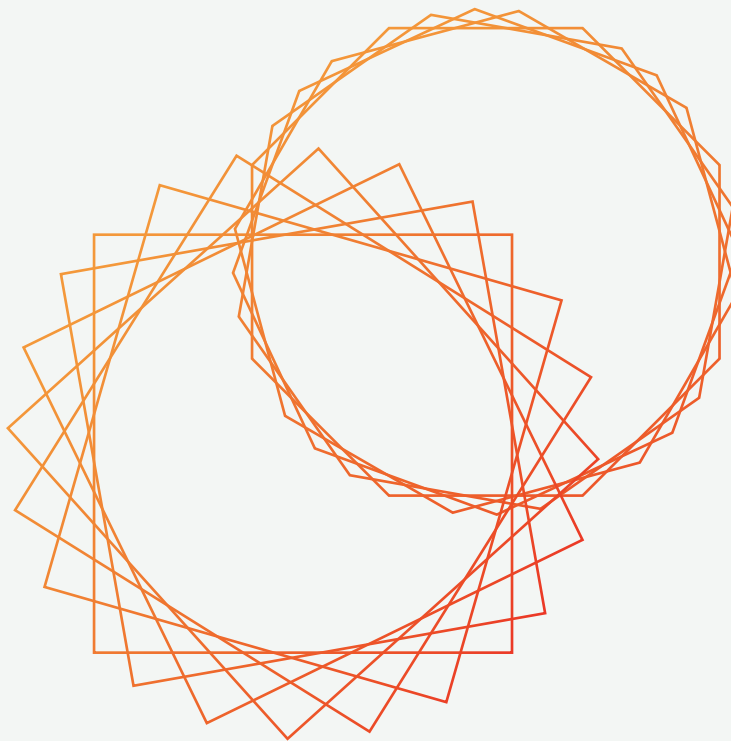
There are seven statements of “one”—when the Church prioritizes these things it produces unity.

Paul describes the different roles in church leadership and gives a clear vision into what happens when these gifts are functioning.

The chapter closes with some strong cautionary words about the attitudes and behaviors that erode and destroy unity in the Church.

The Church is not an entertainment venue. It’s not designed for a few talented people to perform in front of an audience. It’s God’s family, His body in the earth, and it’s meant to grow, move, and function in a healthy way.

When every person does their part, when every person is equipped, the Church grows in love and becomes everything God desires it to be.



¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith. . .

EPHESIANS 4:11-13A (NIV)

EPHESIANS

CHAPTER

FOUR

DAY 1

¹ As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

² Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

⁴ There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called;

⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

⁷ But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

vs. 8–13

⁸ This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,
he took many captives
and gave gifts to his people.”

⁹ (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?

¹⁰ He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

DAY 2

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers,

¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up

¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

vs. 14–18

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.

¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

DAY 3

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

vs. 19 – 26

¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned

²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;

²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds;

²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

DAY 4

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.

²⁶ “In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,

vs. 27 – 32

²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold.

²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

DAY 5

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

CHAPTER 4 SUMMARY

1

When we're humble, gentle, patient, and we bear with one another in love, we please God. (v1-2)

2

We're to make every effort to keep the unity that comes through God's Spirit. This is possible when we all rest in the peace we have with God through Jesus. (v3)

3

We're part of one body (the Church) with one Spirit. We have one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God (Father). (v4-5)

4

If we don't get equipped, we stay immature, constantly confused, and misled by the latest opinions. (v14)

5

We grow up and become more like Jesus when we speak the truth in love to each other. (v15)

6

Jesus holds the Church together and we grow in love for Him and each other when every person contributes their part. (v16)

7

When we harden our hearts (stop listening to people who care about us), we give in to dark thoughts and bad choices. (v17-19)

8

We have the ability to stop being the worst (old) version of ourselves, and instead to put on our new life in Christ. (v22-24)

9

Because we're all members of one body (the Church), our thoughts, attitudes, and actions towards each other should be loving and kind. (v25-32)

Our theme verse shows Jesus' strategy in the Church. The different types of leaders equip the people for works of service so the body is built up. Is everyone supposed to be in professional ministry?

No, but everyone has a crucial part to play.

God gave *SOME* so *ALL* can be equipped.

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What stood out to you from this chapter?

Read Ephesians 4:11-13a. Why does God give "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers" to the Church?

Do you see yourself "in the game" of ministry, or are you watching from the sidelines? Explain.

What are you gifted at, and how could you use your gifts in the Church?

Notes



Wk. 5 / 7

'FILLED'

This book is designed to help you read, pray, and genuinely know God. When that happens, it impacts your everyday life—how you think, how you feel, how you treat others. I hope you're already seeing a difference.

But it wasn't my idea! This is God's pattern for how we grow.

Paul understands that the greatest motivation for growth is love. Make no mistake—there's a clear emphasis on character transformation in the first part of this chapter that carries over from chapter four.

People who have been adopted into God's family, who've been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, who are part of His Church, don't just sit around attending services or gaining information.

Because they understand how deeply they're loved, they change. In their normal, everyday lives they look more and more like their Father.

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INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER FIVE (A)

The chapter starts with one simple thought: “Follow God’s example...” You’re part of the family so you’re expected to act like His child.

Paul lists a variety of ways the people have failed to do this including sexual immorality, greed, and obscene/vulgar talk.

There is a clear contrast between wise and foolish living that reminds us of Old Testament wisdom books like Proverbs.

Paul is concerned about spiritual apathy—a general carelessness towards the significance of prioritizing the things of God. This is a challenge for every generation.

The solution is to be filled with the Spirit. The tense of the verb in the original language communicates an ongoing filling, not a one-time event.

Over time, our character does not change because we muster up enough willpower, discipline, or habits to reinforce spiritual rules. We only change when we understand how much God loves us and how He has a better way for us to live. This happens when we make the choice to fill ourselves with His Spirit instead of our pride, our desires, or our personal comfort.

¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

EPHESIANS 5:18-20 (NIV)

EPHESIANS CHAPTER FIVE (A)

DAY 1

¹ Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children

² and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

DAY 2

³ But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

⁴ Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.

⁵ For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure

vs. 6–13

or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

⁷ Therefore do not be partners with them.

DAY 3

⁸ For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light

⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)

¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.

¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.

¹² It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.

¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.

vs. 14–20

¹⁴ This is why it is said:

“Wake up, sleeper,
rise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

DAY 4

¹⁵ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,

¹⁶ making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.

¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.

DAY 5

¹⁸ Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit,

¹⁹ speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord,

²⁰ always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 5A SUMMARY

1

Because we're dearly loved children, we should walk in love as we follow God's example. (v1)

2

Jesus didn't just say He loved us—He demonstrated His love by giving His life for us as a sacrifice to God. (v2)

3

God's standard for sexuality is incredibly high—there should not even be a hint of immorality (anything outside of a man and woman in marriage). (v3)

4

Instead of foolish or obscene talk, we should fill our words with thanksgiving. (v4)

5

We all lived in darkness at one point, but we're not meant to stay there. We come out into the light when our lives demonstrate our commitment to goodness, righteousness, and truth. (v8-9)

6

Jesus calls us to wake up, rise from our old, dead way of living, so His light can shine on us. He wants us to be careful how we live—wise, not unwise—making the most out of every opportunity. (v14-17)

In this week's theme verse, Paul contrasts being drunk with wine with being filled with the Spirit. Wine is often used as a stimulant to enhance how people are feeling—it's used to drown sorrows or to celebrate a success. But it leads to bad choices and regretful outcomes which damage relationships.

The filling of the Spirit comforts the discouraged, provides endless joy, enhances a celebration, and always leads to a deeper connection with God and encouraging and inspiring others. This filling empowers and strengthens our relationships.

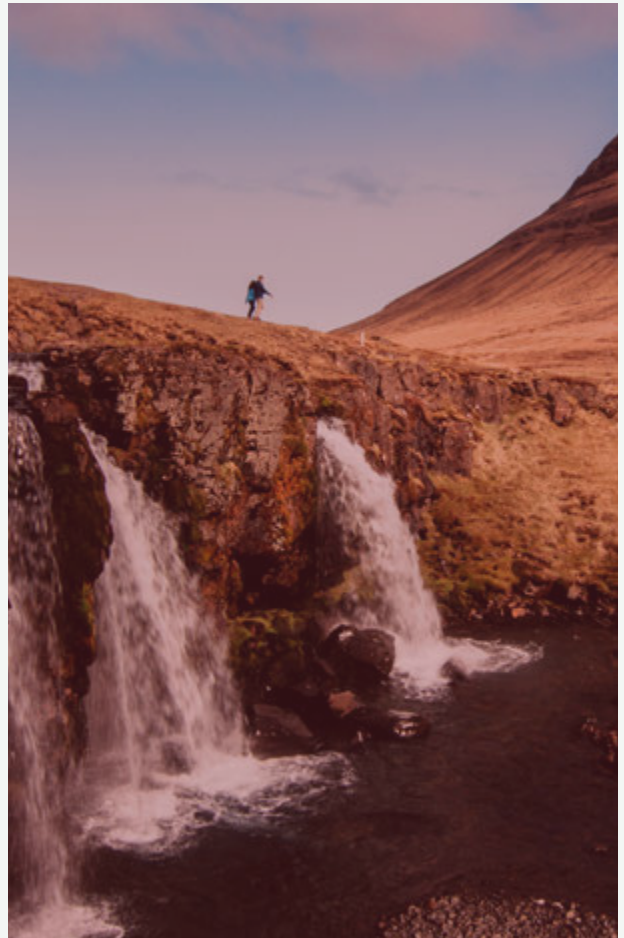
What stood out to you from this chapter?

Read Ephesians 5:18-20. What do you think it means to be filled with the Holy Spirit?

We all have personal vices—things we turn to when we're feeling stressed or sad or anxious. What are your vices, and when are you most likely to turn to them? What does verse 18 tell us we should do instead?

According to verses 19-20, how can we experience the infilling of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

Notes



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Wk.

6

7

'UNIFIED'

If something seems different, you're not wrong. You've probably noticed we've disrupted our pattern. For the first time, we broke up a chapter into more than one week. We have a good reason.

Every chapter of Ephesians is filled with more than enough content for one week. However, all of us grow in confidence when we feel like we're making progress, so we wanted to keep a good pace, especially in the early weeks.

But the second half of chapter five is one of the most important and brilliant passages in the whole Bible when it comes to marriage and family. If you've been to a wedding, there's a good chance it will sound familiar.

And this is a subject we know nearly everyone needs help with, so we wanted to give an entire week to this section.

Don't forget what's happened up to this point. Paul is not changing the subject from being filled with the Spirit. What our families need more than anything else is people who are filled with the Spirit—connected to God and encouraging to others.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER FIVE (B)

The word “submit” often scares people because they view it as a license to dominate or control other people. A careful reading will show this is not what God is after.

Based on what we know about Paul from the Bible, he was not married. But he was aware and gifted to see the challenges marriage and family created and he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to help.

Because of Paul’s experience working with people and churches, he deeply understood the value of unity—in the church and in the home. And he knew both were only possible through the power of God.

Family unity doesn’t come from a certain level of income, personality compatibility, or good genes. It’s the result of an entire household of people committed to putting the wants and needs of others ahead of their own out of their love for Jesus.

Families have implied agreements: If you do this for me, I’ll do this for you. This can work for a little while—until there are unmet expectations. And then it all breaks down.

Marriage and family are God’s idea. When we follow His pattern, we can experience the unity He intended.

"For this reason a man will
leave his father and
mother and be *united*
to his wife, and the two
will become one flesh."

EPHESIANS 5:31 (NIV)

EPHESIANS CHAPTER FIVE (B)

DAY 1

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

DAY 2

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

DAY 3

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved



vs. 26–32

the church and gave himself up for her

²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

DAY 4

²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—

³⁰ for we are members of his body.

DAY 5

³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

vs. 33

³³ However, each one of you also must love his wife
as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her
husband.

UNITED: A STUDY IN EPHESIANS | WEEK SIX

CHAPTER 5B SUMMARY

1

A follower of Christ is not afraid to submit because we do it out of our reverence for Him. Our trust is ultimately in Jesus, more than the one we submit to. **(v21)**

2

Wives submit to their husbands not because they're inferior but because they trust God's pattern. **(v22)**

3

The model a wife looks to is not a regional tradition, a cultural norm, or family tradition. The model is the way the Church submits to Jesus. **(v24)**

4

The standard for husbands could not be any higher— love your wives the way Christ loves the church. **(v25)**

5

When a wife is loved well by her husband she is radiant—you can see it in her attitude and the way she carries herself. **(v26-28)**

6

When God created marriage, people didn't realize it was a picture of how Jesus would love the Church. But now we know and benefit from His example. **(v32)**

7

A wife needs her husband to love her, and a husband needs his wife to respect him. **(v33)**

Our theme verse is a reference all the way back to the very beginning of the Bible where God explains how the first two people came together. It's a pattern and an insight into how God makes a new family. And it's so crucial because whenever God builds anything He starts with a family.

It's also why the enemy always attacks the family.

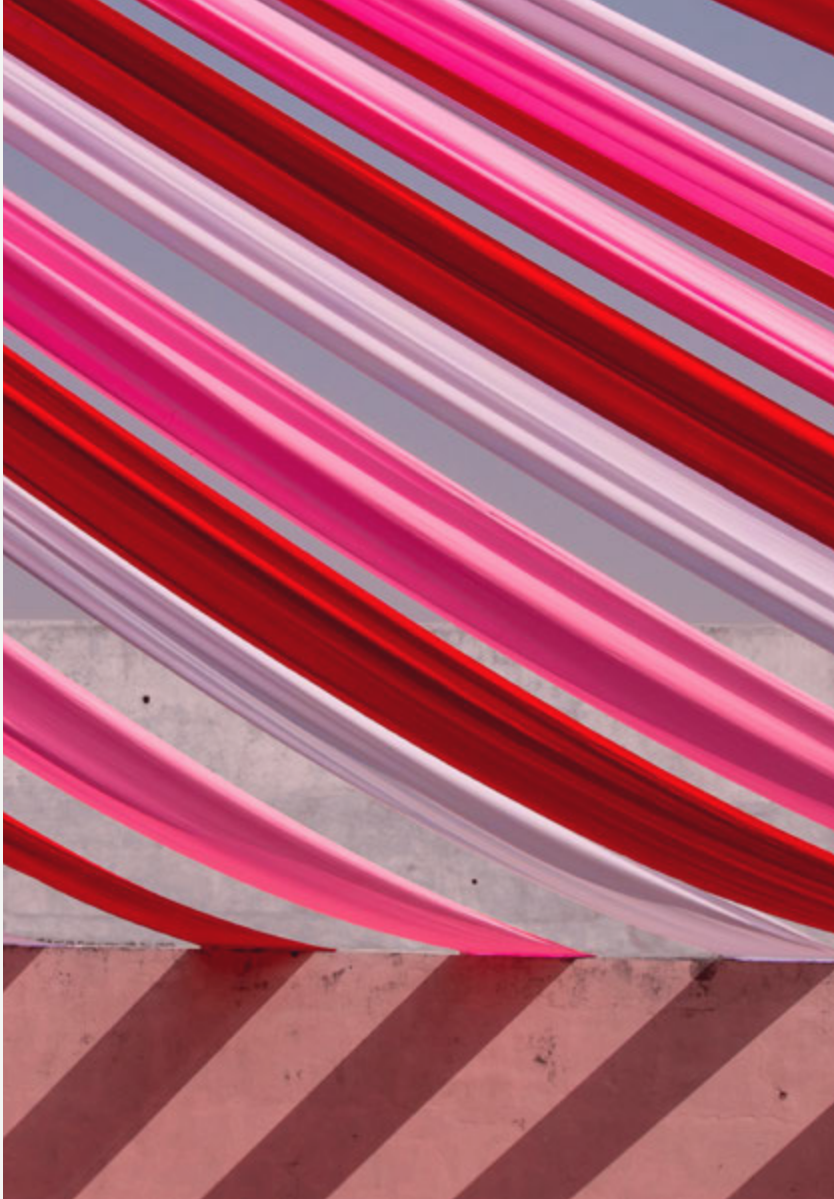
What stood out to you from this chapter?

Read Ephesians 5:31. What does it mean to become "one flesh" with your spouse?

People often view "submission" in a negative light. How does this chapter affect your view of love and submission in the home?

If you are married, what is something you can do this week to strengthen the unity of your marriage?
If you aren't married, where has God given you opportunities to love and submit to others right now?

Notes



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Wk.

7 / 7

'PROTECTED'

We've made it to the last week and the last chapter of our study! My prayer is that you've gained the confidence to make reading the Bible a habit that will last beyond this guide.

The last chapter of Ephesians picks up the discussion of the household before closing the letter by using military metaphors to encourage the believers to stand strong in their faith.

Paul continues the same approach that he's been highlighting since chapter four—Christians are first called to honor and obey God, and when they do, all of their other relationships are blessed. In other words, our primary challenge is not controlling how people treat us, but confronting our own attitudes, emotions, and behaviors.

This sounds difficult because it is! But that's why we need to be filled with the Spirit, connected to life-giving relationships in the church, and rooted in the love of God. It's also why the best evidence of a man or woman filled with the Spirit is not someone so spiritual they seem disconnected from the real world, but a person with healthy, loving relationships.

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER SIX

In the ancient world, children were not viewed as being equal to adults. There were no child-centered homes in Ephesus. Paul's instruction for parents and children to love and honor each other may seem obvious to us, but it was countercultural.

Paul IS NOT condoning the institution of slavery. He's encouraging people in their current situation to respect and honor those they serve out of their love for Christ. The book of Philemon (also written by Paul) gives a great window into God's heart to free slaves and how people should treat each other.

What Paul is describing is closer to indentured servitude (servants had opportunity to work for their eventual freedom, i.e. Joseph) not the human chattel enslavement in America which was unequivocally wrong.

The idea that a master and servant were equals before God and He shows no favoritism was found nowhere outside of followers of Jesus. And remember, Paul is writing from prison where he always respected and honored the people holding him captive, even when it was unjust.

The Roman army was the global superpower of the day and the most fearsome military force the world had seen. Paul's audience would have imagined them when he describes the armor of a soldier.

You'll notice Paul closes the letter urging the people to pray—for each other, for him, and for the advancement of the gospel. Then he sends specific greetings including his dear brother Tychicus. In other words, everything about the end of the letter is relational, not an exchange of information.

For our struggle is not
against flesh and blood, but
against the rulers, against the
authorities, against the powers
of this dark world and against
the spiritual forces of evil in the
heavenly realms.

EPHESIANS 6:12 (NIV)

EPHESIANS CHAPTER SIX

DAY 1

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

² “Honor your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise—

³ “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.”

⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

DAY 2

⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

vs. 6–12

⁶ Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.

⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people,

⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

DAY 3

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

¹¹ Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities,



vs. 13–18

against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

¹³ Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

¹⁴ Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place,

¹⁵ and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

¹⁶ In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

¹⁷ Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

DAY 4

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the

vs. 19–24

Lord's people.

¹⁹ Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,

²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

DAY 5

²¹ Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing.

²² I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you.

²³ Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁴ Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.



CHAPTER 6 SUMMARY

1

Honoring our father and mother is the first commandment that comes with a promise—well-being and the enjoyment of a long life. (v2-3)

2

When we work with a servant's heart out of our love for God, He rewards us no matter what our job is. (v7-8)

3

God has given us a full set of armor we can put on to stand strong against any and all attacks. (v11)

4

Truth, righteousness, gospel-readiness, and faith aren't just virtues; they're weapons we can use to fight the enemy. (v14-16)

5

Our greatest offensive weapon, the sword of the Spirit, is the Word of God. (v17)

6

We can pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. (v18)

7

We should always be alert and ready to pray for God's people. (v18)

“Our struggle is not with flesh and blood.” We all face enemies and resistance when we follow Jesus, but those enemies aren't people. They're not our demanding boss, our inconsiderate spouse, our manipulative sibling, or anyone else who hurts us.

God has given us everything we need to be strong in the Lord and His mighty power.

What stood out to you from this chapter?

Read Ephesians 6:12. When Paul says that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood," what do you think that means?

List situations where you see the enemy attacking people and bringing division today (examples: in the nation, at your job, at your school, in your family, in your church, etc.)? How does the Bible shape your perspective on these situations?

What is a challenge you are facing in your life today? How does this chapter shape the way you see that challenge, and what will you do about it?

Notes

A black and white photograph of Cannon Beach, Oregon. In the foreground, Cannon Beach Rock is visible. The ocean stretches across the middle ground. The sky is a uniform light gray, with a small crescent moon visible near the top center. The text "MILESTONE CHURCH © 2020" is overlaid on the image.

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