

# THE APOSTLE TO THE EPIHESIANS

# EPHESIANS

A Letter to the Church at Ephesus



Ephesians: A Letter to the Church in Ephesus  
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# Introduction

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*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. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

*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, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 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, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.*

**Ephesians 1:1-11, NIV**

## **Sharing In Life**

1. What are some of the highlight of this past week?
2. What has God been doing in your life this week?
3. Where are you looking to grow in your relationship with God this week?

## **Sharing In The Word**

In the early middle school years during gym, there was always the dreaded moment when the teacher said “Line up and pick teams.” Having never been a popular team, I stood there hoping that someone would pick me despite the lack of football skills my awkward middle school body carried. Yet, the joy that came from being picked by a team, by the winning team, was astounding. To know that someone saw the potential in me beyond my ability to perform was always an enriching moment. For the church in Ephesus, Paul starts with the exhortation that, we are chosen by God.

### **Read Ephesians 1:1-11**

Paul opens up his letter to the church in Ephesus giving thanks to God at the outset of his letter. Over the span of his letter, Paul would be leaving no stone left unturned in his encouragement to the church towards unity, how to deal with one another, and how to live out the faith they hold. Yet the source of everything is Jesus Christ.

**What means does Paul say that we are adopted into the family of God? How did Jesus accomplish this?**

**What is the driving force of God choosing us?**

**What role does Christ play in this process? What role do we play?**

### **Chosen By Him**

One thing I have learned over the course of God is that you cannot run from God. If we believe in an omniscient (knowing all things) God and an omnipresent (in all places) God, then the idea that we can run or hide things from Him is ludicrous. Yet, Paul makes it clear to the church in Ephesus, that although God knows us and chose us beforehand, that we are still chosen by Him. No matter what we have done, are doing, or will do, the love that God has for us is not limited or revoked.

**What comfort is there in God's foreknowledge of any and all situations we find ourselves in? Is there freedom is not needing to hide anything from Him?**

**Does it bring you anxiety or comfort to know that God has had a plan since the beginning that covers every detail?**

**What does it mean that God chose us despite whatever we have done or not done? What does this say about the love of God for us?**

## **Adopted Into The Family**

If you ask any parent who has adopted a child, that child is fully and completely a member of their family. They do not introduce their children as their regular child and their adopted child. There are no separate classes of children but their children. Even from a legal standpoint, the adopted child has the same rights and privileges as a child born biologically, there is no distinction. The same is true of us. When we are adopted into the family of God, we become full fledged heirs and children of God. Our past does not determine our status in the family of God but instead we are freed from our past and placed in the eternally loving family. We are full members of a divine family, saved by a loving God, by the sacrifice of a Savior.

**What does it mean that we have been adopted into the family of God?**

**What situations are we being adopted out of? What are we being adopted into?**

Throughout the book of Ephesians, Paul will guide and direct the people of the church of Ephesus in how they live their life and apply their faith. Yet, at the core, we are first and foremost loved by God. While the expression of our faith may change, the heart of it does not. We have been chosen by God to be family, adopted in to the family of God.

## **Sharing in Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for choosing us. We cannot say that enough. Thank you for choosing us. Thank you for loving us despite our sins. Thank you for welcoming us into a new life with you. As we seek to study your word and be transformed by your word, root us in the love that you have for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

# Dead To Sin Alive to Christ

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*As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 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. 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. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 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.*

**Ephesians 2:1-7, NIV**

## **Sharing In Life**

1. What is an achievement or activity that you are proud of this week?
2. What challenges did you face this week?
3. What do you have coming up this week that could use prayer?

## Sharing In The Word

Once while at a hotel pool, guests noticed a nearby shrub swarming with bees. Management was summoned, and shortly thereafter an exterminator arrived to spray the bush, blanketing it in a discoloured foamy veneer. After he walked away, everyone saw the bees were still buzzing about. When the exterminator was asked about it, he replied, “don’t worry, they’re dead; they just don’t know it yet.” This is the effect that sin has on our lives. We may be moving, we may be walking, talking and going about our day, but with the effects of sin, Ephesians tells us we are dead but just don’t know it yet.

**Read Ephesians 2:1-7**

### Dead To Sin

In verses 1-3, an alarming description of the condition of unredeemed humanity is made. Paul was once in this lost state, and so were we. Reread each judgment that once was true of all of us. People have different views about salvation and the part they play in it. God helps those who help themselves, right? Or does He? Dead people can’t save themselves. These verses outline our former devotion to sinful principles, reasonings, passions, or physical patterns that dominated our lives. This is the state of the world around us. The consequence of this ungodliness is being objects of God’s wrath. Like the bees in the story, all people are blanketed in sin. *They’re dead; they just don’t know it yet.*

**How does Paul’s description compare to your experience before you came to Christ?**

**Since the bible teaches we are spiritually dead before Christ redeems us, what would you say to the person who claims, “I’m spiritual, not religious”?**

**Many Christians fear the backlash from people who deny *sin* and *God’s wrath*, yet insist on their status as a child of God. Is everyone a child of God? Why or why not? Support your answer biblically?**

### **Alive To Christ**

“But God...” Is there a more glorious pair of words? In verses 4-7 we encounter the grace of God. **[Reread verses 4-7]**. This grace is God’s free and sovereign act of profound love and mercy to undeserving spiritually dead enemies. He satisfied His own holy wrath against sin through the death of God the Son, Jesus, not because He *had* to, but because He *chose* to from before Creation out of His transcendent love. (Eph 1:4) This is the good news of the Gospel!

We see hugely important words, “*brought us to life*”, “*raised up*”, “*seated with him*” to express that you, the believer, share these experiences *with* Jesus. Not only did you die with Him, you’ve been made alive with Him, raised with Him (Rom 6:4, Col 2:12) and are even *enthroned* with Him (Eph 2:6, Col. 3:1) to spend eternity with Him! This means that the grace that saved you is the same grace that sustains you until your glorification! Come on, give Him some praise!

**Share with the group the change others have noticed in your life since Christ saved you.**

**What other words and phrases does Paul use**

**Ephesians 2:4-7 to describe God's actions toward the lost?**

**Which of these offers hope to a need you have in your life right now?**

**In what ways do you revert back to trying to earn points with God? How will you rely on grace instead?**

In just these several verses, we see the vivid contrast between death and life, judgment and salvation, children of wrath and citizenship in heaven. God did not merely restore you, He recreated you. You are a new person. God's love and mercy reached out and resurrected you to adoption as a cherished member of His family through the power of the Holy Spirit. That is marvelous news indeed, at least for us. But here we are, surrounded by lost people deceived by their counterfeit sense of security. The dead are not awakened by sympathy, but by the Truth. Stir up your faith in your mighty Savior who can save even the most hardened rebel. As Spurgeon wrote, "However far they have gone - if even to the very arctic regions of vice where the sun of mercy seems to scatter only a few rays - the light of salvation can reach there...and if the outcast of society, the vilest of the vile, the scum of this world are there, oh! Ye chief of sinners! Christ is able to save to the uttermost. To the uttermost!"

No one is too far for God to reach. Pray for those you are tempted to give up on, and ask God to do for them exactly what He did for you: make them new. He is able.

## **Sharing in Prayer**

Lord, we thank you for the Gospel, it is good news indeed. We cling to it still, even now, because your grace holds us secure when we fear your displeasure. We repent of our human efforts to either to please you or to thwart your anger. We know now that you are for us, and not against us, and that as a result of the shed blood of Christ, we are no longer under condemnation. We celebrate our freedom and rebirth as your children. We are now indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who guards us, guides us, loves us, and conforms us to the image of Jesus day by day. Your love is trustworthy, and your grace unceasing. Thank you for your faithfulness and your commitment your purpose in our renewed lives. We pray that others glorify you through us. May they see Jesus when they look at us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# God's Masterpiece

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*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

**Ephesians 2:8-10, NIV**

## **Sharing In Life**

1. How has God been speaking to you this past week?
2. What has been going on in your family or with your friends this week?
3. How have you seen God guiding you this past week?

## **Sharing In The Word**

If you go into the house of most families with younger children, you will see a common decoration on the refrigerator; children's art. Compared to the Mona Lisa, children's art is objectively terrible. They haven't mastered shading, *chiaroscuro*, and other artistic techniques. Yet, parents hang the

art proudly in a high traffic area of the home for all to see. The work, although objectively nothing special, is displayed prominently out of the warmth of love for our children. In the same way, while we may not do the best things, God's love and adoration for us goes beyond our ability to perform. We are Masterpieces of God not because of what we do but because of who He is. From that, we can know our purpose.

### **Read Ephesians 2:8-10**

While we may not be able to perform at the level of holiness and righteousness that God alone is able to, we are no less loved by God. We are not created like birds, trees, or rocks. We are created special and with special purpose.

**What does Ephesians say is our means of salvation?**

**What does this mean for our ability to earn our special status with God?**

**What does it mean that we are God's "masterpiece?"**

### **Saved Only By A Savior**

As Paul writes to the church in Ephesus, he wants to make it abundantly clear that our status of being a "Masterpiece" is in no way a work of our own doing. Not one of us is able to say that we have done enough good works to deserve salvation. However, by the love of God, the offer is extended to us, often times despite all of the reasons that we give God not to. This work is not of our own. It is the work of our God who is able to do all things and has declared victory over death.

**Why is it tempting to try and take personal credit**

**for our good works? What is driving the thought to want to earn our salvation? (Insecurity, pride, etc.)**

**What comfort do you see in the fact that we are saved by grace through faith? What comfort is in knowing that our eternal destiny lies in the hands of God?**

## **Created to Do Good Works**

While we are not saved by our works, our salvation produces through us a Christ-like expression of the faith we possess. Our purpose is not to come to God and simply fade away into obscurity and irrelevance. Our purpose in being a Masterpiece of God is to live out the faith we hold from the depth of the love we have for our God. John Piper words it this way, “God is most gloried in us when we are most satisfied in Him.” As our faith deepens and we understand the depth and reach of God’s grace, the Masterpiece shines brighter and the world seems the handiwork of our Great God.

**How does our salvation inform and direct what we do?**

**What does it look like when we live out our faith beyond the walls of the church and in the day-to-day?**

**Whats areas of your life do you have the most trouble in living out your faith? How can the Gospel and Grace empower you to live out your faith in those areas?**

It is not our works that drive our salvation but our salvation drives our works. We do not do good things in order that God would love us, but out of the depth and richness of God's love for us, His precious masterpieces, we boldly go out and pursue righteousness.

## **Sharing in Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank you for creating us as your beloved masterpieces. Thank you for loving us beyond our desire to earn it. Thank you for continually showering us in your love. We ask that you would give us the strength to live out our faith every day as we pursue righteousness in every aspect of our lives. We want to be more like you. Guide our every steps as we seek to be more like you. Amen.

# Identity Creates Unity

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*Therefore, remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands – remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For those through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

**Ephesians 2:11-22, NIV**

## Sharing In Life

1. What are some of the highlight of this past week?
2. What has God been doing in your life this week?
3. Where are you looking to grow in your relationship with God this week?

## Sharing In The Word

The lunch tables in middle school are marked by a class type system. Each group of people seems to gravitate towards one another as they simultaneously work out their identity in the confusion of asking “Who Am I” at the ripe age of 12. Yet oddly, in our search for inclusion in a group of people, whether its jock, nerd, or whatever we begin to stereotype and resent the other sections. While I would love to say this is a phenomenon limited only to middle school, but, truth be told, this is an issue well into adulthood as well. We stereotype, judge, and outcast certain groups of people based on nothing but our disagreement with them. Where our flesh promotes this division, Christ, in his sacrifice once for all gives us a better alternative.

### Read Ephesians 2:11-22

Humanity’s fallenness resulted in suspicion, jealousy, conflict, prejudice, and even war. This is not surprising when we see that the word devil in Greek, *diabolos*, (*dia*-through, *bolos*-throw) means “to throw something through”, “splitter”. The intention of Satan in Genesis 3 was to split Adam and Eve from God and each other.

Paul was trying to combat this spirit of divisiveness. The early church was made up of Jewish people who believed in Jesus as

the Messiah. But the Jews were prejudiced against the Gentiles (“the uncircumcised”) who had also responded to the Gospel. Whether overt or covert, prejudice is always oppressive and alienating.

**Compare all of the opposites of being *without* Christ and being *in* Christ that Paul discusses. How do these describe the scope of what God has done?**

### **Acknowledging Our Prejudices**

Sadly, we all have times when we are divisive. This is one of those times where, either implicitly or explicitly, we carry a bias or prejudice towards a person or group of people. We take mental shortcuts where we should not and generalize about persons or people where we should give them the proper thought and consideration. In our creative ways of distinguishing between different groups of people, we have only served to build division among the body of Christ, which transcends nations, languages, and cultures.

**Are there age groups, nations, ethnicities, ideologies or denominations whom you feel superior to?**

**How can we maintain our zeal for God’s holiness without alienating others from the Gospel?**

**In what ways could our stereotypes impact evangelism and even our fellowships in the church?**

## **We Are A New People Together**

Paul is attempting to clarify that the church is not a 'body of Jewish and Gentile believers', but an *entirely new creation* ("one new man" or "people"). God reveals to Paul that the Gentiles are fellow heirs with Jews and members of the same body and partakers of the promise of the Gospel. It is the Father's will to glorify His Son by creating a people who are recognizable because of the image of Jesus Christ. People from every nation can be accepted by God and brought into a community that is no longer defined by social, economic, ethnic or national distinctions, but on the basis of the message of Jesus and the presence of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**When people in church feel threatened by others different than themselves, they can be tempted to respond divisively. Can you think of examples of those reactions?**

**How can the 2 Corinthians passage guide us practically in relational conflicts in families, churches, diverse age groups, and races?**

**Why is the Cross of Christ the only true equalizer that makes unity possible in the Body of Christ?**

**Questions**

**What act of reconciliation do you sense God leading you to pursue as a result of this passage?**

In *The Cross of Peace*, Sir Philip Gibbs wrote: "Modern progress has made the world a neighborhood and God has given us the task of making it a brotherhood." Above our ethnic background, our differences, our gender, or whatever else we

use to divide us is the fact that we are children of the living God. Our identity is, above all, in Christ and Christ alone. It is our love for a Savior that brings us all together, in Him.

## **Sharing in Prayer**

Father, you have taught us the power of the blood of Jesus can bring healing and reconciliation between races, nations, and even our denominations. Lord we ask you to help us fulfil our role as ministers and leaders of reconciliation. Forgive us for complacency and for dismissing the evil of divisiveness in every respect in our culture. Forgive us for our prejudices, and we confess them before you now. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

# Don't Lose Faith With Suffering

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

*Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 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. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

*I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 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, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 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, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and*

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

### **Ephesians 3:1-13, NIV**

## **Sharing In Life**

1. Have you heard any stories this week of people going through suffering?
2. In times where you have suffered, how have you felt the Lord's comfort?
3. When have you experienced the greater growth in your relationship with God, during times of suffering or when all is going well?

## **Sharing In The Word**

The amazing book of Ephesians wasn't written while Paul was on a cruise in the Mediterranean sipping his favorite drink. No, he was in prison because of his faith in Jesus. Had the Apostle Paul considered his faith to be a private matter, he may not have been imprisoned. But he went public!

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

The "mystery of Christ" was made known to Paul through revelation, not by study or any other effort on his part. This revelation came by the Spirit of God as a result of God's grace and goodness.

**What is the "mystery of Christ" that Paul refers to?**

**Why a "mystery" instead of a clear, simple truth?**

## **The Mystery Revealed**

*Mystery* is defined as: 1) anything that is kept secret or remains unexplained or unknown, and 2) any truth that is unknowable except by divine revelation. In order for us to understand the Gospel, we need a revelation from God.

**How did the Lord reveal the Gospel to you?**

**How does God use suffering in this revealing?  
(Compare with II Corinthians 1:3-6)**

## **Going Public**

It is quite likely that if Paul had just remained silent about this “revelation,” he never would have experienced prison. While prison may not be in our future, the potential for suffering is real, especially if we are committed to “going public” with the Gospel.

**What are a couple reasons Christians like to act like “secret agents” for Christ?**

**Have you ever prepared a personal testimony (my story) to be shared with others?**

**If an opportunity presented itself, would you be able to share the Gospel with someone?**

One day there will be NO more suffering, but until that day comes we have a choice to make. Will suffering cause us to

quit the race? If the answer is “Yes”, followers of Jesus will still have a wonderful forever, but their impact on earth will be minimized. If the answer is “No”, then the Lord may use us to do great damage to the kingdom of darkness. Suffering, and the need to sacrifice, can serve as a sobering reminder of the spiritual war we are involved in and of the reality of our enemy. Understanding that suffering will come and embracing it as an opportunity to advance God’s kingdom while honoring the Lord Jesus can give us a proper perspective.

## **Sharing in Prayer**

Father, thank You for revealing to us the mystery of the Gospel. We confess that all the glory goes to You. Your amazing grace has changed me forever and I will respond in worship throughout eternity, beginning right now. I worship You, Jesus, as my Savior and Lord. I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit, that I might have the power to share this Good News with those who need to hear. I don’t want to be a “secret agent” for You, but my desire is to honor You by going public. I ask You Lord to bring some specific people to mind who I can share with this week and then empower me with boldness to share the Gospel. Thank You, Lord. I pray this in the Name of Jesus, Amen.

# Unity With Diversity

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*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 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.*

*But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says:*

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

*(What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions[c]? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 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.*

*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. 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. 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.*

**Ephesians 4:1-16, NIV**

## **Sharing In Life**

1. What is the best thing that has happened to you over the past week?
2. What was the most difficult of the past week?
3. What are some of the stressors and challenges you face on a daily basis?

## **Sharing In The Word**

We all know what disunity looks like. It is when people take sides, blame shift, and get critical. We've all seen it. We've all done it! It is especially sad when Christians act like this. Paul is writing his readers to not just *know* that we are one family, but to *act* like we are one. When we act in disunity we are not only opposing the Spirit, we act like "the splitter", Satan.

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

Count how many times the word "unity" or "one" is used, and note how many ways these words are used. Unity is given by the Spirit. We don't produce it ourselves, but we do help maintain it.

## Peace And The Spirit For Unity

Jesus associated peace with the presence of the Holy Spirit in a believer and in the Church. We know that peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Conflict, however, is not necessarily negative. In his instructions to Timothy in 2 Tim 4:2, Paul tells Timothy to “preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season, correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.” The meaning of the word rebuke, “*epitmaow*”, means “to express strong disapproval of someone, rebuke, censure, speak seriously, warn.”

**Is Paul’s instruction to “rebuke” a contradiction to his call for unity and love?**

**In your view, what should Christians be willing to sacrifice for the sake of unity? What shouldn’t we sacrifice?**

## Building Up and Building Together

After quoting Psalm 68:18, Paul drills into a key phrase, “He gave gifts to men.” Here Paul shows how the victorious Christ, who achieved dominion over all the powers, fills His church with the spoils of victory (gifts) so that the church will grow to maturity. This is accomplished in a two-fold way: *building up and building together*. Not one or the other. Both in unison. Consider what Christ has in mind for the Church: “The building of the body is directly linked to Christ’s intention to fill the universe with His rule. The Church is His instrument in carrying out his purposes for the cosmos”.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to Ephesians* (Eerdmans, 1999), p.297.

**What ministry roles must be active for equipping and growth to be accomplished?**

**What does Paul say are the risks of not building up and building together? (v. 14) Do you see evidence of any of these in your life?**

**According to 4:15-16, what goal is thwarted if we neglect building up and building together?**

Our togetherness does not mean that we all have to look the same. Like in a symphony, there is a range of different instruments who, although not playing the same notes, join together for the same song. We worship the same God together in unity but with the melody and harmony of our culture and where we come from.

## **Sharing in Prayer**

Father we your children pray now now as a demonstration of our willingness to grow together. Our time together in your Word is our request for you to teach us so that we may grow up in maturity as well as in unity. We do not want to be tossed about and unknowingly led astray by false teaching, and we do not want to be unstable in our understanding of You. Protect us and guide us, so that as we are fed, we can turn and nurture others to faith in you.

We ask that our spiritual gifts will be used to help others grow. It is your desire to expand your Kingdom across the earth, and we are divinely chosen to share in your blessing the nations. May we take the time to discover the gifts you have blessed us with. We ask to be open to the direction of the Holy Spirit and to never forget the love you have for each of us here gathered.

Holy Spirit, give us the courage to serve others for the building up of the Church Christ died for. And finally, we want to walk in unity with our fellow believers. May the lost look at us and glorify You because of the love we have for one another. Thank you that love will grow as we build up in Truth, and build up together. In Jesus' Name.

# Being Others Focused

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*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. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

**Ephesians 4:29-32, NIV**

## **Sharing In Life**

1. What are some of the highlight of this past week?
2. What has God been doing in your life this week?
3. Where are you looking to grow in your relationship with God this week?

## **Sharing In The Word**

On competitive sports teams you see a team of people acting as one whole. The strongest teams are not the ones with the strongest players but rather the ones who are able to function at a high level as a team. As the teams practice together, they do so not to develop their individual skills but rather to develop together as a team. A quarterback may be able to throw a ball a long distance, but if the receiver isn't able to read and understand his quarterback to catch the ball then ultimately the throw won't matter. Even more than that, growth of one person can never occur at the expense of another. If a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, then weakening a link to make another stronger does nothing for the chain. The same with the body of Christ. Together, we are the collective body of Christ and how we deal with one another is vital to the overall well being of the church.

### **Read Ephesians 4:29-32**

Paul speaks a good amount of time in chapter 4 to discuss what Christian Living looks like in relation to one another. He first looks at the actions that he is seeking to correct, the unwholesome talk etc and then immediately addresses the heart behind the issues (bitterness, rage, envy). Ultimately, though, our grace towards others comes from knowing that we have been first healed.

**Why do you think Paul stresses the importance of building one another up?**

**Describe the contrast Paul depicts of the fleshly response and the Godly response.**

**What role does Jesus Christ play in our ability to create unity with one another?**

### **Being Forgiven...**

Paul is looking to direct the church in Ephesus to the fact that, first and foremost, they are forgiven by Jesus Christ. In whatever way we may seek to forgive one another and create the bond of unity with one another, unless our forgiveness is grounded in the already done work of Jesus Christ in our lives, our efforts will fall flat.

**When did you first come to understand the forgiveness of Jesus Christ?**

**What effect did coming to faith in Jesus Christ transform who you are?**

**What are some of the areas God is still working on bringing to wholeness?**

### **...We Can Now Forgive**

The question we can always ask is “What does our faith look like?” Sure, we are definitely saved by grace by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Yet, Jesus is transformative that once he enters into our lives we can’t help but pursue him. We are able to forgive because we have been forgiven from so much more from God. We can build one another up with our words because by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, we have had our feet set on the solid ground of eternity. Our bond of unity with one another is a direct expression of the faith we have in God. Christ transforms our hearts towards him and our actions flow from our hearts towards one another.

**How does the realization of the grace that you have been given translate into giving others grace?**

**Where have you seen your faith expressed in your life towards others?**

**What are the challenging areas where you are still seeking to live out your faith towards others?**

Living out our faith and being others focus is not complicated but it most certainly is not easy. Where our flesh may want to respond with anger, bitterness, and all other sorts of things, God has a better way. We bring the bond of unity by refusing to put down one another but instead by lifting one another up. We do this because, when we were at our lowest, Jesus lifted us up out of a deep love for us, His beloved creation.

## **Sharing in Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we do not want to put others down with our words and respond with our flesh. We want to be more like you. Help us to radiate the love you have for us in our daily actions with one another. Thank you for your gift of forgiveness and for cleansing us from our sins. As we pursue the bond of unity through servant leadership to others, ground us in the Gospel that we are loved despite our flaws and welcomed into your arms. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# Be Imitators

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*Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 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.*

**Ephesians 5:1-2, NIV**

*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**

## Sharing In Life

1. As you have been working through the book of Ephesians, what has stood out to you the most?
2. What biblical truth did God reveal to you this week?
3. How have you tried to apply what you have learned in this study to your life?

## **Sharing In The Word**

An author of a blog for mothers wrote about an embarrassing time when her 2½ year old son imitated her. She was making breakfast while he was “playing” with her cell phone. Every now and then she would give it to him to entertain himself for a minute. Unfortunately, she didn’t know that he watched her put in the security code and *knew how to dial and press “send”*. When she suddenly heard the operator of 911 talking at the other end of the line, she knew she vastly underestimated his ability to watch and learn! The police officer who rushed over was equally impressed.

### **Read Ephesians 5:1-2 and Ephesians 6:12**

As Paul writes to the church in Ephesus, Paul makes it abundantly clear that the battle we face is not in physical battle. There is no feat of strength or might to overcome the enemy. The battle is supernatural and we, thus, must look towards a spiritual solution. We set our eyes upon Christ and the sacrifice He made for us.

**What is the relationship between being a child of God and following Him? Why are these connected?**

**What is the difference between a battle of the flesh and a battle of the Spirit?**

### **Be Imitators of God (Eph 5:1-2)**

Imitating means copying or mimicking someone. Paul tells us to follow God’s example. How? We do that by following Jesus who came to reveal the Father. Jesus said to His disciples in John 13:15 “For I have set you an example, that you also should

do just as I have done to you.” It gets even better. We can’t do it on our own. Because of God’s lavish grace, He gave us the Holy Spirit who helps us to follow God and look like Jesus.

**Who in your life is the primary “competition” for being more like Christ? Who is influencing you and are they influencing you to be more like Christ?**

**Where do you need the Holy Spirit’s help to walk in the way of Godly love as you imitate Christ?**

## **The Spiritual Battle**

Many people are of the opinion that God and Satan are equal but opposing powers. But Satan is a created being and therefore not even remotely comparable to God’s majesty, power, authority and presence. There are no gods beside Him or above Him. Paul states in 6:12 that evil forces are not “flesh and blood” with physical bodies, but spirits invisible to us. They work through unbelievers, human religions, governments, culture, media, and philosophies.

**How have you seen the spiritual darkness lead you think that the devil and God are somewhat equal?**

**How can we not underestimate Satan and his forces without giving him too much credit?**

**Where have you felt the spiritual attacks in your life? Why do you think they come?**

**Where does our victory come from? How did Christ achieve this victory for us?**

As we stand in the midst of a spiritual battle for the souls of everyone one of us, we can stand firm in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus has no fear of the devil or His schemes, the more we become like Jesus, the less we have to fear of the devil. Satan has no power over us and we draw closer to Jesus Christ.

## **Sharing in Prayer**

Father we pray that your Truth would secure us in our struggles, especially when the father of lies seeks to undermine your Word in our lives. We ask that your righteousness would strengthen our weaknesses and enable us to walk with integrity and honor. Lord, may our faith arise and literally extinguish the flaming arrows of accusation, fear, and temptations to pride that the enemy fires at us. May we know without a doubt that we are no longer condemned but saved. Thank you that the Holy Spirit guarantees our salvation and has set His seal upon us. Lord you have given us your sword, the Word of God. May we never fail to be students of your Word so that what you say is sealed in our hearts. Just as Christ was always prepared against the enemy with Scripture, may we be aswell. Please help us learn it. Lord we pray now and ask that you would help us be committed to prayer. We cannot do any of these on our own, so we ask for your Holy Spirit to help us, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

# Equal Honor Different Roles

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*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

*Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing[a] her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—for we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

**Ephesians 5: 21-33, NIV**

## **Sharing In Life**

1. Who have you known through the years who you would consider to have an amazing marriage?
2. What is it about their marriage that made it so amazing?
3. What are the greatest hindrances to people experiencing great marriages?

## **Sharing In The Word**

Marriage has the potential to be one of the greatest blessings in one's life, while it also can be one of the biggest challenges. Since God created us, and thus understands us like none other, He is best qualified to give marital advice. When we follow His advice, we can experience the blessings. When we decide to do it our way, the challenges can become overwhelming.

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

Paul lays out some very simple, yet deep, principles for us when it comes to marriage. These include submission and love. While "love is what makes the world go 'round," submission is usually considered an archaic and negative concept. One thing is for sure: Both submission and love require a willingness to humble ourselves and put others first.

**When you hear the word "submission," what comes to mind?**

**What would be some qualities of love that Jesus demonstrated for His bride, the church?**

## **Keys To A Healthy Message**

Paul deals with marriage briefly in Ephesians by discussing the differing roles of a husband and a wife. In no way, is the value of a person identified or determined by their role. If wives will honor their husbands and husbands will love their wives as Christ loves the church, marriage can be fulfilling, empowering, and fruitful.

**Why is it that “role” and “value” have a tendency to become interchangeable?**

**What are a couple ways that wives can honor their husbands?**

**When a husband loves his wife like Christ loves the church (to the best of his ability), how does his wife feel?**

## **Religion vs. Relationship**

The use of marriage to describe the relationship of Jesus with the church is very powerful. Concepts such as intimacy, faithfulness, and forgiveness are taken to a whole new level. Christianity as just one of many religions is shattered by the reality of a personal, intimate relationship with the living God.

**How can we grow in our intimacy with Jesus?**

**When a person leaves the faith or turns his back on Jesus, how do you think that makes Jesus feel?**

**How does “religion” differ from “relationship?”**

Because Christianity is more than a religion, but is primarily a relationship with the living God, our hearts are deeply involved. There is zeal, affection, passion, and many more emotions that influence our relationship. Clear evidence that our relationship with the Lord is growing is the depth of our intimacy. This intimacy is reflected in our love for the Person and purpose of God. As with a marriage, when we are passionately in love, we will remain true to the end. We will faithfully finish.

## **Sharing in Prayer**

Father, thank You for calling us into a personal relationship with You through Your Son. We confess that we haven't always been faithful, nor have we loved You as we should. Please forgive us and we ask for renewed passion to value our relationship with You above all else. Thank You, Father, for demonstrating Your amazing love to us by sending Jesus to die on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. We are overwhelmed with thankfulness. We love You Jesus and will live for YOU the rest of our lives.

We know that many people have no understanding of Your amazing love. Give us the desire to share Your amazing love with as many as possible. Help us not be selfish with the gift of salvation that You have given to us. As we grow in our passion for You, may we also grow in a passion for the lost. You are amazing. Thank you, Lord. AMEN.

# The Spiritual Battle

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*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. 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. 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. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

**Ephesians 6:10-17, NIV**

## **Sharing In Life**

1. What is an achievement or activity that you are proud of this week?
2. What challenges did you face this week?
3. What do you have coming up this week that could use prayer?

## **Sharing In The Word**

In the first book of The Chronicles of Narnia, *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, as winter is melting and there is the coming of a new season of revival. Yet, there still an evil presence that must be dealt with. When three of four children are approached by Santa Claus, he gives them great gifts of armor. The weapons were their equipping to handle the White Witch and her evil forces. These weapons prove to be very important aspects of the books and their effects are felt even throughout the series. We too live in a transitional period, awaiting Christ's return. While the passing of our spiritual winter is a clear sign of the victory of the King, there is still the evil forces. Like the Pevensie children, we too are able to take hold of the armor of God.

### **Read Ephesians 6:10-17**

We could very well spend weeks covering the items in the armor of God and find it very enriching. Yet as Paul begins his exhortation on the Armor of God, he gives a warning and an exhortation; a day of evil is coming, and to stand firm.

**What does Paul mean when he says our struggle is not against flesh and blood?**

**What is the difference between battle man and battling forces?**

**How are the Spirit and the Word of God connected?**

## **The Coming Day of Evil**

Ephesians, and the bible as a whole, makes it very clear that we are in the midst of a spiritual battle. Moreover, that spiritual battle is over us. With the enemy prowling around seeking our destruction, we can trust in our heavenly Father is seeking to protect us. Yet, many times, we like to attribute the description of “evil” to those around us. We call people, who are made in the image of God, and who God is actively seeking to restore as evil. As the day of evil approaches, we must not forget that we are not fighting people. Instead, we are in the midst of a *spiritual* battle and our enemy is unseen.

**How do you battle an unseen Spiritual Battle? How can you prepare for it, how can you defend against it?**

**Why must we resist the temptation to call people evil? What does this say about our belief in God to say that some people are beyond God’s great.**

## **Stand Firm**

Paul’s description of the various parts of the armor of God cannot be viewed independently from the exhortation to stand firm. It is precisely the call to stand firm

**Each piece of the armor of God represents something specific. Which is represented twice? What does this tell us about the importance of the word of God?**

**Where have you seen the word of God shield you and how have you seen it cut through the enemy?**

**What is the source of power for the armor of God?**

**What spiritual battles do you encounter on a daily basis and how can you apply the armor of God to those battles?**

Paul has walked the church in Ephesus through a message that still resonates in our daily lives as well. The way we deal with one another, the way we handle our daily lives, and even how we prepare for the spiritual battles we face. The message to the church in Ephesus rings true even today. Yet at the core of the book of Ephesus is the call to be fully reliant on our Heavenly Father for everything we need. Our love for others is because God loved us first. Our unity in our relationships is based fully in the unity of the trinity and our identification with Him.

## **Sharing in Prayer**

Heavenly Father, prepare us for Spiritual Battle! Equip us with your armor and give us the strength to stand. We know our strength comes from you and we are equipped by you. As we go into our day to day lives, help us to stand firm in the grace and love that comes from you. We give you our all and our everything. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.