

A Study of Ephesians

Participant's Guide

This study of Ephesians is an interesting and edifying, though challenging, Bible study.

It was written by Kathie Wendland, with the Leader's Guide assistance from Kristi Meyer, Marilyn Miller, and Paula Sulzle. It has been reviewed by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Professor Paul Wendland.

It would be good for everyone in the study to have a copy of Prof. Panning's People's Bible commentary on Ephesians to aid in study and discussion.

May God bless your time together in his Word.

The material requires about seven 60-90-minute sessions to complete.

God's Grace to and Through the Church: the Body of Christ

Getting Started

The format of this study will be to have study notes interspersed with the discussion questions. The primary resource is the Bible. It's recommended that you read this epistle at least once a day from beginning to end to get used to the rhythm of the book. It's a short letter, so take 15 or 20 minutes to sit down and spend a little time with your friend Paul. Other helpful commentaries used to prepare these notes include the *Concordia Study Bible*, Prof. Panning's *Galatians/Ephesians People's Bible*, and Prof. Habeck's commentary entitled simply, *Ephesians*.

Introduction to Paul's Letter to the Congregation at Ephesus

TO WHOM THE LETTER IS WRITTEN

While there should be little debate after reading verse 1, apparently a couple of early manuscripts omit the phrase, "*in Ephesus*." Both Professors Panning and Habeck point out that this is most likely a matter of the letter being recopied for circulation to other congregations as the vast majority of manuscripts include the phrase. The congregation at Ephesus was established on Paul's second missionary journey and revisited a number of times after that. Paul spent three years here, the longest recorded stay by the apostle as he was establishing congregations among the Gentiles.

1. There is quite a bit known about Paul's relationship and interaction with the congregation at Ephesus from the book of Acts. In Acts, Luke records an incredible amount of background of the work of the Holy Spirit in establishing the kingdom of God here on earth. Ephesus is highlighted in chapters 18-20 of Acts. Note at least one occurrence in Ephesus for each chapter.

2. Paul follows his usual *modus operandi* when establishing the congregation at Ephesus. Describe what that was.

3. What do we know from secular sources like a Google search, study Bible introductions, the People's Bible Galatians and Ephesians by Armin Panning, Bible encyclopedias, etc., about the city of Ephesus and the worship of Artemis?

4. We also find reference to the congregation at Ephesus in Revelation 2:1-7, the letters to the churches in John's vision. Describe the commendation and the caution in the letter to the church in Ephesus only about 30 years after Paul's letter to them from his house arrest in Rome.

5. Discuss how this might apply to your congregation today.

THE AUTHOR and DATE OF WRITING

Read verses Ephesians 1:1, 3:1.

6. Who is the divinely inspired author of the letter to the Ephesians?

Also, refer to Ephesians 3:7, 13, 4:1, 6:19-20; and Acts 22:17-29; 24:26-27, 25:1-12, 27:1-26, 28:17-31, which explain how Paul ended up in Rome.

7. When did Paul likely write the letter to the Ephesians, and what was his situation at the time of writing?

8. Discuss how this will aid in understanding more fully the message to the Ephesian Christians.

Discuss how this will aid in understanding application for us as God's people today.

PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

There doesn't seem to be a big doctrinal dispute in Ephesus. We know from Acts that Paul was very close to the congregation in Ephesus and many of the members. We also know from Acts this was a mixed Jew and Gentile congregation but was likely predominately Gentile.

Refer to Acts 6:1-7; Acts 14:26-15:35.

9. List some of the conflicts arising in the early Christian congregations as Jews and Gentiles began to worship Jesus Christ together.

Why did these conflicts almost invariably arise?

10. Discuss cultural differences that may be found among members of WELS congregations today. How might these differences show themselves?

Paul's letter to the Christians in Ephesus, Jewish and Gentile believers alike, encourages them to be joined together as *"members of his [God's] household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord"* (Eph. 2:19-21). Paul also gives those early Christians and us helpful guidance for living and working together even as we distinguish that which cannot be changed from that which can be acceptable as we Christians live out our Christian freedom.

God's Eternal Plan of Salvation

A PLAN DEvised BY THE TRIUNE GOD FROM ETERNITY (CHAPTER 1)

vv 1-2 In the opening greeting of this letter, Paul follows the custom of the day in a manner very similar to the way e-mails are constructed today. He identifies himself, addresses the recipients of the letter, and greets the readers. Paul, however, adds some powerful information and encouragement in this opening address.

1. Paul provides some vital qualifying information about himself in the opening words of the letter. What is significant about the way Paul identifies himself? See also Romans 11:13; 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, 15:3-11; 2 Corinthians 12:12; 1 Timothy 2:3-7.

2. What is a saint? (Ephesians 1:4 actually defines "saint.")

Grace is a keyword in the New Testament. Paul uses it extensively in his letters to the Christian Jews and Gentiles. In his letter to the Ephesian Christians, he uses the word “grace” 12 times. A Greek word that sounded similar to grace was the standard Greek greeting used as we in English use the word “hello.” CHAIREIN is the Greek word for “Greetings” or “Hello.” CHARIS is the Greek word for “grace” or “favor,” usually used in the NT for God’s unmerited goodwill and love for those who don’t deserve it. Paul is punning on the “hello” idea, turning a common everyday greeting into a prayer for God’s blessing just as peace (shalom) was and still is today in many Jewish circles used as a prayer for God’s blessing.

Chapters 1 and 3 of Ephesians explain the concept behind the word **grace** and chapter 2 explains the concept behind the word **peace**.

3. Describe the tone of the letter being set by opening with “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Prof. Panning writes that some refer to this first chapter of Ephesians as “the divine side of church history.” He further explains that while the “triune” God is never referred to as such, in this chapter, all three persons “are clearly in evidence.” Verses 3-6 are about the Father’s gracious plan, verses 7-12 illustrate how the Son carried out that plan, and verses 13-14 “seal” the Father’s plan in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. The entire section of verses 1-14 is referred to as a doxology or a “song of praise.” In the original Greek, all 200 words make up one sentence. This must have been quite a challenge for the translators!

vv 3-6 The Father’s **gracious** purpose

4. Explain verse 4. Why is this verse such a comfort to us as Christians?

Think of and discuss times it would be good to refer to this verse when comforting a Christian friend.

5. Explain the doctrinal richness of verses 5-6.

In love . . . (the word “agape”)

predestined . . .

adopted as his sons . . . (focus on both “adoption” and what that means and “sons” as it reflected blessings to the Jewish people)

through Jesus Christ . . .

in accordance with the good purpose of his will— . . .

for the praise of his glorious (glorious refers to something being magnified, visible, and sometimes tangible) grace . . .

6. For whom is the teaching of predestination or election intended?

Why is the truth of predestination a comfort for us?

7. What conclusions can we draw about those who have not been elected to salvation?

Explain why it is important to keep this in mind.

vv 7-12 The Father's plan accomplished by the Son's work

8. According to verse 7, how was our election secured? (Note especially the concepts of redemption and forgiveness.)

Why was it secured?

9. According to verse 9, how and why do we know about our salvation?

10. According to verse 10, what was the purpose of God's plan from eternity?

And who/what is included in "*all things*"?

11. How does verse 11 bring the application closer to us and our lives?

12. To whom is verse 12 referring?

13. When Scripture uses the word "hope," it doesn't do so in the manner in which we usually use it. Common usage has hope as some good outcome that is more of a wish than a certainty. Scripture uses the word hope as assuring us and being certain of a good and blessed outcome (see Romans 5:1-5).

What does it mean to be the "*first to hope in Christ*"?

14. A Scriptural concept associated with the word “glory” includes that the one being glorified is in some way being made visible or tangible (see Exodus 16:10-12, 24:15-17). Discuss then the phrase, “*that his glory would be praised.*”

vv 13-14 The Father’s plan sealed by the Holy Spirit

15. Who is now also assured that they were included in the original plan of salvation from eternity?

16. What made that inclusion in God’s gracious plan of salvation for the Gentiles, and how was it sealed in you?

17. Note repetition of the phrase, “*that his glory would be praised.*” What application does this have for our lives, specifically the purpose of our earthly lives?

18. Look at verse 14 especially. Think of guarantee, deposit, or down payment, depending on which translation being used, in terms of “earnest money.” Earnest money is that which is given when purchasing a house, for instance. Earnest money guarantees the seller that the rest of the money for the house will be paid. Earnest money cannot be returned. Why is this truth comforting to us especially during times when our faith is being tested?

vv. 15-23 Thanksgiving and prayer

The final verses of this chapter are Paul's prayer for the Ephesians and for us to see God's gracious power. Paul comments on the *faith* and *love* of the Ephesian congregation. Prof. Panning reminds us that *love* is *faith* in action.

19. Remember the condemnation in the letters to the churches in Revelation 2:1-7? What had apparently occurred in the Ephesian congregation within 30 years of the writing of this letter?

Review the application the letter to the church at Ephesus can have in our lives and congregations.

20. List everything that Paul is praying for this congregation.

21. How will the blessings of verses 17-19 bear fruit in my life and in the life of a congregation? (There are at least three major components to the answer here.)

WHY do we want to remain within the Lord's church?

How will that be possible?

22. For whom is this section of Scripture intended?

And with whom and when will we be likely to discuss it?

23. The last verse of this chapter again points out the purpose of God's plan of salvation and its implementation on earth. What would that be?

Ephesians

God's Eternal Plan of Salvation

A PLAN DEVISED BY THE TRIUNE GOD FROM ETERNITY (CHAPTER 1)

ENACTED IN TIME (CHAPTER 2)

Prof. Panning reminds us at the beginning of this section of the makeup of the congregation to whom Paul is writing as well as the makeup of the congregations Paul established and nurtured. Paul's *modus operandi* on his missionary journeys was to first find the local synagogue, if there was one. Here he met with the Jewish leaders of the community and explained to them that Jesus Christ had fulfilled all of the Old Testament prophecies with his life, suffering, death, and resurrection. He was therefore their Redeemer and Messiah. Some believed but sooner or later most would reject Jesus as their Messiah and throw Paul out. Paul then turned his attention to the Gentiles with the help of those Jewish leaders who had been brought to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. These men were very learned in the Old Testament teachings and prophecies and made very good leaders of the forming congregations. However, most of the members of the congregation were Gentiles.

There was a very new dynamic in the kingdom of God as compared with God's Old Testament church, to say the least. Two groups of people who had formerly not only avoided one another, thereby failing to understand the other, but disdained each other, were now to be working together to proclaim the message of Christ. It was going to take an act of God to change the attitude of the two groups toward each other. That's what Paul now begins to address in this section of his letter to the congregation at Ephesus.

Paul had been speaking to the congregation as a whole when he reassured them of God's plan of salvation for them before time began. Now he illustrates for them how the Lord put that plan into action in their lives. It wasn't exactly the same for the Jews and Gentiles, but Paul points out that it wasn't all that different either. Paul concludes his prayer directing the attention of the reader to the church as a whole and so close as to be acting as a single body, the body of

Christ, no less. Paul now addresses the two formerly individual groups to show them how they now have become one group with a single purpose in Christ.

vv 1-2 Paul begins with the Gentiles.

1. How does Paul describe the Gentiles?

Discuss how this description also applies to each and every one of us.

Discuss how keeping this truth in mind aids us as we reach out to people around us who don't know Christ.

v 3 Paul now expands his audience to include the Jews.

2. How does Paul now expand the topic to include the Jews?

What does he add to illustrate how the two groups were actually the same all along?

3. How does v 3 address the issue of whether or not someone will go to hell if they've never heard of Jesus? After all, isn't God a God of love?

4. Refer to Matthew 11:25-12:8; Acts 4:11-12; John 3:3, 3:16-18; Romans 1, 5:18, 10:13-15; Hebrews 3:7-19, 4:6; Revelation 14:12-13.

What does Scripture say is the consequence of not knowing Jesus, including those who have never heard of him?

5. Jumping ahead a bit, read Ephesians 3:10-11. Who is supposed to do something about this awful state of affairs for those who don't know Jesus?

vv 4-7 Paul explains mercy, grace, and kindness and how they are interrelated in God's plan of salvation as he enacts it in the lives of human beings throughout the ages.

For each of the following consult a dictionary or Google each word to accurately define them.

6. Define:

a. Mercy

b. Grace

c. Kindness

d. Love (agape)

7. According to vv 4-7, explain what these characteristics of the Lord God mean in my life and in the life of every Christian.

vv 8-10 The summary of the first two sections of Paul's letter to the Ephesians:

8. How does verse 8 summarize Ephesians chapter 1?

Verse 10 is a striking contrast in the state of our lives on earth to verses 1-5 of Ephesians chapter 2. The Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV) translates verse 10, *“For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk around in them.”*

9. Describe the contrast between my life as an *“object of [God's] wrath”* before being *“made . . . alive with Christ”* versus my life as *“God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus.”*

10. Discuss the importance of including memorizing Ephesians 2:10 when memorizing Ephesians 2:8-10.

Discuss now how our lives can demonstrate we understand Ephesians 8–10.

11. Are the good deeds we do “our” good deeds? Explain.

12. According to Ephesians 2:8-10, who am I? What is my identity in life that is the foundation of my life and is *never* changing?

vv 11-13 Prof. Panning explains, “Accepting circumcision was the sign and seal by which a Jewish male indicated his willingness to live under God’s covenant.”

13. How does that help us understand verses 11-12?

14. List what being outside of God’s covenant meant for the Gentiles. There are four “problems” listed in these passages.

15. Read Matthew 26:27-29; Mark 14:22-26; and Luke 22:19-20. The study notes found in the EHV Study Bible are especially helpful!

According to verse 13, what changed it all? What brought Jew and Gentile together under one covenant?

Discuss why Ephesians 2:13 is such a special passage for both Jews and Gentiles of Paul's day and for all cultures in the world today.

vv 14-18 Paul goes on to explain how this transition in Christ took place. There was a huge shift from the Old Testament church in outward appearance to the New Testament church. Paul addresses the following three key points in our relationship with God the Father.

16. How did God accomplish the change from the Old Testament to the New Testament?

Why did God do it?

The word “peace” appears in these five verses four times. It is the English word customarily used to translate the Hebrew word *shalom*. Shalom refers to something that is whole or intact, something unharmed, everything is in complete harmony.

Because Jesus’ blood was shed, discuss what God’s people therefore have had restored, both with God and with one another.

17. What application would this section have for each of us personally?

18. Discuss how these verses will influence our relationships and conversations with fellow Christians regardless of individual cultures.

vv 19-22 Therefore, some tremendous changes have taken place in your life and in your relationship with God and with others in God’s kingdom.

19. What do we, as God’s people, now possess?

20. On what is the Lord's New Testament church built?

Describe what that means to us today as God's people.

21. What keeps God's people together and united across cultural lines?

22. According to verse 22, what is the purpose of the "*holy temple in the Lord*"?

Ephesians

God's Eternal Plan of Salvation

A PLAN DEVISED BY THE TRIUNE GOD FROM ETERNITY (CHAPTER 1)

ENACTED IN TIME (CHAPTER 2)

PREACHED TO THE GENTILES BY PAUL (CHAPTER 3)

The beginning of this section of Paul's letter can be confusing, to say the least. Paul begins, *"For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles . . ."* only to break his thought here and finish it in verse 14. The break explains how the Lord made it clear to Paul that he was to minister primarily to the Gentiles. The break also explains exactly what Paul was to proclaim to the Gentiles.

v 1 *"For this reason . . ."*

Note: While "prisoner" could refer to Paul's current situation being under house arrest in Rome, it is not the only way in which Paul is "captive." See also Philippians 1:1 where the word "servant" actually means "bondsmen" or "slave."

What reason? Why was Paul a "prisoner," or as another translation says, "captive" of Jesus Christ?

Explain what Paul means when he says he's a *"prisoner of Jesus Christ **for the sake of you Gentiles.**"*

vv 7-9 Paul, acutely aware of his unworthiness to proclaim Jesus' message, points out that he *"became a servant of this gospel, in keeping with the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power."* Here the word "servant" means to be a "courier" or a "go between."

3. Read 1 Timothy 1:12-17. Why does Paul refer to himself in this way: *" . . . even though I'm the very least of all of the saints"*?

4. In both verses 7 and 8, Paul refers to proclaiming the gospel message as being one of the grace manifestations in his life. What does this reveal about his attitude in proclaiming the gospel message as his life's work?

5. Discuss what we as individuals and as congregations can learn from Paul when we may be asked or see opportunities to tell others, in any way, the wonders of the Lord and all Jesus has done for us.

v 8 *" . . . the unsearchable riches of Christ . . ."* Prof. Habecck, in his commentary, translates this section as the "untraceable riches of Christ." He comments that the original word has the sense of tracking an animal only to find there are so many footprints that it's impossible to sort out which way the animal has gone.

6. How does Prof. Habek's comment help us grasp the magnitude of the ". . . riches of Christ"?

v 9 "and to enlighten everyone about the administration of this mystery." This is the second purpose Paul identifies as part of his commission to the Gentiles.

7. Again, what is the "mystery" Paul is explaining to his readers, both Jew and Gentile?

8. Think of applications this could have in our lives, congregations, and synod.

vv 10-13 Paul here explains in the clearest of terms what the purpose of the church is. The word "church" from the Greek word *ecclesia* simply means those "called out" or "summoned to a meeting." It's obvious from this meaning that it's not a building that is being referred to, rather the redeemed souls called to be part of that church. Paul also explains what is to be proclaimed, to whom, why, and how it came to be. He concludes by encouraging the readers to approach the Lord with "confidence." "Freedom" and "boldness" are other ways to translate that word.

Paul writes, "now, through the church . . ." When and how was the New Testament church established? (Skim through Acts looking at the headings. Just list the major steps as listed in Acts.)

9. Explain how the word “church” and its original Greek meaning underscore a number of major points Paul has already made in this epistle.

10. What then is to be proclaimed by the church? Include all that is included in the phrase found in verse 10.

11. What would then be included in the “multifaceted wisdom of God” that would be made known to *“the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms”*?

12. Why is the church being commissioned to be part of this most blessed proclamation?

13. And why is it possible to fulfill this eternal purpose?

14. Look at verse 12. Read also Romans 5:8-11. Discuss what Jews, Gentiles, and each and every Christian now shares through Jesus Christ as individuals and as a group.

Discuss some ways we, as God's family of believers, could better take advantage of and more fully appreciate this wondrous blessing.

15. Verse 13 refers to verse 1 of chapter 3. Remembering what the word "glory" entails, how is Paul's suffering for the "glory" of the church, especially the Gentiles?

vv 14-19 Paul again prays in earnest for the church at Ephesus. This prayer could be referred to as a summary of God's grace, which calls us to faith, and grace which sustains and strengthens us. The New Testament church now includes multiple peoples and languages united in one family, God's family, "*according to the riches of his glory.*" From that source Paul is praying that each member may be strengthened with power through the Spirit, indwelt by Christ himself, rooted in love, established or founded on love, with power to grasp the width, length, height, and depth of the love of Christ. This is a tall order! Paul concludes this prayer with a request for knowledge, full knowledge. This is the word for knowing fully and intimately, the same sense as Adam "knowing" Eve and conceiving a son.

Paul now returns to the thoughts he began at the beginning of chapter 3. The “For this reason...” of Ephesians 3:14 refers back to the “For this reason...” of Ephesians 3:1, which refers to the immediately preceding message of Ephesians 2:19-22, which is building on the magnitude of God’s grace and peace as expressed in chapters 1 and 2.

16. With that in mind, discuss how “*according to the riches of his glory*” helps us understand what this prayer is all about and what is to be going on within congregations.

17. Paul’s prayer for the church is that the church be strengthened with power through the Spirit and that those in the congregation would know Christ intimately. What then is the power to do and what is the purpose of “*knowing the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge*”?

vv 20-21 These couple of verses are actually a transition to the rest of the book. Paul clearly explains whose power is at work and the purpose of that power. He also makes it clear that the result is more than any mere mortal is able to do on his own. The prayer is closed with the phrase, “*to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen.*” The rest of the letter is instruction to the church as to how the Lord will be glorified in the church and in Christ Jesus.

18. Why is it so comforting to know who gives the power to accomplish the purpose and work for which the church was made?

19. Discuss the direction for the work of the church and the power source for accomplishing that work as it applies to congregations and larger church bodies.

Ephesians

God's Eternal Plan of Salvation

A PLAN DEVISED BY THE TRIUNE GOD FROM ETERNITY (CHAPTER 1)

ENACTED IN TIME (CHAPTER 2)

PREACHED TO THE GENTILES BY PAUL (CHAPTER 3)

**THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF GOD'S SAVING GRACE—A LIFE OF HOLINESS TO:
SHOW ITSELF IN UNITY AMONG BELIEVERS (CHAPTER 4:1-16)**

vv 1-3 Remembering that to “glorify” means to “magnify” or “make visible” helps us understand the motivation to follow Paul’s exhortations in these verses. As a group, Christians are to make the Lord visible to those around them who don’t yet know him. It’s a tall order, to say the least! Paul urges the Christians in Ephesus to “*live up to the calling you have received.*” Refer again to verse 20 of the preceding chapter to identify the “power source.”

Paul begins with listing four qualities, two pairs of two, which will glorify the Lord through his church. “*Be completely humble and gentle*” and “*be patient, bearing with one another in love.*”

“Be completely humble and gentle”

1. Refer to Philippians 2:1-4. Define what godly humility is and how it will show itself as we deal with one another.

2. Refer to Isaiah 42:1-4, especially vv 2-3, which define gentleness or meekness. From the Isaiah passage how would you understand gentleness?

According to the People's Bible both humility and gentleness are inner attitudes that arise from the realization that we are unworthy as we stand before God. Therefore, we have no justification for lording over others or being rude or harsh with others.

3. In the culture in which we live, how are godly attitudes of humility and gentleness viewed?

“ . . . be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

4. Explain what the second pair of qualities means and how they will make themselves visible in our lives. The People's Bible points out that this second set involves irritations and aggravations from others.

“ . . . be patient,”

“ . . . bearing with one another in love.”

vv. 7-10 The word “grace” is here used as a synonym for “spiritual gifts.” Christ decides who does what and how they will be used within the service of his church. Paul then proves his point by quoting Psalm 68:18.

The Evangelical Heritage Version translation has supplied some very helpful headings throughout the Psalter, which help us identify the switching in and progression of thought throughout the psalm. In Psalm 68, The Procession of God, the headings are:

- a. vv 1-2 Judgment on God’s Enemies
- b. vv 3-6 Blessing on God’s People
- c. vv 7-10 God Brings His People into His Land
- d. vv 11-14 The LORD Defeats the Kings of the Land
- e. vv 15-18 The LORD Makes His Dwelling in Zion
- f. v 19 God’s Daily Care
- g. vv 20-23 God’s Future Victories
- h. vv 24-27 God’s Procession into the Temple
- i. v 28 Prayer for Future Victory
- j. vv 29-34 God Rules the Nations
- k. v 35 Closing Prayer

The introduction for this psalm from the EHV Study Bible:

“[Psalm 68] describes a procession from Mount Sinai, the place where the Ark of the Covenant was constructed, to the Temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, the place where the Ark found its home. In the Christian church [Psalm 68] is used on the festival of Jesus’ ascension and on Pentecost.”

Psalm 68 was written by David and is describing the moving of the Ark from the Tabernacle to Solomon’s Temple. In verses 9-10, Paul makes it clear that it’s also prophetic of Jesus’ defeat of Satan and Jesus ascending to his throne at the right hand of the Father to rule heaven and earth already now!

11. Looking at verse 12, describe the purpose of these wonderful gifts.

12. Considering vv 12-13 explain what this would look like if those called to public ministry in the congregation were able to stay focused on their calling and God's people, the laity, understood and could stay focused on their individual callings.

vv 14-16 Prof. Panning explains that not growing up spiritually can have serious consequences. For instance, spiritually immature people are like unsophisticated buyers being "worked" by a slick salesperson. Because they don't know the product, they're taken in "*by cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.*" By virtue of their ignorance, they don't know what to believe and will be taken in by anything that sounds good. Paul then lets us know how to avoid such a sad state for us as individuals and as congregations. This section is then closed with a wonderful description of the purpose of Christ as the "head" of the church.

13. Discuss some of the "*wind(s) of teaching . . . the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming*" that surround God's people today, especially in our American culture.

14. Looking again at vv 12-13, describe what might be involved in “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

Can we be content that we are “adults” and no longer worry about being an infant in spiritual matters?

15. Verse 15 is a good explanation of one reason Christians gather together in congregations. What is that, according to this verse?

16. Read John 14:1-7. When we know Jesus and therefore the Father well, we continue to grow spiritually. Share what this might look like for you personally and within a congregation.

17. Verse 16 is a very good scriptural definition of what Christ as “head” is and does. How would you word it so it would make sense to another Christian?

(Remember your definition as it will help understand Chapter 5:25-33 in context.)

Holiness showing itself in living a pure life is the next section to be studied. There are major changes that worked within us by the Holy Spirit who calls us. These changes can't help but be visible in our daily lives. Paul in chapters 4:17–5:20 shows us where the bar is now set. He also makes it very clear how this drastic change is possible. Remember this is in the section of his letter in which he's explaining how Christians, through the church, glorify God and Jesus Christ.

Ephesians

God's Eternal Plan of Salvation

A PLAN DEVISED BY THE TRIUNE GOD FROM ETERNITY (CHAPTER 1)

ENACTED IN TIME (CHAPTER 2)

PREACHED TO THE GENTILES BY PAUL (CHAPTER 3)

THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF GOD'S SAVING GRACE—A LIFE OF HOLINESS TO:

SHOW ITSELF IN UNITY AMONG BELIEVERS (CHAPTER 4:1-16)

SHOW ITSELF IN LIVING A PURE LIFE (CHAPTER 4:17–5:20)

In this entire section Paul is writing that the grace which has been showered on the called is to be visible in our lives and congregations. The fruit of the Spirit shows! James goes so far as to write to the congregation in Jerusalem, *“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead”* (James 2:14-17). Paul is communicating the same thought to the Ephesians and to us. Grace, when understood through the work of the Holy Spirit, will show. In this section, Paul addresses the very way we, as individuals, conduct our lives, which are visible in the everyday world.

vv 17-19 *“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do . . .”* Paul makes it very clear that this change in life is very important. Note the words, *“insist on it in the Lord,”* and *“you must no longer . . .”* He also explains where the source of the problem is and what the result will be if one continues to *“live as the Gentiles do . . .”*

1. vv 17-19 List the thinking patterns and “goals” of the life of unbelievers.

Why is separating from the lifestyle of unbelievers around us so important that Paul writes, “I tell you and insist on it in the Lord, that you must . . .”?

To what can living like the unbelievers around us lead in the eyes of the unbelievers?

2. Discuss why it's so vital to be aware of what “*Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, they are full of greed*” looks like in the culture around us.

And how does it show itself in our culture today?

3. Describe now what it looks like in these situations to be glorifying God.

vv 20-24 Prof. Panning writes, “We’ll catch the point of these five verses if we reduce them to the main line of thought: *‘You were taught . . . to put off your old self . . . and to put on the new self.’*” Paul tells us we don’t come to know Christ by living like the pagans do. We came to know him through God’s grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. Now we are to “*keep in step with the Spirit . . .*” as he writes to the Galatians.

4. My “old self” is being corrupted by deceitful desires put in front of us often through the culture in which we live. It includes, but isn’t limited to, seeking pleasure, strength, security, comfort, or hope through earthly offerings. Even though the arguments sound good, a search of Scripture reveals they aren’t the places or means to find pleasure, strength, security, comfort, or hope. List some things you can think of that are bombarding you with “answers to all of life’s problems” from an earthly perspective.

What are the three forces (as we learned from previous Bible instruction) that work to deceive us?

My old self is all about serving me. Explain what the deceit is all about then and identify who is always ultimately behind it.

5. Verse 23 says we have been “made new in the attitude of our minds.” We cannot do that by ourselves, so how have we been made new in the attitudes of our minds?

6. The image of God has been defined as “knowing what God knows, wanting what God wants, and loving what God loves.” My intellect, will, and emotion are again in concert with the God who created me in his image. He is now re-creating me in his image through the power of the Holy Spirit. How does verse 24 explain what the image of God is?

7. Read Romans 11:33–12:3. List how Paul makes the same points about the why, how, and appearance of the “new man,” which has been created in Christ, as in Ephesians 4:20-24.

vv 25–5:20 This entire section is contrasting the “old self,” which is to be put off, with the “new self,” which is to “*daily arise and live before God in righteousness and purity.*” Read Paul’s message to the congregation at Rome, where he deals with the same topics in Romans 6:3-14 and 7:5-11. In Ephesians 4:25-5:20, to be discussed a little later in this study, Paul is very specific in giving guidelines for the life of the new man in action.

8. Prof. Habeck heads this section with the summary, “Specific admonitions in contrasts.”

He then further divides the verses as follows:

1. Not lying, but truth (4:25)
2. Not ruthlessness, but kindness (4:26–5:2)
3. Not filth, but light (5:3-14)
4. Not folly, but wisdom (5:15-17)
5. Not drunkenness, but spiritual exhilaration (5:18-20)

Now let’s go back and look at each section individually.

Read John 8:42-47, 18:37-38; and 1 John 1:5–2:8.

4:25 Not lying, but truth

9. Why is lying or falsehood such a big deal that it should head the list?

Discuss how this applies in our lives as God’s children.

vv 4:26–5:2 Not ruthlessness, but kindness

10. In Ephesians 4:26-31 Paul lists behaviors that Prof. Habeck refers to as “ruthlessness” and contrasts them with the Christian behaviors Prof. Habeck refers to as “kindness.” For each verse, list what is ruthless and contrast it with what is Christian kindness.

	Ruthlessness	Kindness
a. verse 26	<i>Don't let the sun go down on your anger</i>	<i>Freely and fully forgive those around you, and do so promptly and without delay</i>
b. verse 27	<i>Don't steal</i>	<i>Do useful work with your hands and share with those in need</i>
c. verse 28	<i>Don't let unwholesome talk come out of your mouth</i>	<i>Speak only what is helpful for building others up and beneficial for their needs</i>
d. verse 29	<i>Don't grieve the Holy Spirit</i>	<i>Strive to walk in step with the Holy Spirit</i>

- e. All of verse 31 lists another set of ruthless behaviors. Discuss what those behaviors look like and why they all would be considered ruthless in our dealings with fellow believers especially but with other people in general as well.
- f. Verse 32 is then the summary of Christian behavior that is the opposite of ruthlessness. Discuss the importance of this Christlike behavior in dealing with sisters and brothers in Christ as well as in dealing with unbelievers.

Ephesians 5:1-2 summarizes kindness and its motivation very nicely. It gives us guidance on where to look to know what kindness looks like in practice. We look to God who defines kindness and imitate him. That's a tall order!

11. We will want to live lives of kindness not because of what it will get us. What then is our motivation for living a life of kindness toward others?

Refer to Philippians 2:1-4 and again to Romans 12:1-3. How do we know what a life of love (*agape*) looks like, and what are some ways it will show itself in our dealings with fellow Christians?

vv 5:3–14 Not filth, but light

Not Filth

12. **vv 3-7** list what Prof. Habecck refers to as “filth.” There are at least six “filthy” practices, practices identified as practices of darkness, to be found. Write each down, explain how each is seen in today’s world, and then write the reason it’s unacceptable for God’s people and/or the behavior that should replace it.

Filthy practice

Current cultural perspective

a.

Reason for being unacceptable/godly behavior

b.

Reason for being unacceptable/godly behavior

c.

Reason for being unacceptable/godly behavior

d.

Reason for being unacceptable/godly behavior

e.

Reason for being unacceptable/godly behavior

f.

Reason for being unacceptable/godly behavior

13. “Therefore,” in verse 7 Paul says, “do not be partners with them.” Discuss the action and reason for it Paul identifies as being essential.

But Light

14. List each of the fruits of the light and describe how each will look to others when put into practice.
- a.

b.

c.

Read John 1:1-9; 3:19-21; and 1 John 1:5-7, 2:8-11. John gives helpful insights on the same issue of living as children of light that Paul is leading up to and writes in Ephesians 5:8-14. Paul also uses the same picture of a light shining in the darkness and its purpose in his letter to the congregation in Philippi. Read Philippians 2:12-16.

15. Explain why it's important for us who are children of God to *"live as children of light."*

vv 5:15-17 Not folly, but wisdom

Read Proverbs 1:1-7, which introduces the main theme of the book of Proverbs. The rest of chapter 1 contrasts the consequences in life of pursuing wisdom or pursuing folly. Wisdom is further described in chapters 2-4 and folly is the focus in chapters 5-7. Chapters 8 and 9 look more closely at wisdom's invitation versus the folly of one who does not fear the Lord.

16. Write your own definition of folly and your own definition of wisdom based on Proverbs.

“. . . making the most of every opportunity . . .” to do what?

17. Paraphrase Ephesians 5:15-19.

vv 5:18-21 (Translation by Prof. Irwin Habeck, *Ephesians*, NPH, 1985, pp. 109, 112): **“And do not get drunk on wine in which there is profligacy, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and psalming in your heart to the LORD, thanking God and the Father always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, subjecting yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ.”**

18. Look up the word “profligacy.” Discuss abuse of alcohol and other drugs that are often addicting. How might they lead to “profligacy”?

Looking for joy, exhilaration, and happiness in all the wrong places can lead to “profligacy.” Paul, in verses 19-20, gives inspired direction for finding joy, exhilaration, and happiness in the right place. And there is no worry that this joy, exhilaration, and happiness will end with a crash, leaving one feeling worse than ever.

19. Discuss what vv 19-20 mean.

20. Prof. Panning notes that the meaning of the verbs speaking, singing, making music, and submitting in verse 21 in the original Greek is a continuous process. It would become part of the fiber of my life. Think of ways to make it happen in your daily life.

Ephesians

God's Eternal Plan of Salvation

A PLAN DEVISED BY THE TRIUNE GOD FROM ETERNITY (CHAPTER 1)

ENACTED IN TIME (CHAPTER 2)

PREACHED TO THE GENTILES BY PAUL (CHAPTER 3)

THE BLESSED EFFECTS OF GOD'S SAVING GRACE—A LIFE OF HOLINESS TO:

SHOW ITSELF IN UNITY AMONG BELIEVERS (CHAPTER 4:1-16)

SHOW ITSELF IN LIVING A PURE LIFE (CHAPTER 4:17–5:20)

SHOW ITSELF IN ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITIES (CHAPTER 5:21–6:9)

This familiar and often quoted section of Ephesians helps us understand what the responsibilities of the new man would be as well as how on earth it's possible for us to fulfill them.

Beginning with chapter 4:17, Paul began his exhortation to live as sanctified children of light rather than children of darkness. Chapter 5:15 is shifting the focus entirely to what the Holy Spirit can work in us in spite of the “evil” days in which we live. Paul further injects the thought of making use of “opportunity” to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others. Colossians, written at the same time and being carried by Tychicus, is similar in content to Ephesians. Colossians 4:3-6 helps us understand what Paul is leading into here.

1. Refer to Colossians 4:3-6. Paul's concern is spreading the gospel message to those who have no idea about God's plan of salvation fulfilled in Christ. Further he is concerned about being credible when doing so. What is Paul urging the Colossian Christians to be intentional about when dealing with outsiders?

Paul began his letter to the Ephesians extolling God's grace through Jesus' life, suffering, and death so we could be with him for all eternity. After so beautifully portraying justification, Paul

then moved to our thankfulness showing itself in lives of sanctification. As Paul did in his letter to the Colossians, he now encourages the Christians in Ephesus to become messengers of the gospel message themselves.

2. Read Acts 2:42-47. How does Luke describe how the Lord used the behavior of Christians toward one another in the growth of the early Christian church?

People often watch how other people treat one another in determining if they want to be associated with those people. This is especially true if what they are saying or promising is new or unusual. Paul is very aware that the message of Jesus is attracting a lot of attention. Therefore, the behavior of Christians, and whether they practice what they preach, could hinder the precious message. Let outsiders see the love of Christ through you.

Ephesians 5:21 ***Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.***

Paul knew his audience well. He knew he was speaking to a group very familiar with the Roman military. Ephesus was a city in the Roman Empire “ranking with Rome, Corinth, Antioch, and Alexandria among the foremost urban centers of the empire” (Concordia Study Bible, p. 1801). As a harbor the Roman Empire made sure it was well protected by its renowned military. Paul therefore uses a word translated as “submit,” which is a military term used to describe the troops lining up for battle.

For each of the following sections discuss how the army of God will benefit from Christian families, employers, employees, and congregations who order themselves according to Paul’s and the Lord’s instructions:

8. ***Ephesians 6:9*** as the employer or the “supervisor”

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GOD'S SAVING GRACE WILL GIVE US COURAGE TO CONTEND AGAINST EVIL—

WEARING GOD'S ARMOR (CHAPTER 6:10-20)

6:10-13 *“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 blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this dark world, against the spiritual forces of the evil in the heavenly realms. For this reason 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.”*

1. On what does the strength of the Christian army depend?

Prof Habeck. uses the word “panoply” rather than “full armor” to describe the covering we Christians are to use. The dictionary uses phrases like “entire equipment” and “magnificent

covering” to define the word panoply. Keep in mind this panoply has been prepared by the Lord for us as individuals but also as the church as a whole. While each soldier needs to have armor on, no soldier can do much alone. In the original language all of the “you” pronouns in this section are plural.

2. What then does God himself give us that makes it possible for us to stand against the devil’s schemes?

3. Give some examples of the devil’s schemes for which we need protective armor as individuals.

4. Give some examples of the devil’s schemes for which we need protective armor as congregations and church bodies.

5. What's significant about the phrase, "**when the day of evil comes**"?

6. The word "stand" appears twice in verse 13. It is two different words in the original. The first time it means to hold your ground, stand and fight. The second time it means to stand in victory. Describe the importance then of having the full armor of God in place each and every day as individuals and as groups of Christians.

6:14-17 *"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 of 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.**"*

Prof. Panning writes that these five defensive pieces of armor and one offensive piece of armor are listed in the order the Roman soldier would put them on. He also relates that the "belt" was large enough to cover the midsection and thighs, the breastplate covered the upper body, the fitted feet meant the boots, the helmet protected the head, and the round shield was used to ward off sword and spear thrusts as well as to deflect flying missiles, like arrows or javelins.

7. List each of the five pieces of defensive armor that God covers us with and explain why they're so valuable in our fight against the devil's schemes. In the case of the first four defensive weapons, the verb indicates something to be picked up and used after being

laid down. The fifth defensive weapon, the **helmet of salvation**, is accepted for use when offered. According to Prof. Habeck, it refers to the salvation Jesus has won for us.

The single offensive weapon is the **sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God**. Professor Habeck writes:

“The Word, of course, can serve as a defensive weapon . . . oppose the Word to [Satan’s] temptation, and we will emerge as victors just as our Savior did in the wilderness. But the Word also serves as an offensive weapon. If we let the Word shape our thinking, the devil will be repelled before he can’t even approach us with his lying suggestions.

“Nor do we want to forget that once we have become believers in the Word, we are left here on earth and not taken home to heaven in order that we might share the Word with others. This means we will constantly need to delve into the Word in order to discover what we are to tell others and then be alert for opportunities to share what we know . . . when we as individual Christians and in our corporate activity with other Christians are sharing and

spreading the Word, we will be on the offensive. Satan will not be making us his victims. With the Word we will be rescuing his victims from his grasp.”

8. Since the Word is such a vital weapon, discuss strategies for how you as an individual, you and your family, and you and your congregation can delve into the Word on a regular basis.

6:18-20 *“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 saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should.”*

9. Discuss the difference between offensive and defensive weapons.

Into which category would you place prayer? Explain why you chose what you did.

We often hear about the “power of prayer.” Passages such as “*Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed*” and “*The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective*” (James 5:16) point us to a power involved with prayer.

10. What’s the power source of prayer according to Ephesians 6:10-20?

11. See the Galatians/Ephesians People’s Bible for verse 18. What guidance does Paul give on prayer as he specifically asks the Ephesian Christians to pray and to pray for him?

12. Discuss the application of the prayer requests in verses 19-20 for today’s Christians.

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WEARING GOD'S ARMOR (CHAPTER 6:10-20)

FINAL GREETINGS (CHAPTER 6:21-24)

Paul concludes his letter to the congregation at Ephesus as many of us conclude letters and correspondence. He refers to a mutual friend and then concludes with prayer for God's richest blessings for his friends in Ephesus.

1. Tychicus is mentioned in three other letters written by Paul, 2 Timothy 4:12, Titus 3:12, and most extensively in Colossians 4:7-9, and by Luke in Acts 20:4. Read these references and list what we know about Tychicus from them.

This information about Tychicus must be relevant as he's referred to five times in God's inspired Word. What application might there be for our lives?

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2. There are three blessings prayed to be bestowed on the Ephesian Christians in verses 23-24.

***Peace to the brothers,
and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.***

When might we find the pattern and thoughts of this closing prayer appropriate and fitting to offer?