

# **A Study of Ephesians**

## **Leader'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 is imperative that the leader work with a commentary, and we suggest Prof. Panning's People's Bible commentary on Ephesians. It would be good for everyone in the study to have a copy of this commentary.

A note for the leader: This guide does not contain all possible answers. This guide is meant to provide some talking points and act as a stimulus for discussion. The leader is expected to study the Scripture and reference/commentary material, which may provide additional insight. Through class discussion, class participants may also add valuable thoughts from their own study and experiences. Also know that only Scripture determines what is true, and all experiences and personal study must be evaluated in light of God's truth. 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.

*Acts 18: After Paul works with Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth for a year and a half, the Jews beat up a synagogue leader who had become a believer in Jesus as the Christ. Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla leave and move on to Ephesus. Priscilla and Aquila remain in Ephesus but Paul moves on, promising to return.*

*Acts 19: Paul arrives at Ephesus for an extended stay of 2 years, 3 months (vv 8-10), which is 3 years (Ch. 20:31) as the Jews counted length of time.*

*Conversion of Jews in the synagogue.*

*When rejected by the Jews in the synagogue, Paul moves to the hall of Tyrannus and for 2 years preached the Word of the Lord to Jews and Gentiles.*

*An evil spirit comes out of a man and beats up the seven sons of Sceva.*

*The believers burn the scrolls with sorcery on them.*

*The silversmith Demetrius, who makes images representing the goddess Artemis, stirs up the people because Paul's message of Jesus is bad for business.*

*A riot ensues; Paul likely refers to it in 2 Corinthians 1:8-11.*

*Acts 20: Paul returns to meet the elders of the congregation.*

*He reviews his message to them.*

*Paul encourages the leaders of the Ephesian congregation.*

*Paul's great love for the Ephesian congregation and their love for him is evident in the recording of their parting ways.*

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

*Acts 19:1-10: Paul begins preaching the good news of Jesus the Christ in the synagogue. When some of the Jew's object and/or threw him out, he found another spot and reached out in earnest to the Gentiles and the believing Jews.*

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?

*Consult study Bibles, Prof. Panning's People's Bible on Galatians and Ephesians, The Lutheran Study Bible, Baker's Encyclopedia, or the EHV Study Bible for maps and background on Ephesus and 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.

*The congregation is commended for its hard work in the face of persecution and making sure those preaching and teaching are faithful to the gospel message. Yet they have lost their first love and are called to repentance for it.*

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

*Answers will vary. Struggles in new congregations often are around understanding the importance of adhering closely to the Word of God rather than to being misled by nice-sounding theology that makes everyone happy and offends no one. On the other hand, established congregations will sometimes struggle with understanding Christlike love as motivation for proclaiming the gospel or being so aware of the love of Christ for them that they can't help but proclaim the gospel message to all they know as they excel in deeds of love and faith.*

#### THE AUTHOR and DATE OF WRITING

Read Ephesians 1:1, 3:1.

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

*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for the sake of the gospel.*

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?

*According to Acts, Paul was under house arrest in Rome. He had been thrown into prison after an angry Jewish crowd threatened to kill him. A Roman soldier stepped in to keep the peace by ordering a flogging for Paul. Paul appeals to Caesar and is held in a Roman prison in Caesarea by Felix for two years until Festus follows him. Festus sends Paul to Rome almost immediately because Paul had claimed his right as a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar.*

*Paul is sent on to Rome by boat by Festus after a meeting with King Agrippa. Paul and the entire crew and passengers are shipwrecked and end up on the island of Malta. After wintering there for three months, they again set sail for Rome.*

*In Rome, Paul is under house arrest where many come to hear what he has to say, Roman guards and many others. Paul was there under house arrest for two years. According to multiple references to being a prisoner, it is widely accepted that Paul wrote a number of letters to his congregations while there including Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon.*

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

*Paul endured more unfair accusations, unfair justice, and hardship, including a shipwreck and floggings, to get him to where he could most effectively proclaim the message of Jesus and serve congregations and individuals.*

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

*Wherever we find ourselves, God has placed us there to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ as we serve others. It's not uncommon even in today's world that the Lord uses*

*hardships and unfair treatment by others to get us to where his plan for us from eternity has determined we should be.*

## 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.

*Those widows who were Jews speaking Greek were being overlooked in the distribution of food. In a culture without social security or welfare of any kind, a widow would have a very difficult time growing or being able to purchase food. The church took on that responsibility.*

*Sanctified Jews, furthermore, who had lived for millennia properly understanding that they should not worship together with unbelieving Gentiles unless and until the Gentiles became believers, were asked to suddenly change their whole culture.*

Why did these conflicts almost invariably arise?

*When various cultures are to be living in harmony it truly requires the intervention of the Holy Spirit to change people's hearts. All sides, no matter how many, have codes of conduct one is taught to abide by without being told. Differing cultures may well do things that are good and right in their culture but taboo in another.*

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

*Answers will vary, in part due to the increasingly diverse nature of those varying cultures. They may also vary due to those in the study failing to see the cultural differences in age groups. Baby boomers are quite different from Gen-Xers, for instance. Or perhaps failing to see differences in culture in various parts of the country. Ask those*

*present to share any funny or surprising reactions they may have experienced when everyone used the same terminology for something but it was different. Whether or not one assumes noodles are in chili or what the last meal of the day is referred to are good ice breakers. Then move to what types of things may arise during worship services or how newcomers are welcomed in.*

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.

*"I am an apostle to the Gentiles..."*

*"We also speak these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual truths with spiritual words."*

*Jesus appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and at other times. See Acts 1:21-22. Seeing Jesus face to face and seeing the crucified Jesus alive after his resurrection were criteria listed for the 12 apostles when the replacement for Judas was being determined. Paul is verifying that he fits this narrow definition of an apostle.*

*Paul lists other criteria in 2 Corinthians 12:12 and clearly states he was appointed to be an apostle.*

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

*One who has been chosen "before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." While many correctly think of the word "holy" as meaning "perfect," there is also a sense of being called out of a group (of unbelievers) to belong to a different group wholly dedicated to one thing, in this case being Christ's ambassador. More on this will be in chapter 3.*



**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.”

*Paul is using terms of blessings and good things here now coming from God through Christ in terms that resonated with each culture he was greeting.*

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?

*There was absolutely nothing that I had done to make God love me. Through Christ there is nothing I can do to make God love me more and through Christ there is nothing I can do to make God love me less. What astounding love our heavenly Father has for us!!*

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

*Answers will vary. Many Christians are burdened with what they think they “should do” and/or guilt ridden because they haven’t lived up to what they “should do.” For women this is manifested especially in terms of relationships with friends, relatives, and even encounters with strangers. Satan can creep in to whisper, “You don’t deserve God’s love and he’s not going to love you if . . .”*

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

In love . . . (the word “agape”)

predestined . . .

*Before I had a chance to do anything to deserve God’s love for me, he loved me.*

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

*The sons in Jewish families, especially the firstborn, had rights and privileges including inheritance rights, just because they were sons. The concept of “adoption” is found rarely if at all in the OT, however. “Adoption” is more of a Greco-Roman idea. We find “adoption” both in Ephesians in Romans where Paul is writing to Jews and Gentiles, those who knew the Greek and Roman cultures well. According to the Greco-Roman culture, a man who would die without natural heirs could adopt someone who was not his birth son to be his legal heir, with all the rights and privileges as if he were a natural born son. This is what has recently occurred when Julius Caesar adopted his nephew, who became known as Caesar Augustus, as his own son. When Paul is writing to the Ephesians, he isn’t making a gender-specific statement. Rather, his point is that all believers, male and female, are “adopted as his sons.”*

through Jesus Christ . . .

*Every child of God, male or female, rich or poor, independent of social status or culture has the same rich inheritance awaiting because of Jesus’ death for us.*

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

*“ . . . God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3b-4). The Lord God created human beings to be with him. It was his intent from before creation.*

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

*See what God has done for me and for all people on earth! We, his children, get to tell everyone about the magnitude of his love for all people.*

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

*Believers in Christ! Nothing then can separate me from the love of the Father who “so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).*

Why is the truth of predestination a comfort for us?

*Nothing and no one can ever take me away from Jesus or separate me from the love of God. See Romans 8:31-35, 38-39.*

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

*Absolutely nothing! While God speaks of those who reject Christ, he never makes any statement about election in the context of unbelievers. Neither can we!*

Explain why it is important to keep this in mind.

*The comfort of the teaching of election is for believers in Christ, especially those who are being harassed at every turn by the various attempts of Satan to make us doubt “how wide and long and high and deep [God’s] love is” (Ephesians 3:18).*

**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.)

*Jesus paid the price for breaking the Sinaitic bilateral covenant with God with the shedding of his own blood, to buy us back from slavery to sin. Our sins had to be paid for so we could be released from our slavery to them. Jesus paid what we owed and announced from the cross, "It is finished!" (John 19:30).*

Why was it secured?

*According to the magnitude of his grace!*

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

*God made it known to us in keeping with his good purpose that he planned in Christ. The passage says it all!*

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

*To bring all things together under Christ's eternal rule. Everything now adds up and is complete under Christ.*

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

*Every knee will bow of every living creature, in heaven and on earth, everything, animate and inanimate! See Philippians 2:9-11 and Psalm 148.*

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

*Paul makes it personal, "In him we have also . . . because we were predestined . . ."*

12. To whom is verse 12 referring?

*All believers. Others come to know and see what our God is like when they hear what we say about him and see us living our lives reflecting him.*

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"?

*Paul is here referring to the Jewish people who were the first to know of God's plan of salvation through the Messiah.*

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."*

*According to John 1:14 and John 14:5-10, we have seen Jesus, the Word made flesh, therefore we have seen the Father. Jesus who is the Father's glory in human flesh is to 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?

*But now, Jew and Gentile alike, having been justified by faith have peace with God through Jesus. More to come on this in Chapter 2.*

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

*Belief in Jesus as the Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

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?

*See Galatians 2:20 and Galatians 5:22-25. Christ lives in us and as his children our lives reflect who he is as we "live by the spirit, [we] also keep in step with it."*

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?

*The Holy Spirit is the “earnest money” that God has invested in us. God cannot take it back. The presence of the Holy Spirit guarantees that eternal life with Jesus cannot be taken away. Again, nothing can take that away from me because God has planned it for me from before creation. It’s guaranteed to me through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.*

**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?

*They had lost their first love, that is, faith in action, in their congregation as a whole.*

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

*Answers will vary widely as individuals discuss what love, faith in action, looks like in individual congregations.*

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

- a. Spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowing Christ fully*
- b. The eyes of their hearts be enlightened to know the hope to which they are called*
- c. How rich the glorious inheritance among the saints is*
- d. How surpassingly great his power is for believers*
- e. The working of his mighty strength manifest when he raised Jesus from the dead and placed him on the throne to rule over all creation*
- f. Including being head of the church and everything for it*

*Truly awesome!!*

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.)

*Answers may vary but could include:*

- a. By the power and grace of God*
- b. through the work of Holy Spirit which is*
- c. through regular use of the means of grace, the Word and sacrament.*
- d. Gathering together with other Christians in worship and Bible study to encourage, support, and build one another up through the Word.*

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

*Because it's the body of Christ, the fullness of Christ who fills everything in every way.*

How will that be possible?

*Again by the power of God through the work of the Holy Spirit*

22. For whom is this section of Scripture intended?

*Believers in Jesus as the Christ.*

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

*Fellow believers, especially those in our congregations and synod.*

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?

*Through Jesus. The church is his body, his physical presence here on earth, through whom he reveals himself. More on this in Chapter 3.*

# 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?

*Dead in trespasses and sin, serving Satan, following the ways of the world. For a description of what we look like by nature, without Christ's robe of righteousness, look at Romans 3:10-20 and Isaiah 64:6.*

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

*Without Christ we are objects of wrath, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Living for self rather than focusing on Christ. Without faith we're not even able to focus on Christ because we don't know him or reject him.*

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

*This is the world they are living in. They don't even know they are disobedient to God because they don't know him. Some may know they need something more in life,,,,, but they don't know what. We often teach the gospel first, and then the law so people have the motivation to change their lives and look to God. Sometimes we need to hit someone over the head with the law to get their attention. We speak gently, speaking the truth in love, not being judgmental, not trying to "fix" them all at once. Yet we do not downplay sin. Jesus certainly didn't.*

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

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

*His language changes to be inclusive—"all of us also . . ." and "like the rest, we . . ."*

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

*"By nature we are objects of wrath." Inclusive "we" can do nothing about it, just as a dead stick on the ground has no ability to bloom and prosper.*

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?

*God is a God of love and he provided a Savior who, by grace alone completely free of charge, paid the total price required to spend eternity with him. He also tells us there is only one way to go heaven, and that is the way he has provided through Jesus Christ. See John 14:6 or Acts 4:12.*

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?

*There is only one way to be saved and that is through the grace of believing Jesus is the Savior. Those who do not know or acknowledge Jesus will not be saved. This gives us much urgency to share this gospel message with all those God puts in our pathway of life, to encourage our missionaries, pastors, teachers, staff ministers, Christian parents, and all others who are called to share the Good News.*

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?

*The church has been given this responsibility. All believers are part of the church as we are told in 1 Peter 2:9.*

**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

*Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm, compassionate treatment of someone in distress. In his mercy, God*

*sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins so that our name can be written in the Book of Life and we have eternal life with him in heaven.*

**b. Grace**

*The spontaneous, unmerited gift of the divine favor in the salvation of sinners, and the divine influence operating in individuals for their regeneration and sanctification.*

**c. Kindness**

*The quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate; of a sympathetic nature, disposed to being helpful and solicitous. One of the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Galatians 6:22, which comes from living a life focused on Christ and not from moral discipline.*

**d. Love (agape)**

*Agape love is the highest form of selfless love, a sacrificial love that transcends and persists regardless of circumstances. This is in contrast to philia, or brotherly love, which so easily falls short. When we say “God is love” this is the type of love he is showing us, his children.*

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.

*Answers may vary. These characteristics exemplify how God responds to me (and every Christian), the gross sinners that we are. While we recognize these gifts in some individuals here on earth, they are never something any individual can fully attain this side of heaven. Only God can and does bestow them generously to the human race.*

**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?

*Through the riches of God’s grace, showered upon us in abundance, I become his forgiven child and I am his in every fiber of my body. He has reconciled me to himself*

*and made promises that I will live with him eternally in heaven. While here on earth, I am his ambassador, doing the things he wills me to do, and serving him by serving others.*

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.*”  
*As we are by nature, God sees us as “objects of wrath” when he looks at us, naked, with all the sins that we heap one upon another, unable to stop sinning or do anything about it. But, through faith in Christ Jesus, God sees the perfection of his Son, the white robe of righteousness, perfect in every way. Praise the Lord!*

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

*Not only have we been saved, we have been saved for a purpose. God has created us just as he wants us, with all the gifts and talents he wants us to have, with the personality he wants us to have, and has put us into this world exactly where he wants us. He made no mistakes. He has prepared work for us to do, from before time began, so that his will is accomplished. We can’t resolve to do good work (see Isaiah 64:6) but rather only through faith in Christ do our works become acceptable. James tells us that faith and works go together. Jesus is to be our model as we seek to emulate his love and humility. We pray that God will conform our will to his, so that we can best serve him.*

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

*When we don’t resist letting our faith become our very identity. When we praise, worship, and serve God before all other things in life. When we begin each day with a prayer that our will is conformed to his, look for the opportunities he gives us, and then*

*step forward (with God's help, of course) to accomplish those tasks. And we do this with joy as we reflect God's love into the world around us.*

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

*We accomplish them using the gifts, skills, and opportunities that God gives us. God has prepared these works for us to do before we even existed. God has given us the opportunity to do them. God has given us the will to step up and do them. Each of these deeds puts another piece into the puzzle that God calls his plan. Many times, we don't even realize we are doing a good deed as we go through our life in humble service to our God. God calls them good works, but they are only good because Jesus makes them so.*

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?

*My identity is that of a loved, chosen, saved child of God through Christ. My gender, culture, or vocation do not identify me, but rather earthly callings or vocations that are used to create relationships here on earth, allowing me to encourage and share Jesus with others. All of these worldly vocations may change from time to time, i.e., I change vocations, immerse myself in different cultures or nationalities, or become part of a family unit. However, my identity remains that of a child of God. All children of God live in unity, regardless of their worldly calling.*

**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?

*This physical sign separated the Jews, those chosen by God, from all others. Those in the “other” category were without hope and without God.*

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

*Being outside God's covenant made the Gentiles without hope of a future, in other words, damned to eternal separation from God. They were separate from the Jewish kingdom. The laws under which the Jewish people lived reinforced this separation. Thus they did not even know the situation they were in. Still many were attracted to the light of Israel. Many Gentiles learned to lean on Israel's God, and hope with Israel's hope.*

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?

*Jesus instituted a new covenant to replace that of the Old Testament. He died for the sins of all people, not just the Jews. None are now excluded. The purpose of the old covenant, to protect the lineage from which Jesus would be born, had been fulfilled. Now we live under a new covenant where God imposes no separation of any kind.*

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.

*No one is now excluded from the covenant of salvation. Jews and Gentiles are joined into one Christian family, brothers and sisters of the same Jesus who died for the sins of everyone. The Ephesians, being mostly Gentiles, see that they are no longer separated from the true God, but welcomed into the citizenship of heaven. The same is true for all cultures and nationalities 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?

*Jesus' life, death, and resurrection mark the change from Old Testament, those words of the prophets that declare the promise of a Savior, to New Testament, the earthly life of that Savior, the early days of the apostles, and spread of the church. The New*

*Testament also gives the promise of a second coming of that Savior to usher believers into a life of eternity in heaven and a return to the initial relationship with God first created in the Garden of Eden, and condemning non-believers to a life of separation from God in hell.*

Why did God do it?

*Because God loves his people and in that momentous moment when the crown of creation, Adam and Eve, first sinned, he promised a Savior who would pay the huge price required for that sin and all sins to follow.*

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.

*There is now a reconciliation between God and the human race. This reconciliation with God, accomplished through Christ, ensures believers peace with God. Not a worldly peace that we often yearn for though never attain, but a spiritual peace that means when God looks at us he sees the perfection of his Son. Think of those precious words once we have participated in the Lord’s Supper: “Depart in peace and joy, your sins have been forgiven.”*

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

*Answers may vary. This peace allows me to go about my life on earth worshipping, praising, and serving God without fear for the future, for what happens after death. This peace allows me to pray directly to God and he has promised, in his love, to hear and answer my prayers.*

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

*This peace, this joy, this reconciliation is for all people in the world. In gratitude for the grace that has been shown us, we gladly share the message of salvation with everyone.*

*He has put people along the pathway of this life that need to know the message and as his ambassadors we share the message. He has given us the ability to pray and support mission fields in our community, across the country and around the world. This is the purpose for which we live. What a privilege we've been given.*

**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?

*We are now members of God's household, along with all believers. We possess the surety of citizenship in the heavenly kingdom.*

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

*The New Testament church is built on the solid foundation of the gospel, as first proclaimed through the OT prophets and NT apostles and recorded for us in Scripture. This solid foundation will not crack, sink, or give way. This church has Christ Jesus as the cornerstone, the stone used to orient a building and keep it from falling apart. Each believer is becoming (active tense) part of that holy temple where God lives.*

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

*Answers may vary. This church is not going to crumble or give way. I can put my confidence in the foundation and it will be my strength. This church is active and growing as new "stones," or believers, are being added daily. The church is where we find, worship, praise, and listen to God. The church is something to cherish and hold on to.*

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

*Simply put, Jesus keeps God's people together and united. The church is for all believers, regardless of cultural or other physical differences because Jesus paid the price for the sins of everyone, regardless of cultural and other physical differences. We rejoice in the cultural differences of believers, because we are able to spread the Good News to even more people on this earth. For God, there is no difference between people of different cultures because he created and loves them all.*



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

*The church is the community in which the Holy Spirit dwells. In the Old Testament God dwelt among his people in the Temple, where Gentiles were not allowed. In the New Testament God dwells in the Holy Christian Church, where Jews and Gentiles are both welcomed. And indeed both Jews and Gentiles are built together into the temple where God dwells.*

# 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?

*Refer again to the introduction to Ephesians, especially questions 2 and 7. Read again Acts 22:21-29. The charge against Paul was initiated when he said to the Jewish group listening that he was to take the message of Jesus to the Gentiles. When he appealed to Caesar, he would end in Rome under house arrest until his appeal would be heard. That's where and when this letter was most likely being written.*

*Paul frequently refers to himself as a servant or slave of Jesus as do a number of other New Testament writers. See Romans 6:12-23 for Paul's understanding of the situation.*

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

*Not only was it Paul's commission from Jesus personally while on the road to Damascus, but ministering to the Gentiles was the very reason the Jews were in opposition to him and tried to stop his ministry.*

**vv 2-6** The emphasis of verse 2, according to Prof. Panning, is that Paul's administration of God's grace was *"for you."* Paul's commission by Jesus on the road to Damascus was specifically to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 26:15-18). The Lord made it even clearer in Jerusalem while Paul was in a trance shortly after his conversion (Acts 22:17-22). The mystery that Paul is speaking of is that Gentile and Jew will now be heirs together of eternal life through Jesus Christ. The Jews are no longer the primary people through whom the Lord will work. Prof. Panning explains that *"mystery"* is not being used in the sense of something murky or mysterious, simply as something that needs to be explained.

1. Why would having Jews and Gentiles worshipping together in the Lord's church be such a "mystery"?

*God in Old Testament times chose the descendants of Abraham through whom to reveal himself to all people. There were provisions for Gentiles to become part of God's people by putting themselves under the Sinaitic law code. This meant males were to be circumcised as a seal of the covenant and all promised to abide by all of the laws God gave through Moses, the civil, ceremonial, and moral laws found in Leviticus.*

*The mystery was that now the Gentiles would also be God's chosen people through whom he would reveal himself. No longer did the Gentiles have to put themselves under the Sinaitic law code before becoming one of God's chosen people. They could come directly through the New Covenant in Jesus' blood.*

2. Jews and Gentiles would now, in New Testament times, be worshipping together as one. Explain why this would be so very hard for both Jews and Gentiles to comprehend.

*They had been adversarial for millennia. First the Israelites wouldn't play together and adapt ways of the Gentile nations. Later, after captivity, the Samaritans did all they could*

*to interfere with and destroy the Israelites' ability to rebuild the temple, both literally and figuratively as a nation of God's people following the Lord and only the Lord. In short there were centuries of hate because of the Lord God. Now they were to be working together? A mystery as to how that could be possible indeed!*

Paul is very certain he's correct about something so new and contrary to the way both Jews and Gentiles had viewed each other for centuries. (Note: Gentiles were always welcome to join God's OT people as long as they put themselves under the Sinaitic Covenant, sealing it with circumcision for the males.) Verse 7 explains why Paul is so certain that believing Jews and Gentiles would now be considered together as God's people.

**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"?*

*The list in 1 Timothy is a picture of one who was as opposed to Jesus as possible. Read the exact wording found in 1 Timothy. He points to God's grace as the only way he, Paul, could possibly become a believer in Jesus. Then to be commissioned to be Jesus' ambassador to the Gentiles in particular was beyond human understanding.*

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?

*It is awesome grace that redeemed me and brings faith in Jesus as my only Savior. More than that though it's awesome grace that the Lord uses jars of fragile breakable clay to house the message of Jesus and to share it. See 2 Corinthians 3:17-4:7.*

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.

*Answers will vary but opportunities to proclaim the message of Jesus are not burdens for us to bear but a privilege and joy to carry out because God allows us to see him at work through us. He could have chosen any number of ways, but he chooses us to be part of the army proclaiming his Word to those dying to hear it.*

**v 8** “. . . the unsearchable riches of Christ . . .” Prof. Habeck, 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. Habeck’s comment help us grasp the magnitude of the “. . . riches of Christ”?

*The riches of Christ are so many that it’s impossible to sort them out or identify individual gifts without crossing over many more in the process.*

**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?  
*How can Jew and Gentile, adversaries for millennia, be co-workers as God’s chosen people through whom he will spread the message of the Savior?*
8. Think of applications this could have in our lives, congregations, and synod.

*Answers will certainly vary depending on the circumstance of any individual congregation. How newcomers are welcomed, especially those who have had a known history of actions out of step with the Spirit? What about multiple generations? How can they work together? Are the neighbors living around the church building reflected in those who are part of the congregation or the target audience of outreach efforts?*

**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.)

*Go to Acts 1. Jesus tells his disciples that when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they will be his “witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 2-7 is the account of being Jesus’ witnesses in Jerusalem. Acts chapters 8-12 recount the church spreading to Judea and Samaria. Acts chapters 13 through 28 are the account of Paul primarily preaching to the Gentiles throughout the then known world, ending with his house arrest in Rome. Read Acts 28:28-31.*

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

*“Called out” or “summoned” to a meeting brings to mind Ephesians 1:1b, 3-8, 11-14, 15. Read those verses again. We have been chosen, called out of the masses, to be part of Christ’s church through which the message of Jesus’ work here on earth and the peace he has won for us is to be proclaimed.*

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

*“Through the church, the multifaceted wisdom of God would be made known.” Refer to the Galatians/Ephesians People’s Bible for Ephesians chapter 3:10 by Armin Panning. He writes:*

*“God revealed the mystery of equality between Jewish and Gentile believers to Paul so that now, by the apostle’s proclamation of the gospel, the Christian church might grow and flourish. Thus in the growth of the church, the good and gracious purpose of God to save sinners would become known to all people.”*

*According to Acts 20:27, this would include the “whole counsel of God” as Paul says to the leaders of the congregation at Ephesus in his farewell to them on his way to Jerusalem to be put on trial for speaking to Gentiles about Jesus.*

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*”?

*Again, the People’s Bible is very helpful. In the paragraph immediately following the quote in the answer to question 10 we read:*

*“But not only people would come to know his plan. God would make it known even to ‘the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.’ ... Here Paul seems to have reduced his scope to just the good spiritual powers, that is, angels. They too are genuinely interested in the spread of the gospel and the growth of the church, as Peter indicated when he said, ‘Even the angels long to look carefully into these things’ (1 Peter 1:12).”*

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

*It’s the “eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”*

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

*All by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.*

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.

*We have been justified by the shedding of blood by Jesus on the cross and thus saved from God’s wrath. If he loved us that much “while we were enemies” just imagine what he’ll do for us now that we have been reconciled and are now at peace with him! We now can have full confidence in God’s love for us through Jesus Christ. We can approach him with every prayer, petition, anxiety, care, etc., and know that he will come to our aid.*

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

*Answers will vary. The point is, in any time of need or concern, we can take it to our loving Father as the first step rather than trying everything else first and going to God as a last resort.*

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?

*The true identity of the New Testament church is found in ALL Christians working together as one. Jesus came for the sins of the world. All have the same status before God in Jesus Christ. There are no second-class Christians before God or in his church.*

**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 that 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.

*God’s glory has been made known through the outpouring of his grace. We see it in all that he has done for us through the work of Jesus. With that in mind we can expect more from this gracious God than we can even imagine or know to ask for! It’s all by his strength and the power of the Holy Spirit. What a relief that it’s not dependent on me!*



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*"?

*So we as his church "may be filled with the fullness of Christ Jesus throughout all generations"!*

**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?

*As mere human beings we could never be up to the task!*

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.

*Review the purpose of the church, which is to make known the "multifaceted wisdom of God" to all. Even the angels will be watching in awe as God works through mere human beings to proclaim the saving gospel message. Is that the focus of my life personally? Is that what guides the activities of the congregation? Is that where funds and time are invested? It can only be so by the power of the Holy Spirit! The remaining chapters of Ephesians give practical direction that will help us know what it will look like in practice.*

# 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.

*Godly humility is first the realization of our own unworthiness before God. We are made holy by the blood of Jesus, but without him we cannot approach God's throne. Like a servant would approach a king's throne in humility we bow before our Lord understanding our lowly status. It is in this humility that we also deal with others. We know they too are bought with the blood of Jesus, but without him God will only see their deeds as filthy rags. So in this way, we are all alike. We are not better in status before God than others.*

*Being humble in our dealings with others means we will, as Paul says in Philipppians, consider others better than ourselves. He continues, “each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.” This does not mean that you will put others before yourself at all times and at all expenses. No, this would not follow God’s command to care for your body. Do not think less of yourself, rather think of yourself less often. What we do will be done out of love for others, not out of selfish ambition for our own gain.*

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?

*Answers will vary. Christ is the only example of pure and perfect gentleness and meekness. In verse 2 we see Jesus bringing peace. He yielded to his Father’s will and came as a babe in the manger, not an authoritative ruler. Despite his power, he did not flaunt it. In verse 3, we see how he deals with those who are weak. He is not harsh with us or treat us as our sins deserve. Though we are lowly sinners he will not crush us, rather he went to the cross for us.*

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?

*As a sign of weakness. It goes against our human nature to consider others before ourselves. The world operates on a “me first” kind of attitude. In our sinful nature, we do what we can to make ourselves look better than others. If we are humble and gentle with others, the world says, “You don’t have a backbone. You let people walk all over you. Stand up for yourself and show others your strength!”*

**“. . . 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,”

*Putting up with one another, especially when they have frustrated or wronged you.*

*Patience literally means long-suffering. You may have to “suffer through it” for a time.*

*God is patient with us, therefore we demonstrate patience with others.*

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

*To show patience, it can only flow from a heart of love—the kind of love that expects nothing in return.*

5. How does the culture in which we live deal with aggravations and irritations caused by others?

*Our culture is full of vengeful people. It almost revels in retaliation. “If I can get them back worse than they did unto me, I am stronger and will come out on top.” Tit for tat.*

*The culture we live in lives for self. We too can get caught up in this way of thinking if we are not careful.*

6. Discuss the purpose and value then in striving to pursue inner attitudes of humility and gentleness toward others and dealing with aggravations from others in a manner so out of step with our culture.

*As others see us Christians live out the “life worthy of the calling we have received,” they notice we’re different. Humility and gentleness often calm an angered and troubled heart. If we react in anger or retaliation, people do not see us reflecting Jesus. Paul also tells the Colossians, “As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience” (3:12).*

**vv 4-6** These verses explain how it’s possible for us to maintain that unity and bond of peace. Prof. Panning explains, “[Paul] constructs three sets of three items each—one set for each

person of the Trinity. He reverses the order from what we're used to seeing. He places the persons into this sequence: Spirit, Son, and Father.”

7. List the three sets of three as Paul does and explain how they clearly indicate the activity of the Triune God on our behalf.

*Spirit = one body, one Spirit, one hope. Paul uses “called” twice in this verse, as if to emphasize the fact that they were in fact called, called into the Christian Church (one body) by the same Spirit being yoked together and like-minded (one spirit), having the same hope, namely, the salvation of souls brought to Christ.*

*Son = one Lord, one faith, one baptism. Jesus Christ brought us peace with God through his innocent death in our place. He is the object of our faith. Through faith alone we have salvation. That faith comes to us through the means of grace in the Word and sacraments—holy communion and baptism.*

*God our Father = over all, through all, in all. God our heavenly Father is all-knowing (omniscient), everywhere (omnipresent), and all-powerful (omnipotent). He watches over all things and works through his people to accomplish what he desires and dwells in us. It is this that allows us, by his grace and power, to live our lives for him.*

**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!

8. Discuss why this is so vital and encouraging to the church today and to all of us working together within the church.

*God dwelled among his people in Old Testament times; wherever the Ark of the Covenant was, there God was with them. He dwells among us today in Word and sacrament. He sees our needs and knows just the gifts to give to each person to carry out the mission of the Church. When Jesus descended to earth, he dwelled among the people and defeated Satan, sin, and death. As he reigns in heaven as our High Priest, he intercedes for us, ruling overall and working all for our good.*

**vv 11-13** Prof. Panning writes, “An ‘apostle’ is someone sent out or commissioned. A ‘prophet’ was one . . . who brought God's message to others . . . ‘evangelists’ are people who share the gospel.”

The office of apostle no longer exists today, since one of the qualifications for an apostle was that he be an eyewitness of the ministry of Christ. Yet in a certain respect Christians today have

a similar function that Christ's apostles did. We Christians are "eyewitnesses" of what Christ does in our lives daily. Re-read Psalm 68:19, as David pens God's daily presence and provision for his people.

9. Describe how Christians might be called to the office of prophet or evangelist in our congregations/synod today.

*Nobody is called specifically to the office of prophet today. However, our congregations and synod call missionaries, pastors, and teachers to do similar work to what a prophet did in the Old Testament and in the days when Jesus walked the earth. Missionaries would most closely line up to the work of apostle, prophet, or evangelist, as those terms suggest this is a traveling minister of the gospel.*

*"WELS World Missions conducts and encourages gospel outreach in 40 foreign countries and is exploring outreach opportunities in 17 additional countries. World Missions brings the light of God's Word through evangelism efforts, church planting, training national workers for ministry, and providing religious materials in foreign languages through Multi-Language Productions. Thirty-nine world missionaries partner with more than 400 national pastors to conduct outreach and train more than 380 students for service in Christ's kingdom" (wels.net/world-missions 2022).*

*Pastors may be called to mission fields—world and home—to share the gospel to a dying world.*

10. How is that different from one who holds the office of a "pastor/teacher"? (According to both Prof. Panning and Prof. Habeck, those two words belong together and are not describing separate callings.)

*Christ instituted the office of the public ministry. Today, pastors, teachers, and staff ministers, are examples of those called to the public ministry by a group of Christians.*

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

*Each person has been given this grace (or gifts) just as Christ apportioned it, knowing what each person needs to carry out the calling Christ has for them. Whether a pastor or*

*teacher, an apostle or prophet, each minister of the gospel is called to spread God's Word, but also to equip the saints to also share the gospel. No one person could ever do the work of the church all by themselves, rather they are to train others to share the work. In this way, more people are served and the body of Christ is built up.*

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.

*Pastors, teachers, and staff ministers could put most time and energy into preaching and teaching God's Word, leading others to the sweet words of the gospel, and equipping them for the continued work of the Church. The laity can share much of the duties of the Church, such as administration and office needs, financial responsibilities, caring for the buildings, planning, preparing and enriching worship services, teaching Sunday school, visiting the elderly or ill, fellowship and evangelism opportunities, and so much more.*

**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.

*Answers will vary. Note to leader: For comparison, you may want to highlight some of the false teaching of Paul's day and those we see today. Specifically, to the Ephesians we know Paul spoke of the circumcision/uncircumcision—the Judaizers imposing Old Testament ceremonial laws on new Christians (2:11-16.) He also spoke to faith by grace, not by works (2:8,9).*



*Today we see many following a “prosperity gospel”—the teaching that God always wants us happy and financially secure; the teaching that giving financially to religious organizations or non-profits will grant us this peace and security. A sense of spiritualism—looking inward to find your true being—is more and more prevalent. And certainly, we see people trying to earn good status with God through their good deeds. All of these false teachings today can be easy for us to slide into if we are not firmly rooted in God’s Word, the only truth.*

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

*Daily study of God’s Word, personal devotions, prayer, surrounding ourselves with people who point us to Christ.*

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

*Full spiritual maturity is never fully attained here on earth. As Paul states in Romans 7:15-20, we will always have our sinful nature to fight against. Yet, we continually strive to reflect Christ in what we say and do. Again, the only way to reflect Christ is to make our study of God’s Word a priority in our lives, something we continually breathe in and breathe out. Growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ is a lifelong process.*

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

*When we gather together around the Word of God, the Holy Spirit increases our faith. We grow in knowledge and understanding of him who is our life and salvation. Therefore, we are able to speak the true doctrine to others.*

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.

*Answers will vary.*

*Personal study of God's Word, devotions, regular church attendance and Holy Communion. Gathering together in weekly worship, group Bible study (various settings).*

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.)

*All believers have the same Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. We form the body of Christ—the family of believers—and each is connected to the Head, which is Christ. As the Head, he keeps every part of the body working together, building each other up. Each part of the body (each person) is important and needed.*

*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.

*Unbelievers are darkened in their understanding and separated from God. They indulge in every kind of impurity and continually lust for more. In short, they have no desire to live according to the commands of God. Instead, they actively seek to live in ways that are contrary to God's commands and have abandoned all sensitivity.*

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 . . .?"

*If we don't separate from the unbelievers around us, we will have a greater temptation to slide back into our old lifestyle and our old sins. Our understanding can also become darkened. In addition, we won't be credible Christian witnesses when we seek to share the gospel with those around us. If we live according to the ways of the world—if we don't separate from their lifestyle—then we look exactly like unbelievers and give them no cause to listen to us when we give the reason for the hope that we have.*

To what can living like the unbelievers around us lead in the eyes of the unbelievers? *An endorsement of their lifestyle. A denial that living a Christian life means loving God and trying to obey his commands. An impression that continuing in the ways of darkness and indulging in impurity is acceptable, because believers are also living in this way.*

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.

*In many ways, our culture has lost its Christian footing and values. As we live in the world and as we interact with unbelievers, we too have the propensity to have our understanding darkened if we aren't careful. We need to be aware of the places where our culture stands contrary to God and indulges in impurity so that we can carefully and intentionally avoid those places.*

And how does it show itself in our culture today?

*So many ways! Endorsement of lifestyles contrary to God's commands (e.g., homosexuality, living together before marriage, divorce). Endorsement of decisions and actions contrary to God's commands (e.g., abortion, a lack of willingness to discipline*

*children, etc.). The idea that morality and truth are relative and unique for each person rather than absolute and set according to God's standards. Many more examples exist—poll the group to see where they see sensuality, impurity, and a continual lust for more in our culture today.*

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

*As discussed above, glorifying God means to enhance his reputation by our words and actions. We glorify God by taking a stand for the truth and not being flexible in areas where God is not flexible. As the Apostle Peter reminds us, this needs to be done with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). We are called to be out of step with the world—to be in step with God—and to show this “out-of-step-ness” in our everyday decisions and actions.*

**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.  
*Answers will vary and may include peer pressure from unbelieving friends, messages contrary to Scripture from the media, preaching from “Christian” churches that is more worldly than scriptural, etc.*

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

*The devil, the world, and our sinful flesh.*

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

*Our sinful flesh is trying to get us to focus on ourselves rather than on our faith and our relationship with God. It tries to make us the most important person in our world and attempts to convince us that the ultimate goal in life is to serve ourselves and make ourselves happy. Ultimately, Satan is always behind these messages and temptations. He makes promises that sound good but are false: everybody's doing it, no one will be hurt by it, etc.*

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?

*Only through the work of God in our lives—specifically, through the preaching of law and gospel by the Holy Spirit through the Word. The law reminds us that we are indeed living contrary to God's commands, and the gospel assures us that through faith, we have been clothed with Christ's righteousness and are now able (with God's help!) to put on the new self and be made new in the attitude 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?

*In short, the image of God is being like God. Here, Paul explains that being like God particularly shows itself in true righteousness and holiness.*

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.

*Here we also see Paul talking about the image of God through various aspects: his wisdom and knowledge, his judgments, his paths, his mind. We see the depth of all these aspects of the image of God, and we marvel at this depth. And then in Chapter 12,*

*Paul urges his readers to offer their bodies as living sacrifices—to strive to live according to the image of God. We know that this offering, this living, will only happen imperfectly on this side of heaven. But—solely through God’s grace!—we still continue to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This transformative process will find its ultimate fulfillment and perfection in heaven.*

**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?

*Satan is the father of lies, and therefore lying is at the heart of so many other sins. As Prof. Panning says, “Shading the truth a bit and adjusting the facts are common weaknesses among people.” Lying or falsehood is a sin that is so easy for us to fall into, and therefore we should take special care to guard against this sin.*

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

*Attempting to be truthful should permeate all our thoughts and actions. As Christ's ambassadors, we should always attempt to speak the truth in love.*

**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.

*Answers will vary. Bitterness can look like an unhappiness with one's situation and a despising of others who appear to be in a better situation. Rage and anger can often show itself in our dealings with our family members and close friends—with those whom we love and are comfortable with. Brawling can be seen in a constant desire to argue or always be right and often shows itself more with words than with actions. Slander is falsehoods spoken either in an attempt to build ourselves up or tear others*



*down. And malice most often comes out in general attitude of animosity and hostility to those around us.*

- 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.

*Living out this Christ-like behavior in dealing with sisters and brothers in Christ isn't easy! There are times when our Christian sisters and brothers wrong us, and our natural tendency is NOT to be kind and compassionate to them or forgive them. But we are called to be a part of the body of Christ and to build up this body by our actions, and therefore we are called to be kind and compassionate, to forgive. It is often even harder to live out this Christ-like behavior when dealing with unbelievers. There isn't a common faith nor a common connection as members of one body. There isn't the recognition that they have sinned against us nor the desire on their part to be forgiven. And yet we are called to live out Christ-like behavior—to be kind, compassionate, and forgiving—to imitate God in our behavior.*

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?

*Our motivation for being imitators of God is just that: God. Specifically, our motivation stems from what God has done for us. He chose us before time began, worked faith in our hearts, and (as Prof. Panning says), "create[d] the new man in Christians, who now have the power and the ability to forgive a repentant brother and sister." As the Apostle John says so succinctly: "We love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).*

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?

*A life of love—of agape—looks like the life of Christ. Reading a bit further in Philippians 2 tells us that our attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: an attitude of humility. This attitude of humility, this life of love, shows itself in various actions: being like-minded, doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, and especially considering others better than ourselves. In Romans, Paul adds the encouragement to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. We are not to conform to the pattern of this world, but we are to be transformed. In short, we are to seek to do God’s good, pleasing, and perfect will.*

**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. *Sexual immorality*

*Engaging in any sexual intercourse outside of marriage, where marriage is defined as the union between one man and one woman; lust; going “too far” before marriage (i.e., illicit sexual practices that don’t necessarily result in full intercourse), etc.*

Reason for being unacceptable/godly behavior

*Violates the 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment/save sexual intercourse for marriage, do not lust*

b. *Any kind of impurity*

*The appearance of engaging in activities that go against God’s commands*



*probably is.*

Reason for being unacceptable/godly behavior

*Once again, refer to James and taming the tongue rather than letting unwholesome speech come out of our mouths/don't tell jokes that you know are off-color, even if there isn't technically anything wrong with such jokes.*

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.

*We know that we will always live among both believers and unbelievers, and we will always have relationships with unbelievers (if we didn't, how else could we share the gospel?). But we are also called to NOT participate in their sinful lifestyles, especially as these sinful lifestyles show themselves with these six actions listed above. Paul identifies the reason for this action being essential in verses 5 and 6: "No immoral, impure or greedy person . . . has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God . . . God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient."*

**But Light**

14. List each of the fruits of the light and describe how each will look to others when put into practice.
- a. *Goodness; answers will vary as to how this looks when put into practice. It can be putting others before oneself and can be as simple as holding a door for someone or letting someone go first in line. It can be helping a fellow brother and sister in Christ with a task they can't complete on their own or freely giving of our time to serve others. Goodness will look different in every Christian's life, but it shows itself in reflecting the love Jesus showed to others.*
  - b. *Righteousness; living in such a way that it is clear we are in a relationship of being right with God. We don't have to fear God or worry about earning his favor by living according to his commands. We know that because he has forgiven our sins and*

*brought us into his family, we are in a right relationship with him, and therefore we can live our lives in this freedom rather than in fear.*

- c. *Truth; looks like speaking and living honestly rather than deceitfully. There are times when it can be tricky to be truthful because doing so has the potential to cause hurt or pain, but we are still called to speak the truth in love.*

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."*
- When we live as children of light, we reflect the light of Christ: the Word, the light who shone in the darkness, the One whom the darkness has not understood nor overcome. When we live by truth, we come into the light—into the presence of God, into a place where our lives witness to the fact that we are children of God. There is no darkness in God, so if we are to walk in step with the Spirit, we must live as children as light and live in the light. By walking in the light, we have fellowship with our sisters and brothers in Christ. Finally, as Paul reminds us in Philippians, when we live as children of light, we are lights to a sin-darkened world around us. We shine like stars and reflect the light of God.*

**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.
- Answers will vary. Possible characteristics for folly include listening to the words of those who are not aligned with God's will, turning away from God and his commands,*

*engaging in evil deeds and actions contrary to God’s commands, not thinking of our neighbors first or treating them as we would want to be treated, being lazy, plotting evil, engaging in adultery, stealing, forgetting the words of God, being led astray with persuasive words and seductive speech, etc.—in short, not doing God’s will. Possible answers for wisdom include accepting God’s words and storing up his commands, finding the knowledge of God, understanding what is right and just, walking in the ways of good men and keeping to the paths of the righteous, keeping love and faithfulness with you, trusting in the Lord with all your heart and not leaning on your own understanding, fearing the Lord and shunning evil, not despising the Lord’s discipline or resenting his rebuke, preserving sound judgment and discernment, not plotting harm against your neighbor, listening to God’s instruction, paying attention to God’s words—in short, doing God’s will.*

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

*To live for God in the midst of a sinful world and witness to our faith by our words and actions.*

17. Paraphrase Ephesians 5:15-19.

*Answers will vary. Here’s one possible paraphrase: “You’re a child of God. Live like one! Know what God commands and seek to live accordingly. Don’t fill yourself up with unwholesome and sinful behavior, but instead fill yourself up with the Spirit of God by continued contact with and encouragement from your sisters and brothers in Christ.”*

**vv 5:18-21** (Translation by Prof. Irwin Habecck, *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”?

*“Profligacy” = reckless extravagance or wastefulness in the use of resources; licentious or dissolute behavior, especially of a sexual nature. Alcohol and other drugs are abused*

*for a variety of reasons, but often a reason is to fill a hole in someone's life. These abuses can lead to a loss of self-control or an inhibition of one's natural restraints, thus leading 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.

*As mentioned above, looking for joy, exhilaration, and happiness in alcohol and drugs is often an attempt to fill a hole in one's life. In verses 19-20, Paul tells us where we **should** go to fill that hole: to the Spirit and to spiritual things. When we surround ourselves with our sisters and brothers in Christ, when we speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, when we sing and make music to the Lord, we look outside of ourselves and find fulfillment in God and his words and teachings.*

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.

*Answers will vary. Possible answers may include making note of the hymns sung at worship on Sunday and intentionally reflecting on these during the week, intentionally engaging in a quick prayer during a quiet (or not-so-quiet!) moment of the day, choosing a Bible passage each day to meditate on, etc.*

# Ephesians

## God's Eternal Plan of Salvation

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

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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 urges the Colossian Christians to be intentional and wise about the way they act toward outsiders. By letting their conversations always be full of grace, they would have wholesome conversations with unbelievers and be credible in their interactions. These credible interactions would then allow the Colossian Christians to develop relationships*



*with those around them, thus letting them proclaim the mystery of Christ through the door that God opened for them.*

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?

*The fellowship enjoyed by the early Christian church—and the love they showed for each other—set them apart and served as a powerful witness to that which made them different. When we read the early Church fathers (specifically Tertullian), we know that this love did indeed set them apart. He wrote, “See, they [the pagans] say, how they [the Christians] love one another.”*

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:

3. **Ephesians 5:22-24** as a wife

*Wives will submit themselves to their husbands as the Church submits itself to Christ. This submission is not forced or coerced, nor does it indicate inferiority or a lesser value or worth. The English word "submission" tends to carry negative connotations, but there is no negativity associated with the Greek term. As Prof. Panning says, "be subordinate" might come closest to reflecting the Greek. When wives submit to their husbands—when they are ordered under them—great blessings ensue. When wives trust their husbands as they would trust Christ and view their husbands' role as the role of Christ over the Church, great blessings ensue.*

4. **Ephesians 5:25-33** as a husband (Note how much instruction and responsibility the head gets in comparison to the others.)

*In this section, husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. Note the Greek word for "love" that is used here: agape—love that God showed to us by loving us when we were completely and totally unlovable. Husbands are called to emulate this love and sacrifice themselves for their wives as Christ sacrificed himself for the church. Yes, husbands are given the role of head and wives are given the role of helper. But this role of head is not a role that is domineering or dictatorial. It is a role that puts his wife first and loves her as he loves himself.*

5. **Ephesians 6:1-3** as a child

*Paul clearly states that children are to obey their parents, but he doesn't stop there. They are to honor their parents and obey them out of love and respect. God has placed parents in authority over their children, and children are called to respect and honor this authority. When this happens in Christian families—when the family unit is strong—the Church is also edified and strengthened.*

6. **Ephesians 6:4** as a parent, but note the father is the one held responsible

*As the head of the household, fathers have also been given spiritual responsibility for their household. They are called to bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord. This certainly doesn't exempt mothers from spiritually training their children—it simply emphasizes the role of the father as the head of the household in everything, including in spiritual training. When parents bring up their children in the training and instruction of the Lord, the family unit finds its proper focus: Christ and his words. This again edifies and strengthens the Church at large.*

7. **Ephesians 6:5-8** as an employee

*Note first: Just because Paul talks about slavery here does not mean that he endorses or condones it. Nor does he make a point here of trying to abolish slavery. Neither of those are his focus in this section (although he does address the issue of slavery in the book of Philemon). Slavery was a reality and did exist in the Greco-Roman world, and it is possible that there were a number of slaves among the Ephesian Christians, so Paul addresses their situation here. Slaves then—and employees now—are called to obey their earthly masters as they would obey Christ. Paul does not make this command optional based on the character or treatment of the employer; employees are called to obey regardless of how well they are treated. They are called to serve wholeheartedly as if they were serving the Lord, and such service builds up the body of Christ.*

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

*Note the phrase “in the same way.” In the previous verses, slaves/employees were called to obey their earthly masters as if they were obeying Christ. Similarly, masters/supervisors are called to treat their employees in a Christian way and reflect the love of Christ in their interactions. They are not to threaten them but instead are to view them as equal in God's eyes (even though there is a difference in their status within the slave/master or employee/employer relationship). This mutual respect and recognition that all are equal in God's eyes again builds up the body of Christ and the army of God.*

# 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)

**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?

*The Christian army stands on Christ and his power alone. God knows life is going to be hard and he gives us every spiritual blessing that we will need in this life. We are part of an army, not standing alone, because an army of one will tend to quickly fall prey to the enemy.*

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?

*God gives us a complete suit of armor. All of our defensive weapons come from being in the Word. Our offensive weapon is the Word itself. And he has promised us the victory. God knows what we are up against in this world even though we don’t fully understand what’s going on. Satan uses all of his might and cunning to enslave us, but we have Christ, who has defeated Satan.*

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

*Answers may vary. Satan creates doubts and makes us think we can get along without God, we are too sinful to be forgiven, material things are most important in our lives, everybody is doing it, and on and on. He knows our every weakness and takes every advantage to drive a stake between us and God.*

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

*Answers may vary. He makes people think that building a congregation is their work, not God’s. He helps our human nature only want to preach what is pleasing, while leaving out the things that offend or are difficult. Money is frequently an issue, either because we have enough and think we can do things on our own or because we don’t have enough and we cut back without putting our trust in God.*

5. What’s significant about the phrase “**when the day of evil comes**”?

*It's not **if** the day of evil comes, it's **when** it comes. The day of evil is sure to happen over and over again. We must always be prepared. God warns and comforts us about evil times in John 16:33.*

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.

*Everything else fails. Only the armor of God brings victory. If we try to fight off Satan on our own, without our armor, we will be attacked and destroyed or at least severely injured. It would be foolish for an unarmed or partially armed army to attempt to hold off a much larger, stronger, well-prepared army, especially when taken by surprise. Satan doesn't send invitations or give advance warning of his attacks. We must be constantly vigilant. We need God to fight those battles for us and we do that by putting on every bit of our armor, leaving nothing exposed. It's interesting to note that we aren't told to fight, just put on the armor. Jesus wins the battle for us. We stand in victory on Judgment Day, when we are told, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”*

**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.

- a. **Belt of Truth**—*The midsection of the body is the weakest and needs the most support and protection through Christ. Satan knows our weak points and will subtly but brutally attack those areas. Maybe it's our attitude, food, friends that aren't good for us, or an ungodly activity that is really enjoyable. Seek out Jesus to help ward off these temptations where we are most vulnerable.*
- b. **Breastplate of Righteousness**—*We have been created with a natural fight or flight approach to life, but this does not always work. Through the Spirit we've been given patience, kindness, gentleness, and it is these things that we seek. The Breastplate, covering the vital organs of the upper portion of the body, protects our heart, the source of weaknesses and emotions, where Satan often pierces us with agony. In the heat of the battle, we are comforted knowing that we are still claimed and forgiven by God because of Jesus' righteousness.*
- c. **Feet Fitted with Readiness**—*Feet carry the weight of the body. Fitted with good, well-fitted boots constructed by Christ himself, the feet readily carry the army forward through the muck of this world toward the surety of salvation. Feet well-fitted with the gospel readiness help us spread the Word. The love God has for us is more than we can ever imagine, and he wants only what is best for us. Don't become angry with God when times become difficult; rather, lean on Jesus as he carries us through to victory. Always be ready to march forward with the gospel strength we have been given. Memorize Scripture so that it is always available when needed.*
- d. **Shield of Faith**—*Satan's arrows fly where he has hope of causing damage to us and God's church. He is especially going to attack when we share the gospel of salvation. But God's got this; we have nothing to fear. With the shield of faith, we can take our eyes off ourselves and focus entirely on reaching the lost and sharing our faith.*
- e. **Helmet of Salvation**—*The helmet protects the head, the source of our thoughts. While Satan likes to attack our thoughts, the helmet of salvation will shape our thinking as we make our way through this world, and give us wisdom, confidence in*

*God's promises, the ability to listen to others, and the words to use in every situation especially when sharing the gospel.*

The single offensive weapon is the **sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God**. Prof. 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.

*The opportunities are endless but we must take hold of those opportunities and make them into habits. Regular weekly worship and participation in the sacraments is a place to start. However, this is not enough. Hopefully there are opportunities for regular Bible study of various kinds for various audiences in your congregation. Daily personal and family devotion are important, reading and studying Scripture on our own is essential. Using the catechism and commentaries can add to our study of Scripture. Living a life that reflects our faith is necessary. This includes our choice of activities, decorations in our homes, and living a life that is God-pleasing and sets an example. Teaching our children the Word on a daily basis is a top priority and gives them the armor they will need as they grow. And memorize Scripture along with them so it is always readily available. The list goes on.*



**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.

*Offensive weapons are what we use to fight off Satan’s attacks. God has given us absolutely everything we need. He knows we cannot withstand Satan’s attacks on our own and so has given us the full armor to protect us. Defensive weapons are what we use to fight back against Satan’s attacks. God is more powerful than Satan and has defeated him. Even Jesus himself, while in the wilderness, used the Word to ward off temptations. Another lesson from the wilderness—you must read the Book to know when Satan subtly changes it to his advantage.*

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

*Answers vary. We pray for God’s strength to recognize and withstand Satan’s attacks on us and keep us strong. We pray that the Holy Spirit continues to strengthen our faith through the Word and sacraments so that Satan’s attacks are warded off through our faith in Jesus.*

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?

*Prayer gets its power from the Word, and our invitation to speak directly to God because of our adoption into his household through Christ. In faith we pray powerfully and confidently that the armor God has given us remains strong and we don’t neglect putting it on at any time. We use his Word to fight off Satan’s attacks and remain confident in the promised victory at the end. We pray for all things, big and small. We bring prayers of praise, for spiritual strength, as well as petitions.*

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?

*Paul says the Ephesians, and all believers, must pray in the name of Jesus. This means unbelievers cannot pray since they don't recognize Jesus as their Savior. Prayers are to be from a heart filled with faith, trusting God's many promises. Come to God on all occasions and with all kinds of prayers and requests. Pray for spiritual matters such as forgiveness and the unity and growth of the church. Pray for temporal matters such as meeting our physical needs or the preservation of life, according to his will.*

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

*It is good to be praying for the spread of the gospel and for the men and women who proclaim it, that they may be effective. This may mean that we educate ourselves to know some of the specifics that need our prayers, for both spiritual needs and physical challenges. This would also include prayers for ourselves, that God would keep us strong in our faith and give us the opportunities and the words to share our faith with others. Yet we know we are not responsible for the results of our labors, but simply to plant or water the seed. Only God has the power to produce the results and the gospel is mighty indeed.*

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**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.

*A faithful, trusted co-worker with Paul and either traveled with him or acted as a courier and encourager. Sent to Ephesus, to Timothy, to Colossi and Troas.*

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?

*It takes a community to do the work of the church. There are many necessary activities needed to do the work of the church and God has equipped his chosen with the varied gifts and skills to spread the gospel. God values helpers. Everyone has something they can do to support the work of the church.*

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?

*Whenever we greet a group of Christians or when we leave each other it is always appropriate to pray for God's peace, love, and grace to fill their life. We can also include this as we encourage and pray for one another, asking God to fill their lives with his peace, love, and grace.*

*May God's peace, love, and grace be yours through Christ Jesus our Lord.*