

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

SESSION 1

Introduction to Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

WELCOME

Thank you all for signing up for this CORE Seminar on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. We're excited about spending the next couple of months diving into this letter. As we explore this letter, we will encounter three main themes:

- Christ has reconciled all creation to himself and to God.
- Christ has united people from all nations to himself and to one another in his church.
- And, Christians must live as a regenerate people.

QUESTION

Which of these three main themes could have the most impact on you and why?

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read [Acts 18:24-28 & 19:1-10](#)

BACKSTORY

The goal of this Seminar is to give everyone a working knowledge of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. This seminar has been written with an expository approach in mind. While the lessons are not intended to be read to the class word for word, the main ideas of each section should be the substance of what is taught. The whole group is **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to read Paul's Letter to the Ephesians several times. Before you read through it, pray that the Holy Spirit would open your heart to the truths of God's Word and open your mind to questions that you may not understand from the text.

There will be some words in this text that have traditionally been "scary" for the reader. Our goal is to work through these words with an understanding of how Paul intended them. There will be definitions from the Greek – don't worry you don't have to know the Greek – to help you understand the context and meaning of the word. Our hope is to simplify the "scary" parts so that we understand Paul's letter more fully.

Ok...let's get started!

AUTHOR

The author of Ephesians was the Apostle Paul. He clearly states this in [Ephesians 1:1 & 3:1](#). Paul took several missionary journey's that took him through Ephesus.

- During his second missionary journey [\[Acts 18:19-21\]](#).
- During his third missionary journey, Paul ministered in Ephesus for 3 years [\[Acts 20:31\]](#).
- And, in [1 Timothy 1:3](#), Paul seemed to take a fourth missionary journey.

QUESTION

How do you think Paul's calling – on the road to Damascus in Acts 9 – and his missionary experiences – in Ephesus Acts 19 – affect the way we listen to his teaching to the Ephesians?

WHO WERE THE EPHESIANS?

The city of Ephesus – situated in modern-day Turkey – was a significant city in the Roman province of Asia. The city had a large population – mostly Gentiles – and was known for worshipping idols at the Temple of Diana – one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. In the book of Revelation, John tells us this church ***“...abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”*** Today, if you were to visit Ephesus you would find that the church is gone and the city is in ruins.

QUESTION

What kind of challenges do you think the church in Ephesus faced?

- ***How are these challenges similar to what we face today?***

BACKGROUND

Unlike some other letters in the New Testament that were prompted by issues or conflicts, Ephesians stands out. This is because it seems to be a very general book. So general, in fact, that it's not even clear that it was written specifically to the Ephesians at all. In most of your Bibles, you'll see a footnote next to the word ***“Ephesus” in 1:1*** saying that in many early manuscripts, the letter just says, “To the saints [blank], the faithful in Christ Jesus.”

What is obvious about this letter is that Paul was focused:

- On boosting Christian understanding and maturity in the church.
- And, to help believers grow in their faith and insight.

MESSAGE OF EPHESIANS

The message again is Christ has reconciled and united people from all nations to Himself and to one another in his church. Simplified, the message is of Jesus's peace and grace, to all nations – Jewish and Greek – who make up the regenerate body of Christ. It is a letter about the grace of God that brings peace between man and God and between brothers in Christ.

[Have someone in the group look up and read Ephesians 2:14-15](#)

God's grace works both in our relationship with Him and with each other. Really, it can be summed up in one simple sentence: *“You have received supernatural **grace** for the glory of God, therefore, live in supernatural **unity** to the glory of God.”*

QUESTION

Why is it good to be reminded – at least sometimes – of who you were before you repented and put your faith in Jesus Christ?

- ***How can being reminded of God's grace and peace help the church to live in unity with one another to the glory of God?***

FEATURES OF THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS

- It is very similar to the book of **Colossians**
 - Having been written at about the same time, it is not surprising that there are many similarities between Ephesians and Colossians. Most notable is the similarity between **Ephesians 6:21-22 and Colossians 4:7-8**.
- It has deep **theology**.
 - Ephesians – much like Romans – stands out for its deep theological content. It explores important doctrines such as the study of Christ [mentioned more than 60 times], the study of the church, and the study of salvation. Martyn Lloyd-Jones [in *God's Ultimate Purpose: An Exposition of Ephesians*] emphasizes that this letter isn't just for exceptional or scholarly Christians. It's not exclusively for theologians or specialists. Instead, it's a letter meant for ordinary church members. Paul's teachings in Ephesians are for everyone to understand and find joy in – regardless of their level of understanding!
- It has long **sentences**.
 - Paul can write some long run-on sentences – and this is especially true in Ephesians. Just look at **Ephesians 1:3-14** – take a deep breath because Paul writes approximately 203 words [depending on your translation] in that sentence.
 - Want some other examples? Scroll on over to **Ephesians 1:15-23** – take another deep breath – this sentence is over 169 words [depending on your translation]. [More examples include **Ephesians 2:1-7; 3:1-7; 3:14-19; and 4:11-16**.]

CONCLUSION

Outline for how we will study Ephesians:

- **February 25th: [after God @ Work] Ephesians 1** - *As for us, we were all dead in our sins, but God graciously made us alive to show His grace.*
- **March 3rd: Ephesians 2:1-10** - *Salvation is by God's grace through faith alone – not our own works but is the gift of God.*
- **March 10th: Ephesians 2:11-22** - *As a result, God has destroyed the barrier between Jew and Gentile, unifying them and being indwelt with his Holy Spirit.*
- **March 17th: Hangout Night**
- **April 7th: Ephesians 3** – *The gospel call to share the gospel and prayer for spiritual strength.*
- **April 14th: Ephesians 4** – *Live in supernatural unity to the glory of God.*
- **April 21st: Ephesians 5–6:9** – *In regeneration, walk in love toward one another.*
- **April 28th: Ephesians 6:10-24** – *Strength through the whole armor of God.*
- **May 5th: Hangout Night or Content Make-Up**

Through this breakdown, we will also hit on how the book is divided into two major sections:

- Chapters 1-3, where unity is described as an accomplished fact,
- And then chapters 4-6 where unity is seen as a goal.

In other words, the book first describes unity as having been **already** accomplished by God, and then calls Christians to work toward the unity that's not **yet** complete.