



EPHESIANS

God's New Community

Small Group
Booklet
October 2014

EPHESIANS: GOD'S NEW COMMUNITY

Dear Friends

This study of Ephesians looks at the unity and integrity that is required of God's people in the Church era which came into being at Pentecost and still continues today.

The text itself reveals Paul as the author of this letter as he prays for his readers and speaks of the unity resulting from the reconciling work of grace that blends Jews and Gentiles into one community. The letter challenges us to be God's ambassadors to the world.

It is written to people who have a personal relationship with Christ. They live in Ephesus, the capital city of the Roman province of Asia. Ephesus was a busy port and was the centre for the cult worship of Diana. Paul was so successful in the city that his presence threatened the business of the silversmiths who made idols of the goddess.

The central theme of the letter is the new community that God is forming. The letter presents the way of life that believers need to adopt as they become new people in Christ. This will come about through God's grace and His gift of peace as a result of Jesus' death on the cross. Saved by grace, we are able now to serve God through that same grace.

Jesus Christ is the link between author, readers and message for it is through Him that the new community is created.



EPHESIANS 1

Paul begins his letter by announcing that he is the letter writer and then prays a blessing on the recipients – the believers in Ephesus. Paul praises God for His love and the grace that blesses all those who are in Christ as God works out His eternal plan through His Son.

The work of the Holy Spirit is implied as He actively pours out the spiritual blessings of:

- **Election:** In the Old Testament Israel was chosen as God's special people; in the New Testament God's people become an international community, formed as a result of God's love.
- **Adoption:** In Roman law both adopted and natural children held equal rights, privileges and responsibilities. Those who believe become God's adopted children and as a member of His family can approach Him freely with confidence, knowing they are redeemed and forgiven. Equally they can be disciplined by a loving Father for their own good.
- **Unification:** The goal of history is for all of God's creation to be restored to harmony under Jesus Christ, and come together in unity.

God's people have been chosen by Him and belong to Him. They depend on the fact that He wants all to be saved; so they give testimony of His grace; live for His glory and worship Him. Everything we are and have comes from God and is for His glory.

It is essential to praise God and pray in order to lead a healthy Christian life. Paul prays for the Ephesians because he has heard about their faith in Christ and their love for other believers. He wants them to fully understand the blessing that they have already received. He asks God to reveal the hope of His call to a new life in which they will increasingly know, love and want to serve Christ as they look beyond their current life to the glory of the life to come.

Paul prays that Christ-followers will come to know the glory of Christ's inheritance. It is uncertain what this actually entails but Paul says that believers are co-heirs with Christ and will inherit whatever God gives.

In addition Paul prays for an awareness of the greatness of God's power which was revealed when He raised Christ from the dead, placed Him at His right hand, appointed Him head of the Church and placed everything in the universe under His feet. Christ has overcome evil and death and His followers are told that He will do the same for them. All of this can only come about through the grace of God.



DAILY REFLECTIONS:

Sunday

EPHESIANS 1

Read the chapter slowly and let its message sink in. What do you learn from it?

Thank You Lord for lovingly and kindly, blessing, accepting and affirming me as Your own.

Reflection: Every spiritual blessing is available to me.

Monday

EPHESIANS 1:1-2

What do the words grace and peace mean to you when they are said as a blessing?

As I receive these life-giving words of blessing I am strengthened, comforted and encouraged to share them and be a blessing to others.

Tuesday

EPHESIANS 1:3-10

As you read these verses, what do you want to say to God?

Lord, I lift Your name on high and love to sing your praises. I am so glad You are in my life. You purchased my freedom on Calvary. Hallelujah!

Wednesday

EPHESIANS 1:11-14

How do you feel about God having a plan for you? Does it concern you or reassure you? Why do you feel this way?

My future is secure in Your hands Lord. I have a rich inheritance as I receive and submit to Your leading in the knowledge that You will prosper me, give me a hope and future.

Thursday

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

Who do you thank God for on a regular basis, remembering them in your prayers? Why are they so special to you?

Thank You, Lord, for the richness of faith and depth of love of those around me. Help me to respond to that love in kind.

Response: pray for your loved ones, the body of Christ and spiritual leaders.

Friday

1 PETER 2:4-12

How do you feel about being a member of 'a chosen people'?

Father, help me to grow and mature in my understanding of what it means to be precious in Your sight and empower and enable me to fulfill the call to be part of Your spiritual house.

Saturday

Now that you have spent some time with this chapter what does it say to you?

I am challenged by the call to walk worthy of my calling.

Reflection: True spiritual power flows from obedience to the divine order in relationships and personal conduct.

SESSION 1

WELCOME

Who keeps your family traditions alive in your family? Why do you think this is so? Briefly share one family tradition with the group.

WORSHIP

Spend time in worship together.

ACCOUNTABILITY

How goes it with your soul?

WORD

Read: Ephesians 1

1. What does being a member of God's family mean to you? How has it changed the person you were and made you into who you are?
2. Paul prays for several things in Ephesians 1:17-19 for his readers. Which of these could you use most in your life at the moment? Why have you chosen this one especially? Let each member of the group write down what people say so that each one can be prayed for by name for their specific need.
3. Whether in our own families or in our church family, somewhere we will find disunity. How can you be a peacemaker to help restore harmony?

MINISTRY TO EACH OTHER

Using the lists you have made, take it in turns to pray specifically for one another. Make sure everyone has a prayer said for them. End by praying verses 17-19 together for the group. Use these verses as you pray for one another in the coming week.

REACHING OUT

Wherever you see or hear conflict or disunity this week – whether on the TV, radio or in your home or office – say a prayer for peace and harmony in that situation



EPHESIANS 2

Paul contrasts life without God with the potential produced by living in God's grace. He uses the phrase 'objects of wrath' (NIV) to describe those who are without God. God totally condemns evil and refuses to make any compromise. Paul did not beat about the bush when speaking of the natural state of humanity. People are under the yoke of sin, death and wrath.

But Paul believes that the living God of the resurrection offers life and salvation to all through His divine grace. Into this apparently hopeless situation Paul says '... but God ...' and reveals that the power that raised Christ to life is the same power that is available to those who believe.

Salvation is dependent solely on our belief in Jesus and God gives His mercy, grace, love and kindness as a free gift of grace. People are saved, not because of any good works they have done, but because they can now do the good works which God has already planned for them to do.

As a result of His death and resurrection Jesus destroyed the barriers between Jew and Gentile. Gentiles now have the opportunity to be reconciled to Jews and the way is open for them to become part of God's family.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus told His disciples that he had not come to abolish the moral law (which is still relevant even now). It is the ceremonial law, the rules and regulations of Jewish worship that Paul says Jesus has abolished, making such things as sacrifice redundant through His death on the Cross. All the barriers came down as Jesus united people in Himself (Colossians 3:11; Galatians 3:28).

Such unity achieved peace between one person and another and between people and God. This is the Trinity in action as believers can approach the Father boldly through the Son in the Spirit.

Paul uses the analogy of the temple building to describe God's new community. The foundation stones (the New Testament Scriptures) keep the structure solid. The cornerstone (Christ) holds everything together. Every other stone (the believers) is either Jewish or Gentile. This is a spiritual building and it is where God lives in His people. But the building is still being built and will only be complete in the new heaven and new earth.

Unfortunately this ideal has not yet been achieved. People still raise barriers between both one another and between themselves and God.

In this way they oppose God and so prevent the world from believing in Jesus. It is only when the Church shows itself as a united family who are reconciled to God that the world will recognize Christ and give Him the glory that is due to Him.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

Sunday

EPHESIANS 2:1-5

Looking back to the time you became a Christ-follower, how have you changed? Praise God I am on a journey of change and transformation. I have begun to understand my position in Christ and with Christ I can share in the present work of His Kingdom's power.

Monday

EPHESIANS 2:6-9

How do you see God's grace touching your life? Father God, Your grace has been sufficient to see me through the seasons of change and transition. Thank You!

Tuesday

EPHESIANS 2:10

What good works are you doing that you know you have been called to do – that God has prepared for you? If you are not aware of any, ask God what He wants you to do for Him. Lord Jesus, my prayer and response today is.....Here I am Lord, send me.

Wednesday

EPHESIANS 2:11-13

How do you feel about being brought near to Christ through the sacrifice He made for you on the Cross? Tell Him what it means to you. Thank You, Lord, that my life has turned from death to life, sin to salvation, hopelessness to eternal joy.

Thursday

EPHESIANS 2:14-18

Where do you need peace – in your heart? In your spirit? In a relationship? Speak to God about it today. Jesus, You are the Peace-maker.....I invite you to come into my life today.

Friday

EPHESIANS 2:19-22

You are part of a living temple (1 Peter 2:5), a dwelling place for God, rising up from the cornerstone that is Christ. What does this say to you about your value to God? Father God, I thank you that I am accepted in the beloved and precious in Your sight.

Saturday

EPHESIANS 2

Now that you have spent some time with this chapter what does it say to you? I am in the process of attaining greater revelation and understanding of my important and valued position in Christ and amongst the body of Christ.

SESSION 2

WELCOME

How do you feel when a disagreement in your family is sorted out and people can be at peace with one another again? What happens when it is not sorted out?

WORSHIP

Spend time in worship together.

ACCOUNTABILITY

How did you feel as you prayed for conflict situations which came to your attention during the week?

WORD

Read: Ephesians 2

1. What do you achieve now with God's help that you could not achieve in your own strength?
2. What barriers have come down for you since you began to follow Christ?
3. What can you see as a barrier to the growth of God's new community where you live?
4. What part can you play/are you playing to bring this barrier down and help to build God's spiritual Temple and thus growing the new community that Paul describes?

MINISTRY TO EACH OTHER

Pray for one another, especially in light of disharmony and barriers that people may be experiencing that harmony and peace may be restored.

REACHING OUT

Pray for guidance that you may be part of the solution (rather than part of the problem) wherever you come across disharmony or barriers between others.



EPHESIANS 3

Paul's imprisonment came about because of his mission to the Gentiles which caused the Jews to riot and Paul to be arrested. He is convinced that God oversees every aspect of his life and so calls himself a prisoner for the Lord on behalf of the Gentiles.

Paul refers to a 'mystery', in this case an open secret. He says that all who believe in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, are heirs to the promise of God and would now form God's new community. It is not surprising his teaching started a riot on the Temple steps. Paul states that having had this mystery revealed to him he now understands that he has to share it so that everyone can learn about it. Eventually all things will be united in Christ and even the angels will learn and understand God's message.

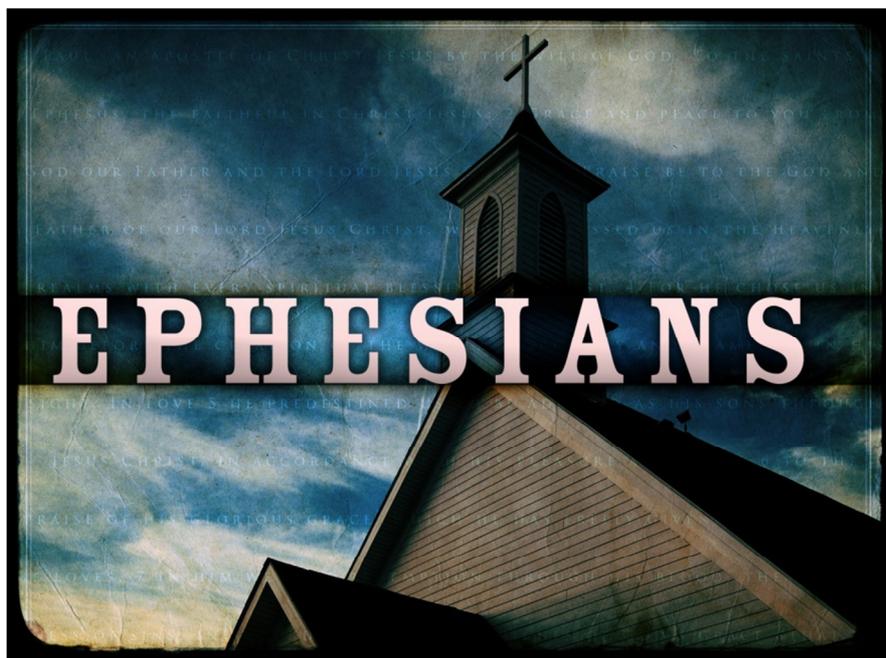
The Church, whilst continually needing reform and renewal, is central to this passage in Ephesians 3. It belongs to God and He has never abandoned it no matter what has happened. He is still building and refining it.

Paul again turns to prayer for God's people, this time on his knees. This emphasizes the sincerity of his prayer for Jews usually prayed standing up. He has absolutely no doubt that God will answer.

Paul asks that believers will be increasingly strengthened by the Spirit and that Christ would always live in them with increasing intensity. The word used for 'dwell' here means settle down and denotes taking up residence rather than merely visiting.

He then asks for a deep love to develop in people for the Father and for one another. Such love can only be understood when we are in the company of other Christ-followers. We may never understand its depth but we can experience and explore it throughout eternity. Finally Paul asks that we may become more and more like Christ

Paul never doubts God can and will do everything he has asked and so he asks boldly. In return he gives God all the glory as the only One who is able to answer this prayer.



DAILY REFLECTIONS

Sunday

Read the chapter slowly and let its message sink in. What do you learn from it? Praise Father, Son and Holy Spirit who continue to reveal and make known that we are in partnership with one another as the Church and with Him in the covenant of salvation.

Monday

EPHESIANS 3:1-6

Paul speaks of having received insight. What issue in your life confuses you where you would like to have some insight? Ask God for a clearer understanding of this issue. Holy Spirit, as I wait upon You ... give discernment, insight and wisdom to the issues that I am wrestling with and have asked about. Thank You!

Tuesday

EPHESIANS 3:7-13

How do you approach God? Do you do so with freedom and confidence, or are you hesitant? Remember, above all things, God loves you. Speak to Him about your feelings. As I seek to come before You, Lord, I surrender all fear, doubt and uncertainty.
Response: Come boldly, confidently and expectantly before the Lord.

Wednesday

EPHESIANS 3:14-19

As you read this passage replace the word 'you' with your own name. What do you want to say to God now?
Response: Bring your personal prayer and petitions before the Lord and receive His love, strength, blessing and favour.

Thursday

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

Spend time today worshipping God and giving Him glory!
I worship You, Almighty God. There is none like You. Be glorified in my life today.

Friday

ROMANS 12:2

Where do you conform to the pattern of this world? What area of your life do you think would benefit from the renewing of your mind?
Lord, transform my thinking and saturate my soul with a clear knowledge of your will for my life.

Saturday

Now that you have spent some time with Ephesians 3 what does it say to you?
Lord, help me meet the challenge of spreading the gospel truths contained in Your word. Holy Spirit, thank You that You empower, equip and enable me to do so.

SESSION 3

WELCOME

When have you heard someone say something controversial in public? Share the comment briefly and how both you and the audience responded.

WORSHIP

Spend time in worship together.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Where were you able to be part of the solution where you came across conflict last week.

WORD

Read Ephesians 3

1. Paul speaks of a mystery – an open secret. What is the greatest mystery you have discovered about God since you have been a Christ-follower? Why does this mean so much to you?
2. When you are gathered with other Christ-followers in your own church how do you feel about them? Is there love among you? How do you feel for other believers when you are in a different church where you yourself are not known?
3. Paul believes without a doubt that God will answer his requests and he asks boldly. How do you ask God for the things that are important to you? How bold and sure do you feel that He will answer?
4. What is your greatest need in your life now? How would you like God to respond to a bold prayer in this regard?

MINISTRY TO EACH OTHER

Pray with one another boldly! Bring your greatest individual needs to God one by one, naming the person who has spoken of that need. Believe that God will answer and encourage one another that this is so.

REACHING OUT

Throughout the coming week approach the throne of God boldly on behalf of those around you who are struggling with any need they may share with you. Look for opportunities to do this and they will become clear to you.



EPHESIANS 4

Paul now turns to the lifestyle that God's new community must follow and he writes as if they have already achieved these living standards, just as he prays they will.

Such a society will have various moral qualities that are essential to unity:

- Humility – this was a derogatory term until Jesus displayed true humility in the way He lived and valued people.
- Gentleness – this gives people control over their own personality and puts the needs of others before their own.
- Patience – this helps people to put up with others who irritate us, just like God puts up with us.
- Mutual tolerance – this enables people to live and work together showing acceptance and harmony.
- Love – encompasses all the above and is essential for unity in God's new community.

These qualities are only possible with God and they form the foundation stones of Christian unity. Paul stresses our oneness – one body; one Spirit; one hope, faith and baptism because there is one Lord. There is only one family because there is only one Father. Although we may differ in worship style and tradition, we are united in truth, life and love because God tells us we are. As we look at the diversity of Christ-followers and all the gifts they are given we realise it is not necessary to have conformity and uniformity. Whilst some gifts – like the gift of salvation – are given to all Christ-followers, other specific gifts are given to individuals – helps, teaching, giving etc – so believers are different to one another. Every believer has a gift and each gift is essential to the building up of the Church towards unity, although special emphasis seems to be given to the teaching gifts.

Because Paul considers himself to be a prisoner in Christ's name He claims Christ's authority over what he says. He instructs the Ephesians, to live like Christ-followers and move away from their pagan lifestyle and habits. Paul encourages them to make the radical change that he had taught them about when he was with them. They need to put aside their old ways and take on the new life which Christ offers. The characteristics of this new lifestyle revolve around our relationship with one another and with God. Paul lists negative behaviour and its positive counterpart:

He says:

- Do not lie but tell the truth;
- Do not become angry except when your anger is righteous;
- Do not steal but rather work and give;
- Do not say anything unkind or dishonest but only say what will benefit others
- Do not become bitter but be kind and compassionate
- Do not make the Holy Spirit sad, but be kind and compassionate, ready to forgive just as you have been forgiven.

When we are rooted in Christ, we become increasingly Christ-like as He guides our thoughts and our thoughts guide our actions. Paul encourages the Ephesians to have no part in the sinful practices that were rife at the time.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

Sunday

EPHESIANS 4

Read the chapter slowly and let its message sink in. What do you learn from it?

As I seek to extend Your kingdomHelp me to live a life of unity with others, worthy of the call placed upon my life in order that You may receive all glory, honour, power and praise.

Monday

EPHESIANS 4:1-6

What is God saying to you in these verses? What will you reply?

Father God, I thank You for the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit ...may they operate in and through my life to bring You glory.

Tuesday

EPHESIANS 4:7-13

What gift(s) do you identify in yourself? They are not all mentioned here – see also 1 Corinthians 12. How do you use your gift(s) to serve God?

As I seek to stir up the gifts within me Lord, help me to actively engage with the Body of Christ in service that will benefit others and please You.

Wednesday

EPHESIANS 4:14-16

Looking back over the past year, what changes can you see in yourself as you have grown in your faith?

Thank You Holy Spirit for quickening my spirit and helping me to mature and measure up to the full stature of Christ.

Thursday

EPHESIANS 4:17-24

How has the 'attitude of your mind' changed over the past year? Where do you still have doubts and where has your faith deepened?

As I seek to embrace the necessary changes – thank You Holy Spirit for enabling me to mature and grow in renewing my thoughts and attitudes and align them with His Word of truth.

Friday

EPHESIANS 4:25-32

What is God saying to you specifically through these verses?

Reflect and respond ...allow the Lord to search your would with regard to your commitment to honesty and integrity....confess any shortcomings.

Saturday

EPHESIANS 4

Now that you have spent some time with this chapter what does it say to YOU.

Father God, thank You for revealing the deep truths and revelations within the Word.

I choose to live as one created in God's likeness – righteous, holy and true.

SESSION 4

WELCOME

What child's comment have you heard that touched you deeply – because of its cheekiness, humour, audacity, appeal etc?

WORSHIP

Spend time in worship together.

ACCOUNTABILITY

How often were you able to pray boldly for needs you noticed during the week in the lives of those around you?

WORD

Read: Ephesians 4

1. Of the five moral qualities that Paul lists in verse 2, which one did you demonstrate the best today; and which one did you struggle with the most?
2. What major change can you see in your way of thinking since you became a Christ-follower?
3. Of all the commands Paul lists in verses 25-31 which seems to be the major command that God is using to challenge you in your Christian life at the moment?

MINISTRY TO EACH OTHER

Pray for each other for any shared needs or struggles that have been discussed in this session.

REACHING OUT

As you have been alerted to the changes that have taken place in your life since becoming a follower of Christ, how can you develop one of them to deeper levels during this week to the benefit of other people? Be prepared to share any progress you have made with the group next week.



EPHESIANS 5

Paul warns his readers that, whatever others may say, judgment will come and those who do not take any notice of his words will be subject to the wrath of God. Therefore, he says, do not have anything to do with such people.

He continues that before they knew Christ they were darkness but now that they know Christ they are light. Christ's light radiates through Christ-followers wherever they are. This image speaks of openness and transparency; there is joyful living in Christ with nothing to fear or to hide for anything that is dark within us is exposed to the light and becomes visible.

Paul advises the Ephesians to use Christian wisdom, that is practical wisdom, which will demonstrate how to live according to Christian standards. Christ-followers make the most of every moment of their time as they discern and follow God's will.

Paul commands his readers to be filled with the Holy Spirit. As they practice self-control they become more discerning in all areas of life. As a result their relationship with God and with others deepens and the sense of gratitude increases. This does not mean that God must be thanked when evil things happen, but praised for His faithfulness, provision and care even in the face of such evil. They consider the needs of others more and more frequently before their own needs.

It must be remembered that this is not a recommendation but a command to the whole Christian community. Each one must be open to the filling of the Holy Spirit all the time. It is not optional but a way of life.

Paul now moves on to everyday relationships at home and later, in the next chapter will speak about the enemy and the armour required for ongoing spiritual warfare. The faith of the Christ-follower needs to equip them to deal with both people they can see and touch, and with the invisible, intangible forces of evil.

As Paul begins to talk about the relationship between husband and wife today's readers come across a stumbling block! The concept of submission is not a popular one and can cause strong emotions to be expressed as the modern attitude favours permissiveness and freedom. But Paul's commands for submission do not imply inferiority. They must be seen in the light of Jesus' teaching and of all that Paul has already said in his letter – that all people are made in God's image and therefore valuable and equal.

However God has delegated leadership to certain roles and people need to submit to such authority in recognition of God's plan for His new community. People need to submit to Christ and then to those set in authority over them. Biblical authority means responsibility not tyranny so those in leadership roles do not have unlimited powers nor may they exploit others. God's authority has priority and He must always be obeyed prior to human authority. Those who are in authority must remember that those they lead also have rights. Paul's statement about man's headship is a creation issue. Whilst man was made before woman and woman was made for man and from him, woman gives birth to man so both are dependent on one another.

The relationship that evolves is a joyful and free partnership. The man accepts responsibility for his wife and loves and cares for her deeply just as Christ loves His Church. The woman accepts his protection and provision in a loving, respectful way. Both play a self-sacrificing role and in this way they become what Christ intends them to be. Such a relationship forms a strong foundation for every growing, enduring marriage.

DAILY REFLECTIONS

Sunday

Read the chapter slowly and let its message sink in. What do you learn from it?

Lord, there is a call to offer You praise and thanksgiving at all times in all circumstances and to follow Your example of living a life of unselfish, giving Bearers of the Light.

Monday

EPHESIANS 5:1-2

How loved to you feel? Read these verses again slowly and tell God about any struggles you may have with the concept that He loves you.

Jesus You are the expression of love....I open myself to receive your healing love and ask for that same love to find expression through my life as I reach out to those around me.

Tuesday

EPHESIANS 5: 3-14

What does this Scripture passage say to you at this time? How will you respond to God?

Lord give me the strength to abstain from destructive habits and attitudes that contradict my faith confession in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour.

Wednesday

EPHESIANS 5: 15-21

How would you describe your closest relationships at the moment? If you are struggling with them, what can you do to improve them; if they are good what can you do to make them even better?

Lord it is good and pleasing when we dwell in unity and harmony with one another.... I bring all my relationships to You, and ask Your hand of blessings, favor and healing upon them.

Thursday

EPHESIANS 5: 22-33

If you are married: How do you shape up as a husband or wife in the light of these verses?

If you are not married: Pray for the marriages of those you love, that they may be based on Godly values.

Lord, I bring these marriages before You and ask for a selfless, godly submission to one another and to You. May these values prevail as they journey through family life.

Friday

MARK 10:13-16

How does this comment from Jesus about little children encourage you to care for children more deeply?

Father, help me to protect, nurture and train the children in my world that they may grow up whole, healthy believers, ready to take on the task of spreading the Gospel in their own world.

Saturday

Now that you have spent some time with this chapter what does it say to you?

Lord Jesus You are One on Whom I can model my life. Holy Spirit, You enable me to do so.
Thank You!

SESSION 5

WELCOME

Are you afraid of the dark?

How do you deal with darkness?

WORSHIP

Spend time in worship together.

ACCOUNTABILITY

How have you managed to develop one of the changes that has taken place in your life since you became a follower of Christ? How have you felt about this?

WORD

Read Ephesians 5

1. When you look at your life, how do you feel you are carrying out your role as the light of Christ in your world?
2. When have you been able to praise God for His faithfulness in the face of unhappy times? Share briefly with the group your struggles and joys at this time.
3. Reading Paul's description of the relationship between a husband and wife as a 21st century reader, what emotions do his words produce in you? Reading the definition of submission and authority in the passage above, how does this alter (if it does) those emotions? Share why you can/cannot accept what Paul says.

MINISTRY TO EACH OTHER

Pray for one another especially in the light of any struggles expressed. What can you do to help one another through those struggles?

REACHING OUT

How can you be the light of Christ to those around you this week?

EPHESIANS 6

Paul now turns to parent/child relationships and tells children to obey their parents. God told Moses that people must honour their parents; and Paul widens the command to incorporate God's new community. However, if parents' commands run contrary to God's, then once again God's command has priority. Christ-followers are required to honour their parents all their lives, but when a child becomes an adult in the eyes of the culture to which they belong, the need for obedience falls away.

Parents may not abuse their authority but must raise their children themselves, setting fair and reasonable boundaries and enabling them to achieve their full potential. They must teach children Christian values, defend them where necessary and accept them for who they are.

Paul continues with the relationship between masters and slaves. There were sixty million slaves in the first century and slavery was part of the economic system and an accepted way of life. It is amazing that Paul even addresses slaves. Contrary to society's views at the time, he implies that they are responsible people and states that they also serve and follow Christ.

When employers and employees accept this concept today, they realize that all parties work together, united in Christ for His glory, part of His family. Employees work with integrity, doing everything to their best ability, respecting those to whom they report and raising their own standards. Employers treat their employees with respect and justice, realizing that all are equal in Christ.

Paul then turns to the spiritual battle that still rages around us. This will continue until Christ's return because evil has not yet conceded defeat in spite of Christ's victory on the cross. These wicked, supernatural beings are active, powerful, cunning, ruthless and completely unscrupulous. They often use weapons against Christ-followers that are not easy to identify – including the lie that they do not exist. They do not like the light.

Paul says that these 'principalities and powers' will do everything they can to destroy God's new community and to rebuild the barriers that Christ broke down. Many people are skeptical about the existence of demons today, but Paul does not question their existence, and Jesus believed in them too (Matthew 8:28-34; 17:14-18).

However as Christ-followers we can be assured that the peace of Christ is present in the centre of this conflict and God's strength and armour will see us through. The combination of divine power and human co-operation with God is a winning formula. Paul uses the same word for God's power here that he used to describe the power that He used to raise Jesus back to life. Christ-followers must stand firm against this onslaught and so God's armour is essential.

Paul uses the analogy of Roman armour to describe God's armour.

- The belt of truth – enabled the soldier to move freely. It gathered the tunic and held the sword. Truth is the only thing which can set us free.
- The breastplate of righteousness – protected the soldier's vital organs. A righteous relationship with God is the best spiritual armour a believer can have.

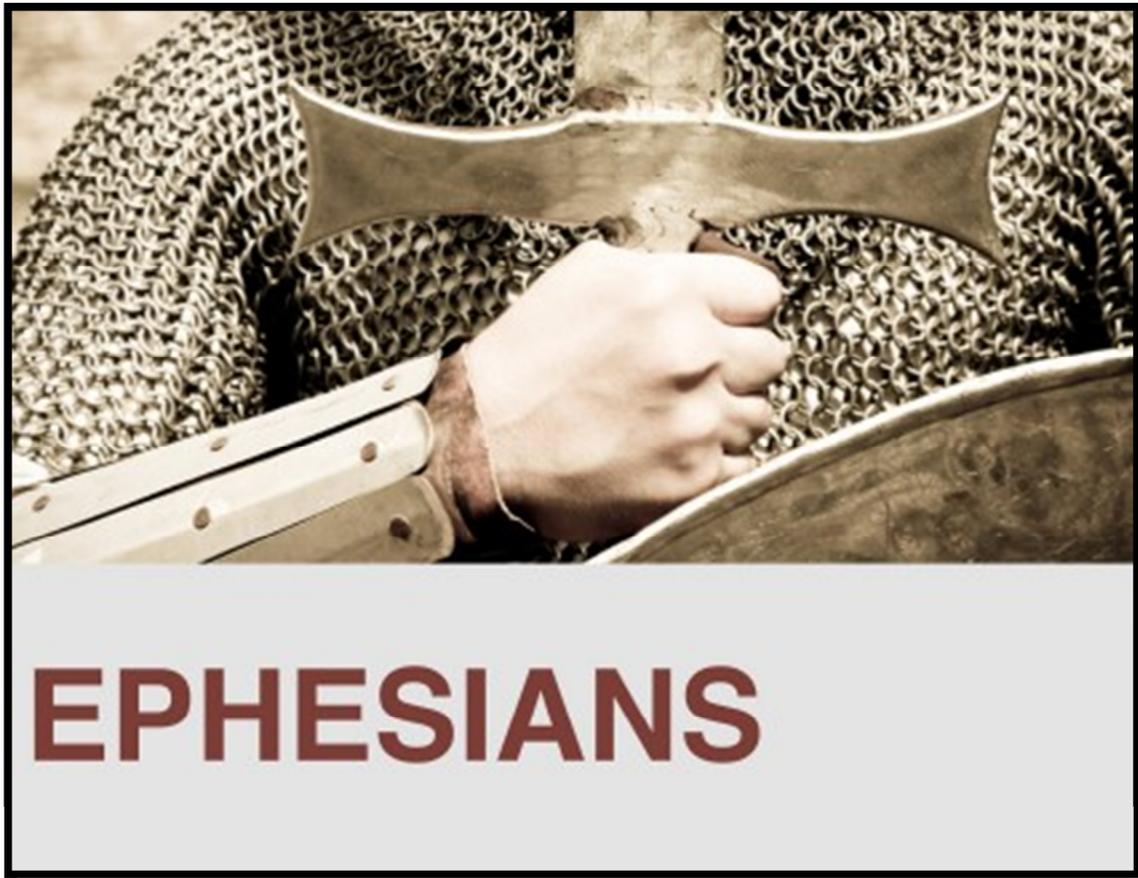
- The boots – were sturdy and comfortable. These are the gospel boots of Peace given to those who believed and shared by them as they spread the Gospel.
- The shield of faith – was a long shield designed to extinguish the enemy’s blazing arrows. It offered protection against doubt, disobedience, rebellion, temptation, fear etc.
- The helmet of salvation – was made of bronze or iron and it took an axe to pierce it. It confirms salvation in the present and in the future.
- The sword – is the Word of God and is the only offensive piece of armour that is issued. It is used for both defense and witness.

God’s armour is freely available to us – but we must make the decision to take it and put it on. Evil is always looking for opportunities to attack so Christ-followers must be on their guard.

Paul asks the Ephesians to pray for him as well as for themselves. He had been handcuffed to a Roman soldier for two years and he needed courage, liberty of speech and opportunity to spread the Gospel. Against such prayers, the principalities and powers are helpless.

Conclusion:

Paul prays that the Ephesians will deepen their relationship with each other and so build up the kingdom of God. Just as he began his letter he ends it by praying for peace and grace for it is only these that can make his dream for God’s new community come true.



DAILY REFLECTIONS

Sunday

Read the chapter slowly and let its message sink in. What do you learn from it?

As we seek to fight the good fight of faith The Lord is mighty in battle and Holy Spirit aids us in our prayer and intercession until victory is won. We serve a mighty God!

Monday

EPHESIANS 6:1-4

Pray for all children who are abused or persecuted in some way; and for parents who do not know where their children are today.

Lord we lift up all the vulnerable children today. Protect them; release and deliver them from the powers of darkness that pervade our land.

Tuesday

EPHESIANS 6:5-9

Pray for all those you know who have been retrenched or are facing retrenchment; and for those who are having to do the retrenching interviews.

We stand upon Your Word as Jehovah-Jireh the Provider during times of retrenchments and subsequent loss of income for breadwinners. Lord provide abundantly for all involved in this process.

Wednesday

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

Read through this passage and see yourself putting on the armour of faith – however that may look to you in your mind's eye. Take a note today of how your day goes.

Yes, Lord we align ourselves with Your Word today and stand firm upon Your promises.

We are strong in the Lord and mighty in His power to wage battle against the enemy.

Thursday

EPHESIANS 6:19-20

Paul was in chains for his faith. What does the persecuted church mean to you? Pray for all those who are in chains for their faith today.

Lord, protect all those who administer your Word in the midst of persecution and possible threat of danger. Strengthen them give them courage to continue their work.

Friday

EPHESIANS 6:21-24

Who will you pray Peace and Grace over today?

May God's grace and peace be upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

Saturday

Now that you have spent some time with this chapter what does it say to you?

Praise God for the equipping, enabling and empowering of the Holy Spirit to confront the forces of darkness and bring all things into the Light of Jesus Christ Our Lord, Redeemer, Saviour and Friend..

SESSION 6

WELCOME

What sort of protective gear do you use when you need it (eg when you are camping; fishing; working; cycling etc)? Why do you choose this particular protection?

WORSHIP

Spend time in worship together.

ACCOUNTABILITY

How were you the light of Christ to those around you this past week?

WORD

Read Ephesians 6

1. How does Paul's description of child/parent or employee/employer relationships encourage you and make you want to improve your own relationships, whichever role you may play in this group?
2. Read the description of God's armour again. Which part do you think you need to wear at the moment? Why do you think this?
3. What has the book of Ephesians taught you? How has spending time with Paul and the church in Ephesus helped you to grow in your faith and your relationship with God and others? Share briefly with the group.
4. Tomorrow, try this experiment: Put on the armour of God piece by piece – see yourself doing it. This may seem a strange exercise but take note of the sort of day you have. Then do it again the next day. How do you cope with each day? Be prepared to share next time you meet.

MINISTRY TO EACH OTHER

Pray for one another, especially in regard to the struggles that have been mentioned; and to any reluctance expressed about wearing God's armour. Pray boldly blessing one another with your own faith.

REACHING OUT

How can you serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord this week? Look for opportunities to do so.

