

# EPHESIANS



*For you were once darkness, but now you are  
light in the Lord. Live as children of light*

## BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

(8 BIBLE STUDIES)

**EXAMINATION APPLICATION**

**BIBLE STUDIES**

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## THE SMALL PRINT

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## GETTING THE MOST OUT OF THESE STUDIES

### **Your Commitment**

I would encourage you to make a commitment to attending your group regularly. I realise that sometimes there are things that get in the way, but do prioritise studying the Bible with other. This will involve sacrifice, and effective use of your time, but I really believe that in doing so you will get the most out of studying the Bible and praying together in your small group.

### **Your Contribution**

What you put into the group is going to determine what you get out of the group. I encourage you to contribute honestly to the discussion and workings of the group. I understand people come from different backgrounds with unique personalities & life experiences. But, we all have a big part to play, so I encourage you to be fully present and take ownership of your group.

### **Your Preparation**

These materials are primarily for use in preparing and/or leading group discussions, but they will also be useful in keeping your thoughts together in one place. The materials provide you with the passage so that you can identify and highlight recurring themes and note down your own thoughts and questions. Also, the materials include questions designed to provoke thought, and help you reflect on what the passage meant, both at the time it was written, and also what it means for us now.

I would encourage you to make good use of these materials, as doing so will help you contribute and get the most out of the group discussions. The materials are, however, only “tools” – they are there to help you, and not to restrict you, or force you to think in a certain manner. I want to see God speaking to you through these passages, and if the questions or notes don't help you, simply don't use them!

I have also included within these materials an introduction to the book. Make of this what you will, but I hope that it is helpful in getting you started with these studies!

### **Your Leadership**

Here are some useful pointers in how to lead your Bible study group. Be aware that included in this study guide are more questions than you can possibly ask and/or answer in one session. They are not designed to be used rigidly, and there will rarely be a need to ask every question! Make sure that you spend some time praying at the start and ensure you read & re-read the passages as much as possible. In relation to the passages, then consider the suggested questions with an open mind. There is rarely “a single right answer” and I would encourage you to share your thoughts with your group.

I have also included a number of quotations from relevant Christian literature, most of which are readily available online if you want to do further thinking or study. My prayer is that as you study together you would grow to love Jesus and experience Him more deeply.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to make these materials even better!

*Steve McClure  
Spring 2019*

## INTRODUCING EPHESIANS

We need to take a step back and think about life in Ephesus. We know a bit about it from Acts 19. It was a place where Paul spent a good amount of time. It was a place where there was opposition to the new church. Ephesus was an active centre of worship for the fertility goddess Diana, and when the idol manufacture business was becoming threatened the idol makers stirred up trouble against Paul. It was a place with an active occult presence (see the burning of the scrolls), and a place where the Jewish synagogue had not reacted positively to Paul. It was therefore not an easy place to be a Christian. It was a place that knew about spiritual opposition to Jesus and the church. It is into this context that Paul writes his letter to the Ephesians, and the surrounding area. He writes to encourage them to stand firm, fighting in a battle that is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms - the rulers, principalities and powers of this age.

These forces are spiritual, demonic in origin, and have an impact on every institution on earth, moving human rulers towards oppression, injustice and immorality. In the west we often do not take such a realm seriously. But the Bible is clear that we are in a spiritual battle - and that the church is in the front line of this battle. Notice in these verses how important the church is - but also how the church is rooted in God's purpose accomplished in Jesus.

*<sup>10</sup> His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, <sup>11</sup> according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. **Ephesians 3:10-11***

I have a vivid memory of a class in my final year at Regent College, a NT seminar, 12 of us discussing one student's paper on Ephesians 6. Suddenly our professor took control of the discussion, almost as if he felt that the weight of the passage was not being felt, and gave us several distinct accounts of spiritual warfare in his own life. It was a little outside my comfort zone - but it was vital to appreciating the passage and the reality of the conflict that exists all around us. There are all sorts of ways that we could imagine fighting such a battle, but Ephesians gives us the way God wants us to be equipped to fight. Paul tells us to put on the full armour of God, so that we can stand - the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation. These are the things that Yahweh equips himself with in Isaiah 59 when there is no-one else to achieve salvation. The righteousness and salvation we put on are not things we achieve or generate ourselves - they are God's. They are ours, only in so far as we stand in Him. That is what the first chapter of Ephesians is all about. Praising God that he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing by placing us in Christ. That phrase 'in him', 'in Christ' comes over and over again in Ephesians 1:3-14. Chosen in him, adopted in him, holy and blameless in him, grace lavished on us in him. Outside of Christ we are dead in transgression and sin, outside of Christ we are far off. In Christ we are made alive, and seated with Christ. In Christ we are brought near by the cross - Jew and non-Jew together, one people of God, built up into God's temple (that's Ephesians 2). The place where God is worshipped, and where God's presence is known is God's people gathered together because they are in Christ.

It is this good news, that Jew and non-Jew together can be God's people through believing in Jesus that Paul heralds to the nations. This good news that we can be part of God's plan to bring his fractured universe back into unity under Jesus (1:10). Together we are one people who show God's

wisdom to the rulers and authorities. These heavenly beings see and will see God's wisdom displayed through God's people gathered together (3:10).

It is in the light of these truths that Paul prays his great prayers for the Ephesians. Use Ephesians 1:15-22 and 3:14-21 as fuel for your prayers. Paul knows that knowing truth is not enough. Truth needs to be prayed in and lived in, in the midst of a hostile world - and so Paul prays to the Father. Not the one who is like our human fathers - but the one who defines what true fatherhood is about, the one full of grace and mercy, the one who adopts us as his dearly loved children and who wants us to know his love that is beyond knowledge. Truth needs to be lived. Paul appeals for the Ephesians to live out that truth in their life together in chapter 4 - in unity as a group of believers, and then as individuals living in Christ to put off the old way of life, and put on the new. To live as imitators of God - forgiving as God in Christ has forgiven us. We live that life not out of our own power, but out of the power of the Spirit whom Paul has already prayed we would have more and more of in chapter 1. In chapter 5 we are called to continually be filled with the Spirit. To continually put ourselves at the Spirit's disposal. We do that as we sing together, as we speak together, as we thank God together, and as we submit to one another because we fear Christ.

Submission is about putting the other person first - about a love for them which asks what is best for them. Submission transforms the codes households lived by - ancient writings often have codes for household life - but Paul's are transformed by the concept of mutual submission.

The wife submits to the husband. The husband loves, as Christ loved the church - he doesn't enforce submission, but instead should give himself for the benefit of the one he loves. Submission is not enforced, it is freely given by a free person in Christ - just as Christ freely came from heaven for us.

Children submit to their parents - and fathers are not to make their children give up, but to love and cherish them. Slaves submit to masters - and masters are to treat their slaves as humans. The entire institution of slavery is undermined by these codes in Paul's letters (and especially by his letter to Philemon) - and as we follow the trajectory of scripture we will move against slavery in all its forms.

And so we come back to where we started. In order to do all this, in order to stand firm in a world where rulers both seen and unseen do not like obedience to Christ we need to put on the whole armour of God. We need to make sure that we are in Christ.

We are to remind ourselves that in Christ, God's beloved Son, God's chosen King, representative of his people, we who believe in Jesus are chosen and destined to be like him (that's what predestination is all about). In Christ, God's beloved son, we too are beloved children of our Father. In Christ, the holy one, we are holy and loved. In Christ, the one who is now seated at the Father's right hand, we too are raised with him. With the knowledge of that salvation, with the reality of that righteousness, with the security of those truths, with the readiness that good news gives to our feet we are to pick up the sword of the Spirit - the word of God, and to pray in the Spirit on all occasions. As we do we remember these words, and dare to ask for more than we can imagine:

*<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21*

Mark Arnold, 2019

First published <https://rozandmark.wordpress.com/2019/05/01/ephesians-in-christ-in-the-world/>

**STUDY 1 – EPHESIANS 1 – SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS AND PAUL’S PRAYER (I)**

**INTRODUCTION:** Paul begins his letter to the Ephesians in with some of the most extra-ordinary words in the Bible as he explains how we have *every spiritual blessing* in Christ. These truths lead him naturally into a time of prayer and thanksgiving for them.

**SETTING THE SCENE (v1-2):** What do we learn about Paul from these verses? What do we know about the work he had begun in Ephesus (detailed in Acts 18:18-19:41)? What can we infer about how the church in Ephesus subsequently fared given what Jesus later said to them in Revelation 2:1-7?

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**SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS (v3):** How do you understand Paul’s comment here that we have been blessed in the heavenly realms (also v20)? Why do you think we find it so hard to rely on such blessings rather than look to the things around us for value, security, love and significance?

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**IN CHRIST:** What do you think Paul means by repeatedly using the phrase *in Him* or *in Christ*? What role does Jesus play (or played) in us receiving these spiritual blessings? To what extent do these blessings depend on us (see esp. v4)?

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**CHOSEN AND PREDESTINED (v4-6, 11-12):** These truths are mind-blowing and yet also the cause of much debate: how do you understand these words of Paul and specifically how do they encourage you? What are the implications of being *chosen*, *predestined* and *adopted*?

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**GRACE AND REDEMPTION (v7-8a):** In what ways has God lavished the riches of His grace upon us? Why was the blood of Christ necessary in order that we might have redemption (to be saved or bought back) and forgiveness of sins? Why do you think God blesses us so lavishly?

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**REVELATION OF GOD'S PLAN (v8b-10):** What do you understand to be the *mystery of God's will* (v9) and what does it reveal about God's ultimate purpose (v10)? How do you see this purpose being worked out in both our experience and our understanding?

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**THE MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT (v13-14):** In what ways is the Holy Spirit like both a *seal* (v13) and a *deposit* (v14)? How do you understand the Spirit's role of *guaranteeing our inheritance*? What is your experience of the Spirit's *blessing* and *gifting*? What do you see as the difference between them?

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**PAUL'S PRAYER (v15-23):** What is it that prompts Paul to pray (...*for this reason*)? How would you describe in your own words the lofty things that Paul prays for? How does the substance of Paul's prayer contrast with the substance of your own prayers? Assuming Paul also prayed more earthly prayers how might we find a better balance in our own prayers?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** What is your response to a chapter like this, which is profound about truth but light on instruction? How might we impress these truths, about who we are in Christ more deeply in our lives? What steps can we take to pray more like Paul for those around us?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Worship and praise God for all that is now true of those who are in Christ because of all that Jesus has achieved for us at the cross. Pray together some of these big prayers that Paul prays for the believers in Ephesus.

**MEMORY VERSE: EPHESIANS 1:17**

**STUDY 2 – EPHESIANS 2 – FROM RAGS TO RICHES**

**INTRODUCTION:** We were all (Jew or Gentile) once dead in sin and under God's wrath but due to God's astonishing grace and mercy we now have new life and hope in Christ. Our salvation and our reconciliation is all God's work and entirely by grace, achieved for everyone at the cross.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** What would you describe as the *heart of the passage* (consider the repeated words/phrases or the contrasts that Paul draws in these verses)?

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**THE THREE CAPTORS (v1-3):** What do you think the difference is between being *enslaved to the flesh, the devil and the world*? How does society go about trying to rectify the problems of the world? It sounds harsh to say that we were objects of wrath: what does this mean and why do you think that the Bible makes such a big deal of sin? Why is wrath such a key element of the gospel?

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**ALIVE WITH CHRIST (v4-5):** How do you understand Paul's contrast before and after becoming a Christian and between being dead and alive? What does it look like to be raised up with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly realms?

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**BY GRACE ALONE (v5-10):** Why is Paul so keen to emphasise that our salvation is by grace and that there is no reason to boast? Why does Paul repeatedly use the term *in* or *with* Christ? What are the implications of being God's workmanship? Are we *saved from sin* or *saved for God* and why? How do you respond to the idea that God has prepared good works in advance for us to do?

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**ONE IN CHRIST (v11-22):** How would you describe the change in focus from v1-10? How does Paul describe the change in relationship with God for both Jews and Gentiles: consider *unity* (v11-14), *reconciliation* (v16), *access to the Father* (v18), *new identity* (v19) and *new dwelling* (v22)?

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**JEW-GENTILE CONFLICT:** What is the equivalent of the Jewish-Gentile divide today (i.e. *the circumcision vs the uncircumcised*)? How does the gospel speak to such differences in race, culture and background (e.g. Jew vs. Arab conflict)?

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**PEOPLE-GOD CONFLICT:** What do you think it means to be *brought near through the blood of Christ* (v13)? How significant is the access that we now have with the Father? Do we make the most of this privilege to enter God's presence (which only High Priest was able to do)? Why?

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**METAPHORS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE:** How do you respond to the metaphors Paul uses of *the body* (v15), *citizens* (v19), *family* (v19) and *temple* (v20-22)? In what sense are we *a building* which is *being built together* (v21-22)? How would this have been particularly poignant in light of the huge pagan temple in Ephesus? What are the implications of the shift from a physical to a spiritual temple?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** In what ways do we as Christians have a tendency to create or perpetuate divisions of race, culture, denomination within our communities? How does this passage speak against such divisiveness? How should all these blessings impact your life and your faith?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Praise God for the rags to riches story that He is working out in your lives. Discuss together what good works God might have prepared in advance for you to do. Ask God to help you take steps to share the good news of God's grace and build unity in your communities.

**MEMORY VERSES: EPHESIANS 2:8-10**

## STUDY 3 – EPHESIANS 3 – ADMINISTERING GRACE AND PAUL'S PRAYER (II)

**INTRODUCTION:** Building on what Paul has been saying about reconciliation (chapter 2), he now turns to God's marvellous purposes (v1-13). As in chapter 1 this in turn leads him into another outburst of prayer as he brings them before the Father (v14-21).

**SETTING THE SCENE:** Paul says "*For this reason*" twice in chapter 3: for what reason is Paul a prisoner of Christ (v1)? For what reason, is Paul kneeling before the Father (v14)? What causes you to kneel before the Father?

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**GOD'S PURPOSES (v1-13):** In what ways does this section build on God's purposes as Paul had explained in 1:9-10? What role does Paul see us playing in the working out of said purposes?

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**ABOUT PAUL (v1, 7-8):** Paul describes himself in these verses: e.g. a *prisoner* (v1), a *servant* (v7) and as *the least of all God's people* (v8)? Why would Paul describe himself these ways (see also 1 Corinthians 15:9-10)? How then does then he see the grace of God at work in His life?

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**THE MYSTERY (v2-6):** Paul talks again (previously in 1:9) about this *mystery* (v3, 4 & 6): what do you think Paul means by this word? How was it made known to Paul and how is it now being made known to the Ephesians (and by implication to us)? Why do you think that this mystery was kept hidden (v9)?

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**ADMINISTERING GRACE (v2-3, 9-11):** How do you understand Paul's concept of *administering God's grace* (v2, 9)? Why was God's intention that the church should make known the *manifold wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms?* (v10)

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**APPROACHING GOD (v12-13):** To what extent do you feel confident in approaching God boldly and freely (v12)? How would this have encouraged the Ephesians not to be discouraged? In what sense might Paul's sufferings be to the glory of the Ephesians (v13)?

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**PAUL'S PRAYER (v14-21):** In your own words, what is Paul praying for the Ephesians in these verses? What are the similarities between and differences between Paul's prayer here and the one he prayed in 1:15-23? How does this prayer compare with the kind of the things you pray for others?

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**COMPREHENDING GOD'S LOVE (v17-19):** What do you think characterises someone who is rooted and established in love? How can we grasp God's love better? How practically can we help each other to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ?

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**IMMEASURABLY MORE (v20-21):** How does the fact that God can do immeasurably more than we could ask or imagine encourage you? How can we make the glory to God central to our praying?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** How do you respond to a passage like this? How can we put the things we are learning here into practice? What difference should it make to how we pray?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Pray some of these *big prayers* together for one another and for God's purposes to be worked out in our time and through each of your lives. Ask God to enable you to administer the grace that God has given to you with all those around you.

**MEMORY VERSE: EPHESIANS 3:12**

**STUDY 4 – EPHESIANS 4:1-16 – MISSION STATEMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:** In chapter 4 the focus changes from what God has done for us to what God has for us to do. Paul here is urging them to live a life worthy of the calling God had given them (v1-10) and to play their part in seeing the body of Christ built up until they reach unity and maturity (v11-16).

**SETTING THE SCENE:** How would you define a *mission statement*? What mission statements most readily come to mind from the world around you and why? Before reading the passage what would you say is God's mission statement for us?

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**WORTHY OF OUR CALLING (v1-6):** What is this calling that Paul says they have received (v1)? What would it look like to live a life worthy of that calling? How is the unity Paul describes in v4-6 achieved through the humility, gentleness, patience, love and peace he describes in v2-3?

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What steps can we take to *make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit* (v3)? Why does Paul emphasise the *oneness* here of the body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism and God?

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**APPORTIONING OF GRACE (v7-10):** What are the implications of Paul's statement that God's grace been given to you *as Christ apportioned it*? How do you understand the somewhat confusing v8-10 (quoting Psalm 68) which appears to illustrate God's apportioning of grace-gifts?

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**WORKS OF SERVICE (v11-12):** What is the nature and purpose of all the gifts that God gives to us? How do you understand the different roles and/or gifts that Paul speaks about here (i.e. apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers & pastors)?

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How do these roles work together to *equip people for works of service* (v12)? Which of these roles (or the wider lists of spiritual gifts in 1 Cor 12:7-11, Rom 12:3-8) do you think God has gifted you with?  
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**GROWING FROM INFANCY TO MATURITY (v13-14):** What do you think is your part in helping others to grow, be built up together, become mature and reach unity in the faith? What does this metaphor of our journey from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity have to teach us about how the use of our gifts can bless others? Where would you say that you are on this spectrum?  
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**SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE (v15-16):** What does it mean to *speak the truth in love* (v15)? What are the consequences whether we speak the truth or not? What do you like about the analogy of the body of Christ (v16) and what is the significance of Christ as its head? Why does each part need to do their work in order for the body to be built up in love?  
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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** How does this chapter help you to start seeing the importance of playing your part in God's purposes? What have you learned about the way that God goes about working out His purposes through us and about God's ultimate intention in doing so?  
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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Thank God for the privilege of playing your part in God's purposes. Thank Him for the gifts that He has given you to build up His body. Ask God to help you live up to your calling and do all that you can to make every effort to work towards bringing unity and maturity in the faith.

**MEMORY VERSES: EPHESIANS 4:11-13**

**STUDY 5 – EPHESIANS 4:17-32 – WALKING WITH JESUS**

**INTRODUCTION:** In 4:1 Paul urged the Ephesians to live a life worthy of His calling. This passage continues Paul's explanation of what it might look like in practice to live walk/live with Jesus. Every instruction is fleshed out with Paul's rationale for why we should live that way.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** What things (i.e. motivations, drivers and purposes) determine how we live our lives? The word *live* (NIV) or *walk* (NASB) is used in 4:17 (see also 2:2, 10, 4:1 5:2,8 & 15): in what ways does this word capture the thrust of this section (and for that matter the next)?

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**NOT LIKE THE GENTILES DO (v17-19):** Paul does not hold back as he describes the Gentiles: what do you understand by some of the language he uses e.g. futile in their thinking, darkened in their understanding, ignorant, hard hearted, without sensitivity, given over to sensuality, indulging in all impurity, full of greed? Can you identify with these things from a time when you did not know God?

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**THINGS TO PUT ON & OFF (v17-28):** What are the things that Paul says to *put on* and what does he say to *put off*? In what ways is this metaphor helpful in helping us understand how we should live?

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**NOT THE LIFE YOU LEARNED (v20-24):** What does Paul mean by this new way of living the Ephesians learned when they heard about Jesus? How can we be made new in the attitude of our minds (v23)? In what ways is the *new-self* created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness?

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**DON'T GIVE THE DEVIL A FOOthOLD (v25-28):** What are the implications of Paul's instructions about truthfulness? Why is the fact that we are one body a motivator to put off falsehood? How might

we sin *in our anger* (v26)? Why might our anger serve to give the devil a foothold? Why is stealing incompatible with walking with Jesus, and what alternate activity does Paul suggest?

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**BUILDING OTHERS UP (v29):** How do we guard against saying what is unhelpful to others (v29, see also 5:4)? Why is it so hard to build others up rather than knocking them down?

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**GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT (v30):** In what ways might we grieve the Holy Spirit and what does that even mean? What does this command tell us about the personhood of the Holy Spirit? What does Paul mean by the phrase that through the Spirit we were sealed for the day of redemption?

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**KINDNESS RATHER THAN MALICE (v31-32):** In v31 Paul tells us what to get rid of and in v32 he tells us what to replace it with: how do you understand the stark contrast between these two very different ways to live? What does it mean to forgive *just as in Christ God forgave us* (v32)?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** If we really took these things seriously what would be different about the way that we live our lives day by day? Which aspects of Paul's description of what it means to walk like Jesus have most challenged you and why?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** These are challenging verses that have application to all sorts of areas of our life: ask God to bring to your attention any sin that you need to put off and the things that He wants you to put on in their place. Ask God to transform you into the person He wants you to be.

**MEMORY VERSE: EPHESIANS 4:29**

**STUDY 6 – EPHESIANS 5:1-20 – IMITATING GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:** Paul continues here with his instructions for walking with Jesus. In particular, Paul focuses on the implications of being in God's family for how we live. Again these words are intensely practical as Paul helps us understand *the how* and *the why* of Godly living.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** In what ways are you like (or unlike) your family? Why is imitation such a powerful way for us to learn and grow? Imagine that you are part of the Royal Family: how would family expectations impact how you behaved? As you reflect back over your lives who have been the most important people that you have sought to imitate (either consciously or unconsciously)?

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**PART OF THE FAMILY (5:1-7):** What things does Paul say in these verses about what it means to have and take on the family likeness in our walk with Jesus (v1-2)? What ways of living does Paul say are *improper* (v3-4) and why? Which of these things do you find most challenging?

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How do you understand Paul's stamen that *no immoral, impure or greedy person* has any inheritance in the Kingdom of God (v5-7)? Why does Paul then describe them as idolaters? Do these words

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**LIGHT AND DARKNESS (5:8-14):** How do we distinguish *the light* from *the darkness* (that which pleases the Lord)? What does it mean to *live as children of light* and how do we *find out what pleases the Lord* (v9-10)? Why does Paul say that the light consists of all goodness, righteousness & truth?

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What might it look like for us to *expose the fruitless deeds of darkness* (v11-14)? What is your experience of light exposing the darkness either in or through your lives?

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**LIVING WISELY (5:15-17):** How do you understand what it might mean to live wisely (v15) and how is this related to making the most of every opportunity (v16)? Paul says we should avoid foolishness but understand God's will: in what ways does God show us what His will is for us?  
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**FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT (5:18-20):** Why is Paul opposed to drunkenness and does this mean he is also opposed to drinking alcohol at all (see Proverbs 23:20, 1 Timothy 5:23, 1 Peter 4:3, Ecclesiastes 9:7)? How can we go about trying to please God in this area?  
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What does it mean to be *filled with the spirit* (literally to be filled and continue to be filled)? What would it look like for the Spirit to be the dominant influence in our behaviour? What does Paul say are some of the results of being filled with the Spirit (v19-21)?  
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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** The wise man is he who not only hears the word but puts it into practice (Matthew 7:24): what do you need to change in your life in light of this passage? How has this passage helped you to grow in your understanding of the holiness of God and what it means to imitate Him?  
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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Thank God that we are dearly loved children of God and that Jesus gave Himself up as a sacrifice for us to God. Ask God to help you live a life of love, to be filled with His Spirit and to be thankful to the Father for all the good things He gives to us.

**MEMORY VERSE: EPHESIANS 5:8**

STUDY 7 – EPHESIANS 5:21-6:9 – LOVE AND SUBMISSION

**INTRODUCTION:** Paul now introduces the principle of submission which he applies to contexts both at home (husbands & wives, children and parents) and also in the workplace (slaves & masters). Paul explains how submission (amidst a diversity of roles) does not imply a difference of value.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** How would you define submission? How do you react to the idea of submission? What response might such a concept get from society at large? What do you think it means to submit to one another in our various relational contexts? To what extent does (or doesn't) submission imply inferiority or lesser value?

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**SUBMISSION IN OUR MARRIAGES (5:21-33):** Paul in v21 tells us to submit *out of reverence to Christ*. what do you think this looks like in the context of marriage? Specifically what do you think it looks like for a wife to submit as *you do to the Lord* (v22)? Do you think this instruction is still relevant today or more for the cultural context in which it was given? Why or why not?

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**SUBMISSION AND HEADSHIP (v22-24):** Paul frames a wives submission in terms of male headship: what does it mean for the husband to be *the head of the wife* (v23)? What is the significance of Paul's statement that a husband's headship is a picture of Christ's headship over the church?

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**LOVE AND SACRIFICE (v25-30):** How does the illustration of Christ's love for the church help you to understand what Paul expects of a husband in loving his wife (v25-27)? Paul says *in the same way* (v28): what standard of love does Paul expect and what are the implications for husbands (v28-30)?

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**A PROFOUND MYSTERY (v31-33):** Paul quotes from Gen 2:24 about how a couple are unified by sexual union: why is this a profound mystery and in what sense is Paul actually talking here about Christ and the church (v32)? How is sexual intimacy a picture of our intimacy with Christ?

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**APPLICATION:** What impact do you think it would make on a marriage if a wife submits (giving herself up for her husband) and a husband loves (giving himself up for his wife)?

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**SUBMISSION IN THE FAMILY (6:1-4):** What motivation does Paul give to children to honour and obey their parents (v1-3)? What might it look like for Fathers to exasperate (translated *provoke* in NLT) their children (v4a)? What steps can we take to train and instruct children in the Lord (4b)?

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**SUBMISSION IN THE WORKPLACE (6:5-9):** How do you imagine these instructions about obedience and wholehearted service working in their original context? What would be the associated costs and challenges? How might these principles be applicable to us today in our workplace relationships?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** While these instructions might well be at odds with how those around us see things: in what ways have we seen how these things will bring glory to God? How could submitting to one another in all our relationships bring greater fulfilment in your own relationships?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Thank God that he cares about all of our relationships: pray through some of the parts of this passage which have been most applicable to you. Ask God to help you be more submissive, loving, caring and/or obedient in your various relationships?

**MEMORY VERSES: EPHESIANS 6:7-8**

**STUDY 8 – EPHESIANS 6:10-24 – SPIRITUAL WARFARE**

**INTRODUCTION:** Paul finishes his letter with some greetings (21-24) but before that he warns the Ephesians about spiritual warfare and encourages them to put on the armour of God so that they can take their stand against the devil's schemes. We too are engaged in a spiritual battle and these words have much to teach us also about the nature of the battle and the need to suit up in God's armour.

**SETTING THE SCENE:** Why do you think that Paul finishes his letter with this warning? Why do you think the powers of darkness want to wage war on us (see also 3:10, Col 2:13-15)? What is your experience (as far as you are aware) of spiritual warfare (lies, temptation, deception, accusation)?

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**THE DEVIL'S SCHEMES (v10-13):** What are some of the devil's schemes both for you and for others you know? What are the dangers of either underestimating the devil or taking him too seriously (James 4:7, 1 Peter 5:8-9)? Who exactly does Paul say is our enemy, whom we are struggling against (v12)?

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How do we put on the *full* armour of God? How does Paul use the metaphor of the armour of God to teach us how we are to stand firm (v13 and also in in v11 & 14)?

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**THE ARMOUR OF GOD (v14-17):** How do you understand different various pieces of armour (i.e. the *belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel boots, shield of faith, helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit*)? What would you say each piece represents (see also 1 Thessalonians 5:8)?

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To what extent is the armour 'something we have to do' and/or 'something God has done'? In what sense is the armour of God a picture of the good news about Jesus Christ?

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**SWORD OF THE SPIRIT (v17-18a):** In what sense is the *Word of God* the *sword of the Spirit* (v17)? What does it mean to pray in the Spirit and what role might the sword of the Spirit have in this (see also 5:18)? What are the challenges associated with praying like this?

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**ALERT AND PRAYING (v18b-20):** Why does Paul encourage them to be alert and what does it look like to be alert (v18b)? What does Paul ask them to pray for and what can we learn from these things? What role might prayer in helping one another to be strong in the Lord (v10)?

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**FINAL GREETINGS (v21-24):** What do we learn in v21-22 about Tychicus (also in Acts 20:4, Colossians 4:7, 2 Timothy 4:12 & Titus 3:12)? How do these final verses help us to understand Paul's affection and close relationship with the Ephesians (v23-24)?

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**DRAWING IT TOGETHER:** What other practical steps do we need to take in order to *put on the full armour of God* (v11), *pray in the Spirit* (v16-17) and *be alert* (v18)? How will you be better equipped to fight to the finish and not desert the gospel of Christ having studied this letter?

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**IDEAS FOR PRAYER:** Share together about your own experiences of spiritual warfare. Pray through the different elements of Armour that Paul mentions asking God to help you put it fully on. Pray for one another that you would continue to stand firm in the faith.

**MEMORY VERSES: EPHESIANS 6:10-11**





# MEMORY VERSES

## STUDY 1 – EPHESIANS 1 – SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS AND PAUL’S PRAYER (I)

<sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. **Ephesians 1:17**

## STUDY 2: EPHESIANS 2 – FROM RAGS TO RICHES

<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. **Ephesians 2:8-10**

## STUDY 3: EPHESIANS 3 – ADMINISTERING GOD’S GRACE AND PAUL’S PRAYER (II)

<sup>12</sup> In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.  
**Ephesians 3:12**

## STUDY 4: EPHESIANS 4:1-16 – MISSION STATEMENT

<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. **Ephesians 4:11-13**

## STUDY 5: EPHESIANS 4:17-32 – WALKING WITH JESUS

<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. **Ephesians 4:29**

## STUDY 6: EPHESIANS 5:1-20 – IMITATING GOD

<sup>8</sup> For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.  
**Ephesians 5:8**

## STUDY 7: EPHESIANS 5:21-6:9 – LOVE AND SUBMISSION

<sup>7</sup> Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, <sup>8</sup> because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. **Ephesians 6:7-8**

## STUDY 8: EPHESIANS 6:10-24 – SPIRITUAL WARFARE

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. **Ephesians 6:10-11**