

# EPHESIANS

THE BEAUTY OF THE CHURCH...  
MIRACULOUSLY ONE

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STUDY GUIDE



SUMMIT VIEW CHURCH  
[summitview.net/ephesians](https://summitview.net/ephesians)

# INTRODUCTION

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide has been specifically prepared with you in mind. It will help life groups grow deeper together in relationship with God and one another. Each week there are conversation starters to help get things rolling, followed by questions for discussion based on the text. Each week wraps up with personal applications and things to pray for to help you grow spiritually.

We realize you may not be able to get to every question. Pick the ones that would best work for your group. Obviously, you are more than welcome to pull in other resources, or highlights from the sermons each week. Our hope is that by participating in this study, you will have a firmer grasp on the Scriptures and a stronger connection with Christ.

## INTRODUCTION

The book of Ephesians is six chapters long, containing 155 verses of rich and wonderful text that speak to the mind, heart, and soul. The book of Ephesians has played a crucial role in the Church throughout the ages in terms of the theology it teaches and the practice it informs. Famous pastor and theologian John Calvin stated that it was his favorite part of the Bible. Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge described it as “the divinest composition of man.” Many New Testament scholars say it is the pinnacle of Paul’s work. For the next 13 weeks, we invite you to join with us in exploring the richness of the book of Ephesians.

Of all the letters within the New Testament, Ephesians is one that could have most likely been written to the modern church. When Paul wrote, he was typically writing in response to a particular situation. Yet in the book of Ephesians, we see something different. Paul writes this letter to churches in Asia Minor with no specific occasion or problem in mind. Paul simply writes this letter to bring about encouragement in the Gospel, while offering practical insight on how to live in light of the Gospel.

## AUTHOR/DATE/BACKGROUND

The very first verse of Ephesians states that Paul is the author of this book. While there is some debate out there regarding whether Paul really wrote this letter or not, we must take the author at his word here at the beginning and see that it is Paul who penned this letter speaking truth (4:15, 25). Paul mentions

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his chains and imprisonment three times in this book (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). Therefore, many scholars believe the date of this book to be 62 A.D. when Paul was in Rome (Acts 28). During this same period, Paul also wrote Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians. These four epistles are now commonly referred to as the “prison epistles.”

While the letter is called “Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians”, it is best understood that the letter was not solely intended for the church in Ephesus. It was written more like a general letter that would have been circulated throughout Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey) that existed around Ephesus. This is because the words “in Ephesus” are absent from some of the earliest and best manuscripts. This makes sense since there is no personal greeting anywhere within the letter –which is different from Paul’s other letters. The letter has most likely become associated with Ephesus due to it being the largest and most influential church in the region at the time of its writing.

Ephesus was an important city in Asia Minor. Paul would have been familiar with the area due to two, nearly three, years he spent there during his third missionary journey (see Acts 18:23-21:17). Ephesus was the third-largest city in the Roman empire with a population estimated around 250,000. It was a harbor city and the largest commerce center on the west. Prior



to Christianity reaching the city, it was well-known for pagan worship. It was deeply entrenched in the worship of Artemis (Diana according to the Romans). The temple itself was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. People worshiped this false god, seeing it as a goddess of fertility, magic, and astrology. Its commerce was deeply tied and connected to idol worship, and as Christianity’s influence spread, it quickly upset the cities culture and economy and caused riots (Acts 19). We find out elsewhere (in 1 Timothy 1:4, 7) as Timothy pastors the church, it faces false teachers who were interested in endless myths but not necessarily sound biblical teaching.

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## MAJOR THEMES

### Reconciliation

Peppered throughout this book is the notion that God’s Gospel of grace is one that continually brings together two parties. In fact, Paul states in Ephesians 1:9-10 that the Gospel was to bring about unity with all things. This is seen in two ways:

**1. God with Us.** The letter focuses on the historical work of Jesus. Jesus’ work on the cross brought about cosmic reconciliation between God and us. The Father has sent the Son to redeem us, and the Spirit is at work preserving us until the final day (Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:1-13).

**2. You and I.** The cross reconciles all people (regardless of race, ethnicity, and any other dividing lines) into one body—the Church. Paul helps to explain our unity in Christ, the love we share in Christ, and what we have in Christ through our baptism and life in the Spirit. While we may have taken different paths to come to Christ, we are one new humanity through Him (Ephesians 1:23; 2:10-22; 4:1-6).

### Mystery

Six times throughout the letter, the Apostle Paul writes concerning the “mystery”. When Paul uses this word, he is not simply referring to something known but difficult to understand. Rather, he is referring to something that is completely unknowable unless God reveals it. It is a special divine act in which knowledge is expressed that is beyond our human reach.

## PURPOSE OF EPHESIANS

As mentioned previously, within the context of the letter, there is no specific issue that Paul is writing to address. Some consider this letter more as a theological tract providing insight on what the core essentials of the Christian faith are. Ultimately, it is best for us to see this letter as providing an understanding of the new creation we have become in Christ and the new community the Gospel creates for us to live and operate in. The letter of Ephesians teaches us that when we embrace the love that Christ has for us, we will embrace the way of life that Christ loves.

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## In Christ

Ephesians mentions union with Christ and being “in Christ” more than any other letter—about 36 times. This phrase occurs approximately 164 times in Paul’s 13 letters. The term “in Christ” gets to the heart of Christianity. To be “in Christ” is to be personally and vitally united to Christ. Christians are people who are in Christ. You are united in His death and His resurrection.



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## OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS

Ephesians can be broken down into two main sections. In Chapters 1-3, the Apostle Paul lays out the indicative truth of the Gospel. In Chapters 4-6, Paul gives instructions on how we might live in light of the Gospel.

- I. Greeting & Introduction (1:1-2)
- II. Theological Foundation—An Explanation of the Gospel (1:3-3:21)
  - a. Spiritual Blessings (1:3-14)
  - b. Thanksgiving and Prayer for Insight (1:15-23)
  - c. Overview of the New Life in Christ (2:1-10)
  - d. Reconciliation in Christ (2:11-22)
  - e. Mystery of God’s Purposes (3:1-13)
  - f. Prayer to be Rooted in God’s Love and Doxology (3:14-21)
- III. Practical Outworking of the Gospel (4:1-6:20)
  - a. Exercising Gifts as a Unified Body (4:1-16)
  - b. Children of the Light: Walking in the Newness of Life (4:17-24)
  - c. Walking in Love (4:25-5:20)
  - d. Practical Instructions: Social Maturity (5:21-6:9)
  - e. Fighting the Spiritual Battle; Stand Strong (6:10-20)
- IV. Concluding Remarks (6:21-24)

## SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES

**Book** / *Alive in Him: How Being Embraced by the Love of Christ Changes Everything* by Gloria Furman

**Study Book** / *Reading Ephesians with John Stott*, by John Stott with Andrew T. Le Peau

**Right Now Media** / *The Book of Ephesians* by J.D. Greear

**Right Now Media** / *Ephesians—What Is God’s Plan?* By Phil Vischer

**Video** / *Overview: Ephesians* by The Bible Project

**Courses** / 3 free courses from The Gospel Coalition

# INTRODUCTION

## FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Included with each week is content specifically prepared for families. It will help parents build family discipleship time into their family's life. Learning about family discipleship time and keeping it a regular part of your rhythm can be challenging, so one way to begin is with intentional family Bible time.

Each week you'll find family discussion questions, followed by "wow" words and big ideas, and a "going deeper" section for older kids, or inquiring minds.

You do not have to discuss every question. Just like with the rest of the study guide, pick the questions that best work for you and your family. Our hope is that by participating in this study, a vibrant family discipleship can take root and grow into your rhythm of family life.



## INTRODUCTION

As a writer, some of the hardest words to craft are the ones that start or end a piece of composition. Yet as readers, if we're truly honest, often we skip the greetings and salutations because we believe they are there simply for perfunctory reasons.

When we do that, we can miss really important things. The same can be said when we approach the Epistles (letters) in the New Testament. If we truly believe that all Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable to us (2 Timothy 3:16-17), then even these seemingly "insignificant remarks" can make a transformational impact on our view of the rest of the letter, God, and ourselves. In these two short and simple verses, much can be learned about Paul's view of his fellow believers and what he wishes for them.

## EPHESIANS 1:1-2

**1** *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:* **2** *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** When you receive a letter (or email), is it your habit to skip to the body of the content, passing over the greeting and skipping the closing? Why or why not?

## READ & DISCUSS

### READ EPHESIANS 1:1-2

**Q.** Out the gate, we are told that the Apostle Paul is the one writing this letter. What do you know about the Apostle Paul? *Hint: See him share his testimony in Acts 26:4-23.*

**Follow Up:** How has Paul interacted and engaged with the city of Ephesus before? *Hint: See Acts 18:23-21:17 for highlights of Paul's missionary journey: preaching the Gospel, performing miracles, and changing the cultural dynamic of the city.*

**Q.** Why does it matter that Paul is an apostle and has the authority to write this letter?

**Follow Up:** How did Paul become an apostle? *Hint: By the will of God.* Does this impact the way you will read and listen to the rest of what Paul has to say in this letter?

**Q.** Paul addresses the readers of this letter as saints. What image comes to your mind when you think of saints?

**Follow Up:** The word “saint” is often referred to someone who is devoted to God; sacred/holy. Is this the way you view and see yourself? Is this how you see others you’re in relationship with at Summit View?

**Q.** Paul goes on to describe the readers as “faithful in Christ Jesus”. When he says “faithful”, he isn’t necessarily speaking to an issue of trustworthiness, but rather the fact that they are believers in the person and work of Jesus. Many of the struggles we face are due to an identity crisis—we forget we are “saints”, “believers”, and “in Christ”. Why is it important for us to remember this as a key part of our identity?

**Q.** After greeting the believers, Paul gives two blessings. What are they?

**Q.** Paul’s initial message to them is one of grace and peace. Grace indicates God’s free, saving initiative and peace points to the initiative He has taken to reconcile sinners to Himself and to each other in their new community. Are these two things you wish for others to experience? Have you experienced them for yourself?

**Follow Up:** From where do these two blessings flow?

## PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

Two things that will be teased out throughout our study in the book of Ephesians is our status and connection with God and the community He is building—the Church. How would you describe the status of your walk with Jesus today? Your engagement with the local Church? What is going well? Where is there room for growth? Begin to pray for your love for Christ and the Church to be increased during our study of Ephesians.



### FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Q.** Paul, or the Apostle Paul, is the one writing this letter. What do you know about the Apostle Paul? (Paul shares his testimony: Acts 26:4-23. Paul's time previously in Ephesus: Acts 18:23-21:17. Paul's story: Acts 7:58-28:31.)

**Q.** What is an apostle? How does it differ from a disciple?



### WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

**Grace:** Undeserved favor given to people by God. It's not getting what you deserve; instead, it's getting what you don't deserve.

Because of God's grace, sinners can be **rescued** due to Jesus' death on the cross and His rising from the dead (Ephesians 1:7).

You must know the **grace** of God before the **peace** of God.

**Peace:** We are reconciled (or made right) with God because Jesus paid the price for our sins through His death on the cross. We are no longer separated from God (Romans 5:1).



### GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about **God's love**—God's love for *all* people. Jesus died on the cross for *all* people. No longer is there a separation between God and people or between people; more specifically, Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1-11).



### VERSES TO REMEMBER

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9



## INTRODUCTION

At first glance of Ephesians 1:3-14, we see the Apostle Paul searching for words to describe the delight he has in what God has done for believers through Christ. One commentator even describes Paul's tone, words, and demeanor here as "controlled ecstasy". In fact, verses 3-14 are one single glorious run-on sentence (sorry to our English teachers out there!) Paul encourages the reader to bless God because He has blessed us with a multitude of blessings. This week we will start to look at what has Paul so hyped up.

## MAIN IDEA

God's eternal plan, in Christ Jesus is our blessing, for the praise of His glorious name.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** Giving thanks is not just for Thanksgiving. What are you thankful for?

## READ & DISCUSS

### READ EPHESIANS 1:3-6

Ephesians begins with a Jewish-style poem praising God for His eternal plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. This book is a summary of the Gospel and how we are to use the Gospel to shape every aspect of our lives.

Verses 3-6 are blessings, or praises, to God. Praise prepare our hearts to respond rightly to what God has done. Paul normally uses this space as a time to give thanks for the recipients of the letter; instead, he lists out what God has done for the believer. Read verses 3-6. What is Paul specifically giving thanks to God for?

**Q.** How has God blessed us?

## EPHESIANS 1:3-6

### Praise for Spiritual Blessings in Christ

*<sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup>even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

*Between the birth and the return of Jesus, the age to come overlaps with the present age. To be blessed in Christ is to enjoy a foretaste of future blessings — intimacy with God, true life, and even, at times, many physical benefits. We should expect the Father to bless us, for we are His children, though He may give us blessings that we do not expect or request. But as in all things, He knows best what to give us.*

- The Abundance of  
Blessing in Christ  
from Ligonier Ministries

- Q. What are the blessings?
- Q. When did God give these blessings?
- Q. Why did He give them?
- Q. What happens in your heart when you focus on praising God for what He has done and take time to celebrate it?

### READ EPHESIANS 1:4

God's redemptive plan has always existed. This means that from eternity past, God has been directing His purposes and nothing can get in the way. Stop and think for a few minutes about the creation story, keeping in mind that God knew everything that would take place. And He knew that in Jesus He would save every believer from sin and death.

- Q. How does this change your view of God?
- Q. What does it mean to be chosen in Christ?

**Q.** How does this affect your understanding of your role in your salvation? The second half of verse 4 says “that we should be holy and blameless before him.” Humanity was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-28); sin has distorted our reflection of that image (Romans 1:18, 21-22); in Christ we are made righteous (Romans 5:18-19); and we should reflect God’s image more and more as we walk with Christ (Romans 12:2).

**Q.** Do you ever consider what image you are reflecting? Who, or what do others see when they look at your life?

**Q.** Growing in holiness is not optional; the good news of the Gospel sets us free from the chains of sin. What chains to you need to step out of?



### READ EPHESIANS 1:5

*Predestined* in Greek means “marked out beforehand”. *It emphasizes God’s eternal plan; He didn’t make things up as they unfolded.* His plan all along was to adopt us through Christ. As adopted children, we are reminded that it was God, in His grace, who chose us. It wasn’t our own doing.

**Q.** Why do you think it matters that we understand this?

We were born into brokenness with no hope of saving ourselves, much like a person in ancient times had no hope of improving their economic station unless they were adopted into a new family (there was no such thing as the American Dream). Once adopted, they were a legitimate member of the family with full rights and privileges (family, station, inheritance, etc.). This is true for us as believers in Christ! Without our adoption into His family, we have no hope. Now, we not only have access to God, but are also given the rights and privileges as children of God.

**Q.** How does looking at your salvation through the lens of adoption change your understanding of it?

**Q.** There’s a misguided, popular saying, “God helps those who help themselves”. Considering this passage, why is this saying untrue and unhelpful? Why do you think it became popular?

### READ EPHESIANS 1:5-6 (WITH EMPHASIS ON VERSE 6)

**Q.** Why did God save us? *Hint: It isn’t about us.*

**Follow Up:** How are we to respond?

## PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

God’s plan all along has been salvation for His praise and glory. We see it threaded throughout the Old Testament. His plan should induce praise in our thoughts, words, and deeds. Look up the following passages and marvel together at His glorious grace that he has blessed us with in the Beloved.

Genesis 3:14-15

Genesis 12:1-3

Deuteronomy 7:6-8

2 Samuel 7:8-16

Ezekiel 34:11-16



### FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Q.** We hear people say, “I deserve \_\_\_\_.” What is a situation where you felt you deserved something? What was it and why?

FAMILY  
DISCIPLESHIP



### WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

**Predestined:** Marked out beforehand; chosen by God. Specifically refers to the sinners whom God rescued.

**Adoption:** The action or fact of legally being responsible for and raising another person’s child as one’s own.

- Imagine a King noticing an orphan living on the street. The orphan did not deserve anything, yet the King could bring him to the palace as a servant (where he would have food, shelter, and clothing). Or even more surprising, the King could adopt the orphan. That child is now a prince or princess along with the King’s other children. He or she is entitled to the same position, privileges, and inheritance as the other children.
- When we believe that Jesus died for our sins, rose again, and we trust that He alone can save us—we become that child adopted by a Heavenly King. We have a position, privileges, and an inheritance.
- We are co-heirs with Jesus!



### VERSES TO REMEMBER

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9

**Adam and Eve**, the first humans, chose to disobey God. Their sin brought sadness, pain, and death into the world. However, God had a plan all along. This was decided long before we existed (before Creation!) God sent His Son for everyone.



### GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about God's love for you. Look at [John 3:16](#) and add your name in the blanks:

For God so loved the world (yes, He  
 loves \_\_\_\_\_)  
 that He gave His only Son, that (if  
 \_\_\_\_\_ ) believes  
 in Him, ( \_\_\_\_\_ )  
 should not perish but have eternal life.







## INTRODUCTION

This week, we continue examining Paul's run-on sentence that started back in verse 3. As we do so, it is important to remind ourselves about how we approach the Scriptures. Regardless of one's background, whenever we approach the Scripture to read them, we must understand we bring a set of preconceived notions and expectations. Unfortunately, we typically approach the Scriptures in a very "me-centric" way. Yet, the intention of the Scriptures is not to be all about us. We are not the main characters that God focuses on. We are not the main character in this story—God is. When we read the Bible, we find that through the work of God, we receive benefits through His grace and love toward us. In this section of Scripture, Paul is focusing on what has been given to us through the work of Christ.

## MAIN IDEA

The spiritual blessings we receive is secured through Christ and assured by the Spirit.

### EPHESIANS 1:7-14

*<sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup>which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup>making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup>as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

*<sup>11</sup>In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, <sup>12</sup>so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup>In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** This week and last have been working under the title of “Spiritual Blessings.” What are some blessings in your life?

## READ & DISCUSS

### READ EPHESIANS 1:7-14

**Q.** According to verse 7, what do we receive from God by the work of Christ?

*Hint: Redemption, forgiveness of sins.*

**Follow Up:** In your own words, what is redemption?

**Follow Up:** Paul uses everyone’s favorite “F” word here—forgiveness. Paul tells us that God has lavished His grace upon us with forgiveness. That means God’s forgiveness is complete, not begrudging, and abundantly given. How does this make you feel regarding guilt of past (or present) sins in your life?

**Q.** Paul connects our ability to receive redemption and the forgiveness of sins through the shedding of Jesus’ blood. Why is the sacrifice of Jesus’ blood so significant?

**Follow Up:** Compare this verse with the following verses: [Galatians 3:13](#); [1 Peter 1:18-19](#); [1 Timothy 2:5](#); [Hebrews 9:15](#); [Mark 10:45](#). How do these fill in the picture of Christ’s payment for our sins?

**Q.** Paul indicates here that among the blessings that we have received by grace is “redemption” and “forgiveness of our trespasses”. What do these verses say that we contribute to the act of our salvation?

**Follow Up:** How do you feel, knowing that God chose to love you even before you did anything?

**Q.** What spiritual blessings are needed in your home, in your neighborhood, in your city, and beyond? What effects of the fall do you see or experience in your midst that need to be “united in him” (verse 10)?

**Follow Up:** How can you, with your family, friends, and/or life group, participate in Christ's unifying, reconciling work?

**Q.** The section of verses 11-14 starts and ends with a reference to an inheritance. What do we know about it?

**Follow Up:** Who is guaranteeing our inheritance?

**Follow Up:** Why is the fact that the Holy Spirit is guaranteeing our inheritance so significant to contrast a works-based faith?

**Follow Up:** How does this impact your day-to-day decisions?



## PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

In this section, “to the praise of his glorious grace/glory” is mentioned three times (verses 6,12,14). Take some time to take inventory of your life to find areas in which you can praise God for His glorious grace in your life. If you are indeed in Christ, the truths we studied this week are reason enough. But if we look pause and look hard enough, we will be able to find many more reasons to praise God.

*Praise God from Whom all blessings flow  
Praise Him, all creatures here below  
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host  
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost*

- Words written by Thomas Ken in 1674, sung since then by Christians praising and thanking God for His work.



### FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Q.** The main character in a book is the main person in the story or the person of which the story is about. Who are some of your favorite main characters? Who is the main character in the Bible?

## FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP



### WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

Review **grace** from Week 1.

**“In Christ”** – is a position, like “in the middle” or “in the playroom.” It tells us that we are part of God’s story. The Bible is not about us; we are not the main character.

God rescues sinners (you and me) not because we are good, but because **He is good**. We do not deserve anything apart from death. Our rescue is not of our own doing, not even a little bit.

**Redemption** – the act of “buying out.” Specifically used regarding the purchase of a person’s freedom.

- Imagine you are a slave or a captive that is being held hostage. You can either: free yourself/escape, have someone rescue you, or have someone pay a ransom for you.
- We are dead in sin—we can do nothing to free ourselves or escape (because we’re “dead,” remember?) But Jesus rescued us and paid a ransom for us by dying on the cross. The price paid was very costly—it was Jesus’ life. His own blood was shed for us. Though Jesus had no sin, He died for our sins.

**Seals** from the ancient world were commonly used to show ownership over a person’s possessions. We are marked by God’s seal but not in a physical way. God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit to show that we belong to Him and as a “down payment” of our inheritance.



### GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about God's love. Because of God's love for us, we can be redeemed. The benefits of redemption include eternal life (Revelation 5:9-10), forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7), righteousness (Romans 5:17), adoption into God's family (Galatians 4:5), deliverance from sin's hold (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:14-18), peace with God (Colossians 1:18-20), and the Holy Spirit coming to live in our hearts (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).



### VERSES TO REMEMBER

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9





## INTRODUCTION

To pray over each other as brothers and sisters in Christ is an amazing gift given to us by God. Paul uses this section of his letter to the church in Ephesus to pray and give thanks for their faith in Christ and their love for all the saints. As Paul prays for them, he is simultaneously reminding them not to forget truths about who God is and what the Lord Jesus has done. This is not just an earthly reality but a cosmic-level paradigm shift. Paul's focus

is being genuinely grateful for the faith that his brothers and sisters have in Jesus. This gratefulness is also a showing of Paul's gratitude of the Gospel. The example we must follow is to pray for each other that we would receive a spirit of wisdom and a revelation in the knowledge of God (Ephesians 1:17).



*“A chief object  
of all prayer  
is to bring  
us to God.”*

—P. T. Forsyth,  
The Soul of Prayer

## MAIN IDEA

Pray for one another to live fully under the Lordship of Jesus.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** Paul tells the Ephesians that he remembers them in his prayers. Who is that you remember and pray for regularly?

## READ & DISCUSS

READ EPHESIANS 1:15-23

**Q.** In your own words, summarize what Paul is praying for the Ephesians to experience.

**Follow Up:** Do you regularly pray for similar things? Why or why not?

**Follow Up:** One of the main differences may be the person for which we are praying. How often do you pray for other people compared to simply for yourself and immediate family?

**Follow Up:** How might we improve in this?

**Q.** Paul is praying that the Ephesians may increase in their intimacy with and knowledge of Christ. How is your relationship with Jesus? Do you know Him better than you did a year ago?

**Follow Up:** Paul asks God to reveal more of himself in wisdom—to give knowledge that will change believers through the power of the Gospel. What does Paul mean when he uses the figure of speech “eyes of the heart to be enlightened”?

**Follow Up:** Paul speaks the idea of hope. How would you define biblical hope? *Hint: Biblical hope – an earnest anticipation based on, and as a result of, faith; the confident expectation of good to come based in the integrity of God, that He will fulfill every promise He has given.*

**Follow Up:** What is the hope in which God has called us to?

## EPHESIANS 1:15-23

### Thanksgiving and Prayer

<sup>15</sup> For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, <sup>16</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

**Follow Up:** How confident are you today in this? Doubtful? Confident? Somewhere in-between?

**Q.** Look at the words “power” and “might” in verse 19. Think of the most awesome display of power you have ever seen (tornado/earthquake/machinery/athletic feat?). What is Paul saying that is even mightier and more powerful than that? (*Hint: The Resurrection.*)

**Follow Up:** Is that how you think of the resurrection—the most powerful and mighty act of all time?

**Q.** What does this passage say about the exaltation of Jesus? What is it exactly?

**Follow Up:** How might living with this awareness affect our lives?

**Q.** How is Paul’s view of the church different from the view taken by most Christians today?

**Follow Up:** What would happen if we took a high view of the church?



## PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

Carefully re-read and pray this prayer alongside the Apostle Paul. In this prayer, we find God’s power. It is at work in us and through us. Do not simply pray this for yourself, your spouse, kids, etc. Pray this for your life group and for our church. Consider taking time this week to memorize this prayer to be one you pray for the remainder of our time in our study of Ephesians.



## FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Q.** Why do we pray?

**Q.** Discuss a few of the different types of prayers: supplication (requesting), confession, thanksgiving, worship, and intercession (praying for others).

# FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP



## WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

Review **adopted** and the idea of **inheritance** from Week 2.

**Hope:** Because of our belief and trust in God, we can eagerly expect good to come based on the sureness that God will fulfill every promise He has given.

In addition to giving thanks, we should **pray** to know God better, understand/appreciate our inheritance from God, and recognize the enormous power of God that is at work in our lives.

God is the most **powerful!** He defeated death. Jesus died for our sins, but He didn't stay dead. Because of God's power, Jesus rose from the dead without it. The sin stayed dead, but Jesus did not.

Jesus was then elevated to God's **right hand**, which is not a place. It's a way of describing a position of power and favor. (**Exodus 15:6** and **Psalm 80:17**). Jesus has ruling authority over everything, including the church.



## GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about God's love—God's love for *all* people. Jesus died on the cross for *all* people. No longer is there a separation between God and people or between people; more specifically, Jews and Gentiles (**Ephesians 3:1-11**).



### VERSES TO REMEMBER

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9*





## INTRODUCTION

Let's face it. One of the main reasons we don't immerse ourselves in the Scriptures is often because we don't necessarily like the picture that it paints of us sometimes. Sure, the Bible can be hard to understand at points, but that's not typically what keeps us from coming back. It's when its message is crystal clear about us. This is one of those weeks that starts with a brutally honest depiction of man, yet ends with a beautiful promise. All this hinges on two great words: ***But God***.

## MAIN IDEA

God helps the hopeless.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** Can you think of a time when you hoped for something to happen, only to be disappointed? What happened? How did you cope with it?

*“God has surely promised His grace to the humbled: that is, to those who mourn over and despair of themselves. But a man cannot be thoroughly humbled till he realizes that his salvation is utterly beyond his own powers, counsels, efforts, will and works, and depends absolutely on the will, counsel, pleasure and work of Another—God alone.”*

—Martin Luther,  
*The Bondage of the Will*

## READ & DISCUSS

### READ EPHESIANS 2:1-3

**Q.** Paul paints a very bleak, hopeless picture. Don't rush ahead to verse 4, but allow the tension of the problem to build. Pay attention to the words dead, trespasses, sin, walked, following, disobedience, and wrath. What other words or phrases stand out that describe our situation? In these verses we are clued into the very real spiritual battle waged against us.

**Q.** What is the problem being addressed in verses 1-3?

**Q.** What is sin? (Check out the [Bible Project video](#) on the words sin, transgression, and iniquity) Why does understanding sin matter?

## EPHESIANS 2:1-10

### By Grace Through Faith

**2** *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins<sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—<sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*

<sup>4</sup> *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

**Q.** What hope do dead things have for coming back to life? What do they need for that to happen?

**Q.** “By nature” means we were born into sin. We are fallen by nature, not born good and then learn to sin (Psalm 51:5). How does this impact the way you view yourself? Why does it matter? Hint: If we are born good, we become a victim of our circumstances and are not responsible for the wrong we do.

### READ EPHESIANS 2:4-9

“But God”—there is good news! Just when we thought there was no hope! In Christ, we are given new life spiritually in this age (regeneration) and we look forward to new physical bodies when Christ returns (future resurrection). God’s grace saves us and gives us hope beyond the here and now.

**Q.** Why did God act?

**Q.** What does this reveal about God? Look at verse 7. How should we respond to God showing us the “immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness” we witness in Christ?

**Q.** Why is a correct understanding of grace and faith as gifts from God so foundational to the Christian faith? Does this truth comfort or challenge you? Why?

**READ EPHESIANS 2:10**

We are God's workmanship; He created us for a purpose, to do something God has always had in mind. Think for a moment how silly it would be if something you created turned to you and asked, "Why did you make me like this?" (Romans 9:21, Isaiah 45:9-10), and off it went to do what it wanted, rather than what it was designed for. When we do not live according to God's purpose, this silly example is exactly what we are doing.

**Q.** Do you struggle to accept that you are God's workmanship, created to do what He purposes? How does free will fit into this idea?

**Q.** What are the good works God has prepared for us to do? How do you know? Remember, it isn't our works that save us, but that we are compelled by the grace of God to respond to it (James 2:14-26).

**PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION**

As you pray, take time to marvel at God's plan, His sovereignty, His mercy, that He saved us from death, making us alive with Christ, and the immeasurable riches of His grace He has shown us in kindness through Jesus Christ. Rejoice that it is not our doing, but God has done it, in His perfect power and might. How will you take this knowledge with you this week, and who do you need to share it with?



## FAMILY DISCUSSION

Brainstorm and make a list of two words (or two-word phrases) that when said, could change things. For example, if I'm having a bad day, these two words "Some flowers?" or "Go out?" changes my perspective on my day. Or, when considering on attending an event, "Free admission" would change things and sway me in favor of going.

## FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP



## WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

Review **grace** from Week 1, **adoption** and the idea of **inheritance** from Week 2, and **redemption** from Week 3.

Every one of us (yes, you, and me too) are rotten **sinners**.

- Sin has separated us from God and because of that, we are spiritually dead.
- God sent His Son to die for our sins when He could just leave us in our sins, destined to spend all of forever separated from Him. And then, two words that change everything—**"but God."** But God sent His Son, Jesus. Even though we were sinners, Jesus (who had no sin) died for us.

We cannot do anything to earn favor with God. Our rescue from sin is based on **Jesus'** work, not ours.

- While we cannot do any good work to earn our rescue from sin, after we are part of God's family, we do works out of a heart of gratitude for all that Jesus has done for us.

How do we get rescued? How do we get to be part of God's family? It's so simple—we just believe that Jesus is who He said He is, and trust that He can save us.



## GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about God's love demonstrated through the Gospel.

The word **gospel** simply means **good news**.

There are three important parts:

1. Jesus died for our sins.
2. He was buried.
3. He rose from the dead on the third day.

This is important because this allows us to come close to God, if we believe (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).



## VERSES TO REMEMBER

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. Ephesians 2:8-9*





## INTRODUCTION

Can two at opposition really become one? Judging by the world around us, this is still a problem today. People often do not trust or choose to fear those who don't look, act, or think like them. The previous section of Scripture dealt with how we can move from spiritually dead to spiritually alive and reconciled back to God through the grace of God. Paul continues his thought to instruct his audience that we have been reconciled to others as well through the blood of Christ; even though his audience includes those who have been hostile towards one another since Genesis 15.

## MAIN IDEA

It is through Christ's blood that we can be spiritually united to form one family.

### EPHESIANS 2:11-22

#### One In Christ

*<sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—<sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

*“The key thought of Ephesians is the gathering together of all things in Jesus Christ. Christ is the center in whom all things unite, and the bond who unites all things. In nature as it is without Christ there is nothing but disunity and disharmony... The world, as we see it without Christ, is a divided, disunited, fragmented world...this disunity can only become a unity, and this disharmony can only become a harmony, when all things and all men and all powers in heaven and earth are united in Christ.”*

—William Barclay



## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** What is your biggest pet peeve? What if someone with that pet peeve became a huge part of your life? How would you get past your differences?

## READ & DISCUSS

**READ EPHESIANS 2:11-12**

**Q.** Why do you think Paul points out to his audience that they are “Gentiles in the flesh”? What implications does this have for us today?

**Q.** Paul uses circumcision to draw up imagery that would take his audience back to Genesis 17. What are the three adjectives of the “uncircumcised” found in verse 12?

**Follow Up:** Compare and contrast this list with the one in Ephesians 2:1-4.

## PEACE

World peace is something joked about in pageant competitions and sought after by world leaders. Anyone raising little kids knows that peace is hard to experience within the home. How will we ever experience peace this side of heaven?

A 21st Century reading of Ephesians 2:11-22 might paint Paul as naïve to think that peace within the body of Christ is attainable. However, Scripture speaks of peace as a virtue attainable through Jesus Christ. Consider how these passages should instruct the way that you experience and extend peace:

Proverbs 14:30; John 14:27;  
Galatians 5:22; Philippians 4:7;  
Colossians 1:20.

*Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you.*

2 Thessalonians 3:16

**Q.** In our cultural landscape, which of these descriptors is the hardest for an unbeliever to understand? Which is the hardest to communicate?

### READ EPHESIANS 2:4 AND 2:13

**Q.** In Scripture, the word “but” is often followed with a message of hope. In verses 4 and 13, what is the reality of someone who has put their faith in Jesus?

### READ EPHESIANS 2:14-17

**Q.** How does Jesus’ flesh break down the “dividing wall of hostility”? *Hint: Look at [Matthew 27:51](#).*

**Q.** Are “Peace” and “One” connected? How should this reflect in the way that Christ-followers engage with one another? How can you seek after peace with someone who doesn’t think or act like you?

### READ EPHESIANS 2:18-22

**Q.** In verse 18, who is the “him” and what did He give? How does this verse instruct our understanding of the Holy Spirit’s role? What is our contribution to the truth found here?

**Q.** In this section, Paul is speaking directly to the Gentile converts, ensuring them of their adoption into the family of God. What is Paul pushing against in the declaration that he makes in verses 19-20?

**Q.** Verses 21 and 22 talk about a structure that is being built. Who is at work constructing? What key word describes the construction of this structure?

**Q.** As the structure is being crafted “together”, what should it begin to look like?

**Follow up:** How can your words and actions begin to reflect this collective dwelling place that the Holy Spirit is building?



## PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

Paul directs his audience to recognize that the community of God is available through Jesus' death on the cross. As disciples of Jesus, we are being built into a community and joined together through the Holy Spirit. When the community of God focuses on the one thing that unites us, the things that divide ought to become less significant. No physical appearance, attribute, skill, no like-minded thinking, or socio-economic status will ever completely bring unity. Peace and unity can only be found in the Holy Spirit offered through the blood of Jesus.

- Where have you been looking for unity in God's family?
- In what ways are your words and actions contributing towards the peace that can be found in God's family?
- In what way are your words and actions detracting from the peace that can be found in God's family?



## FAMILY DISCUSSION

Discuss the huge divide between Jews and Gentiles in ancient times. Jewish people were prideful of their faith and traditions, thinking these elevated them above everyone else. Gentiles were prideful for trusting in their achievements, power, or position.

FAMILY  
DISCIPLESHIP



## WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

Review **grace** and **peace** from Week 1.

God has always called His people to **remember their past** to help them appreciate even more all that He has done for them and the greatness of His grace, mercy, and love.

**But now:** Another two words that change everything: No longer are sacrifices or other rituals necessary to be forgiven or to be close to God. Jesus brought an end to this by His death on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice. Anyone has access to God no matter their race, social status, denomination, or any other earthly division.

- We have peace: 1) with God and 2) with each other.
- Not only do believers have access to God and the wall of hostility between groups has been torn down, believers are called together to one body—the Church.

## The Church

- Fellow citizens of a Kingdom—not an individual matter, but a community experience; joining with other believers.
- Members of a family—a household is a deeper level of belonging; strong and supportive relationships.
- A temple—God’s presence in believers.



## GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about God's love—God's love for *all* people. Jesus died on the cross for *all* people. No longer is there a separation between God and people or between people; more specifically, Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1-11).



## VERSES TO REMEMBER

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9







## INTRODUCTION

In chapter 2, Paul began to introduce the idea of the mystery of the Gospel; that God is making a new group of people through Jesus' death on the cross. At the beginning of chapter 3, it appears that Paul attempts to move on to pray, yet is overwhelmed and returns to further expound upon the mystery of the Gospel.

John Stott remarks:

“[I]n Christianity there are no esoteric (obscure) ‘mysteries’ reserved for a spiritual elite. On the contrary, the Christian ‘mysteries’ are truths which, although beyond human discovery, have been revealed by God and so now belong openly to the whole church. More simply, **mystērion** [Greek word for mystery] is a truth hitherto hidden from human knowledge or understanding but now disclosed by the revelation of God”.

Just as Paul was commissioned to proclaim this mystery, the Church today is also called to make it know, with boldness and confidence that comes from faith in Jesus.



## EPHESIANS 3:1-11

### The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed

**3** For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—<sup>2</sup> assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you,<sup>3</sup> how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.<sup>4</sup> When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ,<sup>5</sup> which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.<sup>6</sup> This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

<sup>7</sup>Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power.<sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ,<sup>9</sup> and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things,<sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.<sup>11</sup> This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,<sup>12</sup> in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.<sup>13</sup> So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

### MAIN IDEA

Paul was appointed by God to proclaim the mysteries of God that united both Jews and Gentiles together in Christ.

### CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** Is there something that seemed like a mystery to you when you were younger, that you know and understand now that you're older?

### READ & DISCUSS

**READ EPHESIANS 3:1-6**

**Q.** Why does Paul refer to himself as “a prisoner of Christ Jesus”? What might a life lived like this look like?

**Q.** Have you ever considered the fact that you are a steward of God's grace? Are you being a good or bad steward of the grace that you have received and are commanded to extend to others? Why?

**Q.** What is the mystery that Paul is talking about in this section?

**Q.** The letters to the early churches (and last week's study) show that there was a division between Jew and Gentile converts to Christianity. As Paul is illuminating the root of the issue here, the Jewish converts probably wondered, "Why the Gentiles, God?" Describe a time where you have asked, "Why me; why now, God?"

#### READ EPHESIANS 3:7-13

**Q.** What (or who) qualified Paul to preach to the Gentiles?

**Q.** What comes to mind when you read the phrase "the unsearchable riches of Christ"?

**Follow Up:** How do you explain the "unsearchable riches of Christ" to an unbeliever?

**Q.** Paul says in verse 9 that it is his responsibility to illuminate and make known the mystery that has been hidden for ages. Through your own personal study, what is one mystery that God has illuminated in your life?

**Follow Up:** Do you see yourself as having the same responsibility?

**Q.** According to verse 12, Paul says that believers have "boldness and access with confidence." How bold and confident do you feel about your faith?

**Follow Up:** How bold and confident do you feel about the mission God has called us to?

# MYSTERY REVEALED

## EPHESIANS 3:1-11

WEEK  
7



### PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

Paul is urging the Church to be...the Church. Christ is still at work building His Church. He is doing it through the mysteries revealed to individual believers through His Word. Briefly review the entire passage one more time. What privileges and responsibilities does Ephesians 3:1-13 give to the Church? How are we to respond to the mysteries that have been revealed in our lives? What is one way we can pray for Christ's mystery to be revealed to others through your words and actions?



## FAMILY DISCUSSION

Some riches can be calculated; money, silver, gold, property. Name some things that are priceless.

## FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP



## WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

**Mystery:** In this instance, God's plan that had not been revealed until Jesus.

- Part of God's plan had been revealed from the beginning: God would send the Messiah. The Jewish people, as God's chosen people, had been waiting thousands of years for this Messiah's rescue.
- What was not known was the Messiah in God's plan would come for all people. Believers—no matter if they are Gentiles or Jews would be equal partners, and that all believers are co-heirs with Jesus. (Romans 8:17, Galatians 3:29, 4:7)
- God planned to have Jews and Gentiles comprise one body—the church.
- This union of Jews and Gentiles, which was so astonishing to all who saw it, is a living example of the gospel; that God accepts all who believe.

Believers not only have the **right** to approach God, but they can approach Him with **confidence and boldness**, much as one would with a close friend.

- Because of Jesus, we can enter directly into God's presence through prayer.
- We are welcomed with open arms because we are part of God's family—we are God's children.



### GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about God's love reflected in a believer's life. Entry to the Kingdom of God is a priceless gift. The unsearchable riches of Christ can be seen in the heart of His followers (Matthew 13:44-46).



### VERSES TO REMEMBER

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

Ephesians 2:8-9, 4:32







## INTRODUCTION

In this passage, Paul prays for the believers to have a deep understanding of God's power in their lives. Paul's main request is for the Spirit to give strength to the believer to comprehend the incomprehensible love of God. When His love is planted in our hearts, we can grow to maturity. How much of your heart does Jesus live in? What in your life is mainly controlled by sinful ideas, unhealthy influences, and self-centeredness? Maturity in Christ is dependent on being filled with His loving and powerful presence, which helps us oppose sin and nurtures a selfless love.

## MAIN IDEA

Believers may know the dimensions of the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ in us and that we may know Him more and more.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** We've all heard the adage, "Measure twice and cut once." Think of a time that you didn't follow the rule; or you did follow the rule and it still didn't work. What happened?

## READ & DISCUSS

### READ EPHESIANS 3:14-15

**Q.** What is Paul's posture in prayer?

**Follow Up:** Who does he kneel to? What does bowing symbolize?

**Q.** What does "before" connote regarding the person kneeling and the Father?  
Hint: Face-to-face implies what kind of relationship?

### READ EPHESIANS 3:16-19

**Q.** The content of Paul's prayer is listed in three items (verses 16, 17, 18-19). What are they?

#### 1. EPHESIANS 3:16—STRENGTH OF SPIRIT

**Q.** We have an inner being (as referred to in verse 16), but there's another part of ourselves—what is it? *Hint: 2 Corinthians 4:16 tells us.*

## EPHESIANS 3:14-21

### Prayer for Spiritual Strength

*<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

*<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

**Follow Up:** What does 2 Corinthians 4:16 tell us is happening to each “being” or “man?”

**Follow Up:** The inner man is wasting away and Paul prays for strength for the inner man, knowing that we cannot resist evil influences in our own strength. But we should not be discouraged. What hope do 2 Corinthians 4:16 and Colossians 3:9-10 give us?

### 2. EPHESIANS 3:17—INDWELLING OF CHRIST

For those who like grammar, this passage uses the present continuous tense, meaning the progressive character of Christ’s indwelling. In other words, Christ’s indwelling is not static, but a maintained experience.

**Q.** We enter a relationship with Christ by faith; we are “in Christ.” What does Christ’s indwelling mean? *Hint: Look up Galatians 2:20 and 2 Corinthians 13:5.*

**Follow Up:** John 15:5 tells us two things about Christ’s indwelling. One is that it is not a temporary, but permanent by the means of whom?

**Follow Up:** What is the result of Christ’s indwelling?

### 3. EPHESIANS 3:18-19—FULLNESS OF GOD

Some translations use the word “grasp” in verse 18. While grasp can mean “to grip or hold,” in this case it refers to “comprehend” or “perceive.”

**Q.** Paul uses four measurements in verse 18. What are they?

**Follow Up:** Scholars disagree on what the measurements refer to—God’s love or God’s power (or both). What do you think? Why?

**Q.** What is Paul trying to communicate about the love of God in verse 19?

**Q.** Part of Paul’s prayer is that the believers may be filled with all the fullness of God. What is the fulfillment God intends for man in Ephesians 4:13? *Hint: How is maturity measured?*

**Follow Up:** A child has full value but does not have full maturity. How does this statement give us hope?



## PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

Paul concludes with an impassioned outpouring of praise in a doxology (Ephesians 3:20-21). God's copious power is again highlighted in this conclusion. Do we underestimate the power at work within us?

The love of God is immeasurable. A hymn from my childhood illustrates this concept. As you read through the hymn, reflect on whether you put limits on God's love for you. Do you know God's love? We do not know Christ until we know the love of Christ that cannot be fully known.

### **The Love of God Is Greater Far**

*The love of God is greater far  
Than tongue or pen can ever tell.  
It goes beyond the highest star  
And reaches to the lowest hell.*

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,  
And were the skies of parchment made;  
Were every stalk on earth a quill,  
And every man a scribe by trade;*

*To write the love of God above  
Would drain the ocean dry;  
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,  
Though stretched from sky to sky.*

*O love of God, how rich and pure!  
How measureless and strong!  
It shall forevermore endure—  
The saints' and angels' song.*

Words & Music by Frederick Martin Lehman (1868-1953).



### FAMILY DISCUSSION

Think of something you love. How would you describe that love? How would you measure it?



### WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

The **power** of God in our lives is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. It now resides in us.

FAMILY  
DISCIPLESHIP

**Indwelling:** We are in Christ, but what's more amazing is that Christ is in us!

### Rooted and grounded:

- Like a tree, the believer who is rooted in God's love is made strong.
- Like the foundation's cornerstone of a building that holds the whole structure together, Jesus provides a solid base for the believer.

Review **mystery** from Week 7.

- The idea that all people are equal in God is mystifying; but even more mystifying is how big the love of God is for us.
- God's love for us is too large to even measure:
  - Wide** enough to reach the whole world and beyond.
  - Long** enough to stretch from eternity to eternity.
  - High** enough to raise both Jews and Gentiles to heavenly places in Jesus.
  - Deep** enough to rescue people from sin's rottenness and even from the grip of Satan.
- The more we understand of the love of God, the more we will be filled with all the fullness of God.



### GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about God's love. The more you understand God's love, the more you will: experience His presence and take on His character (including suffering). (Romans 8:17)



### VERSE TO REMEMBER

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32*







## INTRODUCTION

In Ephesians 1-3, we learned of God's work of redemption. All of this was according to His plan, reconciling sinful men and women back to Himself. Yet, this act is not done in isolation. God calls all His people into a new community, a new people, a new family in Christ. After three chapters of doctrine, Paul transitions into addressing everyday practical implications of the Gospel. Here starts the second half of the letter that teaches us how to live in light of God's glorious grace.

## MAIN IDEA

Paul exhorts us to maintain unity and grow into spiritual maturity.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** What is the best group or team you have ever been a part of? What made it such a great experience?

## READ & DISCUSS

### READ EPHESIANS 4:1-3

**Q.** “Therefore” in verse 1 is a major “therefore” in all of Scripture. It’s a “therefore” that refers back to everything Paul has covered in chapters 1–3. Given all that Paul has said about the riches of the Gospel of Christ and the glory of God, Paul uses all that truth to set up the first major imperative (command) of the book.

**Q.** Before we get to Paul's command, let's briefly take a second to recap the first part of Ephesians. Paul continues to use the term "called" to describe something in which God has done in this chapter (verses 1 and 4). Considering what we've learned so far in the book of Ephesians, how would you describe this calling? *Hint: See Ephesians 1:18; 2:10; and 3:6.*

**Q.** Paul commands his readers to live a life worthy of their calling and then lists some characteristics. What are they? What type of person comes to mind as you read over this list? Who have you witnessed to a good example of this?

**Q.** How do the qualities listed in verses 2-3 display a mature faith?

## EPHESIANS 4:1-16

### Unity in the Body of Christ

**4** *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup>But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. <sup>8</sup>Therefore it says,*

*“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”*

*<sup>9</sup>(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? <sup>10</sup>He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) <sup>11</sup>And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds[c] and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,[e] to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup>so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup>Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

**Follow Up:** What happens when Christians embody and live out these characteristics?

**Follow Up:** From the list of behaviors to model and exhibit in our everyday lives, which one(s) do you struggle with the most?

**Follow Up:** How would you ask God to help you grow in this area?

**READ EPHESIANS 4:4-6**

**Q.** Why does Christian unity necessitate agreement on “one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all”? What might this say about the importance of doctrine, our ability to understand it, and unity?

**Q.** Within this section, Paul lays out three ways in which we are united: by a divine calling (verse 1), by Christlike conduct (verses 2-3), and by our Gospel confession (verses 4-6). Why are each of these components required for us to experience unity? What happens if one of these three pieces is missing?

**Q.** Paul stresses the importance of unity within the local church in this passage. Why is this so important? What message does a unified church declare to an unbelieving world? What message does a fragmented church send to a skeptical world?

**READ EPHESIANS 4:7-16**

While unity means a oneness of mind and heart, it does not mean sameness. While Christians are to experience and strive after unity, we are to do so by using the diverse gifts and abilities God has blessed each of us with.

**Q.** In these verses, Paul highlights Christ’s generosity and authority. Christ Jesus died, rose, and ascended into heaven as the victorious King with all authority and gave gifts to His people, displaying extravagant generosity. What is the relationship between the ascension of Jesus and the distribution of spiritual gifts to believers? *Hint: Look at Paul's use of Psalm 68.*



**Q.** Jesus has given every believer gifts through the Spirit, as well as the corporate body of believers. For what purpose? *Hint: See verses 12 and 13.*

**Q.** How does Paul describe the mature church in these verses? What can you do to help your church grow in spiritual maturity?

## PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

The Apostles' Creed is a well-known and widely used summary of what Christians believe. The Apostles' Creed appeared in various forms during the early centuries of the church, but it was standardized by about A.D. 700 in Latin. Since then, Christians have joined their voices together in reciting this creed, to not only re-affirm what they believe, but also to help others learn and remain true to the teachings of the Bible. Paul, in this passage, calls for unity in the believers' calling, behavior, and belief. Take time either reciting the Apostles Creed together as a sign of unity or personally studying it this week, finding where each statement of faith is rooted within Scripture.

### The Apostles' Creed

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.*

*I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;  
he descended to hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.*

*I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic\* church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

\* the word catholic means "general, universal, concerning the whole" and does not refer exclusively to the Roman Catholic Church. Some may substitute the term "catholic" with "Christian" or "universal".



### FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Q.** What are some things you need to do and you need to communicate with your partner to make a three-legged race successful?

FAMILY  
DISCIPLESHIP



### WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

Review **Church** from Week 6.

**Unity:** A oneness of mind and heart. Unity does not mean uniformity. (See gifts below.)

Believers are **disciples** who are called to make other disciples. They are also called to serve others out of a heart of gratitude for all that Jesus has done for them. They are called to live a life that reflects Jesus.

The **church** is where disciples meet with other disciples to learn more about Jesus.

God wants His people to live together in **harmony**—meaning believers live and work together in a unity that flows out of obeying Bible truths and Jesus-centered living.

- Believers must have **humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance** (bearing with one another in love), and **peace**. This is not always easy. Isn't it nice to know you're powered by a supernatural source?
- Believers should remember what unites them: **one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God!**

Imagine Jesus as the victorious king who has defeated his enemies through His death on the cross and His resurrection. As the victor, He now provides **gifts** to His people (Psalm 68:18).

- These talents and gifts grow and are to be used to serve one another and for the church to work together.
- The church is comparable to the human body. The head provides direction and guidance to the body (this is Jesus). But it is essential for every part of the body to do its job.
- Not all the people do the same thing, but all are necessary. We all have a part that adds to the work God wants us to do together.



### GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about **God's love**. Jesus was a living example of God's love as we are to be living example of His love (John 13:35).



### VERSE TO REMEMBER

*Be kind to one another,  
tenderhearted, forgiving  
one another, as God in  
Christ forgave you.*

Ephesians 4:32







*"The gospel is the dynamic for all heart-change, life-change, and social-change. Change won't happen through 'trying harder' but only through encountering with the radical grace of God. We do not 'get saved' by believing in the gospel and then 'grow' by trying hard to live according to Biblical principles. Believing in the gospel is not only way to meet God, but also the way to grow into him."*

*The Gospel – Key to Change*  
by Tim Keller

## INTRODUCTION

Often when people consider the cost of becoming a Christian, their minds regularly go to "what I can't" or "what I shouldn't" do anymore. Yet, when one becomes a new creation in Christ, it's not simply stopping living in a particular way, but beginning to live in a completely new way. Paul begins to tease out the areas in our lives that should see renewal and transformation as we have been adopted into God's family and begin to live in the new community He has set apart for Himself.

## MAIN IDEA

Believers are called to live out their new identity in Christ by imitating God, by walking in love, light, and wisdom with a lifestyle that is different from the world and different from their past.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** At different points in life, we experience an important event that radically changes something about how we think, behave, or look at things. What is one example of an event that had an impact on everything else in your life?

## READ & DISCUSS

### READ EPHESIANS 4:17-32

**Q.** Paul does not paint a pretty picture for those who do not have a relationship with Jesus. In verses 17-19, what are some of the descriptions Paul gives? Can you give some examples of what this may look like in your life?

**Follow Up:** How do you think someone who does not walk with God responds to these descriptions?

**Follow Up:** How does that impact the way you would witness to unbelievers?

**Q.** Paul says that the Ephesians had "learned Christ." Normally we learn details, facts, or behaviors, but not a person. Do you think this phrasing from Paul was unintentional? What is he trying to communicate here?

**Q.** Paul begins to draw a distinction between the "old self" and the "new self". What are some of the contrasts that Paul makes?

**Follow Up:** What are some of the examples of "deceitful desires" that you may need to put off?

**Q.** What does 4:32 say about forgiveness? Do you need to forgive anyone?

## EPHESIANS 4:17-32

### The New Life

*<sup>17</sup> Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. <sup>19</sup> They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. <sup>20</sup> But that is not the way you learned Christ!—<sup>21</sup> assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, <sup>22</sup> to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

*<sup>25</sup> Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. <sup>26</sup> Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup> and give no opportunity to the devil. <sup>28</sup> Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. <sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

## EPHESIANS 5:1-21

## Walk in Love

**5** *Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. <sup>2</sup>And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

<sup>3</sup>*But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. <sup>4</sup>Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.*

<sup>5</sup>*For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. <sup>6</sup>Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. <sup>7</sup>Therefore do not become partners with them;*

<sup>8</sup>*for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup>and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.*

<sup>11</sup>*Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup>But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup>for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,*

*“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”*

<sup>15</sup>*Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, <sup>16</sup>making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. <sup>17</sup>Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. <sup>18</sup>And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup>addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, <sup>20</sup>giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

**READ EPHESIANS 5:1-21**

Some of Paul's strongest warnings against sin are present within this passage. Coupled with it, Paul calls for believers to allow their love for Christ to be exhibited in the way they walk and carry themselves.

**Q.** Connect the dots between what Paul says in Ephesians 5:1 and what he says at the start of the book in Ephesians 1:5.

**Follow Up:** What does it mean to "imitate God"? Does this seem impossible? Or does it encourage you?

**Q.** In verse 3, sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness are strictly prohibited by Paul, stating that they have no place amongst the people of God. He also calls out the way in which we use our words in verse 4. Are these issues prevalent among Christians today?

**Follow Up:** If so, what impact is that having on the Church? On its ability to witness to an unbelieving world?

**Q.** What are some of the warnings Paul gives for participating in behavior that is not in alignment with God and what He calls his people to?

**Q.** Paul brings about instruction that we, as followers of Jesus, should be light in the dark world around us. This does not just simply mean avoiding participating in it, but he goes even further in stating we should expose the works of darkness (verse 11). How might we do this today? How does the Holy Spirit provide wisdom and boldness for this task?

**Q.** Paul juxtaposes "drunk with wine" and "filled with the Spirit". What differences would characterize one who enjoys debauchery and one whose life is evidenced with being filled with the Spirit?

**PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION**

Ephesians 5:14 says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." This quote is most likely a mixture of lines from Isaiah (Isaiah 9:2; 26:19; 50:9-10; 60:1-2). It's important to take an honest look at our lives and examine the ways we are called to put on the new self and walk in love. As we do this, we are to look for areas that may still be dead and hiding in the darkness. Where does the light of Christ need to shine in your life right now? This is not an exercise to shame nor produce guilt, but to align our lives and hearts with Christ.



### FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Q.** What is a “hard heart” (think of Pharaoh in Exodus)?



### WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

Since we are adopted into God’s family, we are to **live for the Kingdom of God**, not the way the world says to live.

FAMILY  
DISCIPLESHIP

Believers are “**born again**” and made into a new creation. We may be the worst of sinners, yet Jesus can forgive us and transform our lives.

- It is described as a “new man,” and a “new self” as opposed to the “old man” (not age) and the “old self.”
- Believers must make a clean break with their behavior that was a part of their lives before they became followers of Jesus.
- Though they are made new, sinful tendencies remain. Believers will struggle with lying, anger, stealing, naughty words, hard feelings, and even bitterness.

The Gospel is not *just* used to tell people how to become followers of Jesus. After becoming a Jesus follower, you **learn to live** like the holy person you’ve already begun to be, each day, more and more. We grow with our hope in the Gospel.



### GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about **God’s love**. Believers are called to allow God’s love and forgiveness for them to be shown in the way they live, love, and forgive (Matthew 6:14-15, Matthew 18:35, Mark 11:24, Luke 11:4).



**VERSE TO REMEMBER**

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32*







## NOTE FOR THIS WEEK

*This can be a challenging portion of Scripture. Sadly, it has been so misinterpreted and abused that many women avoid reading it and the men teaching it tend to approach it with hesitation. With that in mind, let's prayerfully approach this section, asking the Holy Spirit to remove our preconceived ideas in exchange for the truth. Be gentle with one another and remember it is the role of the Holy Spirit to move our hearts, not man.*

*The questions this week are broken up into three sections: whole group discussion, questions for women, and questions for men. We also understand that there are many who are not currently married. We have provided questions for them as well. Feel free to have the group discussion and then move into separate spaces for the men's and women's conversations. The questions for women were written by Sarah Glassett, our Director of Spiritual Formation to Women, while the questions for men were crafted by Sarah's husband Luke, who is an Elder.*

## INTRODUCTION

As we've seen in the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul has gone to great lengths to teach and remind us of the Gospel - what it is and what it calls us to.

The Gospel has grand implications for our relationships. Up to this point, Paul has spoken about how believers are to engage and interact with the world around them at large and within the Church. At this point in his letter, he turns the attention to our homes. In this week's passage, Paul touches on the key responsibilities of husbands and wives and gives us a beautiful analogy of Christ and the Church.

## MAIN IDEA

Marriage is a mystery, but a Gospel-centered marriage points to God's love for us.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** We all have pet peeves; some of us have words that get under our skin. Share a pet peeve or a word that you don't like.

## READ & DISCUSS

**READ EPHESIANS 5:22-33**

*Consider having a woman read verses 22-25, and a man read verses 26-33.*

## EPHESIANS 5:21-33

*<sup>21</sup>...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

**Wives and Husbands**

*<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.*

*<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE GROUP**

**Q.** Submission can seem like a dirty word. It's important for everyone to start on the same page. What is submission? What isn't it? If you've got the ability, make a T-chart listing what submission is and isn't for reference during the discussion. What are some good examples of submission in the Scriptures?

**Q.** Look back to verses 15-21. How does "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ" set the context of this passage?

**Q.** Christ gives us the ultimate example of submission. Read Philippians 2:1-8. Sin makes submission scary and painful because sinful people take advantage of others and use their power for themselves. How does Christ's example further clarify your understanding of submission?

**Q.** The Gospel should affect every area of our lives, including how we interact with our spouse. Ephesians 5:22-33 is what a Gospel-centered marriage looks like; it is a restorative view of marriage, God's perfect plan all along. How does it help you to understand that a marriage that looks like this was God's plan, before sin entered the world? How does it challenge you?

**Q.** What does this passage teach us about the Church?

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR WIVES

Instead of using this time to focus on why submission is hard or unpopular, focus on what Godly submission looks like and how you can grow. It's important to note that when it wife submits to her husband, she is not looking the other way while her husband sins, it does not condone abuse, or mean you she is a doormat. If you are in an abusive marriage, please let someone at the Church know. We want to help you.



**Q.** A wife that submits to her husband allows him to be responsible for her. This can be frightening and hard. What steps can you take to grow? What conversations might you need to have with him?

**Q.** When we take time to grow in our trust of the Lord, understanding His good character, and love for His children, we can grow in our ability to submit to our husbands. Why do you think this is?

**Q.** Notice in verses 23-24 that the Church is mentioned as an example of submission to Christ. Healthy, strong leadership is a gift from God! We know from [Genesis 1:26-28](#) that both men and women are created equally in God's image and that we are heirs together of eternal life ([Galatians 3:28-29](#)). We are of equal value with different, complimentary roles. How does looking at the role of the wife through a Gospel-centered lens help you tackle the misconceptions of submission?

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR HUSBANDS

Is it ever your duty to remind your wife to submit? I will answer this one for you: NO! I would even go so far as to say that you should not even use this verse in jest. To joke to your wife about "submitting to you" only reinforces falsely-established norms of patriarchal superiority. It misses the point entirely.



**Q.** Paul compares a husband being head of his wife to Jesus as head of his Church. Knowing this, in what ways can a husband model Jesus? Are there verses you can think of that you can use as guidance? *Hint: Philippians 3:2-11.*

**Q.** If our wives are supposed to submit to us, what is the corresponding weight of responsibility placed on a husband's shoulders?

**Q.** According to verse 25, what does it look like to love our wives as Christ loved the Church? What are some practical ways you can give yourself up for your wife?

## A NOTE TO OUR SINGLE BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Just because Paul focuses on marriage for this portion does not mean there isn't an important, necessary role for the single population in the Church. It also doesn't mean that we can't all use Jesus' example of submission as our guideline for the way we live. Christ lived a life of submission to the Father, and we are each called to model that in our distinct roles.

**Q.** We are called to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21). What does Godly submission look like outside of marriage? How should this look inside and outside of the Church? Use Christ's life as your encouragement and example.

- Q. What role does submission play in a Gospel-centered life? How does our submission, or deference, to others point them to Christ? How do you think living this way can open the door to Gospel conversations?
- Q. How does your life point others to God's love for us? How can you grow here?

## PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

### WIVES

According to verse 33, have a conversation with your husband about what respect looks like to him. You might be surprised! Often, words have different meanings to different people.

### HUSBANDS

According to verses 28-30, ask your wife the following questions: What makes you feel nourished by me? How can I make you feel cherished?

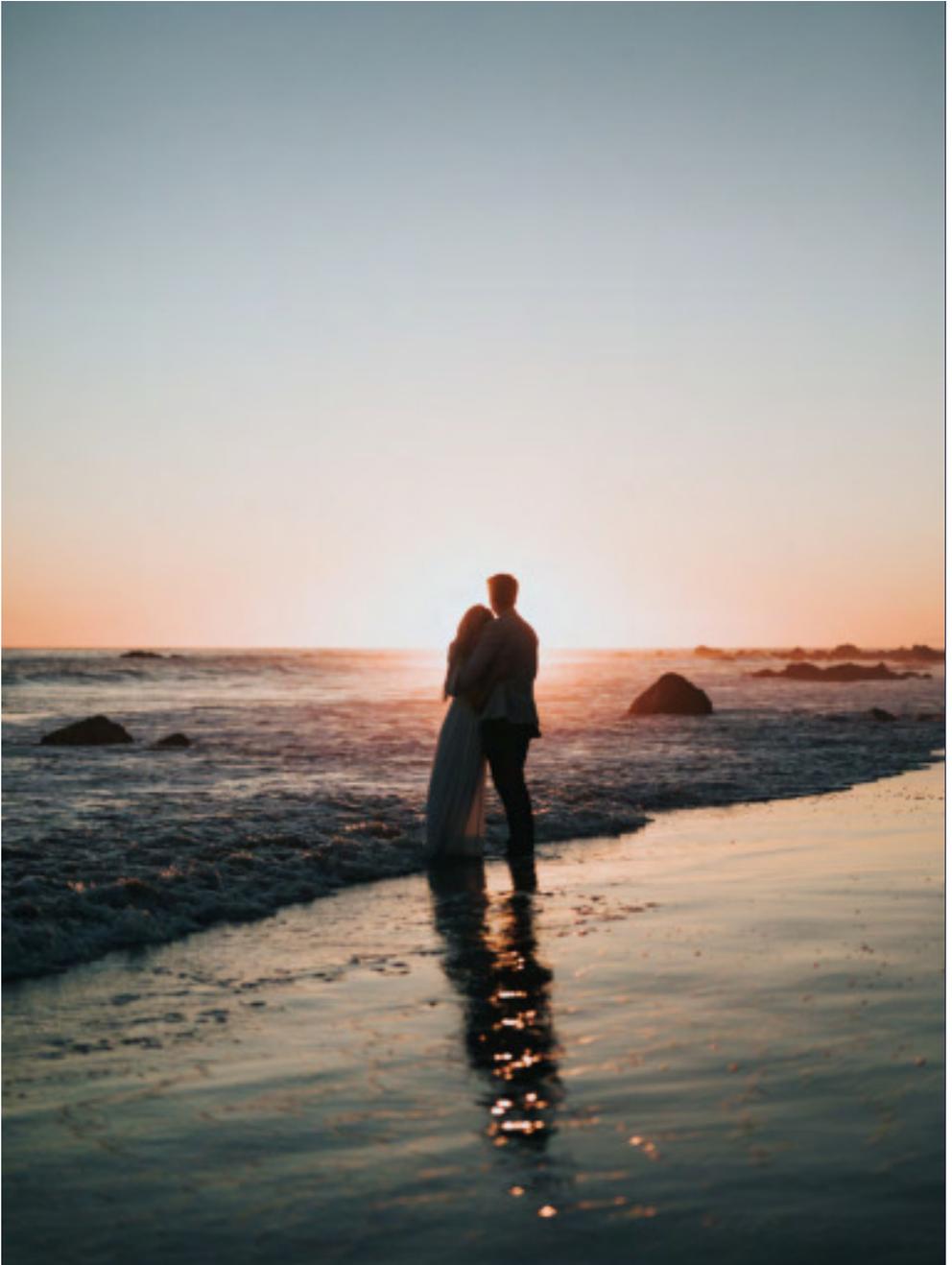
### SINGLES

Have a conversation with a friend about what Godly submission looks like practically. Where can you grow as someone who looks first to the needs of others and are willing to lay down your wants and desires for their benefit?

# MARRIAGE AS A VISUAL REPRESENTATION

EPHESIANS 5:21-33

WEEK  
11





### FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Q.** People are the same, yet different. We all need water, food, shelter, etc., but are all unique in our own way. What are some other examples of “the same, but different?”

FAMILY  
DISCIPLESHIP



### WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

Review the idea of **head** and **body** when it comes to the Church from Week 9.

**Submit:** A voluntary yielding to one who has authority. Submission is not blind obedience.

- Soldiers follow their commanders, members of the church yield to their pastors/elders, and all people submit to the government. (1 Peter 3:5, Romans 13:1)
- Jesus called His disciples to serve one another and resist the urge to be overbearing, or bossy with each other (Mark 10:42-45).
- Paul encourages believers to defer to the needs and interests of others by considering others more highly than they consider themselves (Philippians 2:2-3).
- Submission involves subduing pride and selfish pursuits.

Just as Jesus is the head of the body of the church, the **husband** is the head of the family.

- The husband’s leadership is directed by a self-sacrificial love like Jesus’ love and sacrifice on the cross.
- This is not a heavy-handed and demeaning attitude of husbands to wives.

A husband's responsibility is to **love, cherish, and serve** his wife.

A **wife** is called to submit to her husband.

- This deferring to her husband is made easier when she knows her husband will put her needs above his own and treat her like Jesus treats the church.



### GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about **God's love**. God created man and woman equally in God's image (Genesis 1:26-28), and we are heirs together of eternal life (Galatians 3:28-29). We are of equal value with different, complimentary roles.



### VERSE TO REMEMBER

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* Ephesians 4:32







## INTRODUCTION

Paul continues to provide us with a holistic approach to Gospel-centered living as he walks out Gospel implications for our everyday lives. Paul has taken great care and effort to address the most foundational relationship that each of us has or will experience. After taking time to discuss our relationship with God and how that will impact how we live and reflect Jesus in our daily walk, our relationships within the church, within the marital relationship, Paul now turns his attention to parents, children, and our work environments.

## MAIN IDEA

Christlike actions in the house and workplace are also a worship to God.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** Each of us has (or had) parents. What was your experience in honoring your parents?

## READ & DISCUSS

### READ EPHESIANS 6:1-4

**Q.** Exodus 20:12 is cited by Paul in verses 2-3. How does the idea of "honoring" your parents fall in line with Paul's initial command of "obey"?

**Follow Up:** At what age does this cease to be applicable to us?

## EPHESIANS 6:1-9

### Children and Parents

**6** *Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.<sup>2</sup> "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise),<sup>3</sup> "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."<sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.*

### Bondservants and Masters

<sup>5</sup> *Bondservants, obey your earthly masters with fear and trembling, with a sincere heart, as you would Christ,<sup>6</sup> not by the way of eye-service, as people-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,<sup>7</sup> rendering service with a good will as to the Lord and not to man,<sup>8</sup> knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a bondservant or is free.<sup>9</sup> Masters, do the same to them, and stop your threatening, knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and that there is no partiality with him.*

*"Every single household is showing and demonstrating one of two realities: a God who identifies with his people, provides for his people, protects his people and gives his people a future; or a god who ignores his people, who gives no future for his people and will grind his people to bits."*

*4 Priorities for Every Gospel-Centered Parent* by Russel Moore

**Q.** In what ways could a parent "provoke" their child to anger?

**Follow Up:** The word provoke in the letter's original language meant "to bring to anger", not necessarily as a one-time instance, but as a long-term problem. Understanding that, does it make a difference as to how we take instruction here?

**Q.** According to this passage, whose responsibility is it to discipline and train children?

**Follow Up:** How might you teach your children the basic doctrines of the faith? Are you doing this?

**Follow Up:** Turn to Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What do these verses tell us about imparting our faith to our children?

**Q.** Notice how Paul ends this instruction with stating we are training and disciplining our children in the Lord. This means we are to make disciples of our children and not just good citizens. Does this impact the way you view parenting?



**READ EPHESIANS 6:5-9**

*Note about this section: The situation Paul addressed was not like slavery in American history. It was complex and massive in scope. American slavery was primarily racial and lifelong. In Paul's day it was not racial, and it was not always lifelong. There were some similarities, but it was different. It is estimated that bondservants composed about one-third of the population of a city like Ephesus. They were considered an integral part of a family, so Paul's instructions for bondservants were a natural part of his dealing with family relationships. In this culture, a bondservant could own his own property; but even so, he may have had limited rights under his master and could*

*have become the object of abuse. One should not think of contemporary forms of racially-driven slavery, kidnapping of children to make soldiers, or sex trafficking when thinking of the bondservants mentioned in the Bible, for they are not equivalent. While Paul does not call for the abolition of slavery, the radical teaching of equality in texts such as this one laid the foundation for its dissolution. A better modern-day comparison would be an employee under the authority of a supervisor, manager, or owner.*

**Q.** Drawing a parallel between what Paul is speaking of here and our current work situation, how do should these verses inform our work ethic?

**Q.** Verse 9 is often a verse we may miss the shock the initial readers would have experienced when they read “masters treat your bondservants in the same way...” How should these verses inform the way we relate to people we work with - especially if we are someone who holds authority over others?

**Follow Up:** What is the reason that Paul gives for this? What does he root his argument in?

**Q.** Thinking about what we have covered over the past few weeks, what are the common elements Paul includes for each group (husband/wives, parents/children, masters/bondservant)?

## SLAVERY

Slavery is one of the oldest institutions of man. While some cultures have practiced slavery as a means of helping the poor or employing skilled workers (Exodus 21:1–6; Deuteronomy 15:12–18), many cultures use slavery as a means to separate and subjugate a class or race of people, while exalting the owners and making them wealthy.

Paul's instructions on slavery and the slave-master relationship are complex. Although he never calls for dismantling the institution, he does encourage Christian slaves to gain their freedom when possible (1 Corinthians 7:21). However, those who remain slaves to human masters should see themselves as free in Christ (1 Corinthians 7:22). Peter would later add that slaves should submit themselves even to masters who treat them cruelly or unjustly, following the example of Christ (1 Peter 2:18–25).

The Godly actions of believing slaves and masters manifest the life-changing power of Christ to all (Titus 2:9), make the slaves better employees (Ephesians 6:6–7), promote brotherhood and equality in Christ between slave and master (Ephesians 6:9; Philemon 15:16), and give dignity to all slaves as Christian masters deal kindly with those under their authority (Ephesians 6:9). The fact that slavery in the modern world is not practiced with any sense of Christian ideals, but instead degrades, abuses, tortures, and dehumanizes people as captives, sex objects, or property, argues for the Christian to seek the abolition of slavery today as an act of justice (Psalm 82:4; Proverbs 21:3, 15; 24:10–12; Isaiah 58:6–7; Micah 6:8; Matthew 12:18–20; Luke 11:42).

*Credit to Crossway's Ephesians: A 12-Week Study by Eric C. Redmond*

## PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

This week's passage showed us a lot about two of the biggest arenas of our lives we live in daily. Take some time to pray specifically for these relationships. Pray for the families in your group and families in our church at large, that the parents may be able to live a life worth emulating and be able to teach and train their children in the Lord. Pray for your employer and fellow employees. If there is something that needs to be confessed and repented of in one of these areas, do it.



### FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Q.** Besides getting “punished” or having consequences for our actions, why is it not good for us to disobey our parents or our bosses?

FAMILY  
DISCIPLESHIP



### WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

Review the idea of **head** and **body** when it comes to the Church from Week 9.

Review **submit** and **head of family** from Week 11.

Just as God expects His children (us, including adults and your parents) to have an attitude of obedience to Him, **children** are to obey their parents. We are also to honor God and our parents, which means to respect and love.

**Fathers** are called to use sensitivity and moderation when asserting authority and discipline to their children.

**Believers** should do their jobs well (that includes your chores at home)—even when no one is looking.



### GOING DEEPER

Ephesians is a book about **God’s love**—sharing God’s love with others. That includes parents making disciples in their families (Matthew 28:18-20, Deuteronomy 6:5-7).



### VERSE TO REMEMBER

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* Ephesians 4:32



## INTRODUCTION

As we conclude our study in the book of Ephesians, we come to the final major section that many people are familiar with. What's surprising about this passage is that it appears to be a hard left turn in contrast to what Paul has been speaking about household and workplace relationships. However, if we take a step back, we see this section helps tie up the letter, speaking to how believers need to know there's more at play behind the curtain in their day-to-day lives. Paul uses battle imagery as he calls all of us to stand firm amid the spiritual war that is in progress.

## MAIN IDEA

Stand firm by God's power with God's armor.

## CONVERSATION STARTER

**Q.** What comes to mind when you hear the phrase "spiritual warfare"?

**Follow Up:** What emotions come to mind when you even consider discussing this topic? Fear? Excitement? Uncertainty?

## READ & DISCUSS

**READ EPHESIANS 6:10-24**

**Q.** What are some of the schemes and strategies have you seen the devil attempt to use? *Hint: Two of his biggest attacks are deceiving (see Genesis 3:4-5; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 11:14) and accusations (see Mathew 13:38-39; Revelation 12:10).*

*“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”*

*The Screwtape Letters*  
by C.S. Lewis

## EPHESIANS 6:10-24

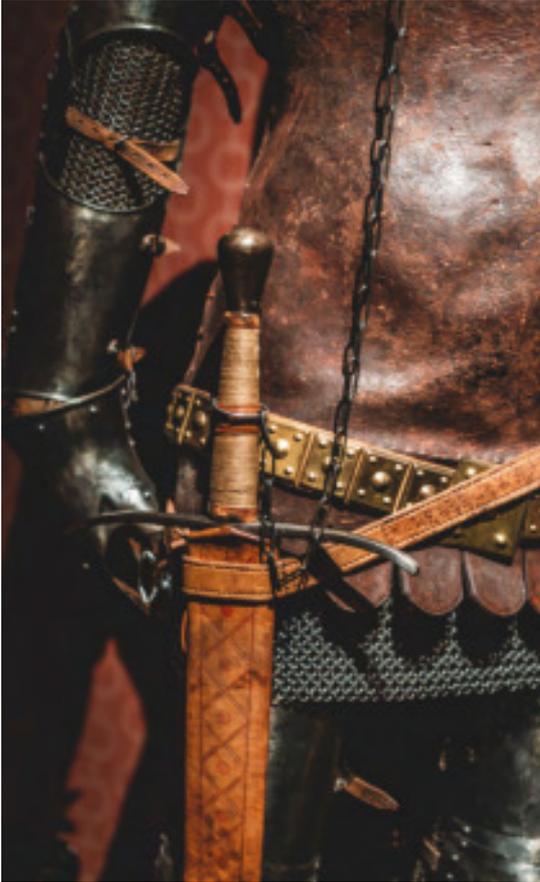
**The Whole Armor of God**

<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. <sup>11</sup> Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>13</sup> Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, <sup>15</sup> and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; <sup>17</sup> and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, <sup>18</sup> praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, <sup>19</sup> and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

**Final Greetings**

<sup>21</sup> So that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything. <sup>22</sup> I have sent him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage your hearts.

<sup>23</sup> Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.



**Follow Up:** Which of these schemes and strategies have been most effective against you?

**Q.** “Flesh and blood” is a figurative way of talking about people. If people are not the enemy, how come so often we perceive our battle is against someone else rather than seeing the true nature of the struggle?

**Q.** What are the two commands Paul gives as instruction for believers against the evil one's attack? *Hint: Be strong in the Lord; put on the armor of God.*

**Follow Up:** Paul says we should be strong in the Lord. How does this differ from self-effort?

**Follow Up:** Four times in this small section, the word "stand" is used. Why do you think that is?

**Q.** Paul describes the main pieces of equipment for protection. What are these pieces and how do you use each part of the armor to protect yourself? *Hint: Belt of Truth; Breastplate of Righteousness; Shoes of Readiness; Shield of Faith; Helmet of Salvation; Sword of the Spirit.*

**Follow Up:** Read Isaiah 52:7, how does this help us to understand what is meant by “feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace?”

**Follow Up:** Do a quick self-assessment regarding each piece of your "spiritual armor". Is it in good condition? Is it taken care of well? Is it lost somewhere or packaged away in the garage?

**Q.** One of the main ways we can extinguish the "flaming darts" of the evil one is being familiar with the Scriptures to combat lies with truth. Can you think of a time Jesus did this during His life and ministry? *Hint: See Matthew 4:1-11.*

**Follow Up:** What were the lies/deceptions Satan attempted to use against Jesus? How did He respond to each one?

**Q.** Yet again, we find repetition in Paul's words, stressing something important. In verse 18, "all" appears four times, instructing the believers on prayer during the war. What does each "all" say about the importance of prayer in our lives?



### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES - SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Secret Church (4.5 hrs) – David Platt – Angels, Demons, Spiritual Warfare

Podcast (13 min) – The Doctrine of Spiritual Warfare

Video (8 min) – Demons & Spiritual Warfare - Russell Moore

### PERSONAL APPLICATION / REFLECTION

Spend some time as a group, or individually, thinking through the past 13 weeks of this study. What stands out the most for you?

How has this letter affected your understanding of God? The church? Your Christian walk?



### FAMILY DISCUSSION

**Q.** We wear a helmet when we go biking. What are some protective devices for the following: soccer, football, parachuting, driving, rollerblading, and boating?

Why is this protective gear important?

FAMILY  
DISCIPLESHIP



### WOW WORDS/BIG IDEAS

God wants to strengthen His people through an active connection to Jesus. The emphasis on verse 10 is not on “be strong,” but on “in the Lord.” It is elaborated with the imagery of armor:

- **The belt of truth** protects against the “father of lies”—the Devil.
- **The breastplate of righteousness** protects our heart and soul. It goes on after the belt of truth—we recognize that our being made right with God has nothing to do with us. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. We know we are “in Christ.”
- **Our feet are fitted with the Gospel of peace.** We are firm (feet planted) in our position of “in Christ.” We are also moving—taking the Gospel (the good news) to others.
- **The shield of faith** is solid and substantial. We can trust that God is true and His Word is effective.
- **The helmet of salvation** protects our head—our way of thinking, knowing and believing spiritual truths.
- **The sword of the Spirit** is the Word of God.

Just as a soldier would need help in putting on his armor, we are called to arm each other through **prayer**.



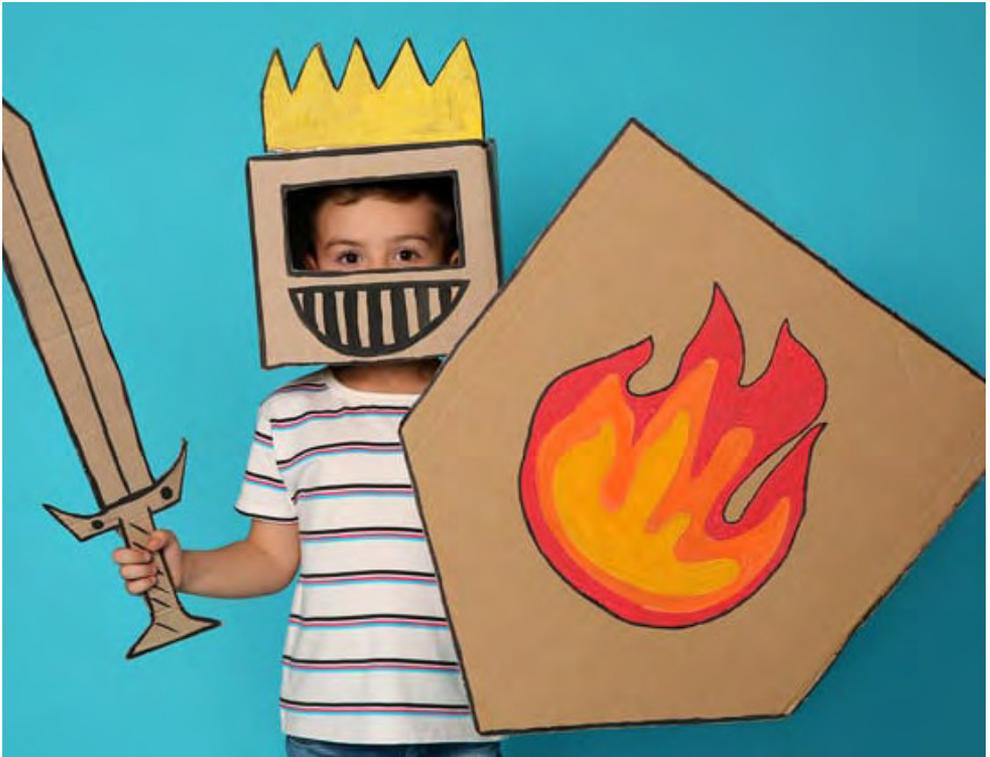
## GOING DEEPER

- Ephesians is a book about God's love. We have access to so much, including His strength. Each piece of armor represents a part of God's strength that He extends to us when we become His children.
- We are directed to "put on" this armor, which means that we do not wear it all the time. Putting on the armor of God involves a conscious decision on our part.



## VERSE TO REMEMBER

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32*









# NOTES



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