


# A VISION



of the church

## Ephesians

**Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church**  
*[ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au](http://ashfieldpresbyterian.org.au)*



## Introduction

Paul wrote to the church (or group of churches) in Ephesus not to address any particular error or problem, but to expand their horizons. He wrote so that they might better understand the dimensions of God's eternal purpose and grace, and come to appreciate the high goals God has for the church. This makes Ephesians a great book for US, as a church, to study as we consider who God would have us be, and what he would have us do.

1. Imagine a friend says he is a Christian but that he doesn't need to go to church. What do you say?
2. One of the things Paul prays for the Ephesians is that the eyes of their heart may be enlightened (1:18). He wants God to give them a vision for who He is and how they fit into his plans. What do we learn about the church from the verses below? What does God want it to be? What does this mean for how we see ourselves, and how we do things?

Verse	What do we learn about the church?	What does this mean for how we see ourselves, and how we do things?
1:22-23		
2:15 (2:11-17)		
2:19-22		
3:10		
3:15		
3:21		
4:11-13		
4:15-16		
5:23-30		

Rather than work through Ephesians from start to finish, we will look at key themes for our Christian life together as a church, studying relevant passages from Ephesians for each.

## Study 1. From the Graveyard to the Throne Room (Eph 2:1-10)

3. **Read Ephesians 2:1-10.** These verses are like those Weight Watchers Before and After photos. How are the Ephesians described BEFORE they became Christian (1-3)?
  
4. Verses 4-9 describe how, in Christ, God perfectly reverses our situation. What has he done?  
made \_\_\_\_\_ (5) God \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ (6)  
and \_\_\_\_\_ in heavenly realms (6). You have \_\_\_\_\_ (8)
5. Why does he do this?  
  
v4a  
  
v4b  
  
v5 & 8  
  
v7
6. What does it mean that God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms?  
  
How does this affect the way we think about life now? Notice that there is also a future aspect – “in the coming ages he will show the incomparable riches of his grace”. (See Colossians 3:1-4)
7. What is the relationship between faith and grace (8-9)?
8. How do we show that we are God’s workmanship? How is this a contrast to our former condition (1,2 & 10)?
9. How should you treat someone who claims to be a Christian but does not show any good works?
10. How are we, as a church, showing Ashfield the incredible change that’s happened to us? How COULD we be showing it?

### Prayer Points:

## Study 2. It's a Team Sport (Eph 2:11-22; 5:1-21)

1. What sort of differences exist between different groups of people in the world? In our society? In our church?

**Read 2:11-22.** In the previous section Paul describes how Christ changes us from God's enemies to his friends. In this section he shows how Christ also deals with the separation from each other.

2. 2:1-3 shows how hopeless our situation was as Gentiles. What other barriers stood in the way of our salvation (11-12)?
3. From 13-16, what has Jesus done to correct this, and how did he do it?

<u>What Jesus has done</u>	<u>How he did it</u>
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13:

13:

14:

15a:

15b,16

16:

4. To whom was Jesus concerned to bring peace and access to the Father (17-18)?
5. What country do we NOW belong to? Whose household (19-22)?
6. What is critical if a church is to have strong foundations (20)? What does this look like as we meet as church?
7. In what areas is church to be growing (21-22)? What might this look like as we meet? How can we encourage this?

**Read 5:1-21.** While the second half of Ch 4 is concerned with the contrast between the people of God and the people of the world, this section emphasises the target to which we should be aiming – be imitators of God.

8. Why are we to imitate God (4:32-5:1)? (What is the “therefore” there for?) Who is our example (5:2)?
  
9. What should be the characteristics of our conversation together (3-7)?
  
10. In what senses are immorality, impurity and greed idolatry (3-5)?
  
11. What is involved in living as children of light (8-14)?
  
12. What is involved in living carefully (15-18)?
  
13. What three actions should characterise our interactions together (19-21)? How can doing these things encourage others to imitate God (1)?
  
14. How can we obey the command to be filled with the Spirit (5:18)? What part does church play in this?
  
15. In which of the above areas are we doing well as a church? Where do we need to see improvement?

**Prayer Points:**

## Study 3. The Maker's Instructions. (Eph 2:19-22; 5:8-21; 6:17)

God's Word, by the power of His Spirit, is the central means for God building his church, and growing followers of Jesus.

### Foundation

1. **Read 2:19-22.** Paul is describing God's church, with Jew and Gentile united under the cross (2:14-18). What does it mean that this church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets?
2. How can we make the apostles and prophets the foundation of OUR church?
3. With Jesus as the chief cornerstone, in what areas does the building grow?
4. How do the words of the apostles and prophets help to achieve growth in these areas?

### Tool

5. **Read 5:8-21.** This is part of a larger section from (at least) 4:17-5:21 concerning Christian living. Not only does Paul encourage them to godly living, but they are to encourage each other. How are they to do this (5:17, 19)?
6. Among other things there are commands to live as children of light (5:8), to find out what pleases God (5:10), not to be foolish but to understand God's will (5:17), and to be filled with the Spirit (5:18). How might the Ephesians be enabled to do each of these by them speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (5:19)?

live as children of light:

find out what pleases God:

be filled with the Spirit:

7. Colossians 3:15-4:1 seems to be expressing a similar thought. What place does Paul want Christ's word to have among the Colossians?

### **Sword**

8. **Read 6:10-20.** Paul lifts our gaze from the earthly, mundane things to true reality. All we do, say and are has supernatural and eternal consequences (6:12). What are we therefore to do (13)?
  
9. What is purpose of this armour (13-14)?
  
10. How is the sword described (17)?
  
11. Whose weapon is the word of God? How does he use it?
  
12. How can God's Word help to strengthen the other parts of the armour?
  
13. How are we, as a church, showing that we value God's word applied in our lives? How COULD we be showing it?

### **Prayer Points:**



## Study 4. Unity and Diversity. (Eph 4:1-16)

For three chapters Paul has been describing God's eternal purposes in and through Jesus Christ. From Ch 4 on he moves to look at what it means to live as citizens of heaven and members of God's church.

He begins by asserting our **unity**, then emphasises our **differences**, then finishes by showing that the goal of our **diversity** in gifts is to build each other up to unity and maturity, being **united** to each other in our relationship with Christ.

1. Have you ever been part of a group of people who were really united and committed to each other? What was it like?
2. **Read Ephesians 4:1-16.** Paul urges us to keep the unity of the Spirit (3) Are we united already, or do we need to create unity?
3. In what ways are we united already – what things do we share in common (4-6)?
4. What attitudes are essential to keep the unity of the Spirit (2-3)? Are these fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)?
5. Verse 7 describes a contrast, we are united, but different with respect to the distribution of gifts that each has received – we are united but not uniform. How does this work itself out in practice? Is diversity beneficial? Is unity important? What happens when one or the other is absent?
6. What five particular gifts are essential for the life of the church (11)? What do they have in common? Why are they mentioned specifically? What happens when they're not present (14)?
7. What is the purpose of these gifts (12-16)?

8. What is the purpose of God's people doing works of service (12)?
  
9. What does it mean to grow up into Christ? What sort of progress are you making at this?
  
10. What do you think the *supporting ligaments* represent (16)?
  
11. What teachings gifts, or works of service are you using to build up God's people? Are there things you could be doing, but aren't?
  
12. How are you encouraging those who build you, and others, up?
  
13. How accurately does this picture (4:11-16) represent our church? Where do we need to improve? How can we move forward?

### **Prayer Points**

## Study 5. Dressed for the Occasion (Eph 4:17-31)

The first part of Ch 4 seems to be about the positives of how Christians are to treat each other. This part of Ch 4 seems to emphasise the negatives – “no longer live as the Gentiles do” (17). They are two sides of the one coin. Godliness is both moving towards Christ (putting on the new self - 22) and moving away from the world (putting off the old self - 24).

1. **Read Ephesians 4:17-31.** Paul contrasts the Gentiles with his readers. On each side of the contrast, what you think influences how you behave. How does this work for;

the children of darkness (17-19)	the children of light (20-24)

2. What words describe the Gentiles (17-19)? Do you see these characteristics among people today?
3. What is the process described in v19. What is the connection between sensitivity and sensuality? Can you see this process at work in the increasingly sinful behaviour of people?
4. What marks out those who belong to God’s people (20-24)?
5. How, practically, do our deceitful desires corrupt us (22)?
6. What is the key to being made new (23)? How can we do this?
7. Putting off the old (22), in context, seems to be all about saying “No!”. The more we practice saying no to our old impulses the better we become at it, the more our attitudes change. Work through vv 25-32. How many of these commands are about NOT doing what our impulses suggest?

8. How can we build each other up with our speech (29)? Aussies see 'knocking' each other as a sign of acceptance. Is it okay for us to behave this way?
  
9. How can we get rid of such strong feelings as bitterness, rage and malice (31)? If the rest of this section is about saying no, how does 32 fit into this section?
  
10. Paul is describing two completely different cultures. How does the culture of our church differ from that around us? How SHOULD it?
  
11. How do the choices YOU make with respect to desires and attitudes influence others in the church? How can we be a positive influence in developing a new attitude, putting on the new self, in others?
  
14. How accurately does this picture (4:17-31) represent our church? Where do we need to improve? How can we move forward?

**Prayer Points:**

## Study 6. Sharing the Inheritance. (Eph 1:1-14; 3:1-13)

Our experience of life revolves around ourselves: what we choose to do, and what we see and hear in the present. In the first part of Ephesians Paul expands the horizons of the Ephesians, helping them to see outside themselves – in fact beyond the visible and physical, and beyond time and space.

It is this perspective that is true reality, and that shows us the eternal significance of the everyday and earthly choices we make

1. Living in our country brings many blessings. What are some of them?
2. **Read Ephesians 1-1-14.** Verses 3-14 are an amazing outburst of praise – they are actually one sentence! Paul details the blessings we enjoy in Christ. It's almost as if he doesn't want to stop until he's covered 'every spiritual blessing' that is ours. What *current* blessings do we enjoy in Christ (4-8)?
3. What *future* blessing awaits those who are in Christ (9, 10, 14)?
4. When did God begin planning our salvation (4, 5, 11)?
5. How did we come to know about the blessings that could be ours in Christ (13)? What response was necessary?
6. In what three ways does the Holy Spirit give us assurance of our salvation?  
v12  
v13  
v14
7. We often feel like we have chosen to follow Jesus. From these verses, how much does God do, and how much do we do?

8. What is God's purpose for the world (9-12)? What part do we have to play in that?

**Read Eph 3:1-13.** In this section Paul explains his personal role in fulfilling God's purposes of bringing all things under one head, even Christ (1:10)

9. What is the mystery (6)?

10. What is Paul's role in the revealing of the mystery (2-9)?

11. What is the role of the church in the revealing of the mystery (10-12)?

12. How does this section put Paul's sufferings into perspective (13)?

13. Paul saw himself as sharing the "unsearchable riches of Christ" with people (8). What can Paul teach us about the value of non-Christians responding to the gospel?

15. How well is our church making known the manifold wisdom of God to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms (3:10-11)? Where do we need to improve? How can we move forward?

### **Prayer Points**

## *Study 7. Communicating with the King. (Eph 1:15-23; 3:14-20; 6:10-24)*

1. **Read Ephesians 1:15-23.** Why does Paul give thanks for the Ephesians, remembering them constantly in prayer (15)?
2. For what does Paul pray for the Ephesians (17-19)? Why are these things important? What difference will knowing them make practically in your life?
3. What hope and inheritance do we have because of Christ? (See also Rom 8:15-25)?
4. What position does Christ now occupy (20-23)? What relationship does the church have with him (22-23)?
5. **Read 3:14-21.** Why does Paul pray this prayer (12-13)?
6. What four things does Paul pray for?
7. Why is it so important to understand God's love?
8. Why is Paul so confident to ask things of his Father (20-21)?
9. Paul's prayers are deep and personal. Think about your personal and group prayer times. What do you pray for? How could the focus of your prayers change?

10. **Read 6:10-20.** Prayer can seem like a waste of time. People seem to think its sole benefit is in terms of generating positive thinking within the person praying. But prayer is vital. What is the world view (10-12) against which Paul says we are to pray in the Spirit on all occasions (18-20)? How does an understanding like this drive us to our knees?
11. What advice does Paul give to enable us to be fully equipped in this spiritual struggle (10-11, 13-17)
12. How do these things help us to pray better?
13. Be honest: How are we, as a church, showing that we value prayer? How COULD we better be showing it?

**Prayer Points:**