

FOR THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY

EPHESIANS



Bible Studies for Ashfield Presbyterian Church
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, come to appreciate the high goals God has for the church, and to live well in response to this. This makes it a great book for us to read at Ashfield Presbyterian Church.

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		

STUDY 1: THE CHRISTIAN IDENTITY (EPHESIANS 1:1-14)

Our experience of life often 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. This perspective is true reality, and 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 – this section of the letter is one very long sentence in which 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 blessings do we enjoy in Christ *now* (1:4-8)?
3. What *future* blessing awaits those who are in Christ (1:9, 10, 14)?
4. When did God begin planning our salvation (1:4, 5, 11)?
5. How did we come to know about the blessings that could be ours in Christ (1:13)? 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 (1:9-12)? What part do we have to play in that?

PRAYER POINTS:

STUDY 2: THE CHRISTIAN PRAYER (EPHESIANS 1:15-23)

1. How has knowing that your life is part of God's divine plan shaped how you've lived this week?

Read Ephesians 1:15-23.

2. How did you come to faith in Jesus? Why does the Ephesians' faith in Christ cause Paul to give such great thanksgiving (1:15)?
3. For whom are you thankful to God for their faith in Christ and the evidence of that faith? How could you encourage them or let them know of this?
4. What does Paul mean by the 'Spirit of wisdom and revelation' (1:17)? Why does he specifically ask God for this for the Ephesians? What result was he asking for (1:18)?
5. What is Paul expecting will be the outcome of receiving the "Spirit of wisdom and revelation" (1:17)? Is this academic (or head) knowledge about God, or is something else?
6. Paul also prays that the Ephesians will have "the eyes of their hearts enlightened" (1:18). What did Paul and his readers understand about the heart? Read a few of these verses: Genesis 6:5; Exodus 4:21; 35:21; Deuteronomy 6:5; 1 Kings 3:6; Psalm 16:7; 51:10; Jeremiah 17:9-10; 31:33; Matthew 22:37; Mark 7:21-22; Luke 6:45; 1 Timothy 1:5. What did Paul expect would be the outcome of this prayer?
7. How can we increasingly know the hope of Jesus every day? What is our role and what is the role of the Spirit in this?
8. What is distinct or unique about the hope of a Christian compared to common 'hopes' of the world (1:18-19, compare with Romans 8:15-25 and 1 Timothy 6:17)? See also Psalm 33:20; 62:5; 147:11; Isaiah 40:31; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:19; Galatians 5:5; Colossians 1:27; I Thessalonians 4:13; 5:8.

9. If someone was to ask you what is your hope for the future, how would you succinctly answer them?

10. Paul also asks God that the Ephesians may know God's great power. Where do we see this power and how is this power at work in and for us (1:19-23)?

11. What position does Christ now occupy (1:20-23)?

What relationship does the church have with him (1:22-23)?

12. What impact does the knowledge of this power and the hope for God's glory have on your life?

13. How could we help each other grow in knowing the hope and power of God? **Pray about this.**

PRAYER POINTS:

STUDY 3: TRANSFORMATION IN CHRIST (EPHESIANS 2:1-10)

1. **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)?

2. Verses 4-9 describe how, in Christ, God perfectly reverses our situation. What has he done?

God ... made _____ (5)

God _____ with Christ (6)

and _____ in heavenly realms (6).

You have _____ (8)

3. Why does he do this?

v4a

v4b

v5 & 8

v7 .

4. 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)

5. What is the relationship between faith and grace (2:8-9)?

6. How do we show that we are God’s workmanship (2:10)? How is this a contrast to our former condition (2:1, 2, 10)?

7. How should you treat someone who claims to be a Christian but does not show any good works? See Matthew 7:15-23 and Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43 for Jesus' views on this question.

8. How is our congregation at Ashfield showing the community around us the incredible change – death to life - that's happened to us? How COULD we be showing it?

PRAYER POINTS:

STUDY 4: RECONCILIATION IN CHRIST (EPHESIANS 2:11-22)

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. In 2:1-3, Paul shows his readers how hopeless their situation was before they believed in the Lord Jesus, when they followed the ways of the world, the ways of Satan. In this section of the letter he speaks specifically to Gentile believers. What other barriers stood in the way of their salvation (2:11-12)?
3. From 13-16, what has Jesus done to correct this, and how did he do it?

What Jesus has done		How he did it	
2:13		2:13	
2:14		2:15a	
2:15,16		2:16	

4. To whom was Jesus concerned to bring peace and access to the Father (17-18)?
5. Paul uses the ideas of citizenship and family to illustrate what it means to be part of God’s covenant people. What spiritual country do we NOW belong to if we believe in the Lord Jesus? Whose household (19-22)?
6. Paul also uses the ideas of architecture and buildings to describe God’s church, with Jews and Gentiles united under the cross (2:14-18). What does it mean that this church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets?
7. How can we make the apostles and prophets the foundation of OUR church?
8. In what areas is church to be growing (21-22)? What might this look like as we meet? How can we encourage this?

PRAYER POINTS:

God’s Word, by the power of His Spirit, is the central means for God building his church, and growing followers of Jesus. **Pray together that God’s Word will be achieve God’s purposes in our congregation at Ashfield.**

STUDY 5: MATURITY IN CHRIST (EPHESIANS 3)

Read Ephesians 3:1-13. In this section Paul explains the part he plays in fulfilling God's purposes of bringing all things under one head, even Christ (1:10)

1. When Paul speaks of "mystery" he's not talking about something that is impossible to understand, but about something that was not known or understood in the past, but has now been revealed by God. What is this "mystery" (3:6)?
2. What is Paul's role in the revealing of the mystery (3:2-9)? See also Acts 9:1-31; 22:1-21.
3. What is the role of the church in the revealing of the mystery (3:10-12)?
4. How does this section put Paul's sufferings into perspective (3:13)?
5. Paul saw himself as sharing the "unsearchable riches of Christ" with people (3:8). What can Paul teach us about the value of non-Christians responding to the gospel?
6. 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?
7. **Read Ephesians 3:14-21.** Why does Paul pray this prayer (3:12-13)?
8. What four things does Paul pray for (3:14-19)?
9. Why is it so important to understand God's love?
10. Why is Paul so confident to ask things of his Father (3:20-21)?
11. 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?

PRAYER POINTS

STUDY 6: THE CHRISTIAN WALK – CHURCH (EPHESIANS 4:1-16)

For three chapters Paul has been describing God's eternal purposes in and through Jesus Christ. From Chapter 4 he moves on 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 (4:3) 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 (4:4-6)?
4. What attitudes are essential to keep the unity of the Spirit (4:2-3)? Are these fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)?
5. Paul has reminded us that we are all the same (4:4-6), and now he says that we are all different! We are united but not uniform (4:7), we are united in the Spirit, but different from one another with respect to the distribution of gifts that each has received. 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 (4:11)? What do they have in common? Why are they mentioned specifically? What happens when they're not present (4:14)?
7. What is the purpose of these gifts (4:12-16)?
8. What is the purpose of God's people doing works of service (4:12)?

9. What does it mean to grow up into Christ? See also 1 Peter 2:1-3; James 1:2-6. What sort of progress are you making at this?

10. What do you think the *supporting ligaments* represent (4:16)?

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 7: DRESSED FOR THE OCCASION (EPHESIANS 4:17-32)

The first part of Ephesians 4 is full of “affirmative imperatives” about how Christians are to treat each other – “live like this!”. Now Paul moves on to some “negative imperatives” – “no longer live as the Gentiles do” (4:17). They are two sides of the one coin. Godliness is both moving towards Christ (putting on the new self – 4:22) *and* moving away from the world (putting off the old self – 4:24).

1. **Read Ephesians 4:17-32.** Paul contrasts the Gentiles with his readers. What words does he use to describe each group of people?

The Gentiles, children of darkness (4:17-19)	The Ephesian church, children of light (4:20-24)

2. Paul wants us to know that what we think influences the way we act. How do you see this working out in yourself? In other people you know?
3. In 4:19, what does Paul mean by “lost all sensitivity”?

What is the connection between this and “given themselves over to sensuality”?

Can you see this process at work in the increasingly sinful behaviour of people? See also Romans 1:18-32.

4. How do our deceitful desires corrupt us (4:22)?

What is the impact of a corrupted “self” on the way we live?

5. What is the key to being made new (4:23)? How can we do this?

6. Putting off the old (4:22), 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, and the more our attitudes change. Work through 4:25-32. How many of these commands are about NOT doing what our impulses suggest?

7. Aussies see ‘knocking’ each other as a sign of acceptance. Is it okay for Christians to behave this way? How can we build each other up with our speech (4:29)?

8. The “negative imperatives” in this section of the letter are paired with “positive imperatives” – Paul doesn’t want us to “put off” our old self and leave an empty space in our closet for sin to return and take over our life again (remember Jesus teaching in Luke 11:24-26: the impure spirit, returning after being cast out, finds the “house swept clean and put in order” – empty – and brings more impure spirits to live there). What behaviour and attitudes are characteristic of the “new self”?

9. Paul is describing two completely different cultures. How does the culture of our church differ from that around us? How SHOULD it?

10. How do the choices we each 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 8: THE CHRISTIAN WALK – GODLINESS (EPHESIANS 5:1-20)

Read **Ephesians 5:1-7**

1. How might “living a life of love” be a sacrifice pleasing to God? Is this earning our salvation?
2. When Paul speaks about sexual immorality, what does he mean by "not even a hint" (5:3)? How was this a challenge for Christians in first century Ephesus? Do you think it is a challenge for Christians today? What do we need to do to live distinctively amidst a world with very different ideals?
3. What are God’s standards for the way we speak (5:4)? How far does our speech depart from these standards, and what do we need to change? Think about practical examples.
4. What is the danger of not taking God's standards seriously (5:5)?
5. What is the danger of allowing ourselves to be deceived by those who speak with empty words (5:6-7)?
6. What do you need to abandon so that you can live well, walking in the light of God?

Read **Ephesians 5:8-14**

7. Paul uses “darkness” and “light” as metaphors – the “light” of God’s holiness helps us throw off the “darkness” of sin. If we were once in darkness, what are we now? What does this mean in practice in our day to day lives?
8. Paul tells us to live as “children of light” and “find out what pleases the Lord.” How are these two things connected? How do we find out what pleases the Lord?

9. Can you think of an example in your life right now in which you are trying to discern 'what pleases the Lord'? If you are comfortable, share this with the group and ask them to pray that God will enlighten the eyes of your heart.

Read **Ephesians 5:15-20**

10. Paul warns us ("be very careful") to live wisely (5:15) What things does he say are key to living wisely?
11. How might approaching each day by "understanding what the Lord's will is" and "always giving thanks" help you to live wisely and make the most of every opportunity?
12. Among other things, Paul has given us 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 things by speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (5:19)?

live as children of light:

find out what pleases God and understanding his will:

be filled with the Spirit:

13. Colossians 3:15-17 seems to be expressing a similar thought. What place does Paul want Christ's word to have among the Colossians?

PRAYER POINTS

STUDY 9: THE CHRISTIAN WALK – RELATIONSHIPS (EPHESIANS 5:21–6:9)

At the beginning of this chapter Paul reminded his readers to be imitators of God, and to live a life of love which would be, with Christ as the example, a “fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (5:1-2). This is the broader context for the section we’re about to read: Paul’s instructions for godly relationships.

He speaks about three key relationships in Ephesian households (wives and husbands, children and parents, slaves and masters), and shows how these relationships can be marked by love.

Read **Ephesians 5:21**

1. Everyone lives within a network of authority relationships. What is yours? Who has authority over you, and who do you have authority over?
2. Is the idea of submission a popular concept in our culture? Why is the idea of submission to one another out of reverence for Christ such a radical idea for the Ephesian Christians and for us?
3. How is submission different from being taken advantage of or abused? How can submission actually be a counter-cultural demonstration of God’s love?

Read **Ephesians 5:22-33**

4. To whom are wives instructed to submit, and why?
5. What is the standard of love in marriage? If so, why would submission be so safe in this context?
6. When husbands and wives lay down their lives for one another, how does this advance the Gospel?
7. If you’re married, how do you think you might grow in this? If you’re not married, but hope to be one day, how might this passage shape how you discern a potential spouse?

Read **Ephesians 6:1-4**

8. What are children instructed to do, and why?

9. What are fathers instructed *not* to do? What do you think this looks like in practice?

What are fathers instructed to do instead?

10. How can we be a church that helps parents in this endeavour?

Read **Ephesians 6:5-9**

11. What are slaves instructed to do? What are masters instructed to do?

12. Does work matter to God? If you work, how is your work - ultimately - a form of serving the Lord? See also Colossians 2:17.

13. Is this section an endorsement of slavery? Why or why not?

14. If Paul thinks even being a slave is a way of serving God, how does this counter the modern lies that work is merely "*a necessity to get to rest*" or "*the sum total of our identity*"?

15. How is Jesus the ultimate example of submission?

PRAYER POINTS:

STUDY 10: STANDING FIRM IN THE GOSPEL (EPHESIANS 6:10-24)

1. Read **Ephesians 6:10-24**. 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 (6:10-11, 13-17)?
2. Read **Isaiah 11:5, 49:2, 59:17**. Who owns this armour?
3. List each part of the armour Paul describes. Which are defensive and which offensive? What is purpose of this armour (6:13-14)?
4. How is the sword described (6:17)?
5. Whose weapon is the word of God? How does he use it? See also Hebrews 4:12-13.
6. How can God's Word help to strengthen the other parts of the armour?
7. How are we, as a church, showing that we value God's word applied in our lives? How COULD we be showing it?
8. Prayer is vital. It is not a waste of time. It does more than generating "positive thinking" within the person praying. What is the world view (6:10-12) against which Paul says we are to pray in the Spirit on all occasions (6:18-20)? How does an understanding like this drive us to our knees?
9. How do these things help us to pray better?
10. Be honest: How are we, as a church, showing that we value prayer? How COULD we better be showing it?

PRAYER POINTS: