

## Intro. on Ephesians

Author: Ephesians is written by Paul (we know this because he says so in vs.1)

To Whom: Most likely the Ephesian church... but was it only to the Ephesian church or was it to be circulated to the regional churches of which the city of Ephesus was the main city. The problem with it being just to the church in Ephesus is the lack of personally addressing the readers (Paul spent at least 3 years in Ephesus with that church). As well, there is no mention of Timothy who was well known in Ephesus... most likely this letter was not exclusively or immediately addressing the Ephesian Church.

Date/Origin: Written from Prison (most likely Rome) around 60AD. Paul was under house arrest, so had the freedom to write letters, receive letters, and have visitors.

Purpose: Since Paul was writing this letter that was going to be circulated we do not see Paul dealing with specific congregation type of issues (see Colossians as example). Paul rose above individual battles to grab a hold of the a vision of God's sovereign plan. The issues dealt with are broad and yet applicable to the practical demands of the Christian life.

## Ephesians 1

### Launch

- Have you ever gotten an inheritance?
- Who gets an inheritance? What gives them that right?

*Link:* Introductions can be a bit long... not quite the meat of the story, not the conclusion, but the foundation of everything that is coming. Paul starts his letter with an introduction, and yet as he starts his letter out Paul cannot help but talk about what Christ has done for them on the cross. How much their lives have changed because they accepted Jesus in their life. He is even more excited about who God is and what God wants to give them as a gift for entering into His family.

### Explore (1-14)

- Who wrote this letter?
- Who was it written to? (It was written to Christians... important to keep in mind regarding application)

- What is the purpose of an introduction paragraph? To get it started and lay a foundation.
- Who is the main character in these verses?
- Define bless. Who blesses who? 1. Man blesses God 2. God blessing us in Christ. How can man bless God? (the rest of these verses unpack God blessing us).
- What did God choose us? What is significant about that? What does it tell us about God/ourselves?
- Vs. 7-10 SWAG we get in Christ (How God blesses us/spiritual blessings)
  - Redemption- define (to buy back). What were we bought back from? What was the price? What are we bought into? (freedom)
  - Forgiveness/trespases (violation of another's rights... God's or mans)
  - Knowing God's will
- Vs. 11-14
  - Inheritance define. Anyone receive one before? Why did you get it?
  - How much control does God have? (he works all things to his will vs. 11)
  - Define Gospel... (good news... we were bought back from death to life)
  - How do we know we have an inheritance? Who is the Holy Spirit?

### Interpret

For those who are in Christ, God lavishes blessings on us because we are adopted into his family. And these blessings are many, one of which is the forgiveness of our sins.

These 14 verses are just overwhelming to wrap our hearts and minds around. Paul is throwing the book of blessings at us... telling us all we get in Christ as an inheritance. And God does not give out of a small faucet, but pours them out from a fire hose. And these blessings were purposed before he created the world, by his will, according to His plan... all for His glory. As he is bringing all things together in Him, for his glory we are caught up in a tidal wave of blessings.

### Application

Why do you think would God want to give all these things to us?

How would this change your tomorrow if you lived knowing God is in control of all your circumstances?

## Ephesians 2

### Launch

- Have you ever had a life changing moment?
- If you were to split your life in the before/after of that moment how would you describe the “you” before and the “you” after?

Link: We all, for good and for bad, have life changing moments. After this one moment we are never the same. The Ephesians became Christians and Paul is going to shed light on who they were, and who they are now and what God did to make it happen.

### Explore (vs. 1-10)

\*Warning... Paul is about to offend us!

#### Vs. 1-3

- Vs. 1&2... what is the oxymoron do you see? (Dead but walking)
- What does it mean to be dead? How is this death different?
- Define trespass and sin (trespass- violation of someone's rights, sin- anything that is contrary to the holy character of God. It is a matter of what we are, not so much what we do.)
- Who is the “prince of the power of the air”? So... who were we following?
- Who is vs. 3 speaking of? (everyone), What was true of all of us? (define passions of the body)

#### Vs. 4-10

- What does “but” indicate? Could be the biggest but in the Bible.
- What positive picture does Paul paint in vs. 4? (Pick up from ppl. God's character, His great love)
- How does this change us in vs. 5&6?
- Vs. 8-10... Define... Saved (from what?), Grace (unmerited favor), Faith (belief that God did it).
- Why does Paul say God did this?

- Now that we are new... what is our purpose? (we once walked in death, now we walk in life).

### Interpret

We all were (are) children of wrath because of our sins and trespasses, we were as dead as dead can get, however, God saved us by his grace in Christ so that we can be alive again.

If you wanted to define the gospel in a few verses 2:8-10 are as good as any. As you move forward continue to go back to these verses at the "good news".

### Apply

Do you believe what Paul says about you? Do you believe you are/were dead? Do you believe you can be spiritually alive again?

If you believed God has already set out good works for you this week, how might it change how you approach your week?

How does Paul's description of God in these verses shape your view of who God is?

## Ephesians 3

### Launch

- Have you ever had a family member who died or was going through pain? What was it like? What about one of your parents or grandparents? How does it affect your family dynamics?

Link: We find out that Paul is writing this letter from prison and he is in prison because of his faith in Jesus. The man who founded this church is now the man who is in prison and many in the church could be discouraged in their faith since their leader is being persecuted.

### Explore (14-21)

- Take a quick look at 3:1... where is Paul writing from? What would a prison have been like in the ancient world? Why is he there?
- How might the church Paul founded be feeling if their first leader was imprisoned? Why? How might it affected their faith?

*Vs. 14-21*

- What does it mean to bow to someone?
- What is the significance of your last name? Who's last name do you bear if you are a Christian?
- What does Paul pray will happen for the Ephesians?
- Define faith in vs. 17... (that we believe that Christ dwells in us)
- What should be our foundation or grounding? How can love be a foundation (think relationship)?
- How BIG does Paul make God's love out to be?
- How BIG is God's power?
- What power is at work in us? (look at vs. 16)

### Interpret

Paul is encouraging the Ephesians because of his imprisonment that they would find strength through the power of the Spirit and be rooted in the grand love of God.

## Apply

What is your view of God's love for you... is it great or small?

Do you believe God is able to far more than you ask of him? Why or why not?

## Ephesians 4

### Launch

- Have you ever met a hypocrite? What were they like?
- Have you ever been caught being a hypocrite? What was that like? Was the other person right?

Link: Paul is going to begin addressing the behavior of the Ephesians. They have been given a new identity by accepting Christ... but now the proof needs to be in the pudding. Are they the same person they use to be when it comes to interacting with people around them?

### Explore

- Vs. 17-24
  - Who were the Ephesians told not to be like? (The Gentiles... define) \*Here we also see they are to “walk” not like the Ephesians... sounds like the “walk” in 2:10?
  - What is their bottom line problem? Where does it begin?
  - Define impurity... What is purity? (untainted, of 1 substance)
  - What does Paul say is “in Jesus”? What does this mean? (He is the standard of reality)
  - What were the Ephesians told to do? Who should we put on? Who does it look like?
- Vs. 25-32
  - What does the person who is living out of the new self do?
  - Which of these stand out to you most?
  - Which one of these seem most confusing?
  - Who benefits when we live out of the new self? (members of one another, something to share with another, for those who hear, to one another, forgiving one another)... the acts of the new self chiefly benefit others.
  - How could someone grieve the Holy Spirit?

- Do Paul's standards of a changed life seem to far out there? How would your life change if you lived like this?

### Interpret

For those of us who have been saved by the gospel (2:8) we must not walk in the foot steps of the values and behaviors of our culture, but we are to walk in God's likeness by putting on the new self.

### Apply

- How do you feel about Paul telling us that we ought to forgive? Is there someone in your life that is unforgivable?
- Do you find that your heart is hard towards God like the Gentiles, or soft like someone who is living out of the new self?
- How do you walk in the culture around you and not like one who follows God?

## Ephesians 5

### Launch

- Have you ever been punched in the mouth? Metaphorically for literally?

Link: Paul is going to plainly lay out what someone who is a Christ follower does and what they do not do. This is gut check time... because they are either the real deal or they are phonies.

### Explore

- Vs. 1-2
  - “Therefore”... what does it mean? What is the purpose? (Since they have a new self... therefore...)
  - What is the command? (\*we see “walk” again)
  - What did Jesus do for them? How did Jesus love them?
- Vs. 3-5
  - Define... Sexual Immorality, Impurity, Covetousness
  - What should not be coming from our mouths? Where do words like these come from?
  - In what way are these actions not loving?
  - What is the consequence for living by these things?
- Vs. 6
  - What is the warning Paul has? What might the average person say about ones sexuality or what comes from their mouth?
- Vs. 7-14
  - What 2 words does Paul use in contrast? (darkness/light)
  - What is true of the lives of those who live in darkness?
  - What is someone who lives by the light suppose to do?
  - How does something become visible? What does it mean for our lives to become visible?

- Vs. 15-21
  - What word do we see again? What is Paul's warning (walk... be aware how you walk)
  - Paul gives several contrasting principles... what are we do to? Not to do?
  - What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?
  - What does submitting mean? Does this feel weird? When is it normal to submit to someone?

### Interpret

We are to be imitators of God because we are His children. God's children are marked by lives that are in the light, filled with the spirit, able to discern, wise, they use words that give life and they are in control of their passions, and they are thankful in all circumstances towards God.

### Apply

Which of these "marks" of a child of God is hardest to hear? Which one probably shows up least in your life?

Is your life marked by light (visible, truth) or darkness?

Is it difficult to be aware of how you are "walking" or living your life? What gets in the way of you being aware of how you live?

## Ephesians 6

### Launch

- Have you ever competed or performed before (athletics, music, plays)? What did it take to get ready to perform your best?
- What is necessary to perform well in life?

*Link:* Paul is ending his letter to the Ephesians by setting their minds on what the real battle is ahead and what they need to be ready to engage it.

### Explore (6:10-20)

- Is the armor of God real? Is it literally real?
- Why does Paul say we need to put on the armor of God?
- Do you believe the devil is real?
- Paul says we don't wrestle against 'flesh and blood'... what might he be referring too? What battles do we face in our lives that are 'flesh and blood'?
- Who do we really battle against?
  - Meaning... for us we feel like we battle relationships, disease, loss, failure, injustice, psycho somatic problems... but Paul is saying ultimately these things are tied to a real spiritual battle.
- Given this reality... in vs. 13 what is Paul interested in us being able to do? (Stand firm... as opposed to being able to interpret a situation spiritually)
- What are all the pieces of the armor of God? Define what they are (belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation and sword of the Spirit)... what are the flaming arrows of the evil one? (lies)
- What else are we to do to be ready to stand firm? Define supplication? (pray, be ready to persevere)
- What prayer does Paul ask for?

### Interpret

Our battle is not just what we see and experience with our 5 senses, but the battle is ultimately a spiritual battle that Paul says we need to be prepared to withstand and persevere by putting on God's armor and praying.

### Apply

Do you believe Paul that there is a spiritual battle going on?

Which of all things that Paul encourages you to do to prepare yourself do you neglect?

How might your praying (talking with God) change, if you lived seeing through the lens Paul encourages us to look through?