

Small Group Study Guide: Ephesians 1

Chosen and Sealed

Week of July 5th-11th

Introduction

Ephesians opens not with a problem to solve, but with a breathtaking vision of God's eternal purposes. Writing from prison in Rome, Paul lifts the Ephesian believers' eyes from their circumstances to the cosmic scope of God's grace. Before Paul gives a single command, he gives them identity — chosen before creation, redeemed through Christ's blood and sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Like Nehemiah, who began with prayer before action, Paul begins with worship before instruction. Ephesians 1 reminds us that Christian living flows from Christian belonging. We do not work *for* God's favor; we work *from* it.

Paul's opening chapter is a sweeping reminder that God's story is bigger than our fears, failures or present pressures. It is a call to live as people who know who they are and whose they are.

Opening Question:

When has remembering who you are in Christ changed the way you faced a difficult situation?

I. Blessed in Christ (Ephesians 1:1–6)

Paul begins with praise, not problems—anchoring believers in God's eternal initiative

Consider **Psalm 103:2-5**, connecting Paul's praise with the Old Testament tradition of blessing God for His benefits.:

Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and

compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Read also **John 15:16**, affirming your chosenness and Christ and related purpose:

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in My name the Father will give you.”

1. Why is it vital to start our prayers by declaring who God is and what He has done, rather than jumping immediately into a list of our immediate problems or needs?

2. Paul says believers are chosen “before the creation of the world.” How does this reshape your sense of worth, especially when life feels unstable or disappointing?

II. Redemption Through His Blood (Ephesians 1:7–10)

Paul moves from eternity past to the present work of Christ

Read also the following passages:

- **Colossians 1:13–14:** For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.
 - **Psalm 103:10–12:** He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.
3. Paul describes redemption as God “lavishing” grace on us. How does this contrast with the way our culture often measures worth or forgiveness?

4. In what ways does understanding redemption free us from shame or (the delusion of) self-reliance?

III. Sealed with a Guarantee (Ephesians 1:11–14)

The Spirit is not an optional add-on but God's guarantee of our future

Read the following passages:

- **2 Corinthians 1:21–22:** Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set His seal of ownership on us, and put His Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.
 - **Romans 8:15–16:** The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "*Abba*, Father." The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.
5. In the ancient world, a seal signified ownership, security, and authenticity. In what daily moments are you tempted to doubt that you belong completely to God?

6. How does the Spirit's presence give confidence in seasons of uncertainty or spiritual dryness?

IV. Paul's Prayer for Insight (Ephesians 1:15–19)

Paul prays not for changed circumstances but enlightened hearts

Read the following passages:

- **Psalm 119:18** Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your law.
 - **James 1:5:** If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.
7. Notice that Paul doesn't pray for the Ephesians' external circumstances to change, but for the "eyes of their hearts" to be enlightened. Why is a change of perspective often more powerful than a change of circumstance?
 8. Paul prays for believers to know "the hope," "the riches," and "the power" available to them. Which of these do you most need God to deepen in you right now?

V. Christ Exalted Over All (Ephesians 1:20–23)

Paul ends the chapter by lifting our eyes to the risen, enthroned Christ

Read the following passages:

- **Philippians 2:9–11:** Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
 - **Psalm 110:1:** The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for Your feet."
9. Paul says the church is Christ's body, "the fullness of Him." What does this reveal about the church's identity and mission?

10. How can we prayerfully practice having a "big view" of Christ's supreme authority over our community, our country and our current personal crises?

Application: Living From Identity, Not For Identity

Ephesians 1 teaches us that transformation begins with revelation—seeing ourselves as God sees us

As you consider your week ahead, reflect on these truths:

- **You are chosen**—before you performed or achieved anything.
- **You are redeemed**—fully forgiven, fully welcomed.
- **You are sealed**—God Himself guarantees your future.
- **You are empowered**—resurrection power is at work in you.
- **You are connected**—part of Christ's body, His fullness on earth.

This Week's Challenge

Choose one phrase from Ephesians 1 (e.g., "chosen," "redeemed," "sealed," "in Christ," "lavished grace") that speaks to a current insecurity or struggle.

1. Commit: Repeat it daily in prayer.
2. Display: Put it somewhere visible.
3. Act: Make one decision this week based on who God says you are, not how you feel.

How does Paul's long, spontaneous prayer of praise in Ephesians 1 reshape the way you think about talking to God throughout your day?

Small Group Study Guide: Ephesians 2

Made Alive and Made One

Week of July 12th-18th

Introduction

If Ephesians 1 lifts our eyes to God’s eternal purposes, Ephesians 2 brings those purposes down into the grit of human reality. Paul reminds the church where they came from—dead in sin, enslaved to destructive patterns, and cut off from God. But he doesn’t linger there. With two of the most hope-filled words in Scripture—“But God ...”—Paul announces the miracle of grace: God doesn’t “make bad people good;” He makes the dead alive.

And Paul goes further. God not only reconciles individuals to Himself; He reconciles people to one another. Jew and Gentile, once divided by hostility are now one new humanity in Christ. Ephesians 2 is both deeply personal and profoundly communal. It tells us who we were, who we are and who we are becoming together.

Opening Question:

When have you experienced God bringing life, healing, or unity into a place that once felt broken or hopeless?

I. From Death to Life (Ephesians 2:1–7)

Paul begins with the bad news so the “good news” (Gospel) shines even brighter

Reflect upon **Romans 5:6–8**, the “Gospel in a nutshell”: ... at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Read also **Colossians 2:13–14**, the glory of Calvary’s cross: When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us

II. Saved by Grace, Not by Works (Ephesians 2:8–10)

Paul moves from what God has done to why He has done it

Read also the following passages, characterizing our need and expressing God's love:

- **Titus 3:4–7:** But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.
 - **Romans 3:23–24:** ... or all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.
 - **Psalm 103:10–12:** ... He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.
4. Why do you think is it difficult for many people—sometimes even longtime Christians—to truly embrace that salvation is a gift and not something that can be earned?

 5. Paul says we are God's "workmanship" (in Greek: "*poiēma*," poem, masterpiece). What does this reveal about God's aims in Creation and your related identity and purpose?

 6. Verse 10 says God prepared "good works" in advance for us. What does this indicate about God's omniscience (all-knowingness) and sovereignty?

III. Brought Near by the Blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:11–13)

Paul shifts from personal to relational reconciliation in Christ

Read also the following regarding God’s intended peace (“*Shalom*”) for fallen humankind:

- **Isaiah 57:19:** “... creating praise on their lips. Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the LORD. “And I will heal them.”
 - **Romans 8:15–16:** Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right.”
 - **John 10:16:** “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to My voice, and there shall be one flock and one Shepherd.”
7. Paul asks believers to “remember” their former separation from God. Why is remembering our past (motives, lifestyle, attitudes) spiritually healthy?

8. What does it mean that Christ brings the “far off” (v. 13) near? Where do you see God doing this today—in families, communities, even nations?

IV. Christ Our Peace (Ephesians 2:14–18)

Jesus doesn’t just *make* peace as the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6)—He *is* our peace

Read the following, indicating the work God has commenced already in Christ:

- **Micah 4:3:** He will judge between many peoples and will settle disputes for strong nations far and wide. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into

pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

- **2 Corinthians 5:17–19:** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation.
 - **John 17:20–23:** “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. I have given them the glory that you gave Me, that they may be one as We are One ... so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that You sent Me and have loved them even as you have loved Me.”
9. Paul says Christ “destroyed the dividing wall of hostility.” What walls—cultural, political, racial, relational—still divide people today? What would it look like for your small group to embody Christ’s reconciling peace in your community?
10. How does the Gospel empower us to be “peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9) rather than peace-avoiders or those claiming “peacefulness” while being apathetic?

V. One Household, One Temple (Ephesians 2:19–22)

Paul ends the chapter with a vision of the true Church, “the Body of Christ” (1 Corinthians 12:27) as God’s dwelling place

Read the following passages, calling us to faithful unity and purpose in Christ:

- **1 Peter 2:4–5:** As you come to Him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to Him—you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- **Psalm 133:1:** How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!
- **Revelation 21:3:** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and He will dwell with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God.”

11. Paul says we are “members of God’s household” (v. 19). How does this challenge the notion of a private, individualistic faith?

12. What does it mean that the church is a “holy temple” (v. 21) where God dwells? How does this elevate the way we think about worship, community and mission?

Application: Alive, United, and Sent

Ephesians 2 teaches that salvation is not just personal rescue—it is communal transformation

As you consider your week ahead, reflect on the following:

- You were spiritually and relationally dead—but God made you alive in Christ.
- You were far away—but Christ brought you near.
- You were divided—but the Spirit is making you one.

- You are God’s workmanship—created for good works.
- You are part of God’s household—His dwelling place on earth.

This Week’s Challenge

Choose one phrase from Ephesians 2 (e.g., “made alive,” “by grace,” “brought near,” “He Himself is our peace,” “one new humanity”) which resonates particularly with you.

4. Commit: Repeat it daily in prayer.
5. Display: Put it somewhere visible.
6. Act: Take one step toward reconciliation or unity this week—initiate a conversation, offer forgiveness or build a bridge with another formerly distant.

Closing Reflection: How does Paul’s movement from death to life and from division to unity reshape the way you see the people you encounter throughout your day?

Small Group Study Guide: Ephesians 3

Rooted in Love, Strengthened in Spirit

Week Off for VBS Sunday- This follows July 26th-August 1st

Introduction

Ephesians 3 is Paul at his most pastoral and personal. Writing again from a Roman prison, he pauses his theological soaring to reflect on the mystery God has revealed—that Gentiles are full heirs in Christ—and on the privilege he has been given to proclaim it. But the chapter crescendos in one of the most beautiful prayers in Scripture: a plea that believers would be strengthened internally, rooted in love and filled with the fullness of God.

If Ephesians 1 tells us *who we are* and Ephesians 2 *Whose we are*, Ephesians 3 tells us *how we stand* in Christ: strengthened by the Spirit, grounded in Christ’s love and empowered to grasp the vastness of God’s affection. Paul’s prayer reminds us that spiritual maturity is not primarily about doing more for God, but about receiving more from Him.

Opening Question:

When have you felt God strengthening you on the inside in a way that transcended your external circumstances?

I. The Mystery Revealed (Ephesians 3:1–6)

Paul begins by explaining the “mystery” God entrusted to him—that Gentiles are legitimate candidates for membership in God’s family

Reflect also upon **Isaiah 49:6**, God’s plan to bring salvation to the nations:

“It is too small a thing for you to be My servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

Read also **Acts 10:34–35**: Then Peter began to speak: “I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears Him and does what is right.”

1. The revealed “mystery” (v. 3, 4) breaks down every dividing wall. How does knowing that God’s plan has always included “outsiders”—even among the ancient Israelites—shape the way you see people who seem far from Christ?

2. Paul says this mystery was “made known ... by revelation” (v. 3). How does this challenge that we can understand God apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, purely through human intellect or effort?

II. Grace to Proclaim (Ephesians 3:7–9)

Paul sees himself not as a prisoner of Rome but as a humble servant of the Gospel empowered by God’s grace

Read also the following passages:

- **1 Corinthians 15:9–10**: For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.
- **2 Corinthians 4:5–7**, recalling Creation: For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

3. Paul calls himself “less than the least of all the Lord’s people” (v. 8). How does this Apostle’s humility deepen your appreciation for God’s grace in your own calling?

4. Where do you sense God inviting you to shine light into places that feel spiritually dark or overlooked? With whom will you share the “good news” (Gospel) of Christ today?

III. God’s Wisdom and Purpose on Display (Ephesians 3:10–13)

Paul says God’s intent is that His “manifold wisdom” (v. 10) would be made known *through the Church*, the Body of Jesus Christ and His image-bearers

Read the following passages:

- **Matthew 5:14–16:** “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”
 - **1 Peter 2:9–10:** But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
5. If the true Church is God’s chosen way to display His wisdom, what does that reveal about the importance of unity, diversity and perseverance at Glenkirk Church?

6. Paul urges the Ephesians not to be discouraged by his suffering. When have you seen someone else's faithfulness amidst hardship strengthen your own?

IV. Strengthened from Within by Christ's Spirit (Ephesians 3:14–17)

Paul kneels and prays for inner strength through the Spirit and deeper rootedness in Christ's love

Read the following passages:

- **Psalm 46:1–2:** God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.
- **John 15:4–5,** abiding (living, walking) in Christ, believing *on* Him and not merely *in* Him: “Remain in Me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.”

7. Paul prays for inner strength, not easier circumstances. How does highlight what one aspect of spiritual maturity looks like?

8. What practices help you stay “rooted and established in love” (v. 17) when life feels chaotic, overwhelming or draining?

V. Love Beyond Knowledge (Ephesians 3:18–21)

Paul ends with a breathtaking vision: that believers would grasp the vast dimensions of Christ's love and be filled with God's fullness

Read the following passages:

- **Romans 8:38–39:** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- **Psalm 36:5–7:** Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, Your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the highest mountains, Your justice like the great deep. You, LORD, preserve both people and animals. How priceless is Your unfailing love, O God! People take refuge in the shadow of Your wings.

9. Paul describes Christ's love as having "width, length, height and depth" (v. 18). Which dimension resonates most with you, perhaps addressing a need in your life right now?

10. How does the doxology ("to Him who is able ... ", v. 20) reshape your understanding of what God can do in your family, at Glenkirk Church, or in your personal struggles?

Application: Strengthened, Rooted, Filled

Ephesians 3 teaches that transformation flows from the inside out, Spirit-enabled

Reflect on these truths for the week ahead:

- **You are strengthened**—the Spirit empowers you beyond your natural capacity.
- **You are rooted**—Christ’s love is your stability; your personal “performance” is not.
- **You are included**—God’s family and plan of salvation is wider than you imagine.
- **You are purposed**—your life displays God’s wisdom, purposes and love.
- **You are filled**—God desires to pour His fullness into you.

This Week’s Challenge

Choose one phrase from Ephesians 3 (e.g., “inner strength,” “rooted in love,” “the mystery,” “immeasurably more”) that speaks to a current need.

7. Commit: Repeat it daily in prayer.
8. Display: Put it somewhere visible.
9. Act: Make one decision this week based on God’s power, not your limitations.

Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3 is bold, expansive, and deeply relational. How might praying with this kind of confidence—asking God for inner strength, deeper love, and fullness—reshape the way you talk with Him throughout your day?

Small Group Study Guide: Ephesians 4

Walking Worthy of Our Calling

Week of August 2nd-8th

Introduction

Ephesians 4 marks a major turning point in Paul’s letter. After three chapters of breathtaking theology—identity, grace, mystery, love and spiritual strength in Christ—Paul now turns to how believers should *live* in light of what God has done. The shift is not from “doctrine” to “duty,” but from identity to expression. We walk worthy not to earn God’s favor, but because we already possess it—faithfulness is a fruit of salvation, not its cause.

Paul paints a picture of a community shaped by humility, unity, maturity and love. He calls believers to put off the old self, put on the new and embody the character of Christ in daily relationships. Ephesians 4 is a blueprint for a Spirit-formed Church in a fractured world.

Opening Question:

When have you seen someone’s Christlike character—humility, patience, gentleness, lovingkindness— change the atmosphere of a room or a relationship?

I. A Worthy Walk in Surrendered Unity (Ephesians 4:1–6)

Paul urges Christ followers to live in a way reflecting the calling we have already received

Reflect also upon **Micah 6:8**, conveying the fruits of saving faith in Christ:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Read also **John 17:20–23**: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are One—I in

them and You in Me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.”

1. Paul lists qualities that preserve unity: humility, gentleness, patience and bearing with one another in love (v. 2). Which of these is hardest for you to exhibit consistently?

2. Unity is grounded in seven (the biblical number for completion, maturity) “ones”—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father. How does this foundation reshape your approach to disagreements within the Church?

II. Gifts for Building Up (Ephesians 4:7–13)

Christ gives gifts to His people so the whole Body can grow into maturity

Read also the following passages:

- **Romans 12:4–8**, one Body, diverse gifts: For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.
- **1 Peter 4:10–11**, the purpose of God-given gifts: Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do so with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

3. Paul emphasizes that spiritual gifts are given “as Christ apportioned.” How does this free you from comparison or insecurity about your role in the Church?

4. The purpose of leadership gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers) is to equip the saints for ministry. Where do you sense God nudging you to participate more fully in the privilege and work of building up the Body?

III. Evidence of Maturity (Ephesians 4:14–16)

Paul contrasts spiritual immaturity—being tossed by every wind of teaching—with both personal and churchwide maturity rooted in truth and love

Read also the following passages:

- **Colossians 2:6–7:** So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.
 - **Hebrews 5:12–14,** continually deepening our grasp of Scripture: ... though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God’s word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.
5. Paul says our words should give grace to those who hear. What is one relationship where you want to practice more grace-filled speech? Warren Wiersebe said, "Truth without love is brutality and love without truth is hypocrisy Which side do you tend to lean toward — truth without love, or love without truth?"

6. The Body grows as “each part does its work.” What is one small, faithful action you can take this week to strengthen another’s faith?

IV. Putting Off the Old, Putting On the New (Ephesians 4:17–24)

Paul calls believers to abandon their former way of life and embrace a renewed mind and new self in Christ

Read the following passages:

- **Romans 12:1-2:** Therefore, I urge you, ... to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.
 - **Romans 8:5–6,** walking by the Spirit, not in selfishness: Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.
7. Paul describes the “old self” (v. 22) as corrupted by deceitful desires. What “old patterns” tend to resurface for you when you’re tired, stressed or discouraged?

8. The “new self” (v. 24) is regenerated to be like Christ in true righteousness and holiness. How does this vision of who you are becoming inspire hope rather than pressure?

V. A New Way of Living (Ephesians 4:25–32)

Paul gives practical examples of Spirit-shaped living: truthful speech, righteous anger, honest work, encouraging words, kindness and forgiveness

Read the following passages:

- **Proverbs 15:1–4**, a call to righteous peace-making:

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise adorns knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly. The eyes of the LORD are everywhere, keeping watch on the wicked and the good. The soothing tongue is a tree of life, but a perverse tongue crushes the spirit.

- **Colossians 3:12–14**, a forgiving spirit borne out of gratitude: Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

9. Paul says our words should give grace to those who hear. What is one relationship where you want to practice more grace-filled speech?

10. Paul roots forgiveness in our forgiveness in Christ. How does remembering God’s mercy soften your heart toward someone who has hurt or disappointed you?

Application: Becoming a People Who Reflect Christ

Ephesians 4 teaches us that spiritual maturity is not abstract—it shows up in how we speak, serve, forgive and love

Reflect on these truths this week:

- **You are called**—your life has divine purpose: know God and make Him known.
- **You are gifted**—Christ equips you uniquely; ... but such gifts are meant to be shared.
- **You are growing**—maturity is a process, not a performance (“God’s not finished with you yet”).
- **You are renewed**—the Spirit reshapes your desires and habits upon your surrender.
- **You are empowered**—God enables what He commands; whom He calls, He equips.

This Week’s Challenge

Choose one phrase from Ephesians 4 (e.g., “walk worthy,” “speak truth in love,” “put off,” “put on,” “be kind and compassionate”) that speaks to a current relationship or struggle.

10. Commit: Pray it daily.

11. Display: Put it somewhere visible.

12. Act: Make one relational decision this week that reflects Christ’s character rather than your old patterns.

Ephesians 4 invites us to live as a people shaped by grace—unified, maturing, renewed and overflowing with kindness.

How might adopting Paul’s vision for a “worthy walk” reshape the way you approach your relationships, responsibilities, and reactions throughout the week?

Small Group Study Guide: Ephesians 5

God's Image-Bearers, Children of Light

Week of August 9th-15th

Introduction

Ephesians 5 continues Paul's call to live out our identity in Christ—not by striving for perfection, but by imitating the God who has already loved us, redeemed us and made us His own. Paul contrasts two ways of life: the old patterns of darkness and the new way of light, wisdom and Spirit-filled living. The chapter moves from personal holiness to relational love, culminating in a profound vision of marriage rooted in Christ's sacrificial love for the Church.

Ephesians 5 is not a list of rules but an invitation to a transformed way of being—a life shaped by love, light and wisdom.

Opening Questions:

Who is someone in your life whose walk with Christ has inspired you to want to imitate God more closely? How are you doing this?

I. Imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1-7)

Paul opens with a simple but profound command: “Be imitators of God ... and walk in love.”

Read **1 John 4:7b-11**, love and purity conveying our “family resemblance” in Jesus Christ: Let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

4. Paul invites believers to “expose” darkness, not through condemnation but through the presence of light. Where and how can you be faithful here today?

III. Walking in Wisdom (Ephesians 5:15–20)

Paul calls believers to live thoughtfully and intentionally, fully submitted to the Spirit

Read also the following passages:

- **James 1:5**, appealing to the Giver of every good gift: If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.
- **Proverbs 3:5–6**: Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight.

5. Paul contrasts foolishness with wisdom, drunkenness with Spirit-filling. What’s the difference between knowledge and understanding? How does wisdom figure here?

6. Paul describes Spirit-filled living as marked by gratitude, worship and mutual encouragement. Which of these is your “go to” when life feels overwhelming?

IV. Mutual Submission (Ephesians 5:21)

Before addressing the married relationship, Paul lays a foundation for all Christian relationships: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Reflect also upon the following:

- **Philippians 2:3–5**, reflecting humble gratitude for God’s salvation in Jesus’ sacrifice: Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but to each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.
- **Romans 12:10**, reflecting a servant’s heart: Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves

7. How are today’s passages NOT a call to being either a “doormat” or enabler?

8. How does mutual submission challenge American culture’s emphasis upon individuality, personal rights and independence?

V. Christlike Love in Marriage (Ephesians 5:22–33)

Paul uses marriage as a living parable of Christ’s love for the Church, His Bride

Read also the following:

- **Genesis 2:24**, reflecting one of God’s purposes in marriage: That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

- **John 13:34–35**, wherein Jesus shares the “law of Christ” and a trademark of His followers: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”

9. How have some with agenda hijacked and misapplied today’s Ephesians passage? In what ways to such people completely miss Paul’s point and God’s intent?

10. Even for the unmarried, this passage reveals how Christ loves His own. Which aspect of Christ’s love —sacrifice, nurture, cleansing, commitment—speaks most deeply to you?

Application: Living as People of Love, Light and Wisdom

Ephesians 5 teaches that Christian living flows from identity, not effort

Reflect on these truths this week:

- **You are beloved**—God’s love for you in Christ enables your love.
- **You are light**—your faithful presence can reveal truth and bring hope.
- **You are guided**—the Spirit empowers wisdom in ordinary decisions.
- **You are symbolic**—your relationships, especially marriage, reflect the Gospel.
- **You are awakened**—Christ calls you out of lethargy into vibrant, purposeful life.

This Week’s Challenge

Choose one phrase from Ephesians 5 (e.g., “walk in love,” “walk as children of light,” “make the most of every opportunity,” “be filled with the Spirit,” “submit to one another”) that speaks to a current relationship or struggle.

13. Commit: Pray it daily.

14. Display: Put it somewhere visible.

15. Act: Commit to exhibiting the desired orientation throughout the week ahead.

How might embracing Paul’s Ephesians 5 vision for a Spirit-shaped walk transform the way you love, discern and function in the ordinary moments of your week?

Small Group Study Guide: Ephesians 6

Standing Firm in the Strength of the LORD

Week of August 16th- 22nd

Introduction

Ephesians closes the way it began — with identity before activity. Paul has spent five chapters lifting believers' eyes to who they are in Christ: chosen, redeemed, sealed, empowered and united. Now, in chapter 6, he turns to the gritty realities of daily life: family relationships, workplace pressures, spiritual opposition and the unseen battle that affects everything we experience in ourselves and the fallen world around us.

Just as the earlier Ephesians 1 guide emphasized that “Christian living flows from Christian belonging”, Paul now shows how that identity equips us to stand firm in a world that pushes back.

Ephesians 6 is a call not to fearfulness but to readiness—not to self-reliance, but Spirit-empowered resilience. It is a chapter for anyone who feels the weight of responsibility, the strain of relationships and/or the pressure of spiritual resistance.

Opening Question:

Where have you recently felt the need for God's strength rather than your own?

I. Christlike Relationships in the Home (Ephesians 6:1–4)

Paul begins with the most intimate, highest priority arena of discipleship: the household

Read **Exodus 20:12**, a platform for a functioning society, the Fifth Commandment: “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.”

human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

3. Paul's treatment of slavery (bondservice) in the Bible causes many to challenge, "The Bible condones slavery." Is this an accurate view? Why or why not?
4. Paul emphasizes working "as unto Christ" (v. 5) How does this transform the way you approach difficult tasks, supervisors, coworkers, or even how you influence or lead others?

III. The Real Battle: Spiritual Warfare (Ephesians 6:10–13)

Paul shifts from household life to cosmic conflict

Read also the following passages:

- **2 Corinthians 10:3–5**, regarding eternal "weaponry": For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.
 - **1 Peter 5:8–9**, reinforcing that the enemy is real, crafty and vicious: Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.
5. Paul exhorts believers to resist the devil; Jesus demonstrated how during His wilderness temptations (Luke 4:1–13)—He disarmed Satan with biblical truth. Joseph, however, used a different tactic with Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39). Why did Joseph flee temptation whereas Jesus rebuked the enemy with Scripture?

6. Paul commands believers to “be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power” (v. 10). In what circumstances are you tempted to rely on your own strength instead?

IV. The Armor of God (Ephesians 6:14–18)

Paul describes the resources God provides for the battle — not physical armor but spiritual realities rooted in the Gospel

Reflect also upon:

- **Philippians 2:3–5**, indicating God Himself as a Warrior in armor: He put on righteousness as His breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his Head; He put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped Himself in zeal as in a cloak.
 - **Romans 13:12–14**, a warning as relevant today as ever: The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.
7. Is the call to wearing spiritual armor likewise a call to combativeness? Why or why not?

8. Which piece of the armor do you most need in this season—truth, righteousness, readiness, faith, salvation or God’s Word?

V. Boldness in Community (Ephesians 6:19–24)

Even Paul, chained for the Gospel, asks for courage; he ends as he began this epistle—a blessing wrapped in peace, love and grace

Read also the following:

- **Colossians 4:2-4**, asking for prayer to enable effectiveness: Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.
 - **1 Thessalonians 3:12–13**, calling for love-strengthened hearts: May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones.
9. Paul doesn't ask for release from prison but for boldness within it. How does this challenge the way we pray about our own difficult circumstances?

10. Paul highlights the importance of encouragement and connection. Who has strengthened your faith recently, and how might you encourage a fellow believer this week?

Application: Standing Firm in the Lord's Strength

Just as Ephesians 1 study guide concluded with identity statements in week 1 of this series, Ephesians 6 concludes with a call to stand firm in those truths

Reflect on these realities:

- **You are strengthened**—not by willpower but by the Lord's mighty power.
- **You are equipped**—God has given you “armor” for every good battle.
- **You are protected**—the enemy is real, but Christ is greater.
- **You are connected**—you stand not alone but with the body of Christ.
- **You are sent**—to live and speak with boldness and purpose wherever God places you.

This Week's Challenge

Choose one piece of the armor of God: the “belt of truth,” “shield of faith” or “helmet of salvation.”

16. Commit: Pray daily for God to strengthen this area.
17. Display: Write down the armor you've chosen, placing it somewhere visible.
18. Act: Make one decision this week based on God's strength rather than your own.

How does Paul's call to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions” reshape the way you think about talking to God throughout your day?