

# Ephesians (Sample) Study Guide

## Background

Although some scholars dispute Ephesians' authorship, it is traditionally assumed to be written by Paul. Within the letter, Paul tells his readers that he is in prison, which means that he wrote it around 62 AD, while he was imprisoned in Rome. Because the letter does not seem to have been written in response to specific issues, many readers believe that it was originally a circular letter, meant not only to be shared with the church in Ephesus, but with other churches in the area (ESV Study Bible).

## Introduction

Connection is a major theme of Ephesians. Paul emphasizes both the believer's connection with God and with others. We can be connected to God through Christ's work in redeeming us (1:3-14), and because of this redemption, we are connected with other believers into one family of God (2:11-22, 4:11-16). Only when we understand our connection to God and our identity in Christ can we pursue unity with Him and others. God's end goal for His creation is complete unity (1:10), and Ephesians deals extensively with how to pursue this unity in our daily lives (specifically, in chapters 4-6).

## Outline

- I. Greeting—1:1-2
- II. Believer's connection with God—1:3-2:10
  - a. God's blessings to us—1:3-14
  - b. Paul's prayer for us as believers—1:15-23
  - c. A picture of how God saved us—2:1-10
- III. Believers' connection to each other—2:11-3:21
  - a. Reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles—2:11-22
  - b. Mystery of God's plan for the Gentiles revealed—3:1-13
  - c. Paul's second prayer for believers—3:14-21
- IV. Practical ways to nurture connection—4:1-6:9
  - a. Importance of unity—4:1-16
  - b. Practical moral instructions for all relationships—4:17-5:21
  - c. Instruction for specific relationships
    - i. Wives and husbands—5:21-33
    - ii. Children and parents—6:1-4
    - iii. Slaves and Masters—6:5-9
- V. Closing Remarks—6:10-22
  - a. Importance of spiritual strength—6:1-20
  - b. Final Greetings—6:21-24

## **Study Questions**

### **Chapter 1**

1. What are some blessings we have been given in Christ (1:3-14)?
2. Which of these blessings means the most to you in your life right now, and why?
3. Paul prays a beautiful prayer for us in 1:15-23. Which parts of this prayer do you need most in your life today?

### **Chapter 2**

1. In verses 1-6, Paul speaks of being dead in trespasses and sins. Do you relate to this imagery? If you have been raised in the church, you might not have experienced as dramatic a conversion as Paul's original audience. Even so, how does this passage describe you?
2. In verse 10, Paul tells us that we are God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works." What good works do you sense you were created to do? What good works have you done that were life-giving for you?
3. How does the imagery in verses 18-22 affect you? Do you feel like this imagery accurately describes your church community and/or your Christian friendships? Why or why not?

### **Chapter 3**

1. Why do you think Paul speaks of God's plan being a "mystery" in this chapter (3:3, 4, 6, and 9)? In what ways is God's plan still a "mystery" to you?
2. Paul prays for fellow Christians to be "rooted and grounded in love" (3:18). How is your life currently rooted and grounded in love? Are there areas of life where you need to be more rooted in love?

### **Chapter 4**

1. God has given Christians different gifts for the building up of the church (4:11-16). Which gifts has God given you, and how are you currently using them?
2. Which of Paul's instructions in 4:17-32 do you most need to hear right now? Why? How can you follow that teaching more fully in your life today?

### **Chapter 5**

1. In verses 1-21, Paul addresses the importance of living a life of wisdom and using our lives well. These instructions are summed up in verse 15-16: "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil." Spend a few minutes taking stock of your current life in light of these 21 verses. Are there ways you can make better use of your time?
2. How is marriage like the relationship between Christ and the church? How does this understanding affect your view of marriage?

## Chapter 6

1. The idea of submission is woven into chapters 5-6, starting with 5:21 (“submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ”) and continuing through chapter 6’s instructions to children, parents, slaves, and masters. Is the idea of submitting hard for you? What areas are difficult for you to submit, and how can you follow Paul’s teachings more fully?
2. What part of the armor of God do you need most right now, and why?

### Works Cited

The ESV Study Bible. English Standard Version, Crossway, 2001.

## Ephesians Study Guide Answer Key

### Chapter 1

1. We have been blessed with every spiritual blessing; we've been chosen by God to be holy and blameless; we have been adopted through Christ; we have been redeemed through Christ's blood; we have forgiveness of sins; we have been lavished with grace; God has made known to us the mystery of His will; we have an inheritance of heaven.
2. Right now, I am most thankful to know that I have been chosen and adopted by God. Knowing that my identity is rooted in Him makes me not worry about what other people think of me. I don't have to try to impress others; I just need to live for God.
3. Today I most need a spirit of wisdom and knowledge as I seek to parent my children well and teach my Veritas students well. I need God's guidance in how to best share His love with them.

### Chapter 2

1. Even though I never went through a "rebellion" phase, I can relate to the idea of being dead in sin. There are times even now when I feel held captive by selfishness, and it's a terrible way to live, always thinking about yourself. Thankfully, God always lets us repent, and it feels so good to be set free from that selfish mindset.
2. I believe that the good works that God has prepared for me to do include serving my family, teaching others, working in our church's food pantry, loving my neighbors, and welcoming refugees to Nashville, among other things. Teaching and mentoring are especially life-giving to me, and my favorite way to use those gifts has been in parenting my children.
3. I think the image of God's church as a "structure being joined together" and growing "into a holy temple in the Lord" is beautiful and inspiring. While the churches I've been a part of haven't always lived up to that ideal, I do believe that they've always striven toward it. And my close friendships with other Christians definitely seem unified and God-honoring, for which I'm grateful.

### Chapter 3

1. I think that the gospel turned the religious understandings of Jewish believers upside-down. The idea that Gentiles were as much a part of God's plan as them was indeed a "mystery" that was just now being made known to them. I am thankful for what God has revealed to us through His Son and through Scripture, but of course, many parts of His plan remain a mystery. What will heaven be like? Will it be "a new earth" like the prophets have said, or will it be in a completely different realm? And how far will God's mercy extend? I believe it's farther than we can dream. Also, evil and suffering continue to be somewhat of a mystery to me at times, although I've seen how God can bring good out of them.

2. I do feel like my life is rooted and grounded in love, especially in my family. I've always heard that parenting teens can be tough, but these have been some of my favorite years of parenting! As Veritas teacher, I want to make sure our classroom is always rooted and grounded in love, which includes how we treat each other and always my own focus in teaching. Learning History and Logic is important, but even more important is that everything we do brings glory to God.

#### **Chapter 4**

1. I believe that God has given me the gift of teaching, and lately, others have affirmed that He has given me the gift of public speaking, which is a huge surprise to me, as I was a very shy child! I have used them through homeschooling, teaching Sunday school at my church, and teaching at Veritas. And this Fall, I spoke at two women's retreats, which is outside of my comfort zone. They both went really well, though.
2. I am always challenged by the idea of only speaking that which is "good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear" (29). It's so hard for me to control my tongue, and I sometimes struggle with complaining or with speaking sharply. I also can make harsh judgments, which should never be thought, much less spoken aloud.

#### **Chapter 5**

1. I've been working hard on not being on my phone so much because it is not a good use of my time. I've gotten off social media entirely, but I still find myself wasting time with word games, news stories, and email. I don't know why it's such a draw, but I'm continually fighting it.
2. The husband/wife relationship mirrors how Christ loves His church, and His church submits to Him. This parallel makes me realize how sacred marriage is and how it can be a picture to the world of how we are supposed to function in relation to Christ.

#### **Chapter 6**

1. It's not hard for me to submit in a relationship where I feel loved and supported, but it is hard when I don't trust the authority. I don't think we *are* supposed to blindly trust every authority, but I do want to submit to Christ in all situations. I think that by consciously trying to submit to Him, I can also be more submissive to others in a way that glorifies Him.
2. Right now, I most need the shield of faith. So many things are happening in the world that I can't understand, and I want to trust God in every circumstance.