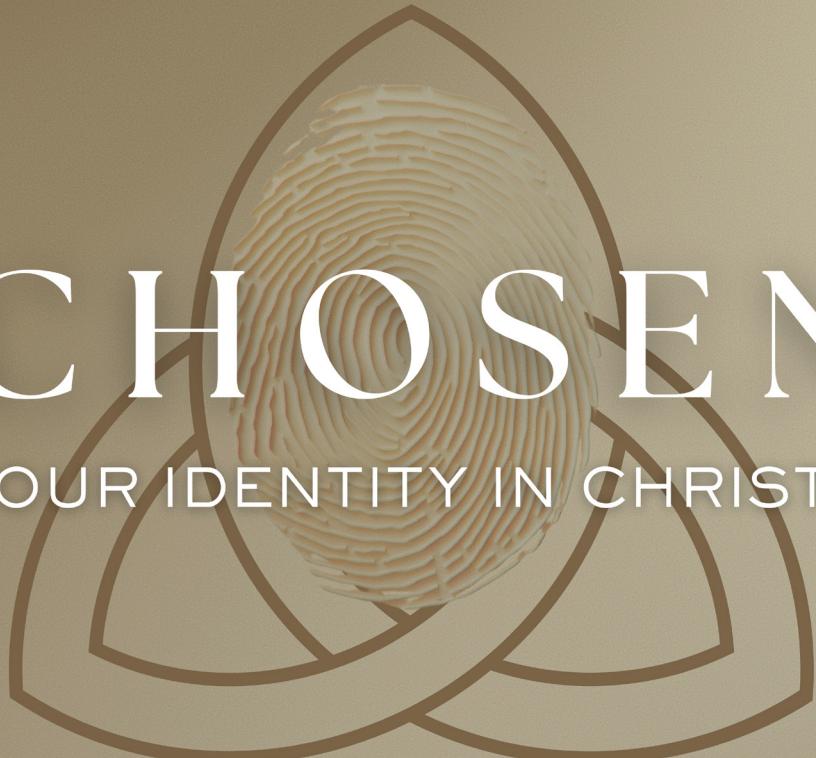


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OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST



THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

STUDY GUIDE

# **- CHOSEN -**

## **OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST**

### **The Book of Ephesians**

The Epistle to the Ephesians is one of the letters in the New Testament by Paul. It stands out for its lofty theology, emphasizing God's cosmic plan in Christ, the unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church (one new humanity), and practical exhortations for Christian living in household relationships and spiritual warfare. Most scholars believe that Ephesians was written by Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (c. AD 60–62), alongside Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians (the "Prison Epistles"). It was delivered by a man named Tychicus.

First Century Ephesus was a major metropolitan center in the Roman province of Asia (modern western Turkey). With a population estimated at 250,000, it was one of the empire's largest cities after Rome and Alexandria. Ephesus was a prosperous port city, a commercial hub at the end of major trade routes, and a center of learning and culture. It was most famous for the Temple of Artemis (one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World) and as a stronghold of pagan worship and sexual rites, with significant economic ties to idol-making (as seen in the riot in Acts 19). The city featured impressive Roman architecture, including a massive theater (seating ~25,000, site of the Artemis riot), libraries, baths, agoras, and aqueducts. Paul came there initially as a substitute for a well-regarded preacher named Apollos. The Ephesus church, despite Apollos preaching, was tiny—just twelve men. Paul baptized the group in the name of Jesus and the Holy Spirit fell upon them, changing the character of Ephesus.

Paul ministered there extensively during his third missionary journey (c. AD 52–55), spending over two years teaching daily in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19). This led to widespread conversions and some conflict, culminating in a riot led by silversmiths fearing loss of trade from Artemis shrines. This riot led to Paul's Ephesus becoming a key early Christian center, later associated with the Apostle John and addressed in Revelation 2:1–7.

Ephesians core themes—our identity in Christ, reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles through Christ, the church as Christ's body and God's temple, and ethical living amid a pagan culture—fit the multi-ethnic church in Ephesus and surrounding areas, as well as the multi-cultural, post- Christendom context of today.

## **SERIES SCHEDULE:**

January 11: Chosen to Be Holy and Blameless - Ephesians 1:1-10

January 18: Sealed with the Holy Spirit - Ephesians 1:11-14

January 25: Redeemed to Reign - Ephesians 1:15-23

February 1: God's Ongoing Project - Ephesians 2:1-10

February 8: A House for the Holy Spirit - Ephesians 2:11-22

February 15: Brought Together by Grace - Ephesians 3:1–13

## Lesson 1: Chosen to Be Holy and Blameless

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

*Ephesians 1:1-10*

1. If you had to name three things that are core to your identity what would they be? Were those things chosen by you or were they chosen for you? Why does that matter? Do we choose being a child of God as our identity or is it given to us? Or is it both?
2. What does it mean for believers to be given “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” (Ephesians 1:3) What might these spiritual blessings include (Galatians 5:22-23)? Does this comprehensive promise impact your daily life? How?
3. Have you considered what it means for Christ to choose us before the creation of the world? (Ephesians 1:4) What do you think Jesus meant when He said, “You did not choose me but I chose you?” (John 15:16) Does this idea contradict your theology of salvation? Why? For what are believers chosen? How many does Scripture name? (Ephesians 4:4-6) How does the idea of being chosen and adopted by God before time began affect your understanding of your identity and relationship with Him?

4. How does God's grace being freely given "to the praise of his glorious grace" (Ephesians 4:7-8) impact the way we respond to our own failures or extend forgiveness to others? What did Jesus teach about this? (Matthew 18:21-35)

5. Why is redemption tied specifically to Christ's sacrifice? (Ephesians 1:7-8, Romans 5:8, Isaiah 53:5-6) What is the expressed purpose of our redemption? (Ephesians 1:9-10) What does this grand purpose of uniting everything in Christ suggest about God's long-term plan, and how does it give hope amid division or chaos in the world today?

## Next Steps:

Consider your identity first as being holy and blameless before anything else. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you ways this impacts your relationships, work and self-image.

## Lesson 2: Sealed with the Holy Spirit

*In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

*Ephesians 1:11-14*

1. What are some things you have inherited, be they genetic traits, attitudes and dispositions, traditions or money and property? Did you choose these things? Why not? How have they impacted you?
2. What does verse 11 say we have received and for what purpose? (Ephesians 1:11) Is our inheritance about us or does it serve a larger purpose? How does understanding that God's ultimate purpose in choosing us is for His glory (rather than primarily for our comfort or benefit) shape the way we view our lives and decisions? If our life is about God's glory rather than us, how is every decision transformed? (1 Corinthians 10:31, Romans 5:3-5)
3. Paul describes believers as those "who were the first to put our hope in Christ" (Ephesians 1:12). What does this inclusion of all reveal about God's plan to unite all believers—Jew and Gentile—in one inheritance in Christ? Where else do we see this in Scripture? (Acts 2:5-13, Revelation 7:9-10) How does this present and future reality impact our racial and ethnic identity?
4. What does it mean practically that the Holy Spirit is a "seal" on believers, and how might this truth bring assurance when we feel spiritually insecure or doubt our salvation? (Ephesians 1:13) How does the Holy Spirit seal? And what does He seal?

5. What else does Paul call the Holy Spirit? (Ephesians 1:14) Upon what is the Holy Spirit a deposit? How does this description of the Spirit encourage us to live with hope and patience while we wait for the “redemption of those who are God’s possession”? Is this a part of your identity? Why or why not? How can you make it a bigger part of who you are?

6. The phrase “to the praise of his glory” appears three times in verses 1-14 (vv. 6, 12, 14), tying together God’s grace, our inheritance, and the work of the Spirit. Why do you think Paul emphasizes that every aspect of salvation is designed to bring praise to God’s glory, and how can we intentionally live in a way that reflects this purpose? What does Psalm 86:12 teach us about this? What reason does Psalm 86:13 give us to glorify God?

## Next Steps:

Consider a difficult situation in your life. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how to use it for God's glory. Take note if this perspective changes how you approach it and share it with your small group.

## Lesson 3: Redeemed to Reign

*For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

*Ephesians 1:15-23*

1. Have you ever struggled against an authority? What happened? Do you think they acted justly? Have you struggled in a position of authority or holding authority? What made it difficult?
2. For what does Paul give thanks and for whom does he pray? (Ephesians 1:15-16) Why do you think Paul places such strong emphasis on thanksgiving and persistent prayer for other believers, and how might this challenge or encourage the way we pray for our church community today? How is prayer living into the authority we have been given? (John 14:13-14)
3. What are the six things that Paul asks the Lord Jesus Christ to give the Ephesians? (Ephesians 1:16-19) Why do you think Paul asks for these things on their behalf rather than external circumstances like health or success? How does this compare to our prayers? Do we ask for too little or too much? (James 4:2). Which of the six things Paul asks for do you personally find most encouraging right now?

4. Paul illustrates God's "incomparably great power" by pointing to the resurrection, ascension, and exaltation of Christ—power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated Him far above all rule and authority (Ephesians 1:20-21). How does reflecting on this same resurrection power being available "for us who believe" (Ephesians 1:19) change the way we face weakness, obstacles, or spiritual battles?

5. What does Ephesians 1:22-23 declare about Jesus' authority? Where else does Scripture declare Jesus' authority? What does it mean practically that Jesus is the head of the church and the world, and how should this truth shape our view of church unity, leadership, and our individual roles within the body of Christ? What kind of authority does Jesus give us? (Matthew 16:19, John 14:12-14)

## Next Steps:

Read the two Gospel Scriptures at the end if this study in question 5 and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you might live in this authority as a follower of Jesus. Apply this authority to a particular area where you may be struggling.

## Lesson 4: God's Ongoing Project

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

*Ephesians 2:1-10*

1. What unfinished business do you have in your life? Is there something that you are waiting on God to do? What is it? Do you have confidence He will do it? Why or why not?
2. How does Paul describe the human condition before Christ? (Ephesians 2:1-3) Why does Paul begin with such a stark picture of our spiritual deadness, and how does recognizing this deepen our appreciation for what follows in verses 4-5? Does this picture of our grand sinful condition and God's great love surprise you? Why or why not? Where else do we see this kind of dichotomy?
3. The phrase "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions" (Ephesians 2:4-5) highlights a complete reversal initiated entirely by God. What does it mean to be "made alive with Christ," and how does this truth challenge any tendency we might have to think we contributed to our own salvation? Why do you think we are so determined to think we play any role in our salvation?

4. Ephesians 2:8-9 declares, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." Why is it essential that salvation is described as a gift received through faith rather than something earned, and how might misunderstanding this lead to pride or insecurity in the Christian life?

5. Ephesians 2:10 states that we are “God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” How does this verse show that good works are not the root of our salvation but the fruit of it, and what encouragement does it offer for discovering and walking in the specific purposes God has for each of us? How does it change our perspective about works to know that not only our salvation but our sanctification is God’s work in our life? (Philippians 1:6, Hebrews 13:20-21)

6. This passage begins from describing our hopeless past (Ephesians 2:1-3) to our glorious present and future in Christ seated with Him in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6) How does it impact your life to know that Jesus was taken from being dead in sin to ruling with Him in the Heavenly Realms? Do you see yourself in that way? Why or why not?

## Next Steps:

Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where your sin has control over your life leaving you dead and powerless. Further, ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can rule over even that situation.

## Lesson 5: A Different Deliverance

### *Lesson 5, A House for the Holy Spirit*

*Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— 12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

*Ephesians 2:11-22*

1. Have you ever been changed by being a part of group—a club, a school, a team, church or a community? What changed and how did the change you? How is being changed by the Holy Spirit from the inside out fundamentally different than being changed from the outside in?
2. Why does Paul tell the Gentile believers to “remember” their past (Ephesians 2:11-12)? What five specific things does he want them to recall about their former condition? Can you relate to some of these more than others? How do these highlight their spiritual hopelessness before Christ? In what ways did the Jews view Gentiles as outsiders or “uncircumcised”? Why was this distinction so significant in their culture? What was circumcision a sign of? (Genesis 17:10-14)

3. What key contrast with the Ephesians past does Paul introduce in verse 13? How has the blood of Christ changed the Gentiles' status from "far off" to "brought near"? How does Paul describe Jesus? What "dividing wall of hostility" did Christ break down, and how did He do it (Ephesians 2:14-15)? What does it mean that Christ abolished the law of commandments and ordinances? Was the law destroyed, or fulfilled in a new way? (Matthew 5:17) Why is this so important? (Romans 10:4)

4. How does Jesus reconcile both Jews and Gentiles to God and to each other? What role does the cross play in killing the hostility? (Ephesians 2:16-18) What important access do both these groups receive?

5. What new identities do Gentile believers now have? (Ephesians 2:19) How does this change their relationship to Jewish believers? What is the foundation of this new "household of God" (Ephesians 2:20)? Why is Jesus described as the cornerstone, and what happens when a building is "fitted together" in Him (Ephesians 2:21-22)? Where else is Jesus described as the cornerstone and why is this so important? (Luke 20:17) Who is Jesus quoting? (Psalm 118:22-23) How is the church described as a "holy temple" and a "dwelling place for God by the Spirit"? What incredible thing does this say about God's presence among His people even today?

## Next Steps:

Pick a community of the Holy Spirit to draw into deeper. If you haven't attended one, attend. If you haven't committed, commit. If you are committed, seek some leadership opportunities. If you lead, seek to mentor someone else to lead.

## Lesson 6: Brought Together by Grace

*For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God’s grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.*

*Ephesians 3:1–13*

1. Who is someone from a very different background or culture that made a lasting impact on your life? What was it about that relationship that helped you connect, despite your differences? Think about how shared experiences, or grace, or humility played a part.
2. In verse 6, Paul explains the great “mystery” that Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers in Christ through the Gospel. Why would this have been shocking to some people in Paul’s audience? How do you see this truth challenging the Church today?
3. Paul sees his ministry of preaching to the Gentiles as a gift of God’s grace. (Ephesians 3:7-8) Why do you think Paul emphasizes grace so strongly in describing his role? How might viewing ministry or church involvement as grace-filled change our attitude toward service?

4. Paul says that through the Church, God's manifold wisdom is being made known to the world and even to spiritual powers. (Ephesians 3:10) What do you think it means for the Church to display God's wisdom? How does unity among diverse believers reflect that wisdom?

5. What kind of divisions or differences keep people apart in the Church today? What would it look like for Christians to intentionally cross those lines and live out the mystery of the Gospel as described in Ephesians 3:1-13?

## Next Steps:

As followers of Jesus, we are called to live out the mystery of the Gospel by building bridges across lines of division and welcoming others into the family of God. This week, take a practical step toward unity by reaching out to someone different from you, whether culturally, socially, or spiritually, and start a conversation grounded in grace. Pray for God to use our church to reflect His wisdom by becoming a community where all kinds of people are brought together in Christ.



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