



**FLOURISH  
BIBLE STUDY**

# **EPHESIANS**

**LEADER'S GUIDE**



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## INTRODUCTION: GETTING INTO EPHESIANS

The first time your group gathers, you'll want to provide an overview of Ephesians and go over your plans for the study. The apostle Paul presents the Christian life as a walk along a path toward heaven. You might want to ask the group to identify where they see themselves on this path today, at the beginning of the study. Is it a steady course, or are they tempted by forks in the road? Relate this to the Ephesian believers who had to walk the path of godliness in the midst of ungodly Ephesus. How was that city similar to the world we live in today? Talk about the overarching themes of the letter, most especially the way it unfolds the importance of the church—God's people living life together for the good of all and for God's glory. Look together at the Reading Plan on page xix and discuss which of the supplemental readings you'll include each week.

### WEEK 1: THE BEST INHERITANCE EVER

#### EPHESIANS 1:1-14

This week's passage, Ephesians 1:1–14, is foundational to everything else in the letter, so it's really important that your group understands what Paul writes here as he sets out the gospel. Rather than try to cover every question during your group discussion, perhaps select a few key questions. If you take this approach, be sure to talk through the chart on pages 4–5 and the question at the top of page 7, and then look back to others that might logically come up when you discuss the “Let's Talk” questions. *An important note: At the top of page 6, where verse 5 is covered, the question is missing. You'll see this: “Paul tells us in verse 5 that God ‘predestined us for adoption.’ In saving us, God adopts us as his very own children.” Here is the question that should appear at the end: “What does this truth indicate about God's heart toward his people?”*



## WEEK 2: SEEING WITH HEART-EYES

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

Prayer is the clear emphasis this week, specifically Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:15–23. In addition to covering the rich theology contained in the prayer, you’ll also want to draw out the particulars of Paul’s petition—what he asks God to do. The first question on page 12 comes from verse 16, where Paul mentions his unceasing prayers for his Christian friends during his imprisonment. The point to bring out here is the way Paul prays even in personally difficult circumstances. From this verse we learn that prayer is meant to be ongoing, not occasional, and that our prayers for others can be strong and fervent even when we stand in great need of prayer ourselves. The second question on page 14 concerns the third blessing that accompanies enlightened hearts—a realization of God’s power toward his people. The type of power Paul has in mind is *resurrection* power, and this power is at work slowly but surely transforming us to reflect Christlike character. You’ll definitely want to save time for both “Let’s Talk” questions. The first one asks us to examine our prayer practices in light of the way Paul prays and to guide us to pray more often the way he does. The second “Let’s Talk” question introduces an important theme that we’ll find threaded through the rest of the letter—the vitality of church life.

## WEEK 3: BUT GOD . . .

EPHESIANS 2:1-10

The passage you’ll talk about this week, 2:1–10, is foundational for the Christian life. Paul sets out salvation, unfolding the gospel so clearly. Definitely take time at the beginning to read slowly and carefully through all ten verses. This is a good week to check in with the group to make sure everyone understands what the biblical gospel actually is. You might begin by asking participants if working through Week 3 raised new questions about the gospel or changed their understanding in some way. If you choose to be selective about the portions of the study you’ll cover, definitely include section 2. When you get to section 3, about Christian “walking,” you can discuss how Paul uses the word “walk” overall in the letter rather than rereading and talking through each instance.



## WEEK 4: ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL

### EPHESIANS 2:11–22

This week’s passage, 2:11–22, is definitely not light reading, but please resist the temptation to hurry through it! If the conversation stalls, you can jump-start it by pointing out that these verses show how Scripture is really one big story that ties together—an exciting discovery when we can see it so clearly, as we do here. The Old Testament rite of circumcision seems foreign to us and—let’s face it—doesn’t make for the most scintillating sort of discussion. But the fact that this Old Testament rite factors into New Testament teaching indicates our need to talk it through. You might want to take a few minutes to read Genesis 17:9–14, which reveals its significance. The “blood of Christ” referenced in the first question on page 29 has to do with Jesus’s death on the cross. Peace is the result. Because the word *peace* means different things to different people, it’s important to emphasize the type of peace Paul is outlining here in Ephesians. First and foremost, of course, the cross brings peace between sinners and God, and after that, it brings peace between God’s people. You might want to discuss the various ways the word *peace* is used today and how it can actually contradict biblical teaching. For example, God’s people cannot make peace with sin or sinful practices, even in the name of love. Finally, be sure the group grasps the significance of Jesus as cornerstone. If you want to undertake a short read on “cornerstone” as you prepare, here’s a link: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/cornerstone-and-foundation>.



## WEEK 5: MYSTERY MADE KNOWN!

EPHESIANS 3:1-21

Mystery is a key theme this week, and you'll want to be sure the group understands the way Paul uses the word. Look together at Genesis 12:1-3 when you talk through the first question/answer on page 38. *An important note here about this page: Those of you using the first printing of the study will see that the "question" at the bottom of page 38 and continuing onto page 39 isn't really a question—it's a comment on what's going on in this portion of the letter, followed by lines to write on. This is a typesetting error, and there should be no lines. If you have this edition of the study, you can simply use those lines to jot down a few notes, if you'd like, or just move on past them to the next question.* Paul's second great prayer in the letter is covered this week, and you'll want to talk through its primary theme—spiritual strength—and what Paul says about the purpose and goal of such strength. We hear a lot about *spiritual power* but often very little about what this power actually is and why it's given to believers. You might want to ask the group to share how they've heard this term used and how studying Paul's prayer this week has reshaped their understanding about it.

## WEEK 6: LEARNING TO WALK

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

There is a lot of material to cover this week, so you might want to decide ahead of time where you will focus your discussion when the group meets. Definitely give time to talking about the various roles in the early church and how these do and do not function in the church today. The first question on page 48 asks this question: "As you think back on all Paul has already written in this letter, what is the 'calling' he has in mind here?" You can refer back to Ephesians 1:3-10 and 2:10. *A vitally important correction on page 51 for those of you studying from the first edition: a key word was dropped. The last paragraph should read: "The apostles were called individually by Christ for the purpose of establishing the early church, and their written words were as authoritative as Scripture."*



## **WEEK 7: KEEP ON WALKING**

EPHESIANS 4:17-32

This week's lesson should make for lively discussion, as it hits us all where we live and struggle. The second question on page 56 asks, "What do you think [Paul] means by 'ignorance' in verse 18?" The ignorance Paul has in mind is spiritual. You might want to look together at 1 Corinthians 2:14: "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." The first question on page 57 comes from 4:22 and asks, "Why do you think Paul calls these desires 'deceitful'?" Deceitful desires are those that appeal to our flesh and hook us through flesh-based pleasures, and in the process we can be tempted to see them as good when, in fact, they are counter to God's ways and purposes.

## **WEEK 8: WALKING IN LOVE**

EPHESIANS 5:1-21

Another week of very practical teaching that will, no doubt, generate some good discussion. The first question on page 65 asks why Paul singles out sexual immorality, impurity, and covetousness as so contradictory to Christlikeness. The most likely reason is that these three sins have an especially negative impact on unity and fellowship—a primary theme in the letter—and they also dishonor God before those watching what Christians do and say. The first question on page 66 considers the link between covetousness and idolatry. The connection is that both involve out-of-control desire that takes on worshipful proportions, pushing the Lord off the throne of our heart. The first question on page 69 notes that being Spirit-filled produces praise, gratitude, and humble submission and asks why living out these traits is an aspect of wisdom. The reason is that living by the Spirit in these ways redirects our focus upward to God and outward toward others, taking our focus off ourselves.



## **WEEK 9: WALKING UNDER AUTHORITY**

EPHESIANS 5:22-6:9

Submission is likely to be a major talking point this week, as you discuss what Paul teaches about godly marriage. The first “Let’s Talk” question focuses on wifely submission, so you might want to hold back lengthy discussion about it until you get there. The third question on page 72 asks, “How can husbands, in their limited capacity, reflect Christ’s purpose in how they lead their wives?” Holiness is where this is going—in marriage, a husband can reflect Christ’s sanctifying of his people in how he safeguards and cares for his wife’s walk with God. The first question on page 74 seeks to distinguish between honoring parents and obeying them. Honor has to do with respectful posture in all matters, whether young or old, toward one’s parents.

## **WEEK 10: STANDING FIRM**

EPHESIANS 6:10-24

Be sure to save sufficient time at the end for the additional “Let’s Talk” question. It will serve as a good wrap-up to the entire Ephesians study. The last question on page 81 asks how “gospel truth and righteousness (the security of Christ’s righteousness given to believers) serve to protect us.” Truth and righteousness protect us from Satan, who is noted for being our adversary and accuser. God’s truth is a direct weapon against Satan as liar, who, Jesus tells us, “does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). The last question on page 82 asks about the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: “What does this ‘sword’ indicate about the part we actively play in spiritual warfare?” Perhaps turn to Romans 12:2 to help you answer: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”