

GROW UP

Moving Past Spiritual Adolescence

A Flexible Study of
EPHESIANS

Leader's Guide

Pam Gillaspie

GROW UP

Moving Past Spiritual Adolescence

A Flexible Study of
EPHESIANS

Leader's Guide

Week One	
The Mystery!	2
Week Two	
God's Kind Intention Toward You!	11
Week Three	
The Real-Life Walking Dead	25
Week Four	
Then and Now, Far and Near	32
Week Five	
God's Mystery Revealed!	39
Week Six	
Complete Unity in God-Given Diversity	45
Week Seven	
Use the New Mind God Gave You!	51
Week Eight	
Learning What Is Pleasing	57
Week Nine	
Subject to One Another	63
Week Ten	
Resist! Stand Firm!	69

Scriptures are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®, © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

"Scripture quotations marked (ESV) are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved."

GROW UP

Copyright © 2017 by Pam Gillaspie
Published by Precept Ministries International
P.O. Box 182218
Chattanooga, Tennessee 37422
www.precept.org

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Week One

The Mystery!

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 minutes	Class Basics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductions / Class Photos• Ground Rules• How to Use this Study
Segment 2:	10 minutes	Inductive Study Basics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ephesians 1:1-10
Segment 3:	5 minutes	Considering How We Think
Segment 4:	20 minutes	Read Ephesians Aloud Together <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial Observations and Questions:• Basic Text Overview
Segment 5:	15 minutes	Jesus' Message to the Ephesians <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revelation 2:1-7

BEFORE YOU START**HOW TO LEAD THIS STUDY:****The Basics**

Well here you are! You've either been called, appointed, or dragged into leading a Bible study. Regardless, here is some good news—this study is designed to be flexible to both students and teachers alike, to give newer teachers the help they need, and to give more seasoned teachers wings to grow their gifting. With this in mind, please use the Leader's Guide to help you prepare to lead. Always remember that it's a guide, not a strict set of step-by-step rules and edicts.

Although presented over 10 weeks with weekly homework, this study can be stretched over a longer period of time with “homework” sections done either at home or during class time. If class time is limited, as is often the case for Sunday School, leaders may choose to work through smaller portions of a lesson together. Thus, it is possible for this 10-week Bible study to flex and expand to fill a 20-week session or more depending on how deep you and your students want to go.

For those who have ample time and are running a 10-week study, consider adding an additional week or two for a technology day or a guest speaker on a topic of interest. This person can be a pastor, local Bible professor, or someone well-versed on a particular topic in the text. With the advance of technology, it's now possible to bring in people from other parts of the country or the world to talk to your class via tools like Skype.* Additional people and material mix things up and keep the class on its toes. This additional week gives you the flexibility to match the class length to the needs of things like, say, the church calendar. Hey, it's reality!

Some of you who are reading this Leader Guide are thrilled to be leading because you have the spiritual gift of teaching. You may find that you don't even use this guide—that's fine! If God has gifted you to teach and you like doing your own research and prep, that is great!! Praise God! Go entrust to the faithful who will be able to teach others also! Others of you, undoubtedly, have been dragged in kicking and screaming. (That was me for a few years while I was still resisting my gifting!) Somebody had to lead and you were drafted. It is my deep hope that you will find help in this guide to make your leading experience not only less traumatic but also filled with great joy!

Small groups or Sunday School classes may decide to simply talk through the questions that are in the lesson but study groups will benefit from additional talk points and material.

* Skype is a free service that allows you to use the internet to video conference in guest speakers or those who just want to listen in to your class. Learn more at www.skype.com.

GROW UPMoving Past Spiritual Adolescence
EPHESIANS

Starting Simple

If this is your first time leading or if you don't have anyone in the group who wants to take full responsibility for leading, you can simply read through and discuss the questions and answers from each week's lesson. This approach can work especially well with small groups or if you're doing the study with a friend.

About the Leader Guide

This leader guide is a basic outline, a road map of one way to go in a class discussion. Just like there are many ways from Chicago to Chattanooga, there are different ways to run a class.

Each week we'll suggest a time frame for running the class. You'll find background information and sample discussion questions. Always look for opportunities to help your students move from Observation and Interpretation to Application. We want them to learn the truths of Scripture not so they can win at Bible "trivia" games but so that their thinking will be renewed and their actions will more and more reflect the One they belong to (Romans 12:1-2).

You may look at the material and think, "There is no way that I can cover all this in the allotted time!" If that's the case, you can pick and choose from the elements to craft your lesson. In general, you're typically better off having a little too much to cover, a couple of extra questions in your pocket, than not quite enough content.

Starting on Time

One way to start on time every week is to read through the week's main text(s) at the beginning of class. In doing this you'll reinforce the importance of continually being in the text of Scripture itself. As odd as it may sound, when we study deeply the temptation to stray away from the text and toward commentaries can be intense. By reading the text every week and starting promptly (even if it is just you and your most prompt student!), you'll reinforce the importance of the text and gain the added bonus of training stragglers to arrive on time.

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: CLASS BASICS

Introductions and Ground Rules

- **Introduce yourself**
- **Have class members introduce themselves**
- **Set boundaries**

Make sure you allocate adequate time the first week of class for general introductions and ground rules. If you're teaching men or a mixed group, estimate based on the size of your class. If you're teaching women, take the time you think this will

require and double it. Asking everyone to share their name and respond to a specific question will help keep things moving. If you ask for “a little bit about yourself,” you’re sure to get more than a little bit! Start out by introducing yourself in a concise manner to set the tone. Feel free to use an icebreaker game or other ideas you have to help people connect. If you have a large group, consider having them introduce themselves in a small group first. Then have different members of each small group introduce one another to the larger group. Let’s face it, if you have to introduce someone else, you listen better the first time around and you typically don’t talk quite as long when you have the floor. I’ve found this to be both a fun and effective approach during recent classes. Name tags are always a big help, too!

You’ll also want to establish ground rules during Week One. The time to set effective boundaries in any relationship is the first meeting. A boundary can always be relaxed, but it is very difficult to establish or strengthen one if you do not set it properly at the start. This applies to both how you will lead your class discussions and how you will let your class interact with you throughout the week. Depending on your situation, you may ask them to contact you primarily by e-mail and make certain times of the day off-limits. When my kids were still at home, I had to take control of inbound phone calls. It was a hard boundary to set, but my kids appreciated me putting my role as “Mom” at the top of the priority list. Seriously, your class will respect this and perhaps even learn the importance of proper boundaries in their own lives from your example.

Let your class know that it is your job as the teacher/facilitator to keep the discussion on track and that you may from time to time have to reel a person in, stop a rabbit trail, or discontinue until after class an interesting but off-topic discussion. Also let them know that you do not have all the answers. No one has all the answers, even those who have studied a lifetime. While acknowledging your limitations may seem uncomfortable at first, you’ll find it is freeing for everyone! If someone asks a question you can’t answer, either look into it further yourself or (preferably) assign it to the questioner for further study. This will draw out future teachers—who come back with it answered and prepared to share. Assigning questions also helps people begin discerning what makes a germane question.

Encouraging your class to ask questions and helping them learn how to ask right questions is a huge part of your job as a teacher. Still, as important as questions are, more questions can be asked than we have biblical answers for. Sometimes you will simply have to answer with an honest, “I don’t know.”

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Basics of the Study Guide and Philosophy

- **WEEKLY STUDY material**
- **FYI boxes**
- **ONE STEP FURTHER and other sidebar boxes**
- **DIGGING DEEPER boxes**

While the study is self-explanatory, reinforce its flexibility with your students. Direct them to the “How to Use this Study” page of their books and encourage them to find a level of study that brings joy and not guilt. They can do more one week, less the

CROWD BREAKER

In the book of Hebrews, we’re told that Abraham “when he was called . . . went out, not knowing where he was going.”

Where is the most interesting place God has had you live so far?

GROW UP

Moving Past Spiritual Adolescence
EPHESIANS

next; they can mix and match and find the fit that is right. You may have students who are overburdened and overbooked. Piling on and guilting them with a ton of homework will not fix the problem. Rather, help them find the joy and sweetness of God's Word and ask His Spirit to begin healing through the power of the Word. Take some time to read the "How to Use this Study" page (prior to Week One) with them and let them know you believe in them and their ability to use this material.

Take special care in stressing the flexibility to long-time *Precept-Upon-Precept*® students as many have a finish-every-question-at-all-cost mentality. Such discipline in studying God's Word is beautiful. The every-last-question mind set, however, can throw people off with a flexible study. Because the material is designed to flex to more advanced students, the volume of material can overwhelm people who force themselves through every question and sidebar. Assure your class that most students won't finish every question every week by design. Some weeks they will, but probably not every week. If every student finished every week, the study would not be flexing to meet the needs of the most advanced students. The goal in allowing the material to flex is not to have people study less; it is to have each person take the next appropriate step from where they currently are and to study and apply more as they are continually drawn into deeper relationship with Jesus.

SEGMENT #2: INDUCTIVE STUDY BASICS

Observation | Interpretation | Application

If your students are unfamiliar with inductive Bible study, be sure to take some time to give them the basics. They will catch up and catch on as we go, but giving them an overview will help put them in context! You'll want to impress on your students that inductive Bible study simply means the Bible is our main source of truth. Before looking for insights from people and commentaries about the Bible, we get into the Word of God itself. We go to the primary source and learn to discover truth for ourselves. Inductive Bible study involves three basic components: observation, interpretation, and application.

1 Observation

This is a very interactive process, well worth the time because the truths you discover for yourself will be accurate and profound. It begins by asking the five W and H questions.

Who is speaking? Who is this about? Who are the main characters? Who is the author speaking to?

What subjects and/or events are covered in the chapter? What do you learn about the people, the events, and the teachings from the text? What instructions are given?

When did or will the events recorded occur?

Where did or will this happen? Where was it said?

Why is something said? Why will an event occur? Why this time, person, and/or place?

How will it happen? How will it be done? How is it illustrated?

GROW UP

Moving Past Spiritual Adolescence
EPHESIANS

Careful observation leads to interpretation—discovering what the text means.

One important part of observing the text involves identifying key words. A key word helps to “unlock” the meaning of the text. It is vital to understanding the text and is often repeated.

2 Interpretation

The more you observe, the greater you’ll understand God’s Word. Since Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture we’ll be looking at contexts and cross-references to help us understand God’s message that was communicated to the original audience. Observation and interpretation lead to application.

3 Application

After we’ve observed the text and discovered the meaning, we need to think and live accordingly. Although the text of Scripture has one interpretation—what God inspired the author to write to his original readers—we can have numerous applications. The result is a transformed life—the more you and I are in the Word of God and adjusting our thinking and behavior to its precepts for life, the more we are changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ! He is the living Word of God who became flesh, the Savior of the world, our coming King of kings!

It is exciting to learn and know about the faith of others. It is transforming to live what we have learned!

SEGMENT #3: Considering How We Think

If you have enough people in your class to break into small groups, do so and have the groups discuss the questions about presuppositions on page 2 of the workbook. Otherwise, simply talk through them together as a large group. Here are the workbook questions:

- *What is your view of the Bible? Do you think it is a work of man? A work of God? A little of both? Or are you not quite sure?*
- *Do you think your view of the Bible impacts how you respond to what you read? Explain.*
- *Do you have a background in a specific denomination or church tradition? If so, consider how that affects your reading and application of the Bible.*
- *What is your reason for studying the Bible in general and the book of Ephesians in specific?*

If you’ve broken into groups, after 5 to 10 minutes pull them back together to see what each one discussed. If you’re not sure if they’ve had enough time, ask them! This is not an exact science. Some classes will need more time to discuss, others will want less.

Let them discuss and remind them that as we go to the Scriptures, we’ll let God’s Word speak for itself.

SEGMENT #4: Read Aloud and Overview Ephesians

- Key Talk Point:**
- Watch for key words.
 - Ask and explain 5W and H questions.
 - Encourage audio Bible.
 - Encourage memorization.

Overview

As you overview the book chapter by chapter, help your students answer the basic Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How questions. Most of the answers are clear from a simple reading of the text, but a few you will need to help them with as they require cross-referencing and input from external sources.

WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY, and HOW

Who and What . . . Paul writes a letter to fellow believers, to “the saints” at Ephesus. That “at Ephesus” is missing from some early texts has led to speculation that this was a circular letter intended for churches in the vicinity of Ephesus. Whether to one church or to a group of churches, the letter addresses believers who are walking their talk.

When and Where . . . Ephesians was likely written from Rome during Paul’s imprisonment somewhere between AD 59–63.

Paul visited Ephesus on his third missionary journey and stayed in excess of two years at this influential city in the Roman province of Asia.

Why and How . . . Unlike many New Testament letters that identify and combat church problems, Ephesians addresses a church without chronic “issues.” The letter is delivered by Tychicus who also brought letters to Philemon and the Colossians.

Sample Discussion Questions:

If you have a large group, let your students discuss these questions around tables and then bring it back for a large group summary discussion. I suggest giving them one set of questions at a time.

What key words did you notice?

What topics in the text are at odds with our culture today?

What questions do these bring up?

SEGMENT #5: Revelation 2:1-7—Jesus' Letter to the Ephesians

Key Talk Point: • Where they are versus where they were.

Context/Comments:

With Revelation being written somewhere between AD 81 and 96, this message to the church provides a glimpse of the Ephesians some 20 years or so after Paul wrote his letter.

While we know that God is the author of *all* Scripture, these direct and specific words from Jesus to a historical church regarding historical specifics are breathtaking. Think about it. The all-knowing One who “holds the seven stars in His right hand” (v. 1) and who “walks among the seven golden lampstands” (v. 1) gives the progress report—talk about gravity!

Jesus knows and assesses everything perfectly, including the Ephesian church's virtues and flaws.

He knows the Ephesians' virtues, their:

- deeds, toil, and perseverance (*hupomone*), v. 2
- intolerance for evil men, v. 2
- testing of those who claim to be apostles, v. 2
- endurance (*bastazo*), v. 3
- energy, v. 3
- hatred for the deeds of the Nicolaitans, v. 6

He also knows the Ephesian church's glaring flaw: **they have left their first love**, v. 4.

Based on these verses, we can deduce the threats they had faced over the years. For one, evil men claiming to be apostles, wolves like Jesus warned about (Matthew 7:15), were hunting sheep. Do you feel for the Ephesians here? I do. When you're busy chasing wolves, it's easy to grow weary—which to their credit they hadn't—but it's also easy to drift from your love. When wickedness increases, hearts grow cold (Matthew 24:12). In the face of these threats, the Ephesians toiled, persevered, tested, and hated evil deeds.

There is a symmetry in verses 2 and 3 with repeating Greek root words:

–toil/grown weary (*kopos/kopiao*)

They worked hard and didn't grow weary.

–perseverance/perseverance (*hupomone*)

They exhibited perseverance.

–tolerate/have endured (*bastazo*)

They cannot tolerate evil men, but they have endured for Jesus' name.

The believers in Ephesus were hard-working and yet their one shortfall is jarring. Jesus says, “But I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love.”

He doesn't leave them wondering how to fix it. Instead He gives three action steps in verse 5: remember, repent, do.

- “Remember from where you've fallen”
- “Repent”
- “Do the deeds you did at first”

The command to “do the deeds you did at first” makes us ask the question: *What were these things? What were the Ephesians to return to doing?* We know they had not abandoned good deeds entirely because Jesus makes references to them.

Acts 19 may shed some light. Here we read that at Ephesus during Paul’s time there:

- the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified before all—Jews and Greeks (v. 17)
- magic books were being burned—in other words people were turning from false words to the true Word (v. 19)
- the “Word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing” (v. 20)

Sample Discussion Questions:

What tempts us to leave our first love today?

What can we learn from the Ephesians about holding on to it?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What is your key take-away point this week?

How will you live it out?

Week Two

God's Kind Intention Toward You!

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	5 min.	Review basic concepts
Segment 2:	15 min.	Overview Ephesians 1
Segment 3:	5 min.	Ephesians 1:1-2
Segment 4:	10 min.	Ephesians 1:3-14
Segment 5:	10 min.	Digger Deeper: Acts 18-20
Segment 6:	15 min.	Ephesians 1:15-23

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Basic Concepts**

A little review each week will cement the basics and give your class a framework for study. Although we'll focus on specific inductive tools each week, keeping the basic components of OBSERVATION, INTERPRETATION, and APPLICATION in front of your class consistently will equip them for a lifetime of handling God's Word. Always remind them that the goal is transformation! We don't learn for the sake of learning; we learn because God uses His Word to transform us and conform us more and more into the image of His Son. Familiarity with the basics will give your students confidence to work through their homework and begin applying and living the texts.

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

*What is **Observation** and why is it important? What question does it answer?*

*How is **Interpretation** different from **Observation**?*

*What do we need for proper **Application**?*

Application needs to be grounded in the single God-intended meaning of the text, its interpretation.

Be aware that at this point you can run into two distinct problems:

1. Some people don't want to apply. They seek knowledge but bristle at application.
2. Others want to apply the text without dealing first with what God said to the original hearers. They want to know "What this means to me" before "What God said."

It is important for you to continually guide your class toward application that comes from the text. When discussions veer toward speculation or issues that do not promote life-change, redirect them to consider what the Author intends.

For those who gravitate toward opinions and ungrounded applications, gently direct them with questions like "Where do you see that in the text?" Continually point them to the text and appropriate application. It may take some repetition, but they will learn. Always be gentle in your approach remembering Proverbs 16:21b that the "sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness."

SEGMENT #2: Overview Ephesians 1**Key Talk Points:** • Key phrase is “in Christ.”

- God's profound goodness toward us in Christ.

Context/Comments:

Be aware that the weekly read-throughs in various translations will be the best part of the week for some students, while others will want more guidance. Likewise, the more open-ended questions in the overview sections for each chapter will likely resonate with the read-through lovers while making others bristle. Assure those who don't like the long-leash approach to study that we will be addressing plenty of specific questions together. Encourage them to start cutting and chewing the meat of Scripture for themselves.

Be careful in this section to draw out their answers as much as possible so you don't spoil their joy of discovery. Remember, too, that your class may have seen things that you've missed—that is part of the joy of studying the Word *together*.

You'll want to make sure that your class notices the following words and phrases:

- “in Christ” (also “in Him,” “in the Beloved,” etc.)
- God's “will” words (also “intention,” “purpose”)
- “choice” words (“chose,” “predestined”)
- “to the praise of His glory”
- “knowledge” words
- “power” words
- “adoption” and “inheritance” words

As you overview, help your class see that Ephesians 1 breaks down into three main sections:

- Greeting, vv. 1-2 (Paul to the saints who are at Ephesus)
- Eulogy, vv. 3-15 (Paul proclaims a eulogy [a good word]/praise about God which focuses on God's blessing [Greek: *eulogeo*] toward us in Christ.)
- Prayer for the Saints, vv. 16-23

Sample Discussion Questions:

Again, if you have a large group let them discuss each question around tables and then bring it back for a large group summary discussion. I suggest giving them one set of questions at a time.

What key words stood out to you as you read?

What did you find significant about each word or phrase?

SEGMENT #3: Ephesians 1:1-2

- Key Talk Points:**
- Paul's apostleship is grounded in God's call, not Paul's decision.
 - The Ephesians were set apart (saints) and faithful in Christ.

Context/Comments:

Paul knew what it was like to deal with both rotten apples and good apples having bad days. The New Testament suggests that the Corinthian church was a constant thorn in his flesh and that other churches such as those in Galatia and at Colossae had moments when they needed a firm hand aimed at discipline. Accordingly, much of Paul's writing is corrective in nature. Ephesians, though, is the glorious exception. For example, while the Corinthians could have kept a counseling staff busy 24/7, the Galatians were in danger of falling back into the Law, and the Colossians needed clarification on the person and work of Jesus, the Ephesians were simply faithful.

Paul opens his letter to the church at Ephesus with his rather standard salutation claiming apostleship and its associated authority. He was an "apostle [Greek: *apostolos*, one who is sent; an ambassador] of Christ Jesus by the will [Greek: *thelema*] of God." He didn't volunteer. He was called, chosen. This is significant. If he had aspired to this position, there would be good reason to question his motives. *Was he grabbing for power? Prestige? A good name for himself?* The fact that he was drafted shows he was in it for the Heavenly Drafter's purpose alone.

I recently heard it said in a church service welcome, "You can be comfortable here; no one in this building came in this morning thinking they are saints." I thought to myself, "How sad. Have we forgotten who we are in Christ?" I knew the intent of this person's heart because in our culture's mind-set and today's vernacular, thinking we're "saints" is thinking more highly of ourselves than we should, thinking ourselves perfect.

Paul's address to this Church shows the exact opposite. He calls the recipients "saints" (Greek: *hagios*, holy ones, set apart) and "faithful in Christ Jesus." They (and we!) are saints because of who and what we are "in Christ," not because of any perfection in ourselves.

Because the phrase "at Ephesus" (Greek: *en Epheso*) is missing from three early manuscripts and because the text lacks the personal greetings common to Paul's writings, some believe that Ephesians was a circular letter intended to be passed around to a number of churches the Roman province of Asia, Ephesus the most prominent among them.

It was likely written during Paul's Roman imprisonment (c. AD 61–62) and delivered by Tychicus on his way to bring letters to the Colossian church and to Philemon.

Paul spends significant time with the Ephesians (as we'll see in the Digging Deeper section on Acts) but the most important commonality he has with his readers is this: God is their Father and Jesus Christ is their Lord. We, too, are part of this community. We serve the same God who by His will selected Paul as an apostle of Christ in the first century and who chooses servants still today.

Sample Discussion Questions:

What do we learn about Paul and his readers in these opening two verses?

From what you know of Paul's other letters, how does this one differ?

SEGMENT #4: Ephesians 1:3-14

- Key Talk Point:**
- The immense blessings “in Christ”
 - Paul’s eulogy of praise.

Context/Comments:

In verse 3 Paul says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In this statement we see truths about both God and ourselves. Jesus Christ (the anointed One, the Messiah) is our Lord. Having just referred to “God *our* Father” in verse 2, Paul now also says He is “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Beginning in verse 3 Paul calls God “blessed” (Greek: *eulogetos* from *eu* [good] and *logeo/logos* [speak, word]) and he immediately explains his meaning with “who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (v. 3). (As you go through this section, remind your students of the now/not-yet tension—God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, but we still live on planet earth. There is true blessing now, but a future component remains.)

After Paul details God’s many blessings toward “us” (vv. 3-9), he offers up a prayer of thankfulness to God for what He has done for the Ephesians (vv. 13-16). Remember, while Paul’s good words pour forth praise, God’s good words spoke creation into existence. When God blesses us with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” His good words pour our His favor and benefit on us and He connects us all together “in Christ.” Help your students see these blessings by following the verb trail of what God has done for us in Christ. He:

- chose us, v. 4
- predestined us to adoption, v. 5
- bestowed grace on us, v. 6

This choosing had nothing to do with our performance; we did nothing to earn or affect our salvation. Rather, according to verse 4, God chose us “before the foundation of the world.” He didn’t choose to leave us in our sin either. His plan was that “we would be holy and blameless before Him” (v. 4).

Also help them reason through the individual and corporate objects of election (Greek: *eklego*). God chose the nation of Israel—He delivered them as a group from Egypt though not all were true sons of Abraham. He has also chosen some Gentiles to be grafted in to Israel (see Romans 11).

Be aware that the word “predestine” makes some people edgy. In fact Spurgeon described it as “the ax at the root of human pride,” the annihilator of all “self-made Christians.”

That said, if God uses the word, we’re not going to shy away from it but we want to take extra care (as we always should!) that our discussion is firmly anchored in the text.

According to verse 5, God predestined “us” to “adoption.” He does this through Jesus and “according to the kind intention [Greek: *eudokia*, literally “good” (*eu*) “think” (*dokeo*)] of His will.” God’s good thinking, his kind intention toward His people stands behind His kind actions in blessing (Greek: *eulogeo*; to speak good to). Remember, when God speaks, His words never return void; as He says, they accomplish the purpose He sends them out to accomplish (Isaiah 55:11). God thinks with kind intent (*eudokia*) and then speaks good words (*eulogeo*) that produce tangible benefits.

Ask your students how the concept of adoption as they know it compares with God’s choosing and predestining us to be His sons. Then help them see how our adopted sonship gives us the inheritance Paul talks about in verse 11. Remind your students that since we had no part in God choosing us, we have no ground for ego or pride of any kind. In choosing us in spite of ourselves, God frees us once and for all from the bondage self-praise.

Small Group Time:

Have your students explore the following references in small groups. If you have a small class, look at them together. If a large group, let them discuss at tables and then have each group share what they learned.

*What can we learn about choosing (Greek: *eklegomai*—verb) from the following verses?*

1 John 15:16-19

Jesus chose the disciples, not vice versa.

1 Corinthians 1:27-28

God has chosen the foolish, the weak, and the things that are not.

*What can we learn about those who are elect (Greek: *eklectos*—adjective) from these verses?*

Romans 8:33

They are God’s elect and no one can bring a charge against them.

Colossians 3:12

They are chosen by God.

2 Timothy 2:10

Chosen to obtain salvation in Christ Jesus.

What do the following verses tell us about God's will toward all mankind?

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord doesn't wish for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

John 3:16

God so loved the whole world that He sent Jesus.

In Ephesians 1:5-8, Paul describes God's grace (Greek: *charis*) as glorious (v. 6) and repeatedly refers to God giving this amazing grace both freely and abundantly. Since the pronouns make it a little more difficult to see, help your students list together all of the "grace" phrases in this section:

- "the glory of His grace," v. 6
- "[grace] He freely bestowed on us," v. 6
- "the riches of His grace," v. 7
- "[grace] He lavished on us," v. 8

Help your class see that grace is poured out freely and lavishly!

In verses 7-12, Paul continues to lay out benefit after benefit that believers have from God in Christ. We have:

- redemption . . . through His blood, v. 7
- forgiveness . . . according to His grace, v. 7
- knowledge of the mystery of His will . . . according to His kind intention, v. 9
- an inheritance . . . because we have been predestined and adopted, vv. 5, 11
- hope . . . in Christ, v. 12

Small Group Time:

What difference have these benefits we have "in Christ" made in your life? Are you living in the light of them?

If your students have a hard time with this, ask them to remember what life was like before they came to know Christ.

In this list of benefits, everything hinges on our redemption through the blood of Christ which puts us in relationship with the Father. Because of this, we have "forgiveness of our trespasses" which is a huge deal since sin brings death. If we are not forgiven, there is no positive relationship with God (we stand awaiting His wrath on our sin), nor are there redeemed relationships with our fellow man.

In verse 9 Paul introduces his readers to the word "mystery" (Greek: *musterion*) which he will use six times throughout this letter. God has now made known this "mystery of His will."

So what is “the mystery of His will”? (Watch the “that is.”)

- “the summing up [Greek: *anakephalaioo*] of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.”

Let’s pay attention to some of the time phrases in the first two chapters to see what we can piece together with regard to this. In order to do this, have your class start with what we know about mankind from the book of Genesis. If you have access to a whiteboard, start by recording basic truths from Genesis. We want them to see what God did prior to the creation of the world.

*What happened before
the the foundation of
the world?*

*What happened in
Genesis?*

What is yet to come?

Before Foundation	Genesis	Ages to Come
He chose u	Creation	Displays surpassing riches of grace
Prepared good works	Relationship Fall/Separation	Fullness of the times Summing up of all things in Christ

Your class may already have identified **the building** and **the body** as Paul’s two big metaphors in Ephesians. Let them know that beyond the words that are obvious in English several words are veiled by translation. This is one of the reasons that it is beneficial to learn to do word studies with tools such as Blue Letter Bible.

For instance, when Paul uses the phrase “with a view to **an administration** suitable to the fullness of the times, *that is*, the **summing up** of all things in Christ . . .” (v. 10), we see both metaphors woven in. The word “administration” (Greek: *oikonomia*; from *oiko* [house] and *nemo* [manage]) which appears three times in Ephesians (1:10; 3:2, 9) is a “house” or “building” word that has to do with how God is planning and arranging salvation history and how, in a sense, He is building His house. It seems an odd word to us in English—at least to me—but the Greek fits.

While “administration” is a “house” word, “summing up” (Greek: *anakephalaioo*) is a “body” word. Specifically it means literally to head (Greek: *kephalaioo*) up (Greek: *ana*).

God is managing the building, reconciling the world and bringing everything under the headship of Christ.

Our part in this, according to verse 13 is to listen (Greek: *akouo*) and believe (Greek: *pisteuo*). We’re not left in a belief-limboland of crossed fingers and hopeful but groundless positivity. Having believed, Christians “were sealed [Greek: *sphragizo*] in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.” In other words, the Holy Spirit marks us as belonging to God. Paul says He is “given as a pledge” which shows that our full inheritance is coming and it’s coming guaranteed! In a cross-your-fingers world, this is gold!

Small Group Time:

What did you learn in this chapter about God's will? Is it as fuzzy as many would have people believe? Explain. What difference does knowing God's will make?

Paul speaks clearly of God's will (*will, purpose, intention*). Your class should have noted the following:

- Paul is an apostle by the will of God, v. 1
- God's will has a kind intention, vv. 5, 9
- God's will was a mystery but has been made known to us, v. 9
- God's purpose is carried out in Christ, v. 9
- God's "eternal purpose" (v. 11) includes His choosing and predestinating us to be sons of God and His "kind intention" (v. 9) to head up all things in Christ (v. 10).

As you walk through these references with your class, assure them that the definitions of several words overlap. They're not precisely synonyms but they contain the same truth from slightly different angles. For example, choice and predestination (Greek: *pro-orizo*: pre-mark, bound, define) are species of purpose, purposive thought. Students may not see the higher unity between these terms right away, but hopefully discussion will bring this out.

Small Group Time:

What did you learn from the text about being "in Christ"? What does it have to do with God's actions toward us?

In Christ, believers are/have:

- faithful, v. 1
- blessed, v. 3
- chosen, v. 4
- recipients of lavish grace, v. 6
- redemption and forgiveness, v. 7
- an inheritance, v. 11

- hope, v. 12
- sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, v. 13
- knowledge of the mystery of His will/purpose to head up all things in Christ, vv. 9-10.

Small Group Time:

If your salvation is a result of God's choice and actions rather than your's what affect should that have on your ego? Explain.

How does/should the truth of being "in Christ" affect the way you walk day by day?

SEGMENT #5: Digging Deeper in Acts 18–20

- Key Talk Points:**
- Remind your students that Digging Deeper sections are **OPTIONAL!!**
 - Studying Acts helps us put Ephesians in context.

Context/Comments:**Acts 18**

Acts 18 opens with Paul leaving Athens, going to Corinth, and there meeting Aquila and Priscilla, husband-wife refugees from Rome. This is during his second missionary journey.

Paul remains in Corinth for a year and a half according to Acts 18:11 before setting sail for his home base in Syria. If you ever weary of travel today, just think what it was like in Paul's day! Leaving Corinth, he makes his way to Cenchrea where he boards a ship for Ephesus, before catching a boat to Caesarea and then making his way back to Syrian Antioch on land (v. 22).

In Corinth (Acts 18:11), Paul meets Aquila and Priscilla who travel with him to Ephesus and remain there after he returns to his home base.

After Paul leaves, a Jewish man name Apollos shows up in Ephesus. He's described as "eloquent" and "mighty in the Scriptures" (v. 24) and "ferveant in spirit" (v. 25) though lacking in full knowledge. Because of this Priscilla and Aquila teach him further. It's interesting to see their approach. There's no conflict or fighting. They simply "took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately." Their investment paid off as Apollos learns and continues to help others discover Jesus Christ. There's much for us to learn in this simple interaction, I think. Not all who are underinformed in the ways of God know they are and choose to be so.

Acts 19

When Paul returns to Ephesus on his third missionary journey, he finds disciples (likely of John the Baptist) who are unclear on the Holy Spirit and have not received Him. They have been baptized “into John’s baptism” but Paul explains that John’s baptism points people to Jesus. They believe what Paul tells them, he baptizes them “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” and they receive the Holy Spirit.

During this more extended stay, Paul:

- spends three months speaking in synagogues, 19:8
- spends two years with disciples reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus (as a result all who lived in Asia heard the word—both Jews and Greeks), 19:10

For the first three months in Ephesus Paul preaches the kingdom of God in the synagogues. After encountering some opposition from those speaking evil of “the Way,” he shifts his teaching venue to the school (or lecture hall) of Tyrannus for the next two years. The move here is from a Jewish audience to a more diverse one and as a result, Luke tells us in verse 10, “all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”

While Paul is teaching in Ephesus, God does “extraordinary miracles” by his hands. People are healed by touching handkerchiefs and aprons Paul has touched. Evil spirits are cast out the same way. Sin is confessed and exposed. In all of this the name of Jesus is magnified (v. 17), and the Lord’s word grows and prevails (v. 20).

Here’s a simple list with references:

- God was performing miracles at Paul’s hands, 19:11
- handkerchiefs carried to the sick cured diseases, 19:12
- the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified before Jews and Greeks, 19:17
- magic books were burned, 19:19
- the “Word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing,” 19:20

The Word of the Lord grew so mightily it disrupted the economy, among other things targeting those whose paychecks depended on making and selling idols. Demetrius, a silversmith, stirs up his fellow tradesmen against Paul and his message to head off declining sales. Disguising their plot with fraudulent religious zeal, Demetrius and his buddies start a riot chanting “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” which lasts for about two hours (v. 34).

We can glean a number of insights from this glimpse into first-century Ephesus. First, we see obvious idolatry. The people claim to worship Artemis but their true idol is money. Demetrius and his cohorts come against Paul when Paul’s God affects their bottom line. Still, while the people of Ephesus can be stirred up, the city operates under rule of law. The town clerk eventually settles the crowd by saying essentially, “If you’ve got a problem with these people, take them to court or we’re all going to be in trouble for rioting.”

Acts 20

When everything settles down Paul leaves for Macedonia. He never makes it back to Ephesus but sends for and meets with some of the leaders at Miletus (about 50

miles south) on his return trip to Jerusalem. It's a sober time for all as they realize they will not meet again this side of heaven and Paul warns them to "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock" because "savage wolves will come." If you have time, you may want to read Acts 20:28-33 again, as background. Likely Paul wrote the book of Ephesians about four years after this event.

Small Group Time:

What did you pick up from Acts that helps most with your understanding of the letter to the Ephesian believers?

SEGMENT #6: Ephesians 1:15-23

Key Talk Points:

- Paul thanks God for the Ephesians
- Paul prays for the Ephesians

Context/Comments:

Because of what God has done for believers in Christ and because Paul has heard of the true faith of his readers (they love all the saints!) Paul both thanks God for them and prays for them. Their love for each other is evidence of true faith (see John 14; 1 John).

Although Paul has spent the past 14 verses telling his readers about everything they have in Christ, he goes on to pray for still more—specifically enlightened eyes of their hearts so that they will know:

- "what is the hope of His calling," v. 18
- "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," v. 18
- "what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe," v. 19

The spirit of wisdom and revelation is not feelings or impressions. They are not sweat-house manifestations or mystical insights. Rather, they are anchored in the knowledge of God which believers have through revelation. Hebrews 1:1 reminds us that "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son . . ." If you choose to take your class to Hebrews 1 to explain this, you may want to keep them here for a few moments to see what the author of Hebrews says about the Son. He:

- is heir of all things, v. 2 (Therefore we have an inheritance in Him [Eph 1:14].)
- is the radiance of God's glory, v. 3 (In Ephesians 1 we see the repeated phrase "to the praise of His glory.")
- is the exact representation of God's nature, v. 3
- upholds all things by the word of His power, v. 3
- made purification of sin, v. 3
- is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, v. 3

- is much better than angels, v. 4
- is worshiped by angels, v. 6
- is enthroned forever, v. 8

In Hebrews 1 we also have a glimpse into the heavenly places in Christ!

Back to Ephesians, Paul's prayer focuses on eternal matters. But let's face it, to know hope is often to know tribulation (see Romans 5:2-3); to know His surpassing power is to know our profound weakness (2 Corinthians 12:10ff). "Power" is a key word in verses 19-23 (Greek: *dunamis*, *kratos*, and *ischus*). This power toward us who believe also raised Christ from the dead. That's power! With that power at work, nothing is impossible. Nothing!

Superlatives pour out in this section. Jesus is *far* above *all* rule and authority, *all* things are subjected to Him, He is head over *all* things. Nothing compares to the One who is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's nature and upholds all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1).

Small Group Time:

What have you learned from Paul's prayer that you can pray for others?

As you close your class, spend some time considering the rich teaching about God in the final verses of Ephesians 1:

- He is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, v. 17
- He is the Father of glory, v. 17
- He gives a spirit of wisdom and revelation, v. 17
- He powers us who believe, v. 19
- He raised Christ from the dead, v. 20
- He seated Christ at His right hand in the heavenly places, v. 20
- He put all things in subjection under His feet, v. 22
- He gave Christ as head over all things to the church, v. 22

Small Group Time:

How can these truths about God shape our thinking and behavior in general? In relation to other believers?

Wrap-Up Questions:

What is your key take-away point this week?

How will you live it out?

Week Three

The Real-Life Walking Dead

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	5 min.	Review
Segment 2:	5 min.	Overview Ephesians 2
Segment 3:	10 min.	Ephesians 2:1-3
Segment 4:	20 min.	Ephesians 2:4-7
Segment 5:	20 min.	Ephesians 2:8-10

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Questions:**

What are the components of inductive Bible study? How do they function together?

At tables, have the students explain Ephesians 1 to each other. (Make sure they're paying attention to key words and divisions.)

SEGMENT #2: Ephesians 2 – Overview

Key Talk Points:

- All: Formerly dead; now made alive in Christ, Ephesians 2:1-10
- Gentiles: Formerly far off; now brought near, Ephesians 2:11-22

Context/Comments:

While Ephesians 1 unfolds the beauty and riches of being in Christ, Ephesians 2 opens with a reminder of how terrible life used to be. Make sure your students are paying close attention to time phrases in this chapter as they literally span the ages and directly impact the theology of the passage.

Small Group Time:

What time phrases did you notice in Ephesians 2? What theological import do they have together?

- **“formerly,” vv. 2, 3, 11, 13**

Formerly (Greek: *pote*) is used to highlight our life before Christ. What we were out of Christ is different from what we are in Him.

- **“the ages to come,” v. 7**

God's salvific work has a long-term future display to it.

- **“prepared beforehand,” v. 10**

Even before we were saved in time, God ordained us to good works.

- **“at that time,” v. 12** (a synonym of “formerly” Paul applies to the Gentiles)

- **“but now,” v. 13**

Now those who were far off are near; those who were divided, He has made one.

Although your students will likely answer sequentially by verse from the text, you may want to ask them to sequence time phrases from past to future to see the order of salvation which follows:

- **“prepared beforehand,” v. 10** (an aspect of our being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world: 1:4)
- **“formerly,” vv. 2, 3, 11, 13** (introduces our spiritual condition before trusting in Christ)
- **“but now,” v. 13** (introduces our condition after trusting in Christ)

You'll want them to grab onto the truth that while God has transferred (Greek: *meta* [after] + *histemi* [stand]) us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of His Son in time (Colossians 1:13), this reality was determined before the foundation of the world by God's choice.

How is Ephesians 2 divided? What are the main contents of the two parts of this chapter?

Ephesians 2:1-10

Gospel defined:

- formerly dead in sin, v. 1 / now made alive with Christ, v. 5
- prepared beforehand to walk in good works, v. 10

Ephesians 2:11-22

Gospel results and implications:

- Gentiles who were far off are brought near in Christ, v. 13
- Christ's sacrifice establishes peace between God and man which makes peace between people possible, v. 15
- Jew and Gentile reconciled in one body to God, v. 16
- Jew and Gentile are one body, one household, one building, vv. 16, 19, 21

SEGMENT #3: Ephesians 2:1-3 – Walking Dead

Key Talk Points:

- Everyone by nature is dead in their trespasses and sins.
- People are “dead” because people are sinful.

Context/Comments:

Exhibiting zero political correctness, Paul recounts what the Ephesian believers used to be: dead. They (and everyone else!) were walking dead men because of “trespasses” [Greek: *paraptoma*; also in v. 5] and “sins” [Greek: *hamartia*] according to verse 1.

Scripture clearly explains the bond between sin and death. Death entered the world through sin: “Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Romans 5:12). Depending on your class, you may want to take time to talk about the fall of mankind in Genesis 3 and make sure they understand the truths of Romans 3:23 (“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”) and Romans 6:23 (“the wages of that sin is death”).

Small Group Time:

What does the text say about sin and its consequences/affects on people? How does real life bear this out? How can you explain this to people who don't acknowledge God's definitions of right and wrong?

In the first verses of Ephesians 2 we learn that:

- we were dead in sin, vv. 1, 5
- we formerly walked in sin, v. 2

This is an *active* death. As gross as the whole zombie phenomenon is today, the idea that death is *more than* a cessation of breathing and absence of heartbeat (if not a cessation of consciousness or existence itself) is accurate: “She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives” (1 Timothy 5:6). This is a living death in which Satan works in and through people who are separated from God by their sin (v. 2).

Sin walks in step with the devil who is here called “the prince of the power of the air” (v. 2). Satan is not idle. He is “working in the sons of disobedience” (v. 2). This living death is characterized by “indulging [wallowing in] the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (v. 3). Human beings are entirely fallen: both flesh and mind.

Although our culture does what is “right in its own eyes” and claims its “own truth,” theologian G.K. Chesterton was certainly accurate in his assessment that original sin is the one part of Christian theology that can be empirically proved. Look around. Measure it. People sin and we know it.

SEGMENT #4: Ephesians 2:4-7 – “But God . . .”

Key Talk Point: • The Gospel in two words: “But God . . .”

Context/Comments:

“But God” is often described as “the Gospel in two words.” We were dead sinners, **but God** intervened to save us! We were rebels, **but God** “made us alive together with Christ” (v. 5). This declaration includes the death of Christ in our stead and for our sins. Talk about rich mercy and great love! Paul tells his reader that God acted “because of His great love” and so that “in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (v. 7). While we were chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world (1:4) and are seated in the heavenly places now (v. 6), there remains a future element to our salvation!

As you talk through, help your class see the past, present, and future aspects of our salvation in Christ Jesus all woven together.

As you talk through Ephesians, continue to remind your class that every benefit we have is poured out because we are united with Christ. As Paul explains it in Galatians 2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me."

Small Group Time:

How did God solve our sin condition?

- He made us alive together with Christ, v. 5
- He saved us by grace, v. 5
- He raised us up with Christ, v. 6
- He seated us in the heavenly place in Christ, v. 6

What else did you learn about God from these verses?

God:

- is rich in mercy, v. 4
- has great and active love, v. 4
- is kind, v. 7
- will show the surpassing riches of His grace, v. 7

How can the truth of these verses about man's condition impact the way you share the Gospel?

According to verse 5, we were dead in our transgressions. Consider taking (or sending!) your students to Romans 5:6-11 for a more complete description of the helpless (v. 6) and ungodly (v. 6) human condition, a state in which people are also called both sinners (v. 8) and enemies (v. 10).

SEGMENT #5: Ephesians 2:8-10 – Saved!

- Key Talk Points:**
- By grace through faith.
 - A gift, not a wage!

Context/Comments:

In this section, Paul reminds his formerly dead readers that they have been saved by grace through faith. They have no reason to boast because their life, their new position, is God's work, not theirs! If you have students in your class who are still seekers or who come from certain church traditions, this may be revolutionary for them. If they

believe they're saved by works, simply keep directing them back to the text which speaks clearly for itself. Be gentle and hold the errant view up to the straight line of Scripture.

Small Group Time:

How are people saved?

Salvation can't be bought. If you are saved it is because of God, not because of you.

Help your students appreciate the “not”s . . .

- “not of yourselves,” v. 8
- “not as a result of works,” v. 9

Because of the “nots” . . .

- “no one may boast,” v. 10

Rather, those who are saved are . . .

- “saved by grace . . . through faith,” v. 8
- “created in Christ Jesus for good works,” v. 10
- “which God prepared beforehand,” v. 10

Help your class reason through the positives and negatives. No one saves himself, no one works her way to God, no one can brag about his relationship to God. Anyone who thinks she has or can does not know biblical salvation in Christ.

Christians aren't saved *by* good works; rather, they are saved *for* good works. This preposition (“for”) is critical to correctly understanding the causal and temporal relationships of salvation to works.

You might want to ask your class how kids and adults react differently when they receive gifts. Kids happily (and sometimes greedily) receive gifts with a simple thank you (if they're really behaving!) while adults often want to pay or reciprocate in kind. As Jesus says: “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like child will not enter it *at all!*” Mark 10:15.

How is the Gospel of Jesus Christ counter to worldly thinking?

The Gospel of salvation by grace through faith and apart from works is counter-cultural and counter to every world religion. It's interesting that man-made religion realizes that good and evil exist and then bases “salvation” on “being good.” When man-made religions think man can work his way to God, they reject the biblical doctrines of holiness, sin, and salvation. Often this results from believing lies about God's holiness and man's utter sinfulness.

If good works can't save, what role do they play in the Christian life?

Paul says that good works (Greek: *agathos ergon*) are a huge part of the Christian life. In fact, just as God prepared his vessels of mercy beforehand for glory (Romans 9:23), He also created us “in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10). He “prepared [these works] beforehand” (Greek: *proetoiimazo*) that we would walk in them. We don't gain God's favor by doing good; we fulfill the purpose for which God created us as a result of God reconciling us to Himself.

Good works result from *being* in Christ; they don't earn us a place in Christ.

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you think and act?

Week Four

Then and Now, Far and Near

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 min.	Review
Segment 2:	20 min.	Ephesians 2:11-18
Segment 3:	10 min.	Digging Deeper: Reconciliation • Colossians 1:20-22 • Romans 5:10 • 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
Segment 4:	20 min.	Ephesians 2:19-22

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Questions:**

What are the components of inductive Bible study?

Briefly summarize Ephesians 1–2:10.

What did you learn this week that most resonated with you?

SEGMENT #2: Ephesians 2:11–18—Children of God

- Key Talk Points:**
- Jew and Gentile are reconciled to God in one body.
 - People are reconciled to God.
 - Because of this, people can be reconciled to one another.

Context/Comments:

Remind your students how important it is to check context when they see a term of conclusion. Verse 11 leads with a “Therefore” (Greek: *dio*) which should prompt them to ask “What is the ‘Therefore’ there for?” Here Paul ties his explanation of the Gentiles’ move from death to life in Christ *to* the result of that move. They are to remember what God has done for them in Christ and live in the reality of the truth that Jew and Gentile are now members of one body.

Small Group Time:

What two main groups does Paul talk about in this section? How has their relationship changed? What impact will that have?

In this section, Paul describes the former condition of his Gentile readers as:

- “uncircumcision,” v. 11
- “separate from Christ,” v. 12
- “excluded from the commonwealth of Israel,” v. 12
- “strangers to the covenants of promise,” v. 12

- without hope, v. 12
- “without God,” v. 12

Why do you think remembering is important?

Paul commands Gentile believers to “remember” (Greek: *mnemoneuo*) what God saved them from. The benefits of remembering are vast. For some, it reminds them daily of God’s great love. Others are reminded that God saves and we don’t. Still others are moved toward greater compassion to those still lost.

What did you learn about the person and work of Christ in this section?

The “far out” Gentiles who are in Christ Jesus—likely most of your class—“have been brought [Greek: *ginomai*; passive verb] near by the blood of Christ” (v. 13).

Furthermore, in this section we see that Christ Jesus:

- is our peace, v. 14
- made Jews and Gentiles into one new man, vv. 14, 15
- broke down the dividing wall, v. 14
- abolished the enmity, v. 15
- established peace, v. 15
- reconciled men to God, v. 16
- put to death the enmity, v. 16
- preached peace, v. 17
- made access to the Father through the Spirit, v. 18

In the next section of the text, we’ll see that He’s also called the cornerstone, v. 20.

What did you learn about peace? What difference did Christ’s peace make in the life of the early Church? What difference has it made in your church? How are you doing at being a peacemaker?

Peace (Greek: *eirene*):

- Christ is our peace, v. 14
- Christ established peace for Jews and Gentiles, making them one new man in Him, v. 15
- Christ reconciled (Greek: *apokatalasso*; *apo* [from] + *kata* [down] + *allasso* [change]; the preposition *apo* indicates that Christ is restoring broken peace, turning people back to God) Jews and Gentiles to God through the cross, v. 16
- Christ came and preached peace to those who were far and to those who were near, v. 17

To bring peace Christ broke down “the barrier of the dividing wall” (v. 14). While it’s easy for us to think of the Law as a mere theological difference that divided in

theoretical and intellectual ways, we need to realize that the Law *actually divided*; it put real distance between Law adherents and others. One example of this that you may want to discuss with your class is in Galatians 2:11ff where Peter (fearing the Jews) stopped eating with the Gentile believers. This was a huge deal and not just on paper!

Because the Law created such a barrier between the Jewish people and everyone else, some commentators believe that when Paul talks about “the enmity” (Greek: *echthra*; hatred or hostility) in verse 15, he is referring to the Law’s *rituals*: circumcision, washings, preparations of food, etc. Others believe “the enmity” refers to God’s wrath against Jew and Gentile who are alike *moral*-Law breakers, dead in “trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 1:1). For this view, compare Colossians 2:13-14.

The two groups who formerly would not have so much as eaten a meal together are now united as one new man in Christ. Both have “access in one Spirit to the Father” (v. 18). They are fellow citizens and are members of God’s household (v. 19).

Although the context here is Jew and Gentile, this is a great place to encourage application discussion on how we can live in unity with other believers who are not “like” us. Depending on your group, this may mean having some careful, listening conversations on things such as racial or generational issues.

[A personal note: As a middle-aged white woman, Ephesians has challenged me to ask more questions and listen more carefully to those of other races and other generations. I’ve been shocked by how many blind spots I have that I’ve only been able to see with the help of others in the body who come from different backgrounds. I’ve seen great strides toward unity by asking more questions, listening without intent to respond, and simply learning to see life from other perspectives with the help of those who walk in different shoes.]

How did Christ put to death the enmity of the Law and what effect has it had?

According to Colossians 2:13-14, God forgave our transgressions “having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us.” This was not just an executive order. Christ died so this could happen justly. This certificate—the record of our sins—was nailed to the cross. Christ paid our debt in full. In His flesh He fulfilled the Law. Now no longer enemies of God, we have the power of His Spirit to reconcile with each other by confessing sin and forgiving. Vertical reconciliation produces horizontal unity, peace. At the cross, Jesus reconciled both Jews and Gentiles to God.

How would you explain this concept simply if a Jewish person asked you about Jesus?

Prompt your class to reason through everything they’ve learned so far and apply it to a practical life situation.

SEGMENT #3: Digging Deeper—Reconciliation

- Key Talk Points:**
- In class test run for a Digging Deeper section.
 - Because we are reconciled, we are to be ambassadors for Christ.

Context/Comments

Since many students forego the Digging Deeper sections, take some time to do this section in small groups in class. They will look at three other passages where Paul talks about reconciliation. In addition to answering the questions in the workbook, you may want to use these discussion questions:

What else do these cross-references add to what Ephesians teaches about reconciliation? What does our being reconciled have to do with our being ambassadors for Christ?

Who needs an ambassador for Christ? What responses do we need to be prepared for?

Colossians 1:19-22

“For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—”

- Through Christ the Father reconciled all things to Himself.
- Peace came through the blood of Christ’s cross—it came at a high price.
- Although we were rebels, the Father reconciled all things to Himself through Christ’s death.
- His purpose in this is to present us holy, blameless, and beyond reproach.

Romans 5:10

“For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.”

- God reconciled “us” and “the world” when we were still enemies.
- We are reconciled through Christ’s death and saved by His life.

2 Corinthians 5:18-20

“Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

- God reconciled us to Himself through Christ.
- God gave the reconciled the ministry of reconciliation through the word of reconciliation.

- We are ambassadors through whom God urges others to be reconciled to Himself.

SEGMENT #4: Ephesians 2:19-22

- Key Talk Points:**
- Jew and Gentile are being fitted together into one building.
 - Gentiles are now part of God's household too.
 - Jesus Christ is the cornerstone.

Context/Comments:

While Paul has already referred to reconciled Jews and Gentiles as “one new man” (v. 15) and “one body” (v. 16), he now adds a new metaphor: the building (v. 21). Those of God's household (v. 19) are being fitted together and are growing into a holy temple. The verb usage here is interesting. When was the last time you heard of a building “growing”? It's a striking and unexpected verb (Greek: *auxano*) that brings attention to the fact that this is a living building.

Small Group Time:

How has life changed for Gentile believers?

Everything changes for Gentiles when they become believers. No longer strangers, they now belong to God's household. Help your students see that Gentiles are not replacing Jews; rather all people enter God's household through faith in Jesus Christ. While Jewish believers are grafted into their own tree (Romans 11:24), Gentile believers are wild olive branches grafted in to the cultivated tree. Through faith in Jesus they move from being “strangers and aliens” to being “fellow citizens with the saints” (v. 19). Once we were on the outside, now we are part of God's household and part of the building project.

What foundation is the Church built on?

Paul refers to the foundation of the building God is growing as “the apostles and prophets” with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone (v. 20). There is some question as to whether the Greek word *akrogoniaios* refers to the cornerstone of the building or to a top-of-arch keystone. (The only other occurrence in the New Testament, 1 Peter 2:6, seems to point to a ground-level stone.) What is clear, though, is that while God built His Church on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ is the most important stone! Other helpful cross-references here are 1 Corinthians 3:10 and Revelation 21:14.

The foundation is the apostles and the prophets, Jesus is the cornerstone, and the rest of us are being fitted together . . . which has countless implications for our relationships with one another!

Again we see that the Church does not replace Israel. Everything is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; we do not have a new foundation. Christians are graciously grafted in to what God has been doing with and through Israel over the ages.

In what sense is the Church “a holy temple to the Lord”?

The picture Paul paints of the Church as a temple, corresponds to the Old Testament’s picture of God dwelling with His people and His presence filling first the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-38) and later the temple (1 Kings 8:1-11). Now the relationship is even more intimate. He not only dwells *among* His people, He also dwells *in* them. There is a corporate element here that we can’t overlook. Believers have the indwelling Holy Spirit individually but that one Spirit baptizes them into one body, the body of Christ.

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How are these truths changing the way you’re thinking and acting?

Week Five

God's Mystery Revealed!

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 min.	Review / Overview
Segment 2:	15 min.	Ephesians 3:1-7
Segment 3:	20 min.	Ephesians 3:8-13
Segment 4:	15 min.	Ephesians 3:14-21

START CLASS HERE

SEGMENT #1: Review

Review Questions:

What are the components of inductive Bible study and why is each important?

As simply as you can, explain Ephesians 1.

As simply as you can, explain Ephesians 2.

Small Group Time:

How would you describe the overall content and flow of Ephesians 3 and how it fits with the previous chapters?

Take a short time to let them discuss what they observed and then go through the chapter section by section.

SEGMENT #2: Ephesians 3:1-7

- Key Talk Points:**
- Definition of the mystery: Gentiles are fellow heirs through the gospel.
 - Paul is a literal prisoner entrusted with a stewardship.

Context/Comments:

After leaving off with a prayer at the close of Ephesians 1, Paul digresses in Ephesians 2 to assert the heart of the Gospel—God's reconciliation of man to Himself in Christ—both Jews and Gentiles. He seems to return to the prayer before digressing again into more of the specifics of the mystery in Christ.

Small Group Time:

In what sense is Paul a prisoner? What is Paul's "stewardship" and what does this have to do with the imprisonment? Also consider Galatians 1:11-24 and Acts 9:15.

- **Paul is an actual prisoner, v. 1**

Paul describes himself as a "prisoner of Christ Jesus," a title he will repeat again in 4:1 and expand on in 6:20 where he calls himself "an ambassador in chains." His imprisonment is for the sake of the Gentiles as he has been entrusted with a stewardship of God's grace for them (3:2; see also Galatians 1:11-24).

Point out to your students that verse 1 drops off as Paul goes down a sideroad grammatically to get back to the main highway of reconciliation in Christ. He'll pick up the thought of verse 1 again in verse 14 which ties all the way back to where he left off at the end of Ephesians 1.

- **Paul has been given a stewardship of God's grace for the Gentiles, v. 2**

God gave Paul a stewardship (Greek: *oikonomia*, see also 1:10, 3:9) of His grace for the Gentiles. In other words, Paul has a special job or task from God. In His wisdom God chose Paul to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. Paul didn't ask for the job, but God gave it to him anyway.

Like spiritual gifts which he will address later in this letter, Paul was given the stewardship of God's grace for the good of someone else . . . the Gentiles.

What is the mystery and how did Paul know about it?

- The mystery is that Gentiles are fellow heirs through the gospel.

"Mystery" first appears in Ephesians 1:9 ("mystery of His will"), but is defined in Ephesians 3:4-6. The mystery is this: "the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel."

- Paul knew about the mystery by revelation.

Paul's knowledge of God and the mystery came by revelation from Jesus Christ (Galatians 1), giving both him and his message authority. He was not alone. The mystery that had been hidden was revealed during Paul's time to the apostles and prophets in the Spirit.

Revelation and mystery go together. The only way people will know the mystery of Christ is if God chooses to reveal it. We see revelation showing up in 3:3 (Greek: *apokalupsis*, noun) and 3:5 (Greek: *apokalupto*, verb). Both forms are compound Greek words combining the preposition *apo* (from) and *kalupto* (to conceal). Revelation implies that what is being revealed was previously hidden or covered.

- The mystery is not new.

As we learned from chapter 1, God's plan existed from before the foundation of the world, but the specifics "were not made known to the sons of men" until God revealed "the mystery of Christ" to Paul and the other apostles (3:4). We see God's general plan to reach all people throughout the pages of Scripture from Genesis 3:15 to the Abrahamic Covenant to the grafting in of such people as Rahab and Ruth. His saving mission has always been active, but the specifics once veiled have now been revealed.

What did you learn in this section about the Gentiles?

- Paul is a prisoner for the sake of the Gentiles, v. 1.
- The stewardship of God's grace was given to Paul for the Gentiles, v. 2.
- The Gentiles are fellow heirs, v. 6.
- The Gentiles are fellow members of the body, v. 6.
- The Gentiles are partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus, v. 6.

The big deal here that modern readers often overlook is that the Law morally separated Jews from the Gentiles.

What challenges do we face in the church today being "fellows" (heirs, members, and partakers) with others who not?

Help your students think through tensions and barriers that need to and can be overcome in Christ. In order to get them engaged, see if they have ever been in a situation where they have felt either encroached upon or locked out of a group or situation. Perhaps it was the birth of a sibling or a change in family because of marriage or divorce. You may decide to move this discussion toward more socially engaging issues such as racism. Depending on the racial makeup of your class, this may provide a time to talk about often off-limit topics of race relations in a positive way that can build the body.

SEGMENT #3: Ephesians 3:8-13

- Key Talk Points:**
- Paul was given grace to preach the riches of Christ to the Gentiles.
 - Through the Church God makes known His manifold wisdom.

Context/Comments:

Paul writes further about the mystery in vv. 8-13 before returning to the prayer that he left off with at the end of Ephesians 1.

Small Group Time:

What makes Paul a unique messenger to the Gentiles? How does he describe himself and what else do you know about him from Scripture? (See also 1 Timothy 1:15, Galatians 1:13, 1 Corinthians 15:9, Acts 8:3, Philippians 3:6.)

Already having described himself as an apostle and a prisoner, Paul now deems himself "the very least of all the saints" (v. 8). Why did he call himself this? Not only had he been separated from Christ as had *all* men, but Paul was an active persecutor of the Church. In 1 Timothy 1:15 he refers to himself as the "foremost" (Greek: *protos*) of all sinners.

Help your students see the hope that God gives us in choosing to use Paul. Bottom line: if there's hope for Paul, there's hope for everyone! There is no one who is so far off that God cannot save.

Also help your class identify that it was not only the Gentiles who were far off and in need of a Savior. Paul was far off in his Judaism, but God drew him near in Christ.

Grace not only saved Paul, it also drove Him to preach Christ to the Gentiles.

What else do we learn about the mystery in this section?

God kept the truth of this cosmic restoration in Christ veiled in mystery until the proper time so that His manifold wisdom would be made known “through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places” (3:10).

Paul’s description of God’s wisdom as “manifold” (Greek: *polupoikilos*) literally means multi-colored. We learn more about the rulers (Greek: *arche*) and authorities (Greek: *exousia*) by comparing how the words are used in Ephesians and Paul’s other writings (see also 1:21; 2:2; and 6:12). Many think these references are to heavenly beings though some question whether they include both good and bad angels. What is clear is that the Church demonstrates God’s manifold wisdom that to this point was hidden.

In all this, God’s salvation includes His choice, grace, and call (as opposed to our choice and works). “It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves” (Psalm 100:3).

God’s purpose is eternal; He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. He also predestined us to adoption as sons . . . thereby as brothers and sisters to one another as we have the same Father.

What difference does Jesus make in the here and now for believers? What difference is he making in your life?

What other truths about God did you notice? How are these changing the way you think and act?

SEGMENT #4: Ephesians 3:14-21

Key Talk Points: • Paul’s Prayer Continued

Context/Comments:

In this section, Paul finally returns to the prayer he left off in Ephesians 1 bowing his knees and addressing God the Father.

Small Group Time:

What do we learn from Paul’s prayer? What does he ask for?

On bended knee, Paul prays to “the Father” (following Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6:9) “from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name” (3:14-15).

There is word play going on here with *patera* (Father) and *patria* (family). This reference may be either to God as Creator of all people and families or to God's whole family made up of both Jews and Gentiles in one house. God is the Father of believing Jews and believing Gentiles who both have been brought near to Him through Christ's atonement.

Paul prays that the Ephesians will be strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit; He wants Jesus to be at home in their hearts. He wants them to understand the magnitude of Christ's love and for them to be "filled up to all the fullness of God" 3:19; see also Ephesians 4:13 and Colossians 1:19 and 2:9).

The entire Trinity is involved in believers being "filled up to all the fullness of God" (v. 19). The Father strengthens believers through His Spirit in the inner man; Christ dwells in hearts through faith (and in Christ "all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form" according to Colossians 2:9). When Christ indwells and the Spirit empowers believers are rooted and grounded in love and come to understand the love of Christ more and more fully.

Are you living in the reality of this prayer today?

Who can you pray this for?

What do we learn about God in verses 20-21?

Paul closes this section with a doxology (a word of praise) to the God who can do far more than we can even think or ask! The power (Greek: *dunamis*) that works within believers is from the Empowerer (Greek: *dunamai*. Or "the Enabler").

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How are these truths changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Six

Complete Unity in God-Given Diversity

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 min.	Review
Segment 2:	20 min.	Ephesians 4:1-6
Segment 3:	30 min.	Ephesians 4:7-16
Segment 4:	15 min.	Spiritual Gifts • 1 Peter 4 • 1 Corinthians 12 • Romans 12

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Questions:**

Briefly explain Paul's train of thought in Ephesians 1–3.

What is the most significant truth you've been applying from the first half of the letter?

SEGMENT #2: Ephesians 4:1–6—Don't Just Believe, Test!

- Key Talk Points:**
- Christians are to walk “worthy.”
 - The Christian walk is possible because of the truth of who we are in Christ.

Context/Comments:

Ephesians 4 moves us into the application portion of the letter. Everything that Paul will tell the Ephesians to “do” is grounded in who they already “are” in Christ. The section begins with a “Therefore” that points back to all of the doctrine Paul has established in chapters 1 through 3.

Small Group Time:

How does Ephesians 4 relate to the three previous chapters?

Having already established that God has chosen people in Christ before the foundation of the world and called them to Himself, Paul now exhorts these very people to walk in a way that reflects who they are.

How do Christians walk based on what is true of them in Christ?

Throughout the second half of this letter Paul returns again and again to the “walk” metaphor. In Ephesians 4:1-6 we see specifically that believers will walk in a manner worthy of their call. How is “worthy” walked? Paul points out several key components:

A worthy walk:

- shows tolerance for one another in love
- is diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

This is no false unity. Rather it is true fellowship because believers are one (Greek: *heis*). They are part of the same body and have the same Spirit indwelling each. Paul goes on to say there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. Paul speaks of maintaining the unity (Greek: *henoteta*) of the Spirit (v. 3) and attaining the unity (*henoteta*) of the faith (v. 13). This is not the external unity of “Shut up, play nice, and bite your tongue off if need be.” This is true unity of the Spirit that is preserved through the bond (Greek: *sundesmos*; that which joins together) of peace.

Not surprisingly the worthy walk operates in all humility (Greek: *tapeinophrosune*), gentleness (Greek: *prautes*), and patience (Greek: *makrothumia*).

What from this portion of the text do you most need to apply and how do you plan to do it?

SEGMENT #3: Ephesians 4:7-16

Key Talk Points:

- All believers have gifts for the benefit of the body.
- We are to grow up in all aspects.

Context/Comments:

While Ephesians 4:1-6 focuses on unity, 4:7-16 shows diversity within the unity—how every part of the body of Christ works together as part of God’s one masterpiece. As you move through this section, don’t let your class get entangled in speculation over Ephesians 4:9-10. The main point is that Christ gave gifts to the Church after returning victorious to heaven. Likely the reference to “descended” in verse 10 simply speaks of Christ’s incarnation. Commentators are divided on the meaning and timing of the descent. Some take it as a descent of Jesus’ human spirit into hell between his death and resurrection. Others argue that it refers to His incarnation.

Small Group Time:

What does this section of the text teach about “gifts”?

Christ gave spiritual gifts after He ascended to heaven. Paul specifically notes gifted people Christ gave to the Church:

- Apostles
- Prophets
- Evangelists
- Pastors
- Teachers

(The Greek grammar uses one definite article for both pastors [Greek: *poimen*] and teachers [Greek: *didaskalos*] leading some commentators to suggest the translation “pastor-teachers.”)

The purpose for these gifts is the growth and health of the body of Christ, specifically:

- “equipping [Greek: *katartismos*; entirely fit for a job; from *kata* (against [the job intended to do]) and *artismos* (readiness, fitness, prep) of the saints for the work of service,” v. 12.
- “building up [Greek: *oikodome*] of the body of Christ,” v. 12

The goal of building up the body is essentially two-fold: unity and maturity:

- unity of the faith in the knowledge of the Son of God (unity ground in truth!), v. 13
- maturity, having grown “to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ,” v. 13

What peril does the Church face if she persists in immaturity? Have you seen any first-hand examples of this?

Spiritual children are vulnerable. Without adequate knowledge of truth, they are in danger from false teaching and false teachers. The words trickery (Greek: *kubeia*), craftiness (*panourgia*), and deceit (*planes*) all point to the malignant origins of such teachings.

Make sure that your students see that spiritual “children” are targets of these schemes and can unwittingly propagate false teaching without malicious intent. The solution is not berating and belittling them. It is not setting them aside as heretics. Rather, it is “speaking the truth in love” and encouraging growth in “knowledge of the Son of God.” God gives the growth, but maturity is more of a corporate event than we often care to believe.

How do those who are growing up interact with one another? What evidence do you see in your church that spiritual children are growing?

In addition to speaking the truth in love, each member of the body is to function as it was made to. If the body is to grow, each part needs to function the way God designed it.

SEGMENT #4: Spiritual Gift Cross-References—1 Peter 4, 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12

- Key Talk Points:**
- Gifts fall into two main categories: speaking and serving.
 - Sign gifts authenticated the Gospel.
 - Spiritual gifts are a “manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

Context/Comments:

If you have time, you may want to do a quick survey of the three other “spiritual gifts” passages in the New Testament. Although you’ll notice the passages overlap

considerably, some specify gifts the others don't have. Generally the gifts are divided into two main categories: speaking and serving. According to 1 Corinthians 12 God places the members in the body as He chooses (v. 18) "for the common good" (v. 7) of the body. If most of the class has not done the Digging Deeper section, you may decide to let them work through it together in class.

Small Group Time:

What did you learn about spiritual gifts in:

1 Peter 4:10-11?

There are two main categories of gifts: speaking and serving. Both are empowered by God to bring glory to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 12?

This is the most extensive list of individual gifts, all of which are given for the common good of the body. The gifts include:

- apostles, v. 28
- prophets, v. 28
- teachers, v. 28
- word of wisdom, v. 8
- word of knowledge, v. 8
- faith, v. 9
- healing, vv. 9, 28
- effecting of miracles, vv. 10, 28
- prophecy, v. 10
- distinguishing of spirits, v. 10
- tongues, vv. 10, 28
- interpretation of tongues, v. 10
- helps, v. 28
- administrations, v. 28

This passage includes sign gifts. While some believe these gifts are still in effect today, others believe they ceased with the end of the apostolic age and the closing of the canon of Scripture. Don't let your class get into a debate on this. The point of Paul's teaching in Ephesians (which we are cross-referencing here) is that spiritual gifts are for the building up of the body.

Romans 12:4-13?

Romans 12 addresses not only the significance of the gifts but also the significance of accompanying attitudes:

- prophesying – according to the proportion of faith, v. 6
- serving, v. 7
- teaching, v. 7
- exhorting, v. 8
- giving – with liberality, v. 8
- leading – with diligence, v. 8
- showing mercy – with cheerfulness, v. 8
- practicing hospitality, v. 13

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Seven

Use the New Mind God Gave You!

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 min.	Review
Segment 2:	25 min.	Ephesians 4:17-24
Segment 3:	25 min.	Ephesians 4:25-32

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Basic Concepts**

How would you explain inductive study to someone who was unfamiliar with Bible study?

What are the main topics of Ephesians 1–3?

How does Ephesians 1–3 lay the foundation for Ephesians 4–6?

How are you doing with memorizing? What is working, what isn't?

SEGMENT #2: Ephesians 4:17-24

Key Talk Points:

- The futile mind versus the renewed mind.
- Lay aside the old self, put on the new self.

Context/Comments:

Continuing his walking metaphor, Paul contrasts Gentiles who walk “in the futility of their mind” (v. 17) with believers who have renewed minds. The difference and detail are profound.

Small Group Time:

What does Paul say about the Christian walk in this section? How is it related to the mind? What affect does it have on actions?

Paul affirms (Greek: *marturomai*; bears witness) that believers will act differently from unbelievers because their different minds issue forth different actions. The boldfaced Greek words that follow all have the Greek root **nous** (mind) in them.

The futile mind (Greek: *nous*) is:

- darkened in understanding (Greek: *dianoia*), v. 17
- excluded from the life of God, v. 18
- ignorant (Greek: *agnoia*), v. 18
- hard hearted, v. 18
- callous, v. 18
- given over to sensuality, v. 19 (Your class might notice similarity to Romans 1.)
- impure, v. 19
- greedy, v. 19

The Ephesians “did not learn Christ in this way” (v. 20)—anti-truth life is incompatible with Jesus, the embodiment of truth and life (John 14:6).

While Galatians 2:20 summarizes the theological truth of our crucifixion and resurrection with Christ, Christians still submit to the reality. “Having laid aside” (aorist participle and aorist infinitive respectively in Colossians 3:9 and Ephesians 4:22) “the old man” (Greek: *ton palaion anthropon*: cf. Romans 7:18), Christians continue to put to death the deeds of the body (Romans 8:13) and put on “the new” *man* or *self* (Greek *ton neon*, Colossians 3:10).

Don't miss here that we are “to be renewed” (present, passive, infinitive) in the spirit of our minds (see also Romans 12:2). We submit, but it is the core work of the Spirit.

Contrasting the futile and ignorant old self, the new self “has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (v. 24). Because of this, Paul urges his readers to live in a manner consistent with who they are in Christ.

How would you interact with someone who claims to know God but walks in darkness?

Be careful with this. If the discussion starts going south, remind your class that God's kindness leads to repentance (Romans 2:4) and that God works powerfully through His Word. Shifting from “**I think**” (my opinion) to “**I believe** what God says” may seem like a minor semantic move, but it can yield tremendous results.

How have you seen your new self ruling over your old self in your life? In the lives of those around you?

SEGMENT #3: Ephesians 4:25-32**Key Talk Points:** • Not this, but that.

- We can live the “new self” because of the Holy Spirit.

Context/Comments:

The “therefore” (Greek: *dio*) in Ephesians 4:25 ties the actions that follow with the renewed mind that preceded. Christians can live with increasingly righteous behavior because the new self in Christ has been created “in righteousness and holiness of the truth” (v. 24).

Small Group Time:

How are Paul's readers to live in light of their position in Christ? How will this affect unity in the body of Christ?

Your class may note the opposites Paul sets forth. Following the example of Jesus who told His disciples how to replace wrong behavior with proper behavior (e.g. shift focus from worry to the God who provides, Matthew 6), Paul tells his readers to replace “old man” destruction with “new man” edification:

- lay aside falsehood . . . speak truth, v. 25
- stop harboring anger . . . resolve issues quickly, v. 26
- stop stealing . . . start working and sharing, v. 28
- stop the unwholesome talk . . . use your words to build up and give grace, v. 29

In place of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice, Christ's people are to be kind, tender-hearted, and are to forgive just as they have been forgiven.

When we live in the reality of who we are in Christ, the devil is not allowed any place (Greek: *topos*; space; others translate this opportunity) and we keep from grieving the Holy Spirit.

Help your students reason through the text to see how these contrasting characteristics affect the unity and disunity of the body.

Take some time to compare Ephesians 4:26 with James 1:19-20 with regard to anger. How can you apply this?

While anger can be an appropriate response to injustice and sin, the temptation to sin in our anger is great. Paul says we are not to do this. In fact, we are not to let anger linger—“do not let the sun go down on your anger” (v. 26). We are never to give the devil room to work.

James instructs Christians to be “slow to anger” and reminds them that man's anger doesn't accomplish God's righteousness.

James 1:19-20, ESV

- 19 *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;*
- 20 *for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*

In a world of verbal digs and unkind speech, how are you doing at building others up? What are some specific ways you can grow in this regard?

The proverb “Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me” is a lie. James goes so far as to say that the tongue is “set on fire by hell [Greek: *gehenna*]” (James 3:6). Although no human being “can tame the tongue” (James 3:8), the Holy Spirit can. Because of His work in our lives, we can keep from spewing “unwholesome” (Greek: *sapros*; literally rotten or putrid) words and instead use words to build others up and give grace.

What did you learn from looking more closely at the Greek words translated “kind,” “tender-hearted,” and “forgiving” through the use of cross-references? What are you applying?

- **Kind** (Greek: ***chrestos***)

Matthew 11:30

*For My yoke is easy (Greek: *chrestos*) and My burden is light.*

Luke 6:35

*But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind (Greek: *chrestos*) to ungrateful and evil men.*

Romans 2:4

*Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness (Greek: *chrestos*) of God leads you to repentance?*

1 Peter 2:2-3

*. . . like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness (Greek: *chrestos*) of the Lord.*

Chrestos also appears in Luke 5:39 and 1 Corinthians 15:33 translated as “good” in the New American Standard.

• Tender-hearted (Greek: *eusplachnos*)**1 Peter 3:8-9**

To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted (Greek: eusplachnos), and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.

• Forgiving (Greek: *charizomai*)**Luke 7:42-43**

When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave (Greek: charizomai) them both. So which of them will love him more?

Colossians 2:13

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven (Greek: charizomai) us all our transgressions . . .

Colossians 3:12-13

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving (Greek: charizomai) each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave (Greek: charizomai) you, so also should you.

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Eight

Learning What Is Pleasing

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	5 min.	Review
Segment 2:	20 min.	Ephesians 5:1-5
Segment 3:	20 min.	Ephesians 5:6-14
Segment 4:	15 min.	Ephesians 5:15-21

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Basic Concepts**

Summarize Paul's train of thought so far in Ephesians.

What specific truths have you been applying from Ephesians 4?

What was your biggest "Aha!" moment from this week's lesson?

SEGMENT #2: Ephesians 5:1-5

Key Talk Points:

- Because we are God's beloved children, we are to walk in love.
- Christ's sacrificial love is our model.

Context/Comments:

Paul continues to build his walking metaphor adding "walk in love" to his previous exhortations to walk worthy (4:1) and to walk in truth (4:17-23).

Small Group Time:

What walk does Paul describe in Ephesians 5:1-5? How does Jesus provide the example?

Paul now tells his readers to walk in love (Greek: *agape*). As beloved children they are to love others as Christ loved them. This is no small task considering Christ's love took Him to the cross. Help your students see that it is only because Christ forgave us that we can forgive and it is only because Christ loved us that we can love (see also 1 John 4:19).

Walking in love as saints (Greek: *hagios*, someone set apart, holy) and imitators of God precludes any idolatrous characteristics like immorality, impurity, and covetousness. Those set apart as holy to God are not to be soiled by:

- immorality, v. 3
- impurity, v. 3
- greed, v. 3

- filthiness, v. 4
- silly talk, v. 4
- course jesting, v. 4

These thoughts and behaviors are incongruous with life in Christ. One proper response to Christ is “giving of thanks” (v. 4).

What resistance does our culture present to walking in love?

Help your students reason through the text as they apply Scripture to their own lives.

SEGMENT #3: Ephesians 5:6-14

- Key Talk Points:**
- Walk as children of the Light.
 - Key contrast is Light and darkness.

Context/Comments:

In 4:17 Paul reminded his readers not to walk like the Gentiles do in the futility or emptiness of their minds. In 5:6 he warns them not to be deceived by empty words of empty minds. Although the empty words of our culture tell us there is no such thing as sin, God’s Word stands as truth nonetheless. Sin is rebellion against God and a just God cannot ignore it. As Paul says in Romans 1:18-19, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.”

Small Group Time:

What does Paul warn the people of in Ephesians 5:6-14? Do we see similar threats in today’s world? If so, where?

As Paul continues laying out the contrast between those who are “in Christ” and those who are still dead in trespasses and sins, he issues specific warnings:

- don’t be deceived with empty words, v. 6
- don’t be partakers (Greek: *summetochos*) with the sons of disobedience, v. 7
- don’t participate (Greek: *sunkoinoneo*) in their deeds, v. 11

In the compound words for both “partake” and “participate” we see the prefix *sun-* which indicates a joining in or mixing together. The Greek word translated “participate” actually comes from the same root as that for Christian fellowship, *koinos*, literally, “common.”

Paul’s description of these first-century “sons of disobedience” (v. 6) and their practices sounds very similar to what we observe in culture today. Characterized by “darkness” (v. 8), unbelievers practice deeds that are “unfruitful” (v. 11) and do things in secret that are disgraceful even to speak of (v. 12).

What effect do children of Light have on those around them?

Those who are in Christ are to:

- walk as children of Light, v. 8
- learn/prove/discern (Greek: *dokimazo*) what pleases the Lord, v. 10
- expose dark deeds by bringing them to the light, vv. 11-13

Whereas the deeds of darkness are unfruitful, the fruit of the Light is characterized by goodness, righteousness, and truth (v. 9).

What do we learn about God in this section of the text?

Although the term “wrath of God” grates at some people—undoubtedly because of the sin nature—the text is clear that “the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” (v. 6). This is consistent with the full counsel of God’s Word and is explained clearly in Romans 1:18ff. The same God who is “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth” (Exodus 34:6) is holy and righteous and judges sin. What is far more shocking than His judgment of sin is His resolve to save sinners!

SEGMENT #4: Ephesians 5:15-21

Key Talk Points: • Walk as wise men.
• Key contrast is wise and foolish.

Context/Comments:

Using his third “therefore” (vv. 1, 7, 15) Paul commands his readers to “be careful” to walk wisely, explaining it with a series of contrasts. The days are evil and a wise walk is critical.

Make sure your students notice that the final verse in this section (v. 21)—“. . . be subject to one another in the fear of Christ”—binds to the section that follows which addresses three different relationships: wives to husbands (vv. 25-27), children to parents (vv. 1-3), and slaves to masters (vv. 5-8).

Small Group Time:

What have we learned about walking so far and what does Paul add in this section?

Everything that Paul has said regarding walking and everything he will say results from two truths from Ephesians 1–3: that his readers are “in Christ” and that the Spirit is in them. Still, as they submit to the work of the Spirit in their lives, they will understand better how to walk wisely.

Again, the walk is:

- in good works, 2:10
- worthy, 4:1
- loving, 5:2
- as “children of Light,” 5:8
- wise, 5:15

The walk is not:

- futile or darkened, 4:17-18
- unwise, 5:15

What contrasts are set up in this section and what did you learn from them?

Don't walk as unwise, v. 15	RATHER	Walk as wise
Don't be foolish, v. 17	RATHER	Understand what Lord's will is
Don't get drunk, v. 18	RATHER	Be filled with the Spirit

Paul employs the imperative “be careful” (Greek: *blepo akribos*, literally “see” or watch accurately) when telling the Ephesians how to walk. A wise walk in evil days will make the most of (Greek: *exagorazo*, also translated “redeem”) the time it has.

Evil times and environments woo people to evil. The believer must walk carefully remembering that “Bad company corrupts good morals” (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Instead of being foolish (Greek: *aphron*; an interesting word that indicates lack of thinking), believers are to understand (Greek: *sunimi*; figure it out, put it together) the Lord's will (Greek: *thelema*; see Ephesians 1:1, 5, 9, 11).

Finally, Paul tells them not to get drunk with wine, but to be filled with the Spirit.

What are some ways those who are filled with the Spirit will behave? How will this affect unity in the body?

(Be sure to stick with the immediate text as “filled with the Spirit” is a charged phrase. If the discussion starts straying, use the question: “Where do you see that in the text?” to bring it back to Ephesians 5.)

Among other things, those filled with the Spirit will:

- speak to one another (in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs), v. 19
- sing and make melody to the Lord, v. 19
- give thanks always . . . in the name of Jesus to God the Father, v. 20
- be subject to one another in the fear of Christ, v. 21

What are some practical ways we can walk wisely with our limited resource of time? How are you doing with this? Consider Psalm 119:97-104 for a foundation but make sure you consider practical, day-to-day application. What is one specific way you can improve on this today?

Encourage your class to share practical ways they have learned to apply this so they can learn from the successes *and failures* of others. Using Psalm 119:97-104, help them see how time invested in God's Word yields what is needed for a wise walk.

Knowing God's Word makes the psalmist:

- wiser than his enemies, 119:98
- more insightful than all his teachers, 119:99

• **more understanding than the aged, 119:100** **Wrap-Up Questions:**

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Nine

Subject to One Another

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 min.	Review
Segment 2:	20 min.	Ephesians 5:21-33
Segment 3:	15 min.	Ephesians 6:1-4
Segment 4:	15 min.	Ephesians 6:5-9

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Basic Concepts**

How does the “application” portion of Ephesians (chapters 4–6) grow out of the more doctrinal portion of the letter (chapters 1–3)?

How would you explain the importance of doctrine to someone who thinks it’s “boring”?

What are some specifics you’re applying from this week’s lesson?

SEGMENT #2: Ephesians 5:21-33

- Key Talk Points:**
- Be filled with the Holy Spirit (5:18)
 - Be subject to one another.
 - Being “in Christ” impacts the marriage relationship.
 - Marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church.

Context/Comments:

The overriding command in this section comes from Ephesians 5:18, “be filled [Greek: *pleroo*] with the Spirit.

As Christians we are able to submit properly in relationships not with teeth gritted and human resolve, but as we are filled with the Spirit.

Small Group Time:

What key relationship does Paul talk about in Ephesians 5:21-33 and what makes it so significant?

In verse 22, Paul launches into a section that at first glance looks like “Marriage Counseling 101” but progresses quickly to a theological treatise anchored in the order of creation.

Beginning with wives, Paul tells each to be subject to her own husband. The verb “be subject” is actually absent from v. 22 and implied from the participle *hupotasso*

(literally “being subject”) in verse 21. The command and the power to obey, however, reach back to “be filled with the Spirit” (v. 18).

Although wife submission was a cultural norm in the patriarchal first century, the reason *behind* Paul’s words is stunning: marriage pictures the relationship of Christ with His Church.

As usual, make sure your class stays with the text. This is not a blanket teaching that *all* women are to be subject to *all* men; the marriage relationship is clearly in view. Although the Greek *gune* is strictly “women,” here the possessive pronoun *idios* in the phrase “to your own [plural *idiois*] males” infers marriage.

That a first-century woman was expected to be subject to her husband is found in both Jewish Law (1 Corinthians 14:34 which may refer to either Genesis 2:20-24 or 3:16) and Roman culture at the time, but Paul’s words to husbands were shocking. They were to love *as Christ loved*.

How *did* Christ love?

- He gave Himself up for His bride, v. 25
- He sanctified her, v. 26
- He cleansed her, v. 26
- He made her holy and blameless, v. 27

In short, Christ sacrificed His very life! Of course, three days later He came back to life, ascended, and “sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:2).

Following this example of sacrifice, Paul calls husbands to love their wives as their own bodies because in marriage the two have become one. In referencing Genesis, Paul grounds this command in the order of creation. Husbands who don’t nourish (Greek: *ektrepho*) and cherish (Greek: *thalpo*) their wives harm themselves.

While the practical benefit of Paul’s down-to-earth words to husbands and wives is undeniable, the greater teaching is the mystery that marriage points to Christ and the Church. As Christ is the head of the Church, so the husband is head of the wife. The marriage relationship gives us a glimpse of something much more!

Small Group Time:

What are some practical ways wives can submit to their husbands “in the fear of Christ” and husbands can love their wives “as Christ loved the Church”?

As you lead discussion, keep it positive. Particularly if you have an age mix in your group, this will provide an opportunity for your class to share and learn from one another some practical ways to show love, submission, and respect in the marriage relationship and in the body of Christ.

It’s important to remember here that the Greek word that most Bibles translate as “respect” is *phobos*, literally “fear.” My guess is that “respect” is an attempt to soften the word so that it will not be misapplied and weaponized by misogynists. The heart of the passage, though, shows that the marriage relationship is not to be one of abusive power. Rather, the submission wives are to afford their husbands should be based on “the fear of Christ” (Ephesians 5:21).

SEGMENT #3: Ephesians 6:1-4

- Key Talk Points:**
- Being “in Christ” affects the parent-child relationship.
 - Children are to obey in the Lord.
 - Fathers are to raise their children in the Lord’s discipline and instruction.

Context/Comments:

Again, the overriding command in this section comes from Ephesians 5:18, “be filled [Greek: *pleroo*] with the Spirit. This is another instance of how being filled with the Spirit causes believers to “be subject to one another in the fear of Christ” (5:21).

Small Group Time:

How are Christian parents and children to treat one another and why?

After telling husbands to love and wives to submit, Paul shifts his focus to children who he commands to both obey (Greek: *hupakouo*) and honor (Greek: *timao*) their parents.

Why? Because it is right (Greek: *dikaios*). Yes, kids, there is such a thing as right and wrong.

Drawing directly from the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12), Paul reminds his readers that commandment #5 is the first with a promise for keeping it.

As you discuss how to apply this scripture your students will likely make the distinction between the obedience of minor children and honor due parents regardless of the children’s ages.

The married woman, for instance, submits to her husband while honoring her parents. The married man cleaves to his wife and honors his parents but no longer obeys them because he has left them for his wife.

That Paul’s main focus here is children in the home as opposed to adult children is bolstered by his instruction to fathers in verse 4 to “not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up [Greek: *ektrepho*, rear or bring to adulthood] in the discipline [Greek: *paideia*, instruct or train children] and instruction of the Lord.”

Small Group Time:

What are some ways parents today can bring children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord?

As you guide the discussion, you may want to point your class to some of the resources listed below.

- Read / Reason with them from an early age
<https://www.amazon.com/Big-Picture-Story-Bible-Book/dp/1433523914>

- Help them memorize
<https://scripturetyper.com/>
- Teach them to study
<https://shop.precept.org/products/wrong-way-jonah-d4y>

Small Group Time:

What are ways we provoke our children to anger? What alternate parenting strategies can we employ?

In the emotionally-charged land of parenting, not provoking to anger (Greek: *parorgizo*) can be a tall order especially when dealing with headstrong preschoolers and teenagers! As you discuss application, be sure to help your students see that not provoking to anger does not mean giving in, doing “whatever it takes” to keep your child happy. Children will have bouts of anger. That’s life in a broken world. Parents who bring their children up to know the Lord will help them grow and deal with anger, not stir it up in them.

SEGMENT #4: Ephesians 6:5-9

Key Talk Points: • Being “in Christ” affects work relationships.

Context/Comments:

As he did to wife and husband and child and parent, Paul applies the category of submission to slave and master. The best current equivalent we have today is the employer/employee relationship.

Small Group Time:

What are Paul’s words to both slaves and masters? How do they compare with the other relationships? Which of them apply most in your life situation?

Slaves, like children, are to obey (again, the Greek: *hupakouo*) those in authority over them.

Paul goes after the heart attitude with this group that has no marital or blood bonds that would draw them together. Instead of getting by and doing just enough, Paul reminds slaves that their true Master in heaven sees and pays. They are to work hard because they are slaves of Christ. Among Christ’s slaves there will be no mere eyeservice (Greek: *ophthalmoudoulia*) or pleasing of men (Greek: *anthropareskos*)! Christ’s slaves serve Him.

Again with wild counterculturalism, Paul commands Christian masters to behave toward their slaves in the same way! Not only the slave but also the master is to:

- do the will of God from the heart, and
- with good will render service

Masters are also to give up threatening (Greek: *apeile*) as the true Master of both slave and master is in heaven!

Small Group Time:

In what ways do people today get caught up in people-pleasing behavior? What baits lure us? What ways can you honor God in your workplace?

Again, make sure to keep the discussion grounded in the text to honor God since this is His Word. Help students understand that slaves of Christ are driven by “sincere” (Greek: *haplotes*) hearts, undivided ones. The sincere heart has no room for ulterior motives.

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways this week?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

Week Ten

Resist! Stand Firm!

Class-at-a-Glance

<i>Segments</i>	<i>1 Hour Class</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Segment 1:	10 min.	Review
Segment 2:	15 min.	Ephesians 6:10-12 and Ephesians 1:18-23
Segment 3:	20 min.	Ephesians 6:13-17
Segment 4:	15 min.	Ephesians 6:18-24

START CLASS HERE**SEGMENT #1: Review****Review Basic Concepts**

What is Paul's basic message in Ephesians 1 through 3?

Briefly explain the Gospel using Ephesians. (This would be a great small group exercise if you have the time!)

SEGMENT #2: Ephesians 6:10-12 and Ephesians 1:18-23

- Key Talk Points:**
- Our battle is spiritual.
 - Our strength comes from our position "in Christ."

Context/Comments:

Paul commands the Ephesians to "be strong" (Greek: *endynamoo*, literally "in-powered") in the Lord. Because of who they are in Christ, because of His strength (Greek: *kratos*), they will be able to stand in spiritual battles and resist in the evil day.

Small Group Time:

What does Paul tell his readers to do in Ephesians 6:10-12 and how can they know it will work? Why is this important then and now?

Remind your students that Paul has already talked about the strength of God's might (Greek: *ischus*) in Ephesians 1:19. There he prayed that the believers would know "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." In short, this is resurrection power; power most clearly revealed when God raised Jesus from the dead. It is "far above" (Greek: *hyperano*, literally "hyper-above") therefore incomparable with all other powers.

Now in Ephesians 6 we see how this strength plays out in day-to-day life. Paul's verb usage reveals a tension many of us know firsthand. He commands his readers to "be strong" (passive voice) in verse 10. The strength that we are to grow in is not our own. It is strength from God. As we are connected to the vine (see John 15) we are strengthened.

As we live and abide "in Christ," we lean in and submit to God as we "put on" (Greek: *enduo*) the full armor (Greek: *panoplia*) of God.

Then and now, believers fight a spiritual battle and just as physical combatants rely on physical weapons, spiritual warriors need weapons of war appropriate to their battlefield.

Small Group Time:

What does Paul tell us about our enemy?

From the text, we learn that our adversary the devil (Greek: *diabolos*) has both plans—schemes (Greek: *methodeias*, close to our “methods”)—and allies (the rulers, the powers, the world forces of this darkness, and the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places).

Although the phrase “spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places” may give pause at first glance, remind your class that Scripture interprets Scripture and we have already seen in Ephesians 1:21 that Christ is far above all rule, authority, power, dominion, and names. The “heavenly places” then likely relate to Satan as “the prince of the power of the air” (2:2).

It is important to make sure your class realizes that the enemy is *not* omnipresent. He is *not* everywhere at one time, he is *not* around every corner or under every bush. Does he have “staff”? Yes, but neither he nor they can be in more than one place at one time. (See also Job 1:6-7, Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:9, Revelation 20:1-10.)

Small Group Time:

What schemes or methods of the enemy have we seen in Ephesians and in other places in Scripture? How can we stand against them?

Throughout Scripture we see that Satan works to set people against God and routinely attacks the mind. It starts in the beginning pages of Scripture (Genesis 3) when the serpent calls into question God’s character and calls God’s truth lies thereby luring Eve and Adam into disobedience.

In Ephesians 4:14, we find the only other instance of the Greek *methodeia* in the entire New Testament and it is associated with 8 interesting nouns and two verbs:

- Children and Adults (one complex subject comparison)
- Tossed
- Here and There (one complex subject comparison)
- Waves
- Carried about
- Wind
- Doctrine
- Trickery
- Craftiness
- Deceit

14 *As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful **scheming**;*

15 *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,*

Help your class consider what each of these words means when scheming is involved. For example, what do “waves,” “wind,” and “carried about” imply? Then help them reason through how this helps us better understand the “schemes” Paul refers to in Ephesians 6:11.

As we consider some of the other words and phrases in this verse “neighborhood,” we are reminded that as the enemy works in the sons of disobedience (2:2) he does not play fair. Never has, never will. His working involves deception in the form of:

- trickery (Greek: *kubeai*, this word is the plural of *kubos*, cube, a die. I think Paul is referring to dice games used to con the unsuspecting.)
- craftiness (Greek: *panourgia*, from *pan* “all” and *ourgia* “work.” It will take a mature man to stand firm in the face of attacks that can come from any angle.)
- deceit (Greek: *plane*, from *plano*, to wander)

The way to stand firm and resist, the way not to be “tossed here and there” is to know God’s truth and to grow up together in Christ. Satan wants you immature and foolish . . . easy ‘pickins’! Think about it. Even lions pick off the easy prey—the young, the sick, the wounded. God calls His children to grow up and stand firm!

SEGMENT #3: Ephesians 6:13-17

Key Talk Points:

- Pick up and put on the armor!
- Stand firm and resist!

Context/Comments:

Because the believer is in spiritual combat, he must both pick up (Greek: *analam-bano*) and put on (Greek: *enduo*) the full armor of God (vv. 13, 11).

Small Group Time:

What is the armor of God? What are we to do with it? What purpose does it serve? How are you doing with it?

Jesus said that wickedness will increase as the end approaches (Matthew 24:12) and Paul saw his own days as evil (5:16). The simple fact that he writes about spiritual armor also makes that clear.

Against an adversary steeped in lies, the man of God stands wearing the belt of truth (ESV). In a world of sin, Christ’s people enter battle clothed in His righteousness with character being conformed to the image of Christ. In a world of war and death their feet are shod with the gospel of peace by which they have been saved and which offers life to other captives.

When Paul refers to the shield of faith, don't think of a small round disc carried on the forearm. The ancient shield was a leather-covered small door, about 4 feet tall by about 2.5 feet wide that provided the soldier substantial protection from large arrows that were ignited before being launched.¹ The Romans and others used siege machines, not simple bows, to attack with gigantic flaming arrows. Faith, like the shield, extinguishes flaming attacks launched by the enemy.

Paul likens salvation to a helmet and tells his readers to take or, perhaps better, "accept" the helmet of salvation. As believers, we can rest in the fact that our salvation is secure regardless of dire circumstances that surround and threaten.

Finally, believers are to take up the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God! How are you handling your sword today?

SEGMENT #4: Ephesians 6:18-24

Key Talk Points:

- Pray at all times in the Spirit.
- Stay awake and on mission for the gospel!

Context/Comments:

Paul's dual emphasis in the final portion of his letter is on prayer in the Spirit and the continuing gospel mission.

Small Group Time:

How does Paul close his letter? What is he concerned that his readers remember?

Paul tells his readers to stand firm, pray at all times, and be on the alert (Greek: *agrupneo*; in other words, "stay awake!"; from *a* + *hupnos* = "without sleep"). Although imprisoned, Paul's prayer is not for release but rather for the furtherance of the gospel. Specifically he asks for prayer to know what to say and then to speak boldly the mystery of the gospel. How does the content of this prayer differ from many of ours today?

In today's culture where any talk involving religious or moral absolutes is increasingly characterized as "hate speech," we would do well to pray this prayer for ourselves and our fellow believers.

Small Group Time:

What final glimpses do we get into Paul's heart?

In his final words we get another glimpse into Paul's personal life and heart not only for God's people as a whole but also for the Ephesians in particular as he sends the letter by the hand of his beloved Tychicus who will comfort his Ephesian brothers and sisters on his behalf.

¹ Hendriksen, William, and Simon J. Kistemaker. *Exposition of Ephesians*. Vol. 7. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001.

Wrap-Up Questions:

What have been your biggest takeaways during our time together?

How is the truth you're learning changing the way you're thinking and acting?

How can you share it with others?

What is your next step in pursuing God through His Word?