



# **THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS**

## **STUDY GUIDE**

Cover design by Salem Alliance Church

Claire McColley

Materials created by Salem Alliance Church

Sarah Morrow, Cary Wood, Efrain Perdomo-Lopez, Kasey Cummings

Inside art by Kasey Cummings

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## PREFACE

During the Apostle Paul's lifetime, Ephesus was a large and influential port city, which made it a cultural and religious hub. Pagan and ungodly influences were everywhere. If there was ever a place that needed God's peace, it was the city of Ephesus.<sup>1</sup> Because when every area of life is centered around self and the pursuit of comfort, rather than God, it's hard to find peace.<sup>2</sup>

We, too, live in a place that needs peace. Our vision statement at Salem Alliance is "A City at Peace with God." In order for us to be a part of this vision, we must have peace with God, as well as peace with one another. Yet questions remain: what is peace, where does peace come from, and how do we live in peace with God and others? These are questions the book of Ephesians helps to answer.

It is important to understand that "peace<sup>3</sup> is not merely the cessation of hostility; it is a comprehensive term for salvation and life with God. The background to this use is the Old Testament concept of shalom, which covers wholeness, physical well-being, prosperity, security, good relations, and integrity. ... Shalom is much more positive than merely the

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<sup>1</sup> "... Ephesus (now in modern-day Turkey), [is] a city with a long and illustrious history. ... In Greek times, it was the birth place of a great pre-Socratic philosopher named Heraclitus. It was considered an important center of learning and culture. The streets at night were illuminated by oil lamps, which was a rare luxury in ancient cities. In Roman times, the city was a major center of cultural exchange. The ancient historian Aristio described Ephesus as being the most important trading center in the Roman province of 'Asia.' The city was also world famous for its massive temple dedicated to the Greek goddess Artemis (or Diana to the Romans), who was goddess of chastity but also fertility and childbirth. The Temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the 'Seven Wonders' of the ancient world and there was a legend that the statue of the goddess was a gift from the gods that fell out of the sky. ... Pliny the Elder, a Roman official and historian, called the temple of Artemis, 'the most wonderful monument of Grecian magnificence.' The priests of the temple of Artemis were all women who 'ruled the show and kept the men in their place.'" "Historical and Cultural Context on Ephesus." *Roots Moravian Church*, 14 Sept. 2018, [rootsmc.org/historical-and-cultural-context-on-ephesus/](https://rootsmc.org/historical-and-cultural-context-on-ephesus/).

<sup>2</sup> "Most likely, this letter was addressed to several churches in the district around Ephesus—namely, the Roman province of Asia (commonly known as Asia Minor). Called the Epistle to the Ephesians, the letter was not really intended to be only for the church at Ephesus. Most modern scholars are convinced that it was an encyclical (circular letter), meant for many churches in Asia including Ephesus. ... Paul's message in this letter is both intimate and global. Intimate—because of his close association with the Ephesians. Global—because the truths he wanted to communicate were for all the churches. ... Ephesians presents the grand picture of God's eternal purpose for the Christian church." Barton, Bruce B., and Philip Wesley Comfort. *Ephesians*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. xvii

<sup>3</sup> The word for "peace" (*eirene*) occurs forty-three times in Paul's letters, eight of which are in Ephesians. (**Ephesians 1:2; 2:14–17; 4:3; 6:15, 23**)

absence of conflict. It refers to the way life should be and is a gift of God that is received only in his presence.”<sup>4</sup>

In Ephesians “God establishes the church as the firstfruits of his shalom. ... By faith in him, believers [collectively and individually] experience a restoration of the broken relationship between themselves and God. We are made members of his family and our sins are forgiven. By faith in him, believers also experience a restoration of their broken relationships with one another in the church, the body of Christ. ... This unity, this shalom, is the fruit of the Spirit that characterizes the church and, when it is visible, will attract like a beacon those who are still far away on a pathless sea of brokenness.”<sup>5</sup>

The peace and unity of the Church modeled in the book of Ephesians is crucial to our witness. It is how God can say to the world, “Look, this is My Kingdom, this is My family, come join Me.” (paraphrase of **Ephesians 2:7**)

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<sup>4</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

<sup>5</sup> Williams, Michael James. *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens: A Guide to Christ-Focused Reading of Scripture*. Zondervan, 2012. Bible Gateway Plus

## ABOUT THIS STUDY GUIDE

In addition to our observation, interpretation, application, and reflection questions, we have two new sections in this study guide. See the descriptions below for how to utilize them in your group.

### Group Devotional Reading

Devotional reading is a great way to experience God's Word together. Before you begin your group discussion time, read the Ephesians passage for that week out loud. As someone slowly reads, have each member listen for a word or phrase that God highlights for them. Consider having one or two people share what God is highlighting. Spend a few minutes in prayerful thanksgiving.

### Memorization

Throughout the course of this Ephesians study, we, as a church, will be memorizing **Ephesians 4:1–4**. Memorization helps us on our sanctification journey as we seek to “hide God's word in our hearts” (**Psalms 119:11**). It is a way in which we can worship God and become more like Him. Each week will highlight a different memorization technique that you can use individually or as a group. Accountability for memorization is key. You may want to consider how your group members can support each other in this process and what check-ins could look like. You may also want to consider reading these passages out loud each week or utilizing the week's technique during group time, if applicable.

### Weekly Audio Response

Each week there will be an audio reflection to supplement the week's study. You'll hear a reading of the passage of Scripture being studied along with some reflection and prayer prompts. This can be used individually or as a group. You can access the audio reflection on the Life Group Resource page on the Salem Alliance Church website.

# Blessings of Peace

## Lesson 1

### Ephesians 1:1–23

#### Big Idea

God longs for us—the Church—to be at peace with each other. However, in order to experience that peace, we must have peace with God through the work of Jesus. In Paul's introduction to the Ephesians, he reiterates the blessings of peace we have through Jesus and the way they can manifest in our lives as believers. The spiritual blessings found in **Ephesians 1** can impact us both individually and together as a body of believers.

#### Group Devotional Reading

Before you begin your group discussion time, read the Ephesians passage below out loud. As someone slowly reads it, have each member listen for a word or phrase that God highlights for them. Consider having one or two people share what God is highlighting. Then, spend a few minutes in prayerful thanksgiving.

#### Read Ephesians 1:1–23

*<sup>1</sup> This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus.*

*I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>2</sup> May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.*

*<sup>3</sup> All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. <sup>4</sup> Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes.*

*<sup>5</sup> God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. <sup>6</sup> So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. <sup>7</sup> He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave*

our sins. <sup>8</sup> He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

<sup>9</sup> God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. <sup>10</sup> And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. <sup>11</sup> Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

<sup>12</sup> God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. <sup>13</sup> And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. <sup>14</sup> The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

<sup>15</sup> Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, <sup>17</sup> asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. <sup>18</sup> I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

<sup>19</sup> I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power <sup>20</sup> that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. <sup>21</sup> Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. <sup>22</sup> God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. <sup>23</sup> And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

# Questions

1. Use the following chart to work your way through **Ephesians 1**. Note the blessings we have been given as an inheritance<sup>1</sup> because we belong to Christ Jesus. Then, write out the implications they have in both your life and in the life of the Church. (There are cross references given to help you further understand the passages and their implications.)

Verse	Blessings	Cross references	Implications for your life	Implications for the Church—the body of Christ
1:2	Grace and peace	2 Peter 1:2 Romans 5:1–2		
1:3	United with Christ	Galatians 3:26–28 1 Corinthians 1:30; 12:12–13		

<sup>1</sup> “‘Inheritance’ language was a Christian way of talking about salvation [and all the blessings that come with it]—either in terms of God’s inheriting a people or the people’s receiving an inheritance from God.” Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus



<b>1:4</b>	God loved and chose us to be holy and without fault.	<b>Romans 8:29–30</b> <b>Colossians 1:22</b>		
<b>1:5</b>	God adopted us into His own family.	<b>John 1:12</b> <b>Romans 8:16–17</b>		
<b>1:6</b>	Glorious grace	<b>Romans 5:20–21</b> <b>Hebrews 4:15–16</b>		
<b>1:7</b>	Purchased our freedom and forgave our sins	<b>1 Peter 1:18–20</b> <b>Galatians 3:13–14</b>		

<b>1:8</b>	Kindness, wisdom, and	<b>1 Corinthians 1:24</b> <b>1 Corinthians 2:13</b> <b>Titus 3:4–6</b> <b>Psalm 117:2</b>		
<b>1:11</b>	United with Christ, given an inheritance, chosen in advance. <sup>2</sup>	<b>Romans 6:5–11;</b> <b>5:3–5;</b> <b>8:29–30</b>		
<b>1:13</b>	Saved by God, be- long to God, given Holy Spirit	<b>John 14:1–21;</b> <b>15:26–27</b>		

<sup>2</sup> In the NIV translation **Ephesians 1:11** says, “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will ...” Predestination or election is often a hard concept to grasp. “The key to understanding what Paul means by [the word ‘election’ or ‘predestined’] is the phrase ‘in Christ.’ ... [T]hose who would come to be ‘in him’ by faith find themselves among ‘the elect’ in the person of their redeemer. God, because of his great love, destined that those who believe ‘in Christ’ would be adopted as his sons and daughters. The concept of election and destining here is corporate. The concept here is explicitly developed from the story of Israel’s election: if someone was ‘in Israel,’ one was a part of God’s chosen people. Individual persons within Israel could opt out by means of apostasy, and others, even non-Israelites could be grafted in by faith in Israel’s God (see the story of Ruth). In **Ephesians 1:3–14**, these biblical concepts of election are focused on Christ...who can incorporate into himself those who trust in him. ... When Paul later speaks of how someone gets ‘into Christ’ he does not speak of God’s predestination, as though a person is programmed to be disposed towards faith. Rather, he says, ‘in Christ, when you heard the word of truth, the good news...you believed and were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise’ (**Ephesians 1:13**).” Witherington, Ben. *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*. Eerdmans, 2008. 233-35

<b>1:14</b>	Holy Spirit is the guarantee of purchase.	<b>2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5</b>		
<b>1:17</b>	Wisdom, insight, knowledge of God	<b>James 1:5 Romans 12:2</b>		
<b>1:18</b>	Light and hope	<b>Romans 5:1–5; 8:29–30 1 Peter 2:9</b>		

<b>1:19–20</b>	God’s resurrection power in us	<b>Romans 6:4–5; 8:11</b>		
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2. As you think about the personal implications you noted, how do/can these implications impact your life on a daily basis?

a. As you think about the implications of the blessings of peace, which include unity, hope, forgiveness, grace, etc., how do/can these impact the church (as a community) on a daily basis? (For example: I can find a community of people who share my hope for the future and together we can share that hope with others.)

b. What could it look like for you to share this inheritance and freedom in Christ with others so they can experience them as well?

3. If the Church has been given all of these things as an inheritance, and the Church can only be made full and complete in Christ (**1:23**), what are the practices we can put in place in order to continue to be filled with Christ, both individually and as a church?

## Reflection

4. Now that you have learned about these spiritual blessings you have in Christ, “whenever the world or the enemy tries to tell you that you don’t have what it takes, pull out [this chart] and remind your head and your heart that God has given you everything you need for this life and the next. In Him you are complete, lacking nothing. And this world cannot touch the inheritance we have in Him.”<sup>3</sup>

Spend some time with Jesus and listen for what He wants to say to you about your inheritance and His heart for you. Maybe one or two blessings from the chart made an impact. Pray those truths over yourself and write down your response to God and His love for you.

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<sup>3</sup>ACF “Who we are in Christ” Eight Week Reading Plan

## Memory Verse

Throughout the course of this Ephesians study, we, as a church, will be memorizing **Ephesians 4:1–4**. Each week will highlight a different memorization technique you can use individually or as a group. Accountability for memorization is key. You may want to consider how your group members can support each other in this process and what check-ins could look like. You may also want to consider reading these passages out loud each week or utilizing the week's technique during group time, if applicable.

### This week's technique: Write it

Write out the passage multiple times. You could use different colored pens, types of paper, or other elements to help with the memorization process. Place your written verses in places you will see throughout each day.

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*

*<sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

*<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. <sup>4</sup> For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.*

**Ephesians 4:1–4**

**PRAYER REQUESTS**

**SERMON NOTES**



# Peaceful Reconciliation

## Lesson 2

### Ephesians 2:1–21

#### Big Idea

Paul ended **Ephesians 1** with a prayer for spiritual wisdom for the Ephesians and other readers of this letter. After his prayer, Paul began to describe what it means to live in Christ. On the cross, Christ reconciled us to God, making us alive in Christ as well as reconciled to one another. “Christ ... has unified all believers in one family. His cross should be the focus of our unity.”<sup>1</sup> We can now live in peace with God and with each other.

#### Group Devotional Reading

Before you begin your group discussion time, read the Ephesians passage out loud. As you slowly read it, have each member listen for a word or phrase that God highlights for them. Consider having one or two share what God is highlighting. Spend a few minutes in prayerful thanksgiving.

#### Read Ephesians 2:1–21

*<sup>1</sup> Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. <sup>2</sup> You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. <sup>3</sup> All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.*

*<sup>4</sup> But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, <sup>5</sup> that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) <sup>6</sup> For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>7</sup> So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us,*

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<sup>1</sup> *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2016. 2002

as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. <sup>9</sup> Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

<sup>11</sup> Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. <sup>12</sup> In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. <sup>13</sup> But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in his own body on the cross, he broke down the wall of hostility that separated us. <sup>15</sup> He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new people from the two groups. <sup>16</sup> Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

<sup>17</sup> He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. <sup>18</sup> Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

<sup>19</sup> So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. <sup>20</sup> Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. <sup>21</sup> We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord.

<sup>22</sup> Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

## Questions

1. Paul started **chapter 2** by contrasting how we used to be with who we are now. How did Paul describe how we used to be? **(2:1–3)**
  - a. How did Paul describe the devil and his influence, and what are the spiritual implications of this description? **(2:2)**
  - b. What was the consequence of our sinful nature? **(2:3)**
2. What did God do instead of subjecting us to His anger? **(2:5–6)**
  - a. Why did He do this? **(2:4)**
  - b. What is the result? **(2:7)**

3. One way to further understand the ideas in **Ephesians 2:7** is this: “It’s as if someone asked God, ‘How can I be sure you’re as loving and gracious as you say you are?’ His response is simply to display the church—flawed, sinful, capable of stupidity and faithlessness—as Exhibit A, demonstrating his infinite patience and mercy. How else would a group of such obviously fallen men and women get together and do anything for the glory of God? Who else but God would use people like us? You are a display case for the grace of God.”<sup>2</sup>
- a. In what ways do you experience the grace and kindness of God?

b. How do you, personally, demonstrate His grace and great kindness to others?

c. How is the church today demonstrating His grace and kindness as well as His love?

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<sup>2</sup> Barton, Bruce B., and Philip Wesley Comfort. *Ephesians*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. 45

4. What more do we learn about salvation from **Ephesians 2:8–9**?

How do the following verses help to solidify this truth?  
Underline or write your thoughts.

a. **Romans 11:6**

*<sup>6</sup> And since it is through God's kindness, then it is not by their good works. For in that case, God's grace would not be what it really is—free and undeserved.*

b. **2 Timothy 1:9**

*<sup>9</sup> For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus.*

c. **Titus 3:4–7**

*<sup>4</sup> But—When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. <sup>6</sup> He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. <sup>7</sup> Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.*

5. There is some tension in the truth that we have been saved by grace and yet our faith is lived out or demonstrated by our good works. In fact, **Ephesians 2:10** states that we are a masterpiece because we point to God when we do the good things He planned for us. Another author explains it this way: “Grace is not opposed to effort, it is opposed to earning. Earning is an attitude. Effort is an action.”<sup>3</sup> How do you explain holding these two things together?

- a. In what way does **James 2:14–18** help further explain the interaction between faith and works?

*<sup>14</sup> What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone? <sup>15</sup> Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, <sup>16</sup> and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do? <sup>17</sup> So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless. <sup>18</sup> Now someone may argue, “Some people have faith; others have good deeds.” But I say, “How can you show me your faith if you don't have good deeds? I will show you my faith by my good deeds.”*

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<sup>3</sup> Willard, Dallas. *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus's Essential Teachings on Discipleship*. HarperOne, 2014.

- b. How does the interaction of faith and works affect the way you live?
  - c. How does the interaction of faith and works impact your witness to those around you?
- 6. Paul spent the rest of **Ephesians 2** proving that both Gentiles and Jews were separated from God and in need of a Rescuer (**2:11–22**).<sup>4</sup> Jesus is that Savior and Healer; He is the one who rescues. From the following verses, note what Christ's work on the cross accomplished:
  - a. **Ephesians 2:13**
  - b. **Ephesians 2:14**
  - c. **Ephesians 2:15**

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<sup>4</sup> "Pious Jews considered all non-Jews (Gentiles) ceremonially unclean... Paul pointed out that Jews and Gentiles alike were unclean before God." *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2016, 2002

d. **Ephesians 2:16**

e. **Ephesians 2:17**

f. **Ephesians 2:18**

7. We must be careful about reading Paul's letter to the Ephesians as purely individualistic. While this reconciliation brings each of us into relationship with God, it also brings reconciliation with each other as all of us are one family in Christ.  
How do you see this unity described in **verses 19–22**?

## Reflection

8. "Christ has destroyed the barriers people build between themselves. Because these walls have been removed, we can have real unity with people who are not like us."<sup>5</sup> As we have unity and reconciliation with one another, breaking down the wall of hostility, even across denominations and churches, we show the grace and kindness of Jesus to the world.  
How might this statement impact the way you pursue unity<sup>6</sup> with others in the Body of Christ, the Church?

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<sup>5</sup> *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2016. 2002

<sup>6</sup> Unity does not mean uniformity. As we all follow Jesus, we can have diversity within our unity.



9. How does the following quote affect the way you share Jesus with others?  
“The Church will realize her unity only when she realizes that she does not exist to propagate the point of view of any body of [people], but to provide a home where the Spirit of Christ can dwell...”<sup>7</sup>
10. “Before Christ’s coming, Gentiles and Jews kept apart from one another. Jews considered Gentiles beyond God’s saving power and therefore without hope.”<sup>8</sup> However, because of the reconciliation Christ accomplished on the cross, everyone has access to Jesus and no one is excluded from the Good News of the Gospel.
- a. Today, who in the world might have limited access?
  - b. Who in your city or your life might have limited access?
  - c. What is one way you can share that access with them?

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<sup>7</sup> Barclay, William. *The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2017. 118

<sup>8</sup> *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2016. 2002

## Memory Verse

Throughout the course of this Ephesians study, we, as a church, will be memorizing **Ephesians 4:1–4**. Each week will highlight a different memorization technique you can use individually or as a group.

### **This week's technique: Read it out loud**

Set aside a couple times each day to read the passage out loud. It may be easiest to do this at mealtimes and make it a routine throughout the week.

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*

*<sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

*<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. <sup>4</sup> For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.*

**Ephesians 4:1–4**

**PRAYER REQUESTS**

**SERMON NOTES**

# Family of Peace

## Lesson 3

### Ephesians 3:1–21

#### Big Idea

We, the Church, are God's family—united in Him through Christ. However, just like the early church, we don't always act united. The Jewish population did not appreciate that Paul was preaching to the Gentiles and inviting them into God's family. Yet, Paul made it very clear that God's plan includes all; no one is left out! We all get to be a part of God's family, and therefore, we are called to be a people of peace and unity. As God's peaceful family, we can love each other because of God's great love for us.

#### Group Devotional Reading

Before you begin your group discussion time, read the Ephesians passage out loud. As someone slowly reads it, have each member listen for a word or phrase that God highlights for them. Consider having one or two share what God is highlighting. Spend a few minutes in prayerful thanksgiving.

#### Read Ephesians 3:1–21

*<sup>1</sup> When I think of all this, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for the benefit of you Gentiles . . . <sup>2</sup> assuming, by the way, that you know God gave me the special responsibility of extending his grace to you Gentiles. <sup>3</sup> As I briefly wrote earlier, God himself revealed his mysterious plan to me. <sup>4</sup> As you read what I have written, you will understand my insight into this plan regarding Christ. <sup>5</sup> God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now by his Spirit he has revealed it to his holy apostles and prophets.*

*<sup>6</sup> And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>7</sup> By God's grace and mighty power, I have been given the privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.*

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<sup>1</sup> Paul breaks off his sentence in **verse 1**, only to resume his original thought in **verse 14**. The following section of **verses 2–13** is therefore a digression. S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary*. Lexham Press, 2015. 222

<sup>8</sup> Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. <sup>9</sup> I was chosen to explain to everyone this mysterious plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

<sup>10</sup> God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was his eternal plan, which he carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

<sup>12</sup> Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come boldly and confidently into God's presence. <sup>13</sup> So please don't lose heart because of my trials here. I am suffering for you, so you should feel honored.

<sup>14</sup> When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, <sup>15</sup> the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. <sup>16</sup> I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. <sup>17</sup> Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.

<sup>18</sup> And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. <sup>19</sup> May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

<sup>20</sup> Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. <sup>21</sup> Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

## Questions

1. In **Ephesians 3:1–4**, Paul revealed that he was in prison because of the Gentiles<sup>2</sup> and reiterated that God had revealed His mysterious plan.<sup>3</sup> Using **verses 6–7**, how would you describe God's plan?<sup>4</sup>

- a. While it may be hard for us to understand the animosity between Jews and Gentiles, we can relate to the fact that there are people with whom we struggle to connect or welcome. There may even be people we just don't like very much. Yet, every person who comes to know Christ as their Savior is a child of God and part of the same family.

What groups of people, types of people, or perhaps specific person do you struggle to invite into God's family and the church?

- b. How can your group help support you as you continue your journey of peace<sup>5</sup> and unity with others?

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<sup>2</sup> See **Acts 21:15–36** for the story of Paul's arrest. "The only reason why Paul was in prison was because he thought Gentiles had the same access to God that Jews did. If he had been content to be a Jewish Christian with a mission to Jews or if he had been willing to keep Gentiles on a lower plane, he would not have been in jail." Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

<sup>3</sup> The Greek word for "mystery" is *mysterion*. "Mysterion occurs twenty-one times in the Pauline letters, six times in Ephesians (**1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19**). ... This term does not refer to something unknown. Rather, in a [Jewish] context it refers to what is known only because God revealed it. More specifically here, it refers to the revelation that the Gentiles are included in Christ as equals." Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> "The primary emphasis of the revelation is the "with-ness" of the Gentiles, which is emphasized in the Greek text by alliteration (**3:6**: *synkleronoma kai syssoma kai symmetocha*—"heirs together, members together of one body, and sharers together"). The promises were formerly made to Israel, but now Gentiles are 'heirs together with' the Jewish Christians and receive a full share of all benefits." Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> This verse may be helpful as you consider your role in living in peace and unity: "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*" **Romans 12:18**

2. How does Paul describe God's purpose for the Church?<sup>6</sup>  
(3:10–11)

While this isn't God's only purpose for the Church, how have you seen the Church fulfill the role of displaying God's wisdom to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms?<sup>7</sup>

3. What is one of the outcomes of our faith revealed in **verse 12**?

a. What does it look like practically for you to come boldly and confidently into God's presence?<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> "**Ephesians 3:10** assigns a lofty and cosmic role to the church. It is the channel by which God's wisdom is demonstrated 'to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.' As before, 'heavenly realms' points not so much to a place as to a spiritual reality, the reality beyond what we see." Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

<sup>7</sup> **Hebrews 13:1–2** says, "Keep on loving each other as brothers and sisters. Don't forget to show hospitality to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!"

<sup>8</sup> We were given access through Jesus' work on the cross and this was visibly demonstrated when the veil in the temple was torn from the top to bottom. (See **Matthew 27:51**)



- b. How can you help others understand and live in the truth of this reality?

4. **Ephesians 3:14–15** in the NIV says, “*For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*” This is “most likely an attempt to be as inclusive as possible to emphasize the cosmic scope of God’s reign and purposes.”<sup>9</sup> How does this wording help emphasize peace and God’s heart for His family?

5. What do you think it means to be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God? (**3:19**)

- a. How is being made complete connected to knowing God’s love? (**3:16–19**)

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<sup>9</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

- b. What do these concepts look like for you, personally, and as a church?

- 6. “The family of God includes all who have believed in him in the past, all who believe in the present, and all who will believe in the future. We are all a family because we have the same Father. He is the source of all creation, the rightful owner of everything. God promises his love and power to his family, the church (**3:16–21**). If we want to receive God’s blessings, it is important that we stay in contact with other believers in the body of Christ. Those who isolate themselves from God’s family and try to go it alone cut themselves off from God’s power.”<sup>10</sup>
  - a. How have you found community to be important?

- b. How has community impacted your relationship with God?

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<sup>10</sup> *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2016. 2004

7. Paul connects God's power and love with the church and how He receives glory. What are the implications of this for us as a church today? (**Ephesians 3:20–21**)

## **Reflection**

8. God's love is what brings us unity and peace (**Ephesians 3:18–19**). How have you experienced God's love bringing peace?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. What does being a part of God's peaceful family mean to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. How does the Church maintaining peace and unity—when we aren't a uniform, one-size-fits-all family—allow us to be a witness to those who don't yet know Christ?

## Memory Verse

Throughout the course of this Ephesians study, we, as a church, will be memorizing **Ephesians 4:1–4**. Each week will highlight a different memorization technique you can use individually or as a group.

### **This week's technique: Draw or color it**

Even if you are not an artist, this technique can be a meaningful exercise to help your brain internalize the message of this passage. Think about what images come to mind when you read the passage. Consider doodling, drawing, painting, coloring, or crafting those images as best as you are able.

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*

*<sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

*<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. <sup>4</sup> For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.*

If you would like, you could use the picture on the following page to color as you meditate on and recite the passage.



**PRAYER REQUESTS**

**SERMON NOTES**

# God's Peacefully United People

## Lesson 4

### Ephesians 4:1–16

#### Big Idea

Paul wrapped up his discourse on the theology of peace, love, and unity at the end of **chapter 3**. In **Ephesians 4:1–16**, he transitioned into how to live out that theology. Paul begged God's people to maintain the unity that comes from the Spirit and reflects on the gifts Christ has given to the Church to help them do so.<sup>1</sup>

#### Group Devotional Reading

Before you begin your group discussion time, read the Ephesians passage out loud. As someone slowly reads it, have each member listen for a word or phrase that God highlights for them. Consider having one or two share what God is highlighting. Spend a few minutes in prayerful thanksgiving.

#### Read Ephesians 4:1–16

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. <sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. <sup>4</sup> For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.*

*<sup>5</sup> There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism,*

*<sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all,  
who is over all, in all, and living through all.*

*<sup>7</sup> However, he has given each one of us a special gift through the generosity of Christ. <sup>8</sup> That is why the Scriptures say,*

*“When he ascended to the heights,  
he led a crowd of captives  
and gave gifts to his people.”*

*<sup>9</sup> Notice that it says “he ascended.” This clearly means that Christ also descended to our lowly world. <sup>10</sup> And the same*

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<sup>1</sup> Fee, Gordon D., and Douglas K. Stuart. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. Zondervan, 2014. 351



*one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself.*

*<sup>11</sup> Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. <sup>12</sup> Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. <sup>13</sup> This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.*

*<sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. <sup>15</sup> Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. <sup>16</sup> He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

## **Questions**

1. **Ephesians 4** opens with the passage we have been memorizing (**4:1–4**). In this passage, “Paul challenges us to live lives worthy of the calling we have received—the awesome privilege of being called Christ’s very own.”<sup>2</sup> How do you define each of the characteristics Pauls describes in **Ephesians 4:2–3**?

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<sup>2</sup> *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2016. 2004

a. How do you see Christ exemplify these characteristics?  
(You can use specific verses, Jesus' interactions with others, or parables, etc.)

b. Where do you see them in the Church today?

2. **Ephesians 4:4–6** explains what makes Christians peacefully united. Do these truths help you, personally, remain at peace with others? Why or why not?

How can they help when the body of Christ, as a whole, experiences division? Feel free to brainstorm with your group.

3. In **Ephesians 4:7**, what is given, to whom is it given, and how is it given?

a. **Ephesians 4:8–10** quotes **Psalms 68:18** and talks about David bringing the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. “In the psalm, the victory is over David’s foes. In Paul’s reference, Christ, the Son of David, is triumphant in destroying his foe Satan. In the psalm, the conqueror received gifts and, as was the custom, distributes a portion of the spoils to his people.” Christ’s victory gives Him the authority to distribute these gifts to all His people.<sup>3</sup> What were the gifts Christ gave? **(4:11)**

b. What was/is the purpose of these gifts?<sup>5</sup> **(4:12)**

c. In what ways have you personally seen these gifts be used to build up the Church, the body of Christ?

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<sup>3</sup> Barton, Bruce B., and Philip Wesley Comfort. *Ephesians*. Tyndale House Publishers, 1996. 80

<sup>4</sup> “Paul’s concern for unity is balanced by an emphasis on diversity and the responsibility of each person...That is, unity does not mean that individuality and individual responsibility are lost. Unity reigns, but Christ does not work merely at the universal level. He works in the individual and gives grace to each person.” Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

<sup>5</sup> “The aim of the ministries mentioned in **verse 11** is now disclosed: to equip all God’s people for service. ‘To prepare’ is ‘to put right.’ In the New Testament this verb is used for the mending of nets (**Matthew 4:21**) and the restoration of the lapsed (**Galatians 6:1**).” Barker, Kenneth L., et al. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Zondervan, 2004. Bible Gateway Plus

4. What is the outcome of using these gifts? (4:13, 15–16)

What happens when we don't use our gifts to build up the body of Christ? (4:14)

## Reflection

5. "While it is true that each believer needs to attain spiritual maturity, there must be corporate spiritual maturation as well. Why? Because a community that is growing spiritually fosters individual spiritual growth, even as an individual who matures in spiritual thinking and living inspires similar development in the community. [Spiritual maturity is] realized in relationship, not in isolation. The fullness of the body is attained in the spiritual growth of the members who constitute it."<sup>6</sup>

a. Do you think we can grow in spiritual maturity alone?  
Why or why not?

b. What effect(s) do you see community having on your spiritual maturity?

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<sup>6</sup> Carpenter, Eugene E., and Wayne McCown. *Asbury Bible Commentary*. Zondervan Pub. House, 1992. Bible Gateway Plus

6. How are you currently growing in spiritual maturity? What does that look like lived out in your daily life?

a. In what ways are you serving the church so that God's people can grow in unity and spiritual maturity?

b. People look to God's family to understand who He is. How can our peace, unity, and spiritual maturity help people who are exploring or investigating who Jesus is?

7. As you have been committing **Ephesians 4:1–4** to memory, what are some of the things God has been teaching you through this passage?

Now that you have some more context for the passage you are memorizing, does it change the way you view the verses and their impact on your heart and mind? If so, how?

## Memory Verse

Throughout the course of this Ephesians study, we, as a church, will be memorizing **Ephesians 4:1–4**. Each week will highlight a different memorization technique you can use individually or as a group.

### **This week's technique: Listen to it**

Much like the reading it out loud technique, this is most effective if you are able to implement it multiple times a day. You can find recordings of multiple versions online.

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*

*<sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

*<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. <sup>4</sup> For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.*

**Ephesians 4:1–4**

**PRAYER REQUESTS**



**SERMON NOTES**

# Peace through Renewed Living

## Lesson 5

### Ephesians 4:17–5:14

#### Big Idea

We, as followers of Christ, have been given instructions for how to live a renewed life in response to the grace we have been given.<sup>1</sup> There are things we do and things we resist, all to give glory to God. In **Ephesians 4:17–5:14**, Paul is giving the church of Ephesus instructions to turn away from the life of sin that the non-believing Gentiles were living and commit themselves to a renewed and righteous life. This section of Ephesians is the climax of the letter,<sup>2</sup> calling upon the audience to make decisions to demonstrate their faith through renewed living, which brings peace. These instructions, given to the Ephesians, are still applicable for us today as we live out our faith in peace and unity.

#### Group Devotional Reading

Before you begin your group discussion time, read the Ephesians passage out loud. As someone slowly reads it, have each member listen for a word or phrase that God highlights for them. Consider having one or two share what God is highlighting. Spend a few minutes in prayerful thanksgiving.

#### Read Ephesians 4:17–5:14

*<sup>17</sup> With the Lord's authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. <sup>18</sup> Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. <sup>19</sup> They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.*

*<sup>20</sup> But that isn't what you learned about Christ. <sup>21</sup> Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, <sup>22</sup> throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. <sup>23</sup> Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.*

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17

<sup>2</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

*<sup>24</sup> Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.*

*<sup>25</sup> So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. <sup>26</sup> And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> for anger gives a foothold to the devil.*

*<sup>28</sup> If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. <sup>29</sup> Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.*

*<sup>30</sup> And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.*

*<sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. <sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

*<sup>5:1</sup> Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. <sup>2</sup> Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.*

*<sup>3</sup> Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God’s people. <sup>4</sup> Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. <sup>5</sup> You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.*

*<sup>6</sup> Don’t be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him. <sup>7</sup> Don’t participate in the things these people do. <sup>8</sup> For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! <sup>9</sup> For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.*

*<sup>10</sup> Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. <sup>12</sup> It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, <sup>14</sup> for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said,*

*“Awake, O sleeper,  
rise up from the dead,  
and Christ will give you light.”*

## Questions

1. In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul described the theology behind our united, peaceful family of God. Now, Paul’s words to the church at Ephesus reveal how God desires His people to live righteously in Holy Spirit’s power. It is through the Spirit that we are able to throw off our old nature and put on our new nature. There are many keywords and concepts in this passage that describe what it looks like to live a renewed and righteous life. The following exercise helps to identify what this renewed life does and does not look like.
  - a. Read through the passage again below and underline what renewed living looks like. See footnote for a few of the keywords Paul used.<sup>3</sup>
  - b. Read it through another time and circle what renewed living does not look like. See footnote for a few of the keywords Paul used.<sup>4</sup>

*<sup>17</sup> With the Lord’s authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused. <sup>18</sup> Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him. <sup>19</sup> They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind of impurity.*

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<sup>3</sup> Light: **Ephesians 5:8, 9, 13, 14**

Truth: **Ephesians 4:21, 25; 5:9**

Love: **Ephesians 5:2**

Forgive: **Ephesians 4:31**

Generously: **Ephesians 4:28**

Helpful: **Ephesians 4:29**

Encouragement: **Ephesians 4:29**

New Nature: **Ephesians 4:24**

<sup>4</sup> Darkness: **Ephesians 4:18; 5:8**

Anger/Angry: **Ephesians 4:26, 27, 31**

Abusive Language: **Ephesians 4:29, 31; 5:4**

Impurity/Impure/Lust/Sexual Immorality: **Ephesians 4:19, 22; 5:3, 5**

Sin/Sinful Nature/Evil Deeds/Evil Behavior: **Ephesians 4:22, 26, 31; 5:3, 11**

<sup>20</sup> But that isn't what you learned about Christ. <sup>21</sup> Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, <sup>22</sup> throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. <sup>23</sup> Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. <sup>24</sup> Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

<sup>25</sup> So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body. <sup>26</sup> And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

<sup>28</sup> If you are a thief, quit stealing. Instead, use your hands for good hard work, and then give generously to others in need. <sup>29</sup> Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

<sup>30</sup> And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

<sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. <sup>32</sup> Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

<sup>5:1</sup> Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. <sup>2</sup> Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

<sup>3</sup> *Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people.* <sup>4</sup> *Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God.* <sup>5</sup> *You can be sure that no immoral, impure, or greedy person will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world.*

<sup>6</sup> *Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the anger of God will fall on all who disobey him.* <sup>7</sup> *Don't participate in the things these people do.* <sup>8</sup> *For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!* <sup>9</sup> *For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.*

<sup>10</sup> *Carefully determine what pleases the Lord.* <sup>11</sup> *Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them.* <sup>12</sup> *It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret.* <sup>13</sup> *But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them,* <sup>14</sup> *for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said,*

*"Awake, O sleeper,  
rise up from the dead,  
and Christ will give you light."*

2. Doing a word/concept study like this is a good way of diving deeper into a passage. It can open your eyes to themes you hadn't seen before or even make a complex passage more understandable. In your own words, describe or summarize what a renewed life looks like.

a. What concepts are difficult for you?

b. What concepts are easier for you?

c. In what ways do you see the Church, the body of Christ, living out this renewed and righteous life, and what does that communicate to our world?

3. Paul's intention for his instructions were not simply to give a strict law that one should measure up to. Instead, his instructions were meant to bring about a fundamental change in the hearts and minds of the Ephesians.<sup>5</sup> How does Paul describe this in **Ephesians 4:23–24**?

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<sup>5</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

How can these instructions help to change your heart and mind?

4. How does **Ephesians 5:1–2** sum up the renewed life?

- a. “On the cross, Christ presented himself to God as an offering; Paul adds that it was ‘fragrant’—a phrase that occurs in a sacrificial context over forty times in the Pentateuch. This metaphor suggests that our Lord’s self-sacrifice was pleasing to his Father and was thus accepted as a means of reconciliation.”<sup>6</sup> Because we are called to imitate Christ, our lives can also be a pleasing aroma to God.<sup>7</sup> How does this reality influence the way you read “do’s” and “don’ts,” not only in this passage, but in the rest of Scripture as well?
  
- b. As you think about your life as a pleasing aroma, what thoughts, emotions, and/or images does that bring up for you as you reflect on your life in Christ?

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<sup>6</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

<sup>7</sup> **2 Corinthians 2:15**



## Reflection

5. These instructions are an invitation to live a life that reflects Christ more and more fully. They came from God Himself. They are meant for us to follow, yet without Holy Spirit, we always fall short. We need to rely on Christ within us to help us live out these things. As we allow God to change our hearts and minds, we move from living in darkness to living in the light.  
How can living a renewed life encourage peace within yourself?

- a. How can living a renewed life encourage peace with others?
- b. How can living a renewed life be a witness to those who don't yet know God?

## Memory Verse

Throughout the course of this Ephesians study, we, as a church, will be memorizing **Ephesians 4:1–4**. Each week will highlight a different memorization technique you can use individually or as a group.

### This week's technique: First letter

Write down the first letter of each word in these verses and put it in multiple places throughout your house or where you will see it regularly. Try to remember what each letter stands for. You may start by having to look at the verse from time to time. But hopefully by the end of the week, you can say it just by using the first letter as a reminder.

TIAPFSTLBYTLALWOYCFYHBCBGABHAGB  
PWEOMAFEOFBOYLMEETKYUITSBYTWP  
FTIOBAOSJAYHBCTOGHFTF

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*

*<sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

*<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. <sup>4</sup> For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.*

**Ephesians 4:1–4**

**PRAYER REQUESTS**

## SERMON NOTES

# Peaceful Relationships

## Lesson 6

### Ephesians 5:15–6:9

#### Big Idea

Paul continued his Spirit-filled life theme by moving from an individual focus on holy living into the practical implications for relationships in the household (5:18).<sup>1</sup> **Ephesians 5:21** instructs all Christians to “*submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*”<sup>2</sup> The next twenty-one verses explore how these relationships are to flourish within the idea of mutual submission. In doing so, Paul teaches the Ephesians that submission to Christ contributes to the believer’s new life in Christ because it honors Him and benefits those who participate in it.

#### Group Devotional Reading

Before you begin your group discussion time, read the Ephesians passage out loud. As someone slowly reads it, have each member listen for a word or phrase that God highlights for them. Consider having one or two share what God is highlighting. Spend a few minutes in prayerful thanksgiving.

#### Read Ephesians 5:15–6:9

<sup>15</sup> *So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise.* <sup>16</sup> *Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days.* <sup>17</sup> *Don’t act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do.* <sup>18</sup> *Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit,* <sup>19</sup> *singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among*

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<sup>1</sup> In **Ephesians 5:18** the author gives the command to be filled by Holy Spirit. In **5:19–21** there follows five participles: (1) speaking; (2) singing; (3) making music; (4) giving thanks; (5) submitting. Participles in Greek are verbal adjectives that can be interpreted in numerous ways. In this passage the five participles could either be interpreted as: (1) the means by which one is filled by the Spirit (e.g., filled with the Holy Spirit by means of ...); (2) the result of being filled by the Spirit (the result of being filled with the Holy Spirit is ...). The context and grammar tends to support the latter option. In other words, submission to one another is a **result** of being filled by Holy Spirit. *The Holy Bible: NET*. Thomas Nelson, 2019. See ExSyn 639.

<sup>2</sup> “Having spoken to all believers in **5:21**, Paul now turns to the wives in the congregation. In many English Bibles, this verse is introduced with a new subheading as though it begins a new section. In the Greek text, however, there is no conjunction indicating a new topic. The absence of a conjunction is quite unusual for Paul, as he almost always uses a conjunction if he was introducing a new thought... Thus, Paul does not begin a new topic so much as continue to reflect on the makeup of the church.” Cohick, Lynn H. *The Letter to the Ephesians*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020.

*yourselves, and making music to the Lord in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> And give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*<sup>21</sup> And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

*<sup>22</sup> For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. <sup>24</sup> As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.*

*<sup>25</sup> For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. <sup>27</sup> He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. <sup>28</sup> In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. <sup>29</sup> No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it, just as Christ cares for the church. <sup>30</sup> And we are members of his body.*

*<sup>31</sup> As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."*

*<sup>32</sup> This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. <sup>33</sup> So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

*<sup>6:1</sup> Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. <sup>2</sup> "Honor your father and mother." This is the first commandment with a promise: <sup>3</sup> If you honor your father and mother, "things will go well for you, and you will have a long life on the earth."*

*<sup>4</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction that comes from the Lord.*

*<sup>5</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. <sup>6</sup> Try to please them all the time, not just when they are watching you. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart.*

*<sup>7</sup> Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. <sup>8</sup> Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.*

<sup>9</sup> *Masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.*

## Questions

1. How does Paul explain the Spirit-filled life? (5:15–20)
2. Have you ever experienced the filling of Holy Spirit? If yes, describe that experience.
3. In **verse 21**, Paul continued his description of the Spirit-filled life when he said, “And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” He explained this mutual submission<sup>3</sup> using household relationships as his examples.<sup>4</sup> Our relationships in our homes and in our churches should look different than the culture around us because we are spirit-filled Christ followers.  
How have you traditionally defined submission? In what ways can submission be both positive and negative?

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<sup>3</sup> While one of the only times the word “submit” is used in this passage, it is referring to wives, **verse 21** introduces the whole passage as a way to submit to one another. This truth and understanding of mutual submission can frame how we read the instruction in this passage.

<sup>4</sup> His use of the slave and master relationship can be problematic for many readers today. Traditionally, this word is translated as “servant,” and does not necessarily mean slavery as we understand it in American culture. This term is not necessarily race-bound but rather economically driven. “The most accurate translation is “bondservant” (sometimes found in the ASV for δοῦλος), in that it often indicates one who sells himself into slavery to another.” *The Holy Bible: NET*. Thomas Nelson, 2019





4. “Although it was assumed that husbands should love their wives, ancient household codes typically told husbands not to love their wives but to rule them. Although Paul upholds the ancient ideal of wifely submission, he qualifies it by placing it in the context of mutual submission: husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church.”<sup>6</sup> Looking at **Ephesians 5:22–33** as it relates to the mutual submission of husbands and wives, what do you believe was Paul’s intention in these verses?<sup>7</sup>

a. How do the instructions of love<sup>8</sup> and submission relate to each other in **Ephesians 5:28–30**?

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<sup>6</sup> Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. IVP Academic, 2014. 552

<sup>7</sup> “The debate has intensified in recent years over the meaning of *kephale*, the Greek word for ‘head’ [as found in **Ephesians 5:23**]. Many have assumed that *kephale* means ‘boss,’ ‘person in charge,’ or ‘leader,’ since the word has those metaphorical meanings in English. And the Hebrew word for ‘head’ (ro’sh) is often used metaphorically in the Old Testament for tribal leaders or other persons in authority. The problem is that this metaphorical meaning is not common in Greek. ... [Additionally,] the argument for ‘source’ as the meaning of *kephale* is not convincing. Although it may mean this in a few extracanonical texts, it is rare. Furthermore, ‘source’ does not fit well in most of the Pauline texts. ... **Ephesians 5:23** does not focus on authority, but on the self-giving love of both Christ and the husband. ‘Head’ in this context suggests ‘responsibility for.’ The husband has a leadership role, though not in order to boss his wife or use his position as privilege. Just as Jesus redefined greatness as being a servant (**Matthew 20:26–27**), Paul redefines being head as having responsibility to love, to give oneself, and to nurture. A priority is placed on the husband, but, contrary to ancient society, it is for the benefit of the wife. The activity of both wife and husband is based in their relation to Christ and in his giving himself for the church.” Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

<sup>8</sup> “Exhortation to husbands to love their wives is unique. It is not found in the Old Testament, rabbinic literature or in the household codes of the Greco-Roman era. Although the hierarchical model of the home is maintained, it is ameliorated by this revolutionary exhortation that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church.” Hoehner, Harold W. *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*. Baker Academic, 2009.

- b. If you are comfortable, answer the following question: In what ways can marriage and mutual submission provide an opportunity for spiritual growth?

5. Paul's focus moved from husbands and wives to parents and children. What is the role of a child in relationship to the parents? **(6:1–3)**

- a. How are parents<sup>9</sup> supposed to treat their children? **(6:4)**

- b. What are some of the ways a child can honor their parents?

- c. What are some of the ways parents can honor their child(ren)? **(6:4)**

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<sup>9</sup> Though the verse only mentions fathers, the principle is for both parents.

- d. Why is it important for Spirit-filled children and parents to have a healthy relationship, especially as we live in a broken world?<sup>10</sup>

6. Slaves and slavery in the first century was not the same as the slavery that occurred in America from its colonization until 1865. It did not necessarily have a cultural or racial prejudice connected to it. In today's context, this passage often gets modernized to the relationship between employer and employee or government official and citizen. Yet, this isn't the context in which Paul was writing. "Slaves played a significant part in this society. There were several million of them in the Roman Empire at this time. Because many slaves and owners had become Christians, the early church had to deal straightforwardly with the question of master/slave relations. Paul's statement neither condemns nor condones slavery. Instead, it tells masters and slaves how to live together in Christian households. In Paul's day, women, children, and slaves had few rights. In the church, however, they had freedoms that society denied them."<sup>11</sup> How might these instructions have affected the relationships between first century masters and slaves?

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<sup>10</sup> There are some instances where appropriate boundaries between parents and children are important to uphold.

<sup>11</sup> *Life Application Study Bible: New Living Translation*. Tyndale House Publishers, 2016. 2010

## Reflection

7. Keeping in mind the truth that mutual submission is a voluntary, Spirit-filled act of worship, what relationship(s) in your life reflect this mutual submission well?
  - a. What relationship(s) could improve by practicing mutual submission?
  - b. What role could you play in helping those relationships improve? (Keeping in mind it takes both parties' participation in order to make lasting changes.)
  - c. How might practicing mutual submission impact your witness to unbelievers?

## Memory Verse

Throughout the course of this Ephesians study, we, as a church, will be memorizing **Ephesians 4:1–4**. Each week will highlight a different memorization technique you can use individually or as a group.

### **This week's technique: Put it to music**

If you are musically inclined, you may want to make up a little jingle to put the words to and sing throughout the week. If you are not musically inclined, find an instrumental song that you are familiar with and try to put the words to the rise and fall of the music and sing throughout the week.

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.*

*<sup>2</sup> Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.*

*<sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. <sup>4</sup> For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.*

**Ephesians 4:1–4**

**PRAYER REQUESTS**

**SERMON NOTES**

# God's Peaceful Army

## Lesson 7

### Ephesians 6:10–24

#### Big Idea

Paul closes his letter to the Ephesians by exhorting them to put on God's armor. Battle imagery in a letter about peace may seem ironic, but it's not a call to war; it's a call to prepare, to engage, and to bring peace. We are an army united for a purpose. We don't fight with swords, guns, or cannons; we "fight" by standing firm against evil and the evil one. We "fight" with peace, love, and grace. We "fight" with prayer. We "fight" hand in hand with each other as one unified, peaceful army of God.

#### Group Devotional Reading

Before you begin your group discussion time, read the Ephesians passage out loud. As someone slowly reads it, have each member listen for a word or phrase that God highlights for them. Consider having one or two share what God is highlighting. Spend a few minutes in prayerful thanksgiving.

#### Read Ephesians 6:10–24

*<sup>10</sup> A final word: Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. <sup>12</sup> For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.*

*<sup>13</sup> Therefore, put on every piece of God's armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. <sup>14</sup> Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. <sup>15</sup> For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News so that you will be fully prepared. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil. <sup>17</sup> Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.*

*<sup>18</sup> Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers*



everywhere.

<sup>19</sup> And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. <sup>20</sup> I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

<sup>21</sup> To bring you up to date, Tychicus will give you a full report about what I am doing and how I am getting along. He is a beloved brother and faithful helper in the Lord's work. <sup>22</sup> I have sent him to you for this very purpose—to let you know how we are doing and to encourage you.

<sup>23</sup> Peace be with you, dear brothers and sisters, and may God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you love with faithfulness. <sup>24</sup> May God's grace be eternally upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Questions

1. From **Ephesians 6:14–17** fill in the armor of God below:<sup>1</sup>

Belt of \_\_\_\_\_

Body Armor of \_\_\_\_\_

Shoes of \_\_\_\_\_ that comes from the \_\_\_\_\_, so that you will be \_\_\_\_\_

Shield of \_\_\_\_\_ to stop the \_\_\_\_\_

Helmet of \_\_\_\_\_

Sword of \_\_\_\_\_, which is \_\_\_\_\_

a. Which piece of the armor of God is the easiest for you to put on? Why?

b. Which is the most challenging? Why?

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<sup>1</sup> The idea of putting on these pieces of armor is not a new concept. In fact it's found in multiple places in the Old Testament. See **Isaiah 11:5; 52:7; 59:17**.

2. Who are we fighting against? Who are we not fighting against? (**6:12**)

a. Why do you think it is significant that Paul mentions who we are not fighting against?<sup>2</sup>

b. What are the implications of this statement for us?

3. What are the results of putting on the full armor of God? (**6:11, 13**)

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<sup>2</sup> “Since **verse 12** explains standing “against the devil’s schemes” in **verse 11**, Paul was surely not thinking about structures of evil such as government, law, or social conventions.” This isn’t talking about physical or relational battles but spiritual warfare. Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

4. “The passive form of the verb (“be strong”) [in **Ephesians 6:10**] indicates that this empowering is something done to Christians, not something they do themselves; its present tense shows the empowering is continual. This is not instruction for a quick fix, but for a life spent drawing strength from Christ. To be strong in the Lord means to know his strength and to draw closer to him.”<sup>3</sup> What does it look like for you to draw your strength from Christ? Do you have a hard time with this? Why or why not?
5. Why do you think Paul uses battle imagery when God calls us to be a peaceful army?

How can putting on this armor bring peace to our lives, our families, our church, our communities, etc.?

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<sup>3</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

6. How is prayer used in the “battle”? (6:18–20)

What can it look like, practically, to pray continually?

## Reflection

7. Take a moment to read the words of the song “Battle Belongs.”<sup>4</sup>

“So when I fight, I’ll fight on my knees  
With my hands lifted high  
Oh God, the battle belongs to You  
And every fear I lay at Your feet  
I’ll sing through the night  
Oh God, the battle belongs to You”

- a. What thoughts or images come to mind as you read these song lyrics?

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<sup>4</sup> CCLI Song # 7148126

Brian Johnson | Phil Wickham

Phil Wickham Music; Simply Global Songs; Bethel Music Publishing

b. What does it mean to you to know that the battle belongs to God?

c. Knowing the battle is in His hands, how would you like to respond to Him?

8. “An English translation cannot easily show it, but the [armor and prayer] imperatives throughout this section are plural. We usually interpret them as if they were addressed to individuals, but without denying their relevance for individuals, we should understand them as Paul’s instructions for the church collectively to put on God’s armor and stand as one person.”<sup>5</sup>  
How can we do this together?

How can the act of collectively putting on God’s armor and standing together impact our city and draw people to God?

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<sup>5</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

9. It is significant that Paul ends his letter with encouragement and peace. “Twelve of Paul’s letters have the greeting “grace to you and peace from God” at the beginning. ... But no other letter has the expression “peace ... from God” or “love ... from God” at the end. This is an obvious effort to underscore God as the source of the peace and love that is extended.”<sup>6</sup>
- What have you learned about peace and unity through this study of Ephesians?

How does peace permeate church life, your spiritual journey, and our engagement with the world?

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<sup>6</sup> Snodgrass, Klyne. *NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*. Zondervan, 1996. Bible Gateway Plus

## Memory Verse

Throughout the course of this Ephesians study, we, as a church, have been memorizing **Ephesians 4:1–4**. Each week have highlighted a different memorization technique you can use individually or as a group.

### This week's technique: Fill in the blanks

Use the form below to fill in the blanks to the best of your ability. This may be a fun time to each take a turn during group time to say it outloud, if people are willing.

<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ I, a \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_  
the Lord, \_\_\_\_\_ you to \_\_\_\_\_ a life \_\_\_\_\_ of your \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, for you have been \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_. <sup>2</sup> \_\_\_\_\_  
be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Be \_\_\_\_\_ with  
each \_\_\_\_\_, making \_\_\_\_\_ for each  
other's \_\_\_\_\_ because of your \_\_\_\_\_. <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_  
every \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ yourselves \_\_\_\_\_  
in the \_\_\_\_\_, binding \_\_\_\_\_ together  
with \_\_\_\_\_. <sup>4</sup> For there is \_\_\_\_\_  
and \_\_\_\_\_ Spirit, just as you have been \_\_\_\_\_  
to one \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_

**PRAYER REQUESTS**



**SERMON NOTES**