

SIX SESSIONS



# Ephesians

HEAD HELD HIGH

— STUDY GUIDE + STREAMING VIDEO —

LORI WILHITE



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STUDY GUIDE • SIX SESSIONS

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HarperChristian  
Resources

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HarperChristian Resources

*Beautiful Word: Ephesians Study Guide*

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# WELCOME



## Ephesians

HEAD HELD HIGH

**SOMETIMES** the Bible can seem overwhelming. Where do you go for words of comfort when you're feeling lost or frustrated in life? What book of the Bible do you turn to for wisdom about the situation you find yourself in?

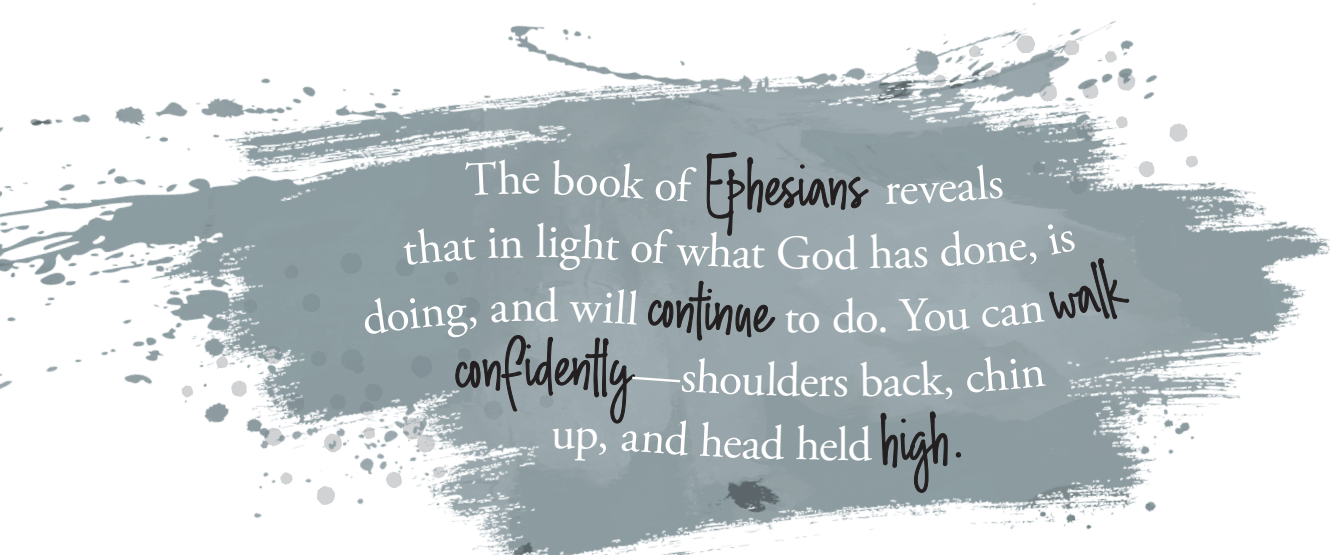
*The Beautiful Word Bible Study* series makes the Bible come alive in such a way that you know where to turn no matter where you find yourself on your spiritual journey.

Paul, the author of Ephesians, is famed for persecuting Christians at every turn, until he had a life-changing encounter on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). His encounter with Christ transformed everything.

He became a staunch builder of the church who set off on multiple journeys to share the good news of Jesus. On his second missionary expedition he founded the church of Ephesus (Acts 18:19) and later spent two years teaching in the robust, wealthy province (Acts 19:8-10). He was eventually driven from the riotous city by fiery silversmiths who were angered by all the money they lost from Paul's teachings against worshipping false gods.

Written around 60 AD, Paul pens this letter from prison. It calls us to walk with our heads held high. There are many burdens in life that can leave us bent, stooped down, staring at the ground. It might be the burden of criticism that stirs your deepest insecurities. Or the heaviness of a struggling marriage. Or the strain of finances. Or the millstone of discouragement and darkness you can't escape. Or the crushing pain from your kiddos who are crumbling under the pressure of schools, friends, and busy schedules. And for those who are parents, we know we're only as happy as our saddest child.

Paul's letter teaches us that we don't have to live under the crushing weight of heartache and disappointment. He gives us beautiful insight into the Lord's redemptive work, and how a life that's been completely changed can change the world.



The book of *Ephesians* reveals  
that in light of what God has done, is  
doing, and will *continue* to do. You can *walk*  
*confidently*—shoulders back, chin  
up, and head held *high*.

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# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

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## Group Size ~

The Beautiful Word *Ephesians* video curriculum is designed to be experienced on your own, or in a group setting such as a Bible study, small group, or during a weekend retreat. After watching each video session, you and the members of your group will participate in a time of discussion and reflection on what you're learning. If you have a larger group (more than twelve people), consider breaking up into smaller groups during the discussion time.

## Materials needed ~

Each participant should have their own study guide which includes streaming video access found on the inside front cover, video outline notes, group discussion questions, a personal study section, Beautiful Word coloring pages, and Scripture memory cards to deepen learning between sessions.

## Timing ~

The timing notations—for example, 20 minutes—indicate the actual length of the video segments and the suggested times for each activity or discussion. Within your allotted time, you may not get to all the discussion questions. Remember that the *quantity* of questions addressed isn't as important as the *quality* of the discussion.

## Facilitation ~

Each group should appoint a facilitator who is responsible for starting the video and keeping track of time during the activities and discussion. Facilitators may also read questions aloud, monitor discussions, prompt participants to respond, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

## Opening Group Activity ~

Depending on the amount of time you have to meet and the resources available, you'll want to begin the session with the group activity. You will find these activities on the group page that begins each session. The interactive icebreaker is designed to be a catalyst for group engagement and help participants move toward the ideas explored in the video teaching. The leader will want to read ahead to the following week's activity to see what will be needed and how participants may be able to contribute by bringing supplies or refreshments.



# — CHOSEN —

A teal watercolor wash background with a cluster of small grey dots above the word "Ephesians".

Ephesians

## Opening Group Activity [10-15 MINUTES]

What you'll need:

- ▶ Sheet of blank paper for each person
  - ▶ Pens, markers, and/or watercolors
1. Each participant is invited to use the paper and drawing/writing tools to create a picture (words or images) of someone whose head is held high, one who is held somewhat up, and someone whose head is weighed down by life.
  2. Discuss the following questions:
    - Overall in your life, which picture best describes you right now? Why?
    - Which pictures best describes you right now in the following areas of life: professional, emotional, and spiritual?
    - What's the area of your life where you most need God to help you walk with your head held high?

## Session One Video [20 MINUTES]

**NOTES:** *As you watch, take notes on anything that stands out to you.*



**It's time to walk with your head held high. This means that you walk with confidence and strength in who God created you to be.**



**Want to walk with your head held high? Embracing that you are chosen changes everything.**



Paul declares that you are chosen, adopted, and God's possession.



Adoption in the ancient world often meant adopting adult children. If a wealthy family did not have a male heir, they would adopt a son in his twenties or thirties who would inherit the estate.



The Romans weren't apt to adopt infants who were untarnished by life, unaffected by circumstances.



In ancient times, when a debt was paid, the creditor wrote "Paid in full" or "It is finished" across the certificate of debt, meaning the debt was cancelled.

## SCRIPTURE COVERED IN THIS SESSION:

### EPHESIANS 1

## Group Discussion Questions (30-45 MINUTES)

1. Lori begins by sharing some of the burdens of life we carry. What's the one life burden that's weighing you down the most right now?
2. Read Ephesians 1:3-10. Which of the words or phrases in this passage do you struggle to believe is true of you? Which words or phrases in this passage are the easiest for you to embrace and live out?
3. Lori teaches,



**“We are chosen before the creation of the world, predestined for adoption, and chosen according to His plan and the purpose of His will. The idea of being chosen should lead us to our knees in thankfulness, to pour out our praise, to freely give our gratitude.”**

Describe a time when you were chosen. How did that make you feel and affect your ability to walk with your head held high? Why do you think it's easy to forget these Biblical truths in everyday life? What can you do to remind yourself?

4. Read Ephesians 1:11-14. What are some of the spiritual blessings you have in Christ? Which is most meaningful to you today?



5. Lori teaches,

*“When the adoption was complete, the person who had been adopted had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family. In the eyes of the law, he was a new person. The debts and obligations connected with his previous family were abolished as if they had never existed.”*

In what ways have you experienced Christ making you new? In what areas are you still clinging to your old life? Where do you most need to write the words “Paid in full” and “It is finished”?

6. What does it mean to you that the same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives in you (Ephesians 1:19-20)? What are some practical things you can do to walk with your head held high this week?

## Close in Prayer

Consider the following prompts as you pray together for:

- ▶ Heightened awareness of the riches of your spiritual blessings
- ▶ Help to stay focused on the reality that you are chosen by God
- ▶ Opportunities to help others walk with their heads held high

Embracing  
that  
you're  
chosen

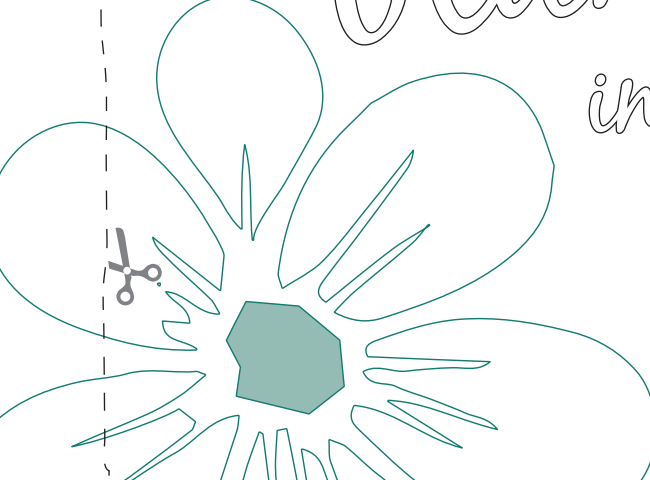
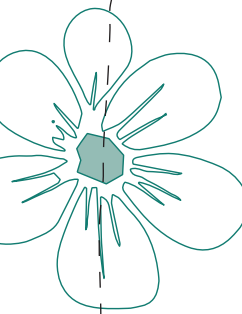
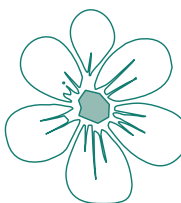
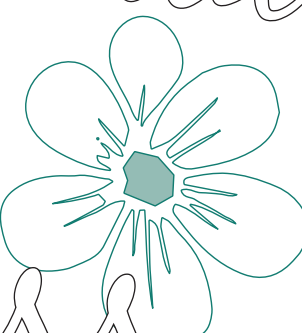
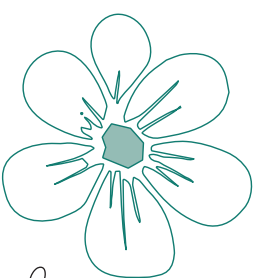
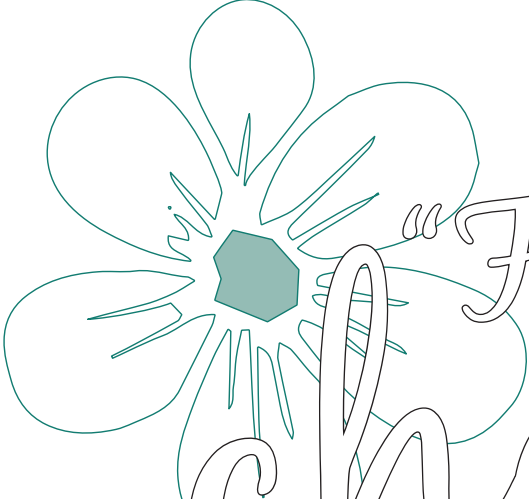


changes  
everything.

# Preparation

To prepare for the next group session:

1. Read Ephesians 2.
2. Tackle the three days of the Session One Personal Study.
3. Memorize this week's passage using the Beautiful Word Scripture memory coloring page.  
As a bonus, look up the Scripture memory passage in different translations and take note of the variations.
4. If you've agreed to bring something for the next session's Opening Group Activity, get it ready.



"For he <sup>us</sup>  
chose <sup>in</sup>  
him before the  
creation of the world  
to be holy and  
blameless  
in his sight."

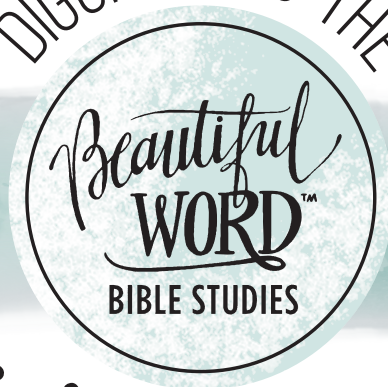
—Ephesians 1:4

SESSION

1

# PERSONAL STUDY TIME

DIGGING INTO THE



# Ephesians

CHOSEN

Some  
ancient  
manuscripts  
contain a  
blank space  
instead of  
the words

"in Ephesus."

Some scholars  
believe this  
letter was  
like a group  
text message,  
meant to  
be shared  
with many  
congregations  
in different  
cities.

## DAY 1

### Ephesians 1:1-2

Like many of the letters in the New Testament, Ephesians was meant to be read aloud to listeners. The tone and flow of Paul's writing often sounds more like a sermon than a literary piece. The opening verse identifies Paul as the author of Ephesians. He's described as an apostle, in the Greek *apostolos*, meaning "one who is sent with a commission."

1. Read Ephesians 1:1. Who is Paul an apostle of? Who is Paul sent by? Who is Paul sent to?

2. On the continuum below, how often do you think of yourself as being sent by God to a particular person or into a particular situation? How does remembering that God is at work in you empower you to be courageous?



After addressing the recipients of the letter, Paul delivers a greeting that often appears at the beginning of his epistles: grace and peace (v. 2). This greeting appears in thirteen letters throughout the New Testament.

3. Read Ephesians 1:2. What is the source of all grace and peace?

4. Where do you most need to experience grace and peace right now?

Some scholars note that this opening greeting echoes elements of a blessing spoken by Aaron in the Old Testament.

5. Read Numbers 6:24-26. Where are the elements of grace and peace mentioned?

6. Who in your life are you struggling to extend grace to right now; struggling to feel peace in the friendship? Write their names in the space below.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Some  
scholars note  
that **Grace**

**(charis)**

is the  
unmerited  
favor of  
God that's  
founded in his  
steadfast love.

**Peace**

**(shalom)**

is a holistic  
deep  
wellness and  
completeness.

7. Take a moment to pray the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24-26 over them. What practical steps can you take to show grace and peace to them this week?

## DAY 2

### Ephesians 1:3-14



Written in the form of a hymn of praise, Paul now offers rich thanksgiving for our bountiful spiritual blessings in Christ. The blessings relate to the past (v. 4), the present (v. 7), and the future (v. 10). It's worth noting that this stunning passage begins with praise, ends with praise, and is infused with praise. There's another common thread that weaves its way through this passage, namely, we are chosen, adopted, and God's possession.

1. Read Ephesians 1:3-14. What key phrases keep appearing in this passage? What does each one reveal about what Paul wants us to know?

Ephesus was one of seven urban centers located near the Mediterranean Sea. Its location made it a hub for agriculture, industry, and trade. This prosperous city was known for its wide streets, huge buildings, and private homes built to impress visitors. It's worth noting that in writing to this affluent region, Paul doesn't emphasize financial blessings, rather he grounds believers in their spiritual blessings.

2. How many times does the word "in" appear in this passage? What does the frequency of "in" reveal about what Paul is trying to emphasize? What does this passage reveal about the source of our spiritual blessing?

In this opening chapter, Paul celebrates and exalts Christ and his work. Throughout Ephesians, Paul will continue to emphasize Jesus as the exalted one whose headship rules over the cosmos, creation, and the church.

3. Fill in the chart below by listing the blessings Paul names. Then place a star by the ones you need to experience more of right now.

| EPHESIANS | SPIRITUAL BLESSING FOR YOUR LIFE |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| 1:3       |                                  |
| 1:4       |                                  |
| 1:5       |                                  |
| 1:6       |                                  |
| 1:7       |                                  |
| 1:9       |                                  |
| 1:11–12   |                                  |
| 1:13–14   |                                  |

4. What’s the purpose of these abundant blessings? (Hint: Ephesians 1:5-6, 10, 12, 14)





Romans sealed  
their scrolls  
six to seven  
times with soft  
wax over the  
edges of the  
parchment to  
ensure no one  
tampered with  
the contents  
without  
authorization.

To be



**sealed  
by God**



means you are  
wholly his.



5. On the continuum below, how often do you struggle with inferiority, failure, or rejection? How does this passage speak truth into those false beliefs?



I often struggle with  
feelings of inferiority,  
failure, or rejection.

I never struggle with  
feelings of inferiority,  
failure, or rejection.

6. Read Ephesians 1:3-14 aloud again. As you do, replace “us” and “you” with your name. How does reading this passage as if it’s written to you impact the way you hear it? How does knowing you have these holy provisions help you face life’s hardships?
7. Who do you know who needs to be reminded of their spiritual blessings in Christ? Take a moment to reach out with an email, text, or phone call to remind them of just how much they are loved by God and you.

DAY3

Ephesians 1:15-23

After recognizing the breadth of our spiritual blessings in Christ, Paul transitions to offer thanksgiving and prayer for the saints.

1. Read Ephesians 1:15-16. Which comes more easily to you—praise or prayer? Why?

2. Read Ephesians 1:17-19. What does Paul specifically pray that the Ephesians would come to know more deeply? Fill in the chart below.

| EPHESIANS | PAUL'S PRAYER REQUESTS |
|-----------|------------------------|
| 1:17      |                        |
| 1:18      |                        |
| 1:19      |                        |
| 1:20      |                        |

“Eyes  
of your  
heart”

refer  
to the  
**center**

of one’s  
being,  
the seat  
of one’s  
mental,  
physical,  
and  
spiritual  
life.

3. Reflecting on the chart above, which entries do you tend to know more of in head knowledge and which do you tend to know more of in heart knowledge? Which of these do you most need to have the “eyes of your heart” opened to (vs. 18)?

4. Read Romans 8:15-17 and 1 Peter 1:3-6. What do these passages reveal about the glorious inheritance God has for us?

The church at Ephesus was located in a coastal region known as Asia’s Supreme Metropolis. The city boasted one of the wonders of the ancient world, a temple for the “bee” goddess known as Artemis or Diana. Thousands of priests and priestesses worshiped and practiced cult prostitution in the city.

5. Read Ephesians 1:20-23. Why do you think the church of Ephesus needed to hear that all rulers, authorities, power, and dominions were under Jesus’ control? In what area of your life do you most need to cling to this truth?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. Where do you feel out of control in your life? How can you commit this area to the lordship of Christ?

7. Reflect on the hope-filled words of Ephesians 1:15-23. Who are three people you could send this passage to today in order to encourage them?



Paul doesn't emphasize  
*financial* blessings, rather he *grounds*  
believers in their *spiritual*  
blessings.



As you reflect on your personal study of **Ephesians 1**, what are the beautiful words the Holy Spirit has been highlighting to you through this time? Write or draw them in the space below.

