EPHESIANS

A STUDY OF PAUL'S LETTER TO THE EARLY CHURCH
Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Him who is the head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Ephesians 4:15–16

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2:42–47
TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME..................................................................................................................................5

SESSION 1: Purpose, Praise, Prayer and Power.................................................................6

SESSION 2: The One Who Took My Place.................................................................12

SESSION 3: All in the Family.........................................................................................18

SESSION 4: A Secret Worth Sharing..............................................................................24

SESSION 5: Divine Imitation..........................................................................................30

SESSION 6: More Than Conquerors...............................................................................36
Discipleship, at its core, is the imitation of Christ. This is no easy task. It requires surrendering all we are to God by placing ourselves at His feet and offering ourselves up as living sacrifices. But, as Richard Foster, author of *Celebration of Discipline*, points out, we living sacrifices are constantly crawling off the altar. That’s why discipleship is a lifelong journey.

It is a journey by which we walk with God and with one another. By placing ourselves before God each week, you are being transformed into the likeness of Christ, by God’s grace and in His time.

I am encouraged and excited by your passion for growing in Christ and your steadfast commitment to living out Acts 2:42–47. My hope and prayer is that you will continue to receive the grace to grow and build up the Body of Christ. During the next few weeks, you will be looking at the letter of Ephesians. Let it take hold of you as you read and meditate on the truth it speaks.

ENCOURAGE. ENGAGE. IMPACT.

In Christ,

Jason J. Nelson, Associate Pastor
The Woodlands United Methodist Church
OPENING PRAYER

God, We praise You for who You are and what You have done. You are the God of the universe. You spoke creation into existence and You speak love and life into our lives. We thank You for sending Your Son into the world, to live and to die, so that we might be saved. We thank You for the freedom we have found in Christ and ask that You give us the grace to live lives that glorify You! Draw us nearer to You through Your Holy Spirit every day. Transform us into the likeness of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

BEFORE WE START

View the introduction of the Ephesians study DVD.
Discuss: Why do we praise God?

VIDEO LESSON

View Lesson 1 of the Ephesians study DVD.
Have you ever been accepted and/or rejected? Describe the situation and your feelings below.

IN THE WORD

Read Ephesians 1:1–23
AFTER WORD | Explore the following questions:

In the introductory video clip, Jason spoke of the feelings he experienced while awaiting his bride’s arrival at the altar on their wedding day. As believers in Christ, we too are waiting; but what does it mean to wait and what should we do while waiting?

What claims does Paul make in Ephesians 1:2-14 about:

God the Father?

Jesus Christ?

The Holy Spirit?
What does it mean to be chosen by God (Ephesians 1:4)?

In what ways does your life reflect that you are a child of God?

What does it mean to live “to the praise of His glorious grace” (Ephesians 1:6) and how can we live this way?

Ephesians 1:15–23 tells of Paul’s great prayers for the people of Ephesus. Do you have anyone in your life that prays for you the way Paul prayed for the Ephesians? How has this impacted your life? Do you pray for anyone in that way? How has that impacted your life?
In Ephesians 1:19–23, Paul highlights the power and sovereignty of God. How might God’s sovereignty coexist with humanity’s free will?

OTHER WORDS
Read the following statements and circle your favorites. Explain why they speak to you.

“The highest form of prayer is intercession … as long as prayer is only a means of personal improvement and happiness, we cannot know its full power. Let intercession create in us a longing for the souls of those around us, a bearing of the burden of their sin and need, a pleading for the extension of God’s Kingdom, and labor in prayer for definite purposes to be realized.” –Andrew Murray

“Any day, any minute, we bless God for our being or for anything, for food, for sunlight, we do and are what we were meant for, made for — things that give and mean to give God glory.” –Gerard Manley Hopkins
“Praise is simply letting off esteem.” – Unknown

“...The purpose of your life is far greater than your own personal fulfillment, your peace of mind, or even your happiness. It's far greater than your family, your career, or even your wildest dreams or ambitions. If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God.” – Rick Warren

DIGGING DEEPER
During the week, read and meditate upon these teachings from God’s Word:

Day 1: Psalm 96:4
Day 2: Psalm 145:21
Day 3: Psalm 147:4–5
Day 4: Exodus 9:15–17
Day 5: Jeremiah 29:11
Day 6: 1 Peter 2:9-10
Day 7: 2 Corinthians 5:20

CLOSING MOMENTS
Use the following prayer page to list those people and situations your group would like lifted up in prayer over the next week.
TODAY’S DATE ____________________________

PRAYER REQUESTS

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PRAISE REPORTS

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MY RESPONSE TO THIS WEEK’S LESSON IS TO PRAY FOR

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OPENING PRAYER
God, we thank You for the gift of salvation. We praise You for saving us from ourselves and from an eternity apart from You. We thank You for sending Your Son to earth to rescue us. You have given us life through Him. Empower us now to live in a way that represents Christ to those around us. Stir within us a passion to praise You for who You are and what You have done. Fan the flame within us so that we might take the message of salvation to a lost and dying world. Transform us into the likeness of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

BEFORE WE START
Discuss the following prior to viewing the Ephesians study DVD:
What is mercy?
What is grace?
How are they different?

VIDEO LESSON
View Lesson 2 of the Ephesians study DVD.

IN THE WORD
Read Ephesians 2:1–10
Describe a situation in your life where you have been overwhelmed by the grace of God.
AFTER WORD | Explore the following questions:
In what sense is being dead in your transgressions an accurate description of life without Christ?

Describe what it means to “follow the ways of this world” and to live according to the “ruler of the kingdom of the air.” What does this other kingdom look like?

What does it mean to be raised up with Christ and seated in the heavenly realms?

According to Ephesians 2:8–9, explain the role we play in our own salvation.
Describe what works-based faith and faith-based works look like.

According to Ephesians 2:10, God designed and planned for us to do good works in the world.

To what good work has God called, designed, created, planned or tasked you for in your life? Is there anything holding you back from accomplishing this work?

OTHER WORDS
Read the following statements and circle your favorites. Explain why they speak to you.

“There but for the grace of God go I.” –John Bradford
“The law detects; grace alone conquers sin.” –Saint Augustine

“For grace is given not because we have done good works, but in order that we may be able to do them.” –Saint Augustine

“Grace isn’t a little prayer you chant before receiving a meal. It’s a way to live.” –Jackie Windspear

“The law tells me how crooked I am. Grace comes along and straightens me out.” –D.L. Moody
“A man can no more take in a supply of grace for the future than he can eat enough today to last him for the next six months, nor can he inhale sufficient air into his lungs with one breath to sustain life for a week to come. We are permitted to draw upon God’s store of grace from day to day as we need it.” –D.L. Moody

DIGGING DEEPER
During the week, read and meditate upon these teachings from God’s Word:

Day 1: Proverbs 8:35
Day 2: Philippians 2:12-13
Day 3: Hebrews 4:16
Day 4: James 4:6
Day 5: Psalm 84:11
Day 6: Nehemiah 9:31
Day 7: Romans 11:6

CLOSING MOMENTS
Use the following prayer page to list those people and situations your group would like lifted up in prayer over the next week.
OPENING PRAYER
God, we thank You for bringing us into Your family. We are so grateful that we can come into Your holy presence and can gather before Your throne. We are amazed by Your love and faithfulness and are awestruck by the realization that we can call You Abba Father! We invite You now to take residence here and pray that You will draw us closer to You this day. We pray also that You will draw us closer together as a family of faith. Unite us, Lord! Help us to speak truth in love toward each other. Break down those things that prevent us from loving each other and You to our utmost! Transform us into the likeness of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

BEFORE WE START
Discuss the following prior to viewing the Ephesians study DVD:

Because of Christ’s redeeming work, Gentiles were “strangers no more” — they became part of God’s family. What are some of the benefits in being part of God’s family?

VIDEO LESSON
View Lesson 3 of the Ephesians study DVD.

Discuss the distinction between unity and uniformity.

IN THE WORD
Read Ephesians 2:11–22 and Ephesians 4:1-32
AFTER WORD | Explore the following questions:

Paul is concerned with unity in the Church. What were some key factors causing disunity among the Jews and Gentiles?

What are the current issues which cause disunity in the church today?

In order to reunite various factions within the church, Paul writes in Ephesians 2:19–22 that Jesus is the foundation of the Church, the Cornerstone, the first laid stone that all others are built upon. Why is this important to recognize and remember?

Paul calls us members of “God's household.” What responsibilities come from being a part of God’s family?
Read Ephesians 4:2. We are members of one body, one family. What does it mean to bear with one another in love?

In Ephesians 4:11–13 Paul describes various spiritual gifts that we are called to use for the benefit of God’s people. What spiritual gifts do you see in yourself? What gifts do others see in you? How do you use these gifts?

In the last half of Ephesians 4, Paul encourages us to change some of our habits. How might we go about doing this?

According to Ephesians 4:30, our bad behaviors “grieve the Holy Spirit.” What does it mean to cause God to grieve?
OTHER WORDS
Read the following statements and circle your favorites. Explain why they speak to you.

“You don’t choose your family. They are God’s gift to you, as you are to them.” –Desmond Tutu

“What greater thing is there for human souls than to feel that they are joined for life — to be with each other in silent unspeakable memories.” –George Eliot

“It is not flesh and blood but the heart which makes us fathers and sons.” –Johann Schiller

“You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.” –Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet
“What we are is God’s gift to us. What we become is our gift to God.” –Eleanor Powell

DIGGING DEEPER
During the week, read and meditate upon these teachings from God’s Word:

Day 1: John 17:23  
Day 2: Romans 15:4–6  
Day 3: Romans 8:13–17  
Day 4: Galatians 3:26–29  
Day 5: Romans 12:3–6  
Day 6: 1 Corinthians 14:12  
Day 7: Colossians 4:5–6

CLOSING MOMENTS
Use the following prayer page to list those people and situations your group would like lifted up in prayer over the next week.
OPENING PRAYER
God, You are an awesome God. Your love and Your character are beyond description. We cannot fully grasp all that You are and all that You do, but we are thankful that You have revealed the message of salvation to us. We are thankful for the revelation of Jesus as the Messiah that You have given us through Your Word and by Your Holy Spirit. Allow us to grasp the greatness of Your love! Renew our minds this day. Give us the grace to capture every thought we have and to offer it up to You as a sacrifice. Help us to live as Jesus did. Transform us into the likeness of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

BEFORE WE START
Discuss the following prior to viewing the Ephesians study DVD:
Has anyone ever given you a gift you were not expecting, a gift that he or she might have worked on in secret? How did you feel upon receiving this gift?

VIDEO LESSON
View Lesson 4 of the Ephesians study DVD.
Paul described God’s plan of salvation as a mystery (secret). Why do you suppose Paul used this word to describe the Good News of God’s plan for the world?

IN THE WORD
Read Ephesians 3
AFTER WORD | Explore the following questions:
In Ephesians 3, Paul writes that the Gentiles now share in God’s promise of salvation along with the Jewish people. Why might this message be so shocking to the Jewish community of that day?

What are some other things we accept as truth but do not fully understand?

Paul calls salvation in Ephesians 3:3 a mystery. Explain how it is or is not possible to fully understand God’s plan of salvation. Why do we believe in this mystery?

How would you explain the grace and love of God to someone who has had no knowledge of the God of the Bible? Where would you start? What would you include as the bare essentials?
In Ephesians 3:7, Paul describes this grace at work in his life through God’s power. How is God’s power working in you? When was the last time you recognized God’s grace shown to you? How do you see God’s grace and power in the Church?

In Ephesians 3:17, Paul says he hopes that Christ may “dwell in your hearts.” What does this mean? What does it look like for Christ to abide in your heart? How can we foster Christ’s dwelling in us?

At the end of Ephesians 3, Paul prays that we might experience God’s power and know the love of Christ. How can we be sure we are encountering these things on a regular basis? Are there practical ways we can allow these things to infiltrate and permeate our lives?

Paul closes this chapter with a benediction. How does Ephesians 3:20–21 speak to you?
OTHER WORDS
Read the following statements and circle your favorites. Explain why they speak to you.

“When we understand the outside of things, we think we have them. Yet the Lord puts His things in subdefined, suggestive shapes, yielding no satisfactory meaning to the mere intellect, but unfolding themselves to the conscience and heart.” —George MacDonald

“The real mystery of life is not a problem to be solved—it is a reality to be experienced.” —J.J. Van der Leeuw

“Mystery creates wonder and wonder is the basis of man’s desire to understand.” —Neil Armstrong

“Some people believe that holding on and hanging in there are signs of great strength. However, there are times when it takes much more strength to know when to let go — and then do it.” —Ann Landers
“There is no surprise more magical than the surprise of being loved. It is God’s finger on man’s shoulder.” – Charles Morgan

“Love is a symbol of eternity. It wipes out all sense of time, destroying all memory of a beginning and all fear of an end.” – Author Unknown

DIGGING DEEPER
During the week, read and meditate upon these teachings from God’s Word:

Day 1: Revelation 21:3
Day 2: 1 Corinthians 15:50–54
Day 3: Romans 16:25–27
Day 4: Romans 11:25–26
Day 5: Colossians 3:15–17
Day 6: 1 John 4:10–19
Day 7: Romans 8:38–39

CLOSING MOMENTS
Use the following prayer page to list those people and situations your group would like lifted up in prayer over the next week.
TODAY’S DATE ____________________________

PRAYER REQUESTS

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PRAYER PAGE

PRAISE REPORTS

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MY RESPONSE TO THIS WEEK’S LESSON IS TO PRAY FOR

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OPENING PRAYER
God, thank You for sending Your Son into this world to save us. We also thank You for the example He set for us. We see You more clearly when we take glimpses of Him. Give us the grace through Your Holy Spirit to become more like Christ each and every day. We ask that You cause us to love each other the way Jesus loves us. We pray that You would mold us to be imitators of Your Son, who was the ultimate servant. We pray that You strengthen our relationships by drawing us nearer to You through Your Spirit. Right now we humble ourselves and pray that You would transform us into the likeness of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen

BEFORE WE START
Discuss the following prior to viewing the Ephesians study DVD:
- Describe the functions and qualities of light.

VIDEO LESSON
View Lesson 5 of the Ephesians study DVD.
We’re called to live as children of light. Why do we sometimes choose darkness instead of light?

IN THE WORD
Read Ephesians 5 and 6:1–9

AFTER WORD | Explore the following questions:
It’s easy to read the list of bad behaviors from Ephesians 5 and rationalize our own behavior by comparing ourselves to others and saying things like, “Well this isn’t as bad as ...” or, “I’m not as bad as ...” Why is comparing sins like this dangerous?
What Paul calls unacceptable here is what culture defines as normal and acceptable. How do we live in culture without letting it completely set our definitions for acceptable behavior? Describe how you walk this line?

Using Paul’s analogy, what does it look like to walk in light? In darkness?

In Ephesians 5:20, Paul describes the opposite of sin as being thankful. How is thankfulness opposite of these actions he lists? Practically speaking, how we can be sure we are “always giving thanks to God?”

Ephesians 5:21 tells us to “submit to one another.” What do you think of when you read this verse? Why is this so hard, especially in 21st-century America?
Reverence to Christ leads to submission. What does it mean to show reverence to Christ? How did Christ submit to the Father?

What does it mean to submit to one another? What are some practical applications of submission?

We've been created to live for God and God's glory and not the other way around ... not for us and for our glory. So, how is God glorified through our submission?

How much of your life has been spent “getting to the top?” What have been the benefits of your efforts? Costs?
How much of your life has been spent in service to others? What have been the benefits of your efforts? Costs?

OTHER WORDS
Read the following statements and circle your favorites. Explain why they speak to you.

“There are two kinds of light — the glow that illumines and the glare that obscures.” –James Thurber

“We cannot hold a torch to light another’s path without brightening our own.” –Ben Sweetland

“Light gives of itself freely, filling all available space. It does not seek anything in return; it asks not whether you are friend or foe. It gives of itself and is not thereby diminished.” –Michael Strassfeld
“People are like stained-glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is light from within.” –Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

“Dare to reach out your hand into the darkness, to pull another hand into the light.” –Norman B. Rice

“How is one to live a moral and compassionate existence when one finds darkness not only in one’s culture but within oneself? There are simply no answers to some of the great pressing questions. You continue to live them out, making your life a worthy expression of leaning into the light.” –Barry Lopez, Arctic Dreams

DIGGING DEEPER
During the week, read and meditate upon these teachings from God’s Word:

Day 1: Matthew 5:16
Day 2: John 3:21
Day 3: Acts 13:47
Day 4: Matthew 19:19
Day 5: Romans 12:10
Day 6: Hebrews 13:17
Day 7: 1 Peter 2:13

CLOSING MOMENTS
Use the following prayer page to list those people and situations your group would like lifted up in prayer over the next week.
OPENING PRAYER
God, we praise You for the victory we have in Jesus! Joyfully we proclaim Jesus as Savior and Lord of all! We realize that the battle for souls is raging and ask that You give us the grace and discipline to put on the full armor as recorded in Your Word. Make us passionate for Your Word and for prayer. Help us to see the world through Your eyes. Make us prayer warriors who stand for Truth. Give us strength to be bold and courageous as we fearlessly proclaim Christ as Lord! Draw us to our knees as we stand up for Jesus! Transform us into the likeness of Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

BEFORE WE START
Discuss the following prior to viewing the Ephesians study DVD:
When was the last time you were on a winning team? How did it feel to be on the winning side?

VIDEO LESSON
View Lesson 6 of the Ephesians study DVD.
How is victory in Christ different from victory in the world?

IN THE WORD
Read Ephesians 6:10–24

AFTER WORD | Explore the following questions:
Explain why you do or don’t believe in spiritual warfare.
In the video lesson, Jason quotes an excerpt from C.S. Lewis’ book, *The Screwtape Letters*:

“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.”

Do you think this quote is still true today? Under which category do you see most people fall? What does it look like to ignore evil and/or be obsessed with it?

Paul cautions us that our enemy is not each other but “spiritual forces of evil.” In what ways might we become susceptible to the Devil’s influence?

Paul speaks about the armor of God in Ephesians 6:14–18. What does it look like to appropriate this armor in your life? How do you put it on? Why is it needed?
In verse 11, Paul says, “put on the full armor of God.” Are there times when you find yourself using only a portion of the armor? Which pieces do you tend to leave off? Which pieces do you use the most?

Paul places a heavy emphasis on prayer at the end of Ephesians 6. What is the role of prayer in fighting our enemy? How often do you pray for others? How often for your own needs? What keeps you from praying more?

Dr. Seuss once wrote this profound stanza:

I have heard there are troubles of more than one kind. Some come from ahead and some come from behind. But I've bought a big bat. I'm all ready you see. Now my troubles are going to have troubles with me!

What do you do when trouble comes your way?

What has been your biggest take away from Ephesians 6?
OTHER WORDS
Read the following statements and circle your favorites. Explain why they speak to you.

“The function of wisdom is to discriminate between good and evil.” –Cicero

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” –Edmund Burke

“It is impossible to win the race unless you venture to run, impossible to win the victory unless you dare to battle.” –Richard M. DeVos
“The smile of God is victory.” –John Greenleaf Whittier

“Prayer is the communication with headquarters by which the weapons of warfare are deployed according to the will of God ... Prayer is the walkie-talkie of the church on the battlefield of the world in the service of the Word. It is not a domestic intercom to increase the temporal comforts of the saints. It malfunctions in the hands of soldiers who have gone AWOL. It is for those on active duty. And in their hands it proves the supremacy of God in the pursuit of the nations. When missions move forward by prayer, it magnifies the power of God. When it moves by human management, it magnifies man.” –John Piper

DIGGING DEEPER
During the week, read and meditate upon these teachings from God’s Word:

Day 1: Psalm 27:1
Day 2: James 2:19
Day 3: Psalm 121:7–8
Day 4: Deuteronomy 33:12
Day 5: Joshua 1:9
Day 6: Psalm 91:9–10
Day 7: 2 Thessalonians 3:3
Ephesians challenges us to see ourselves distinctly as God’s children. Because of our new status in Christ, our lives are marked and our actions should reflect that change.

Join Pastor Jason Nelson in this six-session study as he challenges us to read these words with a fresh perspective and engage with each other as people defined by grace. This study guide serves as the companion to the teaching sessions and will help you explore how grace molds us into one family.