

The Book Of Ephesians

Believers Are Showered

With God's Knowledge

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

Ephesians

OVERVIEW:

The “church age” began at Pentecost (Acts 2). Born in Jerusalem, the church spread rapidly through the ministry of the apostles and the early believers. Fanned by persecution, the gospel flame then spread to other cities and nations. On three courageous journeys, Paul and his associates established local assemblies in scores of Gentile cities.

One of the most prominent of those churches was at Ephesus. It was established in A.D. 53 on Paul’s homeward journey to Jerusalem. But Paul returned a year later, on his third missionary trip, and stayed there for three years, preaching and teaching with great effectiveness (Acts 19:1-20). At another time, Paul met with the Ephesian elders, and he sent Timothy to serve as their leader (1 Tim. 1:3). Just a few years later, Paul was sent as a prisoner to Rome. In Rome, he was visited by messengers from various churches, including Tychicus of Ephesus. Paul wrote this letter to the church and sent it with Tychicus. Not written to counteract heresy or to confront any specific problem, Ephesians is a letter of encouragement. In it Paul describes the nature and appearance of the church, and he challenges believers to function as the living body of Christ on earth.

After a warm greeting (Ephes. 1:1-2), Paul affirms the nature of the church—the glorious fact that believers in Christ have been showered with God’s kindness (Ephes. 1:3-8), chosen for greatness (Ephes. 1:9-12), marked with the Holy Spirit (Ephes. 1:13-14), filled with the Spirit’s power (Ephes. 1:15-23), freed from sin’s curse and bondage (Ephes. 2:1-10), and brought near to God (Ephes. 2:11-18). As part of God’s “household,” we stand with the prophets, apostles, Jews, Gentiles, and Christ himself (Ephes. 2:19-3:13). Then, as though overcome with emotion by remembering all that God has done, Paul challenges the Ephesians to live close to Christ, and he breaks into spontaneous praise (Ephes. 3:14-21).

Paul then turns his attention to the implications of being in the body of Christ, the church. Believers should have unity in their commitment to Christ and their use of spiritual gifts (Ephes. 4:1-16). They should have the highest moral standards (Ephes. 4:17-6:9). For the individual, this means rejecting pagan practices (Ephes.

4:17-5:20), and for the family, this means mutual submission and love (Ephes. 5:21-6:9).

Paul then reminds them that the church is in a constant battle with the forces of darkness and that they should use every spiritual weapon at their disposal (Ephes. 6:10-17). He concludes by asking for their prayers, commissioning Tychicus, and giving a benediction (Ephes. 6:18-24).

As you read this masterful description of the church, thank God for the diversity and unity in his family, pray for your brothers and sisters across the world, and draw close to those in your local church.

THE BLUEPRINT

In this letter, Paul explains the wonderful things that we have received through Christ and refers to the church as a body, a temple, a bride, and a soldier. These all illustrate unity of purpose and show how each individual member is a part that must work together with all the other parts. In our own lives, we should work to eradicate all backbiting, gossip, criticism, jealousy, anger, and bitterness, because these are barriers to unity in the church.

1. Unity in Christ (Ephes. 1:1-3:21)

This letter is from Paul, chosen by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus.

It is written to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

[2] May grace and peace be yours, sent to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

[3] How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ.

[4] Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. [5] His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure.

[6] So we praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us because we belong to his dearly loved Son. [7] He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our freedom through the blood of his Son, and our sins are forgiven. [8] He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

[9] God's secret plan has now been revealed to us; it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago according to his good pleasure. [10] And this is his plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. [11] Furthermore, because of Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us from the beginning, and all things happen just as he decided long ago. [12] God's purpose was that we who were the first to trust in Christ should praise our glorious God. [13] And now you also have 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. [14] The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us

everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. This is just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God.

[15] Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for Christians everywhere, [16] I have never stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, [17] asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. [18] I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the wonderful future he has promised to those he called. I want you to realize what a rich and glorious inheritance he has given to his people.

[19] I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power [20] that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. [21] Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. [22] And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church. [23] And the church is his body; it is filled by Christ, who fills everything everywhere with his presence.

[2:1] Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins. [2] You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. [3] All of us used to live that way, following the passions and desires of our evil nature. We were born with an evil nature, and we were under God's anger just like everyone else.

[4] But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, [5] that even while we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's special favor that you have been saved!) [6] For he raised us from the dead along with Christ, and we are seated with him in the heavenly realms—all because we are one with Christ Jesus. [7] And so God can always point to us as examples of the incredible wealth of his favor and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us through Christ Jesus.

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

[11] Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders by birth. You were called "the uncircumcised ones" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. [12] In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from God's people, Israel, and you did not know the promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope. [13] But now you belong to Christ Jesus. Though you once were far away from God, now you have been brought near to him because of the blood of Christ.

[14] For Christ himself has made peace between us Jews and you Gentiles by making us all one people. He has broken down the wall of hostility that used to separate us. [15] By his death he ended the whole system of Jewish law that excluded the Gentiles. His purpose was to make peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in himself one new person from the two groups. [16] Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of his death, and our hostility toward each other was put to death. [17] He has brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and to us Jews who were near. [18] Now all of us, both Jews and Gentiles, may come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

[19] 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. [20] We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. [21] We who believe are carefully joined together, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. [22] Through him you Gentiles are also joined together as part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

[3:1] I, Paul, am a prisoner of Christ Jesus because of my preaching to you Gentiles. [2] As you already know, God has given me this special ministry of announcing his favor to you Gentiles. [3] As I briefly mentioned earlier in this letter, God himself revealed his secret plan to me. [4] As you read what I have written, you will understand what I know about this plan regarding Christ. [5] God did not reveal it to previous generations, but now he has revealed it by the Holy Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets.

[6] And this is the secret plan: The Gentiles have an equal share with the Jews in all the riches inherited by God's children. Both groups have believed the Good News, and both are part of the same body and enjoy together the promise of blessings through Christ Jesus.

[7] By God's special favor and mighty power, I have been given the wonderful privilege of serving him by spreading this Good News.

[8] Just think! Though I did nothing to deserve it, and though I am the least deserving Christian there is, I was chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ. [9] I was chosen to explain to everyone this plan that God, the Creator of all things, had kept secret from the beginning.

[10] God's purpose was to show his wisdom in all its rich variety to all the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. They will see this when Jews and Gentiles are joined together in his church. [11] This was his plan from all eternity, and it has now been carried out through Christ Jesus our Lord.

[12] Because of Christ and our faith in him, we can now come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of his glad welcome. [13] So please don't despair because of what they are doing to me here. It is for you that I am suffering, so you should feel honored and encouraged.

[14] When I think of the wisdom and scope of God's plan, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, [15] the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. [16] I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will give you mighty inner strength through his Holy Spirit. [17] And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. [18] 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 really is. [19] May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

[20] Now glory be to God! By his mighty power at work within us, he is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope. [21] May he be given glory in the church and in Christ Jesus forever and ever through endless ages. Amen.

2. Unity in the body of Christ (Ephes. 4:1-6:24)

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. [2] Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. [3] Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace.

[4] We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. [5] There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, [6] and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all. [7] However, he has given each one of us a special gift according to the generosity of Christ. [8] That is why the Scriptures say,

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

[9] Notice that it says "he ascended." This means that Christ first came down to the lowly world in which we live. [10] The same one who came down is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that his rule might fill the entire universe.

[11] He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. [12] Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ, [13] until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.

[14] Then we will no longer be like children, forever changing our minds about what we believe because someone has told us something different or because someone has cleverly lied to us and made the lie sound like the truth. [15] Instead, we will hold to the truth in love, becoming more and more in every way like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. [16] Under his direction, the whole body is fitted 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.

[17] With the Lord's authority let me say this: Live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused. [18] Their closed minds are

full of darkness; they are far away from the life of God because they have shut their minds and hardened their hearts against him. [19] They don't care anymore about right and wrong, and they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed.

[20] But that isn't what you were taught when you learned about Christ. [21] Since you have heard all about him and have learned the truth that is in Jesus, [22] throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. [23] Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. [24] You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness—righteous, holy, and true.

[25] So put away all falsehood and "tell your neighbor the truth" because we belong to each other. [26] And "don't sin by letting anger gain control over you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, [27] for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil.

[28] If you are a thief, stop stealing. Begin using your hands for honest work, and then give generously to others in need. [29] 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.

[30] And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he is the one who has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

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

[5:1] Follow God's example in everything you do, because you are his dear children. [2] Live a life filled with love for others, following the example of Christ, who loved you and gave himself as a sacrifice to take away your sins. And God was pleased, because that sacrifice was like sweet perfume to him.

[3] Let there be no sexual immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such sins have no place among God's people. [4] Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes—these are not for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. [5] 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 really an idolater who worships the things of this world. [6] Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins, for the terrible anger of God comes upon all those who disobey him. [7] Don't participate in the things these

people do. [8] For though your hearts were once full of darkness, now you are full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it! [9] For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

[10] Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. [11] Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, rebuke and expose them. [12] It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. [13] But when the light shines on them, it becomes clear how evil these things are. [14] And where your light shines, it will expose their evil deeds. This is why it is said,

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

[15] So be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise. [16] Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in these evil days. [17] Don't act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do. [18] Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you. [19] Then you will sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, making music to the Lord in your hearts. [20] And you will always give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[21] And further, you will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. [22] You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. [23] For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of his body, the church; he gave his life to be her Savior. [24] As the church submits to Christ, so you wives must submit to your husbands in everything.

[25] And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her [26] to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word. [27] 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. [28] In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man is actually loving himself when he loves his wife. [29] No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body, which is the church. [30] And we are his body.

[31] As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." [32] This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.

[33] So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

[6:1] Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. [2] "Honor your father and mother." This is the first of the Ten Commandments that ends with a promise. [3] And this is the promise: If you honor your father and mother, "you will live a long life, full of blessing."

[4] And now a word to you fathers. Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord.

[5] Slaves, obey your earthly masters with deep respect and fear. Serve them sincerely as you would serve Christ. [6] Work hard, but not just to please your masters when they are watching. As slaves of Christ, do the will of God with all your heart. [7] Work with enthusiasm, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. [8] Remember that the Lord will reward each one of us for the good we do, whether we are slaves or free.

[9] And in the same way, you masters must treat your slaves right. Don't threaten them; remember, you both have the same Master in heaven, and he has no favorites.

[10] A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. [11] Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. [12] For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.

[13] Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm. [14] Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. [15] For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared. [16] In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. [17] Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. [18] Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere.

[19] And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words as I boldly explain God's secret plan that the Good News is for the Gentiles, too. [20] I

am in chains now for preaching this message as God's ambassador. But pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.

[21] Tychicus, a much loved brother and faithful helper in the Lord's work, will tell you all about how I am getting along. [22] I am sending him to you for just this purpose. He will let you know how we are, and he will encourage you.

[23] May God give you peace, dear brothers and sisters, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [24] May God's grace be upon all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: God's purpose

EXPLANATION:

According to God's eternal, loving plan, he directs, carries out, and sustains our salvation.

IMPORTANCE:

When we respond to Christ's love by trusting in him, his purpose becomes our mission. Have you committed yourself to fulfilling God's purpose?

THEME: Christ the center

EXPLANATION:

Christ is exalted as the central meaning of the universe and the focus of history. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the Creator and Sustainer of all creation.

IMPORTANCE:

Because Christ is central to everything, his power must be central in us. Begin by placing all your priorities under his control.

THEME: Living church

EXPLANATION:

Paul describes the nature of the church. The church, under Christ's control, is a living body, a family, a dwelling. God gives believers special abilities by his Holy Spirit to build the church.

IMPORTANCE:

We are part of Christ's body, and we must live in vital union with him. Our conduct must be consistent with this living relationship. Use your God-given abilities to equip believers for service. Fulfill your role in the living church.

THEME: New family

EXPLANATION:

Because God through Christ paid our penalty for sin and forgave us, we have been reconciled—brought near to him. We are a new society, a new family. Being united with Christ means we are to treat one another as family members.

IMPORTANCE:

We are one family in Christ, so there should be no barriers, no divisions, no basis for discrimination. We all belong to him, so we should live in harmony with one another.

THEME: Christian conduct

EXPLANATION:

Paul encourages all Christians to wise, dynamic Christian living, for with privileges goes family responsibility. As a new community, we are to live by Christ's new standards.

IMPORTANCE:

God provides his Holy Spirit to enable us to live his way. To utilize the Spirit's power, we must lay aside our evil desires and draw on the power of his new life. Submit your will to Christ, and seek to love others.

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

