

## LIVINGHOPE **DEVOTIONAL**



# *the book of* **Ephesians**



# Preface

This devotional on the Book of Ephesians spans six weeks and contains forty-two entries that will cover some of the most significant Christian themes and doctrines in the bible. Within its pages, you will be reminded that God will one day submit everything under the leadership of Jesus Christ. You will see that He is the head of the church and the fullness of God in human flesh. As you journey through the pages, you will note the extraordinary power of the church when it is filled with the Holy Spirit who is able to reveal the nature of God in all things. You will see again how Jesus loves and cherishes the church and how He blesses His bride with wonderful gifts.

Ephesians is full of living revelation and serves to ground, shape and generally challenge believers in the faith. The absence of personal names and the address of specific moral problems has led biblical scholars to believe that the letter of Ephesians was probably a circular letter meant to be read by a wide audience beyond the church in Ephesus so receive this letter with gladness.

Regarding this wonderful letter, Spurgeon wrote, *“Divine things are usually better seen by the heart than by understanding. God has revealed a thousand things, which we shall never understand, and yet we can know them by a loving, trusting experience. The purifying of the heart is the enlightening of the spiritual eyes. Strange as it may seem, the true eye of the renewed man is seated in the heart rather than in the head. Holy affections enable us to see and, as far as possible, to understand divine things.”*

It is our prayer, that as you work through the pages of this devotional, God by His Spirit will reveal to you the divine aspect of His character, nature and person.

Let's get started!



# Ephesians



## Chapter 1



# Ephesians 1

ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)

## Greeting

*1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

## Spiritual Blessings in Christ

*3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

## Thanksgiving and Prayer

*15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

# Day 1 - Greetings

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 1:1-2

KEY VERSE:

*"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God"* EPH 1:1

There is an interesting scene from the recent Christian movie titled 'Overcomer' where two men strike up a friendship after meeting by chance in hospital. One character is a coach and teacher from a nearby high school while the other is a blind, poor local man spending his final few weeks on earth in a hospital bed. They will soon discover that they are both followers of Christ. During their second meeting, the sick man strikes up a poignant conversation:

*"John, if I ask you who you are, what's the first thing that comes to mind?"*

*"I'm a basketball coach", says John.*

*"And if that's stripped away?" asks the blind man.*

*"Well, I am also a history teacher."*

*"If we take that away, who are you?"*

*"Umm, I am a husband and a father."*

*"Beyond that, who are you?"*

*At this point, John is starting to become uncomfortable and slightly agitated,*

*"I am a white male!"*

*The blind man chuckles and prompts again, "Is there anything else?" "Well", says John "I am also a Christian."*

*"What does that mean?" asks the blind man.*

*"I suppose it means that I am a follower of Christ."*

*The blind man, in his sickbed asks, "Now how important is that?"*

*John replies that it is very important.*

*"Interesting," replies the blind man "how far that is down your list."*

*"Now wait a minute," replies John, "I could have easily said I am a Christian first!"*

*“Yes, but you didn’t. Look John, your identity will be tied to whatever you give your heart to. To me, it doesn’t sound like the Lord has first-place”.*

Although this is but a scene from a Christian movie, the dialogue between these fictitious characters is very sobering! This poor, blind, sick man is helping John realise that he has allowed for things other than Christ Jesus to define him.

Look at what Paul leads with in his greeting, *“Paul, an apostle (special messenger, personally chosen representative) of Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed), by the will of God [that is, by His purpose and choice]”* (Eph 1:1 Amp). His identity is found in Christ Jesus. Paul knows who he is. It is not his education, career, culture, ethnicity, social status, family tree, intellect, wit or wisdom that defines him. Paul is defined by his relationship with Jesus, his Lord and Saviour.

What defines you?

Like Paul, Jesus calls us to find our identity in the one who created us. As you read Ephesians chapter one, allow the weight of what Paul says about Christ-followers to press on you. Find in this first chapter how God sees you and what He says about you.

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read through chapter one and write out “I am” statements based on everything Paul says about believers. Example, Paul writes: “our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” (v3). Write: “I am blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing!”
- Why not pray in this moment that the Holy Spirit will reveal to you who you are called to be in Christ Jesus.
- Having done this, see how many “I am” or “we are” statements you can get from chapter one.

# Day 2 – The Adoption is Official!

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 1:3–10

KEY VERSE:

*“He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins”* EPH 1:7 NLT

It is estimated that there are more than 4,250 active religions in the world today varying in size and influence and representing thousands of gods. One can choose from an overwhelming array of supposed deity and men throughout the ages have done exactly that. The God of the bible, however, stands alone in a category of His own. He doesn't compete with other gods or put Himself forward as yet another choice in the colossal line-up of available celestial options. We don't choose Him. He chooses us! Isaiah writes, *“But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth, and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, ‘You are my servant, I have chosen you and not cast you off’”* (Isaiah 41:8–9).

As with God's choice of the nation of Israel, Paul expresses believers' election in corporate terms. In other words, God chose us in Christ and it wasn't just a quick, last minute divine decision. Paul writes that God chose us even before the foundation of the world! (v4). Isn't that something?! God knew you, thought about you and anticipated your life even before the foundations of this world were put in place!

It should give you immense joy and confidence when you read in verse five that God predestined you for adoption and how did this adoption become official? Verse seven gives us the answer, *“He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins”*. God chose you, and then put in place the measures needed to adopt you! Adoption signifies great honour for those who were once alienated from God to join His family with all the rights and privileges of those born naturally!

Hallelujah!

Christ's death was in no way a 'plan gone wrong' but rather a component of God's determined plan to assemble a majestic family of sons and daughters who delight in Him and live to praise Him!

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- **Read Ephesians 1:3 - 10**
- **Meditate today on the wonder that God predestined you for adoption! Thank God that He made a way through Christ Jesus for you to be reconciled to Him and become part of His family!**
- **Why not share the good news of your adoption and all its inherent privileges and joy with those you share life with!**



## Day 3 – I Am Sealed!

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 1:11–14

KEY VERSE:

*“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit”*

EPH 1:13

Did you know that the origins of the wax seal date back to before the invention of pen and paper? Historians believe that it may have originated in ancient Mesopotamia where officials used a form of seal to authenticate written tablets by leaving its unique mark in drying clay.

In time, the humble wax seal would become integral to the signing of official documents when sending important written information. Each seal would bear its owner's unique design such as a coat of arms or an emblem. Think of it in terms of your own personal signature. In that day and age, such a seal carried the same level of authority.

As the use of wax seals became increasingly popular, even relatively insignificant documents were stamped with a seal as a simple way of identifying the sender. We can see, however, that the practicality of the wax seal went beyond mere identification of the sender; an unbroken seal on delivery meant that the content of the letter remained secure!

With this in mind, isn't it exciting when Paul states that in Christ Jesus, we who believed in Him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit?! Paul is not saying that the Holy Spirit is the agent who 'stamped' us with a seal but rather that the Spirit is the seal. God sealed us with His very Spirit! When the world looks at us, they should 'see' the one who sent us!

Wonderful!

Not only that, but the Holy Spirit protects and preserves Christians until the day on which they will reach their glorious inheritance!

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 1:11 – 14
- Pray and thank God as you go throughout your day for the privilege of being sealed with His Holy Spirit.
- Read and rejoice over these scriptures regarding the Holy Spirit and ask the Lord to guide you in their practical application in your life: 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; Hebrews 9:14 & 1 Peter 1:2.
- Ask the Lord to guide you in their practical application in your life.



## Day 4 – I Will Remember You!

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 1:15–16

KEY VERSE:

*“I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers”*

EPH 1:16

Robert Murray McCheyne once wrote, “If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference. He is praying for me!”. McCheyne was right for Romans 8:34 clearly reminds us, *“for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and he is sitting in the place of honour at God’s right hand, pleading for us”* (NLT). Now that is very reassuring for everyone who belongs to Christ Jesus!

Paul followed in the example of Christ. He tells the Ephesian church, *“I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly”* (v16 NLT). In the early church, it must have been a blessing to know that someone like Paul the apostle was praying for you and having the confidence that his prayers went beyond occasional arrow prayers.

It is so encouraging when you realise that others are praying with and for you. Receiving a phone call, e-mail or text message from a fellow believer, sharing what they are praying and perhaps what they believe God may be saying over you is one of the sweet joys of Christian fellowship.

There is a well-known sentiment that goes something like this, “If you want to have a friend, be a friend!”. Sounds like good advice! Take the first steps. Selflessly, reach out with kindness, generosity and joy. In the same vein, perhaps now is the time to step-up prayer for others. Follow in the example of Christ Jesus and His apostle, Paul. Cover others in prayer. Like Jesus, plead for the well-being of fellow believers. Like Paul, continuously give thanks for the church and the body of Christ at large.

Become a source of encouragement, comfort and strength through prayer in your Christian community.

Who are you praying for today?

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 1:15-16
- Ask the Lord to show you who you should be praying for specifically in this season.
- Connect with those you are praying for and, like Paul, encourage them by letting them know of your fervent and faithful on-going prayers.



# Day 5 – Do You Know What You Have?

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 1:17–19

KEY VERSE:

*“and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might”* EPH 1:19

Craig Brian Larson writes on the subject of power and tells the following story to illustrate our dependence on God.

On Wednesday October 11, 1994, NASA's Magellan space explorer fell silent. The Magellan had circled Venus more than fifteen thousand times since arriving at the planet in 1990 but on this day, NASA scientists intentionally changed the satellite's course and sent it veering into the planet where it burned to a crisp in the atmosphere.

Why would NASA send the Megellan – which cost nine hundred million dollars – plummeting into the planet? Because the Megellan was virtually out of power. One final experiment had drained its batteries to the point where it could no longer transmit data.

Without power, even the most superior technology is worthless.

Without the power of God, even the most committed Christian can bear no fruit!

Paul states that there is not only some power but immeasurable, divine power towards us who believe. He says to the Ephesian church, *“I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him”* (v19 NLT).

Paul suggests that mankind does not possess the means necessary with which to establish just how much power is available towards those who are in Christ! The same mighty power that raised Jesus from the grave lives in you!

### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 1:17 – 19
- Like Paul, pray for greater understanding regarding the power in and available to us, who believe in Him.
- Take some time today to specifically invest in your relationship with the Holy Spirit.



# Day 6 – Above Every Name

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 1:20–21

## KEY VERSE:

*“far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come”* EPH 1:21

Did you know that every bible name has a meaning? Dr Judson Cornwall in his book, ‘The Exhaustive Dictionary of Bible Names’, explains that at times when God changed the nature of a person, He also changed the name. Abram (high and honoured father) believed God’s promise of a son and God changed his name to Abraham (father of a multitude). Sarai (contentious or quarrelsome) became Sarah (princess or noblewoman). Jacob’s name was changed to Israel and in the New Testament, Saul of Tarsus meaning ‘demanded’, became Paul, which means ‘little’. This is what the greatest apostle became known as in his own eyes as he looked increasingly upon the greatness of Christ.

Paul reminds the Ephesian church that Jesus Christ has been raised, *“far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come”*. His name means ‘Jehovah is salvation’ and by anyone’s account, Jesus of Nazareth is the most significant person who has ever lived on earth. He has influenced more lives and had more written about Him than any other person in history, bar none! Jesus is the only one who ever made a credible claim to being more than just another human being and to this day, more than a billion people revere Him as the supreme revelation of God!

Jesus is also known by another name which is revealed to us in Matthew 1:23, *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel which means, ‘God with us’”*.

As believers, we remember that we called on the name of Jesus for salvation (Acts 2:21); we put our faith in the name of Jesus (John 1:12); we

are justified (1 Corinthians 6:11) and forgiven in Jesus' name (Acts 10:43) and are then baptised in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38). Ours is a life lived in His name (John 20:31) where we glorify His name (2 Thessalonians 1:12) and give thanks for everything we do in the name of Jesus (Colossians 3:17).

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 1:20 – 21
- Study the final paragraph of today's devotion and review the associated scriptures.
- Tell someone today in your own words what the name of Jesus means for you.



## Day 7 – The Church

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 1:22–23

KEY VERSE:

*“And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church”* EPH 1:22

When Paul speaks of the church, he uses the Greek word ‘ekklēsia’ and he will go on to use this word nine times in total throughout the book of Ephesians. Ekklēsia was a common, secular, Greek term referring to a gathering or an assembly of people. Interestingly, it was used in the Old Testament (Deut. 31:30) for the community of Israel, God’s chosen people.

Paul uses this term to identify the Christian body. He says, that Christ is the head over the ‘ekklēsia’ and this is perhaps one of Paul’s most creative and profound contributions to theology. The head sustains, guides, inspires enables and strengthens the body! Like a physical body, the church has an organic connection with its head and simply cannot function in any shape or form without it. There can be no life in the body if it is not attached to the head.

The image of the body serves to highlight the unity of the church with Christ and with one another. Each member is involved with all the others and equally important as they go about doing Christ’s work on earth. Attempts to work, serve or journey apart from the ‘ekklēsia’ simply doesn’t make sense. As believers, we are not to run alone but are to be rooted in His body, the church.

The great bible commentator, Matthew Henry, stated that God appointing Christ as head over everything is a majestic gift to the church. The church is tied intrinsically to one who is endued with limitless power and authority. As such, we can take great comfort today in the knowledge that Jesus Christ has so identified Himself with His church that it is said to be His very body, much as Adam described Eve as, *“bone of my bones and*

*flesh of my flesh*” (Gen 2:23) and as God declared man and wife to be “*one flesh*” (Eph 5:28–31).

Hallelujah!

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 1:22 – 23
- Pray today for prodigals, those who fell away from His ‘ekklēsia’, to come back to the body of Christ. Pray for them to be planted and rooted in a local church.
- Ask the Lord to give you a name or names of those who once were in Christ and connect with them today where possible. Encourage, love and inspire as the Lord leads you.



# Ephesians



## Chapter 2



# Ephesians 2

ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)

## By Grace Through Faith

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. <sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

## One in Christ

<sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called “the uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— <sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. <sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

# Day 1 - I Was Dead

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 2:1-5

KEY VERSE:

*"And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world" EPH 2:1-2*

Once while walking in Dartmoor National Park on a misty and rainy day, I was shocked to stumble upon a skeleton of a horse nestled next to a river. My experience of horses previously had been riding them on great adventures and watching them gallop through fields with their usual nobility, radiance and prowess on display. To find an old skeleton of the poor horse took me totally by surprise. It clearly had been there a very long time.

One of the biggest surprises in my life was discovering that I am also considered dead according to scripture, even though I felt very much alive in my flesh. I was enjoying living out passions of the flesh, desires of my body and mind, not knowing this was leading directly to my death. Seen through God's eternal eyes, these actions make us by nature children of wrath, receivers of God's punishment, due to our sin.

The second chapter of Ephesians begins by telling us, "*you were dead in the trespasses and sins*", pointing us towards a clear consequence in scripture of our actions. This is further backed-up by verses such as Romans 6:23, "*For the wages of sin is death*"; Romans 5:12, "*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned*" and Psalm 51:5, "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*".

Each verse provides a fuller and fuller picture of the fact that we are already dead in our sins. It is the reason for eternal death and eternal separation from the Father. Every single human has sinned as part of the curse placed upon Man in the garden of Eden. We are born into sin

meaning that, by nature, we are sinful humans with sinful hearts doing simply what we are hard-wired to do which is offensive to God.

Have you realised how dead you truly are in your sins? The first time I realised that my sin has such a severe consequence on my life, it put me in a place of shock and fear of what the effects of this might be for all eternity! A little bit like seeing the skeleton of a horse on Dartmoor – what I was used to seeing with so much life, suddenly appeared scarily dead.

The great news for us is that God does not leave us dead in our sins. He is rich in mercy; He has a great love for us and, *“even when we were dead in our trespasses, he made us alive together with Christ”* (v5). The beginning of Ephesians chapter two paves the way for the rest of the chapter which shows the powerful contrast we find in standing upon Christ’s death and resurrection and the ill-fated future we had due to our sin.

The start of this chapter points to how dead we really were in our sins which lights up how much more we are now truly alive through the power of Jesus Christ which has made us alive today! I don’t know about you, but the truth of Jesus Christ having transformed my life totally makes me thankful beyond measure – I, who once was dead, am now forever alive in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Thank you, Lord, that you are great in mercy, great in love and that we are made alive together in Christ! Thank you that I once was dead but now I am alive and my eternity is forever changed through the blood of Jesus Christ.*

#### ACTION STEPS

- Read today’s passage, Ephesians 2:1-5
- Pray a prayer of thankfulness that you have been resurrected from death to life through the power of Jesus Christ.
- Tell someone today your story of how you found life after being dead in your trespasses and sins.



## Day 2 – The Greatest Gift

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 2:6–9

KEY VERSE:

*“for by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God”* EPH 2:8

I love receiving gifts. I love watching others receive gifts. I love giving gifts. Gifts are often surrounded by great smiles, joy-filled eyes and loud shouts of appreciation and thankfulness. Many of us have poignant memories of significant gifts received whilst growing up. For me, my first set of golf clubs, a hiking rucksack and a pool table are all memorable gifts which I was massively thankful for, each adding to a happy birthday or Christmas.

Perhaps the greatest gift I have ever received was a BMW Sport Convertible – not a toy model but the actual car! What made this even better was that it was nowhere near my birthday or Christmas, it was just simply a gift given to my family from a generous owner. I received it with great thankfulness, joy and also surprise that someone would be so kind to give me such a generous gift.

Ephesians 2:6–9 shows us in great detail the incredibly generous gift we have received through Jesus Christ and also, no matter how hard we try, we simply cannot earn the gift of salvation. It is a gift, given by the grace of God. It is something we will never deserve and there has never been – or ever will be – such a great gift given!

We explored in previous verses how we were supernaturally raised from death to life. The great gift we receive through Christ has far more for us than the already miraculous gift of life. Our salvation means that we will be seated *“with him in heavenly places”* (v6). Scriptures point towards great banquet that we are invited to. There is beautiful imagery of us sitting in a place we never could dream of – the presence of the Living God.

Verse seven says, *“so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus”*. It gives us a sense, that for all eternity, we will continue to receive the gift of Christ’s grace (that is, forgiveness we didn’t earn or deserve) and His kindness (unpolluted and forever growing in revelation to us).

A stand-out part of this gift is that, *“by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God”*. This incomparable gift is not a work of merit. You don’t have to read the bible a thousand times, have prayed for six hours a day your whole life or even have lived a Godly life. You cannot earn it. It is simply, a gift of God.

The worst of sinners who has in their life committed the most terrible of atrocities, on their deathbed, can receive the greatest gift ever given. God’s grace, kindness and love stretches far beyond what our minds can compute and is received through repentance, the power of faith and, ultimately, God’s great grace. Acts 3:19 says, *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord”* (NIV).

Through the power of faith and repentance, we should believe today that we have entered into the hope, kindness, love and eternal power of the greatest gift; eternal life in Jesus Christ. What a privilege we have to know Him and an incredible future to look towards!

*Thank you, Father for the greatest gift ever given; your son Jesus Christ and thank you that my salvation is not based upon the works of my life but is a gift I receive today through the power of faith.*

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 2:6-9
- Pray today a prayer of thanks for the gift of God’s grace.
- Say / write down three reasons why you are thankful that your salvation isn’t earned by works but is a gift through faith.

## Day 3 – The Craftsman's Hand

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 2:10

KEY VERSE:

*“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* EPH 2:10

I have never been good at anything artistic. I cannot colour in the lines; my drawings have often been compared to that of a five-year-old and you will not see any of my paintings hanging in a national gallery any time soon! I once received an invitation to a pottery class which I mistakenly accepted and proceeded to create misshapen and unusable pieces of pottery that were unsalvageable even for the pottery teacher. I certainly cannot claim to be a master craftsman.

One of my favourite parts of following Christ is that we entrust our lives to follow Him and ultimately allow Him to define the way we speak, spend, think and live. We place our lives into the hands of the master craftsman in the form of allowing Christ to shape our lives. Ephesians 2:10 shows us this so vividly.

Firstly, we should know that, *“We are his workmanship”*, not me on my own, or you on your own. Continuing the picture of the potter's wheel, we are placed in His hands and as we partner with Him, we are shaped as He wills. I believe this is great news for every one of us. By nature, we all have our own thoughts of how our life should look; have a tendency to chase after the latest fad; conform to popular opinion and are led by the deceitful desires of our heart. We must be thankful that we find ourselves as clay in the hands of the master craftsman, the creator of the heavens and the earth. His shaping means our lives are defined with a heavenly stamp, not a worldly counterfeit. The more time we spend in the presence and hands of the master craftsmen, the more we begin to reflect Jesus, Himself.



Secondly, we are, “*created in Christ Jesus for good works*”. This gives us a great picture that we are a new creation found in the resurrection power which took us from death to life. Jeremiah 18 is a powerful piece of scripture which looks at a prophetic word from the potter’s house. Jeremiah 18:4 says, “*But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so, the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him*” (NIV). I read this scripture and it gives me great hope because we are recreated in Christ Jesus. All of us started our journey of faith from a place of being dead in our sins; our lives ultimately falling apart and being tripped up by the on-going consequences of sinful living. What arrived in the master craftsman’s hands as a marred pot is now being reworked and shaped into what seems best to Him.

Finally, we are being reworked to walk in the works, “*which God prepared beforehand*”. We should be greatly encouraged that God has a plan and calling for our lives, far beyond what we ever would have accomplished or dreamed of on our own. We must simply allow the master craftsman’s hands to mould our life and respond daily to His shaping. Proverbs 16:3 gives us insight into this great exhortation, “*Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established*”. I believe that as we commit our lives into the hands of the master craftsman, our character is transformed and we walk into the incredibly exciting, powerful and world-changing works the Lord has planned for us.

*Lord, may I place my life in your hands today, trust you as my master craftsman and allow you to shape me and lead me into the great works you have planned for my life.*

#### ACTION STEPS

- Read Ephesians 2:10
- As you pray today, ask God to shape you as He sees fit and declare your trust in the master craftsman’s hands.
- Write down how you used to live and the characteristics you previously had. Compare them to where you are now and give thanks for what Christ has done in your life.

## Day 4 – The Wall-Breaker

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 2:11–14

KEY VERSE:

*“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility”* EPH 2:14

I have had the privilege of travelling to and through Germany on multiple occasions, visiting great friends in different parts of the country. Between August 1961 and November 1989, travelling this journey would not have been possible for any of the German population because of the infamous Berlin wall. The wall was built on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> August 1961 after the East German government’s decision to close the entire border. Initially, it was made up solely of barbed wire before it was quickly replaced to be a formidable, 13-foot-high and 96-mile-long wall with 300 guard towers strategically placed across regular intervals. From that moment, there was no movement between East and West Germany until the removal of border restrictions in November 1989 and then the final destruction of the wall in December 1989. Towns, cities and regions were split in two overnight. Families and friends who were together daily, suddenly had the horror of this being impossible and illegal due to the closing of the borders and their positions on either side of the new wall. A situation hard for many of us even to imagine.

This horror is closer to home for all of us than we might think. God knitted us together in our mother’s womb and breathed the first breath into our lungs. At the point of birth, we are born in sin and are now living under the curse of the fall in the garden of Eden which results in a separation being created between us and the Father. A great wall of hostility is placed between us and the Father. Our sin is offensive to Him and we cannot enter into His presence. We are now people, *“having no hope and without God in the world”* (v12) and destined for an eternity without the Father. The great news for us is that, *“you who once were far*

*off have been brought near by the blood of Christ”(v13). The unpassable divide which once separated us like the Berlin wall has been demolished through the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ and by His blood. We can now once again come close to the Father.*

We could not make peace with the Father in our own strength but only through the blood of Christ. *“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility.”* Declaring Jesus as Lord and Saviour literally breaks down the wall of hostility which stood between us and the Father and is a powerful picture of our miraculous salvation. What was never meant to be possible has been made possible. For many in Germany, when the wall came down, scenes of euphoria, celebration and tears flooded our screens as many were re-united with family and friends. This, one day, will be our story as we are re-united with the Father in heaven through the blood of Christ. In John 14:6, Jesus says, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me”*. Before Christ, we were without hope, far from the Father and lacking peace. Now, through the blood of Christ, we are again brought near to the Father and the wall of hostility between us is gone forevermore.

*Thank you, Heavenly Father, that there is power in the blood of Jesus which breaks down the wall of hostility between us and allows us to draw near to you; an impossible miracle for which I am eternally grateful.*

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 2: 11-14
- As you pray today, ask for the same power of Jesus' blood which broke down the wall of hostility, to bring new freedom in your life.
- Break, rip or destroy something today and imagine it to be the wall of hostility which separated you from the Father. Once broken, worship in that moment and thank Him that the wall was totally destroyed!

## Day 5 – The Good News of Peace

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 2:15–17

KEY VERSE:

*“And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near”* EPH 2:17

I love the opportunity to share good news with friends and family and I love hearing good news from friends and family! “I got the job”, “We got engaged”, “I am pregnant”, “I won the award”, “Our offer has been accepted on the house”, “I have decided to follow Jesus.” When you hear good news like this, you can’t help but clap, scream, dance, embrace and start celebrating with those sharing the good news. Many movies capture this moment of pure joy and celebration so well and it is hopefully a scene we can all relate to from those high moments of our life!

There is no greater news than hearing that someone has made the commitment to follow Jesus Christ! Luke 15:10 says, *“I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents (NIV)”*. This is a wonderful picture and gives us a glimpse of what happens in heaven when someone accepts the good news of peace in their heart! We, too must celebrate like this and I hope many times throughout our lives!

Ephesians 2:17 tells us, *“And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near”*. Christ spent his life proclaiming peace, the Father’s desire to remove the hostility between us and to reconcile us back to Him. Christ ultimately paid the price for our peace through his body on the cross. This moment in history has defined billions of lives and has brought peace between the Father and many others ever since. Peace was given to those close to Jesus at the time and is also given to us here today. 2,000 years on, we are still receiving and inheriting salvation through the good news of peace.



Peace is actually a fruit of the spirit and in Matthew 5:9 we are told, “*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God*”. This shows us that those who are preachers of peace, who lead others to the peace found only through the blood of Christ, shall be called blessed and children of God. We should aim to be proclaimers of this good news of peace, sharing with all our friends and family the incredible news that, through the blood of Jesus, we can find peace again with the Father! It is the Father’s heart that none should perish and that all should know and accept the good news of peace found only in Christ. It should be our longing to be in tune with the Father’s heart so let’s declare the great news we have!

I would like to encourage us that this good news is news which needs sharing. Eternal destinations depend on it and we should be eager in declaring, sharing and living as peacemakers with the purpose and hope of seeing the many lost people in our nation receiving the age-old peace of Jesus Christ. Today, set your heart on being a peacemaker and proclaimer of this incredibly good news!

*Thank you that we have heard and know the good news of peace which has changed our eternal destination forever! I pray today that I will be a peacemaker in this world, sharing the good news of peace with others so that they also know the eternity-changing peace only found in the blood of Jesus.*

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 2:15-17
- Pray for all those you know who are yet to follow Christ! Pray for opportunities to share the good news of peace and that they will be saved by the blood of Christ!
- Share the good news of peace with someone you know today.

# Day 6 – From Strangers to Family

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 2:18–19

KEY VERSE:

*“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”* EPH 2:19

When I was eighteen years old, I made a decision which would totally change my life for the better. In my naivety, I could not imagine how that one decision would transform my life. I had decided to move from Southern England to the gem of God's earth, the Isle of Man. The move was supposed to be for one year. I now find myself sat here eight years on and in awe of how significantly God has moved in my life and the journey He has taken me on. I couldn't have imagined it as I took my first steps onto the shores of the place I now call home.

Moving town, job, country, leaving family behind; these are all challenges and changes faced by taking journeys like mine and ones which many of us have had to adapt to after making major, life-changing decisions. One of the best parts of moving to the Isle of Man was discovering Living Hope Church and being warmly accepted into the family. Through the church, I have been so fortunate to make life-long friends; find amazing spiritual mentors; to have been shown love in an incredible way and, to top it all off, find a beautiful wife! What a joy it is to be a member of the household of God here on the Isle of Man.

For me, this is a great picture of how our relationship with God is transformed through the blood of Jesus, *“For through him we both have access in one spirit to the father”* (v18). I arrived on the island as a stranger to everyone – an alien. I didn't belong in this location. I was far and distant from anyone I knew and certainly didn't belong to any church family at that point.

Ephesians 2:19 says, *“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”*. In the NLT version, the second half of the verse is written as, *“ you are members of God’s family”* and I think this captures what happened to me in moving to the Isle of Man but also what happens to us all through salvation and being brought into a new family; being called sons and daughters of the living God. God is our Heavenly Father and He loves being with his children. He loves His family and He longs to put the lonely [those far off from Him and yet to find this wonderful family we belong to] in family. (Psalm 68.8)

When I consider how we were strangers to God, far off and destined to forever be separated from Him and how we are now able to come near to Him; to cry on His shoulder; to share our deepest thoughts and burdens with Him, it is an amazing privilege and brings me to a place of great thankfulness! What an honour to have such an incredible Heavenly Father who loves us so dearly and isn’t it amazing that we are now members of the household of God and part of His family!

The church family is a powerful picture of this as it reflects the fact that we are now sons and daughters, specially placed in the family of God. Be sure to celebrate and be close to your church family today.

*Thank you, Lord, that I am no longer a stranger far from you, but that I am close to you and part of your family as a son/daughter of the living God. Thank you for the church and the incredible picture it is of being part of the family of God!*

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 2:18-19
- Pray for your church family today and thank God for the privilege of being part of it.
- Everyone in the family goes through different seasons of life. Find someone who is thriving in their faith today and encourage them. Find someone who is struggling at the moment and lift them up. Help them carry and conquer the challenges they are facing.

# Day 7 – A House Built Strong

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 2:20–2

KEY VERSE:

*“Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone”* EPH 2:20

The Leaning Tower of Pisa is one of the most famous pieces of architecture in Europe but for all the wrong reasons! Construction started on the tower in 1173 and amazingly concluded 226 years later. The construction was hindered by wars, debt and while engineers figured out how to prevent the tower from leaning. Even in the 13th century, when only three of its eight stories were built, it had already started that famous lean it is known for today. Originally built at 60 metres tall, it is now 56.67 metres at the highest point and 55.86 metres at the lowest point and leaning at about 3.99 degrees, far off the perfect angle and height it was designed to be.

Where has the construction of this tower gone so wrong? It was designed by famous architects of the time; constructed with fine resources by skilled engineers and builders. The key problem actually lies below the surface in the very foundations of the structure! They were laid on top of soft ground consisting of clay, fine sand and shells and it is commonly believed that the tower would have collapsed upon completion had it not been for the 226 years it took to build which compressed the soil and gave it some form of stability.

From this, we must conclude that foundations are important in all construction. We also must conclude that what foundations we build our lives upon has a significant effect on our life and faith. We are encouraged in the final verses of Ephesians chapter two, to allow our faith to be, *“built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the cornerstone”*. This simple exhortation contains vital and key truth. The image of a cornerstone bears little significance in our lives today but at the time of writing, every new building would have had a cornerstone; a



perfectly shaped rock, angled and set at the corner of the building to direct the angle and connection of the two adjacent walls coming together. Without the correct angle and foundations, the buildings would simply crumble and not last the test of time.

This is the same story for our faith; it should be built upon what we see and know in the character of Jesus. Daily, we should look to live as Jesus lived, following His example and not deviating from His footsteps. As we do this, we reflect Christ to the world and we are, “*built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit*” (v22). We should make great effort in searching the scriptures, learning about Jesus and basing every area of our lives upon who He was and How he taught us to live. It is vital to build our life upon correct foundations otherwise our natural, fleshly tendencies will have us leaning away just like the Tower of Pisa and eventually, falling away completely from our faith.

As we conclude Ephesians chapter two today, we can reflect on the rich truths discovered in this passage – how we have been brought from death to life; been newly shaped in His purposes; become receivers of the good news of peace and brought into God’s family. Despite all this, there is a sense that we must keep looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith to shape our lives, and choose to build our life upon Him, our cornerstone. May this be your life-long goal and challenge.

*Lord, I pray that everything I do will be built upon you, the cornerstone and strong foundation of my life.*

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 2: 20–22
- Bring before God today, every area of your life and ask Him if you are building correctly.
- Why not seek-out a trusted friend today and ask if they see any area of your life which isn’t currently reflecting the character of Jesus.



# Ephesians



## Chapter 3



# Ephesians 3

ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)

## The Mystery of the Gospel Revealed

For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— 2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. 13 So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

## Prayer for Spiritual Strength

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

# Day 1 – God’s Mysterious Plan

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 3:1–6

## KEY VERSE:

*“This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”* EPH 3:6 (NIV)

Do you ever start a sentence and then interrupt yourself? My wife does it all the time, especially when she is giving directions,

“You turn right at the white farmhouse and then carry on to the end of that road. Did you know they are talking about clearing that wasteland and putting in a duck pond and play area? Wouldn’t that be amazing for the community?!” Then a few minutes later, “Oh and turn left at the give-way sign”.

Chapter three of Ephesians is a bit like that. Paul opens with, “*For this reason*” and we would expect the next words to be a response to all the amazing truth he has shared with us in this letter so far but from verses 2–13, he interrupts himself to share an exciting mystery which God revealed to him. A mystery that he has already touched on in chapter two and we don’t hear the end of his sentence until verse 14! What a great interruption! Five times in this letter, Paul talks about ‘mystery’ and three of those occasions are found in this short chapter.

Part of the mystery involves God’s plan for the gentile believers. Paul reminds the Ephesians that he is a prisoner of Christ – yes, he is physically imprisoned, but he is also willingly enslaved to Christ – for the sake of the gentile believers. God has revealed to Paul the all-inclusive nature of the gospel. We have already seen in chapter two verse 13, “*now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ*” and now in this passage, he goes further. Not only can those far-off come near to God, but they can have equal share in His



inheritance; equal membership in the body of Christ and become equal participants in God's promises.

There are no second-class citizens in God's family. Part of the great mystery God revealed to Paul was that anyone could know God through faith in Christ! The gospel was not restricted to the Jews who had been the chosen ones; God has extended His grace to everyone including you and me and not just as an after-thought but as part of God's eternal plan!

What does this mean for us?

- **All are invited.** No-one is outside of God's reach. No one is too far gone. Whoever you are, whatever your past, God invites you to be his child, to receive his grace and forgiveness through faith in Jesus.
- **All are members of the body of Christ.** All believers have a role to play, no one is less important or less needed - YOU are an essential part of the body!
- **All share the benefits.** There are over 3000 promises in the bible. They aren't just for the pastors or particularly 'good' Christians. They are for YOU!! Eternal life awaits every follower of Jesus - we all share that inheritance. No one will be at the back of the queue!

#### ACTION STEPS

- Read Ephesians 3:1-6
- Thank God that you have been welcomed into his family.
- Paul knew his part in God's mysterious plan (v8). What part can you play?

## Day 2 – Boundless Riches

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 3:7-9

KEY VERSE:

*“Although I am less than the least of all the Lord’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ”* EPH 3:8 (NIV)

In 1965, a sound engineer in Abbey Road Studio picked up a piece of crumpled paper from the bin. On the page was John Lennon’s handwritten lyrics for ‘Nowhere man’. In 2003, this piece of paper was sold at Christie’s Auction for £270,000. One man’s rubbish became another man’s treasure.

Do you ever feel worthless or discarded? Paul called himself, “*less than the least*”. He had been a persecutor and murderer of Christians, completely at odds with the gospel of Christ, yet God chose him, saved him and gave him a purpose. Not only had he become a beneficiary in the boundless riches of Christ, but he had been called to share these riches with a people group who themselves were unlikely and considered unworthy.

I spoke to a precious girl recently who said,

“If people knew the truth about me, they wouldn’t want anything to do with me. No-one would love me if they knew who I really was.” Like that piece of paper thrown in the bin, she had no idea of her value. The truth is that none of us deserves anything from God but to Him, we are priceless. My friend’s mum had a beautiful sketch of Jesus on her wall along with these words:

‘I asked Jesus, “how much do you love me?”

“This much,” he said

and he stretched out his arms and died.’

God was willing to pay the ultimate price for you and me so that we could become recipients of His boundless riches. What are these boundless riches? We have seen throughout this letter, the limitless forgiveness, grace and mercy of God that is made available to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Because these riches are 'boundless' (beyond comprehension or measurement) this means that whatever we may have done, however we may have messed up or fallen short, He is always there for us with depths of mercy, grace and forgiveness that will never run out!



#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 3:7-9
- Pray. Thank God that your value is found in Him. Repent of any areas where you may have failed God, confident that out of His boundless riches, we will find grace, mercy and forgiveness.
- Who can you share the boundless riches of Christ with today?

## Day 3 – Church on Display

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 3:10–13

KEY VERSE:

*“[God’s intention] was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* EPH 3:10–11 (NIV)

Throughout the course of human history, every generation has faced the threat of epidemics and bacterial diseases that have, at times, literally wiped out entire continents of people. The Bubonic plague, or ‘Black Death’, killed an estimated 200 million people in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century alone.

In the late 1920s a Scottish physician, Dr Alexander Fleming, who was trying to develop an antibacterial agent, noticed that the growth of a pathogen was halted by the presence of mould in a contaminated petri dish. Fleming published a scientific article in a journal in 1929 and one of his students, Dr. Cecil Paine, went on to develop the effectiveness of penicillin – a drug derived from the mould – against many bacterial diseases in human patients. We cannot accurately gauge the number of lives saved by that mysterious discovery but without doubt, the numbers of lives owed to Fleming reaches to the hundreds of millions.

There is a beautiful mystery in God that, for many centuries, remained concealed even from the angelic host. Century after century passed by. God’s covenant family was isolated and cut off from other peoples. It didn’t mix. It was consecrated, set apart to be holy, set apart to protect the life-saving message of the coming Messiah.

In the arrival of Jesus, the mystery was unshrouded; the concealed intentions of God revealed through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus. A new community was birthed. A community drawn together from



every ethnicity, every creed, every language. The walls that had isolated the covenant family were torn down as law was superseded by the new covenant of grace and the church was born!

God's multi-faceted wisdom is displayed to the whole earth, and even to the rulers and the authorities of the heavenly realms, through the church. What does the church display? The church is a demonstration of God's saving love, given freely to undeserving people. The church is the vessel that God adds His children to. The church is the world's 'spiritual penicillin'. It is a vessel through which God has saved, not hundreds of millions of lives but billions! A vessel, not revealed by the accidental experimentation of man but through the intentional unfolding and revelation of God's eternal plan at just the right time.

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 3:10-13
- Spend time praying for the witness of the church. Ask God to work powerfully in your church family so that when He holds us up to the spiritual realm, every being will give Him praise and thanks for His eternal wisdom and His mercy that made a way for every person to be saved.
- Send a message to a person in your church family from a different nation. Encourage them by telling them how thankful you are that God's salvation plan includes them!

# Day 4 – Falling on Our Knees

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 3:14–16

## KEY VERSE:

*“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.”* EPH 3:14–15 (NIV)

Finally, Paul resumes the sentence he began in verse one! The NLT version puts it like this, *“When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray”*.

What is *“all this”*? It’s all the amazing things that we have seen in this letter so far – the grace, forgiveness, mighty power and love of Jesus and now, the mystery of God’s plan for His church! No wonder he falls to his knees to pray. Much of Ephesians is based on prayer and, in this second half of chapter three, Paul starts once again to intercede for the Ephesian believers.

**Who does he pray to?** *“The Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name”*. (v14–15). Again, Paul reminds us that whether part of a Jewish family or a Gentile family, believers in Christ all share **one** Father. Paul is not praying to some distant deity, but as a son, he is coming before his Father and reminds us that we, too, are the children of this good, good Father.

**What does he pray?** Paul goes on to pray that the believers in Ephesus would receive:

- Inner strength (v16)
- Christ’s presence (v17)
- Understanding of Christ’s love (v17–19)
- Completeness in Him (v19)

Paul prays that God will provide for these believers, *“out of His glorious riches”*. Remember, we have seen that these riches are limitless so there will be a constant supply!! But he doesn’t pray for their physical

needs. When he thinks of “*all this*” – the wonder and mystery of Christ – his prayer is that we would know, understand and experience more of Him. More important than asking God to change our circumstances, is asking Him to strengthen us to face them. More important than asking God to make our lives easier, is asking Him to be with us. More important than asking God for ‘things’, is praying that we find our completeness in Him! Corrie Ten Boom, who spent time in a Nazi prison camp for hiding Jews during the Second World War, wrote these words:

‘If you look at the world, you will be distressed.  
If you look within, you’ll be depressed.  
If you look to Him, you’ll be at rest.’

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 3:14-16
- Pray for each other to be filled with His strength, His presence, His love and to know completeness in Him.
- Maybe God is laying someone specific on your heart today. Why not let them know that you are praying for them and send them an encouragement from God’s word?

## Day 5 – Rooted in Him

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 3:17

KEY VERSE:

*“so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love”* EPH 3:17 (NIV)

I remember hearing about an orange grove in Florida whose trees continued to bear big juicy oranges even during a season of severe drought. Throughout the region, owners of other groves were losing entire crops so they asked this owner how his orange trees were still bearing fruit. He explained that as young saplings, they would often go for days without being watered. This caused their roots to grow deeper and deeper into the soil to find the water table and so, as they grew, they were not dependant on rain to flourish – their roots had a constant supply of water.

Paul prays that these believers will be “*rooted*” and “*established*” in God’s love. The NLT puts it like this, “*and your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong*”. Like those orange trees, if we are well-rooted, we will find our strength and nourishment in the Lord, even in difficult times.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 says, “*Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green.*” (NIV)

### How deep are your roots?

Jeremiah said that those who trust in God, would not fear when the heat or drought comes. He didn’t say tough times wouldn’t come but that there was no need to fear if they were rooted firmly in God. This is a time to grow those roots deep into the right soil; to choose to spend more time with God and less time on Netflix; to dig deep into God’s word and to



spend time in His presence being replenished as we are re-filled by the Spirit so that when times get harder – when heat, drought or strong winds come – we will not be moved!

### **How do we deepen our roots?**

- **Prayer.** Throughout this letter, Paul prays for the believers. He is in prison so he can't visit them but he knows that things shift when we pray. Prayer pulls our roots deeper into the soil of God's love.
- **The Word.** Read and digest the word of God. This will nourish, strengthen and enlighten us.
- **Fellowship.** Hebrews 10:23-25 reminds us why fellowship is so important. Meeting together (even virtually) and encouraging one another, spurs us on to love and good works and prevents us from wavering in our faith.



#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 5:17
- Pray that your roots will grow deep down into the soil of God's marvellous love.
- What can you do this week to strengthen your roots?

## Day 6 – Infinite Love

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 3:18–19

KEY VERSE:

*“to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ”*

EPH 3:18B (NIV)

I remember singing ‘Wide, Wide as the Ocean’ in Sunday School and we would stretch our arms wide. The boys, of course, used this as an opportunity to smack one another in the face. Then we would go up on our tiptoes and reach our arms up, to sing, ‘high as the heavens above’ before touching the floor for ‘deep, deep as the deepest sea, is my saviour’s love.’ Even as children we knew that we couldn’t reach wide, high or deep enough to express the dimensions of His love.

How beautiful! Paul’s prayer is that all believers grasp something that really cannot be grasped – the immeasurable, infinite love of Christ. I had a rich friend at school (her surname was actually triple-barrelled, that’s how posh they were!) who used to boast that it took her dad a whole day to walk round their property limits. That’s pretty big but we could walk for years and never reach the limits of Christ’s love!

Isn’t it interesting that Paul talks about four dimensions of Christ’s love – width, height, length and depth. 4D includes not only dimensions of volume, but also of time! Not only is Christ’s love immeasurable, it’s also eternal. God tells His people in Jeremiah 31:3, “*I have loved you with an everlasting love*”. His love will never ever run out. It will never run dry. We will never exhaust His love for us or reach the bottom of the barrel. What an amazing assurance! Are you feeling the love? If you are someone who struggles to believe that you are loved, take a moment to consider the limitless love of Christ. Pray like Paul, that you may be able to grasp how much you are loved today.

It gets better. Look at the last part of verse 19, “*that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*”. How incredible?! A God without limits, with a love so amazing that it cannot be measured, and yet Paul prays that we will be filled with all the fullness of Him!!! How can we possibly contain something so huge? The truth is, we aren’t supposed to contain it. This love is supposed to overflow out of us and flood the world around us so let’s thank Jesus for His amazing love. Consider how high, wide, deep and long it is and think of ways we can pour out His love to others today.

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 3:18-19
- Pray that you, and your brothers and sisters, can grasp this immeasurable, eternal love of Jesus.
- What can you do today to pour the love of Jesus into someone’s life?

# Day 7 – Immeasurably Love

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 3:20–21

## KEY VERSE:

*“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to His power that is at work within us”* EPH 3:20 (NIV)

When it comes to God, we can't help but use every superlative adjective we can think of! In this chapter alone, we have considered His boundless riches, manifold wisdom, eternal purpose, mighty strength, limitless love, and now we see that He is able to do immeasurably more. 'Awesome' is a word that has become overused over the past few decades but it really only can be used accurately to describe the wonder and glory of God.

Today, as we conclude this chapter, we see that the infinite God with the limitless love can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. The King James Version puts it like this, *“He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all that we ask or think”*. I love that – even better than Mr Kipling's cakes!! Think of a number, double it, triple it, multiply it by infinity squared and that is what our God is capable of!

How big are your prayers? What can you imagine? Can you imagine a tenth of our island coming to know Jesus? God can do immeasurably more!! Can you imagine a life group in every village? God can do immeasurably more!! Can you imagine nations falling to their knees in repentance and worship? God can do immeasurably more!! Are you expectant for more? There is no ceiling when it comes to God; He really can do above and beyond all we ask.

How will he accomplish this? Do we pray our big, hairy audacious prayers and then passively wait? He will do immeasurably more through, *“His power that is at work within us”* (v20). He has chosen to put His power to work in us so that we can be used to do immeasurably more. We saw

earlier in the week that God's mysterious plan involved using the church - a collective of believers, from every nation, every background, every ethnicity, every walk of life - to display His manifold wisdom to the powers and authorities. God chooses to use the Church - together with God's power at work in us - to do exceedingly, abundantly above all we ask or think, with each of us playing our part. God took Gideon's 300 men and defeated an army of 24,000. Jesus took one boy's packed lunch and fed thousands of people. What immeasurable things will He do through a praying church who make themselves available to be used by Him?

Finally, Paul reminds us that it's all for the glory of God, *"to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen"* (v21)

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 3:20-21
- Pray BIG prayers. What do you want to see God do on this island? Across the UK? Around the world? Pray with expectancy that He will do immeasurably more.
- Be available to be used!! One 'share' of an online church service could reach hundreds of your friends with the good news about Jesus. One letter or card could be the answer to someone's desperate prayer. A bold step of obedience to offer prayer for someone could end up in a powerful healing testimony.



# Ephesians



## Chapter 4



# Ephesians 4

ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION (ESV)

## Unity in the Body of Christ

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. 8 Therefore it says, "When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men." 9 (In saying, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? 10 He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) 11 And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, 14 so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. 15 Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.*

## The New Life

*17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, 22 to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, 23 and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, 24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labour, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamour and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

# Day 1 – The Call to Walk in Unity

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 4:1-6

KEY VERSE:

*“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called... eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” EPH 4:1-3*

As I think back to my time as a child at primary school, I can only ever remember long, hot and sunny summer days culminating in June, at the end of term, with the annual school sports day. There was the tug of war, egg and spoon race, obstacle race, and of course the sprints and relay races, but my favourite was the three-legged race. (Today, this might fall foul of health and safety policing and risk-management as inevitably there would be falls and injuries and entangled bodies.) One leg from the first child was securely fastened to one leg from the second child with an old pair of your mum's tights! I don't know where that came from, but they did the job very well. As the whistle blew, it was only a matter of seconds before the first bodies lay mangled in a heap on top of one another on the grass. Running the three-legged race without falling wasn't rocket science but it did involve a few key strategies. Firstly, tie the tights well to one another's ankles. Secondly, walk in the same direction and finally, make sure you walk in unity, almost as one person, in the same direction and at the same speed.

Paul outlines doctrine and exposition in the first three chapters of his letter to the Ephesians and now in the remaining chapters, his focus is on duty and exhortation, or putting it simply, how to apply these eternal truths to every part of daily life.

The church in Ephesus, like many of the churches across Europe, was made up of a diverse group of people. There were slave and free, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, those from a Jewish background and others who were Gentiles but now, they were one. The God whom they

served was indeed three – diverse – but also one – unity. The origin of their unity lay in the work of the Father, the Son who gave them life and the same Holy Spirit who dwelt in each of them. They were indeed one but now the exhortation came to faithfully live it out.

If only walking in unity was as simple as the three-legged race! At that time, the calling was to hundreds of believers locally. Now, it is also a call to millions globally who are joined together and united in Christ. This calling is to walk in such a way that reveals the unity that Paul is referring to, through their daily lives.

### **How do we do that?**

*“with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love” (v2).*

There’s no doubt that we each must make the effort but these qualities aren’t actually naturally occurring in one’s life; they are the result of intentionally partnering with the Spirit daily. The real effort is to effectively allow Christ to live through us.

As we meditate upon the Scriptures; pray in the Holy Spirit; walk in the light with the family of God and have a willingness to obey the promptings of the Spirit, we’ll increasingly see a love for one another and demonstrate a unity that can only have originated from above.

### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 4:1-6
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a greater humility and patience with others.
- Pray for a greater eagerness in your life group, local church and in the worldwide church to live together in an authentic, Biblical unity.

## Day 2 – Serving in Your Grace Zone

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 4:7-10

KEY VERSE:

*“grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift”*

EPH 4:7

It was a warm summer midweek night and I was sitting in a Belfast church I'd never been to before, the Iron Hall, listening to a preacher I'd never heard before, Dr Rex Mathie. He had come from South Africa to teach in various churches night after night all around Northern Ireland. I was also hearing a message on a person I honestly had never heard specifically mentioned before in my 18 years growing up in the Plymouth Brethren: the person of the Holy Spirit. I could probably still tell you the core of the message some 34 years later!

This is the same Holy Spirit who gives gifts to the church so that the body of Christ is built-up. In verse 11, Paul will specifically highlight five 'grace' offices in the Church but elsewhere in the New Testament, there are lists of 'grace' gifts: gifts of the Holy Spirit.

It's really key in understanding spiritual gifts, and even fivefold offices, to know that they are a 'charis' – a grace gift – rather than a title, something you complete a course on, study for, or even a position one is voted into.

In 25 years of local church leadership and ministry, I've seen a lot of round pegs in square holes resulting in frustration at a lack of fruit in ministry and ungodly desires for titles and status, but then I've also seen and experienced first-hand the amazing fruit and ease when someone is ministering in their grace-zone. There are few things better when you've hit your sweet spot, when everything is flowing with ease and whatever you put your hand to seems to thrive. This is your grace zone. Equally, there's nothing worse when you're out of it.



For a season taking school assemblies, for me, was an absolute nightmare. I had lost my confidence and, in the end, I didn't even want to go into primary schools and sent feeble excuses as to why I couldn't take the assemblies. It was almost a depressive place but with help, I managed to get back in the saddle with a level of competency. It's a whole different ball game when you hit the zone for which you're graced. Put me in front of a school full of children and my stomach is churning but speaking to a large conference full of leaders, I thrive and come alive. There's life, joy, fulfilment and fruit.

### **So where are you graced?**

Sometimes we do struggle to find our grace-zones because, at heart, we're servants and have laid down our lives for the Gospel and find ourselves serving in many different areas. We've learned skills and how to be competent, however, God does also have a special area to which he has graced you.

If you don't know what area that is then let me share with you a secret. The people around you, in your life group and church, will often be those who can call-out your destiny through telling you where they see you are graced and gifted.

Don't stop being a servant but do also ask those around you, particularly those who are modelling a healthy and fruitful Christian life, to share with you where they most often see the grace of God flowing in and through you.

### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 4:7-10
- Ask those close to you where they see your grace zone.
- Pray that you'll be able to devote more time and energy into the areas where God has called and graced you to serve.

# Day 3 – Why the Church needs Fivefold Gifts

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 4:11

**KEY VERSE:**

*“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers”* EPH 4:11

Apostles? Today? Are you kidding? Those were exactly my sentiments and questions the very first time I was exposed to an ‘apostolic partnership’ of churches. In March 2012, however, along with the pastors and spouses from our church and a few other leaders and saints, we decided to see for ourselves and attended one of the first ever Four12 conferences in Cape Town, South Africa. The lead apostle of the movement, Andrew Selley, was speaking on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and teaching on how to shepherd/pastor like Jesus. When the session was over and our team met up again, it was clear that we were all deeply impacted with many in tears as we had a life-changing revelation of what it really meant to shepherd the sheep like Jesus. We still didn’t understand much about apostolic ministry but, for perhaps the first time in most of our lives, we had experienced an apostolic grace flowing from Andrew to us. We knew that this is what we needed and within months we were partnering with not only Andrew, but with others who were fivefold gifts to the church.

Others would have said that we were a ‘successful’ multi-site church and called into question why we would have felt the need to seek help beyond the local church or indeed to ‘give ourselves’ to Andrew and the other partnering churches, however, we could see that this was the way of Jesus. The Biblical pattern is for local churches to be led by a team of elders but, just as no saint alone is the full package and we need to belong to a local church, local churches need ‘graces’ beyond themselves.

Up until that point in 2012, with our local church leadership, we had been trying our best and God had been faithfully working among us but we had failed to embrace the gifts that Jesus gave after his Ascension. We often call people to embrace the gift of salvation, emphasising that until the gift is opened and unpacked that it is of no benefit. Likewise, every team of elders and the local church have a responsibility to embrace all the gifts and, in particular, these fivefold gifts which Jesus himself has given.

I find it interesting that most people value evangelists, teachers and pastors but have struggled with the very first two who are actually foundational for the others to operate effectively. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:28) The first followers of Jesus were ‘devoted to apostolic teaching’. We often say that if you want to experience what they experienced, you’ll need to do what they did. Whether we’re church leaders or saints in God’s house, let’s unwrap all of God’s gifts and be devoted. Read, listen to and watch online resources from your apostolic teams. When these gifts are ministering in your local church, prioritise their visit.

The Church that Jesus is building will thrive, flourish and even the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it but we need to build according to His ways, in alignment with His blueprint and with an attitude of devotion.

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 4:1-11
- Research resources from the apostolic team who serve your church and make time to regularly receive their input.
- Pray for your local church to have an increased desire to partner with the apostolic and to fully embrace every gift from Jesus.

# Day 4 – Every Member a Minister

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 4:1–12

KEY VERSE:

*“to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ”* EPH 4:12

At the opening of one of our church buildings on the Isle of Man, there was a plaque erected stating that the building was opened by ‘Rev. Jonathan G. Stanfield, Minister’.

Who really is ‘the minister’? (We’ll leave the ‘Rev.’ addition for another devo!)

In yesterday’s devotional we read about the ‘fivefold’ gifts and, in today’s verse we learn that their role in working with local churches is not to create bigger platforms and spotlights for themselves but rather to raise up others to minister.

A healthy local church isn’t a bottleneck with a small group of leaders at the top; rather, its leaders are at the bottom, ensuring that every saint finds their grace-zone and place of ministry.

During the lockdown of 2020, I was really encouraged to see how well the Living Hope family stepped up to the plate and how literally every saint, hundreds and hundreds, ministered to the needs of others in their life groups and congregations, and also, the wider community. As a pastor/elder, I was able to devote myself to the ministry of the Word and prayer, and to equip them for every good work they were doing.

If you’re a follower of Jesus – a saint – then let me remind you that you’re also a minister. Be sure to give yourself fully to your leaders so that they can equip you to fully play your part in a healthy body.

To leaders: we’ve often grown-up in a model of church which revolves around us doing the day-to-day ministry and this is often a difficult paradigm to move away from. My number one suggestion to help



you both minister in your grace zone and to release as many saints as possible into theirs is, when faced with any ministry opportunity, to ask the following three questions and in this order. (Anyone who knows me will say these three questions will be on my headstone!)

1. **What needs to be done?**
2. **What can others do?**
3. **What must I do?**

Often, most leaders end up reversing questions two and three and ask themselves, “how can I get others to help me?” This puts a lid on the level of ministry because leaders can only do so much, and we also restrict the majority of saints from ministering.

### **So, who really is ‘the minister’?**

You are. Well actually, we all are! Every single saint - without exception - has a calling, a grace and a unique role in building up the body of Christ.

Now, there’s no need to buy a dog collar, alter the tone of your voice to the classic pastor/minister lilt or change your title by deed poll. Simply pick up a basin and towel today and wash the feet of some of the saints around you in whatever way the Lord tells you.

### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 4:1-12
- If you’re not yet ministering in your local church, ask your leaders how you can start. If you are serving why not ask your leaders for some perspective on how you can be more fruitful.
- Pray that every local church will have a fully mobilised body with every member ministering.

# Day 5 – The Blessing of the Fivefold Gifts

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 4:13–16

KEY VERSE:

*“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.”* EPH 4:16 (NLT)

Do you remember what it's like to have a tiny splinter or skelf in your hand? It's tiny, small and seemingly insignificant but your entire body knows all about it. God has wired our bodies so that every single part is interconnected and necessary.

Paul writes that when every single part is working properly, the body is healthy, growing and full of love. The blessing of the fivefold gifts of apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and evangelists is that they are God's gifts to us to ensure the body of Christ is indeed functioning and connected as Jesus intended. They are gifted to bring the body into a godly unity with an equally beautiful diversity. The world would be a boring place if everyone was the same.

We all love music and it's great to listen to a choir singing the same song together in unison, however, when you start adding the harmonies, a special dimension is introduced. That's also what happens in an orchestra. Every instrument being played brings a unique aspect to the unified tune. What would a soccer or basketball match be like if everyone was on defence or a goalkeeper? It would be boring! We need all sorts of skills and abilities to play the game.

**Why is unity with diversity so important?**

Firstly, the church is a reflection of the image of God and when we live as one, loving and submitting to one another yet still diverse, we give a glimpse of the godhead – the Trinity – to our world.

Secondly, unity commands a blessing. In Psalm 133, the Scriptures declare a commanded blessing where “*brothers dwell together in unity*”. I’ve been in local church leadership for 25 years through highs and lows and the truth is, I’ve known times when the blessing of God has rested upon the church and other occasions when it’s been hard-going and fruit has been few and far between. I’ve discovered that it’s God’s desire always to bless, however, we get to choose the degree to which we experience that blessing. That’s why I’m so thankful that we are partnering with the fivefold gifts because in doing so, we come into an authentic Biblical unity and in turn we come under the increasing blessing of God.

### **Can we ‘do church’ without partnering with these gifts?**

Of course we can but when we build according to the ways of God, we position ourselves for increased blessing and favour because we then become healthy churches, the way Jesus intended.

Let’s position ourselves personally, and as local churches, for the blessing of God just as Paul commended the European Christians for doing. “*They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.*” 2 Corinthians 8:5 NLT

### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 4:13-16
- Let’s live in such a way that ensures we fully enter into the blessing of God.
- Pray that you will give yourself to your apostolic teams to the very same extent that you have given yourself to Jesus in order for increasing blessing to be released over you and the church.

## Day 6 – God's Wardrobe

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 4:17–24

### KEY VERSE:

*“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”* EPH 4:22–24 (NIV)

My mother had a job that I don't know anyone else's mother had. She was a tailoress and worked part-time making high quality children's clothes and yes, she loved making me my clothes. You might be thinking, 'that's amazing', 'what a blessing!' Well, the only problem was that my mother's fashion sense for her sons was usually stuck in the previous fashion season. When tight trousers, drainpipe style, were in, my mum was making me flares for school. On a windy day there was a genuine risk that I'd take off into orbit with my school trousers turning into sails. When shirt collars were small and neat, yes you guessed it, my shirts had wings with a matching kipper tie. I'm surprised I don't need counselling today! (No, please don't respond to that comment.) All I could think about throughout my teenage years was, 'get these clothes off me'.

### **There are some clothes we should wear.**

Paul now addresses this increasing, loving and maturing church in Ephesus and tells them that they need to take off old stuff and to put on God's wardrobe. They had to take off 'self' and now be clothed with the wardrobe of God. Our 'old self' is our sinful nature. From birth, every single human being without exception is preoccupied with 'self'. By nature, we reflect an unholy trinity of 'me, myself and I'.

Do you remember the last wedding you attended? At some point the official photographer gathered together the entire wedding party and guests for a photo. A few weeks later, probably on Facebook, the happy couple started posting the official photographs on their wall and you saw



the group shot for the first time. When you click on the picture where do your eyes focus? On the happy couple? Nope! We inevitably frame the entire scene around ourselves. Where am I? It's all about ME! Most of us have grown up with that 'Star Wars theology' - "this answer lies within you" - but the problem is that, within every human being is self, selfishness and a self-serving attitude. It's time to get rid of that old self-centred wardrobe and to put on God's wardrobe of righteousness, love, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit.

Every morning as you wake up and begin to get dressed, why not make that a prophetic action where you consciously remind yourself that you are a new creation in Christ Jesus and intentionally remind yourself of the righteousness of God upon you, peace, joy and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Whatever time of year it is, as you read the devotional, please spring-clean your spiritual wardrobe and, on this occasion, don't give your clothes to someone else or to a charity shop. Burn them. Bin them. Don't pass on your old identity or put it into storage. Embrace your new wardrobe. You're a new person! You've got Kingdom style!

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 4:17-24
- Let's clear the wardrobes of our lives today and continually declare the new wardrobe of blessing from God over our lives. You are who the Word of God says you are!
- Pray that, increasingly, righteousness and holiness will be the hallmarks of your life.

# Day 7 – Keep a Smile on the Holy Spirit's Face

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 4:25–32

**KEY VERSE:**

*“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”* EPH 4:30

The story is told by RT Kendall of friends who followed the call of God to be missionaries in Jerusalem. When they moved into their new home in the city, they noticed that a pair of doves would make their home with them on the roof. They took it as a sign from God that they were right in the centre of His will as, in the Scriptures, the dove is one of the symbols of the presence of the Holy Spirit. After a few days, however, the friends started to notice that when they had an argument, raised their voices or slammed a door, the doves would fly away; they were so sensitive to their environment. The same is true of the Holy Spirit. He rests His presence in an environment that welcomes, honours and does not grieve Him.

God is omnipresent. That means that He is everywhere but as followers of Jesus, we also experience the blessing of His inner presence within our lives.

There is also the manifest presence of the Holy Spirit. We have all experienced occasions when it was clear that the Spirit was manifest among us, often to save, heal, deliver and work miracles; that might be during a church service or any other time when God pulled in to your life.

## **How can we avoid grieving the Holy Spirit?**

1. Don't use foul language.
2. Don't live a bitter life, refusing to make peace with others.
3. Don't get angry with people leading you to slander them. Pause and T.H.I.N.K. before you speak.

**T** – Is it **Truthful**?

**H** – Is it **Helpful**?

**I** – Is it **Inspiring**?

**N** – Is it **Necessary**?

**K** – Is it **Kind**?

That's just three of many ways not to grieve the Spirit. Instead of the above, let's be encouragers of others. One of the things the Holy Spirit loves to do in the life of every believer is to impact what comes forth from one's mouth – sharing the Gospel, prayer, worshipping, preaching, prophesying etc.

We put a smile on the Spirit's face when we speak the way the Spirit speaks, which is words of encouragement and life.

Aaron pronounced an amazing blessing over the people of Israel but it wasn't when they were in the land of milk and honey; it was when they were still in the wilderness.

*“The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face shine on you  
and be gracious to you;  
the Lord turn his face toward you  
and give you peace.”*

NUMBERS 6:24-26 (NIV)

The smile and the shine of the Lord's face on our lives can be experienced even when we're going through challenging times. In fact, that's the time we need the manifest presence of the Spirit the most. Don't grieve Him. Through your everyday life, cause the Spirit to smile.

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 4:25-32
- Every morning say, “Good Morning Holy Spirit” and take a moment to bask in His smile and favour.
- Pray daily to be filled with the Holy Spirit and ask Him to help you to be an encourager with every word you speak, and to speak as He does.



# Ephesians



## Chapter 5



# Ephesians 5

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV)

*1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. 3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them. 8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. 14 This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." 15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

## Instructions for Christian Households

*21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*



# Day 1 – Why Wise Christians Copy God

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 5:1-2

KEY VERSE:

*“You must become imitators of God, as well-loved children imitate their father.”* EPH 5:1

A pastor friend of ours tells the story of when he was leading a large church in the UK. They had organised a conference and invited a major preacher from overseas. The pastor collected the visiting preacher from the airport and as they were driving home, they passed a cyclist. The cyclist clearly felt the pastor had done something wrong, so he began cursing and using hand gestures not associated with showing love! As the pastor looked in his mirror at this raging cyclist, he realised this was a man from his church!

Paul the apostle often wrote to the churches reminding them that they represented Jesus, and Paul himself, to the world. He told the Corinthian church, *“You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone. You show that you are a letter from Christ”* (2 Cor. 3:2 NIV) and he talked with pride about the Thessalonians, saying, *“You became imitators of us and of the Lord...And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia — your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it”* (1 Thess.1:6-8 NIV).

We must never forget that, as followers of Jesus, we are broadcasting a message to the world 24/7. We are a letter from Jesus read by everyone! Our lives reflect our Lord for good or for bad. Like that cyclist, we can leave a terrible and misleading impression or, like the Thessalonians, we can be a model to others that speaks for itself.

How do we do that? Here in Ephesians chapter five, Paul turns to some practical application. Our model is Jesus Christ and the path to follow is the way of love. Jesus loved us first by giving Himself up for us and God received this as a sweet sacrifice. To become great imitators of God, our lives must include forgiving others, loving others ahead of ourselves and offering our very lives as a sacrifice in service to Jesus and His church. Someone once challenged us by asking, “What would the church look like if everyone lived like you?” Would that be a good or bad reflection of Jesus? Imitating God is a high standard for us but the world is watching.

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians chapter five as we start this week of devotionals.
- Thank God for Jesus and pray that your life and the lives of your brothers and sisters might reflect well on Jesus and our leaders.
- From this chapter, write down three aspects that Paul highlights for us to imitate. Encourage someone today who is a great example of Jesus to you.

## Day 2 – Sin is no Joke!

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 5:3-7

### KEY VERSE:

*“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partners with them.”* EPH 5:3-7

For any church, one of the most heart-breaking things that can happen is to see a brother or sister who was on fire for God slowly allow the things of the world to draw them away from following Jesus. Over the years, we have sadly seen this happen many times. Like so many destructive things in life, these things creep up in small, daily decisions rather than dramatic gestures.

In Ephesus, Paul addresses the external attack of Gnosticism but also faces into an even more dangerous attack from inside the church. There were those in the Church who perverted the doctrine of grace. This perversion, which still exists in the church today, argues that it doesn’t matter what I do because the grace of God has already covered all our sin. Sounds good doesn’t it? This is why it is so dangerous!

In Romans chapter six, Paul addresses an extension of this argument. In a rhetorical conversation, he repeats the reasoning that if grace wipes out sin then surely the more sins I commit, the greater the flow of God’s amazing grace. It’s rather like saying the more times I break my arms, the more opportunity I have to experience the incredible skill and care of the NHS! Absolute madness.

Instead, the letter to the Ephesians makes clear that grace is not only a privilege and a gift but a responsibility and an obligation for any follower of Jesus. It is 100% true that God's love through Jesus' sacrifice can and will forgive us, but the existence of such costly love leaves us with a duty to deserve that love to the best of our ability.

The worst possible thing we can do is allow anyone to think lightly of the full horror of sin. Paul begged the church, "*there must not be even a hint of...any kind of impurity...let no one deceive you with empty words*".

### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 5:1-8
- Come before the Lord and give thanks for the cross. Bring your life to God afresh and meditate for a moment on our sinfulness and the incredible power and gift of grace in Christ Jesus.
- Write down the areas of sin highlighted in this passage. Where are you most vulnerable? What one thing can you do to double the guard?

# Day 3 – The Power of Light

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 5:8-14

## KEY VERSE:

*“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light <sup>9</sup> (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) <sup>10</sup> and find out what pleases the Lord.”* EPH 5:8-10

Carole and I were hiking in Madeira where they have these amazing irrigation channels called ‘levadas’ which make the island one of the most verdant places on earth. Flora and fauna flourish everywhere because of these water channels. To carry the water through the mountains, long, narrow and dark tunnels were carved through the rock with a path alongside the water. As we entered the first of these, we realised we had forgotten a torch. I soon also realised that the ceilings were low and the walls were sharp and jagged. I went ahead getting my arms shredded and banging my head at regular intervals shouting behind me, “duck!” As we approached the next tunnel, I was not looking forward to a repeat when suddenly a brainwave hit me – my phone! We reached into the backpack took out our phones, activated the torch and glided happily through the tunnel without mishap. What a difference the light made!

Albert Einstein is quoted as saying, “Just as darkness is the absence of light, evil is the absence of God.” In Lamentations 3:2 the prophet’s sadness was compounded by, “*an absence of light and only darkness*”. The light of Christ in us brings out beauty but also protects and guides us. Just as our phones did in the tunnels of Madeira, His light shows us the path and reveals the dangers to avoid. If we fill ourselves with the light through the daily reading of God’s Word and praying for His presence through the Holy Spirit, there are some significant benefits:

- The light produces good fruit. In Madeira we discovered that passion fruit wasn’t a fruit but a group of fruits! We tried purple, lemon, banana and pineapple passion fruit among other varieties!



Our varieties of spiritual fruit are goodness, righteousness and truth. In the Greek, 'goodness' here means 'generosity of spirit', 'righteousness', 'giving to men and to God that which is their due', and 'truth' not just moral truth but a way of living.

- The light enables us to discriminate in our spirits between what pleases and displeases God. It is in the light of Christ that all our motives, actions and plans must be tested.
- The light exposes evil. Anything being done in secret continues and deepens but in the light of the day, it dies a natural death. The most thorough deep-clean of our lives is exposure to the light of Christ.
- Finally, Paul says, "*Everything which is illuminated becomes light*". The light of Jesus in our lives not only reveals but it also has a healing quality. If, like me, you have brought something into the light, you will know that everything seems to feel stronger, easier and better.

#### ACTION STEPS

- Read Ephesians 5:8-14
- Pray for those you know who are walking in darkness. Contend for anyone who has backslidden and for your unsaved friends and family.
- Do two things: Firstly, let those from Action Step 2 know that you are praying for them. Secondly, consider speaking with a close friend about what is really happening in your life. Bring the truth into the light and see what God will do.

# Day 4 – Wisdom for Living in These Evil Days

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 5:15–17

**KEY VERSE:**

*“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise,<sup>16</sup> making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.<sup>17</sup> Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”* EPH 5:15–17

I was on a ministry trip to Zambia with a good friend of mine. We had been invited to speak and minister into a church in one of the townships in Lusaka. This was a completely new experience to us as two British men among over 400 Zambians in one of the poorest areas of the city. With a large crowd in the hall there were only two or three cars in the car park. I felt excited and loaded with my best preaches! My friend, however, is brilliant with children and shared with me that he felt we should offer to lead the children’s work as part of our ministry. Immediately, I sensed that he had heard God so we offered to lead a children’s workshop alongside preaching and teaching. The Zambian Pastor was amazed and later told us that this was the first time anyone had asked to do something with the children. What followed was one of the most moving moments of my life. We stood in a tiny classroom with just a blackboard and a few desks. My friend began to tell and act out (in a way that is worthy of an Oscar!) the story of Jonah. The children just kept appearing and as he continued, the classroom was soon over-flowing! In a moment of inspiration (captured in photos), my friend set off around the empty car park on a march to Nineveh followed by a huge line of enthralled children! We saw over 40 salvations over that weekend. Thanks to my friend’s wisdom, we had found the Lord’s will.

One of the reasons these days are evil is because the world does not value what God values. If we live for ourselves, insist on our right to choose and worship at the altar of fame and fortune, then we are surely

living as unwise not wise (v15). There is a lot of truth in the well-worn phrase, ‘only fools rush in’. Making rash decisions without taking the time to seek the Lord and find trustworthy, accountable counsel is a road to disaster. I should know! Too many times I have, ‘just got on with it’ only to prove scripture correct, *“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall”*. (Proverbs 16:1). There are many pitfalls for us in these evil days but God has provided us with many (and better) protections if we live wisely. In Zambia, I was at risk of diving in and missing God’s will but my friend was living wisely.

### **What are the ways we can live wisely and understand the Lord’s will?**

- Wise living begins with a fear of the Lord by living His way. Putting God first in all things is always the safe choice. *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction”*. Proverbs 1:7
- The wise person prays. Prayer is a dialogue with the wisdom of heaven. *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you”*. James 1:5
- Actively choose to live in accountability. Inviting advice and correction from a loving leader who is worthy of imitation is a wise choice. *“Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise”*. Proverbs 19:20
- Value those who are older and more mature in the faith; we need their wisdom. *“Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long-life bring understanding?”* Job 12:12

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 5:15-17
- Bring any decisions you are facing before the Lord in prayer and continue a dialogue with heaven.
- Seek out accountable and wise, Godly advice. Be humble and invite both advice and correction. That is living wisely.

# Day 5 – You’ve Got to Fill a Man with Something

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 5:18–20

## KEY VERSE:

*“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, <sup>19</sup> speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, <sup>20</sup> always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

EPH 5:18–20

One of the most difficult and strange aspects of the Coronavirus pandemic has been our separation from one another. There is a deep-rooted need in most of us to come together. Throughout history, gathering to drink alcohol has been part of society. In recent times, the concept of binge-drinking has become a regular feature of a weekend evening. We still use the word ‘symposium’ for a group of people coming together. It is derived from the Greek word ‘sumposium’ which literally means ‘drinking party’.

This must have been an issue even in first century Ephesus as Paul draws a sharp distinction between a drinking party and a gathering of Christians. We often apply the instruction, “*be filled with the Spirit*” (v. 18) on an individual level and this is a continuous need in our walk with Jesus; after all, the theologian A.C. Welch said, “you’ve got to fill a man with something!”

It is, however, also a necessary feature of any church meeting. On a corporate level we need the presence of God above all else. In this passage we can see that the early church was a singing church; you get the sense that they could not stop themselves but overflowed in all different types of song. There were psalms, hymns and spiritual songs abounding! Today, we might proclaim Psalm 103, “*Bless the Lord O my Soul*”. The word hymn

simply means a song of praise of God like ‘How Great is Our God’ or ‘Great are you Lord’. Spiritual songs can be spontaneous, prophetic songs that break into a meeting. There are some vital ingredients to this type of worship. We need to be Spirit-filled as songwriters, musicians and worshippers if we are to experience the power of God’s presence. We need to be conscious that we are not just singing to ourselves but exhorting, encouraging and empowering each other as we sing. We are literally, “*speaking to one another*” (v.19) as we worship. It needs to come, not just from the mouth but also from the heart. This means a heart full of God and a heart that has been prepared before the meeting, not just turning up. It also means a physical expression. Worship is meant to engage the body as well as the voice – hands raised, dancing, eyes closed and sometimes kneeling.

Finally, a Spirit-filled church is a thankful church. Its members filled with amazement and wonder that God’s love has reached out to save them and this fills them with thanksgiving because they know they are held in the hands of a great Saviour in Jesus. When we gather (even online as is the case for the time-being), this is the attitude we must bring.

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 5:18-20
- Play those favourite worship songs, pray to be filled with the Spirit and fill your heart with thanksgiving.
- Next time you are at Church or Life Group or any other gathering of Christians, whether online or physically together, worship for the others more than yourself. I’m believing for a Spirit-filled moment for you and them.



# Day 6 – The Motive for True Submission

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 5:21–29

KEY VERSE:

*“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord...  
Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself  
up for her.”* EPH 5:22 & 25

I was working on an important and high-profile project. The project had reached a critical phase and I was working flat-out. In fact, I was working extremely long hours with a huge task list and barely taking a break. One day, my boss called me into her office. I started thinking of all the things I should have done or could have done better and wondered what had triggered this summons. That was not what she wanted to discuss. She looked at me and asked one simple question, “What help do you need?” I realised that she had noticed how hard I was working but, more than that, cared enough to protect me from myself by investing in making things easier. Perhaps she also had the overall risk to the project in mind but I remember that moment as personal support. Within days I had been given two top-quality and highly supportive additional team members who transformed my situation and made the project successful. From that moment on, my loyalty to my boss dramatically increased and I was always willing to go the extra mile and support her willingly whenever needed.

In this story is the essence of true submission. It can never come from a set of rules, demands or irrefutable arguments. It can never be totally knowledge-based or agreed through perfect explanation. True submission has to be rooted in a deep understanding of being loved and valued. Of course, I know my boss was not acting out of love(!), however, in that moment, I knew the expectations came with care.

Any form of submission in scripture is based on the example of Jesus, “*become imitators of God*” as we saw in verse one of this chapter. Paul

exhorted the Corinthian church to, *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”* (1 Cor.11:1) and when it comes to the question of submission, we see Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane agonising over what faces him. He sees the pain and suffering of the Cross and cries out through tears of blood, *“Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done”*. (Luke 22:42) This is such an incredible act of submission, based on the perfect love in the relationship between Jesus and the Father. When we submit our lives to Jesus, we do it knowing that his submission to the Father was for us, *“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends”*. (John 15:13)

This is the basis of the submission that Paul asks of the Ephesian church in these verses. Husbands love your wives like Jesus loved the church. Look at Jesus laying down his life in total sacrifice and be willing to do the same for your wife. Love her, serve her, put her before your desires and be like Jesus to her. Wives look at your husbands the same way as you look at Jesus and willingly follow them. True submission is not lording it over someone but a willing laying down of our selfish desires in response to a love like Jesus. In fact, Paul makes it clear that this is the basis of all Christian relationships, *“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”*. (Eph.5:21)

#### ACTION STEPS

- Read Ephesians 5:21-29 and Luke 22:39-44
- Pray by giving thanks to Jesus for how he laid down his life for you and then pray in response from your heart however that comes. Pray for those who don’t know love like this in their life.
- Today is a day to show love to others. If you are married, do something together and talk about what it looks like to love each other like Jesus. For all of us, why not show the love of Jesus to someone and let them know they are valued.

# Day 7 – Jesus is Getting Married

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 5:25–32

## KEY VERSE:

*“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless...<sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.”*

EPH 5:25–27, 32

In a Hebrew wedding, the groom takes responsibility for all the arrangements; he even signs a contract called a ‘Kettubah’ which is a binding oath that is read out loud. He is responsible for preparing a place for the couple to live, for organising the wedding celebration and feast and even provision of a dress of “*fine linen*” (Revelation 19:8). The bride’s only job is to prepare herself.

There is so much in these traditions that is captured in the picture of the church being made ready for the return of Christ. Our Lord is preparing a room for us and a day of celebration and feasting, “*Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!*” (Rev.19:9). The responsibility of the church, the bride, is in the preceding verses, “*For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready*”. Here in the fifth chapter of Ephesians, Paul’s apostolic jealousy for the bride of Jesus is restated as in 2 Corinthians 11:2, “*I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.*”

What does our preparation look like? Ephesians 5:26 describes a washing – a picture of baptism. Before a Hebrew wedding, the bride would take a special purifying ‘mikveh’ bath like the one Esther would have taken. The mikveh had to be filled with clean, living water & scented with fragrant oil. Every part of her went under the water. For us, this means

fully pursuing holiness. As already seen in earlier chapters, we set aside sin and the ways of the world so that our fragrance is that of Jesus.

The second part of the preparation that the bride was responsible for was to adorn herself with beautiful jewellery. The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery says, “A bride’s jewellery represents her readiness for the groom...often this jewellery was given by the groom and his family” and Isaiah 61:10 says that the bride “*adorns herself with her jewels*”. The jewels that will adorn us as the church will be the gold, silver and costly stones that survive judgement day. This is why it is so important for us to build our lives and churches on the foundation of Jesus. “*If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person’s work. If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward*”. 1 Cor.3:12-14

As we leave chapter five of Ephesians, we move on with an insight into the “*profound mystery*” that Paul describes of how we are being made ready to marry Jesus, how we must prepare in holiness and build His way.

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Re-read the full chapter five of Ephesians
- Pray for the church and yourself, that we might live holy lives and build His way, not ours.
- Commit to sharing a reflection from this week with your Pastor, Life Group leader or an Elder. God bless!



# Ephesians



## Chapter 6



# Ephesians 6

NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION (NIV)

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 “Honour your father and mother”—which is the first commandment with a promise— 3 “so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.” 4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. 5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. 6 Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. 7 Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, 8 because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free. 9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with him.

## The Armour of God

10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. 11 Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. 13 Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. 16 In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. 18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people. 19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

## Final Greetings

21 Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. 22 I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. 23 Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 24 Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

# Day 1 – Healing a Father Wound

TODAY’S READING: Ephesians 6:1–4

KEY VERSE:

*“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”* EPH 6:4 (ESV)

Welcome to week six on our journey through Ephesians. I want to start this week by looking at family. I hope to highlight an area that I see time and again in pastoral ministry that keeps people from reaching their full potential.

Growing up in a home with two older brothers and a younger sister, I would say my parents surrounded us with love, healthy boundaries and security. I thought this was the norm! As I entered into ministry in 1999 with Stauros, I worked with people battling addictions and their families. I realised then, that actually, my experience was far from the norm! 90% of the men I dealt with had a father who was either absent or an abusive and destructive influence in their lives.

Catholic priest Richard Rohr tells the story about a nun ministering in a men’s prison. One day early in May, an inmate asked the nun if she could get him a Mother’s Day card. Happy to oblige, the nun went into town and bought it for him. The inmate told others and the word spread like wildfire around the prison. Soon, dozens of prisoners were knocking on the chaplain’s office door asking for their own Mother’s Day card. Overwhelmed, the nun wisely thought to call Hallmark’s national office for help. The company graciously donated a thousand cards to the prison, and a week before Mother’s Day, the prison warden invited inmates to go to the chaplain’s office for their cards. By the end of the day, all the cards had been distributed. The nun was delighted. Soon after this great success, she was looking ahead on her calendar and noted Father’s Day just ahead. Planning ahead this time, she again contacted Hallmark who sent her a thousand Father’s Day cards. The warden repeated his announcement the

Sunday before Father's Day. "Father's Day came, and Father's Day went," the nun reported in dismay. "Not one inmate asked me for a Father's Day card."

When we are born, we are so helpless and dependant. In these early years in a broken home, the 'father wound' is formed. Neglect, absence, abuse, control and withholding, lead to that profound lack of self-acceptance. This leads us to believe that we are unworthy, stupid, incompetent and unlovable. This also affects our image of God the Father and we see God from our personal experience of a father believing that we are not good enough, shameful and must work harder to justify or earn His love.

### **How is the father wound healed?**

There are four steps to addressing the father wound:

- Understanding the heart of God
- Inviting Jesus into the wounds created by the birth father
- Accepting the truth about yourself as a child of God
- Forgiving your father.

If this affects you, and you would like to talk more about it, please contact your Pastor or Life Group leader today.

*Dear God, please help me to be the parent You envision for me to be to my children. Help me always to be as Christ to them and may they grow up knowing that they are very much loved by me as well as by You. Please help me to face my father wound and help me to forgive my father. Thank you for hearing and answering my prayer, in Jesus' name, amen.*

### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 6:1-4
- Pray that God would expose any 'father wound' in your soul.
- Commit to praying through the four steps to healing and follow up <https://danielpassini.org/father-wound/> for more detail.

## Day 2 - Working 9 to 5?

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 6:5-9

### KEY VERSE:

*"Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people."* EPH 6:7

Like many songs, I can sing the first line of the chorus of 'Working 9-5' but I don't think I have ever watched the movie (PTL). As church elders, we don't have an off switch to our day but we do have a healthy work practice of dividing our days into sections and ensuring that we have space in the day for our families, our hobbies, and personal time with God! Jonathan ensures that the team have Mondays off and take their holidays so that we keep mentally well, spiritually on fire and physically healthy. It also helps to keep our marriages healthy, and means that we get time to relax with our families. That was, until lock down! (ha ha!)

In this passage, it looks at the relationships between slaves and masters. Hopefully you don't feel like a slave to your job and that you are working in your zone in whatever you do, but are you are working as if your boss was Jesus? If you are the line manager or CEO of a company, are you treating your team and employees like Jesus would? How would your boss or employees react to the fact that you were a Christ follower?

In life we often segregate our work life and our spiritual life like they are two different worlds but God is in everything we do. God is as interested in you at work as he is when you are at home or in the church Zoom sessions! Working 9 to 5 with Jesus is a great slogan... what a way to make a livin'!

### How do you bring God with you to work?

- We often use the phrase, 'play to an audience of one' but we can also work to an audience of one. Today, imagine that God is the boss and work to do all you can to please Him.



- Work hard and with excellence in all you do.
- When witnessing, be tactful and invitational but don't use company time to ambush someone at the photocopier or water machine! Why not think creatively of how you can involve them in your life off the clock - invite them to the church quiz night, a catch-up online or, post lockdown, a social distancing event to mark freedom!
- Pray for opportunities to serve wholeheartedly and with excellence, to witness in our attitudes and to share the good news of JESUS.

In these challenging days, many people are working from home and, as a result, never really leave the 'office'. They tend to work longer during the day and then go back to finish work off in the evening. We are the worst boss of our time and work/life balance ever!! Pray that we have a good work/life balance.

For others this is an uncertain time for work as we don't really know what it will look like for our jobs next month or even next year as we see an economic depression on the horizon. Pray for job security.

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read the Chapter 6: 5-9 (not 9 to 5!).
- Reflect how to build a healthy work/life balance.
- Pray for those facing uncertain futures in regard to work.

# Day 3 – Taking Your Stand

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 6:10–13

## KEY VERSE:

*“Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.”* EPH 6:11

Over the next few days, we are going to look at putting on the armour of God. You can't take a stand in your underwear, yet many of us go headlong into battle half naked and ill-prepared! Your enemy is a schemer and he does not fight fair so in order to take your stand, you need to be equipped!

In the famous battles of North Africa during the Second World War, two great military leaders went head to head. The British Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery – known as ‘Monty’ – was leading the attack against the German General, Erwin Rommel. Many tactics that Monty employed in Africa are also useful to us as we take our stand against the devil and his schemes.

- **Know your enemy**

While Rommel planned the battle and prepared his unstoppable Panzer divisions, Monty studied his enemy and knew that he would attack from the south so when the first attack came, Monty stood firm and won a decisive victory. Our enemy, the devil, has many schemes that he has employed since the dawn of time. He is deceitful and will attack your most vulnerable flank with his lies! He is a thief, the accuser, the tempter and our adversary and even disguises himself as an angel of light! If you know his names, you will recognise his schemes. Intelligence in battle is vital.

- **Rely on air support**

When Monty arrived in Africa, the air force base was seven miles from the Eighth Army Headquarters. He joined the two together as he knew air support was vital to defeating the enemy. Our help comes from

the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. To take our stand we need heaven's support in the battle and that means getting on our knees in prayer every day and throughout the day. We must bombard the enemy with prayers. Pray unceasingly - make your whole life a prayer! When the enemy attacks, make sure your prayer-life is operational so that heaven comes to fights for us.

- **Training, training, and more training**

Monty was famous, in England and Africa, for his regime of training, training and more training. For us to take our stand, we need to be trained in the Word every day. The Word is for training in righteousness. Every day get the Word of God into our heart so that we can go on the offensive against our enemy. By reading the Word every day - and doing what it says - we will be trained for battle. We will see the power of that Word unfold before us when we read accounts such as when Jesus went head to head with Satan. His first response, when being tempted was, *"It is written"* (Matthew 4.4)

Jesus told us that as Christ-followers, battles were inevitable and part of the Christian life so it is essential that we remain battle-ready at all times and take our stand against the schemes of the devil.

*Lord Jesus, as I take my stand against the devil's schemes, help me to fight this fight prepared and defended by you. I remind myself that you have defeated Satan and have conquered sin and death. I pray that I fight in that victory and keep myself alert and ready as the devil prowls around my life and my family. Today, I take my stand with you as I walk in your victory. Amen*

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read the Ephesians 6:10-13
- Reflect how the enemy has consistently attacked you.
- Make a battle plan to place defences in these areas with the word of God and with good friends to stand with you.

## Day 4 – Belt Up

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 6:14–17

KEY VERSE:

*“Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist.”* EPH 6:14a

Many of us get up in the morning, physically get dressed yet run headlong into spiritual battle completely naked. We forget to put on our armour. Is it any wonder that we feel the effects of the enemy's attacks upon us and our family?!

Over the next few days, I want to show you how our armour helps us battle against the devil's schemes.

When I read this passage, I always think of a Roman soldier (mainly because of the pictures in Sunday School and in preaches growing up) so when we are told to belt up, I see the big leather belt of the Roman soldier holding all the under-clothing together and tucking in anything that would hinder him in the battle.

It is time to belt up!

A while ago, when we could still catch a flight, my friend's father was travelling back to the UK. He is an elderly man and walks with a steady shuffle. As he was called forward to the search area, he was asked to remove his shoes and his belt. He did so, slowly and carefully and moved forward through the scanner, which of course beeped. He was directed to a security area to be searched. As the security guard waved his wand around him, he asked my friend's father to lift his arms up. As he complied, his hands went up his trousers fell down to his ankles and he was left looking a little embarrassed.

You can't underestimate the importance of a belt. In this world of fake news, nonsense conspiracy theories and scams on the phone, it is so important to have the Belt of Truth around our waist. Every attack from



the enemy is a lie – he is the father of lies. Like Pilate in John 18, we ask, ‘what is truth?’ The truth is a person and his name is Jesus.

When Jesus went head to head with Satan, Satan tempted him with lies and twisting of the scriptures. Jesus answered him from the truth of God’s word. Every day, Satan tries to catch us with our pants down; he speaks lies into our minds. We need to combat him with truth; the truth of God’s word.

- When the enemy suggests, “You are a failure!”, refute him with the truth that says, “No! According to Romans 8:37, I am more than a conqueror!”
- When the enemy tells you, “You are rejected!”, you can fight back with the truth that says, “No! According to Ephesians 1:5, in Jesus, I am accepted.”
- When the enemy suggests that, “You are not important!”, you can refute him with the truth that says, “No! According to Deuteronomy 7:6, I am God’s treasured possession!”
- Next time the enemy tells you that, “You are all alone!”, you can refute his lies with the truth that says, “No! According to Joshua 1:5, I am never alone.”

There are dozens of other replies that you need to learn from God’s word to combat the lies by wearing them as a belt of truth. Let’s pray that today the truth of God surrounds us like that belt.

*Father, we thank you that you are truth. Help us today to tune-in to your voice and immerse ourselves in your word so that we can combat the lies of the enemy. In Jesus name, Amen*

#### **ACTION STEPS**

- Read the Ephesians 6:14-17 to see the full picture
- Draw your own large-scale picture of the Roman soldier and put different scriptures on the parts of the armour. What other scriptures tie in with this picture of armour?
- Put these scriptures on the belt of truth and pray into each scripture. What other scriptures can you use to make up the belt of truth?

## Day 5 – Suited and Booted

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 6:14–17

KEY VERSE:

*“with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.”* EPH 6:14b–15

Every morning as we get up, it is helpful to imagine yourself getting dressed in the armour of God. Before we leave the house, we ensure we are suited and booted and ready for whatever may come our way!

With the breastplate of righteousness, we cover our heart and other important organs. These are core vulnerable areas that, if hit, can quickly lead to big problems for the soldier on the battlefield. To protect our soul, our will and emotions, we need to always live in a righteous way; to always set out to ‘do the right thing’. Our will gets attacked as we make choices for our life that will have an impact on other people.

- I can choose to have that conversation online with the girl in the office. Yes, she always listens to me and laughs at my jokes but am I doing the right thing?
- I can choose to listen to the gossip on the parents’ Zoom group about that struggling mum who isn’t on the call but am I doing the right thing?
- I can choose to lose my temper at the kids; after all, they were in the wrong but am I doing the right thing?

All day, the breastplate of righteousness can be taken off (and we can choose to do our own thing) or put on (and we can choose to do the right thing). It is our choice. Do you remember the WWJD wrist bands our young people wore in the 90s? They were a helpful reminder to always ask yourself, ‘what would Jesus do’? Pause and reflect on this piece of armour and where we should have employed it this week!

A few years ago, I joined a group of men who did an XCC (Extreme Character Challenge) across the mountains of Scotland. It was hectic terrain but I had spent my money well and had a great pair of walking boots. One of our team had gone for a cheap pair and they literally fell apart as we hiked over bogs, rocks and rivers! In the end, he had two plastic bags over his feet and shoved into what was left of his boots. On the last day, we sat down to take a rest and get some food in us. He removed his boots and bags and we could all see that his feet were wrecked - blistered, bruised and broken. There was no way he could go on!

In our Christian walk the right footwear is essential. The Roman sandal was designed for long marches and sure footing in battle. It meant the soldier was ready for battle as he marched. Our footwear is the gospel of peace. We fight the enemy by sharing the good news of Jesus with everyone we meet on our journey! As Christ followers, we should always be prepared; we never know when an opportunity may arise to share the good news of the gospel with someone else.

*Lord as we protect ourselves with the breastplate of righteousness, help us to make good choices today based on your word and life. Help us to always choose to do the right thing and as we walk in the gospel of peace, to always be ready to share our story and your gospel with unbelievers. Give us an opportunity today to lead someone to you. Amen*

#### ACTION STEPS

- Read the Chapter 6:14-17
- How can you do the right thing in that situation today that is facing you? Make a note here.
- Create an opportunity today to share the gospel in some way with someone. Pray for that opportunity.

## Day 6 – Incoming

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 6:14–17

KEY VERSE:

*“In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation.”* EPH 6:16–17

In the UK, the difference in being brought up in Northern Ireland and in Great Britain can be seen in the games we played! As I grew up in the 80s, Northern Ireland was being torn apart by terrorism, violence and murder and that spilled over into our childhood. We built barricades behind where we lived and my friends and I would take it in turns to attack the barricades with bricks and bottles, while others would defend with bin lids as shields! They would shout ‘incoming’ and raise their shields. It was madness but such fun! Those bin lids were pelted with rocks and bottles but actually functioned quite well as a shield!

The Roman shield was an awesome bit of kit! It was about five feet high, about two feet wide and protected the soldier from the knee to the shoulder. The leather on the front of the shield was soaked in water before the battle so that the enemy's fiery arrows were extinguished on impact! In the Christian walk, the enemy often fires flaming arrows at us but, in these times, it is our faith that is vital! Not just what we believe in, but who we believe in. Our faith in God and good foundations in His word help us to extinguish the fiery darts of doubt, fear, and lies that are flung at us by the enemy.

As well as the shield for protection behind my make-shift barricade, I had a builder's hard hat that I wore in case a rock made it over my bin lid! That was health and safety at work right there. One day, we decided to test the effectiveness of this hard hat against impact so I put on the hat and my friend hit me on the head with all his might using the handle of a spade. I remember the spade handle broke but so did the hat

as it split apart under the force of the blow. That was the last thing I remembered for a while! Our minds are very vulnerable to spiritual attack! How we think and how we process thoughts can leave us feeling worthless and feeling isolated. The helmet of salvation is vital to close down the attacks of the enemy on our mind and our thinking. My favourite verse to counteract the enemy in this area is Philippians 4:8. It says, “*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things*”.

Renew your thinking today by changing the way you think and choose to focus on the words of this verse as you go into battle.

*Lord, help me to take up my shield of faith! Today, I put my hope in you, Lord, and believe that no problem is too big for you. Today, I stop looking at how big the enemy is or how big my problems are, and instead I tell them how big my God is! Lord, I thank you for my brothers and sisters who fight with me and for me and I thank you for each saint in my church who has locked shields with me in this battle. Today, I cry freedom over my situations and advance against the strongholds in my life. Today, I take ground for Jesus. Amen.*

#### ACTION STEPS

- Read the Chapter 6: 14–17
- How is your picture of the soldier coming on with the scriptures on each part of the armour?
- Encourage a brother or sister in the faith today with a text or WhatsApp message to let them know that you are standing with them.



# Day 7 – Armed and Dangerous

TODAY'S READING: Ephesians 6:17–18

KEY VERSE:

*“Take... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.”* EPH 6:17–18

On lockdown and as a pastor you think it would be such a joyous time to have endless days to read the word of God and pray but this has actually been the most difficult time I have experienced in years with regard to getting into the word of God consistently and deeply. I have battled more with the duvet in this season than ever before. The enemy, therefore, has been at my door, discouraging me and leading me into dark thoughts of isolation and loneliness.

After a few weeks of this, I made the call to draw my sword and go into battle against myself and the enemy! I began to open the word of God again every morning and spoke to the enemy within and without, warring against the flesh.

The word of God is a weapon that was forged over 2000 years by 40 authors in three languages and across three continents. It is not just a book. It's a collection of 66 books, written by people who were shepherds, kings, scholars, fishermen, prophets, and priests; people just like you and me who were inspired, by the Holy Spirit, to write God's word and give us the greatest weapon in the world with which to fight a spiritual enemy. Paul refers to it in verse 17 as, *“the sword of the Spirit”* but a sword is useless if it is kept in its scabbard. It must be taken out and wielded with confidence and accuracy against the enemy. Here are the six steps to getting a grasp on God's word again:

- Hear it
- Read it
- Study it

- Memorise it
- Meditate on it
- Apply it in your daily life

Take time to note down how you are doing each step in your quiet time each day. Remember, listening to the devo or having a verse for the day is not using the sword of the word effectively.

Finally in our week of devotions on Ephesians chapter six, we see another great weapon in our arsenal against the enemy: prayer. In verse 18, Pauls exhorts us to get into battle on our knees in prayer. A preacher summed it up with five Ps to help us remember:

- **Perpetual Prayer**

Keep in prayer throughout the day. When you say 'amen', it doesn't hang up the phone to God!

- **Petitionary Prayer**

Be specific in prayer. Don't waffle around subjects. Talk to your creator as the one who knows all your innermost thoughts and feelings and just get to the point with God.

- **Powerful Prayer**

Pray in the spirit. We have the gift of tongues which the enemy cannot understand. Tongues cry out to God from your spirit to God by a heavenly language in a way our words alone never could. It is a powerful gift of the Holy Spirit that destroys the schemes of the enemy.

- **Perseverant Prayer**

Keep on praying even when you can't see God working. Don't give up! Your answer is coming, just not in your time frame!

- **Purposeful Prayer**

Don't just pray for yourself, pray for all the saints. It often helps to pray for others in their pain to help us see God in ours.

**ACTION STEPS**

- Read Ephesians 6:17-18
- Make a study plan for the month on a book or character in the bible and be purposeful on studying each day, asking God to reveal something to you in the Word each time you open it.
- Practice today's devo now by closing the door and spending time alone with God in prayer and with His word.



## Artwork by Claire Keys

Claire is one of the saints in **LIVINGHOPE** who has a wild passion for God & painting. She is extremely talented and a real blessing to the Bride of Christ. **YOU CAN FOLLOW HER ON INSTAGRAM @onedayinhiscourts**



All proceeds from the sale of items related to the Ephesians Devotion will go towards the Living Hope Benevolent fund. Our Benevolent Fund is there to help those connected to our church family who need help at this difficult time.

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