

Ephesians

An Overview

TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of **6 U DISCIPLE**, the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11

Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- As we embark on a study of Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, let's step back and get a 30,000 foot **overview of story of the church in Ephesus**. At the end of Paul's second missionary journey, on his way home to Antioch to give a missionary report to his church, he visited the city of Ephesus. **Read Acts 18:19-22**. After a brief evangelization at the local synagogue, Paul left a reliable missionary couple, Priscilla and Aquila, to preserve the evangelistic fruit. The year was ca. **53AD**.

- Read Acts 18:23-28**. During Paul's stay in Antioch, what valuable resource did God bring to Ephesus (v. 24)? How did that resource become even more valuable (v. 25-26)?

On Paul's third missionary journey (ca. **54-57AD**) Paul spent three years in the strategic city of Ephesus. **Read Acts 19:1—20:1**. Make a list of the major events and outcomes of Paul's extensive ministry.

Based on all that's taken place thus far—both good (19:10) and bad (19:23ff.)—what sort of future would you expect for the church of Ephesus? **Why** do you think that?

- At the end of this missionary journey, Paul met with the elders of the Ephesian church (**57AD**). **Read Acts 20:17-38**. What is the "feel" of Paul's address? Support your conclusion with verse references.

What threat lies ahead for the church of Ephesus (v. 28-30)?

From what **two** sources will these "savage wolves" come (v. 29-30)? Which of those have you experienced personally? Tell us a bit about it.

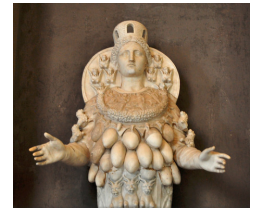
- About four years later (ca. **61AD**) Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians. What issues in the church of Ephesus did Paul address (glance over Ephesians chapters 4-6)?
- Five years later, Paul wrote to Timothy, his protégé, and the current pastor of the church in Ephesus. What issues in the church of Ephesus did Paul **now** need to address (glance over 1 Timothy)? How do you see a fulfillment of Paul's prophecy from almost a decade before (Acts 20:28-30)?

- Finally, **thirty** years later (ca. **95AD**), the church of Ephesus received one final letter—from Jesus himself! **Read Revelation 2:1-7**. What was the state of the Ephesian church, merely 40 years after it was founded?

Did they repent (2:5)? Did the Ephesian "lampstand" endure (Revelation 1:20b)? What do we learn?



Today we begin messages on the much-loved New Testament book of Ephesians. Ephesus, the third largest city in the Roman Empire (population ca. 250,000) was a major commercial port located in present-day Turkey. Archeologists have unearthed large public squares, stadia, gymnasiums, and theaters—one which accommodated 24,000 people! By far the most famous structure in Ephesus was the famous temple of Artemis—one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The temple to Artemis, goddess of fertility, magic, and astrology, became the center of a very lucrative tourist business. Ephesus was a very religious city. While Jews and Christians lived there, the vast majority of its citizens worshipped fifty pagan gods and goddesses as well as emperor worship.



Ephesus also was a center of demonic activity and the dark arts of magic.

Ephesus played a prominent role in Christian history; the Apostle Paul visited Ephesus on both his second and third missionary journeys (Acts 20:17–38) and many New Testament letters were written from Ephesus. On his third missionary journey Paul lived and ministered in Ephesus for three years. It was from Ephesus that “all who lived in Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord” (Acts 19:9-10)! Christianity gained such a foothold in Ephesus that the silversmiths who sold idols were going out of business! Out of frustration, they started a riot (Acts 19:24-29).

There is some evidence that Paul may have intended for this letter to be circulated among many churches in the region. What is clear, however, is that this letter is addressed to God’s people—and that includes us! Ephesians is about the believer’s responsibility to walk in accordance with our heavenly calling. Ephesians *wasn’t* written to correct specific problems in the church. Paul wrote this letter to prevent problems from arising. The more we become like Jesus, the more problems we *prevent*. The book of Ephesians breaks neatly into two parts:

Chapters 1-3	Chapters 4-6
• Doctrinal	• Practical
• Position	• Practice
• Calling	• Conduct
• Believe	• Behave
• Wealth	• Walk

Paul dramatically met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9); it is impossible to overemphasize how important this was for the spread of Christianity. The recipients of this letter are the “saints” in Ephesus. Biblically speaking, every true believer in Christ is a saint—“set apart” for Christ. Paul wishes God’s grace and peace upon them—the kindness of God directed toward undeserving people. While there was once alienation and hostility between us and God, now there is peace—because of God’s grace (John 3:16-18). God has already pronounced humanity guilty, but we need not remain in that alienated, guilty state. The phrase “in Christ” is used twenty-seven times in this short letter! In Christ, forgiveness is available.

12 Application/Challenge

Read through the book of Ephesians at least three times this week.

Each time try to do it in one sitting, if you possibly can. Instead of watching TV, or whatever you do in the evenings, this week read Ephesians! Reading it in one sitting will help you get the big picture of the book. It’s only six chapters. Six pages in my Bible! As you read, note the shift between the subject matter in chapters 1-3 and chapters 4-6.

- First we are to **sit** in the truths we discover in chapters 1-3.
- Then in response, we are to **walk** in a manner worthy of the Lord.
- Finally, we are to **stand** firm against the schemes of the devil who opposes us at every turn.

Sit, Walk, Stand. Will you do that this week? All right then. See you next week!

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*"Five Question Bible Study" (see next page) is a simple way to study any passage.
Let's use it to get an overview of the whole book of Ephesians...*

Monday—Read Ephesians 1-3

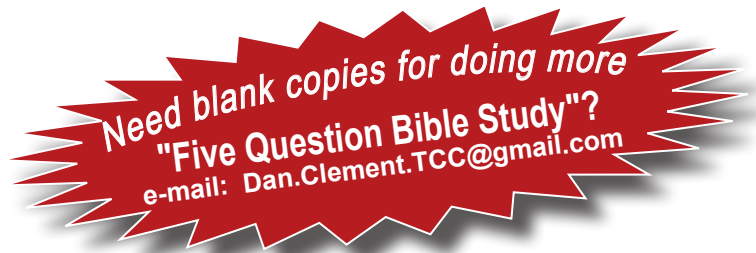
Tuesday— Read Ephesians 1-3

Wednesday— Read Ephesians 1-3

Thursday— Read Ephesians 4-6

Friday— Read Ephesians 4-6

Saturday— Read Ephesians 4-6



Five Question Bible Study

Bible Text: _____ Date: _____



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]





You want the best for your children—and so does God!
That's why Ephesians opens with a blessing (Ephesians 1:2):

**"Grace and peace to you
from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."**

Why not make this your family's "memory verse" for the week?

- Write the text of Ephesians 1:2 on a piece of poster board. Depending on their ages, let your children write it or illustrate it.
- Each evening at dinner recite it and discuss different key words.
- Close in prayer (including letting the children pray for you).