

Assignment (before our first class on Jan. 11):

1. Carefully read and study this introduction to Ephesians. If you want to dig deeper, use a commentary or study Bible and read their introduction to the letter.
2. Before our first gathering on Tuesday morning, Jan. 11, read Ephesians thru in one sitting three times (it takes about 20 minutes) using a good word-for-word translation (NASB 1995 or 2020, ESV, CSB). I highly recommend reading it out loud. Jot down questions that come to mind.
3. Spend a few minutes praying for the study, the leaders and participants, that God's Word would change all of us, that we would be diligent.
4. Meet with your prayer partner.

An Introduction to Ephesians From Position to Practice

I. Authorship – Paul

II. Literary Form – A Letter

21 of the 27 NT books are letters (epistles), including all of Paul's writings.

The typical first century Greco-Roman letter had three parts:

1. An opening greeting or salutation, usually containing a wish for physical health.
2. The body of the letter.
3. The conclusion.

Paul likely used an amanuensis—a professional scribe—though at times writing portions in his own hand to authenticate.

NT letters would often be delivered by representatives (e.g., Tychicus, Eph. 6:21) from the churches Paul planted who were visiting Paul with updates and reports of problems OR by close associates of Paul who might then stay and minister among a given flock.

Paul's letters were likely copied and circulated among local churches, who would also copy and circulate them to other distant churches or influential individuals.

III. Date Written – A.D. 60-61

During 1st Roman imprisonment while under 2 yr. house arrest (cf. Acts 28:16-31). Ephesians is a Prison Epistle, along w/ Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. He refers to his imprisonment 3 times.

IV. Location of Recipients – Ephesus

Ephesus was the capital of the Roman province of Asia Minor, now Turkey, a top 5 city between the east and west of the Roman Empire on the empire's main highway. It was a commercial, religious, political, and educational hub. It had a flourishing trade in the manufacture of silver replicas (idols) that visitors could take home.

Home to the temple of Diana, goddess of fertility (Diana was the Roman name; Artemis its Greek name). This temple, measuring 418 x 239 feet (nearly 100,000 sq feet) was one of seven wonders of the ancient world.

V. Background of the Church in Ephesus

SEE Acts 18:18-21. Paul made a brief visit at the end of his 2nd missionary journey, around A.D. 53. Priscilla and Aquila likely did extensive evangelism and ministry there. From this small beginning, it would become the foremost church in Asia Minor.

SEE Acts 19:1-41. Paul returned on his 3rd missionary journey. He was there 2-3 years (54-57), teaching and doing evangelism, longer than his stay at other churches. He saw its strategic location for the spread of the gospel throughout Asia Minor.

This church had a Who's Who list of ministers: Paul, Timothy (pastor 1 ½ years after Paul and where he lived when Paul wrote 1 Timothy), Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila, Tychicus, and the Apostle John in his later years.

With these Christians living in the shadow of this massive Temple and daily rubbing shoulders w/ pagan worshippers, Paul's call to expose the deeds of darkness and be prepared for spiritual warfare would strike them w/ special force.

Acts 20 reveals Paul's affection for this church in his tearful farewell to the Ephesian elders, where he warned them of false teachers rising up from within the church and from within their own ranks (cf. 1 Timothy). Thirty years later, Jesus sent this church a personal letter (Rev. 2:1-7) commending them for keeping out false teachers but rebuking them for leaving their first love.

VI. Purpose of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

Expositor's Commentary: "Ephesians, unlike Colossians, was not devised to combat error and expose...false teaching. Paul's aim was more detached and therefore more exalted. He rose above the smoke of battle and captured a vision of God's sovereign plan that transcends ... controversy ... Paul stood aside from the conflict and contemplated God's overall design for His church and His world."

VII. Key Observations

Tone: Positive, encouraging, faith-building YET challenging. It sounds at times like a sermon, and at times like a prayer. Reveals that the Church, the ONE body of Christ, is God's masterpiece, planned by the Father, purchased by the Son and protected, indwelt and empowered by the Spirit. Paul's usual style is lots of reasoned doctrine and careful arguments, but Ephesians often gives way to doxology. Argument yields to AWE.

VIII. Key Words

- Riches – 5x
- Fulness or filled – 6x
- Glory – 8x
- Grace – 12x
- Love (verb and noun) – 19x
- Key Phrase: “in Christ” ~ 35x, more than any other NT book!

X. A Summary of Ephesians:

Understanding your position in Christ is the key to your Christian walk. The truth or doctrine we believe is the root; what we think, say and do is the fruit.

Or to change the metaphor, chapters one-three lay the foundation for this great building called the Christian life. Chapters one-three dig past the surface rocks and dirt and gravel to lay an immovable foundation to anchor the Christian life. Chapters four-six are the towering building where every area of our lives rests on this glorious foundation.

Ephesians teaches us to place our position in Christ before our practice as Christians. Belief precedes and drives behavior. Theology leads to doxology. Christian doctrine is relevant for every area of life and should be known and understood by all Christians “to the praise of the glory of His grace.”

IX. Simple Outline:

- I. Our Position in Christ (Belief/Doctrine) 1-3
- II. Our Practice in Christ (Behavior/Duty) 4-6

Outline of Ephesians (this matches our weekly schedule)

Part One – Our Position in Christ (1-3)

1. A Greeting of Grace and Peace (1:1-2)
2. Praising God for our Spiritual Blessings in Christ (1:3-14)
3. Praying for a Deeper Understanding of our Spiritual Blessings in Christ (1:15-23)
4. Sinners Made Alive in Christ (2:1-10)
5. Jew and Gentiles Made One in Christ (2:11-22)
6. The Mystery of the Church Revealed (3:1-13)
7. Prayer and Praise to the God Who Saves (3:14-21)

Part Two – Our Practice in Christ (4-6)

1. The Practice of Unity (4:1-16)
2. The Practice of Holiness (4:17-32)
3. The Practice of Imitating God (5:1-14)
4. The Practice of Wisdom & Marriage (5:15-33)
5. The Practice of Parenting & Work (6:1-9)
6. The Practice of Spiritual Warfare & Conclusion (6:10-24)