

1. Introduction to Ephesians

Introductory Questions:

We often think of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in regard to individual salvation; ie, being saved from "my" sins, and receiving the gift of eternal life. But the Gospel is much more than that. The Gospel is not just good news of a new life in Christ, but good news of a new society. [Discuss]

One of the chief blind spots in modern Christianity has been to overlook the central importance of the church. We tend to proclaim individual salvation without moving on to the saved community.

The letter of Ephesians sets forth God's eternal purpose through the gospel to create a new society through Jesus Christ. What is this new society? (Eph 2:11-22)

This new society is the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is made up of followers of Christ from all walks of life, and from different ethnic groups (Jews and Gentiles). We are now one in Christ, and one with God our Father.

The key verse of Ephesians is Eph 1:9-10. It declares God's eternal purpose. What is it?

God's eternal purpose is not just for individuals to be saved, but that we all be brought under one head – even God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; ie, we are not just saved for personal gain, but for God's purpose of being a new society under Christ, for the praise of God's glory (cf. Eph 1:11-12).

Background:

- The letter of Ephesians was written by Paul (Eph 1:1), and was probably written when he was in prison in Rome (Eph 3:1, 4:1, 6:20).
- Since we read of Tychicus (by whom he sent the letter to Ephesus) in Eph 6:21, and in 2 Tim 4:12, it appears that Paul wrote this letter near the end of his life. We see his loving concern for God's church, the new society, to be all that we were intended to be under Christ.
- Ephesus was the capital city and most important city of the Roman province of Asia (now Turkey). It was a large, thriving commercial centre, with a busy commercial port. It was also home to the temple for the Roman goddess Diana (Greek – Artemis) – one of the seven ancient wonders of the world.
- Paul brought the Gospel to Ephesus at the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-21).
- On his third missionary journey Paul spent a considerable time (three years) at Ephesus (Acts 20:31).
- He made Ephesus a centre of evangelism during this time, from which they reached out to other cities in the Roman province of Asia, such as Colosse (Acts 19:10).
- Paul experienced a severe trial at Ephesus due to an uproar started by a craftsman who was losing business because of many turning from the goddess Diana to the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 19:23-41).
- The letter of Ephesians does not address any errors or heresies (unlike some other of Paul's letters).
- It was written to help Christians understand the dimensions of God's eternal purpose and grace, and to appreciate the way we are to live as a new society in Christ, for His praise and glory.

A Message For Us

The letter of Ephesians concentrates on what God did through the historical work of Jesus Christ, and what He does through the work of His Spirit today, in order to build His new society in the midst of a fallen world. The letter can be divided into the following four sections:

1. The new life God has given us in Christ (1:1 – 2:10)
2. The new society which God has created through Christ (2:11 – 3:21)
3. The new standards which God expects of His new society; especially in unity and purity (4:1 – 5:21)
4. The new relationships for those in this new society; harmony at home, hostility to Satan (5:21 – 6:24)

Read Ephesians 1:1 – 6:24

As a group, read through Ephesians.

Seek to glean what the overall message of the apostle Paul is to the Ephesians.

Discuss this with each other.

Summary: Christians are a new society under Christ for the praise of God's glory.

2. A Life of Blessing

Review: *What is the overall purpose of the letter of Ephesians?*

Ephesians is the gospel of the church, to the church. It's about Christians being God's people - a new society under Christ, living a new life together by the Holy Spirit, for the praise of God's glory.

In a society that is self-focussed, and with a modern-day Christianity that emphasises individual salvation only, what should the letter of Ephesians help us to see? (cf. Eph 5:8-10; Tit 2:14)

Salvation is not all about "me", but about "us" who are in Christ. We are a new community for God. We are to live together as God's people in such a way that we are a light for Christ in a dark world (Eph 5:8-10).

The Greeting (1:1-2)

How does Paul describe himself in Eph 1:1 and 3:7-8?

Paul is an apostle (an especially chosen messenger) of Christ. He did not attain to this position by self-effort, but by God's will and God's grace and God's power. As an apostle he was entrusted to preach the good news of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. With humility he carried out his ministry (3:8).

How does Paul describe the Ephesian Christians? (Eph 1:1b)

They were saints, and they were faithful. "Saint" means set apart ones for God (ie, holy). "Faithful" refers to how they were people who had faith (trust) in Christ. Although they lived in Ephesus, most importantly they were **in Christ**. Paul uses the phrase "in Christ" or "in Him" many times in Ephesians.

REFLECT: How would you describe yourself? Are you a "saint"? Are you "faithful"? Are you in Christ?

What blessing does Paul pronounce on the Ephesians? What's so special about this? (Eph 1:2)

Paul desires that they know and experience the richest of God's blessings – His grace and peace. There is nothing more precious than this. God's grace in Christ is His undeserved and unmerited favour toward us, and God's peace in Christ guards and protects our heart and mind (Phil 4:7).

REFLECT: Do you pray for God's grace and peace for fellow Christians? Even those who hurt you?

The Blessing (1:3-8)

Paul wrote from prison (Eph 4:1, 6:20). Yet after his greeting, what does Paul write next? (1:3)

Despite his chains, Paul praises God for all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. He lifted his eyes off his present circumstances and looked upward to God, who so blesses us by His grace through Christ.

REFLECT: When you're facing trying circumstances, what do you do? (cf. Job 1:20-21; Acts 16:23-25) As the song goes "Count your blessings name them one by one; count your blessings see what God has done".

Paul emphasises that we have "EVERY SPIRITUAL" blessing. How are we to understand this?

Firstly, by being in Christ we have every blessing. There is not one more blessing we could have. Secondly, we haven't been given earthly blessings, but spiritual blessings. Our blessings are in connection with heaven; not this earth. As a result, Christians don't enjoy health, wealth and prosperity, as a false doctrine declares, but often they experience pain, loss and persecution. However, what a hope we have!

The phrase "heavenly realm" occurs five times in Ephesians. What does this mean? (Eph 2:6)

It's in reference to how Christ has been raised from the dead and sits at the right hand of the Father – in the heavenly realms (Eph 2:6). Since we are in Him now, this is where we are seated as well, and one day, when we go to be with Him, we will enjoy all the blessings of God that are in Him – in full.

Why are we in Christ and blessed with every spiritual blessing, according to Eph 1:4-8?

It definitely is not because of who we are and what we have done. It's all because of God's doing. God **chose** us to be His holy people (v. 4); He **predestined** us to be His adopted children (v.5); He **redeemed** us through His Son's blood so that we could be forgiven. It's because of God that we are blessed.

When did God chose us? How does that make you feel toward God?

He chose us before the creation of the world; before we ever lived, and did right or wrong. Why He chose us we do not know, but the fact that He did should fill us with humility and praise. It did for Paul!

What were the motivating factors for God to choose and predestine us? (Eph 1:4-8)

It wasn't according to how righteous we were, or because we had faith. Instead, He chose and predestined us before time began, according to His amazing love and His glorious grace.

In Christ we have been adopted as sons and have forgiveness of sins. What's your response to this?

We, who once were sinners and enemies of God, should be so thankful for what God has made us in Christ.

Summary: Christians have every spiritual blessing in Christ because God chose us. Praise His name.

3. A Life for Praise

Review: *Though Paul was in chains, what do we find him expressing in Eph 1:3? Why?*

Paul is praising God for who He is and what he has done for us in Christ. Despite his circumstances, he looked upward and praised God for all the spiritual blessings we have in the heavenly realms.

Why are we in Christ and so blessed of God? (Eph 1:4-8)

We are in Christ and blessed of God because of His doing. God chose us before the creation of the world and predestined us to be the recipients of His great salvation in Christ – according to His grace and love.

The Purpose of God (1:4-8)

God has done so much for us, but with a purpose in mind. What is the chief purpose? (1:6, 12, 14)

God's chief purpose was not just to save us, but to make our lives for His praise and glory.

How can our lives bring praise and glory to God? (cf. 1 Peter 2:9-10)

We are the objects of His great grace and amazing love. When we testify of God's love and grace through song or speech or sharing the gospel with others, we bring praise and glory to Him

What do you think the phrase means "to the praise of His glory"? (1:12, 16)

God's glory, in this case, is in relation to His glorious character. Not only is He glorious in appearance (Rev 4:2-3), but our God is glorious in character – in His righteousness, justice, faithfulness, love, grace. We should praise and worship God for His glorious character (cf. Exod 34:5-8, and Moses' response).

According to Eph 1:4 how can we live lives here on earth that bring praise to Him?

We were chosen to be holy (set apart for God), and to be blameless (righteous and pure). We have not been chosen just to go to heaven. God wants us to be like Him (1 Pet 1:15-16) here on earth; that we might express His glory to others (cf. Matt 5:16).

The Plan of God (1:9-12)

Not only has God a purpose for us, but our salvation is part of His plan (His will). What did

God's plan bring about for us, according to Eph 1:5?

God's plan (or will) was to adopt us as His sons through Jesus Christ. What an incredible plan, when we think of who we were - enemies of God and rebels of Him. It was His will (Eph 1:5b).

God's plan is much bigger than us being His children. What is God's chief plan? (Eph 1:9-10)

God's chief plan is to have everything under His Son; whether things in heaven or things in earth. All things are to come under His headship and rule. This is where all things are heading (cf. 1 Cor 15:24-28).
REFLECT: Even non-believers will one day bow before Jesus (Phil 2:9-11), but how much better to bow before Him now as our Saviour and King.

Why does Paul speak of His master plan being a mystery, and who has it been revealed to? (1:9)

God's great plan was a mystery during the Old Testament period. It was prophesied about (Isa 9:6), but who was this "child"? It wasn't fully revealed until Jesus came. This great mystery has now been revealed to those who trust in Jesus – the fallen world is oblivious to God's great plan and the implications of it.

What great declaration does Paul make in regard to God's plan in Eph 1:11-12?

Everything is worked out according to God's master plan – nothing has been left to chance. We who are in Christ have not just stumbled into salvation, but we were chosen and predestined to salvation.

REFLECT: How should we view all the horrific things that happen in our world. Are these according to God's plan as well? (cf. Rom 8:18-21)

Note: God has willed for this world to be in a fallen state at present, but He doesn't permit things to get out of control - He puts a boundary around the evil of men and Satan, so that His master plan is accomplished; ie, where all things come under Christ His Son. This master plan is what is in mind in v.11.

The Promise of God (1:13-14)

What is part of God's great plan for us? (Eph 1:13-14)

We have been promised a glorious inheritance in Christ; one day our redemption will be complete.

How is the Holy Spirit described in these verses?

We have been sealed by God's Spirit, and He is a deposit guaranteeing what is to come. In other words, what we have in Christ (our salvation and inheritance) is absolutely certain; made certain by the Spirit.

God has done everything for us, but we also must response rightly to God. What is it? (Eph 1:13)

We must hear the Gospel of Jesus and respond to it by believing (trusting) in Christ. Have you?

Summary: God has planned to save us and promised us salvation, so that we might be for His praise.

4. A Life of Prayer

Review: *What is God’s great plan for the whole creation (1:10), and His chief purpose for us (1:12)?*
 God’s great plan is to bring all things under Christ, and for Christians to be for the praise of His glory.

We are so often distracted by the things of this life. How should we see our life? (1:3-14)

We should see our life, no matter how things are, in the light of God’s eternal plan for us. God has chosen us in the past, and has promised us glorious things for the future; for us who are under Christ. Praise God!

The prayer for Christians (1:15-19)

What do we learn from Paul in regard to his view of the Ephesian Christians? (Eph 1:15-16)

Paul is mindful of the Ephesian Christians – He is thankful for them, and also prays for them.

REFLECT: *Are we mindful of each other? Are we thankful for one another and do we pray for each other?*

Why is Paul thankful for the Ephesian Christians? (Eph 1:15; John 13:34-35)

He is thankful for their faith in Jesus Christ, and the way they express that faith by loving other Christians.

REFLECT: *Can others be thankful for us because of how we show our faith in Christ by loving them?*

Read Paul’s prayer in Eph 1:17-19. What motivates Paul to pray like this? (cf. also Eph 4:13)

Paul knew that none of us are mature in Christ yet – we are still growing. Thus, he prayed for their growth.

REFLECT: *How often do you pray for yourself/others in being a mature and fruitful Christian?*

What is the overall thrust of Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians?

Paul is not asking for God to give the Ephesians a “second blessing”. No! We already have every spiritual blessing in Christ (1:3). He wants them to know what they already have in Christ; that’s how we grow.

What specific requests does Paul make before God for the Ephesian Christians? (Eph 1:17-19)

He prays that they may know God better, that they may know the hope of God’s calling, that they may know the riches of God’s inheritance for us, and that they may know the power of God that is for us.

REFLECT: *Although “we once were blind, but now we see”, most Christians see (or know) poorly. Why?*

How can we know God better? (Eph 1:17)

We can know God better by praying for wisdom (spiritual sight) and revelation. We ought to know God more and more; as the “God of our Lord Jesus Christ” and the “glorious Father”, as Paul calls Him.

What is the primary way for us to receive wisdom and revelation in regard to knowing God?

God’s word is **the** way for us to have wisdom and revelation of God, for the Bible is the revelation of God. Thus, we need to read God’s word and pray for God to reveal Himself to us through His word.

What is required for us to know the hope of God’s calling? (Eph 1:18)

We need the “eyes of our heart” enlightened. In the Bible, “heart” includes mind. Thus, our mind needs enlightening to what God has called us to. This is something to pray for, and to discover in God’s word.

How well do you comprehend the riches of God’s inheritance for us? What should we do?

We think we know what’s in store for us, but our lives often don’t reflect the reality. What we must realise is that we need to pray and read God’s word, so that we may realise and appreciate all that God has for us.

REFLECT: *Are you able to say like Paul in Phil 1:21 “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain”?*

The power of God (1:19-23)

In Eph 1:19, Paul also prays that we may know “the incomparably great power for us who believe”. What do you think Paul may be thinking of when he mentions God’s power for us?

God’s power for us is His power to make our salvation secure (John 10:27-30); and to grant us life (Rom 8:10); and to keep us for our inheritance (1 Pet 1:3-5). It’s God’s power that makes it all happen.

In Eph 1:19-23 Paul speaks of God’s mighty power. What does he mention? Why?

He mentions the mighty power God used to raise His Son from the dead, and to ascend Him to His right hand, and to put all things beneath His feet. Because we are in Christ, we can be assured that this same power will be exercised to ensure our own salvation and eternal security – our inheritance is certain.

Twice Paul mentions the headship of Christ – in Eph 1:9-10 and Eph 1:21-23. Why?

Paul wants to constantly remind us of God’s master plan. God wants His Son to fill and rule everything.

In Eph 1:22-23 what do we learn about Christ and the church. What do we show the world?

The church is a people that has fulfilled God’s plan by being under the Lordship of Christ – He is the head and we are the body. We show to the world how we are all meant to be – under Christ (God’s master plan).

REFLECT: *How well do we show the world what it looks like to be under Christ?*

Summary: Pray as Paul did so that we may grow in Christ and show the world that Christ is Lord.

5. A Life Resurrected

Review: *What should we be doing for fellow Christians (consider the example of Paul in Eph 1:15-19)?*
We should be mindful of them, thankful for them, and praying for them. We should pray that we may know better - our God, our hope, and His power at work in us. This is so that we may grow in Christ.

It is God's master plan for Christ to be Lord of all. Where is this already seen? (Eph 1:22-23)
It is already seen in Christ's church, where He is the head of the church – but how well is it seen?

What we were by nature (2:1-3)

In Eph 2:1-3 who is Paul describing? (consider especially the last part of v.3)

Paul is not describing the people from some satanic heathen nation, but how we all once were before we became a Christian; even those of us who have grown up in a Christian home in a Christianised society.

What state were we in before we came to be in Christ (Eph 2:1)? What does this imply?

We were dead spiritually - separated from God. We had no spiritual life, no relationship with God, and no promise of eternal life, because of our sins. This is how we all were— no one is born alive spiritually.

To what forces were we enslaved to before we became a Christian? (Eph 2:2-3)

We were enslaved to the ways of this world, and to all kinds of sinful desires and lusts.

REFLECT: *What would your life be like for you if you had not become a Christian?*

Whose power were we really under? (Eph 2:2; John 8:42-44)

We were under Satan's power – who is called the “prince of the power of the air”. Not only did he tempt us to be in rebellion to God, but he blinded us to the gospel (2 Cor 4:4) so that we might not be saved.

This is why salvation is often described as being set free from Satan's dominion (Col 1:13).

In God's eyes what had we become? (Eph 2:3)

Through our sinful nature, we had become children of wrath – God's anger was toward us (John 3:36).

REFLECT: *The description given here of how we all once were before we became a Christian is hard-hitting. Why is it important that we understand this and see what our true natural state was?*

What we have become by grace (2:4-9)

Despite what we are by nature, how has God treated us? (Eph 2:4-7)

He has not treated us as we deserve. Instead of pouring out His wrath on us, by His great love and mercy, He has saved us through His Son Jesus Christ. What words: “BUT GOD”!

What three awesome things has God done for us in Christ? (Eph 2:4-7)

We were spiritually dead, but God has made us spiritually alive; we were part of a fallen world and under Satan, but God has raised us up to be with Christ; we were slaves of sin and evil desires, but God has seated us with Christ to rule and reign with Him. God has reversed our state. Praise His name!

REFLECT: *All the things God has and will do for us are tied to what God has done for His Son (Eph 1:19-21). We too will be raised up and seated in heaven, just as Christ was – all because we are in Him.*

In Eph 2:4-9, one word is mentioned three times. It's the key to our new state. What is it?

It is God's grace – we have been saved by His grace. All that is to come and what we will enjoy in eternity is all because God has been gracious to us – He has not treated us as we deserve (which is wrath).

Eph 2:8-9 is a key passage in the Bible. What important truths does it teach?

Firstly, salvation from sin is by God's grace. Salvation is a free gift God has graciously chosen to give us. We receive it, not by earning it through good works, but through putting our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

REFLECT: *What shouldn't we be glorying in, in the light of God's grace (Eph 2:9)? In what ways do we?*

What we are in Christ (2:10)

While we wait to be raised up and seated with Christ, how are we to view our life here on earth?

We are to consider ourselves to be God's work – He has saved us and is seeking to do good works in us.

What does it mean to live a life of “good works”?

It is to be like Jesus, who lived a holy and blameless life for God's glory (cf. Eph 1:4, 1:12).

Faith is mentioned in Eph 2:8 and good works in Eph 2:10. How do they relate to salvation?

We are saved by faith in Christ – not by doing good works. However, if we are saved, then we will show it by doing good works; ie, we are saved by faith alone, but saving faith is never alone (cf. James 2:17-18).

REFLECT: *What does your life reflect? A fallen nature, or a new nature that practices good works?*

Summary: By nature we are dead and objects of wrath; by grace we are alive and are God's work.

6. A Life in a New Community

Review: *How does the Bible describe our natural state; before we came to trust in Christ? (Eph 2:1-3)*

We were spiritually dead, under Satan's control, enslaved to evil desires, and under God's wrath.

What have we become by God's grace and through faith in Christ? (Eph 2:4-10)

We, who were spiritually dead, have become spiritually alive; we who were part of a fallen world under Satan, have been raised above with Christ; we who were slaves of sin have become God's workmanship.

Brought near (2:11-16)

Most of us are Gentiles (non-Jews). In Eph 2:11-12 we are reminded of our history. What was it? We were without hope and without God in this world. Only the Jews had a covenant with God and were God's people. We were alienated and separated from God – not just because we were sinners, but because we were non-Jews. (NB: A Gentile had to be "naturalised" as a Jew to have any hope and to know God)

REFLECT: A Gentile in the Old Testament died without hope and without God. What does that mean?

We have an inkling of the attitude of Jews to Gentiles in Eph 2:11. What was it? Was that right? The Jews looked down at the Gentiles – they were slandered as the "uncircumcision", and were pushed away. Yet, God had commanded the Jews to welcome Gentiles; ie, strangers and aliens (Lev 19:33-34).

But what has Christ done for the Gentiles? (Eph 2:13)

Christ has welcomed the Gentiles – we who were "far off" have been "brought near".

How has Christ brought us near? What does Paul particularly emphasise in Eph 2:13?

Christ has brought us near by His blood; ie, Christ also died for the sins of the Gentiles to make us right.

By Christ shedding His blood, He has established a new covenant (1 Cor 11:25). What has happened to the old covenant that the Jews were under? (Eph 2:14-15; cf. also Heb 8:7-13)

The old covenant has been abolished by the new. It has been made obsolete. No longer are people made right with God as the Jews were (and those who converted to Judaism) by obeying the ceremonial law, which included circumcision and sacrifice. Instead, all people groups are now made right through Christ.

Some feel that the inclusion of the Gentiles was God's plan B after the Jews failed. Is that true?

No! It was always God's intention to include all people (not just Jews) into His kingdom. Consider the promise in Gen 22:18 and the prophecies in Isa 2:2, 42:6-7, 49:5-6, and the fulfilment in Rev 5:9-10.

What has God brought about through His Son? (Eph 2:14-16; Col 1:19-22)

God has made a new community where Jews and Gentiles are at peace with Him and each other through Christ. This new community is Christ's church; His body. The things that led to hostility between Jews and Gentiles have been removed. We have become one people through Christ's body and blood.

Citizens of God's household (2:17-22)

Why was the gospel of peace preached to those who were near (ie, the Jews)? (Eph 2:17)

Although the Jews "were near", they were not right with God, as they had based their salvation on their heritage and works, and besides, only Christ could truly bring about the forgiveness of sins (Heb 10:4-10). The Jews were as lost as the Gentiles; that's why they needed the gospel too.

In Eph 2:18, what ultimate purpose did Christ's death enable?

It enabled all people to have access to God the Father. Through faith in Christ, and the receiving of God's Spirit, any person from any people group can know the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as their Father.

What glorious conclusion does Paul come to in Eph 2:19, especially for Gentile believers?

Although we were strangers and aliens, we who have trusted in Christ are fellow citizens with Jews who also have trusted in Christ. We are part of God's family; adopted children (Eph 1:5).

REFLECT: In a world where we strive to find a sense of belonging, what has God done? How do you feel?

Eph 2:20-22 relates the church to a spiritual building. What do we learn about our foundation?

The church has been built on the apostles (New Testament) and prophets (Old Testament), with Christ the cornerstone; ie, everything is lined up with Him, in accordance with God's will (Eph 1:10, 1:22-23).

Thus, Christ and His Word (the Bible) is the foundation of the church.

What should be happening in Christ's church? (Eph 2:21-22)

We should be one - fitting together, growing together, and being built up together for God's dwelling.

REFLECT: The old Jew/Gentile barrier has been abolished. But have we replaced it with others? Consider denominationalism, separation of clergy and laity, racism toward ethnic groups, alienation of people, etc.

Summary: We live in a new community; by faith in Christ, all are welcome, and we are to be at peace.

7. A Life of Ministry

Review: *What has God done for the Gentiles through Christ? (Eph 2:11-13)*

Although previously without hope and without God, the Gentiles have been “brought near” through Christ.

In Christ, what have Jew and Gentile believers become? (Eph 2:14-19)

We have become one people. There are no more barriers, but all have access to the Father by the Spirit.

Read Eph 3:1-13

A Ministry Revealed (3:1-6)

Why does Paul consider himself a prisoner of Christ, when he is a prisoner of Rome? (Eph 3:1)

Paul was in prison from ministering the Gospel of Jesus to the Gentiles. He was also in prison to minister for Jesus to rulers and authorities (Acts 9:15-16). In that sense, he calls himself a prisoner of (for) Christ.

Paul was a Jewish Pharisee who persecuted the church of Christ (Phil 3:5-6). How did he even become a minister of the Gospel of Christ to the Gentiles? (Eph 3:2-3)

Paul became a minister of the Gospel of Christ by revelation. He did not discover the Gospel by himself, or work it out. Instead, he encountered Christ on his way to Damascus, who revealed to him the Gospel, and commissioned him to preach it (Acts 22:14-15; Gal 1:15-17).

Paul often associates the Gospel with “mystery”. In what way is the Gospel a mystery? (Eph 3:4-5)

The Gospel was not fully revealed until Christ came, died, and rose again. Although the Scriptures spoke many things about Christ, the full extent of the Gospel was only revealed through Christ and His apostles.

How has the mystery been revealed to us? (Eph 3:5)

It has been revealed by God’s Holy Spirit. He, and He alone, is able to reveal the Gospel to us. He first revealed it, in part, to the Old Testament prophets, and then to Christ’s apostles. He is also the One who takes the words of the Bible and helps reveal the Gospel to us. (cf. Matt 16:15-17; 2 Cor 4:4-6).

REFLECT: *If you are a follower of Christ, this only happened because God was pleased to reveal the mystery of the Gospel to you. How does that make you feel?*

What are some of the key truths of the mystery that have been revealed? (Eph 3:6; Col 1:27)

One of the great mysteries revealed in the Gospel is that the Gentiles (non-Jews) would be included into God’s family through faith in Christ, and that Christ would dwell in us by His Spirit.

A Ministry Received (3:7-13)

Paul was given revelation, but how else does he describe the way he became an apostle? (Eph 3:2,7)

Paul became an apostle by God’s grace and by the working of God’s power (cf. how it required the risen Jesus appearing to Paul – an enemy of Christ’s church). Unlike how he became a Pharisee by human effort, he received his apostleship as a free gift. God gave it to him.

What was Paul’s response to receiving this lofty position of being an apostle of Christ? (Eph 3:8)

He felt very humbled. He never forgot how he was the least of all Christians because of how he had blasphemed Christ’s name and had put Christians to death. God’s grace kept him humble and thankful.

REFLECT: *If you are in Christ, you are a child of God, and have been blessed with spiritual gifts, and given ministries to do for God’s glory. How have you received all this? How should you respond?*

In Eph 3:8, how does Paul describe the message of the Gospel that he was given to proclaim?

He describes it as “the unsearchable riches of Christ”. The Gospel is all about Jesus; who He is and what He has done for us, in order to secure for us every spiritual blessing (Eph 1:3). What riches! Beyond measure!

In Eph 3:10, how is the Gospel described?

It is the manifold wisdom of God – what grand wisdom it was for God to deal justly with our sins, and yet be merciful to us – the answer was the cross; Christ the Lord dying in our place (cf. 1 Cor 1:21-24).

Besides Paul being commissioned to make known the Gospel, who else is? (Eph 3:9-10)

The church is to make known the Gospel, for the mystery of God and the wisdom of God (the Gospel) has been revealed to us and entrusted to us. We are to pass it on to all nations, and to people in all positions.

According to God’s plan, what is the overall main purpose of the Gospel? (Eph 3:11-12; cf. 2:18)

Through the Gospel and faith in Christ, we now all have freedom and confidence to approach God. Wow!

REFLECT: *What do you see to be the main purpose of the Gospel? Is it to approach and know God?*

How should we look at hardships that come from declaring the Gospel? (Eph 3:13) Why?

We should never lose heart, for the Gospel is the manifold wisdom of God in bringing us to God.

Summary: By revelation we have received the Gospel – may we minister it faithfully and not lose heart.

8. A Life of Fullness

Review: *What are some ways Paul describes the Gospel of our Lord Jesus in Eph 3:4-5, 8-10?*

It is the revealed mystery of Christ, the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the manifold wisdom of God.

What is the connection between the church and the Gospel? (Eph 3:10-11)

As God’s church, we have had the Gospel revealed to us by the Spirit, and we are to reveal it to others for their salvation. This is the ministry we have received from God according to His eternal purpose.

Read Eph 3:14-21

A Life of Prayer (3:14-16a)

In Eph 3:14-21 Paul shares a second prayer for the Ephesians (the first is in Eph 1:15-23). He begins in 3:14 by saying “for this reason”. What was the reason that caused Paul to pray for them?

Paul prayed in the light of what God has done for us in Christ and the revelation of God’s will and purposes (which we read about in Eph 2:1 – 3:13). God’s truth led to action – including prayer.

REFLECT: *How often do you act on God’s word, after reading or hearing it, by praying?*

Consider how Paul prayed. What do we learn from his example about praying? (Eph 3:14-16a)

1. Like Paul, we should pray humbly and reverently – on bended knees (or at least, bended hearts)
2. Like Paul, we should pray to the Father – it’s the thrust of the Gospel (Eph 2:18, 3:11-12; John 16:25-27)
3. Like Paul, we should adore God – He has given us birth into His family through Christ
4. Like Paul, we should bring our requests to Him, for He is generous and rich in giving (cf. Matt 7:7-11)

A Life of Faith (3:16b-17)

In his prayer, what does Paul request first for the Ephesians? (Eph 3:16)

He requests that they be strengthened in their inner being (their heart and mind) by the Holy Spirit’s power.

What did Paul believe this request would result in? (Eph 3:17a)

Paul knew that this request was essential for the Ephesian Christians to continue to have faith in Christ.

Why is there such a great need to pray this for ourselves and for each other?

We are in spiritual warfare (as we shall see in Eph 6). The devil is doing everything he can to knock faith in Christ out of our hearts; whether through temptations or trials, fightings or fatigue, etc. We also have the world seeking to tear faith in Christ out of us, and our own sinful nature doing the same.

Understanding the battle we are engaged in, what then is Paul requesting in Eph 3:16?

Paul is praying that by the Holy Spirit’s power we would continue in the truth that has been revealed to us, and continue to have faith in Christ. Only by the Spirit’s power and enabling can we do this.

REFLECT: *Like many, do you automatically assume you will always maintain your faith in Jesus? Others have thought the same, and fell away. What can you do to ensure you will persevere and trust Christ?*

A Life of Love (3:17-19)

In Eph 3:17b-18, Paul makes a second request of the Father. What is it?

Paul prays for the Ephesian Christians to comprehend (or grasp) the love of Christ. They had already been established in it (by the Gospel), but there was a need to grasp and know it more.

What was the main purpose of this second prayer request? (Eph 3:19; 4:13)

It was so that we “may be filled to all the fullness of God”; that is, grasping the love of Christ enables us to be “full in God”, which in turn enables us to be mature in the faith, and fruitful in our service to Christ.

Why does grasping the love of Christ enable us to be “full” and mature Christians?

When we comprehend the grace of God and the love of Christ, it will spur us on to living fully for Christ. Cf. In Rom 12:1, there is a direct link between appreciating God’s mercy with us being “living sacrifices”.

How does Paul describe the love of Christ?

The love of Christ surpasses knowledge; it’s not unknowable, but it’s so great that it cannot be completely known. Consider its width – all sinners are welcome; its length – Christ left heaven to save us; its depth – Christ became sin for us; its height – it’s divine; higher than the highest heavens (cf. Psalm 103:11-14).

A Life of Praise (3:20-21)

Paul concludes his prayer with such a wonderful benediction. What’s it all about? (Eph 3:20-21)

Paul is filled with praise for our Father who is more powerful and generous than we could ever imagine.

Who should especially be glorying in God? Why? (Eph 3:21)

The church in Christ should be glorying in God, for God’s goodness and greatness has been revealed to us.

Summary: Pray for God’s fullness, through maintaining faith in Christ and grasping the love of Christ.

9. A Life of Unity

Review: *Paul prayed that the Ephesians be strengthened in the inner man. Why? (Eph 3:16-17a)*

He prayed this so that they may not give up, but continue to have faith in their hearts toward Christ.

Paul also prayed that the Ephesians comprehend the love of Christ. Why? (Eph 3:17a-19)

Paul knew that grasping the love of Christ would help them be "full of God"; ie, mature and fruitful.

Read Eph 3:14-4:6

Note: In Ephesians 1-3 Paul has made known the content of the Gospel, but in Ephesians 4-6, he moves onto living out the Gospel. Or put another way: previously we have considered the new community we are in under Christ. Now we shall consider what it practically looks like to live as Christ's new community.

Living a Worthy Life (4:1)

What does Paul remind us about, concerning what God has done for us? (Eph 4:1, 4b)

He reminds us that we have been called by God. God chose us and then called us to Himself through Christ by His Spirit (Rom 8:29-30). We would not be a Christian were it not for God's call (John 6:44).

In the light of God calling us to Himself and saving us, how should we live our life? (Eph 4:1)

We should live our life "worthy of the calling we have received".

REFLECT: *What does it mean to live a life "worthy of the calling we have received"? (consider Eph 1:4 – called to be holy and blameless; Eph 2:17-19 – called to be God's new people)*

Paul often writes about living a worthy life. What do we learn from the following verses?

Col 1:10 We are to please God, doing good works and bearing fruit, and growing in knowledge

1 Thess 2:10-12 We are to be holy, righteous and blameless

2 Thess 1:11-12 We are to glorify Jesus by living by faith and by relying on God's power

The word "worthy" is used in Eph 4:1. How should we understand this word?

It is not to be understood in the context of salvation, for we can never be worthy of that (Eph 2:8-9). But we can live a life worthy of our calling; that is, we can live a life that reflects our thankfulness to God.

A Life of Unity (4:2-6)

According to Eph 4:1-3 what is an essential element of living a worthy life? (cf. also Eph 2:13-18)

We are to preserve the unity amongst God's people – there are not to be any barriers, but unity and peace.

What effort should we put into being one, according to Eph 4:3? (Cf. also Heb 4:12)

We should "make every effort", or "spare no effort" in preserving our unity. We are to be striving and diligent at it. This includes going out of our way to see a brother and putting things right (eg, Matt 5:23-24).

We are called to unity. What are the four foundation stones for Christian unity? (Eph 4:2)

The four foundation stones are humility, gentleness, patience and forbearance. They are all acts of love and selflessness. Humility is putting others before yourself (cf. Phil 2:3-4); gentleness is being considerate and kind; patience is being long-suffering; forbearance is being tolerant and understanding.

Consider the opposites to the list of characteristics listed in Eph 4:2. What must we watch out for?

We must watch out for pride (self ego), harshness (judging others and treating them roughly), impatience and irritability, intolerance and a lack of understanding. Such things will lead to division; not unity.

The word "peace" is used in Eph 4:3. Why is it linked to unity? How does it relate to the Gospel?

True Christian unity is about having peace. This should not surprise us for the Gospel is about bringing peace between God and man (Rom 5:1), and between people (Eph 2:13-14). Consider: We are called by the God of peace (Phil 4:9) and the Prince of peace (Isa 9:6) to live out the Gospel of peace (Eph 6:15).

What's the difference between uniformity and unity?

Uniformity is where we all are the same as each other. But the church does not have uniformity, but diversity. We are made up of different ethnic groups, male and female, young and old, and where Christians have differing gifts, and have come to faith by different ways. But unity is where we work together, though different from each other, in order to have peace and harmony.

Although there is diversity, what things do we have in common? What should that do? (Eph 4:4-6)

We have one body (one true church), one Holy Spirit in each Christian, one hope for all Christians, one Lord and King over us (Jesus), one faith in which and by which we are saved, one baptism which all are to obey, and one God and Father over us all. What we have in common should truly help us be one.

REFLECT: *Read John 17:20-23 and consider Jesus' prayer for unity. What comes from our unity?*

Summary: Live worthily of God's calling – preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

10. A Life of Giftedness

Review: *How should we live in the light of how God has called us to Himself through Christ? (Eph 4:1)*
We should live a life worthy of the calling we have received; living for His glory and praise.

What's one main way we are to live a life worthy of our calling? (Eph 4:2-6) How do we do that?
We are to be one: "preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". We do that by bearing right characteristics (eg, humility), and remembering the great things that tie us together; eg, one Lord, one faith.

Read Eph 4:1-16

The Giver of Gifts (Eph 4:7-11)

Based on Eph 4:7-11, what has been given to each Christian? (cf. also 1 Cor 12:1-7)
Each Christian has received special gifts – what we call spiritual gifts.

Should we distinguish spiritual gifts from natural talents or abilities? Why?
Spiritual gifts are different from natural talents, or natural abilities that we have developed. They are given to individual Christians by Christ through His Spirit for His church.

How have these spiritual gifts been distributed in Christ's church? (Cf. also Rom 12:4-6)
They have been given to us by Christ's grace. We haven't deserved them, or earned them. They have also been given according to how the Lord sees fit (according to how He wills - 1 Cor 12:11).

As Paul shares about spiritual gifts, what great truths about Christ does he share? Why?
Jesus descended from heaven to earth, and when He died, He descended into Hades (the abode of the dead). Then when He was raised to life, He ascended into heaven, and is now above all things and fills all things (cf. Phil 2:9-11). He is the Lord of all. Paul shares these glorious truths that we may remember who we have received spiritual gifts from.

REFLECT: In the light of how we have received spiritual gifts, and who we have received them from, what should our attitude be toward our gifts? [We ought to be humble and thankful as they have been given in grace, and we ought to make sure we use them well]

The Gifts and their Purpose (Eph 4:11-16)

Paul lists some of the spiritual gifts in Eph 4:11. There are others listed in Rom 12:6-8 and 1 Cor 12:8-10. Compile a list of gifts mentioned in the New Testament.

Prophesying, serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, leading, showing mercy, having wisdom, having knowledge, having faith, healing, performing miracles, distinguishing spirits, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, apostleship, evangelising, pastoral ministry.

REFLECT: Every Christian has been given spiritual gifts. What gifts has Christ given you in His grace?
What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? (Eph 4:12-13; cf. also 1 Cor 12:7)

Christ has given us gifts to help His body, the church, function well. The gifts are given so that we may help one another and equip one another in works of service; so that we may become mature in Christ.

When the gifts are operating well in a church, what does this look like practically? (Eph 4:14-16)
It results in God's people, both collectively and individually, remaining faithful to Christ and not going off track with wrong doctrines. It also results in us being like Christ, and being under His rule. It also causes us to grow in love and unity, fulfilling Christ's great desire for His people (John 13:34-35, 17:20-21).

According to Eph 4:14, what are we to be aware of, and how do spiritual gifts help us in this?
We are to be aware of Satan's schemes to take us away from the truth through trickery, deceit and scheming. Such spiritual gifts as mentioned in Eph 4:11 help us to stay on track.

Is the gift of apostleship still around?

We understand that this gift was only at the start of the church. Indeed, apostles had to be an eyewitness of the resurrection (1 Cor 9:1), and they were entrusted with laying the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20).

In Eph 4:15 we have the phrase "speaking the truth in love". How are we to understand this phrase in the context of Eph 4:1-16?

We are to teach the truth to each other, but always with the motive of love, and for the purpose of unity.

We see in the Lord Jesus a perfect picture of "speaking the truth in love". Consider John 1:14.
REFLECT: The church grows by truth and love. Discuss the dangers in a church when truth and love are not together; ie, where truth dominates without love, and where love dominates without truth.

Summary: Use the spiritual gifts Christ has given you by His grace. God's people need you.

11. A Life Lived In A New Self

Review: *Every Christian has been given spiritual gifts. How have they been given? (Eph 4:7; 1 Cor 12:11)*
They have been given by Christ (through His Spirit) according to His grace and will.

What is the main purpose of spiritual gifts? (Eph 4:12-16)

It is to help Christ's new community (His body) become mature, and to grow in love and unity.

Read Eph 4:17-24

The Old Self – put it off (Eph 4:17-22)

In this next section (Eph 4:17-19) on living worthy of our calling (Eph 4:1) what are we called to do?

We are called not to live like the Gentiles (or pagans); that is, the unbelieving and ungodly.

How are the unbelieving Gentiles (pagans) described in Eph 4:17-18?

They live according to their own understanding, which is void of God's revelation and knowledge. As a result, they are separated from God due to their darkened understanding and ignorance.

What has led to unbelieving Gentiles being separated from God and living in ignorance?

It has been their hardness of heart – which is pride and stubbornness. Without humility and a teachable spirit, we will not comprehend God's revelation and knowledge, but remain ignorant of the truth.

REFLECT: *God has plainly revealed Himself to us through Creation (Rom 1:18-20), and more completely through His Son (Heb 1:1-3). What causes us to miss the obvious and reject the truth? [pride]*

What does living in our own ignorance and futility of mind lead to? (Eph 4:19)

It not only results in us being separated from God (not knowing God personally), but also in practising evil. Without God and a right mind, we end up indulging the desires of our fallen nature.

REFLECT: *The more void we are of God's revelation, the more immoral we will be as a society. Even our own society still has some respectability because of our Christian heritage, but as it is eroded, what will it lead to? What are we seeing more and more as the Christian faith is rejected in Australia?*

In Eph 4:20-21, Paul then challenges us in regard to the way we as Christians are to live. Why should we be living a life radically different from that of unbelieving Gentiles?

In the Gospel, not only have we learnt about who Jesus is and what He has done for us through His death and resurrection, but we have been taught how to live righteously under Christ's rule. We have both His example and His teaching so that we might live holy lives for God's glory. This new life we are called to live with the help of God's Spirit is totally opposite to the way an unbelieving Gentile lives.

REFLECT: *If we only preach salvation through Christ's death and resurrection, and neglect Christ's lordship and the righteous life He calls us to live (Matt 28:20), what will it lead to? [we will continue to live lives that are like the unbelieving Gentiles – this is why discipleship is so important]*

At the end of Eph 4:21 what do we learn? How does this compare with the unbelieving Gentile?

Truth is in Jesus; indeed, He is the truth (John 14:6). If we reject or ignore Him, then we will be like an unbelieving Gentile – ignorant, with a darkened understanding of life, and a futile mind.

So, in the light of what we have been taught in Christ, what are we to do? (Eph 4:22)

We are to put off our "old self", just as we put off an old, dirty, smelly garment, and leave it off. Our sinful nature is our old self – our fallen nature that is bent on indulging our fleshly desires.

REFLECT: *Is this "putting off" something we do just once at conversion? (cf. Rom 6:12-14, 8:12-13)*

The New Self – put it on (Eph 4:23-24)

As we are called to put off the old self (our sinful nature), what are we also called to do? (4:23-24)

We are called to put on the new self – the new self is, in a nutshell, the life of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Cor 4:4). We are not just to put off and remain naked, but to clothe ourselves with Christ.

How has it been possible for us to put on the new self? (Eph 4:23)

It has been made possible through our minds being renewed; and they have been renewed by the truth that is in Jesus. No longer are we in darkness and ignorance, for our spiritual eyes have been opened and we can see how we are to be in Christ – God's truth is key to putting on the new self (cf. John 17:17).

REFLECT: *What are you doing to renew your mind in Christ?*

What characterises the new-self, according to Eph 4:24, compared to the old-self?

The new self is all about righteousness and holiness; not sensuality and impurity. It's all about the way of Christ – what He showed us through His life, and what He taught us through His words.

Summary: Let us live a worthy life by putting off the old self and putting on the new self in Christ.

12. A Life Imitating God

Review: *What are we to "put off"? (Eph 4:22)*

We are to "put off" the old self. This is our fallen sinful nature, which we see unchecked in unbelievers.

What are we to "put on"? How? (Eph 4:23-24)

We are to "put on" the new self. This is the likeness of God (or the life of Christ, who is the image of God). We do this by renewing our minds through the truth – which is Jesus (Eph 4:21b).

Read Eph 4:25-5:2

Putting off and Putting on (Eph 4:25-32)

After Paul teaches that we are to put off the old self and put on the new self, he goes on to give some specific applications of this. What does he begin with in Eph 4:25?

We are to put off falsehood; that is, lying, as well as distorting or exaggerating the truth. It is common amongst unbelieving Gentiles from politicians to school kids. However, as Christ's new community we are to be different by putting on truthfulness; both to outsiders and within Christ's body.

Amongst unbelieving Gentiles, anger is common. What characterises such anger? (cf. Jam 1:19-20)
It is often not slow, but quick, and it also does not accomplish God's righteousness. This is because of how it is selfish, uncontrolled, and damaging. Such anger is to be "put off" by the Christian.

Can Christians be angry? If so, in what way? (Eph 4:26)

Christians can be angry – we can "put on" anger. However, our anger is to be different to that which we see in the world. Our anger is to be without sin – which means it's not to be selfish or uncontrolled. It also must be slow. We call such anger "righteous anger" (cf. Jesus when he was angry in John 2:13-17).

What does it practically mean to "not let the sun go down while you are still angry"? (Eph 4:26b)

Our anger is to be short-lived. We're not to continue to be angry, as this leads to bitterness and resentment. Instead, we are to be forgiving and compassionate toward those who have angered us.

Why is it not good to lie or be angry, like unbelieving people in the world? (Eph 4:27)

Not only is it inconsistent with our new self, but such behaviour leads to the devil getting a foothold into our life. He cannot possess us, but he can exploit our sinful behaviour so that we are defiled, and where we damage the witness of Christ's church, and bring dishonour to God's holy name.

In Eph 4:28, what's another behaviour that we are to put off, and another that we are to put on?

We are to put off stealing; which includes taking someone's property, or time, for our gain. Instead of being takers, we are to work for what we have, and be giving. This behaviour is what we are to put on.

According to Eph 4:29, what are we to put off and put on in regard to our speech?

We are not to speak with evil words that cut and destroy. Instead, we are to speak words that build up.

REFLECT: *The tongue gets quite a mention in this section. Do you have a controlled tongue that blesses, or an uncontrolled tongue that damages? What do we particularly need to take care of? (cf. Matt 15:18)*

In Eph 4:30, Paul tells us not to grieve the Spirit. Why is this mentioned here, and how do we do it?

The Holy Spirit is mentioned, because He is the one who makes it possible for us to put off the old self (Rom 8:13) and to put on the new self (2 Cor 3:18). We therefore grieve the Spirit when we choose to not put on our new self, and to not put off (rid ourselves of) sinful traits; like those mentioned in Eph 4:31.

In Eph 4:32, Paul gives a summary of what we are to be like toward others, and which stops us from grieving the Spirit. How are we to be? What part of us is being addressed?

We are to be kind, compassionate and forgiving. Our heart (or mind) is being addressed.

We can find forgiveness hard. What should help us forgive others? (Eph 4:32; Matt 18:23-35)

We should be encouraged to forgive others in the light of how much God has forgiven us through Christ.

REFLECT: *If we don't forgive others, what does that imply? (cf. Matt 6:14-15)*

Imitating God (Eph 5:1-2)

The whole putting on is summarised by Paul in Eph 5:1. What is it?

We are to imitate God – we are to imitate our heavenly Father, as Jesus taught us (Matt 5:44-48), for we are His children. We are to imitate Christ our Lord, who perfectly reflects the Father (Heb 1:3).

What key characteristic should dominate our new life in Christ as we imitate God? (Eph 5:2)

We ought to love. God is love (1 John 4:8). Christ is love - He loved us and gave Himself for us. And the Holy Spirit has poured God's love into our hearts (Rom 5:5). So then, let us love! (cf. 1 John 4:11).

Summary: Let us imitate God – by putting off the old, putting on the new, and living in love.

13. A Life of Holiness

Review: *What happens when we do not "put off" the old self and do not "put on" the new"? (Eph 4:25-30)*
 We give the devil opportunity to make our life unworthy of the calling we have received, and to bring Christ's church and Christ's name down. We also grieve the Holy Spirit.

As we "put off" the old and "put on" the new, what will we be like? (Eph 4:32-5:2)

We will be kind, compassionate, forgiving, and loving – imitators of God and of His Son Jesus Christ.

Read Eph 5:3-14

Holiness and Unholiness (Eph 5:3-6)

In Eph 4:25-31 we were instructed to "put off" certain sinful behaviours. What other sinful behaviours are we not to practice, according to Eph 5:3-4?

Christians are not to be immoral (especially in sexual immorality), or impure (especially in idolatry and worldliness), or greedy (covetous), or speak coarsely or badly.

REFLECT: The sinful behaviours mentioned in Eph 5:3-4 are commonly practiced in our society. Discuss how rampant sexual immorality, idolatry, greed, and coarse joking is? How do you go about resisting it?

When it comes to our talk, instead of being like unbelievers, how should we be? (Eph 5:4b)

We are to use our tongue to give thanks to God through our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Thess 5:18).

Not only are we not to practice such sinful behaviour, but what else does Paul say in Eph 5:3?

We are not to have anything to do with such sinful behaviour; there's not even to be a hint or a possible accusation that we are dabbling in it. We are to be holy (cf. 1 Peter 1:15-16).

What's one of the motivating reasons why we should be holy according to Eph 5:3-4?

It is inappropriate, or not fitting, for Christians to behave like unbelieving Gentiles. We are saints now; ie, God has called us out of this world to be His beloved and holy children (set apart for God).

What's another motivating reason why we should be holy according to Eph 5:5-6?

No one who practices sinful behaviour is part of Christ's kingdom; that is, they are not right with God and they will not have eternal life. Also, they are under God's judgment and will face the wrath of God.

REFLECT: Does this mean that if we commit immorality or impurity or covetousness or idolatry, we won't be saved? (cf. 1 John 3:7-10 and then 1 John 1:8-2:1) [Christians still sin, but unlike unbelievers, we do not habitually sin, and when we sin, we repent and seek forgiveness from God through Christ]

According to the context, what does Paul mean by "let no one deceive you" in Eph 5:6a?

There are false teachers that claim that we can live as we please (including practicing immorality) and still be a Christian and be saved. Don't be deceived! If we are saved, then the presence and work of God's Spirit in our life will show by the way we have a heart to be holy and to grow in holiness (cf. Heb 12:14).

Light and Darkness (Eph 5:7-14)

What's another motivating reason why we are not to participate in sinful behaviour? (Eph 5:7-8)

We, who once were in darkness are now light in the Lord. When we were in darkness (Eph 2:1-3) we were not under Christ, but under Satan, fulfilling our sinful desires. However, now being in Christ, we are in His light, and we have been blessed with salvation, as well as sight to see how to live aright.

What is consistent with living in the light of Christ and His truth? (Eph 5:9-10)

In the light of Christ we bear the fruit of goodness, righteousness, and truthfulness (the very opposites of sinful behaviour). We also seek to please the Lord (Eph 5:10), rather than ourselves (Eph 2:3).

What does Paul tell us to do in regard to the "deeds of darkness"? (Eph 5:11)

We are not to participate (take part) in deeds of darkness – because it is disgraceful and contrary to the way we are to behave as children of light. Not only that, we are called to expose the deeds of darkness.

How do we go about exposing the "deeds of darkness"? (cf. also John 3:19-21; Phil 2:14-16)

This is done by us speaking up, and not remaining silent. It also is done by us living as children of light in the midst of a dark world. As Christ shines His light through us, the deeds of wickedness will be exposed.

REFLECT: In what way have you been able to expose "deeds of darkness"?

Why is it important that sin is made visible by God's light? (Eph 5:13-15)

Unless sin is made visible, we will not repent of them and turn to Christ. The believer will not have fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-7). The unbeliever will remain spiritually dead. But through God's light, we are awakened and made aware of our sin, so that we may seek Christ be found in His light..

Summary: Be holy, for it is fitting for God's saints, and it is consistent with being in Christ's light.

14. A Life of Fruitfulness

Review: *What motivations do we have to live a holy life? (Eph 5:3-6, 8)*

We’re set apart (saints) to God (5:3), we’re not under God’s wrath (5:6), and we’re light in the Lord (5:8).

Why do we need to expose the unfruitful deeds of darkness? (Eph 5:11-14)

Revealing sin is absolutely necessary so that we might be awakened and repent of our sin and seek Christ.

Read Eph 5:15-21

Be careful how you live (Eph 5:15-17)

As Paul continues to show us how to “live a life worthy of the calling” (Eph 4:1), what does Paul go on to declare in Eph 5:15 in regard to how we should live?

We should live carefully; not casually or carefree. We should also live wisely; not unwisely or foolishly.

Why does Paul emphasise the need to live carefully and wisely? (cf. Eph 2:1-3; 4:17-19; 5:3-7)

We live, and are immersed, in a fallen world hostile to God and ruled by Satan. It is full of immorality, impurity, and idolatry. As a result, we need to be very careful not to live as people do in this fallen world.

We also need to be wise, knowing that unrepentant sinful behaviour leads to God’s wrath.

What’s the great benefit of living carefully and wisely, according to Eph 5:18? (cf. also 2 Pet 1:8)

We won’t be living for self-indulgence or self-satisfaction, but we will be making the most of our life – making it count for glory. Our lives will be useful and fruitful, and for Christ’s honour and God’s glory.

REFLECT: *In what ways could you make the most of your time on earth? Reflect on this quote from C T Studd “Only one life, ’twill soon be past; only what’s done for Christ will last.”*

In order to live wisely and to make the most of our time, what must we know? How? (Eph 5:17)

We must understand and know the will of the Lord; as revealed to us through His holy Word.

Look up Rom 12:2 and Col 1:9-10. What do we learn about knowing God’s will?

God’s will is known when our minds are renewed (through His Word); rather than our minds being conformed to this world. We also should pray that God might make known His will, as Paul did for the Colossians. Only knowing God’s will leads to a life pleasing to Him. (cf. Jesus in John 4:34; 6:38)

Be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18-21)

What are we to be filled with? What does this mean? (Eph 5:18)

We are to be filled with the Spirit. The Greek verb indicates an ongoing process – not a once-off experience.

What is the link between drunkenness and being filled with the Spirit?

A drunk person is controlled by alcohol, as is evident by his walk and his talk; but a spirit-filled person is controlled by the Spirit, and this also is evident by their walk and their talk.

In Eph 4:30 and 5:18 we have two contrasting references to the Holy Spirit. What are they? How do they relate to Paul’s earlier language of “putting off” the old self and “putting on” the new self?

We are not to grieve the Spirit, but be full of the Spirit – we grieve the Spirit when we don’t “put off” the old self; we can only “put off” the old and “put on” the new, when we are controlled (full) of the Spirit.

What things flow out of our lives when we are full of the Holy Spirit? (Eph 5:19-21)

We will express our love for God by singing to each other joyful songs of praise, and by giving thanks to Him. We will also love people by submitting to them and serving them; love will be the key (cf. Gal 5:22)

In Eph 5:19, we have an insightful verse in regard to public singing in church. What do we learn?

We not only are to sing to God, but as we do, we are to sing to each other. This implies that songs at church should not be all about “me and my relationship with God”, but about “us and our relationship with God”. We also have a variety of songs, such as psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, and we should use our rich heritage to keep a good balance. Above all, there ought to be the “making of music” in our heart – in other words, we sing from the joy of the Lord, which is part of the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal 5:22).

We are called to be a thankful people. What do we learn from Eph 5:20? (cf. also 1 Thess 5:18)

We are to always be giving thanks to God, in every situation of life and for all things. Our thanks is to be like our prayers – directed to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

REFLECT: *How can we give thanks to God for horrible situations? [consider: we are not to give thanks for evil, but for our God who blesses us and helps us no matter what we may face – cf. Psalm 23:4-6]*

The Spirit will help us to submit to each other. What else should help us? Why? (Eph 5:21)

If we revere Christ, then we’ll respect and love His church. Instead of demanding “my way”, we will serve.

Summary: Be fruitful, by being careful and wise in the way you live, and being filled with the Spirit.

15. A Life of New Relationships – in marriage

Review: *How should we live in this fallen world? (Eph 5:15-17)*

We should live carefully and wisely, making the most of our time by doing God's will.

What must we maintain in our life, and what does this result in? (Eph 5:18-21)

We must keep on being filled with the Holy Spirit; which is where we allow the Spirit to completely control us. This results in a life of praise and thanks to God, and where we serve one another.

Read Eph 5:22-33

REFLECT: Paul has taught us the importance of unity in the church, and the use of spiritual gifts and godly living to help us in this. But what is the point of having unity (peace) in the church, if there is no unity (peace) in the home? What problems does this create? What effect does this have on children?

Role of the wife (Eph 5:22-24)

After teaching us that Christians are to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph 5:21), what is a wife specifically commanded to do in a Christian marriage? (Eph 5:22-24)

She is to submit (or be subject) to her husband; and she is to submit "in everything".

Why do women often react to this word "submit"? What must we bear in mind as we use this word?

The word "submit" is often taken to be a derogatory term that puts a woman down and makes her second-rate to her husband; ie, "his slave". But as a person, she is not a slave, but a wife. She is a fellow heir of the grace of life (1 Peter 3:7). What is being highlighted in Eph 5:22-24 is her role; not her personhood.

What example is given of how a wife is to submit to her husband? (Eph 5:22, 24)

She is given the example of the church. As the church submits to Christ, so a wife is to submit to her husband. As she submits to the Lord, she is to have the same heart attitude toward her husband.

REFLECT: A wife is called to submit to her husband "in everything". Are there any occasions when a wife shouldn't submit? [cf: What if her husband asks her to do something contrary to God's will?]

How are wives to view their husbands? (Eph 5:23, 33)

She is to view her husband as her head. As a result, she is to respect him (Eph 5:33).

Role of the husband (Eph 5:23, 25-31)

What role does the husband have in a Christian marriage? (Eph 5:23)

A husband is to be the head (the leader) in his relationship with his wife (cf. also 1 Cor 11:3).

What example is given of how a husband is to be the head of his wife? (Eph 5:23)

He is given the example of Christ. As Christ is head of the church, so a husband is to be head of his wife.

Consider what Paul says of Christ in Eph 5:23 (& 4:25-26). What type of head should a husband be?

Paul refers to Jesus being the "Saviour of the body". In other words, like for Christ, our headship is to be about care; not control. It's to be about helping our wife grow; not about personal gain (cf. also Eph 5:29).

In order to lead like Christ leads the church, what is a husband commanded to do? (Eph 5:25)

A husband is to love his wife, just as Christ loves the church. As we see in Christ, this kind of love is sacrificial (giving of ourselves) and unconditional. It's not just about feelings, but it's an act of our will.

What is the husband's goal as he loves his wife? (Eph 5:26-27)

Like Christ does for the church, we are to help our wife grow in Christ and to become holy and blameless.

REFLECT: How can a husband practically help his wife grow in holiness in Christ?

As Paul reflects on the husband's role, we glean great truths about Christ. What are they? (5:25-27)

Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us; He has sanctified us by washing us clean of our sins, so that we may be holy and blameless and pure. Praise God for what Christ has done for us and what He has made us!

What else is a husband called to do in marriage according to Eph 5:28-30?

He is to love his wife as his own body, just as Christ loves His body (the church). Like his own body, and like Christ does for His church, a husband is to nourish and cherish his wife; just as he does for his body.

Why does Paul emphasise that a husband is to love his wife as his own body? (Eph 5:31)

When a husband marries his wife, he is joined to her, and they become one. So, a husband ought to view his wife as being part of him. That's why Paul can say "he who loves his own wife loves himself" (v.28).

What happens when a husband and wife live out their God-given roles in marriage? (Eph 5:32-33)

We show to our kids and the world the unity and the relationship between Christ and His church. In a husband, people see what Christ is like, and in a wife, people see what our right response is to be.

Summary: Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves.

16. A Life of New Relationships – at home and at work

Review: *What role does a wife have in marriage? What example is she given? (Eph 5:22-24, 33)*

A wife is to submit to her husband in everything, just as the church submits to Christ.

What role does a husband have in marriage? What example is he given? (Eph 5:23, 25-33)

A husband is to be the head of his wife, like Christ is head of His church. He is to love his wife, as Christ loves the church, and he should also seek to love his wife as his own body, as in marriage he is one with her.

Read Eph 6:1-9

Children and parents (Eph 6:1-4)

If we are in Christ, all of our relationships are to be holy. What does Paul say next in Eph 6:1-3?

Children are to obey (and honour) their parents; which is even declared in the Ten Commandments.

Is Paul just addressing any child? Who do you think he is specifically addressing? (cf. Eph 6:1b)

He is addressing Christian children – those "in the Lord". They are to especially obey their parents.

REFLECT: We can assume that our children won't become Christians until later on in life. According to what is implied in Eph 6:1, what should we hope for? (cf. Mark 10:13-14)

How should we understand the promise in Eph 6:2-3?

We know that not all godly Christians who obeyed their parents when young will live a long life.

However, it is a general truth – for obedience to the Lord and to parents leads to a life of peace and joy.

How are Christian fathers to raise their children? (Eph 6:4)

They are not to exasperate or provoke their children to anger, but bring them up with sound discipline and instruction in the Lord; ie, they are to disciple their own children that they may know Christ and follow Him.

REFLECT: In what ways can fathers (and mothers) exasperate their children?

Did you notice that Eph 6:4 is addressed to fathers? How should we understand this?

Both parents are to be involved in disciplining and instructing their children, but a father should take a lead role in this. Since he is to be head of his wife (Eph 5:23), it follows that he should be head of his children.

REFLECT: How well do Christian fathers in our society live out Eph 6:4? What stops them from fulfilling their God-given role to disciple (discipline and instruct) their children in the Lord?

Slaves and masters; or workers and bosses (Eph 6:5-9)

How are Christian slaves to serve their masters? What attitudes should fill their heart (Eph 6:5-7)

They are to be obedient to their masters at all times, and not just when their master has their eye on them. They should work with fear and trembling (ie, working well to avoid punishment), and sincerely.

Paul seems to support slavery in this passage. Why doesn't he condemn its practice?

We often think of slavery as it was in the 18th century, where masters terribly abused their slaves. In the NT, slavery was a way of life that helped people have work; just as we have bosses who employ workers. The thrust of the NT is for a slave to gain their freedom (1 Cor 7:21-22), but if they can't, then they are to remain as a slave; but a good slave for Christ's glory.

In our society we don't have slaves and masters. How are we to relate to these instructions?

We may not have slaves and masters, but we are to use these instructions for workers and bosses.

As a Christian working for a boss, how should we work? (Eph 6:5-7; Col 3:22-25)

We are to work not just for our boss, but for the Lord; ie, we are to work as if serving Christ.

REFLECT: Contrast a Christian's work ethic with a non-Christian's. What is different?

What benefit comes if a Christian worker (slave) works well for his boss (master)?

His earthly master may not reward him, but his heavenly Master will. He'll receive great reward (Matt 5:12). Also, they become a credible witness of the Gospel and a good ambassador for Christ.

What are Christian bosses (masters) called to do? (Eph 6:9)

Just as workers are called to work well for their masters, masters are to treat their workers "in the same way"; ie, they are to serve them well as they serve the Lord, by providing them with good pay and protection.

What do Christian bosses and Christian workers have in common? (Eph 6:9; cf. also Eph 5:30)

They have the same Lord, and they are brothers/sisters of the same family; God's family.

How does Eph 5:21 serve to summarise the section from Eph 5:22 to 6:9?

If we are in Christ, whether we are a wife or husband, child or parent, or slave or master, we are to serve one another out of reverence for Christ – and as we do, we will be serving the Lord Christ for His glory.

Summary: In Christ, be subject to one another (Eph 5:21); whatever our status in life might be.

17. A Life of Spiritual Warfare

Review: *How should children and parents live before Christ? (Eph 6:1-4)*

Children are to obey their parents, and parents (especially fathers) are to disciple their children well.

How should slaves and masters (or workers and bosses) live before Christ? (Eph 6:5-9)

Slaves are to serve their masters, and masters are to serve their slaves, as if serving Christ.

Read Eph 6:10-17

The spiritual battle (Eph 6:10-13)

After instructing us in regard to how we should live as Christ’s church, and how we should live in our relationships, we are confronted with something we need to be aware of. What is it? (Eph 6:10-12)

We need to be aware of the spiritual warfare we are engaged in.

REFLECT: *Why does Paul need to remind us of the spiritual warfare we are in? (cf. also 2 Cor 2:11)*

[We tend to ignore the spiritual warfare we are in]

What do we learn about our enemy from Eph 6:11-12? (cf. also Rev 12:17 and 1 Peter 5:8)

Satan is a schemer – he’s out to trip us up. He also rules over this fallen world (all those who are not in Christ). He is at war with Christ and His people, and he uses his army of demons as well as the people of this fallen world to try and destroy Christ’s people.

REFLECT: *Why do we need a thorough knowledge of the enemy and an understanding of his schemes?*

[We will not take serious the need to be prepared for the spiritual battle that we are engaged in]

What is the first thing we are to do as we engage against Satan? How do we do this? (Eph 6:10)

We are to be “strong in the Lord and in his mighty power”. We do not stand against Satan by our own power, or even by some spiritual gift. It is in Christ’s power alone that we stand. We have His power when we are full of His Spirit; ie, when we are committed to serve Christ and to do His will.

Twice Paul tells us to put on the armour of God. Four times he tells us what this does. What is it?

The armour of God enables us to **STAND** against Satan. Consider: A foot soldier in battle needed to stand. Without this right position, he was not able to engage the enemy or defend himself. It’s the same with us.

Paul mentions in Eph 6:13 about standing our ground in the “day of evil”. What “day” is this?

It is every day that we are attacked by Satan who wants us to turn from Christ. We may experience many days where things are good. But Satan will attack us repeatedly and we need to be ready. Consider Jesus – He was tempted after His baptism, but it didn’t end there. The devil looked for another time (Luke 4:13).

The armour of God (Eph 6:14-17)

Paul relates five physical pieces from a Roman soldier’s armour as a picture of the spiritual armour we need in order to stand against Satan. What’s the first piece? What does it stand for? (Eph 6:14)

The first piece is the belt. For a soldier it held everything together. Our belt is TRUTH. We need to be truthful, as well as live by the truth – God’s truth. Truth will hold everything together.

In the second half of Eph 6:14, what is the second piece of armour? What does this stand for?

The second piece is the breastplate. It protected a soldier’s vital organs, like the heart. Our breastplate is RIGHTEOUSNESS. We need to live righteously in order to protect our heart from desire and temptation.

What is the third piece of armour? What does this stand for? (Eph 6:15)

The third piece is boots. It enabled a soldier to walk and stand. Our boots are the GOSPEL. We need to be about the GOSPEL – looking for opportunities to go and share the message of peace and reconciliation with others, and to stand for the Gospel. Without this, we will waste our life and be defeated by Satan.

What is the fourth piece of armour? What does this stand for? (Eph 6:16)

The fourth piece is the shield. It protected a soldier from arrows or spears. Our shield is FAITH in God. By it we extinguish arrows from Satan such as doubt, or the lack of assurance that we are forgiven, etc.

What is the fifth piece of the armour? What does this stand for? (Eph 6:17a; cf. also 1 Thess 5:8)

The fifth piece is the helmet. It protected the head. Our helmet is our HOPE – the hope of salvation. It protects our mind from being distracted with the temporal things of this world.

The final part of the armour is for offense. What is it? What does this stand for? (Eph 6:17)

For a Roman soldier it was a sword. Our sword is the WORD OF GOD. With it, we are able to cut down the lies of our enemy, like Jesus did when He was tempted (cf. Matt 4:1-10).

REFLECT: *Do you know God’s Word well enough to defeat Satan’s lies? How could you improve this?*

Summary: Without the armour of God we will not be able to stand against Satan. So, put it on!

18. A Life of Prayer and Peace

Review: *As we live in this fallen world, what are we engaged in as Christians? (Eph 6:10-13)*

We are engaged in spiritual warfare. Satan will oppose us and scheme against us.

What must we do to stand against Satan? (Eph 6:10-11, 14-17)

We must be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power, and we must put on the full armour of God.

Read Eph 6:18-24

Pray always (Eph 6:18-20)

In the context of spiritual warfare, what does Paul go on to command us to do in Eph 6:18?

Paul commands us to pray – to pray and to keep on praying; ie, pray always (cf. 1 Thess 5:17).

What instructions are specifically given for prayer by Paul? (Eph 6:18)

We need to pray on all occasions – whether we feel strong in Christ, or whether we are being tempted; whether we are full of faith, or whether we are struggling with doubt, etc. We need to be alert, being aware of what's happening with our heart and mind, and pray. We need to pray for God's people as together we engage in spiritual warfare and seek to stand for Christ against Satan.

What did Jesus teach us in regard to temptation (spiritual warfare) and prayer? (Matt 26:41)

We need to be constantly watching and praying. We need to watch ourselves as we have wayward hearts, and we need to watch each other in love, because we all have a tendency to go astray. How true it is that the spirit is willing, but our flesh (our fallen nature) is weak (cf. also what Jesus teaches us in Matt 6:13).

What do you think it means to pray in the Spirit? (Eph 6:18; cf. also Eph 5:18 and Rom 8:9)

To pray in the Spirit means to pray with the Holy Spirit leading us, and not ourselves leading us. It's to pray for God's kingdom to come and God's will to be done, rather than our kingdom to come and our will to be done. We pray in the Spirit when we continue to allow God's Spirit to fill us (Eph 5:18).

REFLECT: *When we are in the Spirit, the Spirit also intercedes for us (Rom 8:26-27). How does He intercede? How does that make you feel when it comes to prayer?*

In Eph 6:19, what also does Paul request? Why?

He also requests that they pray for him. This is because Paul was conscious that Gospel ministry can only be done effectively as God gives us the words (Mark 13:11), as well as the boldness to speak (Acts 4:31).

As Paul asked for prayer, how did he view himself? (Eph 6:20)

He calls himself and "ambassador in chains". He clearly saw himself as an "ambassador for Christ" (2 Cor 5:20); representing and speaking for Christ our king. Whether he was in chains or free, he was first and foremost an ambassador for Christ.

REFLECT: *How do you view yourself? Do you see your main position in life as an ambassador for Christ?*

Peace, love and grace (Eph 6:21-24)

What do we learn in Eph 6:21-22 about Paul's heart toward a fellow Gospel worker?

Paul had a real love and appreciation for fellow Gospel workers. He called Tychicus a "dear brother and faithful servant". He could trust him to go and encourage the Ephesians. We are not in competition with each other, but are to rely on one another and work together for the Gospel of Christ and God's kingdom.

As we come to the end of Ephesians, what does Paul desire for the Ephesians? (Eph 6:23)

He desires them to know God's peace and love, in the midst of spiritual warfare. God's peace is beyond understanding (Phil 4:7), and His love is great (Eph 2:4). They are from God our Father and the Lord Jesus.

How should we understand the phrase "love with faith" in Eph 6:23?

The Greek word for "with" can be translated "in the midst of"; ie, in the midst of having faith in God the Father and the Lord Jesus, we experience God's peace and love. Thus, they come to us through faith.

What is the very last thing Paul writes about in his letter to the Ephesians? Why? (Eph 6:24)

He tells them about grace. Grace is the key to the Gospel and God's dealings with us through Christ. God saved us to "the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph 1:6); we have been saved by grace (Eph 2:8); we have been gifted by God's grace (Eph 4:7). The whole Christian life is about God's grace through Christ.

Although all can receive God's grace through Jesus, who truly experience it in full? (Eph 6:24)

God's grace is experienced by all "who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love". Only those who have trusted in Jesus and who love Him dearly, know and experience the richness of God's grace.

REFLECT: *How does God's grace affect the way you view and approach God, and the way you live life?*

Summary: Pray always, and by faith in God and love for Christ, know God's peace, love and grace.