

Bible Study Notes and Questions on the letter of Paul to the Ephesians

Introduction: Paul's letter to the Ephesians was one of five letters written whilst Paul was in prison in Rome from about **60-64AD**. In the versions of the Bible that we are familiar with the letter was addressed to the congregation in Ephesus, but there is a textual problem in **Ephesians 1:1** where the words "at Ephesus" were absent from early manuscripts. It has been claimed that the letter was not intended for the church in Ephesus alone but sent as a circulating letter to all the churches in the region of the Lycus valley in the province of Asia (West Turkey today). There are similarities between the letter to the Ephesians and the one sent to the Colossians as shown by at least 75 verses giving the same teaching.

The name Ephesus means "desirable, beloved, a giving away, to relax, permitted, loosening." Ephesus was a city on the western coast of Asia about one mile inland from the Aegean Sea. It was one of the largest cities in the world at that time having one of the so-called "Seven wonders of the world," the enormous temple of Diana (Artemis) that was greater in area than a football pitch! Worship to this goddess, Diana (Artemis), was widespread in that region and such worship was associated with the occult and magic practices of many kinds which even the Jewish community were involved in (**Acts 19:13-20**).

Paul had visited Ephesus briefly at the end of his second missionary journey (**Acts 18:19-21**) before returning to Antioch in Syria. He had left at Ephesus Aquila and Priscilla who had worked with Paul previously in Corinth. Some time later Paul did return to Ephesus to stay three years on his third missionary journey (**Acts 19:1-41**).

As a result of Paul preaching and teaching in the region, it had such influence that the idol makers were in an uproar against Paul because their trade was threatened. Paul had to move on to Macedonia. Later he gave one final word to the elders of the church in Ephesus at a place called Miletus nearby (**Acts 20:17-38**). He had exhorted and warned them to remain faithful to the word of God. It seemed for a while the church in Ephesus had kept to the truth in view of what was said to this church in the Book of **Revelation 2:1-7**.

The major theme in this letter is that of the church (Greek word: **Ekklesia** meaning "called out") with Jesus Christ as its head (**Ephesians 1:22-23**) where there is one body of believers (**Ephesians 4:4**). The Jews and Gentiles are one in Christ (**Ephesians 3:1-6**) and a glorious church will be presented absolutely pure to Jesus Christ (**Ephesians 5:25-27**).

Summary Notes for each Chapter

Chapter One: 1:1-2: The writer, recipients and greeting.

1:3-14: The spiritual blessings for the believer in Christ.

1:15-23: Paul's prayer for the believers who will receive this letter.

Chapter Two: 2:1-10: We have been brought from death to life spiritually to know Jesus Christ as our Saviour being saved by grace through faith.

2:11-22: There is no longer any barriers between Jews and Gentiles who are believers in Jesus Christ. They are now all part of the household of God.

Chapter Three: 3:1,13: Paul stressed that his imprisonment was in God's plan and purpose.

3:2-6: Paul wrote of the mystery being revealed that the Gentiles were part of the body of Christ, along with Jewish believers.

3:7-12: Paul has shown the purpose of this mystery in being entrusted with the gospel to the Gentiles. Such a mystery was revealed to all who are saved.

3:14-19: Paul wrote of his prayer for the Gentiles to grow spiritually into mature believers knowing the indwelling Christ by faith and especially the love of God.

3:20-21: The closing doxology shows God's ability to answer prayer. He must be glorified for ever.

Chapter Four: 4:1-6: We must preserve the unity which God has already created.

4:7-16: In the church there is unity and diversity because each believer in Christ has different gifts to help build up the body of Christ.

Chapter Four continued: 4:17-24: There is a new way of thinking with a renewed mind and a new man.

4:25-32: There is a new way of speaking with good works by putting off the old way of speaking.

Chapter Five: 5:1-7: There is a contrast between the true love of Christ and the false love of pagan religion. Hence we should seek to imitate God.

5:8-14: As believers we no longer walk in darkness but in the light. Such light can draw unbelievers to Christ.

5:15-21: We must be wise in making good use of our time to know God's will being filled with the Spirit.

5:22-33: There are special relationships essential in the home. In this chapter Paul has written of the relationship between husband and wife.

i) **5:22-24:** Submission of the wife to her husband as the church should be to Christ.

ii) **5:25-29:** Husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church.

III) **5:30-33:** The mystery of the union of husband and wife being one flesh as Christ is to his church.

Chapter Six: 6:1-4: The relationship between children and parents.

6:5-9: The relationship between slaves and masters.

6:10-20: Paul exhorted the believers to be strong in the Lord by putting on the whole armour of God. Once again Paul stressed the importance of continual prayer.

6:21-24: Paul closed the letter with greetings. It appears Tychicus was sent to bring the letter to the brethren and to pass on news of Paul's affairs.

Suggested Ways of attempting Bible Study of Ephesians

The intention of these bible study notes and questions was not to give a lengthy exposition and interpretation of the relevant scriptures but to attempt to encourage everyone interested in reading through the entire letter of Paul to the Ephesians and to think about the meaning of the text. Time spent with others in a small group up to about ten to fifteen people who are keen to study the scriptures is of immense value where there is time to ask questions and to give views on a particular text. Such bible studies should be interactive i.e. dialogue between everyone present.

It is advisable where possible to have someone leading the bible study who can facilitate in guiding the study possibly giving a short introduction up to fifteen minutes and adding questions to provoke discussion where necessary. If no one feels able to lead in the group that meets, it is suggested that you read together the portion of scripture to study. Where it seems right, give a short time of up to about ten minutes for each person to think further about the scriptures read before each person shares what the text is really saying. Try to avoid just giving opinions but attempt to see what the Lord is revealing to you as a group during the bible study. Perhaps a bit of time should be allowed to give a concluding summary which helps to finish the study. Where a home group has the majority of brethren with some degree of maturity there may be no need for one particular person to lead. In such a situation a group may take it in turns in deciding who should lead a bible study. Where you can, each person involved in the group study could be told the scriptures to study beforehand and therefore preparation can be made by each person to give a contribution from what they have discovered from the text.

Starting the bible study with prayer and worship can be of benefit in leading to a stimulating time studying the scriptures together. An exhaustive concordance and any other relevant resources can be of value in contributing to the study.

In the following questions below there may well be far too many questions for you to cover in a group study owing to the amount of time you have available. You may wish to be selective in each section which questions to study.

The miscellaneous questions have been included to encourage more individual study but still possible to include in a group study. May it be that in studying this letter you meet personally with its author, the Lord Himself.

Questions

Before attempting the questions from Paul's letter to the Ephesians it is advisable to find out the background to how the church in Ephesus developed. Consider what was known of this church by reading **Acts 18:18-28; 19:1-41; 20:1,17-38** and **Revelation 2:1-7**. Having read up the background you are in a better position to attempt the questions below.

Section One: Chapter 1

Q.1) Show the significance of Paul's greeting in **1:1-2**.

Q.2) What is understood by election and predestination in **1:3-6**? See also **Matthew 24:22,31; Luke 18:7; Acts 4:28; Romans 8:28-33; 9:9-13; Ephesians 2:10; 3:11; 2Timothy 2:10; James 2:5; 1Peter 1:2,20**.

Q.3) Read carefully **1:3-14** and show the work in process of redemption from sin by (a) God the Father (**1:3-6**) (b) God the Son (**1:7-13a**) (c) God the Holy Spirit (**1:13b-14**).

Q.4) What blessings does every believer have "*in Christ*" according to **1:3-14** and how should a believer respond?

Q.5) What can we learn from Paul's prayer in **1:15-19** in how to pray for other Christians?

Q.6) Consider the power of Jesus Christ in **1:20-23** in relation to the following:

(a) God. See also **Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:43-45; 26:64; Mark 14:62; 16:19; Luke 20:42-44; 22:69; Acts 2:34-36; 7:55-56; Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1Peter 3:12; Revelation 3:21**.

(b) Other powers and authorities. See also **Romans 8:37-39; 1Corinthians 15:22-28; Ephesians 3:10; 6:11-12; Colossians 1:16; 2:10-15**.

(c) The entire universe. See also **Colossians 1:17**.

(d) The church. See also **Colossians 1:18**.

Section Two: Chapter 2

Q.1) What did Paul mean by saying to his readers that they used to be "*dead*"? See **2:1,3,5**. See also **Isaiah 59:2**.

Q.2) What does it mean to be "*made alive or quickened*"? See **2:1,4-6**.

Q.3) Show how Paul stressed that salvation is a gift from God. See **2:4-10**.

Q.4) What are believers in Jesus Christ called to do in view of what is written in **2:8-10**?

Q.5) Read carefully **2:11-12**. What do these verses reveal of the condition of the Gentiles without Christ?

Q.6) What changes have been made by Jesus Christ to bring Jews and Gentiles together as one people? See **2:12-18**.

Q.7) Show the relationship Jews and Gentiles now have as believers in Jesus Christ in **2:19-22**.

Q.8) Who were the apostles and prophets referred to in **2:20**? See also **3:5**.

Section Three: Chapter 3

Q.1) Why did Paul mention that he was in prison in **3:1,13**?

See also **4:1; 6:20** and **Colossians 1:24**.

Q.2) Show the mystery that was revealed to Paul in **3:2-6**. See also **Colossians 1:24-27**.

Q.3) Show the ministry that was entrusted to Paul in **3:7-12**.

Q.4) What has Paul prayed specifically for the Ephesians and is this prayer applicable to us today? See **3:14-19**.

Q.5) What does this doxology in **3:20-21** reveal of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Section Four: Chapter 4:1-16

Q.1) How do we keep the unity of the Spirit? See **4:2-3**.

Q.2) Show the unity that we already have as believers in **4:4-6**.

Q.3) What did Paul mean by the "*calling*" we have received in **4:1,4**. See also **Romans 8:30; 1Corinthians 1:9; 7:15-24; Galatians 1:6,15; Colossians 3:15; 1Thessalonians 4:7; 2Thessalonians 2:14; 2Timothy 1:9**.

Q.4) In **4:8** why did Paul quote from **Psalm 68:18**?

Q.5) How significant are the gifts of Christ and show the way the church is built up by particular gifts. See **4:7-16** and also **Romans 12:4-8; 1Corinthians 12:1-31**.

Section Five: Chapter 4:17-5:21

- Q.1)** Show in **4:17-19** what is the wrong way of thinking. See also **Romans 1:18-32**.
- Q.2)** What was known of Gentile society without Christ in **4:17-19**? See also **Colossians 3:5-9**.
- Q.3)** How do you learn the right way of thinking? See **4:20-24**; **Romans 12:1-2**; **Philippians 4:8**; **Colossians 3:1-4,10-14**.
- Q.4)** Show the three principles that govern the behaviour of Christians into the right way of thinking. Read carefully again **4:20-24** and the other scriptures in question 3.
- Q.5)** Show the things that must be put away and the way we must live in **4:25-32**. Can you give the reasons why Paul exhorts us to live in this way?
- Q.6)** Compare the love of Christ in **5:2** and the pagan love without God in **5:3-7**.
- Q.7)** How can believers show the love of God? See **5:1-2**.
- Q.8)** What is meant by walking in darkness and walking in the light? How can believers walk in the light? See **5:8-14** and also **1John 1:7**.
- Q.9)** Read carefully **5:8-14** again and consider what these verses teach of Paul's way of evangelism. See also **Acts 19:8-20, 23-41**; **20:18-35**. Why did Paul not tell the Ephesian Christians to have public and political campaigns e.g. against child prostitution?
- Q.10)** How can we make good use of our time? See **5:15-17**.
- Q.11)** How can we be filled with the Spirit? See **5:18-21**. See also **Romans 12:1-2**; **Galatians 2:20**; **Colossians 3:16**; **1John 1:5-9**.

Section Six: Chapter 5:22-6:9

- Q.1)** Show the relationship of the wife to her husband. See **5:22-24,31,33**; **Colossians 3:18**.
- Q.2)** Show the relationship of the husband to his wife. See **5:25-29,31,33**; **Colossians 3:19**.
- Q.3)** Study with care the relationship between Jesus Christ and his church in **5:22-33**.
- Q.4)** Show the relationship between children and parents in **6:1-4**.
See also **Colossians 3:20-21**; **Exodus 20:12**; **Deuteronomy 5:16**.
- Q.5)** Show the relationship between slaves/servants and their masters in **6:5-9**.
See also **Colossians 3:22-25**; **4:1**.

Section Seven: Chapter 6:10-24

- Q.1)** Why is there a conflict for all who know Christ? See **6:10-13**; **2Corinthian 10:3-5**; **11:3-4**; **2Timothy 2:1-4**.
- Q.2)** Show how essential it is to put on the whole armour of God in **6:10-14**.
- Q.3)** List the six pieces of armour and what each of them signifies. See **6:14-17**.
- Q.4)** In view of Paul stressing the importance of prayer, how should we pray? See **6:18-20**.
- Q.5)** In closing, how does Paul show his love for the brethren in **6:21-24**?
- Q.6)** What do we know of Tychicus in **6:21-22**? See also **Acts 20:4**; **Colossians 4:7-9**; **2Timothy 4:12**; **Titus 3:12**.

Miscellaneous Questions

- Q.1)** Read carefully through the letter and make a list of the main themes.
- Q.2)** Read through **chapters 1,2&3** and show the position of a believer in Jesus Christ.
- Q.3)** Read through **chapters 4,5&6** and consider how a believer in Jesus Christ can walk worthy of the calling of God in practical living.
- Q.4)** What lessons can we learn about prayer? See **1:16-19**; **3:14-19**; **5:18-20**; **6:18-20**.
- Q.5)** What is meant by the term "*heavenly places*"? See **1:3,20-21**; **2:6**; **3:10**; **6:12**.
- Q.6)** What did Paul teach on the Church of Jesus Christ?
See **1:22-23**; **2:11-22**; **3:1-12**; **4:1-6**; **5:22-33**.
- Q.7)** Show the evidence of prophecy in the letter to the Ephesians. It is helpful to read **1:9-10**, **13-14**, **18-19**; **2:7**; **4:30**; **5:25-27**.
- Q.8)** What does this letter teach us of (a) the love of God (b) the believer's love for God and for other believers in Jesus Christ? See **1:4,6**; **2:4**; **3:17-19**; **4:2,15-16**; **5:25,28,33**; **6:24**.
- Q.9)** What do we understand of the word "*mystery*" in this letter? See **1:9**; **3:3**; **4:9**; **5:32**; **6:19**.
- Q.10)** What do we know of (a) God the Father? See **1:6,17-23**; **2:6,18**; **3:14**; **4:6**; **5:20**; **6:23**.
(b) Jesus Christ, God the Son? See **1:7-12,20-23**; **2:20**; **3:17**; **4:5**; **5:14-15**; **6:23-24**.
(c) God the Holy Spirit? See **1:13-14,17**; **2:2,18,22**; **3:5,16**; **4:3-4**, **23,30**; **5:9,18-20**; **6:17-18**.

Bibliography

The list of resources available will be helpful in finding out more about the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

Please note that the author does not necessarily agree with the views held by the writers of the reading material.

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