

STUDY GUIDE # 1 : Introduction To Ephesians

“Life – It’s A Spiritual Journey A Study Of The Book Of Ephesians”

Read through the book of Ephesians to get a general feel for the contents and focus

Overview of the Letter to the Ephesians

The letter to the Ephesians was written about A.D. 61, most likely from Rome, during Paul’s imprisonment there. I find that Ephesians communicates the Christian vision more clearly than any of the other New Testament letters. Most of Paul’s other letters are directed to the particular problems of a given church. But his letter to the Ephesians is free from turmoil. Most scholars believe that the letter was not written solely for the church at Ephesus, that instead it was a “circular letter” addressed to several churches in the district around Ephesus, including Asia Minor. In fact, the oldest and best manuscripts even lack the words in vs. 1 that address it to the “*Saints in Ephesus.*” The oldest manuscripts are addressed generally “*To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus.*”

Whether this letter was written solely to the church at Ephesus, or to churches in the surrounding areas, ultimately it is also written to us. It enables us to see the full sweep of God’s plan from before creation to the ultimate union of everyone and everything in Jesus Christ. This book was written to strengthen the original readers in their Christian faith by explaining the nature and purpose of the church. It has that same purpose for us today.

Ephesians is a letter about restoration and healing. In it we learn of God’s plan to reconcile all things to God’s self. As we are restored in relationship to God, we are also reconciled to each other. As God works in us to heal and grow relationships, God binds us together into one body – the church. In Ephesians we learn that the scope of God’s work goes well beyond what we can see, touch and experience with our senses. It opens our eyes to the spiritual world. Ephesians instructs and encourages us to be the church in the way God intended the church to be – a foretaste of heaven on earth.

Scripture for Today: A Prayer for the Church Ephesians 3:14-21

**This text gives us insight into the author’s heart, and hopes, for his readers*

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Lord, ¹⁵from whom God’s whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of God’s glorious riches God may strengthen you with power through the Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. ²⁰Now to the One who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to God’s power that is at work within us, ²¹to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

SPIRITUAL CHECKLIST: How are you doing in each area?

- (1) **PRAYER:** How has your prayer life been this year? Blossoming? Fading? Faltering? Open? Routine? Is this an area that needs more dedicated focus for you?
- (2) **LEARNING:** What have you studied this year – formally or informally? What have you learned?
- (3) **WORSHIP:** Are you worshipping at least weekly? How has that time been? What have been your highs ... your lows? Are you taking time to prepare or just showing up?
- (4) **LEADER SKILLS:** Do you sense that your capacity to lead has increased? Are you observing the leadership of others? What are you learning?
- (5) **COMMUNITY BUILDING:** How are you helping your congregation to thrive – formally and informally?
- (6) **ACTION:** Where have you put your faith to action? What blocks you from action?
- (7) **SERVING OTHERS:** Where have you served God this year?
- (8) **SENSE OF GROWTH:** Where do you feel you have grown this year – spiritually, emotionally, and relationally?
- (9) **BALANCE:** How is your sense of living a balanced life? Do you keep the Sabbath – take time to rest and commune with God?
- (10) **GROWING EDGE/STRETCHING BEYOND YOUR COMFORT ZONE:** What have you done this year that has caused you to lean on God because you couldn't have done it on your own? Where in your life is God calling you to move beyond your comfort zone and rely on him?

Assignment in Preparation for Sunday, September 30:

Read the 1st Chapter of Ephesians

When reading think about ...

**What captured your attention?*

**What questions did it raise, what answers did it suggest ...?*

**How will you act on what you read?*