

Bible Study Guide: Background of Ephesians

Historical Context

- The Book of Ephesians was authored by the Apostle Paul during his imprisonment in Rome around 60-62 AD.
- Ephesus was a significant city known for its wealth, trade, and as a cultural hub between East and West.
- Paul faced opposition in Ephesus due to the city's strong pagan worship and economic interests tied to idolatry.
- Despite challenges, Paul established a church in Ephesus and nurtured it with deep affection and concern.
- Acts 18 and 19 provide insights into Paul's missionary journey and the establishment of the church in Ephesus.

Purpose of the Letter

- Paul wrote to remind the church of their identity in Christ and the importance of spiritual resilience.
- The letter serves as a guide for the church to fortify themselves against false teachings and idolatry.
- Paul emphasizes the need for unity and understanding of their spiritual blessings in Christ.
- The letter addresses the challenges faced by the church and encourages them to remain steadfast in their faith.

Chapter 1 – Identity in Christ

Key Themes and Messages

- Paul opens with a salutation and immediately addresses the central theme of spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-4).
- The concept of being chosen and predestined by God is highlighted, emphasizing that believers are not mistakes but divinely appointed (Ephesians 1:5).
- Paul stresses the importance of understanding one's identity as a child of God and the implications of being adopted into His family (Ephesians 1:5).
- The theme of redemption through Christ's blood is introduced, showcasing God's grace and forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7).
- Paul concludes the chapter with a prayer for wisdom and revelation, urging believers to recognize the greatness of God's power (Ephesians 1:17-19).

Spiritual Blessings Explained

- Spiritual blessings are described as gifts from God that empower believers in their daily lives.
- Paul emphasizes that these blessings are available through a relationship with Christ, highlighting the importance of surrendering to the Holy Spirit.
- The blessings include love, grace, and the assurance of eternal life, which are foundational to a believer's identity.
- Paul encourages believers to recognize their worth and purpose, reinforcing that they are chosen and valued by God.
- The chapter serves as a reminder to live in light of these blessings and to reflect God's character in their lives.

Chapter 2 – The Household of God

Our Condition Before Salvation

- Paul reminds the church of their previous state of spiritual death due to sin (Ephesians 2:1).
- The transition from death to life is emphasized with the phrase 'But God,' highlighting God's mercy and love (Ephesians 2:4).
- Salvation is presented as a gift of grace, not based on human effort or merit (Ephesians 2:8).
- Paul underscores the importance of faith in receiving salvation, reinforcing that it is through God's grace that believers are saved.
- The chapter illustrates the transformation that occurs when one accepts Christ, moving from separation to unity with God.

Unity in Christ

- Paul explains that the blood of Christ reconciles believers to God and to one another, breaking down barriers (Ephesians 2:13).
- The metaphor of the church as a building with Christ as the cornerstone is introduced, emphasizing unity among believers (Ephesians 2:19-22).
- Paul stresses that all believers, regardless of background, are part of the same household of God, promoting inclusivity and community.
- The chapter serves as a call to unity, urging believers to embrace their identity as members of God's family.

- The concept of peace through Christ is central, as He brings harmony among diverse groups.

Chapter 3 – The Mystery Revealed

The Revelation of Salvation to the Gentiles

- Paul discusses the mystery of the Gospel being revealed to the Gentiles, a significant theme in his ministry (Ephesians 3:1-6).
- The Old Testament prophets anticipated this revelation but did not fully understand how it would unfold.
- Paul emphasizes that his mission to preach to the Gentiles was divinely appointed, showcasing God's plan for salvation (Ephesians 3:8).
- The chapter highlights the unsearchable riches of Christ, inviting believers to explore the depth of God's grace.
- Paul's role as a messenger of this mystery underscores the inclusivity of the Gospel message.

Paul's Prayer for the Church

- Paul concludes the chapter with a powerful prayer for spiritual strength and love (Ephesians 3:16-19).
- He prays for believers to be rooted and grounded in love, emphasizing the importance of love in the Christian life.
- The prayer reflects Paul's desire for believers to experience the fullness of God, which is central to their spiritual growth.
- The closing doxology (Ephesians 3:20-21) emphasizes God's ability to do more than we can ask or think, encouraging believers to trust in His power.
- This chapter serves as a reminder of the importance of prayer and reliance on God's strength in the life of the church.

Study Guide Questions – Ephesians 1–3

1. Identity in Christ (Ephesians 1)

How does understanding that you are *chosen, predestined, and adopted* in Christ (Ephesians 1:4–5) shape your view of your purpose and self-worth in everyday life?

2. Spiritual Blessings vs. Worldly Thinking

Paul says we have been given *every spiritual blessing in Christ* (Ephesians 1:3).

What are these blessings, and how do they differ from what the world considers “blessed”?

3. From Death to Life (Ephesians 2:1–8)

What does Paul mean by being “dead in sin” and then made alive through Christ?
 How does the phrase “*But God*” (Ephesians 2:4) change the entire direction of our lives?

4. Unity in the Body of Christ (Ephesians 2:13–22)

Paul teaches that Christ broke down barriers and made believers *one household*.
 What kinds of divisions still exist today, and how can the church actively live out this unity?

5. The Mystery & Spiritual Growth (Ephesians 3)

Paul speaks about the *mystery of Christ* being revealed to all people and prays for believers to be *rooted and grounded in love*.

What does it look like practically to be spiritually rooted in love and filled with the fullness of God?

EPHESIANS 1–3

Identity • Unity • The Mystery Revealed
 THREE CHAPTERS THAT CHANGE EVERYTHING

1 EPHESIANS 1: YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. (Eph. 1:3)

Chosen before the foundation of the world. (Eph. 1:4)

Predetermined for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ. (Eph. 1:5)

Redeemed by His blood. Forgiveness of sins. (Eph. 1:7)

CHOSEN. REDEEMED. ADOPTED. BLESSED.

That's who you are in Christ!

PRAYER FOR WISDOM & REVELATION
...the eyes of your understanding being enlightened... that you may know the hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance, and the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.” (Eph. 1:17–19)

2 EPHESIANS 2: THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD

Once dead in trespasses and sins... **BUT GOD!** (Eph. 2:1–4)

Saved by grace through faith. Not by works. (Eph. 2:8–9)

Brought near by the blood of Christ. He is our peace. (Eph. 2:13–14)

One new humanity. No more divisions. (Eph. 2:15–18)

We are God's building, being fitted together as one. (Eph. 2:19–22)

CHRIST THE CORNERSTONE (Eph. 2:20)

ONE FAMILY. ONE BODY. ONE PURPOSE.
Built on Christ. United in Love.

3 EPHESIANS 3: THE MYSTERY REVEALED

The mystery of the Gospel: Salvation now revealed to the Gentiles. (Eph. 3:1–6)

Paul's mission: to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Eph. 3:8)

I pray that you may be strengthened with might through His Spirit. (Eph. 3:16)

Rooted and grounded in love. (Eph. 3:17)

To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge; filled with the fullness of God. (Eph. 3:18–19)

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think... to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen. (Eph. 3:20–21)

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
 BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

PAUL IN PRISON (60–62 AD)
 The Apostle Paul wrote Ephesians while imprisoned in Rome. He writes to a church he loves deeply.

THE CITY OF EPHESUS
 A wealthy, influential city and major trade gateway between East and West. Known for idolatry, the Temple of Artemis, and magical practices. A center of culture, commerce, and spiritual darkness.

A CHURCH UNDER PRESSURE
 Paul established a strong church in Ephesus despite fierce opposition from those who benefited from idolatry and the status quo.

A WARNING & A WORD OF LOVE
 Paul warned the elders, “After my departure, savage wolves will come in among you...” (Acts 20:29). He writes to strengthen them for the battles ahead.

ROMAN EMPIRE (60–62 AD)

EPHESUS

A letter to remind them of who they are in Christ and how to stand firm in a hostile world.

THE PURPOSE OF PAUL'S LETTER

- To remind the church of their **IDENTITY IN CHRIST** and the blessings they have received.
- To fortify them against **FALSE TEACHING, IDOLATRY,** and compromise.
- To teach the **UNITY** of Jews and Gentiles in one new humanity through the cross.
- To reveal the **MYSTERY** of the Gospel—salvation for all nations.
- To encourage spiritual maturity and **RESILIENCE** through the power of the Holy Spirit.

CORE THEMES OF EPHESIANS

“TOGETHER, THESE TRUTHS EQUIP BELIEVERS TO LIVE BOLDLY FOR CHRIST IN EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE.”