



BOOK INTRODUCTION

Written by the apostle Paul in approximately 60-61 AD while in prison in Rome, Ephesians is considered by many to be the crown jewel of Paul's writing; it is succinct, thorough and transformative. As we go through this rich and beautiful *letter* (book), among the many themes presented, *we will focus on our spiritual identity and how it is lived out.*

Ephesians contains only six chapters. It's a mere 155 verses. If you read it straight through, it would take you about 20 minutes. Yet the rich wisdom packed in this book will take you much longer than 20 minutes to apply and live out.

If you want to really apply this book, read it slowly; and often. In Fact, for our study time together, I would like you to read the entire chapter we are studying "daily" until we complete that chapter study. Let us all do this with each chapter until we conclude the Book of Ephesians.

Paul, the author, writing to the people in Ephesus, started out with a few seemingly benign statements. They would be easy for a reader to gloss over in an attempt to get to "the important stuff." But if you do that, you'll regret it. You'll short-circuit the work God wants to do in your heart instead of digging deeply into who God declared you to be. And who God declared you to be is more powerful than who you feel you are.

The One on whom you fix your eyes: is both the source, and the object of your identity!

It may seem obvious ... but in order to follow Jesus as His disciple, you have to see Him as He truly is. Once you have a clear picture of Jesus, you can fully understand who you are.

THE GOSPEL CHANGES EVERYTHING ABOUT US!

We are radically and eternally changed by the work of Christ. The believer is made into a new person—their standing before God, their relationships with one another, and their worldview are all changed. These new realities are called positional truths—things that are now true of us based on the finished work of Christ on our behalf. The first half of Ephesians highlights and emphasizes our new position in Christ.

IDENTITY IS EVERYTHING

Often, we are introduced to the Christian life by being taught what we are and are not supposed to do. Paul starts by teaching us who we are in Christ. Later, in chapters 4-6 he then teaches us how to live. If we do not start with our identity in Christ, our identity will be attached to our obedience rather than to Christ's obedience. Doubt, guilt, and fear will slowly seep into our minds and hearts if we are not convinced of our new adopted status in Christ. The most important thing about you is who you are in Christ!

Theme: "In" Christ ... and the blessings thereof.

The word "in" occurs about 90 times in the letter. It stresses the truth of the believer's union with Christ in death, resurrection, and ultimate ascension. The fact of the believer's position "in" Christ permeates the entire thought of the letter. Accordingly, Ephesians 1:3 seems to suggest the theme of the letter ... ***"Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."***

In prayer, we often pray for things that we do not have. In chapters 1-3, Paul is praying that we would fully comprehend and understand what is already true about us!

The new identity we have in Christ is so powerful and transformative in nature ... that it profoundly affects our perspective, reorients our source of power, and gives us the confidence and courage to live wholeheartedly for Christ in a broken world!

SIMPLE OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS

Chapters 1 – 3 ***Our Position In Christ (What We Are Before God)***

- 1:1 – 23 ... The Believer - as God's Child
- 2:1 – 18 ... The Believer - as a Member of God's Body
- 2:19 – 3:21 ... The Believer - as God's Building

Chapters 4 – 6 ***Our Practice of Christ (How We Are To Act Before People)***

- 4:1 – 6:9 ... A Worthy Walk
- 6:10 – 24 ... A Continual Conflict – Spiritual Warfare

READING EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1 ...