

HOW TO USE THIS DEVOTIONAL

Welcome to this devotional on the book of Ephesians! This guided study will help you to know the contents, structure, and themes that are part of this important New Testament letter. This study will also help you apply the timeless truths of God's Word to your everyday life.

The book of Ephesians is a manual of Christian living. Those who want to learn how to live as Christians need to study and apply this great epistle.

Here's how the book breaks down: chapters 1-3 detail the believer's riches in Christ, as seen from the vantage point of the heavenly, eternal realm. Rather than continuing to live as spiritual paupers, our response to these riches is to believe and receive them, and live as the rich spiritual children that we are *in Christ*. The idea of being *in Christ* therefore is of paramount importance for us.

In chapters 4:1-6:9, the believer learns to walk. We walk with the Lord in response to and gratitude for the many blessings He's graciously and freely provided for us (chapters 1-3). As the believer learns to walk, there is a progression from infancy to toddler to a fully mature saint. These are the ways in which we walk: we walk in humility, in unity with other believers, as new creations in Christ, in love, as children of light, circumspectly, in the Spirit, and in submission to others in our lives.

The final major section of this great epistle is in 6:10-18. This passage shows us how to stand in the face of much spiritual opposition from the evil one and his cohorts. Our position in Christ is under attack, as is our walk with Christ. We are told to take up the complete armor of God that we might stand in the evil day. Only with the armor can we effectively withstand the onslaught of the enemy of our souls.

To sum it all up, the book of Ephesians teaches us to *Sit*, to *Walk*, and to *Stand*.¹ We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places, we walk with Christ here on earth, and we stand in Christ against spiritual foes.

Ephesians is also significant due to its emphasis on the doctrine of the church of Jesus Christ. Whereas the epistle to the Colossians emphasizes the Christ of the church, Ephesians focuses on the church of Christ. Members of Christ's church (Greek: *ecclesia*, the called-out ones) have been redeemed out of the world to form the body of Christ, which is also the bride of Christ. These doctrines emphasize how relational this Christian life is, as we are intimately and intricately connected to Jesus Himself.

The translation that is used for the text is taken from the New International Version (NIV). But it is also possible to use other translations like the New American Standard and the New King James Version.

This devotional is intended to give you a complete tour of the book within a 40-day framework, one devotional per day. At the end of every five days, you'll find summary pages. Use these pages to reflect upon the week. Here are the steps on how to proceed with this study.

- 1) Be sure to look at the big picture of Ephesians before you get into the specific passages. Take a moment and actually read through all six chapters in one sitting. This is how the letter was meant to be read! This will help you to frame the book and see the "forest" before you start examining the "trees."
- 2) Take some time to look over the background of Ephesians, the arguments, the topics, and the outline of the book. This will help you become familiar with the basic shape of this great epistle.

3) As you approach each lesson, begin by reading the portion of the passage that is listed above. Think about the passage and pay attention to some of the key ideas that are mentioned. Remind yourself of the context of each passage (what proceeds and follows the day's verses). Look for action verbs and notice repetition, contrasts, and comparisons. Read it again out loud to help you understand the passage. Then take some time to look at the interpretation notes which should aid you in understanding the passage.

4) Take some time to go over the reflection questions and apply them to your own life. Please do this thoughtfully and carefully. Use the text as a mirror to your own heart as you think about the principles first and then how your life should reflect those principles.

5) Take some time to pray over and meditate on the truth, and ask God to help you make it true in your own life. This will be crucial in order for you to internalize the devotional fully for that day!

BACKGROUND TO EPHESIANS ²

TITLE

The traditional title of this epistle is *Pros Ephesios*, "To the Ephesians." Some ancient manuscripts, however, omit *en Epheso*, "in Ephesus," in chapter 1, verse 1. This has led some scholars to posit the idea that *Ephesians* was a circular letter intended for general use for all the churches of Asia and beyond. It is argued that *Ephesians* is really a Christian treatise designed for general use (for the following reasons): *Ephesians* involves no controversy, and deals with no specific problems as is common in Paul's epistles to specific churches. *Ephesians* was also written with a formal tone (no terms of endearment) and distant phraseology (e.g. "after I heard of your faith," 1:15), details which seem inconsistent with the relationship Paul must have had with the Ephesians after a ministry of almost three years among them.

If *Ephesians* began as a circular letter, it eventually became associated with Ephesus, the foremost of the Asian churches. Another plausible option is that this epistle was directly addressed to the Ephesians, but written in such a way as to make it helpful for all the churches in Asia.

DATE AND SETTING

At the end of his second missionary journey, Paul visited Ephesus where he left Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18–21). This strategic city was the commercial center of Asia Minor, as well as a religious center ... famous especially for its magnificent temple of Diana (Roman name) or Artemis (Greek name), a structure considered to be one of the seven wonders of the ancient world (cf. Acts 19:35). The practice of magic and the local economy were clearly related to this temple.

Paul remained in Ephesus for nearly three years on his third missionary journey (Acts 19; 20:30), during which time the Word of God was spread throughout the province of Asia. Paul's effective ministry began to seriously hurt the traffic in magic and images, leading to an uproar in the huge Ephesian theater. Paul then left for Macedonia, but afterward he met with the Ephesian elders while on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 20:17–38).

Paul wrote the "Prison Epistles" (*Ephesians*, *Philippians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon*) during his first Roman imprisonment in a.d. 60–62. These epistles all refer to his imprisonment (*Ephesians* 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; *Philippians* 1:7, 13–14; *Colossians* 4:3, 10, 18; *Philemon* 9–10, 13, 23), and fit well against the background in Acts 28:16–31. This is especially true of Paul's references to the "palace guard" (governor's official residential guard, *Philippians* 1:13) and "Caesar's household" (*Philippians* 4:22). *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon* were evidently written about the same

time (cf. Eph. 6:21–22; Col. 4:7–9) in a.d. 60–61, and Philippians about a year later, not long before Paul's release.

THEME AND PURPOSE

The theme of Ephesians is the believer's responsibility to walk in accordance with his heavenly calling in Christ Jesus (4:1). Ephesians was not written to correct specific errors in a local church, but to prevent problems in the church as a whole by encouraging the body of Christ to mature in Him. It was also written to make believers more aware of their position in Christ because this is the basis for their practice on every level of life.

OUTLINE³

- I. Introduction 1:1-2
- II. Main Teaching 1:3-6:20
 - A. The Position of Believers (1:3-3:21)
 - 1. Chosen and Sealed (1:3-14)
 - 2. Prayer for spiritual knowledge (1:15-23)
 - 3. Saved by Grace (2:1-10)
 - 4. United in One Body (2:11-22)
 - 5. Equal in the Body [the Mystery] :1-21)
 - B. The Practice of Believers (4:1-6:9)
 - 1. In Relation to Other Believers (4:1-6)
 - 2. In Relation to Spiritual Gifts (4:7-16)
 - 3. In Relation to the Former Life (4:17-32)
 - 4. In Relation to Evil (5:1-17)
 - 5. In Relation to the Holy Spirit (5:18-21)
 - 6. In Relation to Home Life (5:22-6:4)
 - 7. In Relation to Slaves and Masters (6:5-9)
 - C. The Protection for Believers (6:10-20)
 - 1. Against Whom? (6:10-12)
 - 2. With What? (6:13-20)
- III. Conclusion 6:21-24

¹ Phrase taken from the book *Sit, Walk, Stand* by Watchman Nee, Tyndale House Publishers, Copyright 1977.

² Taken and adapted from *Talk Thru the Bible* by Bruce Wilkinson and Kenneth Boa, Copyright 1983 by Thomas Nelson. Publishers.

³ Taken and adapted from *The Ryrie Study Bible* by Dr. Charles C. Ryrie, Moody Press,

IMPORTANT TOPICS IN EPHESIANS

- 1. The location of the believer's spiritual blessings (1:3)

2. A listing of these spiritual blessings (1:4-14)
3. The focus and goal of election and predestination (1:4-6a)
4. How to pray for spiritual insight and power (1:15-23)
5. Description of our former state, prior to conversion to Christ (2:1-3)
6. From death to life to God's Divine purpose for our lives (2:4-10)
7. How God creates unity out of division (2:13-16)
8. The foundation and structure of the church of Jesus Christ (2:19-20)
9. The mystery of the body of Christ (3:3-6)
10. How to pray for the experience of the love of God (3:14-21)
11. The essentials of spiritual unity (4:1-16)
12. How to put on our new spiritual clothing, and what that looks like (4:17-32)
13. How to live a consistent life without hypocrisy (5:1-17)
14. On being filled with the Holy Spirit (5:18-21)
15. The responsibilities of marriage (5:22-33)
16. Parenthood and childhood (6:1-4)
17. The spiritual opposition we face and what we must do about it (6:10-13)
18. How to put on the whole armor of God (6:14-18)

KEY VERSES IN EPHESIANS

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Ephesians 1:4-6 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love {5} he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— {6} to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 1:13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

Ephesians 2:4-5 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, {5} made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— {9} not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...

Ephesians 2:22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Ephesians 3:17-19 ...so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, {18} may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, {19} and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 4:1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Ephesians 4:2-3 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. {3} Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Ephesians 4:11-12 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, {12} to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...

Ephesians 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.

Ephesians 4:22-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; {23} to be made new in the attitude of your minds; {24} and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Ephesians 5:1-2 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children {2} and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light...

Ephesians 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...

Ephesians 5:33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Ephesians 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

Ephesians 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:5 Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.

Ephesians 6:9 And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Ephesians 6:18 And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Week One, Day 1

EPHESIANS 1:1-3

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: {2} Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. {3} Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

At the very beginning of the epistle the Holy Spirit twice uses the phrase in Christ. Everything that belongs to the true believer is in Christ. For the believer, it's the most important prepositional phrase in all of God's Word. Being in Christ means to have believed in Him, to have welcomed Him personally into your life as Savior and Lord.

Those who are in Christ possess every spiritual blessing ... the best kind of blessing. Nothing is withheld. Whereas in the earthly realm not everyone will be wealthy or healthy, in the heavenly realm we are given everything. To whom God gives one blessing in Christ, He gives all blessings in Christ.

Paul will go on to list some of these blessings for our specific understanding, but at this moment it's important to know that our Father has blessed us with these things. They belong to us already. His intention from all of eternity was to bless us, and His intention in the present and future will be the same. God loves His people, therefore He has blessed them with everything spiritual, and will continue to do so.

1. Are you *in Christ*? Have you believed in Him, and received Him? If you answered "no" to the question, what is keeping you from doing it?
2. Read through the rest of Ephesians 1 right now, and name the spiritual blessings that are listed just in this chapter. Rejoice and worship the Lord that these blessings already belong to you!
3. Of the blessings you listed, which is the most important to you right now, at this moment? How will your experience of Christ change as a result of believing that this blessing is yours today?

Week One, Day 2

EPHESIANS 1:4-8

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love {5} he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— {6} to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. {7} In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace {8} that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

When did God make His choice of us? What was the basis of His choice? What was the end or goal of that choice?

By Divine revelation (found in this morning's text), we have the answers to these questions. First, God made His choice of us before the creation of the world. Second, He chose those who would be in Him (that is, in Christ). [That is, God made a decision in eternity past that His elect would be chosen in His Son. If someone desires to be one of the chosen ones, then he/she could become just that by fully trusting Jesus Christ and committing their life to Him.] And third, the goal of that choice was that He would have people that are holy (set apart) and blameless before Him (in His sight). He wanted to invite human beings into the "inner circle" of the Trinity—that we would know all that He is, and share it with Him!

The same basis for God's blessings applies to the other ones listed here ... predestined unto adoption as sons (through Jesus Christ) ... grace which he has freely given us (in the One he loves) ... redemption and forgiveness (in him).

In other words, the key to obtaining all of these blessings has to do with whether or not one is in Christ. In Christ we are chosen, adopted as his sons, recipients of his glorious grace, redeemed by his blood, and forgiven of all our sins. There are only two classes of humanity: those who are in Christ and those who remain in Adam.

What a blessing to be in Christ! Our position is solid, and our lives are forever changed! We need only believe in what we already have to experience the joy of what it means to belong to God. When God chooses, adopts, redeems, and forgives He does it completely, intentionally, and with a purpose. Because of Him, our lives are eternally meaningful. God does not make junk.

This is the truth about the believer ... ultimately the only actual thing that is true of any of us is what God says!

1. Using a Bible dictionary or online dictionary, look up these words and write out the definitions that you think express the Biblical intent: adoption, redemption, forgiveness. Do you believe these relational concepts are true of you? Are they yours?
2. How does the idea that God chose you before the foundation of the world affect your view of yourself? How does this change your self-perception?
3. What is life like in God's "inner circle"? What is it like to experience His joy, peace, love, creativity, patience, or goodness? Talk with the Lord about these things, enter into the Holiest by Jesus' blood (Hebrews 10:19-22).

Week One, Day 3

EPHESIANS 1:9-12

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, {10} to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. {11} In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, {12} in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

This is the first of six times Paul the apostle will use the word mystery in Ephesians. Its basic meaning is “something previously hidden or unknown, but now revealed by God.”

God has shown us what He is doing! He has let us in on this great truth—that all of human history is headed in one single direction, the ultimate and complete reign of His Son over all that has been made. Read the newspaper with this in view: the Lord will use every detail or event toward the fulfillment of His eternal purpose. Our lives have important and real meaning because of this fact.

There is a plan! It is God’s plan, and those who are in Christ are going to be part of it. God has predetermined it. The final result will bring His glory into focus, and all will praise God for it.

In the Bible, the great timeframe during which these things happen is called the *day of the LORD*. The day of man will have come to a close; the *day of the LORD* will have begun.

1. What are the advantages of knowing what God has in mind for the earth and the universe?
2. How does this knowledge affect your thinking or plans concerning your life and future? Be as specific as you can.
3. Using a Bible dictionary, look up the word “hope.” What is the meaning of Biblical hope?

Week One, Day 4

EPHESIANS 1:13-14

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, {14} who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

How does a person come to be in Christ, anyway? It's through hearing the "word of truth," which is the good news of our salvation. After one hears the gospel message, then he must believe it.

Notice the connection between truth and the gospel. The bold assertion of the New Testament is that its message is true. There is such a thing as absolute truth, and it is found in the message of Christ. This message is that Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). The resurrection of Christ confirms that it's all true.

Upon receiving the truth by faith, the believer immediately is marked with a seal (who is the Holy Spirit Himself, living within us). This seal identifies the believer as belonging to God, in the way that a branding mark on cattle identifies ownership for the rancher.

Not only is the Holy Spirit our seal, He is also our guarantee, or "down payment" (Greek word: arrabōn- an initial payment as security for the rest). In other words, God the Father gives us the Holy Spirit as His down payment that ensures to us that the rest of His blessings are on their way. We know heaven and eternal life will be ours because the Spirit has been given to us!

1. How or when did you first hear the gospel message? Did you receive it immediately? Briefly describe your testimony, and ask God to give you the opportunity to share it with someone today.
2. What are some practical benefits of being sealed with the seal of the Holy Spirit? Consider these verses as you formulate your answer: John 6:27; Ephesians 4:30; 2 Timothy 2:19; Revelation 7:3.
3. What role does the Holy Spirit have in assuring the believer of his salvation and future inheritance? Do you have this assurance?

Week One, Day 5

EPHESIANS 1:15-23

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, {16} I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. {17} I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. {18} I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, {19} and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, {20} which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, {21} far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. {22} And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, {23} which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Notice that Paul the apostle prayed much for the believers in Christ. He prayed for them, and he thanked God for them.

Notice also that in his prayer, he doesn't pray for a change in their circumstances. His focus was to pray that his readers would know certain truths which were already theirs. It was a prayer for their illumination and personal experience of the truth.

Specifically, Paul prayed for an awareness of God that would help them know Him better, that they would experience His hope within their hearts, and that they would experience the incredible power of God which was living inside of them. What is this power like? It's the same power that both resurrected and exalted our Lord Jesus Christ. It's the same power that has placed everything under Jesus' direct rule. Think of it: this is the power that we already have, because of the One living within us.

1. Have you prayed for fellow believers? Think about the content of these prayers ... how many of them were focused on changing their circumstances?
2. What do you think: are the prayers of Ephesians 1 valid prayers to pray for others today? Why do you think so?
3. Look up 1 John 5:14-15 and Mark 11:24. How can you tie together these two promises with Paul's prayer? How does this connection help you to pray more effectively?

SUMMARY OF WEEK ONE

1. List at least three valuable insights and timeless truths you've gained this week.
2. List any commitments and adjustments you are making as you are convicted by the Word of God.
3. Write out your prayer of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

Week Two, Day 1

EPHESIANS 2:1-7

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, {2} in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. {3} All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. {4} But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, {5} made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. {6} And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, {7} in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

What was our former condition? We were dead in trespasses and sins. This was an inherited condition from our first parents. We existed on the physical and emotional/intellectual planes only. Spiritually, we could not know God or connect with Him intimately, because we were dead.

What was our former path in life? We followed the world's ways, fueled by the devil himself. The basic energy and power by which we lived was somehow connected to Satan.

What was our former lifestyle? We lived only to gratify our own selfish, sinful desires. It was all about "me," a selfish, miserable existence apart from fellowship with God.

All of these things made us objects of God's wrath. Divine justice would have struck us down in a heartbeat, and we would have had no one but ourselves to blame.

"But because of His great love for us, God"... amazing grace! God intervened! His mercy triumphed over justice, and we were made alive. Notice that the solution for spiritual death could only be spiritual life—the very resurrection life of Jesus Himself, made real in our experience through the new birth (see John 3:1-16). God took dead people and put His own life into them. He did this upon our acceptance of the gospel message.

Not only that, but He also raised us up with Christ and made us sit with Him in the heavenly realms—which was also revealed in chapter 1.

What do we have to look forward to in eternity, in the ages to come? God will be unfolding to us just how incredible His grace is ... we'll be learning about it forever and ever and ever. What a future we have to look forward to!

1. Refer to Genesis 2:16-18 and compare it to Ephesians 2:1-3. As you ponder the meaning of your former condition, thank God for the cross, by which He reconciled us to Himself. Either write out or verbalize your worship to Him.
2. Have you ever thought about the concept of learning in heaven? How does this idea change or alter what you envision heaven to be like?
3. Read Exodus 34:6-7, which describes the meaning of God's name. How does the meaning of God's name relate to the passage we've read today?

Week Two, Day 2

EPHESIANS 2:8-10

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— {9} not by works, so that no one can boast. {10} For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

What is it that has saved us? According to the text before us, it was the grace of God that did that.

How was this grace received? Again, the text tells us—it was through faith. We simply trusted in what God had promised to do for us through the gospel. He is the One that told us that Jesus paid for all our sins on the cross, and that believing in Him, we would have forgiveness of sins and receive eternal life. Because this salvation came through God’s grace and could only be received and never earned, there is no room for boasting. God did it, pure and simple. We did nothing but believe it.

Now we are God’s workmanship, the thing He made by His Divine creativity and artistry. He does not make junk ... and like king David of old, the believer can rightly say that we are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalms 139:14).

Not only has He made us special, He has also made us for special purposes. He has engineered the believer for good works ... works which He has prepared ahead of time ... works that are ready and waiting for us to accomplish. It’s like a construction job site; the tools are all laid out, the lumber and supplies are ready, a set of plans is spread out on the table ... all that is needed is for the carpenter to show up and find out his duties for the day, and then do them. So it is with the individual believer.

1. Think about dead, works-based religion. What do you suppose the dead religionist thinks about Ephesians 2:8-9? Pray for opportunities to share the good news of free grace with someone today.
2. Have you agreed with God’s estimation of your value as an individual that He has made? Read Psalm 139:1-18 to gain a better understand of how God views you.
3. What are the good works that God has directed you to complete? Why not learn to make it your daily habit to ask God to show you what He has prepared in advance for you to do today.

Week Two, Day 3

EPHESIANS 2:11-13

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)— {12} remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. {13} But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

The key word in this passage is the word “remember.” Believers are commanded to remember that they were uncircumcised pagans, separated from Messiah Jesus, outside of Israel and her covenant blessings, and living without hope or God in their lives.

Obviously, it is very easy for us to forget our history and the fact that we have been grafted into Israel, the authentic olive tree (see Romans 11:17-18) ... which is why we need this command.

It’s vital that we remember where we came from. We were in a deep, deep ditch out of which only God could rescue us. We were doomed to a Christ-less eternity, with no possible way to be saved. Except for God and His mercy, we were done for.

But now in Christ Jesus—there are those wonderful words again—but now in Christ Jesus we have been brought near (to God). What is it that brought us near? It was the blood of Christ. His death saved us, and His blood reconciled us.

Only when the believer can cry out “woe is me, I am undone” will he then appreciate the greatness of his salvation. Only then will he be humble and realistic about who he is, and where he’s come from. We are sinners that have been saved, and we must never be arrogant about that.

1. The great Bible commentator Matthew Henry once wrote *“Converted sinners ought frequently to reflect upon the sinfulness and misery of the state they were in by nature.”* Take some time to do that right now, and make note of any specific thoughts the Holy Spirit brings to your mind.
2. Why is it so important to reflect upon our former condition? How does that help us live in the present?
3. Meditate upon the idea that you have been brought “near” by Christ’s blood. What are some of the implications of having been brought near? What might that include, practically?

Week Two, Day 4

EPHESIANS 2:14-18

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, {15} by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, {16} and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. {17} He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. {18} For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Jesus doesn't just bring peace, He is our peace. Here we see how our Lord brings hostilities between people to an end.

In the first century, there was enmity between Jews and Gentiles. The problems resulted from different culture and expectations. The Jews had the law and its ordinances, while the Gentiles observed none of those things. In the temple, there was actually a wall that kept Gentiles out of the "Jewish only" section of worship. This "dividing wall of hostility" represented the larger issues that separated them.

The Lord's plan of action was to create one "man" out of both groups. This "man" is actually His church, the body of Christ. Presently, the church is made up of Jews and Gentiles. But to make this new man, He would have to destroy that which divided.

He accomplished that through the cross. In the cross, He fulfilled the meaning of the law, and paid the penalty for it having been broken. In this way, sinful Jews who believed were reconciled to God, as were uncircumcised Gentiles who trusted Christ.

Having both been reconciled to God, they could now be reconciled to each other. First the vertical relationship with God would be restored, and then the horizontal relationship between men could be made whole. This is the solution for the ending of all hostilities ... they are done away with in Christ, through His cross.

1. Remember a time in your life when Jesus brought peace between you and another person. How did He do that?
2. By faith and in the Spirit, see yourself in Christ, at the foot of the cross. Now see another believer in Christ, at the foot of the cross. How does he or she appear to you now?
3. Think of someone in your life right now that you are struggling to accept. Write out how the process of peace described in this passage will be the key to reconciliation.

Week Two, Day 5

EPHESIANS 2:19-22

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, {20} built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. {21} In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. {22} And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

When God birthed the church, He created a new people and a new nation (1 Peter 2:9-10). Whenever a new nation is formed the criteria for citizenship are laid down. So also are its laws and governing documents. The foundation of the United States was the Founder's commitment to freedom, their adherence to the truth of scripture as the basis for good government, and two subsequent documents—the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

With regard to the body of Christ, God built this new nation on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself as the cornerstone, i.e. the one stone upon which every other part of the foundation is laid. The apostles and prophets were the human agents who established the church. Their message and purpose were wholly centered upon Christ. The 27 New Testament books are the divinely inspired seal and inerrant declaration of their efforts. This is the reason why there are no more foundational apostles and prophets. Their work was complete.

In this present age, human beings are being built together to form God's new temple. He now lives in people—a collective people indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Christ in us ... that is our hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). Every true believer in Jesus Christ is part of this holy temple. It's an honor to be included in its construction, although we often feel the pain of hammer and chisel shaping us into what God wants us to be.

1. How has the Bible shaped your life? In what ways have you based your life upon its timeless message?
2. Since the church is being built as God's dwelling place, how do you see your life in this process? What has He been doing in you to make that happen?
3. Read 1 Peter 2:9-10. What is God's purpose for us as His people?

SUMMARY OF WEEK TWO

1. List at least three valuable insights and timeless truths you've gained this week.
2. List any commitments and adjustments you are making as you are convicted by the Word of God.
3. Write out your prayer of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

Week Three, Day 1

EPHESIANS 3:1-6

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— {2} Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, {3} that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. {4} In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, {5} which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. {6} This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Viewing these words, the reader is immediately impressed with Paul's understanding that his imprisonment in Rome was for Jesus Christ. He accepted his circumstances and rejoiced in the trials and sufferings of his faith (see James 1:2-4; Romans 5:3-4).

It is unlikely that Paul had the full picture of how the Lord was using these events in his life. Not only was he preaching and teaching while in prison, but he was writing as well. The Holy Spirit was revealing vital truth to his heart as he wrote words of instruction and encouragement to several churches. From these writings (in Paul's first imprisonment) we have the New Testament epistles of Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon!

The Spirit of God gave Paul the privileged responsibility of revealing the truth of the mystery of Christ. Again, this mystery was something that had not previously been revealed, but now was being made plain by God Himself.

What an amazing truth it is—that Jews and Gentiles have been brought together in the body of Christ, sharers in the promises of Christ through the gospel. In Christ—that is in Messiah—all these promises and blessings are received and experienced. For Jews in NT times, these words must have been almost shocking. For Gentiles, these words must have been amazing and astounding.

1. Many have given this sage advice: live your life as though you are living it backwards. To put it another way, live life from the perspective of what others may say about you at your funeral ... or what may be written in your obituary. Keeping that in mind, how do we now look at Paul's imprisonment and sufferings? If you were to live your life backwards, how would your life's focus and priorities change?
2. Think about how God has revealed His truth to you. What is the source of that revelation? What would we know of God and His ways apart from what God has told us?
3. List several of the blessings Gentiles receive in Christ, being linked with Israel in the body of Christ. When you are done, be sure to thank God for these blessings.

Week Three, Day 2

EPHESIANS 3:7-9

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. {8} Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, {9} and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.

In this amazing passage, Paul links two concepts together which appear at first to be oxymoronic. He links being a servant (i.e. slave) with his reception of the gift of God's grace. In other words, Paul saw himself as a blessed man because God's grace enabled him to be God's slave in the gospel. Keep in mind that slavery was not a desired position in 1st Century Rome.

Another incredible statement from the great apostle was that he was less than the least of all of God's people. Certainly we don't view Paul in those terms today, but that is how he viewed himself. His pre-conversion persecution of the church no doubt factored into these words (see 1 Corinthians 15:9), as did his awareness of the weakness of his flesh (Romans 7:18,25).

Paul's passion is also obvious here: he was passionate about making the good news of Christ plain and understandable to as many as he possibly could. This was his ongoing prayer request ... that the Lord would open doors for this to occur, and that the Lord would help him to accomplish the task at hand.

1. How has God's grace influenced and motivated you to be His servant?
2. Think about how you think about yourself. Jot down a few phrases that describe your thoughts. How are those thoughts colored by reality (truth)? How have you reflected your self-view toward others?
3. What is your greatest passion in life? How has your prayer life reflected that passion?

Week Three, Day 3

EPHESIANS 3:10-13

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, {11} according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. {12} In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. {13} I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

God is determined to live through His people—to display His attributes through human beings in whom He dwells. In particular, Paul the apostle desired to place God’s wisdom on display ... that the angelic hosts might have knowledge of what they have been searching for in the Old Testament prophets (1 Peter 1:10-12). Paul was God’s instrument to tell them of these things.

Jesus Christ is the Way to God (John 14:6). Because of His finished work at Calvary the believers can draw near to God with great confidence (Hebrews 10:19-22; 1 John 2:1-2). The veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom on the day He died (Mark 15:37-38). Access into the Holiest was gained through His resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven.

Due to Paul’s ministry of proclamation of these great truths, he did not want pity or sympathy with regard to his sufferings. He was suffering for the gospel. Remember Ephesians 3:1, which began this long paragraph. In that verse he calls himself the prisoner of Jesus Christ.

1. How can God display any of His attributes (characteristics) through us? Refer to Colossians 1:27 to help you with your answer.
2. Do you have confidence in prayer? Are you certain that God has invited you to spend time in His presence as often as you desire? Why or why not?
3. List a few things you might do or believe that will give you greater boldness and encouragement when you pray. Let the Bible be your guide.

Week Three, Day 4

EPHESIANS 3:14-19

For this reason I kneel before the Father, {15} from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. {16} I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, {17} so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, {18} may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, {19} and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Many times we struggle with how to pray for other believers. This prayer of Paul for the Ephesians provides an end to that struggle.

Since God has promised to hear and answer prayers that are according to His will (1 John 5:14-15), our greatest need is to discover what His will is. Make sense? And where is the very best place to learn God's will? Answer: God's will is revealed specifically in the Bible. Therefore, because this prayer is a Biblical prayer, it exactly reflects the will of God. Hence, we can pray it for others (and for ourselves) with utmost confidence.

The prayer itself is directed to our heavenly Father. It's a prayer for inner strength by the Holy Spirit, for an abiding experience of Christ in us, and for a deep experiential knowledge of the vastness of God's love. All of this adds up to an incredible filling with the very fullness of God Himself.

This prayer can entirely change a person's life. I know, because it has changed mine. God is faithful, and He hears and answers prayer.

1. Think of someone right now who needs prayer, and pray this prayer for him/her. Pray it with confidence, on the authority of the Word of God!
2. Take one of the aspects of this prayer and pray it for yourself. Jot down the need in your life which leads you to pray this particular prayer.
3. How well do you experientially know the love of Christ? Have you realized that it is God's will that you experience His love? Find at least two other New Testament passages that teach us that God loves us and wants us to know it.

Week Three, Day 5

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, {21} to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The emphasis upon this great statement is upon the phrase “to Him who is able.” Truly God is able to do amazing things, even more than our finite minds can think about or comprehend.

Is there anything too difficult for God? What are the limits of His power and love?

Consider two aspects of the limitless power of God. With His power He created and now sustains the material universe. And with His power He raised His Son Jesus Christ from the dead. Just think of it: the very power is at work within the life of each believer!

Oh, may God receive all of the glory He deserves! May His glory be on display forever and ever!

1. Look up the following passages and meditate upon the idea that God is all-powerful (“He is able”) ... Genesis 1:13-14, Job 42:1-6, Isaiah 26:4, Matthew 19:23-26.
2. Focus on a specific area of your life right now that could benefit from the application of God’s power. Then find a passage of scripture that you can use to pray about that area according to God’s will. How does the awareness of God’s infinite power add to your confidence in prayer? To what extent is God able to work in this area of your life (remember Ephesians 3:20)?
3. How is God currently glorifying Himself through your life? How can you live to bring Him even more glory?

SUMMARY OF WEEK THREE

1. List at least three valuable insights and timeless truths you've gained this week.
2. List any commitments and adjustments you are making as you are convicted by the Word of God.
3. Write out your prayer of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

Week Four, Day 1

EPHESIANS 4:1-10

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. {2} Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. {3} Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. {4} There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called— {5} one Lord, one faith, one baptism; {6} one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. {7} But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. {8} This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." {9} (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions ? {10} He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

The true Christian says "I am not worthy to receive the least of God's blessings or the depth of His love and forgiveness" (e.g. Genesis 32:10; Matthew 8:8; Luke 15:18-19, 18:13). But the true Christian has been declared worthy of an incredible and high calling. As Paul implies everywhere in this letter, we have been made worthy through the finished work of Christ.

Therefore, the believer should be humble, knowing what he is—and what he is not. He should reflect that humility in his relationship with others, and grant them the same grace that he himself has been granted by God.

Every believer is a part of something very important to God ... the body of Christ. He/she is not an island, but is one among many. The many are called together in a unifying body of truth. We have the same hope; we also have the same Lord, faith, and entrance into the Christian life. We share the same God and Father, the same and the same grace. Our lives are thus entwined.

Ultimately, we're all connected to the same Messiah, the One who suffered and died for us, and the One who ascended into heaven as our great High Priest. He has a strong and specific purpose for all who are in Him.

1. Using a Bible and standard dictionary, look up the word "humility." How do these definitions help you in your understanding of Ephesians 4:1?
2. Look at the passages cited in the first paragraph. Write out a few of the ways that these verses help you with humility.
3. Consider your relationship with other believers. How have you gauged your connectedness with them? According to today's passage, how should you gauge or measure your connection with believers from other churches, groups, or ethnicities?

Week Four, Day 2

EPHESIANS 4:11-16

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, {12} to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up {13} until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. {14} Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. {15} Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. {16} From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

God has clearly defined the major roles of the church. Therefore each person is able to accomplish what God has clearly called them to.

First there are the equipping roles. These are found in the list in verse 11. Then there are those who are being equipped, which includes everyone else. In many ways, the equippers are also among the equipped.

What is the purpose of this equipping? It is for the purpose of preparing believers for their ministries. The members of Christ's body—not the so-called clergy—are those who are to do works of service.

This process causes the church to grow up into Christ, and into spiritual maturity. This spiritual maturity is characterized by unity of faith, full personal knowledge of Christ, spiritual stability and doctrinal soundness, relational fortitude, and selfless living for others.

This is God's design and purpose for the church. Praise Him that we are allowed to be part of it.

1. Which of the two categories in this passage do you belong to? How has your God-defined role affected the way you live out your Christian life?
2. Someone has asked the question "If you were arrested for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?" What evidence is there in your life that you are a true believer? What kind of works of service is the Lord doing through you?
3. Take some time right now to pray over verses 13-16. Ask the Lord to strengthen weak areas, and to make you into the person described therein.

Week Four, Day 3

EPHESIANS 4:17-21

So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. {18} They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. {19} Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. {20} You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. {21} Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” That pretty much sums up our text here in Ephesians 4.

The Lord has done a brand new work in the life of every true believer in Jesus Christ. The changes He makes are both instantaneous and progressive; there are “right now” changes upon receiving Christ, and “from glory to glory” changes that take place over the entirety of one’s life.

Whether a believer is new in the faith or has been in Christ for some time, there are definite commands that apply to all. They are to be constantly and unquestionably obeyed. The believer is not to copy the lifestyle of the world around him. Specifically, the believer is not to be spiritually ignorant, living in the darkness of his old ways. He is to keep an open and pliable heart while he avoids the sensual lusts which are common in every culture.

The lifestyle of the Gentiles is diametrically opposed to the way we’ve been taught by Jesus. His truth has brought us into an understanding of Divine mysteries and into the light—that we might live lives of contentment, purity, and self-control.

It’s important that we remember exactly how Jesus has taught us. This will help us live the way He has called us to live as His own.

1. What immediate changes did you notice in your life upon receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?
2. How has the world attempted to “squeeze you into its mold” (as J.B. Phillips put it)? What have you done to resist? Consider Romans 12:1-2 as you contemplate God’s method for avoiding conformity to the way of the Gentiles.
3. Think about the phrase “the truth that is in Jesus.” Where do we find this truth? How is your life based upon it?

Week Four, Day 4

EPHESIANS 4:22-30

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; {23} to be made new in the attitude of your minds; {24} and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. {25} Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. {26} "In your anger do not sin : Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, {27} and do not give the devil a foothold. {28} He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. {29} Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. {30} And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Here we come to the subject of the clothing of the believer. We need to be careful about what clothing we are wearing! We can either wear the old clothes of our old selves (our pre-Christian behaviors and desires), or we can wear the new clothes of our new nature, which was given to us when God made us His new creations in Christ (i.e. upon our conversion and new birth).

By faith we put off the old, and put on the new. We exchange our old torn up and grubby rags for brand new and beautiful attire, created in righteousness and holiness.

This becomes very practical. We put off falsehood, sinful anger, stealing and laziness, unwholesome talk, and anything else that would grieve the Holy Spirit.

In place of these things we put on the behaviors and attitudes that are consistent with Christ and His nature. We put on truthfulness, the appropriate use of anger, hard work leading to a generous life, edifying speech, and any other thing that will please the Holy Spirit.

Again, we do all of this by faith. We put off the old, put on the new. Just like changing our physical clothes, must change our spiritual clothes every day. As we do, we are bearing more of Christ's image in the way we live.

1. What clothing did you wear the most yesterday? Think back over your words, your thoughts, and your actions. This will help you with your own personal spiritual discernment.
2. Consider a conversation you've had within the past couple of days. Evaluate it in the light of Ephesians 4:29. Was it unwholesome speech (useless, bad, corrupting), or was it beneficial speech which helped the person you were speaking with?
3. How can the Christian know what may or may not be pleasing to the Holy Spirit? What are the criteria? How do we acquire this sort of understanding?

Week Four, Day 5

EPHESIANS 4:31-32

Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. {32} Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

This passage is closely linked to verse 30.

If we allow the evil of v. 31 (bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice), we grieve the Holy Spirit. These are horrible and destructive attitudes which can produce horrible and destructive behaviors to others. Doing these things, we cause the Spirit to feel distress, sorrow, heaviness.

Contrariwise, if we practice the virtues of v. 32 (kindness, compassion, and forgiveness) , we bring Him joy and gladness. These are characteristics of His own nature, as well as of the nature of the Father and the Son. He loves it when we humans reflect godly attributes, because they are His attributes.

What is the driving force or motivation behind such behavior toward others? It is found in this key phrase: "just as in Christ God forgave you."

What God has done for us in Christ is what we must do for others because of Christ. Believers have an entirely new lens through which to view themselves and others. It's the lens of the mercy and grace of God. Because we have been granted kindness, compassion, and forgiveness through what Jesus Christ did for us in His death and resurrection, we grant the same to others. We are the forgiven servant of Matthew 18:21-35. And we must never forget this fact.

1. Spiritual checkup time: allow the Holy Spirit to inspect your heart for any trace of the evils of v. 31. Tell the Father (confess) anything He may show you, receive the cleansing of Christ's blood (1 John 1:9), and determine to make your attitudes and actions right.
2. Consider an individual in your life with whom you've had trouble in the past. How would your outlook change if you obeyed v. 32 right now, and began given him/her the same kindness, compassion and forgiveness you've been given by God?
3. Weekly assignment: make an attempt to begin viewing everyone you meet in Christ. Pray about this matter, and submit to the Holy Spirit to help you. Make note at the end of the week how your heart has been changed in the process.

SUMMARY OF WEEK FOUR

1. List at least three valuable insights and timeless truths you've gained this week.
2. List any commitments and adjustments you are making as you are convicted by the Word of God.
3. Write out your prayer of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

Week Five, Day 1

EPHESIANS 5:1-7

Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children {2} and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. {3} But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. {4} Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. {5} For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. {6} Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. {7} Therefore do not be partners with them.

Here's an aid to Biblical interpretation: whenever you see a "therefore," ask what it's there for. In this text, Paul's "therefore" takes us back to Ephesians 4:32, where God's wonderful attributes of kindness, mercy, and forgiveness are on display, in Christ. Therefore we should imitate God in these things (literally, "mimic" God in these things). Our lives as believers are to be lives of love. God the Father loved us by sending His Son, and God the Son loves us by giving Himself for us.

Contrary to a life of love are the evils of sin. There is no way to live lovingly if our lives are not holy lives (i.e. lives which are separated unto God). The sins listed in this passage are not proper for God's people, and are completely out of place.

Believers who are tempted in any of these areas need to remember that these very sins are the reason for God's strong anger against those who reject Christ. We must not allow ourselves to be deceived into thinking that God doesn't care about sin. He does care ... and He's paying attention.

1. What is the life God has called us to? Why is this our primary calling? Read 1 John 4:7-12 to help you with your answer.
2. List each of the sins in today's verses, then provide a brief definition of each. What are their opposites? Ask the Lord to fill you with His Spirit, that His character might be dominant in your life today.
3. How have you been deceived in the past about how God looks at sin? Ask Him to help you fear Him, which is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

Week Five, Day 2

EPHESIANS 5:8-14

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light {9} (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) {10} and find out what pleases the Lord. {11} Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. {12} For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. {13} But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, {14} for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

The reason we must no longer live *in* darkness is that we are no longer darkness. We are now light in the Lord. We not only *have* light, we *are* light. This is because of the One who lives in us.

Light was made by God as His first creative act (Genesis 1:3), and originates from God Himself (1 John 1:5). Light is one of the most powerful properties in the universe, having the power to eliminate darkness. Just try it. Go into a dark room and try to get the darkness out. Use a broom, use a vacuum ... nothing will work. But turn on a small flashlight, and the job is done. Darkness is gone.

Our lives in Christ are to be lived as children of light. Instead of the fruitlessness and shame of dark deeds, we reflect the fruitfulness and confidence of deeds that please the Lord.

As light drives out darkness, so waking up ends spiritual slumber. Believers who have been toying with the deeds of darkness need to wake up! We are the light of the world, Jesus said. We need to wake up and let our light shine (Matthew 5:14-16).

1. What does it mean to live as light in the Lord? What are some characteristics of light which help you understand what this means?
2. List some of the deeds of darkness in one column, and the opposite deeds of light. Meditate on the contrasts between the two lists. Which list have you been living in?
3. Spend some time in prayer. Ask the Lord to make your life one that reflects Him. Determine—by the power of the Holy Spirit—to let your light shine for the benefit of others.

Week Five, Day 3

EPHESIANS 5:15-21

Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, {16} making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. {17} Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. {18} Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. {19} Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, {20} always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. {21} Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

In this very ‘pregnant’ passage the life of the wise Christian is described. The wise Christian:

- Makes the most of every opportunity (diligently looks for ways to serve and please the Lord)
- Understands the will of God (for others and for himself)
- Is filled with or controlled by the Holy Spirit (rather than by wine or other intoxicants)
- Is worshipful
- Is thankful (to God for everything)
- Is submissive to others because he fears Jesus Christ

If we look at the opposite position, the unwise person (or even Christian) is described this way:

- He neglects or overlooks opportunities to serve and please the Lord
- He does not understand the will of God
- He is controlled by outside influences or intoxicants
- Does not worship
- Is not thankful
- Is unsubmitive or uncooperative

1. Which of these two general categories characterizes your life today? Why or why not?
2. Read Galatians 5:16. Using that verse as the basis for your answer, which of the characteristics of the wise Christian is most important?
3. What does it mean to you to be ‘filled with the Holy Spirit’? Write out your answer and share it with someone else for feedback and edification.

Week Five, Day 4

EPHESIANS 5:22-24

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. {23} For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. {24} Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Somehow, submission has become a dirty word. It was not always the case, especially when we “gaze upon the face of God.”¹

Submission (and its true meaning) comes from the nature of God Himself. There is an eternal relationship that exists between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The Son submits to the Father, the Holy Spirit submits to and carries out the will of the Father and the Son, and the Father honors the Son. Each member of the Godhead loves the other. They are in complete unity. Submission is a very beautiful and wonderful reality within God Himself.²

It is the world which has distorted and misused the concept. But we must not allow the world to shape our thinking in any area of life, let alone with this important subject. Therefore, submission of a woman to a man is not only wonderful, it is right. Submission means to *fit into*. It means to *come under in one's rightful place*. It means to subordinate.³

It is also important that this passage is part of the larger context. According to the context, submission flows out of a Spirit-filled lifestyle. It is also multi-relational; that is, the husband submits to his wife as well (by loving her). Fathers submit to their children (by raising them in the nurture and instruction of the Lord). Servants submit to their masters, and masters submit to their servants (by not threatening them, but treating them equitably as unto the Lord).

Wives are to be submissive to their own husbands as the church submits to Christ. It is a highly relational submission, therefore. It involves interaction, understanding, sensitivity, cooperation, and obedience.

1. How have you thought of the word submission, particularly in the context of marriage?
2. How has your concept changed as a result of this study?
3. What is the ideal environment in which submission can thrive? What can husbands do to make their wives thrive in their roles? What can wives do to make their husbands thrive in theirs?

¹ Dr. Del Tackett, *The Truth Project*, Lesson 7. *Sociology: The Divine Imprint*.

² The Greek word is *hupotasso*. It's meaning is derived from Genesis 2:18 and from the Strong's Concordance Hebrew-Greek Dictionary.

³ See John 10:30, 20:21, 14:26; John 16:7; Matthew 28:19-20.

Week Five, Day 5

EPHESIANS 5:25-32

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her {26} to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, {27} and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. {28} In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. {29} After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— {30} for we are members of his body. {31} “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” {32} This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. {33} However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

The Bible actually teaches mutual submission within marriage. Both the husband and wife submit to each other ... but in different ways.

The way a husband submits to his wife is to love her as Christ loved the church, to love her as he loves his own body, and to love her as he loves himself. Therefore, a husband’s submission to his wife is through love. She is to receive love, attention, and affection from her man. She is to be *the one* for him ... and he is to make her feel desired and appreciated. She needs to know that she is important to him. The love of a husband sets the wife apart from all others. She is holy and clean by the cleansing of God’s word.

The husband-wife relationship pictures a great spiritual truth. It speaks of the relationship that exists between Jesus Christ and His church. As a husband loves his wife, it’s a reminder of the way Jesus Christ loves His bride, His church. As a wife respects and fits into her husband’s life and leadership, it serves to remind others of the way the church submits to Christ.

The Lord loves the man, so He gives him the woman. The Lord loves the woman, so He gives her the man. Each are vessels for the expression of Divine love to the other.

1. Define *submission* and what it looks like for the husband. How does this compare with examples of husbands that you have seen?
2. What is the truth that marriage represents, according to this passage? How does your relationship with Jesus as part of His church reflect this truth?
3. Which word is repeated more often than any other in today’s text? What does that tell you about how a marriage becomes a great one?

SUMMARY OF WEEK FIVE

1. List at least three valuable insights and timeless truths you've gained this week.
2. List any commitments and adjustments you are making as you are convicted by the Word of God.
3. Write out your prayer of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.

Week Six, Day 1

EPHESIANS 6:1-4

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. {2} "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise— {3} "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." {4} Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

A string of participles (verbal adjectives) stems from the command in Ephesians 5:18, "Be filled with the Spirit." The meaning is that being filled with the Spirit *includes* these subsequent actions:

"Being filled with the Spirit ... speaking to one another." "Being filled with the Spirit ... giving thanks always for all things." "Being filled with the Spirit ... submitting to one another in the fear of God."

So in which relationships is submission a part of the Spirit-filled life? The answer: wives to husbands, husbands to wives, children to parents, fathers to children, servants to masters, and masters to servants.

In today's passage, the Spirit-filled child will obey and honor his/her parents. The Spirit-filled father will not exasperate his children, but will bring them up in the ways of the Lord.

Our relationships make up our primary world. If they operate as God intended ... by His Spirit ... our lives are saturated with the wonderful fruits of love, joy, and peace.

1. How does being filled with the Holy Spirit affect the way you relate to your spouse (if married)? Or the way you relate with your friends?
2. Consider your relationship with your parents. Measure your interaction with them with the measurements of verses one and two. As an adult, can you think of any boundaries for your obedience to them? What does it mean to "honor" them?
3. In what ways can a father exasperate or provoke his children to anger? (You will want to be sure to forgive your own father for any offenses toward you.) What must a father do to avoid this problem, according to the text?

Week Six, Day 2

EPHESIANS 6:5-9

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. {6} Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. {7} Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, {8} because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. {9} And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

Continuing with the theme of Spirit-filled submission, we will stop here long enough to review previous thoughts:

Submission should not be a dirty word, since it flows out of God's own nature and the interaction within the Godhead. Submission is a reflection of God Himself.

Submission is directly connected to the Spirit-filled life. The Spirit-filled life in many ways is characterized and recognized by submission.

Submission should be the dominant aspect of our interpersonal relationships ... with our wives, husbands, parents, and children.

Christianity is radical, as is today's passage. The influence of Christianity was a vital factor in the elimination of slavery within the Roman Empire. Note that Paul didn't argue for abolition of slavery, for there was no political apparatus which would allow him to do so. Rather, Paul appealed to the behavior of Christians. If Christian servants and masters would only obey God's word, the salt and light of their lives would have its effect on the culture.

This text also has application concerning a Christian's work ethic. The believer must work as personal servants of Jesus. If all believers worked in this manner, it would likewise change the culture. Employers are also responsible to treat their employees with equity and dignity. In doing so, their witness will have great power as they use their influence for the glory of God.

1. Consider the phrases *sincerity of heart, like slaves of Christ, and doing God's will from the heart*. Do these phrases describe your work life as an employee? Cite areas in which you could improve.
2. Have you thought about future rewards from the Lord? Find at least one gospel passage that speaks to this issue. How does this help to motivate you?
3. How does this passage address the so-called division of the secular from the sacred?

Week Six, Day 3

EPHESIANS 6:10-13

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. {11} Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. {12} For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. {13} Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

The enemy of our souls will not sit still as we discover our position in Christ (Ephesians chapter 1-3) or as we live our Christian lives practically (Ephesians 4:1-6:9). He will oppose those who are a threat to his rule over men's lives.

Our own strength is not sufficient in this spiritual battle. We must be strong with the strength which comes from the Lord. Only the complete armor and protection of God can protect the believer from the diabolical tricks of the devil.

The opponents we face are an invisible host of organized ranks under the authority of Satan. We *struggle* against them (from the Greek word "to throw" as in a wrestling match).

Victory is assured for us—we *will* be able to stand—if we do one thing. We must put on the full armor of God and not omit a single piece. Doing that, we will stand our ground and hold our position. We'll continue in the realities of our position in Christ, and in our walks with Him, fulfilling His will for our lives.

1. What are some of the *devil's schemes* that he has used against you? How has God's strength enabled you to overcome them?
2. List a few ways that the enemy has sought to undermine your position in Christ. How should you answer those attempts?
3. Try to memorize the armor of God, piece by piece, in the order in which they are given. Try putting it on right now.

Week Six, Day 4

EPHESIANS 6:14-18

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, {15} and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. {16} In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. {17} Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. {18} And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

The first three pieces of the armor of God refer to blessings we have already received in our salvation. Therefore, to put on these pieces refers to our need to remind ourselves of their meaning.

We remind ourselves of truth (that we have received it in Christ, and the truth about the situation we're in); we remind ourselves of the righteousness we received when we believed in Jesus (see Romans 3:24-26, 2 Corinthians 5:21); we remind ourselves of the state of peace which now exists between God and us through the gospel (Romans 5:1).

The last three pieces of the armor refer to that which we are to take up in the present. We take up the shield of faith (we "believe" what we truly believe), we take the helmet of salvation (primarily our future salvation, which protects our minds—see 1 Thessalonians 5:8), and we take up the sword of the Spirit, which is God' spoken word into our minds.

We do all of this in prayer, as we're told in verse 18. Prayer is the means of putting each piece of the armor in its proper place.

All in all, the armor of God actually refers to a Person—namely, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Truth (John 14:6), He is our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6), He is our peace (Ephesians 2:14), He is our shield (Psalm 3:3), He is our salvation (1 Thessalonians 5:9, Revelation 19:1), and He is the word of God to us (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Therefore, putting on the whole armor of God is to avail ourselves of the Person and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of what He has done for us. He is our protection against the enemy of our souls. The devil cannot defeat Him, living in us.

1. Write down each piece of the armor of God, with a brief definition.
2. Why do you think it is important to put on the armor of God in the order in which it is written?
3. How does Ephesians 6:14-18 relate to the promise of James 4:7?

Week Six, Day 5

EPHESIANS 6:19-24

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, {20} for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. {21} Tychicus, the dear brother and faithful servant in the Lord, will tell you everything, so that you also may know how I am and what I am doing. {22} I am sending him to you for this very purpose, that you may know how we are, and that he may encourage you. {23} Peace to the brothers, and love with faith from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. {24} Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.

Paul greatly desired—and needed—the prayers of God’s people. His prayer requests were very telling... they speak of his heart. He didn’t ask things for himself, but for the benefit of others.

Here Paul asks for boldness to proclaim the gospel. In Colossians 4:3-4 he asks for opportunities to preach God’s word, as well as for the ability to present it clearly.

His concern for the church of Ephesus is apparent as he assures them concerning his present circumstances and sends encouragement by way of Tychicus, his faithful co-worker.

He closes the epistle with three easily overlooked blessings... the blessings of peace, love, and grace. Oh, how we need all three!

1. Contrast Paul’s prayer requests with your own. How are they different? How are they similar?
2. What changes would occur in our lives if we regularly asked the Lord for boldness and open doors, as Paul did?
3. Find someone that you can bless today with the blessings Paul gives in verses 23 and 24.

SUMMARY OF WEEK SIX

1. List at least three valuable insights and timeless truths you've gained this week.
2. List any commitments and adjustments you are making as you are convicted by the Word of God.
3. Write out your prayer of adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication.