

EPHESIANS: BECAUSE JESUS

DATE	TOPIC	TEXT
10-6	1. Paul in Ephesus	
10-13	2. The Mystery	Ephesians 2:11-3:13
10-20	3. One in Christ	Ephesians 2:11-22
10-27	4. By Grace Through Faith	Ephesians 2:1-10
11-3	5. The Heavenly Places	
11-10	6. In Christ	Ephesians 1:1-14
11-17	7. The Spirit in Ephesians	
11-24	8. Paul's Prayers	Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21
12-1	9. Unity in the Body	Ephesians 4:1-6
12-8	10. Old and New Self, Part 1	Ephesians 4:17-32
12-15	11. Old and New Self, Part 2	Ephesians 5:1-21
12-22	12. Transformed Relationships	Ephesians 5:22-6:9
12-29	13. Christians at War	Ephesians 6:10-23

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. There is more detail about Ephesus than nearly any other church in the New Testament. What can you glean about the history of the Ephesian church from the following Scriptures?
 - a. Acts 18:24-28
 - b. Acts 19:1-10
 - c. Acts 19:11-20
 - d. Acts 19:21-41
 - e. Acts 20:17-38
 - f. 1 Corinthians 15:32
 - g. 1 Corinthians 16:8; 2 Corinthians 1:8-11
 - h. 1 Timothy 1:3
 - i. Revelation 2:1-7
2. Despite all this context, little of the Ephesians' story appears within the letter. Several themes from Paul's parting words to the elders dominate the letter. Complete the following chart to compare Paul's farewell to the epistle.

Acts 20:17-38	Comparison	Ephesians
20:21		3:6
20:21		1:13
20:23		6:20
20:24		3:2
20:28		4:11ff
20:32		1:11-14
20:32		4:16

3. Paul gives some glimpses to his personal circumstances at the time of writing. What can you discern about Paul's life from these passages?
 - a. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20
 - b. 3:8
 - c. 3:13
 - d. 3:19
 - e. 6:21-22

2

THE MYSTERY (2:11-3:13)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After Paul's experience on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19), Jesus revealed Paul's personal mission to Ananias (9:15-16). How do Jesus' words compare with Paul's declarations about the mystery in Ephesians 3:1-13?

2. Paul's goal for this letter is to declare that mystery. To whom does he want to make this revelation known:
 - a. 3:4

 - b. 3:8-10 (cf. 1 Peter 1:12)

3. How does Paul describe the state of the Gentiles without the gospel?
 - a. 2:1-3

 - b. 2:11-12

 - c. 4:17-19

4. These descriptions of Gentiles are not flattering. Is Paul being racist? Explain your answer.

5. Contrast the previous state of the Gentiles with what has now been accomplished through Jesus (2:13-3:6). List the things that have been fully reversed.

3

ONE IN CHRIST (2:11-22)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The pronouns tell a story. Paul draws a distinction between “you” and “us.” To whom do these pronouns refer in the following texts?
 - a. 2:11
 - b. 3:1
 - c. 2:1
 - d. 1:12-13 (Romans 1:16)

2. God’s plan, Paul contends, is “to unite all things in [Jesus], things in heaven and things on earth” (1:10). What did Jesus do to accomplish this unity (2:13-18)?

3. Paul uses the imagery of a temple and a body to describe the unity that now exists in Christ. Use the chart below to show the similarities of those analogies.

Temple Ephesians 2:19-22	Similarity	Body Ephesians 4:11-16
2:20		4:15
2:20		4:11-12
2:19		4:16
2:21		4:16
2:21		4:16
2:21		4:16

4. Twice Paul mentions the end of “hostility” (2:14, 16). What specific causes of hostility should no longer exist because of what Christ has done?

4

BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH (2:1-10)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul offers a description of his audience before Jesus saying, “You were...” (2:1-3). Consider your life before Jesus. If you changed those two words to, “I was,” would these verses be accurate?
2. “But God” (2:4). These two words begin a beautiful declaration of the good news in Jesus. What in Paul’s description (2:4-7) makes you most grateful?
3. Paul argues that salvation is “not as a result of works” (2:8-9). What works is Paul discussing? (cf. Romans 3:27-31; Galatians 2:15-16)
4. “We are his workmanship, created in Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (2:10). Paul just argued that our salvation is not a result of works, but now he asserts God’s desire for Christians to walk in good works. Is Paul contradicting himself? Explain your answer.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul uses a unique phrase five times in the letter. Most translations render it, “the heavenly places.” According to the following verses, what is in the heavenly places?
 - a. 1:3
 - b. 1:20
 - c. 2:6
 - d. 3:10
 - e. 6:12
2. What are the “heavenly places”?
3. The Christian’s involvement in the heavenly places is described in the present, not the future. Which action by Christians in the heavenly places most surprises you?
4. What is your reaction to the discovery that your life and actions are impacting the spiritual realm?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Underline each use of the phrase “in Christ” or “in him” in this section (1:1-14).
2. Three blessings are described in Paul’s opening words (1:3). Rewrite this statement in your own words.
3. Much theological blood, sweat and tears have been shed over the words “chose” and “predestined” (1:4-5). Three options can explain to whom “us” refers. Which option seems most likely? Explain your answer.
 - a. Individual Christians
 - b. Those “In Christ”
 - c. Jews
4. Three times Paul declares the purpose of God’s blessings is “to the praise of his glory” (1:6, 12, 14). Complete the following sentence: If I started living to the praise of God’s glory, I would change...

7

THE SPIRIT IN EPHESIANS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul frequently discusses the Spirit in his letter to the Ephesians. Write a brief summary of what Paul says about the Spirit in each of the following verses:
 - a. 1:13
 - b. 1:14
 - c. 1:17
 - d. 2:18
 - e. 2:22
 - f. 3:5
 - g. 3:16
 - h. 4:3-4
 - i. 4:30
 - j. 5:18
 - k. 6:17
 - l. 6:18
 - m. Bonus: 2:2, 4:23
2. The Spirit is twice described as a seal (1:13; 4:30). Common to official documents of their day, seals were wax pressed with a signet. This served two functions: a uniquely designed signet proved the identification of the sender, and an intact seal showed the security of the contents. Which of these two functions does Paul intend when he describes the Spirit as a seal?
 - a. Identification
 - b. Security
3. Paul contends that the Spirit is a source of unity (2:18, 22; 4:3-4). Explain his logic. Why should the work of the Spirit create a unified church?
4. Paul connects the Spirit to the Wisdom and Word of God (1:17; 3:5; 5:18-19; 6:17). How does the inspired word help us in the following areas:
 - a. Embrace a Church with a Universal Mission (3:4-6)
 - b. Sing as a Church (5:18-19)
 - c. Combat Satan's Schemes (6:17)

8

PAUL'S PRAYERS (1:15-23; 3:14-21)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Paul's two prayers in the letter (1:15-23; 3:14-21). They are both prayers for wisdom. Write a short prayer that you can regularly use to ask God for wisdom.

2. What does Paul mean by the three things he hopes the Ephesians will know (1:18-19)?
 - a. The hope to which he has called you.

 - b. The riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

 - c. The immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe.

3. Outline the second prayer (3:14-21) by looking for the phrases that begin with "May."

4. Look for the three members of the Trinity in Paul's second prayer (3:14-21). What does Paul pray about each member of the Godhead?

5. Paul ends with praise "to the one who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think" (3:20-21). How would you pray differently if you believed this?

9

UNITY IN THE BODY (4:1-16)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Paul describes unity as something to “maintain,” (4:3) and something to “attain” (4:13). That makes it seem as if we have unity, but we don’t yet have it fully. How can we maintain and increase our unity as Christians?

2. List Paul’s seven “one” statements (4:4-6). What impression do you think Paul hoped this list would have on the Christians?

3. Unity does not equal uniformity. The triumphant Christ gives gifts (4:7-11), but they are not all the same. How do we keep diversity from becoming divisive?

4. The body imagery strengthens the unity theme (4:15-16). “Every joint” is important, and “each part” must work. How do you determine your role in the body, the local congregation?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. “You must no longer walk as the Gentiles do” (4:17). “Put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life” (4:22). In Christ, you are not who you were. Write an honest description of your life before Jesus. What attitudes and sins marked your life?

2. Use the following chart to contrast the old self and the new self.

Verse	Old Self	New Self
4:25		
4:26		
4:28		
4:29		
4:31-32		

3. The new self is a renewed self, “created after the likeness of God” (4:24). This phrase recalls God’s words at creation, saying, “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26-27). We are called to act like God. How has He exemplified the actions of the new self?
4. Paul encourages both something to “put off” (4:22) and something to “put on” (4:24). Consider the thief; he must not only stop stealing, but also do honest work and share with those in need. Why must we put on a corresponding new action?
5. What about you? For the sins that currently tempt you, what must you put off and what must you correspondingly put on?

11

OLD AND NEW SELF, PART 2 (5:1-21)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. While Paul does not continue to describe the change as old to new, or put off and put on, he does continue to contrast worldly practices with Christian virtues. Use the chart below to continue the contrasts.

Verse	Old Self	New Self
5:4	Filthiness Foolish Talk Crude Joking	Thanksgiving
5:6, 10	Wrath of God	Pleasing to God
5:8	Darkness	Light
5:9, 11	Unfruitful	Fruit
5:15	Unwise	Wise
5:18	Drunk with Wine	Filled with the Spirit

2. “Let no one deceive you with empty words” (5:6). What worldly attitudes about covetousness and sexual immorality might cause a Christian to soften to these vices?
3. Christians are described as a light in the darkness (5:7-14). The encouragement is not to practice the works of darkness, and to expose them (5:11). This challenges society’s ideal of tolerance. Still, it requires us to speak the truth in love (4:15). What are some right ways and wrong ways to expose sins?
4. Combatting the evil of the world, Paul exhorts the Christians to collective singing (5:18-20). What affect does singing have on the individual and the group?

12

TRANSFORMED RELATIONSHIP (5:22-6:9)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Jesus becomes the example for walking in love (5:2). Based on this verse, how would you define love?

2. The character of Christ is at the heart of each of the relationships. How does Jesus redefine each of the following roles?
 - a. Wives (5:22)

 - b. Husbands (5:25)

 - c. Children (6:1)

 - d. Fathers (6:4)

 - e. Bondservants (6:5)

 - f. Masters (6:9)

3. Based on what Paul says to husbands and wives, what can you glean about the purpose of your marriage?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. David was unafraid standing before Goliath. He shouted, “The Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hand” (1 Samuel 17:47). Paul asserts that Christians are also at war. He writes, “Put on the whole armor of God” (6:11). How can you have the courage of David as you enter the battle?
2. Paul makes clear, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood.” He describes our enemies as “spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (6:12). How does the nature of the enemy change the strategy of our warfare?
3. Complete the chart below to itemize the armor of God.

Verse	Image	Spiritual Weapon
6:14	Belt	
6:14	Breastplate	
6:15	Shoes	
6:16	Shield	
6:17	Helmet	
6:17	Sword	

4. If only it were as easy as fastening your belt or tying your shoes. What must a Christian realistically do to put on this armor and be ready for the war?
5. At last Paul encourages prayer, even requesting prayers for his boldness (6:18-20). Write a prayer that would prepare you and your fellow Christians for battle today.