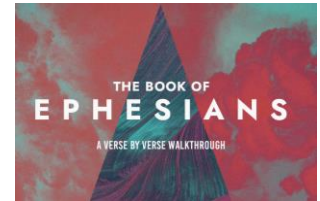


Title: Ephesians, A verse-by-verse Walkthrough, Pt 1: Introduction to the book
Speaker: Charles Stone
Passage: Ephesians 1.1-2
Big idea: If you put time and effort into this series, God will make you a better you.



<https://open.life.church/items/226412-small-group-video-mp4>

You just saw an overview of the book that we begin today, [Ephesians](#). It's going to be great growing opportunity for us corporately and for each of us individually.

This study comes at a good time because the world is so fractured and the body of Christ, the church, as well. Covid has exacerbated this fracture as varying views have caused conflict and disunity among believers.

You see, each of us deals with an inner tension caused by the fall and sin. It's like an internal civil war. We are torn between the desire to do good and the temptation to do evil. Raging around us is this battle between good and evil that we saw as we looked at the book of Revelation that we finished last week. This war includes the church and the evil one does everything he can to disunify believers in the Church.

The central thought of Ephesians is this: universal disunity is one of the curses of the fall and the only way real unity is possible in the world and among people is through the person of Jesus.

I've divided this message into three sections, each with a take-away for you.



Take away 1: Overview



The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Ephesians. He did not write it to deal with controversies, as he did with other books but to influence listeners and readers of it to think and act based on the truth in it. His goal was to stimulate thought and persuade to action, rather than argue critically. He wanted to inspire these believers and us to be our best selves and unity is crucial for that. He sought not just to win *minds* but to win *hearts* as well.

Some scholars consider it to be his most sublime book capturing some of the greatest biblical ideas, somewhat of the church's job description. It answers the question, *what does it mean to be in Christ, and what does this demand of us?*¹

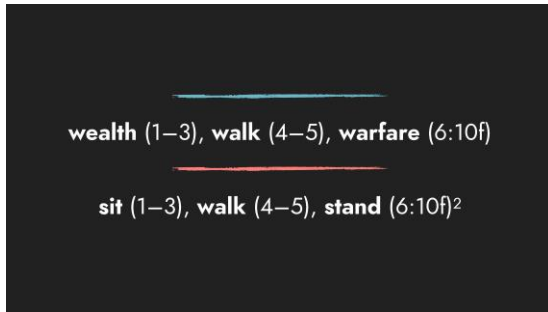
¹ Hughes, R. K. (1990). [Ephesians: the mystery of the body of Christ](#) (p. 15). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

A key theme is unity among the Church around the person and purpose of Christ.

He wrote it as a circular letter to be shared among all those churches in the Roman province of Asia of which Ephesus was the capital. Ephesus is one of the best-preserved ruins of that era and a big tourist attraction today.

Ephesians is similar to the book of Colossians.

Easy to remember divisions might be:



wealth (1–3)
walk (4–5)
warfare (6:10f)
Or,

sit (1–3)
walk (4–5)
stand (6:10f)

Ephesians is the equivalent to a sermon that you hear on a church today. In those days in the Greek world non-religious speakers would also deliver secular sermons about life and philosophy. Sermons weren't limited just to religion.

So, Paul was using a communication tool his audience was familiar with in their culture, which is an example of how we must maximize the tools available to us to get the gospel out. One of those ways is through the internet and our streaming our services.

What's next? Well, a few churches are experimenting with virtual reality services using virtual reality goggles. The broad term for this new medium is the metaverse.

Here's how a megachurch in the US describes this medium.

The metaverse is an online world where people can socialize, work, and play. When you attend church in the metaverse, you're able to experience it in a way unlike any other digital platform. All the people you see are present with you at the same time in the service. You talk to them avatar-to-avatar and hear their real voices. You can even see their facial expressions and body language. One-on-one digital conversations take on a whole new meaning in virtual reality.

I know that is like, way out there, but remember Paul set the example for us to use any means to share the Gospel, as long as you don't compromise biblical truth. Paul tapped into novel communication tools like a sermon the culture used. He also tapped into another novel communication tool at the time, used in the culture, discussion using a pagan meeting hall, rather than the temple. More about that later.

A bit more background of this book. We need to go to the book of Acts to learn about how this book came to be.

Acts 18 records that Paul visited Ephesus for a short time with two other missionaries and left them there. Another strong teacher, named Apollos, had already been there teaching. On a subsequent missionary trip, Paul went to Ephesus and probably spent 3 years there. Paul was very strategic in how and where he shared the gospel, as must we also.

He realized how important this city because as it was an important highway between east and west. If he could establish a strong Christian presence there, it could easily extend to the over 200 communities that surrounded the city. So, he went to Ephesus, and as he usually did when he entered a city, he went to the synagogue to lecture.

Acts 19:1 While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples....

⁸ Paul entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God. ⁹ But some of them became obstinate; they refused to believe and publicly maligned the Way.

The Way was the term used for followers of Jesus. Well, being strategic again, He used another different technique for the time to evangelize people. He brought the Gospel outside the confines of the church and used discussion, as I mentioned a moment ago.

So Paul left them. He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.

He began to use this magnificent secular hall called the **Lecture Hall of Tyrannus**. He powerfully preached the gospel there through discussion and teaching. It became one of the most successful evangelism strategies in Christian history because Acts says that all the Jews and Greeks heard the Gospel. Travelers who would come through would go into this hall and hear the Gospel, come to faith, and then take it back to their homes.



Well, the Gospel thoroughly changed these people, their behavior, and how they used their money. It wasn't just that, "I'll take just a little bit of Christianity, but not too much to cause me any problems or discomfort." No, their behavior dramatically changed. Here's what happened.



In Ephesus was the **Temple of Artemis**, a pagan temple dedicated to this Roman goddess. Here are the ruins of Artemis. Well, Acts 19 tells us that after these two years one particular silversmith named **Demetrius** who made little icon images of this Roman goddess, caused a lot of trouble.

In Paul's preaching he made it clear that these were idols and Christians don't have or worship idols. As a result, the silversmith business was hurting because people quite buying the idols. This silversmith Demetrius fostered hysteria among the other silversmiths in that city and they started a riot which cut short Paul's time in that city. It could have resulted in Paul's death were it not for the government officials who stepped in. So, that's some background about Paul's stay in Ephesus.

Paul was later imprisoned in Rome where he wrote Ephesians less than 100 years after Jesus' time on earth. He also writes Philemon, Philippians, and Colossians as well while in prison.

His imprisonment, like a house arrest, allowed for certain privileges, one of them being visitors. His friends and inquirers about the faith would visit him as well as travelers coming from other churches in other parts of the Roman Empire. So, his fellow evangelists could take these letters he had written and distribute them to these churches.

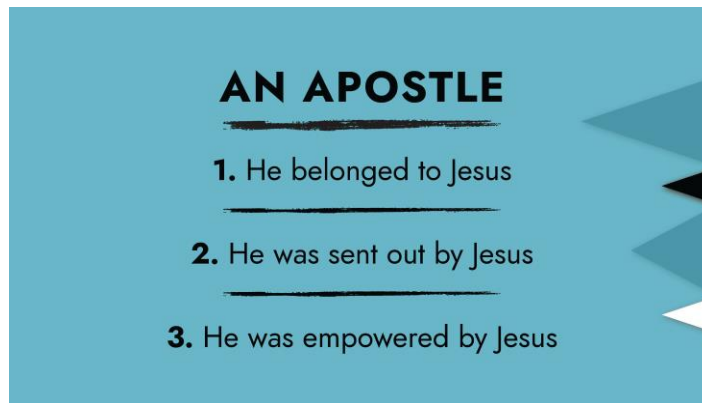
Some of Paul's letters were written to deal with some problem or theological error in a particular church. Some are more general as is Ephesians. Since Paul's mind and heart was not pre-occupied with some specific issue, he was able to reflect over God's grand scheme of things, the grand scope of his purpose and desire for unity in the church and oneness in Christ. At the time many philosophies espoused a kind of unity, but Paul made it clear that unity was only found in Jesus. Jesus is the coordinating principle in all of life.

So briefly look at the first two verses.

Eph. 1:1 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.

Paul had in mind three ideas when he said that he was **an apostle**

1. **He belonged to Jesus** and his life was not his own. He couldn't do what he wanted to do with what Jesus had called him to, just like us. We are not our own. To become a Christian means that we follow Jesus.
2. **He was sent out by Jesus.** It was God's will, not Paul's will.
 - a. The word apostle means to be sent out like an ambassador is sent out say from Canada to say the US to represent Canada's interests. Jesus commissioned Paul as His ambassador to win people to Himself, start churches, and build them up in both oral and written forms.
 - b. Only the book of John has more references than Ephesians to the will of God. Paul was making it clear that Christianity vastly differed from the idea of impersonal fate. The largely Gentile audience at the time, and many today, believe in "as fate would have it." Christianity has at its center a real, personal God who is involved in history and in our lives. Life is not luck or fate. I don't use the term, 'good luck' and I think a Christian probably should use a different term when we're trying to encourage someone. Maybe God speed is a good replacement. We are not at the mercy of fate or luck.
3. **He was empowered by Jesus.** Any power or authority he possessed was delegated power and authority, not intrinsic. He was not left on his own to carry out Jesus' task. Jesus empowered him, just as Jesus empowers us to carry out His will.
4. **He had seen Jesus**



Let's take another look at this verse.

Eph. 1:1 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.

The book is written to **saints**. He is not referring to these Christian servants in history that the Catholic Church has decreed to be an official saint. Rather, the word saint is the common word for Christians in the NT. A true saint evidences godly, saintly character and does godly and righteous acts. We have no innate holiness because such holiness comes from Christ's work in our lives.

He describes these saints as 'faithful' which means fidelity and trust.

These early believers were set apart in a pagan world to be different, not simply for difference's sake, but for the Gospel. If you claim the title of Christian, you, too are set apart in our culture to be different, as Jesus says salt and light in a dark world.

So, the ideas of *saints, faithful, and in Christ*, were all reasons to rejoice which we see when he wrote *grace and peace* to you. The Greek greeting in those days was 'rejoice' and the Hebrew greeting was 'peace.' He combines then replaces rejoice with a deeper word, *charis*, meaning grace.

He combines the Eastern and western world's greetings, modifies them a bit, and creates this Christian greeting, grace and peace. The order is important, grace comes first and as it fills our lives through the Holy Spirit, it brings peace, shalom, wholeness.

So, when a person comes to faith, receives God's grace, its effects bring peace between us and God and enables believers to live peaceable with each other.

Grace could be translated *charm*, like a charming person. There should be something lovely about a Christian's life that is attractive to others.

He even telegraphs the key theme of unity in Ephesians when he says 'our' father to emphasize unity of all believers, no matter their ethnic background. In this case it would be Jew and Greek as the two major ethnicities.

Remember our 3 takeaways.

Take away 2: Sticky Learning Key



We live in a world that increasingly forgets. Unfortunately, those who passively listen to a sermon or teaching forget most of what they heard. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, a German psychologist named Hermann Ebbinghaus researched memory. He created over 2,000 short nonsense words and experimented on himself by memorizing lists of them and then recording how long it took him to forget them. Out of his research rose what psychologists call the forgetting curve. Simply put, if we passively engage in learning, we quickly forget what we learn.

This visually describes the implications of the *forgetting curve*.

Most people will forget 70% of a talk within 24 hours and over 90% within a week

Now, I don't want to waste your time when you come. You don't want to waste your time. Seems to me we would want to maximize the learning we get from a sermon.



So how can we counter this tendency to forget? Of course, we can't remember everything, but don't you think remembering more than 5 or so % of a message would be valuable? I hope you are saying yes in your minds. Here is the key to countering forgetting: Active learning.



Specifically, you can practice active learning, in contrast to passive learning (just hearing me talk) with what I call the **Three Learning R's** I shared this diagram when we began Revelation.

The first one is **Read**.

Read means to read the upcoming Sunday's Bible passage each day. All learning is based on prior knowledge. The more familiar you are with the upcoming passage, the more you will retain what you hear so that in turn the Holy Spirit will be able to deepen more truths into your heart. This is basically engaging yourself with God's word.

To help your reading, we have a download on our web page on Ephesians something called the [RIPE Reading Guide](#) which is an ancient way to read and reflect over God's word.

Record by taking notes. The research tells us that when you take notes learning gets imbedded more deeply. Even doodling about what you hear enhances learning. When you do this, you are forcing yourself to consolidate what you are hearing which engages more of your brain which enhances retention. For those of you who don't take notes, why not try it during this series? As you come in you can get a copy of the sermon notes and take notes.

Review.

Reviewing is the number one way to retain what you hear from a sermon or message. You can do this as you review the notes you took, read the scriptures, review the discussion questions we provide, or review the memory verse of the month which is on your sermon notes.



To help you with this process we have some **Specific Steps** to get the most out of this series.

Our enews each week will now include...

- a short preview video clip of the upcoming message to whet your spiritual appetite
- the upcoming scriptures to read (although enews comes out on Thursday do you might be a bit behind.) But our weekly sermon notes also give you the upcoming passage.
- a question to think about

Please email us if you want to get on our enews.

Also, we have this little **business card** with a QR code that you can get as you come in or as you leave and scan it with your phone and it will take you right to the Ephesians page on our website with these resources I just mentioned, plus...

- videos of prior messages
- an electronic copy of today's notes for notetaking
- full transcripts of the sermons
- other recommended resources and downloads.



The code is the same each week, so you don't need a new card each week but feel free to take one each week if you want it. We have plenty. So, when you come in, you can get the card, scan the QR code with your phone and even download that Sunday's sermon notes if you want to take notes on your phone or ipad with some PDF markup app.

Finally, we also are selling some message notes binders: you can purchase one of these at the church on the cheap. We three hole punch the notes so you can keep them in the notebook plus there are a few more goodies in the notebook as well.

So, **Take away 2: Sticky Learning Key**

Take away 3: 5 big ideas



Paul wrote Ephesians to emphasize that God's purpose for humanity is unity in Christ evidenced in the corporate life of the Church and in the individual lives of its people as we live out a life of love and spiritual power.

These overall big ideas capture the major sub- themes of the book.

Big Idea 1:
True belief (doctrine) **will** lead to changed behaviour (duty).

Big Idea 2:
You can't separate the vertical from the horizontal.

Big Idea 3:
A right relationship with God **will** lead to right relationships with people.

Big Idea 4:
God's accomplishments determines our assignments.

Big Idea 5:
What Jesus has done

for us, in us and between us creates newness:		new unity new love new behaviour new power
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A final Question. *In the next 13 weeks, what will you do to maximize the impact of the truth of Ephesians?*

I believe that if you take the initiative and put in effort God will change you, mold you, and make you into a better version of you.