



EPHESIANS

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Eric C. Redmond



J. I. Packer

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

Dane C. Ortlund

SERIES EDITOR

“This series is a tremendous resource for those wanting to study and teach the Bible with an understanding of how the gospel is woven throughout Scripture. Here are gospel-minded pastors and scholars doing gospel business from all the Scriptures. This is a biblical and theological feast preparing God’s people to apply the entire Bible to all of life with heart and mind wholly committed to Christ’s priorities.”

BRYAN CHAPPELL, President Emeritus, Covenant Theological Seminary; Senior Pastor, Grace Presbyterian Church, Peoria, Illinois

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“*Knowing the Bible* brings together a gifted team of Bible teachers to produce a high-quality series of study guides. The coordinated focus of these materials is unique: biblical content, provocative questions, systematic theology, practical application, and the gospel story of God’s grace presented all the way through Scripture.”

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“What a gift to earnest, Bible-loving, Bible-searching believers! The organization and structure of the Bible study format presented through the *Knowing the Bible* series is so well conceived. Students of the Word are led to understand the content of passages through perceptive, guided questions, and they are given rich insights and application all along the way in the brief but illuminating sections that conclude each study. What potential growth in depth and breadth of understanding these studies offer! One can only pray that vast numbers of believers will discover more of God and the beauty of his Word through these rich studies.”

BRUCE A. WARE, Professor of Christian Theology, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

KNOWING THE BIBLE

J. I. Packer, Theological Editor
Dane C. Ortlund, Series Editor
Lane T. Dennis, Executive Editor

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Genesis	Ecclesiastes	John	Colossians/
Exodus	Isaiah	Acts	Philemon
Leviticus	Jeremiah	Romans	Hebrews
Joshua	Daniel	1 Corinthians	James
Ruth, Esther	Hosea	2 Corinthians	Revelation
Ezra, Nehemiah	Matthew	Galatians	
Psalms	Mark	Ephesians	
Proverbs	Luke	Philippians	

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J. I. PACKER is Board of Governors' Professor of Theology at Regent College (Vancouver, BC). Dr. Packer earned his DPhil at the University of Oxford. He is known and loved worldwide as the author of the best-selling book *Knowing God*, as well as many other titles on theology and the Christian life. He serves as the General Editor of the ESV Bible and as the Theological Editor for the *ESV Study Bible*.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS



Series Preface: J. I. Packer and Lane T. Dennis	6
Week 1: Overview: The Church in God's Plan	7
Week 2: Believers' Spiritual Blessings (1:1–14)	11
Week 3: Prayer for Revelation (1:15–23)	17
Week 4: The Dead Alive by Grace (2:1–10)	25
Week 5: One New Man (2:11–22)	33
Week 6: An Interlude on the Mystery of Gentile Inclusion (3:1–13)	41
Week 7: Prayer for Love (3:14–21)	49
Week 8: Christian Maturity (4:1–16)	57
Week 9: Walking in a New Life (4:17–32)	65
Week 10: Walking in Love (5:1–14)	73
Week 11: Walking in the Spirit (5:15–6:9)	81
Week 12: Standing Firm in the Real War (6:10–24)	89

S E R I E S P R E F A C E

KNOWING THE BIBLE, as the series title indicates, was created to help readers know and understand the meaning, the message, and the God of the Bible. Each volume in the series consists of 12 units that progressively take the reader through a clear, concise study of that book of the Bible. In this way, any given volume can fruitfully be used in a 12-week format either in group study, such as in a church-based context, or in individual study. Of course, these 12 studies could be completed in fewer or more than 12 weeks, as convenient, depending on the context in which they are used.

Each study unit gives an overview of the text at hand before digging into it with a series of questions for reflection or discussion. The unit then concludes by highlighting the gospel of grace in each passage (“Gospel Glimpses”), identifying whole-Bible themes that occur in the passage (“Whole-Bible Connections”), and pinpointing Christian doctrines that are affirmed in the passage (“Theological Soundings”).

The final component to each unit is a section for reflecting on personal and practical implications from the passage at hand. The layout provides space for recording responses to the questions proposed, and we think readers need to do this to get the full benefit of the exercise. The series also includes definitions of key words. These definitions are indicated by a note number in the text and are found at the end of each chapter.

Lastly, for help in understanding the Bible in this deeper way, we would urge the reader to use the ESV Bible and the *ESV Study Bible*, which are available online at www.esvbible.org. The *Knowing the Bible* series is also available online. Additional 12-week studies covering each book of the Bible will be added as they become available.

May the Lord greatly bless your study as you seek to know him through knowing his Word.

J. I. Packer
Lane T. Dennis

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW: THE CHURCH IN GOD'S PLAN



Getting Acquainted

The audience of Ephesians was well-known to the apostle Paul (Acts 19). For two years the disciples in Ephesus observed Paul daily reasoning about the kingdom of God and teaching the Scriptures (Acts 19:8–10). This ministry resulted in a gospel witness spreading throughout the Roman province of Asia. The message of Christ reached those practicing dark arts and worshipping Artemis in this great ancient city, where demonic¹ influence was strong.

Paul explains these believers' formation into a church as the work of Christ alone. The decree of God always included the formation of the beautiful bride of Christ—the body of Christ, of which Christ is the head.

Ephesians concerns the mystery of the church in the plan of God. The letter calls believers to walk in love, holiness, and wisdom within their local church congregation and in the world. Paul reveals that this mystery concerns earthly, present matters, as well as matters in the invisible realm, both in the present world and in the world to come. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 2257–2261; available online at www.esvbible.org.)

Placing It in the Larger Story

The Lord revealed the inclusion of Gentiles in his plan of salvation when he called Abram and made promises to bless all nations through him (Gen. 12:1–3). From the beginnings of the Lord's dealings with Israel, Gentiles came to the God of Israel—as when Rahab and Ruth left their gods to follow him.

Even though Israel as a whole rejected their Messiah,² Jesus told his initial Jewish followers that he would build the church and that they would have a significant role in its growth (Matt. 16:18). In doing so, he indicated that something new had dawned in the messianic age—an assembly, “my church,” distinguished from greater Israel. The book of Acts shows that soon after the church's formation, Gentiles joined the assembly without converting to Judaism or following the Mosaic law. The inclusion of the Gentiles into the largely Jewish church raised strong feelings among both believing and unbelieving Jews (Acts 11:1–3; 21:20–25).

Ephesians explains the theology of the inclusion of those formerly outside the covenant with Israel. Believing Jews and Gentiles in Ephesus are part of a larger design. The church will transform the marriages, work, parenting, and morality of her members. She will become the true temple of God.

Key Verse

“We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

Date and Historical Background

Paul wrote Ephesians during his first imprisonment (3:1; 4:1; 6:20). He is therefore writing in AD 62, about five years after his final meeting with the elders of this assembly (Acts 20:17–35). Christianity is still in its infancy, being only a thirty-year-old movement. Unlike other New Testament letters, one does not discern any error, conflict, or misunderstanding that prompts the writing of this letter. Paul writes simply to advance Christian insight and maturity.

Outline

- I. Believers' Spiritual Blessings in Christ in God's Plan (1:1–14)
- II. Prayer for Revelation about the Blessings in Christ the Head (1:15–23)
- III. Mercy Making the Dead Alive by Grace (2:1–10)

- IV. Breaking a Wall to Make One New Man (2:11–22)
- V. Interlude on the Stewardship of the Mystery of Gentile Inclusion (3:1–13)
- VI. Prayer for Love to Shape the Church, to the Glory of Christ (3:14–21)
- VII. Christian Maturity as Trinitarian Unity within Gifted Diversity (4:1–16)
- VIII. Call to Live (Walk in) a New Life (4:17–32)
- IX. Walking in Love (5:1–14)
- X. Walking in the Spirit in Marriage, Parenting, and Work (5:15–6:9)
- XI. Standing Firm in the Real War (6:10–20)
- XII. Final Greetings (6:21–24)

As You Get Started

Read the book of Ephesians as if it were a letter from the apostle Paul written to your own church. What stands out as unique or significant as you read? Write down your initial thoughts.

Two prayers and one request for prayer in Ephesians each revolves around revelation and mystery (1:15–22; 3:14–21; 6:18–20). What might this tell you about Paul's hope for believers who read Ephesians?

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW: THE CHURCH IN GOD'S PLAN

In reading Ephesians, what words and ideas are repeated? How might you group some of these words and ideas together under larger headings that point to Paul's main idea in Ephesians?

As You Finish This Unit . . .

Using the prayer of Ephesians 1:17–23, take a few minutes to ask the Lord to reveal to you and your church more and more of his will for his glory as you begin this study of Ephesians.

Definitions

¹ **Demon** – An evil spirit that can inhabit a human being and influence him or her to carry out its will. Demons are fallen angels, created by God and always limited by him. Jesus and his followers cast out many demons, demonstrating Jesus' superiority over them. All demons will one day be destroyed along with Satan (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

² **Messiah** – Transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning "anointed one," the equivalent of the Greek word *Christ*. Originally applied to a person specially designated for a particular serving role, such as king or priest. Jesus himself affirmed that he was the Messiah sent from God (Matt. 16:16–17).



THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS is a source of great encouragement to the church, proclaiming the mystery of the gospel and the supremacy of Jesus as Lord over all powers. Made alive in Christ, believers have received a bountiful inheritance from God.

In this accessible study, pastor Eric C. Redmond opens our eyes to Paul's teaching about God's astonishing grace—grace that enables us to walk in love, holiness, and wisdom as we participate in a heavenly war being waged in the arena of our regular routines.

ABOUT THE *KNOWING THE BIBLE* SERIES

Over the course of 12 weeks, these studies explore books of the Bible and:

- Ask thoughtful questions to spur discussion
- Show how each passage unveils the gospel
- Tie the text in with the whole story of Scripture
- Illuminate the doctrines taught in each passage
- Invite you to discover practical implications
- Help you better understand and apply God's Word

“Knowing the Bible brings together a gifted team of Bible teachers to produce a high-quality series of study guides.”

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“Here are carefully wrought studies that will ignite the mind and the heart.”

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GRAEME L. GOLDSWORTHY,
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BIBLE STUDY

