

Ephesians 1

In a time when so many people struggle with identity, Ephesians is the perfect book of the Bible to study. Paul makes it clear: Our identity is found in the fact that we are children of God, adopted into his family, and we're to live as children of light in a dark world.

Ephesians reminds believers of all Christ has done to reconcile us to himself and what that means for how we should live. It provides practical instructions for relationships that honor God.

The greatest adventure in life is not an exotic safari, a booming business success, or a love relationship with that perfect someone. Rather, it's discovering the purpose for your life. This letter answers the question men and women have asked throughout all time: Why am I here? The answer may startle you, considering the standard talk-show ideas of our age. It has to do with eternity, making peace with God, and understanding the believer's new identity in Christ. Interested? Read on. The adventure is only beginning.

Who wrote this book?

The apostle Paul.

When was it written?

Sometime during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, around ^{ad} 60.

To whom was it written and why?

It was written to believers in Ephesus (a city in modern-day Turkey) to encourage them to think of themselves in a whole new way. Paul wanted them to think of themselves not as people who had once been involved in idol worship, illicit sex, and foolish philosophies, but as people *in* Christ—people with a radically new identity (2:12–13).

What to look for in Ephesians:

In this book, you'll learn about God's intentions for his people, and you'll gain insight into the nature of the church. Notice the various word pictures describing the church and how Paul stressed the unity of all believers. The last half of the book offers practical ways to live in unity with God and others.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Ephesians 1:1–14

- What are the spiritual blessings in Christ in verse 3?
- What kinds of blessings have you received? Where did those blessings come from?
- What does it mean that we have been adopted through Jesus Christ? What does it mean to be adopted, and how did Jesus make this possible?
- Paul writes that God’s grace has been “lavished on us.” When would you use the word *lavished* normally? What feelings does this truth evoke?
- The Holy Spirit is referred to as a seal and a deposit. What does that mean?
- What feelings does this section evoke? How does it help you understand God differently?

Live It Out

- Keep a blessing notebook, jotting down the blessings you receive each day. Praise God for the ways he is blessing you.
- Because God has lavished his grace on us, consider someone in your life to whom you can give some extra grace. Determine several ways you can show extra grace to him or her.
- In light of your adoption into God’s family, consider ways that you can live that are true to that identity. What things need to go? What new things need to be added?

Thanksgiving and Prayer

Ephesians 1:15–23

- What does it look like to not stop giving thanks? How is that possible?
- Paul writes, “For this reason . . . I have not stopped giving thanks for you.” What is that reason?
- Verse 17 mentions all three persons of the Trinity. What does it say about each?
- What does Paul pray for the Ephesians?
- If we are called to hope, what might need to change in your attitudes, thoughts, or actions?
- What does it look like to be a person of hope?
- The incomparably great power that is available to those who believe is the same power that God exerted when he raised Christ from the dead. What are your thoughts when you hear this?
- How often do you pray for other believers? What kinds of things do you pray for them?
- If Christ is the head of the church, why are there so many problems in churches today? How can we change this?
- When Paul writes this letter, it is addressed to the church. What effect does fear, or lack of faith have on a church body?

Live It Out

- Identify several people in your life for whom you are grateful. Thank God for them. Then send them a note or card to say thanks.
- Pray the prayer in verses 17–21 for a fellow believer. Replace “you” and “your” with the person’s name.
- Pray the things in verses 17–21 for yourself. Pray that God will give you wisdom, enlighten you, and allow you to know the hope to which he has called us.
- We have been called to hope. Create a plan for the next time you feel cynical, sad, or hopeless. What will you do to remind yourself of the hope we’ve been called to? How will you turn the situation around?
- Consider: What has God asked you to do that you have been too afraid to do? How might you lean into the incomparably great power available to us?