

EPHESIANS

GROUP GUIDE: WEEK 1

CONVERSATION STARTER

What's one mystery or question you wish you knew the answer to or the truth behind?

THE REASON FOR EPHESIANS

We live in a complicated world, with lots of people and ideas seeking to influence our every thought and decision. The book of Ephesians is a masterclass on what it means to live a good life in the midst of these various influences.

In Ephesians 3, Paul describes his reason for writing this famous letter in his own words. He says, "When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ," (3:4). In other words, Paul wants to share about the mystery of faith as revealed in Jesus. He wants to help us understand how our faith in Christ has the power to influence every aspect of our life.

To do this, Paul will write Ephesians in two main sections. Chapters 1-3 focus on the story of the Gospel, pulling the veil back on the mystery of God and helping us understand how all of history is fulfilled in Jesus. Then, in chapters 4-6, Paul shares how we're called to live in light of this reality in very practical ways.

Biblical Scholar and Bible Project Co-Founder Tim Mackie says it like this, "Ephesians is an essay summarizing the most apocalyptic event in history—Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and the gift of the Spirit to bring new creation right here in the present world."

This is the invitation to you as we begin Ephesians, both as individuals and as a community. In 2024, as we follow Jesus and live by the power of the Spirit, God wants to do new things in your life and through your life. *Amen, God. Let it be so!*

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What stuck out to you about the reading from this week? Was there a verse or idea that was particularly meaningful or challenging for you?
2. The purpose of Paul's writing Ephesians is for us to contemplate the mystery of God. There's an inherent tension between our desire for clarity and making room for uncertainty. Which do you feel more comfortable with—certainty or mystery? Which has been a bigger part of your faith journey?
3. Paul is writing to a community of believers, rather than one individual. Following Jesus is not meant to be a solo endeavor. As we embark on this journey, how can your group support one another and be a source of encouragement as we go?
4. Romans 8:6 says, "For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace." In other words, who or what is influencing you? What kinds of things are you setting your mind on regularly?
5. Prayer is a major part of this opening chapter. Spend a few moments praying with and for one another. Start by sharing at least one thing your group can pray for you. Then, either take turns praying for one another or elect one person to pray for your entire group—whatever you're most comfortable with.

WEEKLY PRACTICE

A key theme from Ephesians chapter 1 is blessing. Israel was uniquely blessed by God to become a great and mighty nation so that through the way they lived the rest of the world would experience God's goodness and be blessed as well. Similarly, we are blessed, but not just for our benefit. We are blessed, so we can be a blessing. This is not just a nice idea, it's a way of life. How we live ought to bring blessing and peace to those around us. This is what we were created for! This week, think of a way you can be a blessing to someone around you. Here are a few ideas, but don't be afraid to get creative and come up with a few of your own!

- Send an encouraging note or text to a friend or family member.
- Offer to pray with someone face-to-face.
- Check up on someone you know who is going through something challenging.
- Grab coffee for a coworker on your way to work.
- Pay for a stranger's meal in the drive-through line.
- Do something special for a spouse or significant other they aren't expecting.
- Reach out to someone who you haven't talked to in a long time, maybe it's someone you need to reconcile with.
- Volunteer your time to help someone else in need.