

STUDY GUIDE 5

Ephesians 2:1-10

LIFE OUT OF DEATH--that's what this passage in Ephesians talks to us about. We will see the desperate state that all of mankind is in when separated from God. Then we will see God come in, full of love, and transform lives--literally from death to life.

Read Ephesians 2:1-10 three times, reading it out loud at least one time.

— — —.

Memorize Ephesians 2:8-9. Write these verses out here.

Read verses 1-3.

1. What does verse 1 tell us about the believers in Ephesus? (This describes each of us, too.)

What do you think it means to be "dead in your trespasses and sins?"
(See Romans 6:20-23.)

2. From verses 2-3, what did we all, including the Ephesians, used to do?

In verses 1-2, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) says, "And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you formerly **walked** according to the course of this world..." Why do you think Paul used the word "walked" here?

What are some ways we might be prone to walk according to the "course of this world?" (See also 1 John 2:15-17.)

3. Verses 2-3 tell us that before we knew God, we all walked according to the "prince of the power of the air," which is another name for the

devil, whose goal is our destruction. Knowing that, how should we respond to the sin and struggles of non-Christians?

4. In addition to the above two influences (the world and the devil), we also must struggle against our own flesh. John Stott defines flesh (NIV-"sinful nature") "Not as the living fabric which covers our bony skeleton but our fallen, self-centered human nature...[which] includes the wrong desires of the mind as well as of the body...Wherever 'self' rears its ugly head against God or man, there is 'the flesh'." Notice that this includes wrong desires of the mind as well as the body. In what ways today, are we tempted to indulge the desires of the flesh and of the mind?

Read verse 4-7.

Verses 1-3 focused on what the Ephesians (and we) are like, and what we do (our lifestyle) when we don't know God. Now these verses change the focus from us to God, and to all that God has done for us.

5. Look carefully at verse 4. How is God described in this verse?

When we think of being rich, or of having something richly, what comes to mind?

Why is it so essential for all of us to remember that God is rich in mercy?

6. The NASB puts verse 4 in this way, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us." From this verse, what two things do we learn about God's love?

GOD LOVES YOU! Take 2 minutes now to stop and think about that fact.

How does it make you feel that God has great love for you? (Be honest here. Some of you may not feel loved, even though you are. It's a fact. God cannot lie.)

7. List all the things in verses 4-7 that God has done for us.

What does God want to show us? (verse 7) What does God want to show you?

Read verses 8-10.

8. What have we been saved by? Through what?

Below is a neat acronym and definition of Grace:

God's Riches At Christ's Expense = GRACE

Faith is a word we hear often. Look up "faith" in a dictionary. What did you find?

9. What does the end of verse 8 teach us about salvation, grace, and faith?

What does not save us? (verse 9)

10. Many times, we are tempted to "work for God" so that He will be pleased with us, or try to "work our way to Heaven." What are some ways that we sometimes struggle in this area, and why do we attempt to do this?

11. As Christians, do we have any reason to boast? Why or why not?

In your own words, write out your understanding of what it means to be saved by grace, through faith, not as a result of works. What is God's part, what is our part?

12. Verse 10 tells us that we were created for (or to do) good works. What do we learn about these good works, and why are we to do them?

How do the good works in verse 10 relate to the works of verse 9?

It's a very good thing to take a good hard look at our sin and guilt. We all need to do that. But thankfully, we can move beyond that. We can move on to God's mercy, love, and forgiveness, and hence to salvation. At the beginning of this passage, we were walking in trespasses and sins; now we can walk increasingly in good works, thanks to God and His grace.

13. Write out a short prayer, thanking God for His grace, love, and salvation He has given to you. NOTE: If you have never trusted your life into the hands of God's saving grace, take a moment now to write a short note/prayer to God, telling Him that you accept Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as forgiveness for your sins, and ask God to come into your life, to lead and direct you. He will. He loves you.

Thoughts in the Margins – Study Guide 5

- I. Dr. Ray Pritchard, in an October 3, 1999 sermon¹, highlights that the gospel is contained in Ephesians 2:1-9 in just six words across three verses:

You were... But God... Through faith
Ephesians 2:1 Ephesians 2:4 Ephesians 2:8
[Grace needed.] [Grace given.] [Grace received.]

- II. What is the nuance between *trespasses* and *sins* in Ephesians 2:1? John Stott observes in **The Message of Ephesians**:

These two words [*transgressions* and *sins*] seem to have been carefully chosen to give a comprehensive summary of human evil. A ‘transgression’ (*paraptōma*) is a false step, involving either the crossing of a known boundary or a deviation from the right path. A ‘sin’ (*hamartia*) however, means rather a missing of the mark, a falling short of a standard. Together the two words cover the positive and the negative, or active and passive, aspects of human wrong doing – that is to say, our sins of commission and omission. Before God we are both rebels and failures.

- III. Tricky question: In Ephesians 2:8, what is the gift? God’s grace? Salvation? Our faith? Including verse 9 may help reveal Paul’s intent. (It is tricky because all three are mentioned elsewhere in the Bible as being gifts of God.). James M. Boice notes in **Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary**:

In speaking on this text I have sometimes referred to the previous phrase in verse 8 (“and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God”) as referring to faith, teaching that even faith is God’s gift. This is probably not what Paul had in mind, because “faith” (*pistis*) is

feminine, and “this” (*touto*) is neuter. The statements in verse 8 probably refer to the whole of the previous sentence, teaching that the salvation which is ours through faith is not of ourselves but rather is God’s gift.

✞ Mary Ann Porter

¹ <https://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/amazing-grace-2/>

Additional Scripture for Study Guide 5

□ Romans 6:20-23

²⁰ For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. ²¹ Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. ²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

□ 1 John 2:15-17

¹⁵ Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. ¹⁷ The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.



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STUDY GUIDE 6

Ephesians 2:11-22

1. Think about a time when you were excluded. How did it feel to be excluded?

In the first ten verses of chapter two we learned that we were "dead in our trespasses and sins", **BUT GOD**, Who is rich in mercy and grace, made us alive with Christ Jesus. In this lesson there is more good news. We will discover that though we were once separated and excluded from the household of God, **NOW IN CHRIST** we are included and unified with God's people.

As you begin your study pray, "Asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you wisdom to see clearly and really understand who Christ is and all that He has done for you." (Ephesians 1:17, *The Living Bible*)

Review the memory verses - Ephesians 1:3, 2:8-9.

Read the entire second chapter of Ephesians. Slowly and thoughtfully reread Ephesians 2:11-22 several more times.

2. Twice Paul exhorts his readers to *remember*. What does Paul want the Gentile believers to remember about the time they were without Christ?

3.

a. What was the purpose of circumcision in the Old Testament?
(Genesis 17:1-14 may be helpful.)

b. What do you learn from each of the following passages about "the true circumcision"?

Romans 2:28-29

Galatians 3:26-29

DIGGING DEEPER: Prejudice is not new. Using either a Bible Encyclopedia or Dictionary, what additional information can you find about the prejudice that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles at the time Ephesians was written?

NOTE: The temple consisted of five courts: the court of Gentiles, the court of women, the court of Israelites, the court of priests, and finally the Holy of Holies. The court of the Gentiles was separated from the rest of the temple by a wall on which was inscribed, "No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and

enclosure. Any one who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death." Talk about a vivid symbol of the separation that existed between the Jew and the Gentile!

4. The problem of walls is by no means confined to the New Testament! What are some of the barriers that can divide Christians today?

5. What do you think Paul means when he writes that Christ abolished or nullified "the law with its commandments and regulations"?

6. Compare Ephesians 2:15-16, Ephesians 1:9-10 and Revelation 7:9-10.

9. How does the gospel (the good news about Jesus Christ) break down religious and social barriers?

10.

a. In verses 19-22 what word picture is used to describe the growth of God's reconciled and unified people?

b. Christians are being built "on the foundations of the apostles and prophets". Explain what that means. (Verse 20)

c. What is Christ's place in the foundation?

William Barclay wrote wisely of the Church when he penned the following. "The Church will realize her unity only when she realizes that she does not exist to propagate the point of view of any body of

men, but to provide a home where the Spirit of Christ can dwell and where all men who love Christ can meet in that Spirit."

Reread Ephesians 2:11-22 one more time.

11. When we are tempted to build walls, what should we remember?

12. Our prayer as we began this lesson was that we would be given the wisdom to see clearly and really understand who Christ is and all that He has done for us.

a. From this passage what have you learned about Christ?

b. According to Ephesians 2:11-22, what has Christ done **for you** if you by faith have accepted Him as your Lord and Savior? Please put your answer in your own words.

"The problem of fences has grown to be one of the most acute that the world must face. Modern progress has made the world a neighborhood: God has given us the task of making it a brotherhood. In these days of dividing walls of race and class and creed we must shake the earth anew with the message of the **all-inclusive Christ**, in whom there is neither slave nor free, Jew nor Gentile, male nor female but all are one." (Sir Philip Gibbs)

HE IS OUR PEACE

by Kandela Goves

*He is our peace,
Who has broken down every wall,
He is our peace. He is our peace. He is our peace,
Who has broken down every wall.*

*Cast all your cares on Him
For He cares for you.
He is our peace. He is our peace.*

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✻ Rosetta Lane

Thoughts in the Margins – Study Guide 6

- I. It can be very difficult to imagine how radical of an idea it was that Jews and Gentiles could be reconciled to God and united as one body in Christ. Beginning in approximately 1400 BC, Jews have had ceremonial cleanliness laws that separated them as a people unto God. The book of Leviticus contains *chapters* about what is clean and unclean.

In Acts 10:28, when the Apostle Peter arrived at [Gentile] Cornelius' home, Peter said, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and *yet* God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.

But God. God did not raise saved Gentiles up to some kind of Jewish status. He *created* something new and greater than that; both believing Jews and believing Gentiles were now in Christ. When Paul writes in Ephesians 2:15 that Christ *makes* the two into one new man, the word *makes* is Strong's 2936, *ktizo*. In Scripture, *ktizo* is only used to denote something that God creates.

Galatians 2:28 also hits home the point:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

- II. Now consider the imagery of the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). In ancient building practices, the cornerstone was the basis for the rest of the new structure. It was placed at a corner, where two orthogonal walls were to meet. The cornerstone was a key element of properly distributing the building's weight and setting the plumbness of every wall. A faulty or misplaced cornerstone resulted in structural collapse.

Isaiah 28:16-17 reads,

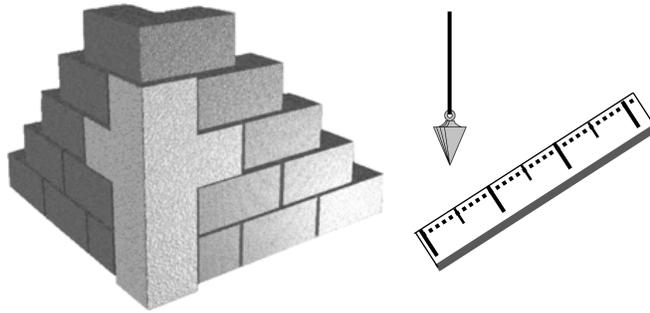
¹⁶ Therefore thus says the Lord GOD,

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,
A costly cornerstone *for* the foundation, firmly placed.
He who believes *in it* will not be disturbed.

¹⁷ "I will make justice the measuring line
And righteousness the level;

Then hail will sweep away the refuge of lies
And the waters will overflow the secret place.

While a cornerstone was usually a carefully shaped rectangular prism, I like to picture Jesus as the cornerstone with the following image:



✎ Mary Ann Porter

Additional Scripture for Study Guide 6

□ Genesis 17:1-14

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him,

“I am God Almighty;
Walk before Me, and be blameless.

² “I will establish My covenant between Me and you,
And I will multiply you exceedingly.”

³ Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,

⁴ “As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you,
And you will be the father of a multitude of

nations.

⁵ “No longer shall your name be called Abram,
But your name shall be Abraham;
For I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.

⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. ⁷ I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. ⁸ I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.”

⁹ God said further to Abraham, “Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. ¹⁰ This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. ¹¹ And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. ¹² And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a *servant* who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. ¹³ A *servant* who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting

covenant. ¹⁴ But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.”

□ **Romans 2:28-29**

²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

□ **Galatians 3:26-29**

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

□ **Revelation 7:9-10**

⁹ After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and *all* tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches *were* in their hands; ¹⁰ and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”

□ **2 Corinthians 5:18**

¹⁸Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation,



6. To highlight the before and after, list what the passage says you were before salvation and what you are now.

Before Christ	After Christ

7. Starting in Ephesians 2:11, Paul calls on his readers to remember their situation before their salvation and then consider their new standing. What is to be gained by remembering your life before Christ versus after Christ? (Why does Paul instruct us this way?) Take some time and the space below and/or on the next page to do your own reflection on your life before and then after you were saved.

Thoughts in the Margins – Study Guide 7

- I. When Paul writes in Ephesians 2:20, that believers have been *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets*, to what prophets could he be referring? (Why are prophets mentioned second?) Acts 11:19-30 and 13:1-3 may add insight, as well as looking ahead to Ephesians 4:11-13.

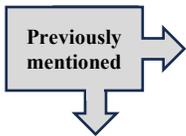
Most expositors of the Word hold that the context of Ephesians 2:20 indicates that Paul is referring to “New Testament” prophets. Keep in mind that the collection of the first century writings that became our New Testament were not canonized until the Council of Hippo in 393AD. Paul refers to the apostles and prophets as the *foundation* of the holy temple in Christ. It is clear that Paul has certain individuals in mind; the cornerstone was placed first and

then the foundation was established. (A foundation is positioned before walls are built.)

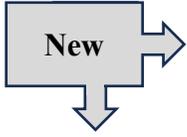
This may raise the question in your mind about whether the Church has prophets today and how to understand prophecy as one of the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12. If you are curious, put “cessationist vs. continuationist” into your favorite internet search engine to read about the different views. Finally, remember that God does not contradict Himself! As John wrote in 1 John 4:1, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

II. Adding to the list of parallels between the books of Joshua and Ephesians:

Parallels: Joshua & Ephesians



Joshua	Ephesians
Physical Inheritance = the Promised Land	Spiritual Inheritance = full, eternal life in Christ
Leader for the heirs: Joshua	Leader for the heirs: Jesus (Greek form of Joshua)
In Joshua 1:3, God tells Joshua, “Every place on which the sole of your foot steps I have given it to you,....” The inheritance is theirs solely as a gift from God before they ever step foot in the Land. (A positional truth that does not yet match their conditional truth.)	From Ephesians 1:3, believers are <i>blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ....</i> These blessings are a gift from God, by grace. Furthermore, Ephesian 1:11 says believers <i>have obtained an inheritance....</i> (A positional truth that does not yet match a believer’s conditional truth.)
The certitude of the victory and receiving the Land was a positional truth – the Land was	Believer’s certitude of victory & Christ as our inheritance is a positional truth, but we need to



<p>theirs, but they had to make it their reality – experience it as a conditional truth.</p>	<p>understand it as a conditional (our condition here & now) truth.</p>
<p>Rahab, the Jericho prostitute who hid the Israelite spies from the authorities, is a picture of a Gentile coming to God by faith.</p>	<p>“The Uncircumcision,” (separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers to the covenants of promise having no hope and without God in the world) have been brought near.</p>
<p>After the initial attack on Ai failed [man’s plan] and the second succeeded [God’s plan, God’s victory], Joshua gathered the Israelites for a ceremony of blessings and cursings in the natural amphitheater formed between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal. [As Moses had instructed.] Joshua built an altar of uncut stones [no human work formed the stones] and the priests offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Joshua wrote the wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses and read the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience to the Law. (Deuteronomy 27, Joshua 8:24-35)</p>	<p>From Ephesians 2:13-18, the reconciliation we experience with God was accomplished solely by Jesus Christ and no human work contributed to it. It was and is God’s plan and God’s victory!</p>

✪ Mary Ann Porter

Additional Scripture for Study Guide 7

□ Acts 11:19-30

¹⁹ So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and *began* speaking to the Greeks as well, preaching the good news of the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord. ²² The news about them reached the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch. ²³ Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and *began* to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain *true* to the Lord; ²⁴ for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and faith. And considerable numbers were added to the Lord. ²⁵ And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; ²⁶ and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers of people; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

²⁷ Now at this time *some* prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them, named Agabus, stood up and indicated by the Spirit that there would definitely be a severe famine all over the world. And this took place in the *reign* of Claudius. ²⁹ And to the extent that any of the disciples had means, each of

them determined to send *a contribution* for the relief of the brothers *and sisters* living in Judea. ³⁰ And they did this, sending it with Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

□ Deuteronomy 27

Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, “Keep all the commandments which I command you today. ² So it shall be on the day when you cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God gives you, that you shall set up for yourself large stones and coat them with lime ³ and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, so that you may enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. ⁴ So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal, these stones, as I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with lime. ⁵ Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron *tool* on them. ⁶ You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God; ⁷ and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and rejoice before the LORD your God. ⁸ You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly.”

⁹ Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying, “Be silent and listen, O Israel! This day you have become a people for

the LORD your God. ¹⁰ You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.”

¹¹ Moses also charged the people on that day, saying, ¹² “When you cross the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. ¹³ For the curse, these shall stand on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. ¹⁴ The Levites shall then answer and say to all the men of Israel with a loud voice,

¹⁵ ‘Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets *it* up in secret.’ And all the people shall answer and say, ‘Amen.’

¹⁶ ‘Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

¹⁷ ‘Cursed is he who moves his neighbor’s boundary mark.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

¹⁸ ‘Cursed is he who misleads a blind *person* on the road.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

¹⁹ ‘Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan, and widow.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²⁰ ‘Cursed is he who lies with his father’s wife, because he has uncovered his father’s skirt.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²¹ ‘Cursed is he who lies with any animal.’ And all the people shall say, ‘Amen.’

²² 'Cursed is he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or of his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

²³ 'Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

²⁴ 'Cursed is he who strikes his neighbor in secret.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

²⁵ 'Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to strike down an innocent person.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

²⁶ 'Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

□ **Joshua 8:24-35**

²⁴ Now when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them were fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. ²⁵ All who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000—all the people of Ai. ²⁶ For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. ²⁷ Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of that city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua. ²⁸ So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day. ²⁹ He hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening; and at sunset Joshua gave command and they took his body down from the tree and threw it

at the entrance of the city gate, and raised over it a great heap of stones *that stands* to this day.

³⁰ Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, ³¹ just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no man had wielded an iron *tool*; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. ³² He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. ³³ All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them *stood* in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. ³⁴ Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. ³⁵ There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them.



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STUDY GUIDE 8

Ephesians 3:1-13

A MYSTERY AND A MINISTRY – That is what Paul will speak to us about in this section of the book of Ephesians.

Read Ephesians 3:1-13 two times ____ ____.

Read verses 1-7 again.

1. In verse 1, how does Paul describe himself?

In reality, Paul, at the time of writing Ephesians, was a prisoner of Nero, and yet he says he is the prisoner of Christ Jesus. Why do you think Paul says this, and what do you think he means by it?

What would it mean for you to consider yourself a "prisoner of Christ Jesus"?

Paul then goes on to say that he is a "prisoner...for the sake of you Gentiles." For the background to this statement, read Acts 22:21-24.

What Paul begins in verse 1, he will continue in chapter 4, but starting in verse 2, his thoughts move in a new direction. He begins thinking about himself in prison, "for the sake of you Gentiles ", and in verses 2-13, he tells what he means by that. That is, how and why it came to be that he, a Jew, is reaching out to the Gentiles.

In verses 2-6, Paul writes of a mystery. It is important to realize the word Paul uses for mystery does not have the same meaning as when we use the word mystery. What Paul means by a mystery is a revelation –

something that cannot be understood unless God reveals it to us. Basically, the mystery that Paul is writing of is a divine secret that God has revealed to him, and now to us.

2. Has this mystery always been known to us? (See verse 5.)

When and to whom was this mystery revealed? (Verse 5)

3. What is the mystery -- the secret that God revealed to Paul, and now to us? (Verse 6)

Explain in general terms what you think it means that the Gentiles are fellow heirs...fellow members of the body...fellow partakers...in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Verse 6) You might want to review Ephesians 2:11-22.

Why is this mystery important to us? That is, what does it mean for us?

Read verses 8-13.

4. What is Paul's responsibility now that the mystery has been given to him? (Verses 8b-9)

When God reveals some of His truth to us, what are we to do with it?

Specifically, what is one step you could take to be responsible with some of God's truth that has been revealed to you?

5. Verse 8 says that Paul was "...to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ..." What do you think are some of the "riches of Christ" available to us? (You might want to review chapters 1 and 2 of Ephesians as you answer this question.)

6. In verse 8, how does Paul describe himself?

What do you think he means by that? Why would he describe himself that way? (See Acts 8:3, 1 Timothy 1:13)

What does Paul say was given to him? (Verses 2, 7b, 8)

7. It was once said, "Don't ever say 'no' to a ministry opportunity because you feel inadequate. The fact of the matter is that we ARE inadequate." Paul understood this, and realized that he had to depend on God's grace to do what he had been assigned to do. And just what had Paul been assigned by God to do? (Verse 8)

How did Paul know that he was to preach to the Gentiles? (Read Acts 22:21, Galatians 1:15-16)

Paul must have felt very inadequate to preach to the Gentiles. He had been raised a Jew, and had had the best Jewish training. He was the perfect candidate to be a missionary to the Jews. But God sent him to the Gentiles. In this way Paul was placed in a situation where he was not an expert, but where he had to depend on Jesus for his adequacy. God was building into Paul a balance of humility along with boldness and confidence – a balance that we see beautifully demonstrated in the life of Jesus. Paul was able to maintain this balance because he realized that he was completely dependent on God, but also that God had given him the grace and adequacy needed to fulfill the ministry that God had asked him to do. (READ 2 Corinthians 3:4-6)

What was true for Paul, is also true for us. Like Paul, we are inadequate. We must realize our complete dependence on God, and yet move forward confidently knowing that God has given us the grace necessary

to accomplish what He has asked us to do. Our adequacy and ability come from God.

8. In what kind of circumstances or situations do you sometimes feel inadequate?

What do you usually do when you feel inadequate?

What do you think God would want you to do when you feel inadequate?

Write out Philippians 4:13 and 2 Corinthians 3:4-6 inserting your name every time there is a pronoun (i.e., words like I, me, we, our or us).

9. In verse 10, Paul tells us why God chose to reveal the mystery – the revelation that all people, Jews and Gentiles, are now invited into God's family. What is the reason?

What do we learn from this about how God feels about the worldwide group of believers known as the church? Are His plans for the church large or small?

How does this contrast with the way we are often tempted to feel about the group of believers called the church?

In terms of integrity and personal character, how do believers today compare with the "heroes" of the Bible like Moses, David or Paul? (Think carefully!)

How might our view of the church need to change?

10. Verse 12 tells us that we can now have a special privilege. What is it?

How does it come to us?

We can now confidently enter into the presence of God. What had to happen for us to be able to do this? (See Ephesians 2:13-18)

How do we, practically speaking, enter into God's presence?

Just as God chose Paul, an untrained, inadequate, and unlikely candidate to be God's "chosen vessel to the Gentiles," so also we, the church, are an unlikely and inadequate group trying to proclaim the gospel to the world we live in. Just as God used Paul, He desires to use the church, that is, you and me, our homes, neighborhoods and towns.

11. Jot down a few things from this lesson that you have learned, and that you desire to remember and focus on this week.

✪ Laura Gamble

Thoughts in the Margins – Study Guide 8

- I. In his Ephesians 3:1-6 sermon, *The Great Mystery*¹, Pastor Ray Stedman on Ephesians 3:1-6 included an observation that captured my attention and invaded my ponderings:

He [Paul in verse 4] says, "When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ." That is, "You can understand that I have great grasp and understanding of what this mystery is, that it is really the secret of all things, touching everything in life. It is at the heart of all human existence. It is the mystery of the goal toward which God is moving in human affairs; therefore, it encompasses space, time, matter – all of life." And he sums it up in these words: "the mystery of Christ" – Jesus Christ, at the heart of all things. None of us can help but be aware that this is an extremely troubled time in which we are living:

We do not know how to solve the problems which are overwhelming us.... We don't know what to do about these things. Why? Many writers – thoughtful, perceptive men – are sitting down and trying to analyze where we have gone wrong, and why cannot we understand what to do. Some propose one solution and some another; some are partially right, and some are almost totally wrong. But the reason they cannot grasp the answer is that they have never dealt with the heart of the problem, the great secret to all things. The key mystery is Christ, says the apostle.

If you read that as merely theological language, you have missed the import of what he is saying – that every bit of life finds its final solution in the person and being of the Lord Jesus himself. God has set his Son at the heart of all things. Therefore the understanding of this great mystery is the key to the ultimate solutions for

which men are seeking today. If we begin to understand what Christ is, who he is, what he does, how we can lay hold of him – we will begin to see the solutions of these problems unfold, as they are indeed unfolding in many of our lives. Solutions are coming into being as we grasp what Christ has made available to us. I know that sometimes we are so blinded by familiarity with these terms that we miss the impact of this. But I pray that God will open the eyes of your understanding, that you will see how fantastic is this great mystery, and how important it is to understand it thoroughly, and to enter into it.

- II. Think once more about the radical idea that Gentiles could gain access to God without becoming associated with the Jews. In the Old Testament every Gentile that came to know God conformed to Jewish laws and customs. When Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:6 that [believing] Gentiles are *fellow heirs, fellow members, and fellow partakers*, these are rarely used words in the Scriptures, once again highlighting that this concept was new.

word	Definition	Occurrences in New Testament
<p>fellow heirs <i>sunkleronomos</i> Strong's G4789</p>	<p>a joint heir, co-inheritor. (<i>sun</i>, “with,” and <i>kleronomos</i> “one who obtains a lot or portion”)</p>	<p>Hebrews 11:9 <i>of husband and wife united in Christ</i> 1 Peter 3:7 <i>of Gentiles who believe, as participants in the Gospel with believing Jews</i> Ephesians 3:6 Romans 8:17 <i>of believers with Christ in His sufferings</i></p>

<p>fellow members <i>sussomos</i> Strong's G4954</p>	<p>body, bodily. (<i>sun</i>, “<i>with</i>,” and body “<i>soma</i>” the body as a hole, the instrument of life)</p>	<p>Ephesians 3:6</p>
<p>fellow partakers <i>summetochos</i> Strong's G4830</p>	<p>partaking together with (<i>sun</i>, “<i>with</i>,” and <i>metochos</i> “<i>partaker</i>”)</p>	<p>Ephesians 3:6, 5:7</p>

✎ Mary Ann Porter

Additional Scripture for Study Guide 8

□ **Acts 22:21-24**

²¹ And He said to me, ‘Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

²² They listened to him up to this statement, and *then* they raised their voices and said, “Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!” ²³ And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air,

²⁴ the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way.

☐ **Acts 8:3**

³ But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

☐ **1 Timothy 1:13**

¹³ even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief;

☐ **Acts 22:21**

²¹ And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

☐ **Galatians 1:15-16**

¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood,

☐ **Philippians 4:13**

¹³ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

☐ **2 Corinthians 3:4-6**

⁴ Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. ⁵ Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as *coming* from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, ⁶ who also made us adequate *as* servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.



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STUDY GUIDE 9

Ephesians 3:14-21

Spend a few minutes reviewing your memory verses -- Ephesians 1:3, 2:8-9.

Memorize Ephesians 3:20-21. Write these verses out here.

In the last lesson, we learned that through faith in Christ, we can now approach God with boldness and confidence. We enter into God's presence through prayer. And that is exactly what Paul does here. He prays for the believers in Ephesus. There is much we can learn about God and about prayer from the example Paul has left for us. He shows us what are the truly important things to pray for.

Read Ephesians 3:14-21 two times. ____ ____.

1. In this section, Paul begins to pray. Who does Paul pray to? (Verses 14-15)

What can we learn from that? That is, what kind of a person is on the receiving end of Paul's prayer?

2. What does Paul pray for in verses 16-17a?

Where will we be "strengthened in power"? And what does that teach us about what God looks at and how He works?

3. What do you think it means for Christ to dwell in your heart? (Why do you think Paul would pray this for people who were already Christians? Think about the word "dwell.")

How does Christ come to "dwell in your heart..."? What do we do?

In Greek, there are at least two words for the word *dwell*. The first has the idea of a temporary guest. But the second word, the one used here, has the idea of a permanent resident. That is, someone who has the rights to enter every single closet and corner and hiding place in our house. He can go into the kitchen, the family room, the bathroom, the bedroom, and even the attic. God wants to be involved in every area of our life. He wants to dwell deep down within us, to "have the run of the house." And that is what Paul prays for.

If you are a Christian, Christ does already dwell in your heart (your "house"). He has come in, and you have acknowledged Him as your Lord.

But, as we mature as Christians, Christ desires to gain authority over all areas of our lives.

4. Name some specific areas of your life that are important to you (e.g. your spouse, your job, etc.)

Are you excluding God from any of those areas of your life? Is there any area of your life that you are unwilling to let Christ rule and reign in? Explain. (Think about how and why this is happening in this specific area.) Then, start praying to give that area of your life into the hands of Jesus. He wants to be involved in all areas of your life.

5. What does Paul pray for in verses 18-19a?

Paul says that we are "rooted and grounded" in the love of Christ. (verse 17) What illustrations come to mind with the phrase "rooted and grounded"?

What can we learn from these illustrations about how Christ's love is to affect us?

6. What do we learn about Christ's love from verses 18-19?

Is there any place, any direction we can go to get away from God's love? (verse 18) Can anything separate us from God's love? Read Romans 8:35-39 and make a list of all the things that CANNOT separate us from the love of God.

Why is it helpful for you today to realize that none of the above can separate you from the love of God?

7. What additional truths do we learn about God's love for us from the following passages?

John 15:13

Romans 5:5-8

1 John 3:1, 16

8. In verse 19b, Paul prays that you may be "filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." What do you think this means?

What are some specific characteristics of God that we will begin to attain as we are filled with the fullness of God? Reading Galatians 5:22-23 may give you a start as you think of some of God's characteristics. Can you think of some others?

9. In verse 19, Paul prays that we will "know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that ...[we]...may be filled up to all the fullness of God." Why is our knowledge of God's love, and our growth in character (Christ likeness) linked together?

Is there any limit to our growth in character, to our ability to grow in our likeness to Christ? And who is responsible for our growth? (verse 20)

10. List some of your longings, dreams, or desires that you are unable to attain on your own.

Verse 20 says God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us..." What confidence does this bring to you? (Especially as you think about your spiritual growth, desires, etc.)

11. According to verse 21, what is God to receive? What is the ultimate purpose of each individual and of the church?

Practically speaking, how do we (how can you!) give glory to God?

Read Ephesians 3:14-21 one more time.

12. In your own words, write down what you think are the main things that Paul prayed for the believers in Ephesus.

Right now, take some time to pray for yourself, for your family, your friends, and even your enemies, in the way that Paul prayed for the Ephesians.

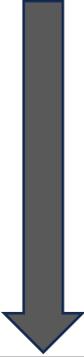
☞ Laura Gamble

Thoughts in the Margins – Study Guide 9

(From Warren Wiersbe's The Wiersbe Bible Commentary New Testament on Ephesians 3:14-21.)

There are four requests in Paul's prayer, but they must not be looked on as isolated, individual petitions. These four requests are more like four parts to a telescope. One request leads into the next one, and so on. He prays that the inner man might have spiritual strength, which will, in turn, lead to a deeper experience with Christ. This deeper experience will enable them to "apprehend" (get hold of) God's greater love, which will result in their being "filled unto all the fullness of God." So, then, Paul was praying for strength, depth, apprehension, and fullness.

	Additional Excerpts from Wiersbe on Paul's Prayer:
<p>strength</p> 	<p>What does it mean to have the Holy Spirit empower the inner man? It means that our spiritual faculties are controlled by God and we are exercising them and growing in the Word (Heb. 5:12-14). It is only when we yield to the Spirit and let Him control the inner man that we succeed in living to the glory of God. This means feeding the inner man the Word of God, praying and worshipping, keeping clean and exercising the senses by loving obedience.</p>
<p>depth</p> 	<p>Paul used three pictures here to convey this idea of spiritual depth, and the three pictures are hidden in the three verbs: "dwell," "rooted," and "grounded." The verb <i>dwell</i> literally means (and here I follow Dr. Kenneth Wuest) "to settle down and feel at home."</p> <p>... The verb <i>rooted</i> moves us into the plant world. The tree must get its roots deep into the</p>

	<p>soil if it is to have both nourishment and stability, and the Christian must have his spiritual roots deep into the love of God.</p> <p><i>Grounded</i> is an architectural term; it refers to the foundations on which we build. ...If you don't go deep, you can't go high.</p>
<p>apprehension</p> 	<p>No Christian ever has to worry about having inadequate spiritual resources to meet the demands of life. If he prays for spiritual strength and spiritual depth, he will be able to apprehend—get his hands on—all the resources of God's love and grace. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). And what is the result of all of this?</p>
<p>fullness</p>	<p>God wants us to experience His fullness. "Filled <i>unto</i> all the fullness of God" is the more accurate translation. The <i>means</i> of our fullness is the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18), and the <i>measure</i> of our fullness is God Himself (Eph. 4:11–16).</p> <p>...Paul tells us that the measure is Christ, and that we cannot boast about anything (nor should we). When we have reached <i>His</i> fullness, then we have reached the limit. In one sense, the Christian is already "made full in Christ" (Col. 2:9–10, where "complete" means "filled full"). Positionally, we are complete in Him, but practically, we enjoy only the grace that we apprehend by faith. The resources are there. All we need do is accept them and enjoy them.</p>

✪ Mary Ann Porter

Additional Scripture for Study Guide 9

□ Romans 8:35-39

³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written,

“FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED.”

³⁷ But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

□ John 15:13

¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

□ Romans 5:5-8

⁵ and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to

die. ⁸ But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

□ **1 John 3:1**

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

□ **1 John 3:16**

¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

□ **Galatians 5:22-23**

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.



