

Bracken Ridge
BAPTIST CHURCH

THE BOOK OF
EPHESIANS

**LIFE GROUP
MATERIAL**





THE BOOK OF
EPHESIANS

J. D. GREAR

Has it ever dawned on you that nothing has ever dawned on God? He knew before the world began that His people would face hardship, so He gave us His Word. The Book of Ephesians is a survival manual—it equips believers to thrive in a world that hates the message of Jesus Christ. Paul the Apostle writes to encourage believers to live well—we've been lifted from the graveyard of sin and called to shout the gospel into the darkened world.

Pastor and author J.D. Greear walks through the powerful words of Paul. In 9 sessions, J.D. digs into the text of Ephesians verse-by-verse and challenges believers to live out the gospel. If the people of your city, of your school, of your family are going to hear the gospel, it's going to be from your mouth. Encounter Ephesians, and get swept up into the story of Jesus.

Accessing The Material

On the following pages you will find all of the information needed to go through the Ephesians Life Group Material. There are corresponding videos that can be accessed through our "RightNow Media" account with the church. If you don't have an account, go to rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/BrackenRidgeBaptistChurch. After creating an account search "The Book Of Ephesians" to access the 9 weeks.

rightnow MEDIA

If you are unable for some reason to access the material through these different means, please simply email office@brbc.org.au or call 07 3261 5045.

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HANDOUT

Lesson 1: Ephesians 1:1-14

DISCUSS

What were the last three things J.D. mentioned—three things we can take away from this text?

According to Ephesians 1:3-10, what has God done, what is He doing, or what will He do?

According to 1:3-10, what do we "have"? What blessings has He blessed us with?

What does adoption mean when God is doing it?

How would you define grace?

What "riches" has God lavished on us?

What's mysterious about God's will?

According to verse 10, what is the mystery?

According to Ephesians 1:11–14, who are we?

What does our identity as Christians mean to you? How can we bring Him praise?

If you began to see bringing Him praise as your purpose in life, how would that change things?

How are you doing with bringing Him praise?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: At least four days in the coming week, thank God that He has included you in His great plan.

Encouragement: If you know a fellow Christian who is going through tough times, offer a word of hope. God has plans for us.

Conversation: Talk with somebody who isn't a Christian (as far as you know). Ask them about their beliefs. If they ask about yours, be ready to tell them God's story.

Journaling: Write out the text of Ephesians 1:1–14, a few verses at a time, jotting down your questions and reactions.

Worship: If you exist "for the praise of His glory," then throw yourself into worship. Take time on your own to sing and dance and pray and shout, but also join with the church or youth group in a gathering of praise.



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Lesson 2: Ephesians 1:15–23

DISCUSS

He summarized Paul's prayer in four parts. What four things did Paul want the Ephesians to see?

What specific actions have happened, or are happening—just in Ephesians 1:15–16? Can you put them in order?

How does viewing Paul's prayer as a story change the way you look at it? How could prayer-as-story affect the way you pray?

What does Paul mean in Ephesians 1:17? How do we "know God"?

How does God's Spirit make us know God?

How would you define hope?

How is "the hope to which He has called you" different from hoping that your team wins the big game or hoping you get a raise?

What's the best thing you can do for someone else to help them have this kind of hope?

Are there times when you feel that you aren't loved by God? Why or why not? Do you think other people feel that way, too? Why or why not?

How can verse 18 change your mind about hope?

In verses 19–20, we find the next main point of Paul's prayer. What is it?

How does Paul describe God's power?

Think of that part of your life that needs a touch of God's power. Your attitude? Your health? Your struggle with temptation? Your relationships? How could God use His resurrection power to transform that?

Is there one phrase that stands out for you in verses 20-23? What does that mean to you?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: At least four days in the coming week, pray for other Christians you know, using Paul's prayer as a model.

Encouragement: Do you know someone who is losing hope? What could you say to them, inspired by this passage, to open their eyes to God's love and power? Find a way to say that this week.

Resolve: Is there a struggle in your life where you need to rely on God's power? Temptation? Attitude? A thorny relationship? Is there some difficult thing you need to do—saying "no," saying "yes," or saying "sorry"? Review Paul's prayer, ask for God's guidance, and act in God's power.

Memorize: Commit verses Ephesians 1:17–23 to memory (so you can use it as a model for your own prayers forever). Alternatively, write out 5-7 "bullet points" from the prayer and memorize those. Check yourself by reading through the whole prayer each day. (And you might just find that you've learned the whole thing anyway.)

Gather: Talk with a few friends about getting together this week for a prayer time, based on this passage, in which you specifically pray for the spiritual vitality of your church or your community.



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Lesson 3: Ephesians 2:1-10

DISCUSS

In what ways does our culture propagate the ideas J.D. mentioned? Do you know people who hold those beliefs?

In verse 1, we read, "You were dead in transgressions and sins." What does that mean? How does that make you feel?

What's "wrath"? Why would we be "deserving of wrath"?

There's a distinction in verses 1-3 between "us" and "them." Do you see it? What's the difference?

What changed when we moved from death to life? What do verses 4-5 tell us? What are things God has done for us?

What is mercy? Is that different from grace?

According to verses 8-10, what has happened in the past, what's going on now, and what can we expect to happen in the future?

Why is the timing of each thing Paul described in 8–10 important? Why do we need to know that our good works come after our salvation and not before it?

How does that make you feel—that your new life through Jesus is God's divine creation?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Take some serious time to go through the truth of Ephesians 2 with God. If you've been trying to pay your own way—trying to be good enough for God—talk with Him about it. Trust in His goodness rather than your own. Thank Him for His grace. Commit yourself to be that masterpiece He created you to be.

Memorize: Ephesians 2:8–10 is an essential expression of the Christian faith. Learn it.

Make some art: God is the Creator, and He made us to be creative, too. What kind of *poiema* could you create to reflect your relationship with God? It doesn't have to be just art—even caring for God's creation (how you mow your lawn) or working with your resources (the way you do your job) reflects the creator-nature God gave to each of us. The possibilities to glorify Him are endless.

Analyze: In your life, you've probably encountered and studied a great poem at some point in time—even if only in grade school English class. If you're God's divine creation, then maybe you can analyze yourself in the same way. What strengths has God given you? What resources? How have your past struggles prepared you to do good works in the future? How do you help others make the most of their abilities?

Share the truth: If you know someone who's trying hard to earn God's grace, what can you say—in a gentle, loving way—to present the truth of Ephesians 2 to him or her?



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Lesson 4: Ephesians 2:11-3:13

DISCUSS

Who is Paul addressing in Ephesians 2:11-13?

Why does he specifically address the Gentiles in 11-13?

Do we have any divisions in our society that are anything like the division between Jews and Gentiles?

Do you agree or disagree with J.D. about there being only one category of people—sinners? How would you describe the human tendency to divide ourselves into groups?

What is Jesus called in Ephesians 2:14? In what way is that true?

What do verses 14-18, say that Jesus has done, or is doing?

What specifically has He “put to death” (v. 16), and how did He do it?

How do you feel about our new humanity? Does J.D.'s explanation make sense to you? Do you agree?

What is the architecture of the new temple in 2:19–22? What is it made of? What is it built on?

When Paul says, “You are no longer foreigners,” or “You too are being built together,” whom is he talking to?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Ask God to show you how you can reach out to someone on the other side of a social “wall.” Begin praying specifically for individuals in your life who might not share your culture, circumstances, or beliefs.

Invite: All too often we assume that people know they can come to any church service they like. Maybe they don’t know this. And maybe they’re waiting for an invitation.

Listen: Have a conversation with someone of another religion, or no religion at all. Ask them what they think about God, or faith, or forgiveness, or death, or morality. And listen. Do not use this as a trick to tell them what you think. If they ask, be ready. And feel free to ask follow-up questions, but the main point here is to listen to them.

Connect: Talk with your church leaders about setting up a joint worship service or Bible study with another church—preferably a church with people of another culture.

Draw: Re-read Ephesians 2:14–18 from a visual perspective. How would you draw the picture described in the verses? Be as literal or symbolic as you like, as you sketch out this powerful text.



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Lesson 5: Ephesians 3:14-4:16

DISCUSS

What comments or stories struck you from this video? Did anything shine a new light on the biblical material?

How can we “live a life worthy of our calling” as Paul mentions in the beginning of chapter four? How does he describe that worthy life?

J.D. made a big deal about growing up. How do the qualities we mentioned display a mature faith?

Take another look at verses 4–6. Why do you think Paul emphasizes “oneness” so much?

In light of contention in the church, how does a conversation about the gifts of the Spirit promote unity? Would people brag about their own gifts? Why or why not?

According to 4:7–13, Who gives spiritual gifts? Who gets spiritual gifts? What are some of the spiritual gifts? What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

LIVE IT OUT

Setup

In your small groups, you’ll have several questions to answer about yourself, your background, your abilities, and what you care about. Each person should answer each group of questions before the next person responds. Then go around the circle again with the second and third groups of questions. Feel free to ask follow-up questions as you go and affirm responses. But be careful not to contradict what someone is saying. If anyone feels uncomfortable answering, they may pass.

The Questions

Group 1

- A. What is something you do—in your work, at home, or at church—that you seem to be pretty good at?**
- B. When did you first notice that you had that ability?**
- C. Have you gotten better at that area of expertise through the years?**

Group 2

- A. What is something you're really passionate about?**
- B. When did you recognize that passion for the first time?**
- C. Has the passion grown stronger, or changed in some way?**

Group 3

- A. Think about a time when someone thanked you for something you did or mentioned that you were helpful to them. What action were they talking about?**
- B. When did this happen? Has it happened often?**
- C. Is there a way you could do that type of action (the thing someone appreciated) on a regular basis, or even more intentionally than you do now?**

According to Ephesians 4:12–13, why has God given us these abilities and responsibilities? What is their purpose?

Now as you think about the questions you've been considering about yourself—those abilities and passions God has given you—how can you use your gifts for the purposes mentioned in 4:12–13?



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LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Talk with God about the gifts He has given you. Ask Him to confirm your thinking, or to adjust it as necessary. Ask Him for opportunities to use your gifts in His service. In these prayers, spend more time listening than talking.

Conversation: Talk with other close friends about your gifts. Ask them to confirm the abilities you think God has given you, and they may even suggest ways to use them. You need some cheerleaders around for support, but also talk with someone who can challenge you—"speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15).

Volunteer: Look for a new way to use the abilities God has given you. Volunteer for an appropriate ministry in the church.

Peacemaking: Unity is a strong emphasis in this part of Ephesians. Even though we have different strengths, we have a common Lord. Take some time to think through your relationships—especially those with other believers. Are there any broken, tense, competitive, or difficult relationships? How could you promote a Christ-centered unity with these people?

Calligraphy: Write out the prayer of Ephesians 3:14–21 and post it where you will see it often. (But ask permission before spray-painting it on a church wall.)



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Lesson 6: Ephesians 4:17-5:7

DISCUSS

How have you heard the idea that all religions are the same expressed? Why do you think people say that?

What's similar about different religions? Do you think people who believe all religions are the same have a good understanding of Christianity?

What sets our faith apart? How are we different?

Why is Paul talking poorly of the Gentiles in Ephesians 4:17–19 when, earlier, he was talking about their inclusion in the church? How does he describe the "Gentile" way of life?

Take a look at verses 20–22. What "way of life" have we learned from Christ?

Look for the words "old" and "new" in these verses. What do you find?

So if you are "being made new" or "renewed" in your attitude, who is doing the renewing?

In verse 24, who has "created" the "new self" to be "like God"? Who puts off the old self? Who puts on the new self?

Stepping back to look at verses 17–24, how does this "way of Christ" compare with the way of "the Gentiles"—that is, those who don't know God?

What four areas of behavior do you see in verses 25–29?

What should we do instead of speaking falsehood and why?

How does being “one body” affect the way we should treat each other?

The verse on anger might be paraphrased as, “Anger will happen, but don’t let it lead you into sinful outbursts.” But what else does it tell us about anger?

What are we supposed to do instead of stealing?

What are we supposed to use instead of “unwholesome language”?

What do you think it means to “grieve” the Holy Spirit?

What does it mean to be “sealed for the day of redemption”?



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Confession: This passage mentions various behaviors we should examine in ourselves. Where have we strayed from the way of Jesus, especially in the areas of truth-telling, angry outbursts, stealing, and destructive language? But don't just feel guilty about these things—confess them and carry a new commitment to live God's way.

Communication Review: Take some time to evaluate your patterns of communication: at home, in the church, and at work. Are you telling the whole truth, or just avoiding technical lies? Are you building others up? Consider healthier habits you could work on.

Anger Cleanse: Every night before bed, get rid of your anger. Apologize, confess, make peace with those who may be the cause of your anger, and commit to sorting things out in the morning, if need be. You won't solve every problem, but it can mean stronger relationships and better sleep.

Peacemaking: The biblical discussion of stealing raises an interesting idea. *How much are you taking and how much are you giving?* We're not talking about theft, but about love. Is your work all about gathering resources for yourself? Or are you "doing something useful with your hands" in order to "share with those in need"?

Accountability: Invite a trusted Christian friend to check up on you as you find new ways to put on the "new self" and learn the way of Christ.



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Lesson 7: Ephesians 5:8-21

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DISCUSS

Why do you think J.D. made the point that life is war? Do you agree? Why or why not?

Why do you think Paul says we are light in verses 8–14? Is there something in our identity that has changed from darkness to light?

Paul also asks us to “live as children of light” (v. 8). What does that mean for the way you live your life?

Verse 9 also talks about the “fruit of the light.” That seems to be a strange mixing of metaphors. How does light have fruit? What does that mean to you?

Why do you think Paul used this hymn in verse 14? How did it help his case? What sort of “sleep” do we need to “wake up” from?

What “opportunity” is Paul talking about in verse 16? How should we “make the most” of it?

What sort of "unwise" or "foolish" things might we do when faced with the opportunities Paul's talking about? How can we avoid those foolish actions?

Back in verse 10, it said, "Find out what pleases the Lord." Here in verse 17, it says almost the same thing ("understand what the Lord's will is"). How can we do that?

Why would Paul compare God's Spirit with wine in verse 18? What's the connection?

Why does Paul suddenly get musical in verse 19? What do songs have to do with waking up and redeeming the time?

According to verse 19, we speak to one another in these songs. What effect on each other can we have when we address one another through our songs?

Do you think that gathering together in worship helps us to "find out what pleases the Lord"? If so, how?



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Alert Prayer: Ask God to wake you up to the opportunities of each day. Then find a time during the day when you “walk and talk with God”—ten minutes of specifically tuning into His voice as you go through your normal activities.

Time Budget: How did you use your time last week? You had 168 hours—what did you do with them? Map it out, as best you remember. Then evaluate. How could you adjust your schedule to reflect your priorities? Set a new schedule/budget for this week.

Coping Check: When you’re stressed, where do you turn? To alcohol or something less damaging but just as wasteful? Can you begin to train yourself to seek the Lord’s strength in those times? For now, have Psalms 23, 42, and 103 at the ready, and then find other ways to connect with the Spirit in those critical moments.

Praise: Find some creative, lavish way to thank God. Write a song. Do a dance. Create a rock garden. Fill your heart with praise and then offer it, as the Spirit leads.

Worship Together: Throw yourself fully into the church worship service. Prepare well. Participate enthusiastically. Review it afterward, perhaps talking with family or friends.



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Lesson 8: Ephesians 5:22-6:9

DISCUSS

What does the last phrase in 6:9 tell us about God? No favoritism between whom?

When Paul says, "Treat your slaves in the same way," what does he mean? What's the "same way"? Why doesn't it just say, "Masters, free your slaves"?

Now read over verses 5-8 again. What do you see here? What "reward" should slaves be most concerned about?

Who is the ultimate Master?

Now do you think it's reasonable to apply these verses to modern employment? Is this essentially the same as a boss-employee relationship? Why or why not?

How could this affect the way you work—either as an employee or as a boss?

In what ways could parents be "exasperating" or "provoking" their children?

According to this verse, what should parents do instead? How would that help?

Do you think it's significant that this is addressed to fathers and not parents in general? Does Paul's exhortation reflect only the culture at that time, or are fathers generally more likely to provoke their kids?

According to verses 1-3, why should children obey parents?

Does obedience always lead to a longer life? What is this "promise" really saying?

In Ephesians 5:31-33, what is the "profound mystery" Paul mentions?

How are those two relationships similar? How is Christ "one" with the church?

How does verse 33 sum up the interaction between husband and wife?

According to verse 25, how should husbands love their wives? What might this look like in everyday life?

Verses 28-30 anticipate the "one flesh" idea with husbands loving their wives as they love their own body. What implications does this have for the day-to-day relationship between husband and wife?

According to verses 22-24, what does it mean to be the "head" of a "body"? In what way is Christ the head of the body? And how is a husband the head of his wife?

How does the teaching in verse 22 compare with what we saw in 6:5, with the instructions to slaves?

How does the church submit to Christ? And how does that provide a model for wives with their husbands?



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LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Take extra time this week to pray specially for the people in the three relationships Paul mentioned: your spouse, your children, and your employer or employees. Let love fill your prayers.

Brainstorm: If you're married, try this. Think of seven practical ways you could show love to your spouse—being sacrificial, supportive, and respectful. Better yet, work together to come up with seven ways each.

Interview: If you have kids, schedule some one-on-one time to ask them how their lives are going. This can be a great way to get beyond the "exasperation" of rules and expectations.

Evaluation: You've probably gone through evaluations at work. Do a self-evaluation based on how well you're serving the Lord. How are you doing with the qualities he loves? If you're a boss, consider how fairly you treat your workers.

Submission: The verse before this section of Scripture has the blanket statement, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (5:21). In the coming week find three ways you can humbly put someone else first, instead of fighting for your own rights.



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Lesson 9: Ephesians 6:10-24

DISCUSS

How do you feel about spiritual warfare? Does it psych you up or freak you out?

Take a look at Ephesians 6:10–12. Do these verses confirm what J.D. was saying or not? How?

When you read about “the devil’s schemes,” and about “the powers of this dark world,” and about “spiritual forces of evil,” how do you feel?

According to verses 11 and 13, what should we do to prepare?

In verse 14, what are the first two pieces of armor mentioned?

Why would the belt of truth come first?

Why is the breastplate associated with righteousness?

What additional item do we find in verse 15? What should we be ready to do? What is the “gospel of peace” doing in this battle-ready scene?

What gear do we find in verse 16? How does faith “extinguish” the devil’s flaming arrows?

The remaining two pieces of equipment are found in verse 17. What are they?

Why would the helmet be connected to salvation?

The sword of the Spirit is identified as the word of God. Why?

LIVE IT OUT

Prayer: Pray specifically for your own resistance to forces of evil, and for others who are under attack.

“Footwear”: This passage talked about being ready—lacing up the shoes—to go and spread the “gospel of peace.” Do you know someone who needs to hear the message that God wants to make peace with them? How will you make yourself ready to go and share it?

“Belt of Truth”: Wrap the truth of Scripture around you. One suggestion: set aside time in the next six weeks to go back through the book of Ephesians, studying, learning more, meditating on it, praying through it. You could work on one chapter a week.

Art Project: Find a doll or figurine and create pieces of armor for it based on this passage.

Caring: Connect with a local veterans group or charity. Get to know some people who have fought. Consider the spiritual damage they might have suffered. Pray for their healing.



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