

10 STUDIES
+ LEADER NOTES

EPHESIANS

He Is Our Peace



PATHWAY
BIBLE GUIDES



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EPHESIANS

BY DAVID JACKMAN



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SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

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Pathway Bible Guides: Ephesians

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Before you begin

If asked to sum up in a word the experience of living in today's world, many millions of people might well choose the word 'brokenness'. In a fallen world, life frequently breaks down. Expectations are disappointed; tragedies strike; relationships break up; families disintegrate; hopes are smashed. Life is broken and it needs to be fixed—but how? All too often disappointment leads to bitterness, hurt to hostility, and cynicism morphs into aggression. We are all aware that 'Humpty' has 'had a great fall', but who can put the pieces of life back together again, and how might it happen?

Ephesians has God's answer. Many Christians affirm that this is a letter all about the church, and we shall certainly see why—but we are not its primary focus. It is supremely a letter about the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of his body, and from whom the whole church grows "so that it builds itself up in love" (4:16). This is a letter that teaches us about God's big purposes, on the grandest scale, here in time and stretching into eternity: "to unite all things in him [Christ]" (1:10). It exalts the Lord Jesus and shows us who he really is; what he has done for us, his people; and how the brokenness of our world can only be mended by the gospel of his grace.

If the greatest division of the first-century world—that between Jews and Gentiles—can be healed through the cross of Christ, then there are no broken relationships beyond his loving reach. Since Christ is our peace, reconciling sinful people like us to God as our Father, there can no longer be any barriers to separate us from one another once we

are united to Jesus, by faith. The church of redeemed, reconciled believers then serves as a prototype, within time, of what God purposes to accomplish for all eternity. Loving relationships and unity between Christians are the fruit of the love of Christ for his people, seen in his death and resurrection. It is also the proof of his total supremacy over all the hostile powers of evil, including the devil himself, and the demonstration to the whole universe that God's mighty work of salvation is accomplished, that it is totally effective, and that it will be eternal in its outworking.

Studying this wonderful letter not only deepens our understanding of all that Jesus is and all that he has done for us, but also deepens our love for him. And that makes us want to live to please him, to walk in love as he loved us (5:2). As we study Paul's practical applications of the gospel to our new lifestyle, we shall be corrected, challenged and above all empowered to live an authentic Christian life in a broken world. Paul's purpose is that we should become more and more in practice what God has made us to be, and so reveal to the whole world the miracle of restoration and new life in Christ, which is the only cure for our human brokenness.

1. Clear vision

EPHESIANS 1:1-14



Getting started

Christians often say that God is in control. But it's sometimes easier to say than believe. What is it that most makes you question whether God really is in control, either in the world at large, or in your personal life and circumstances?



Light from the Word

Read Ephesians 1:1-14.

1. The writer, readers and greeting are all related to Jesus Christ. What is the connection to Jesus in each case, and why do you think Paul draws attention to it (vv. 1-2)?

2. “In the heavenly places” is an unusual phrase (v. 3), indicating the nature of our spiritual blessings in Christ. What do you think it means? Check your answer out against its other uses in this letter (1:20, 2:6, 3:10, 6:12).

3. God chose his people before he made the world. What two great purposes does Paul highlight in verses 4-5? Why do they matter?

8. By “we” in verse 11, Paul seems to have himself and his fellow Jewish believers primarily in mind (contrast “you also” in verse 13, referring to the predominantly Gentile church). How does he describe God’s blessings to them (vv. 11-12)?
9. What blessings do the Gentile believers now experience, and how have they come to receive them (vv. 13-14)?



To finish

Look back on all the blessings listed in these verses, and remind yourself of how each one is dependent on Christ and being “in him”. How does this help us with the issues raised in our ‘Getting started’ question? What sort of response do you think this passage calls for?



Give thanks and pray

- Thank God the Father for his wonderful cosmic plan of redemption, and the Lord Jesus for enabling it to happen through his sacrificial obedience to the cross.
- Pray for yourself and your church that you may understand the privilege of being caught up in God's eternal plan and that such clear vision will motivate all your choices and priorities.

