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Pointing You in the Right Direction

The goal of Bible study must be *transformation* rather than mere *information*. Like a navigator's compass, these studies are designed to guide you toward Christ-centered transformation through active study, discussion, and application of God's Word. The following symbols have been placed throughout the pages of this study in order to help you interact with Scripture personally and within a group setting:



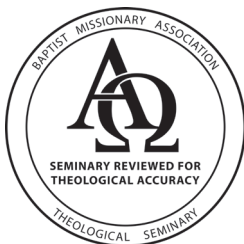
Meditation verses are suggested for individual daily study of God's Word based upon each lesson's focus.



Discussion questions help you study on your own in order to prepare for conversations in your group setting.



The note-taking sections are intended for the weekly group setting and feature fill-in-the-blanks. Your group leader will provide the words for the blanks. Additional space is provided for note-taking.



Meet Ephesians

Ephesians 1:1-2

A couple's marriage had grown cold. The man was very demanding, so much so that he prepared a list of rules and regulations for his wife to follow. He insisted that she read them over every day and obey them to the letter. Among other things, his list included such details as when she should get up in the morning, when his breakfast should be served, and how the housework should be done. It's no wonder their relationship was on the rocks.

After several long years, the husband died. Eventually, the woman fell in love with another man who loved her dearly. Soon they were married. This husband cherished his wife, continually showing his appreciation for her. One day as she was cleaning house she found tucked away in a drawer the list of commands her first husband had drawn up for her. As she looked it over, it dawned on her that even though her present husband hadn't given her any kind of list, she was doing everything for her current husband that her first husband's list had required. She realized she was so devoted to this man that her deepest desire was to please him out of love, not obligation.

When we understand the grace of God we will desire to worship and serve him out of gratitude rather than a sense of obligation.



MEDITATIONS FOR THE WEEK

Monday John 1:17
Tuesday 2 Cor. 12:9
Wednesday Eph. 2:8-9

Thursday Rom. 5:2
Friday Titus 2:11
Saturday Rom. 3:24

THE WRITER OF EPHESIANS

Two major headings in this letter (Ephesians 1:1 and 3:1) indicate that it was written by the apostle Paul. This claim is supported by several church fathers including Polycarp, Origen, and Tertullian. It is similar in style to Colossians. Paul wrote the two letters within a year of one another (A.D. 60-61).

GROUP LESSON NOTES

ANSWERS WILL BE PROVIDED IN GROUP MEETING.

- 1 Ephesians focuses on the _____ of who God is and what he has done in Christ for believers.
- 2 Paul's conversion and ministry were the result of God's _____.



Where was Paul when he penned the letter of Ephesians?



How does this letter compare to Paul's other writings?

THE AUDIENCE OF EPHESIANS

Ephesus was the most important city that Paul visited other than Rome. Located at the intersection of two ancient overland routes at the western edge of Asia Minor (now Turkey) and with easy access to the Aegean Sea, Ephesus had become a political, commercial, and religious center. It was along one of the main routes from Rome to the East. The significant portion of the city's commercial life came from the many thousands of tourists and worshipers visiting the temple of Artemis, the fertility God. Despite the idolatrous influences surrounding them, the believers in Ephesus flourished under Paul's nearly three-year leadership there.

becoming a strong spiritual community even in the midst of such a pagan environment.

GROUP LESSON NOTES

ANSWERS WILL BE PROVIDED IN GROUP MEETING.

- 1 Paul wrote to the _____ in Ephesus.
- 2 The Ephesian believers lived in the midst of a highly _____ society.



What was the idolatry being practiced in Ephesus?



Who did Paul intend to read this epistle?

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

Ephesians shows us there are always opportunities and obstacles to sharing the gospel. Paul saw great opportunities in Ephesus to reach many with the message of the gospel. People from all over were passing through the vicinity, so a strong church there could have a worldwide impact. But along with these opportunities came just as many obstacles. People came to the area with a great variety of worldviews and the idolatry of the region would have to be countered.



What opportunities do you see in your local setting for sharing the gospel?



What obstacles do you find when it comes to sharing the gospel?

CONCLUSION

All of Paul's teachings about the Christian life revolved around a single principle—grace. Paul not only began his letters by offering grace on behalf of Jesus, but he also ended his letters by imparting grace for Jesus' sake. According to Paul, grace is not only the basis of our salvation, but it is also the means by which we live the Christian life. A church operating on grace is like a well-oiled machine; without grace, everything comes grinding to a halt. Grace provides the environment a church needs to run smoothly, especially during challenging times.

The law works fear and wrath;
grace works hope and mercy.

—Martin Luther