

# engage

Welcome to **engage** issue 7. Prepare to be blown away by God's awesome word. Whether you've been a Christian for years, not long at all or you're not even sure you're a Christian, God has loads to say to you. Check out what we've got in store for you in this engage.

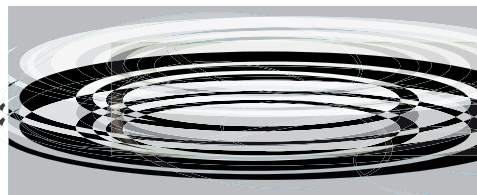
**\* DAILY READINGS** Each day's page throws you into the Bible, to get you handling, questioning and exploring God's message to you — encouraging you to act on it and talk to God more in prayer.

**THIS ISSUE:** Big plans for God's people in **Ephesians**; Big warnings for Moses and the Israelites in **Numbers**; Big life lessons from Jesus in **Luke**; Big disaster and a big future in **Jeremiah**; and big emotions in **Psalms**.

**\* TAKE IT FURTHER** If you're hungry for more at the end of an **engage** page, turn to the **Take it further** section to dig deeper.

**\* TRICKY** tackles those mind-bendingly tricky questions that confuse us all, as well as questions that our friends bombard us with. This time: **Why does God allow suffering?**

**\* STUFF** Articles on stuff relevant to the lives of young Christians. This issue: **Coping with stress**.



**\* ESSENTIAL** Articles on the basics we really need to know about God, the Bible and Christianity. This issue, we ask: **What does it mean to be human?**

**\* REAL LIVES** True stories, revealing God at work in people's lives. This time — **from pauper to prisoner to best-selling author**.

**\* TOOLBOX** is full of tools to help you wrestle with the Bible. This issue we look at different **genres** in the Bible.

**All of us who work on engage are passionate to see God's word at work in people's lives. Do you want God's word to have an impact on your life? Then open your Bible, and start on the first engage study right now...**

## HOW TO USE **engage**

- 1 Set a time you can read the Bible every day
- 2 Find a place where you can be quiet and think
- 3 Grab your Bible, pen and a notebook
- 4 Ask God to help you understand what you read
- 5 Read the day's verses with **engage**, taking time to think about it
- 6 Pray about what you've read

### BIBLE STUFF

We use the NIV Bible version, so you might find it's the best one to use with **engage**. If the notes say '**Read Luke 6 v 1-5**', look up Luke in the contents page at the front of your Bible. It'll tell you which page Luke starts on. Find chapter 6 of Luke, and then verse 1 of chapter 6 (the verse numbers are the tiny ones). Then start reading. Simple.

## In this issue...

### DAILY READINGS

**Ephesians:** Big big stuff

**Numbers:** Counting on God

**Luke:** Walking with Jesus

**Jeremiah:** Prophet in pain

**Psalms:** Down in the depths

### ARTICLES

#### ESSENTIAL

Being human **12**

#### STUFF

Coping with stress **24**

#### TRICKY

Why does God allow suffering? **46**

#### TOOLBOX

Genres in the Bible **60**

#### REAL LIVES

Prisoner's progress **78**

### TEAM ENGAGE

**Star writers:** Martin Cole · Cassie Martin · Carl Laferton · Helen Thorne

**Head coach:** Martin Cole

**Kit designer:** Steve Devane

**Cheerleading proof-readers:** Anne Woodcock · Nicole Carter

# Ephesians

## Big big stuff

How's your relationship with God? Are you zooming along or do you feel like you're stuck in a rut, going nowhere? Whichever is true, Ephesians is the book for you. It's a letter Paul wrote around 60AD to a church in Ephesus (in what is now Turkey).

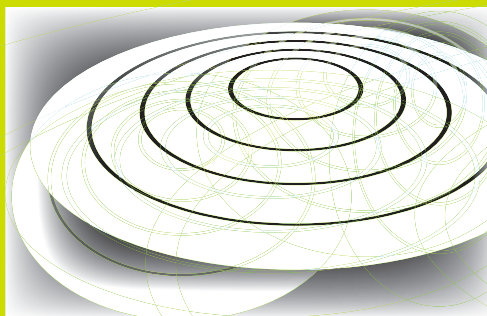
Here are three reasons why Ephesians could change your life:

### 1. THE BIG PICTURE

Paul opens our eyes to the great plan of God, which started before time began and will continue forever. Paul will reveal to us God's big purposes and show us where Christians fit into His perfect plan. Get ready to have your horizons expanded.

### 2. BIG TRUTH

Ephesians will help you get your head round what makes Jesus' death on the cross so important. It will show you Jesus' role in God's plan. It will show you what the Holy Spirit does.



And it will reveal to you God's plans for His people.

### 3. BIG WAY OF LIFE

Paul gives us practical advice on how to live for God in our down-to-earth daily lives. He helps us out of the rut and pushes us forward on God's tracks.

Ephesians divides neatly into two halves. Chapters 1–3 reveal God's plans to create a new people. Chapters 4–6 talk about how God's people should now live. This book is full of life-changing stuff. So what are you waiting for?



## 1

## Simply the blessed

**Ever opened a cupboard so full of stuff that it piles out and falls on your head? Well, the first chapter of Ephesians is like that — it's stuffed full of truths about God that are almost too much to take in.**

**Read Ephesians 1 v 1–2****ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

▷ *How does Paul describe himself?*

▷ *And what two phrases describe the Christians in Ephesus? (v1)*

Did you notice the words *grace* and *peace* in v2? Well, keep your eyes open, as both appear loads of times in this letter as major themes. Paul calls himself an apostle of Jesus — someone sent out by God to tell people about Jesus. He describes the Ephesian Christians as ‘saints’. That doesn’t mean they all have their own special day and bring people luck. “*Saints*” means “holy ones, set aside to serve God”. All Christians are saints!

**Read verses 3–6**

▷ *Why is God worth shouting about? (v3)*

▷ *What has God done exactly? (v4–6)*

Paul doesn’t hold back — he hits us with the big stuff right away. God has given us great blessings (privileges). In fact, Paul says we’ve got all of them (v3). Not one is held back from us. For a glimpse of all that God has done for us, read through verses 4–14. It’s mind-blowing.

These blessings are for God’s people, Christians. We’ve not earned them; they’re a free gift (v6). Before the universe began, God chose us to be His people (v4). In fact, Christians can call themselves God’s sons and daughters (v5). What a privilege.

**PRAY ABOUT IT**

All of this was made possible by Jesus. Spend time now reading through v1–6 and praising God for all He has done for His people.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

God blesses His people. Loads.

**TAKE IT FURTHER**

More blessings on page 108.



## 2

## Perfect plan

**Paul is so excited about all that God has done, is doing and will do for His people. He's so fired up that (in the original Greek) v3–14 are one long, 200-word sentence! Join in with the excitement.**

## Read Ephesians 1 v 7–10

## ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

▷ *What has Jesus' death achieved?* (v7)

▷ *What is God's big plan?* (v10)

Christians have so much to thank God for. He redeemed them — bought them back from slavery to sin. It cost the life of His Son. And look what it gave us — true forgiveness. And God even let us in on His perfect plan that will end in Jesus ruling over a new heaven and a new earth. One day, the whole universe will worship Jesus as King.

## Read verses 11–14

▷ *What are the steps to becoming one of God's people?* (v13)

▷ *Try putting v13–14 into your own words.*

God chose His people from the beginning of time (v11). But it still

requires us to believe that Jesus' death can save us — we must put our trust in Him (v13). Those who do are marked as belonging to God (v13). They receive His Holy Spirit, who guarantees that one day they'll receive everything God has in store for them in His new world. All of this should lead to us praising God big time (v12, v14).

## GET ON WITH IT

▷ *How should Ephesians 1 v 1–14 shape your priorities in life?*

▷ *What do you need to change?*

## PRAY ABOUT IT

▷ *Which verses make you want to praise God?*

Go on then...

## → TAKE IT FURTHER

Further plans can be found on page 108.



3

Power-filled prayer

**We've been reading about the blessings God heaps on believers. Have you grasped how great they are yet? Do you even feel like you're one of God's people? If so, do you feel privileged?**

**Read Ephesians 1 v 15–19**

**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

- ▷ *What does Paul pray for these Christians? (v17)*
- ▷ *What does Paul pray they'll know and understand? (v18–19)*

Paul was so excited to hear these guys in Ephesus had become Christians that he prayed for them all the time — that they would know God better. As Christians grow, they learn and understand more about God. They know that they'll spend eternity with Him and they can know and experience God's power working in their lives. Paul continues...

**Read verses 19–23**

- ▷ *Where is Jesus now? (v20)*
- ▷ *How would you describe Jesus' greatness? (v20–23)*

When Jesus died on the cross, God didn't just raise Him back to life;

He raised Him to a new life as ruler over everyone and everything. He is head of the church — that means all Christians. If you're a believer, Jesus is your boss.

**PRAY ABOUT IT**

Paul prays that God's people will know God's power in their lives — the power which raised Jesus from death to be head of the universe and head of God's people. Just think how that power can help us live for Him.

- ▷ *Read verses 15–19 and pray those same things for Christians you know, and for yourself.*

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

Jesus rules.

**→ TAKE IT FURTHER**

More prayer pointers on page 108.



## 4

## Amazing grace

**What makes someone a Christian?  
Can we do anything to get right with God?**

**Read Ephesians 2 v 1–7**

**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

- How does Paul describe life before being rescued by Jesus? (v1–3)*
- What has God done? (v5–6)*
- Why? (v4, v7)*

Before you trust in Jesus, you're **dead**, a slave to sin and heading towards punishment from God. It's horrible. But because God loves us so ridiculously much, He sent His Son to rescue us and give us new life. Just in case you think you deserve it, listen carefully to Paul...

**Read verses 8–10**

- How much are we responsible for this new life?*
- So how should Christians now live? (v10)*

Our new life, freedom and rescue are all down to God. We're full of sin, so we don't deserve God's love and rescue. Yet He gives it to us anyway. That's what **grace** is — God sending His Son to die for us despite us deserving His punishment. When we turn to Jesus, God makes us into something new, so that we can serve Him in great ways. It's all part of His perfect plan (v10).

**GET ON WITH IT**

Think about what God has done for you through Jesus and what He has promised to do for you in the future.

- How should this knowledge change your priorities and the way you live?*

**PRAY ABOUT IT**

Read today's verses again and then talk honestly with God, straight from your heart.

**TAKE IT FURTHER**

Find yourself on page 108.



5

Free peace, sweet!

**Jews = God's chosen people. Gentiles = everyone else. God intended the Jews to bring Gentiles to know Him. But instead they hated Gentiles, who in turn hated them. But God had other plans for them both...**

**Read Ephesians 2 v 11–13**

**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

- What used to be true for Gentiles? (v12)*
- What changed all that? (v13)*

**Read verses 14–18**

- What has Jesus done for Jews and Gentiles? (v14)*
- So what's true for all believers, whether Jew or Gentile? (v18)*

Jesus broke down the barrier that kept Gentiles far from God and at war with Jews. Jesus' purpose was to create "one new man" (v15) — a new human race, made up of Jews and Gentiles united with each other and friends with God. That's the church — God's people of all backgrounds who have access to God (v18).

**Read verses 19–22**

- Who's at the centre of God's people? (v20–21)*

- What's the great news for Christians? (v22)*

All believers are united through Christ, and are part of God's family. Jesus is at the centre of this family. Mind-blowing fact: God lives in the lives of His people, through the Holy Spirit!

**GET ON WITH IT**

- How can you get on better with believers you know who are different from you?*
- If God's Spirit lives in you, how can you be a better home for Him?*

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

Jesus brings us nearer to God and to each other.

**TAKE IT FURTHER**

Break down barriers on page 109.





## 6

## Open secret

**What's the best secret you've ever kept? What happened when you revealed it? Paul now tells us about a big secret, or "mystery". Except it hadn't been kept very secret at all...**

**Read Ephesians 3 v 1–6**

**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

*What's the mystery that has now been revealed? (v6)*

It's not a secret any more — anyone can be part of God's family and share in God's great promises. Just like Paul, we're privileged to be let in on this secret. We should thank God for these great truths.

**Read verses 7–13**

*What was Paul's job description? (v7–9)*

*What great result of Jesus' work must we remember? (v12)*

Paul was to preach the good news of Jesus to Gentiles (non-Jews) and tell everyone the role of God's people. The whole process would teach unseen spiritual beings God's great plan (v10). Incredible stuff!

**PRAY ABOUT IT**

Just as amazing is the fact that you can "approach God with freedom and confidence". How awesome is that? So what are you waiting for? Approach God freely and confidently right now, telling Him what's on your mind.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

Anyone can share in God's promises and get to know Him personally.

**TAKE IT FURTHER**

No secrets on page 109.



## 7

## Paul's powerful prayer

**Today Paul tells us some big truths about God and gives us some top tips on praying for other Christians.**

**Read Ephesians 3 v 14–21**

**ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

You're doing all the work today — figuring out what Paul is teaching us.

*First, write down what we learn about God.*

v16:

v18:

v20:

God's love is so deep, wide, long and high that it's too much for us to fully understand. Yet we can talk to this incredible God. And here's how...

**Read verses 14–21 again**

*Put into your own words what Paul prays for these Christians.*

*Strength (v16–17):*

*Love for each other (v17):*

*Knowledge (v18–19):*

**PRAY ABOUT IT**

Look back on the notes you made. Spend 5 minutes thanking and praising God for the first set of things you wrote down. Then spend a further 5 minutes, using the other stuff you wrote down, to pray for Christians you know.

**TAKE IT FURTHER**

Keep praying on page 109.



## 8

## One faith, one Lord

**We've read loads about what God has done for us. But what should we do to serve Him? And for other believers? How do we actually live as Christ-followers?**

**Read Ephesians 4 v 1–2****ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN**

**▷** *What does Paul want us to do? (v1)*

**▷** *What five qualities should Christians show? (v2)*

**GET ON WITH IT**

Next to each quality, write the name of a Christian you know and how you can show that characteristic to them.

Humble:

Gentle:

Patient:

Bearing with them:

Love:

**Read verses 3–6**

**▷** *How seriously should Christians take the issue of unity? (v3)*

**▷** *How might the qualities in v2 achieve unity among Christians?*

God's people should show unity because God is in perfect unity — Father, Son and Spirit. It won't just happen instantly, but we must keep working on showing humility, gentleness, patience and love to each other.

**PRAY ABOUT IT**

Which one of the qualities from v2 do you need most help with? Talk to God and ask for His help.

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

Christians must work at being united.

**→ TAKE IT FURTHER**

United we stand... on page 109.

