

## PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN EPHESUS: EPHESIANS Chapters 1 to 6

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The new life God gives us in our Lord Jesus Christ.</li> <li>• The importance of unity, honesty and respect in marriage.</li> <li>• Unity, honesty and respect in family, church and business life.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The power of prayer and the need to watch for answers.</li> <li>• How Satan makes spiritual war on God's people.</li> <li>• Living a holy and victorious life using the full armour of God.</li> </ul> |
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**THIS BOOK** tells us that Paul planted the church in Ephesus (Turkey) and wanted to remind them of his many teachings. Paul was a Jewish believer in the Messiah, Jesus Christ, Son of God Almighty. He wanted to remind other Jewish converts to continue to live in the new way of trust in Jesus and in the power of God's Holy Spirit. Jewish Christians and Christians from other nations were now one family of God. They should all give up their old ways of living and live, work and worship in unity, avoiding conflict. They must therefore learn to trust and serve each other. He reminded this New Testament church to remain strong against evil things that might come to test them. Paul's teaching is important for all Christians today.

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# EPHESIANS

## Paul's Letter to the Church in Ephesus

**A Bible Teaching Commentary  
for personal or group study**

**by Fred Morris**



# EPHESIANS

## Chapters 1 to 6

### To the reader or leader

These Bible commentaries explain the truth about God's Word in a way that is easy to read and understand. They are also easy to translate. You can use these books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. Each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.



**Now Read this:** Where you see this, it means you should always read the Bible passage first before reading the words in this book.



**Talk About this:** Where you see this, there are questions that can be asked in a group study. They will help the readers to understand the Bible.



**Think About this:** Where you see this sign, the question requires more time and meditation.



**Ruled boxes:** Where you see this sign, the information is additional Bible teaching mainly for students, teachers and preachers.

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Last of all, Paul makes a special request. It is not for his comfort, or for his health. He asks for the right words to say and boldness to speak for Jesus (6:19).

He reminds everyone who receives a copy of his letter that he is in prison 'held by chains'. He repeats, "Pray that I will be bold as I preach the Good News." He knew that was what he should do even at risk of death (6:20).

Paul planned to send Tychicus to the Ephesian church to let them know how he was and what he was doing (6:21). He wanted them to know how God had answered their prayers for him and his friends.

Paul wanted Tychicus to encourage the Christians at Ephesus (6:22). He sent his own prayers to them for peace, love and faith (6:23). This was his prayer at the beginning of his letter (1:2). He ended with asking God to give His grace "to everyone who loves our Lord Jesus Christ with a love that will never die" (6:24).



### Talk about this:

1. How should children and workers obey God (6:1-9)?
2. What helps us to win battles (6:10)?
3. What helps us to resist Satan's attacks on us (6:14-17)?
4. How should we pray (6:18)? Do you watch and pray to understand what God is doing?
5. Are you a bold witness for Jesus to both the saved and the unsaved (6:20; 2 Corinthians 5:20)?



### Think about this:

Are you fighting Satan in your own strength? Do you go forward in faith and believe you can win spiritual battles with the armour God has given you? Have you put on ALL God's armour? Are you praying and 'waiting on the Lord' daily?

## CONCLUSION

Paul wrote this letter to the Christians at Ephesus to remind them that they all have a totally new life because they know Jesus [as their Saviour]. Paul reminds them about all the good things that God has given them. Paul tells the church members to encourage and support one another. Today, we often think of the church as a building but in fact the people inside the building are the real church. Paul tells the Ephesians to be honest with each other, helping when things get difficult, being gentle in the things they do and say, encouraging each other, correcting at the right time, and always giving thanks to God. Finally, in Chapter 6 he tells us to make sure we protect ourselves in Christ by putting on our spiritual armour each morning.

[Ephesians 1st UK ed English 2018]

## EPHESIANS Chapters 1 to 6

### INTRODUCTION

Paul wrote this letter to Christians living in the city of Ephesus, a Roman city in Turkey. He said their city was ruled over by Satan and demonic spirits (2:2). Therefore, the Christians were at risk of being deceived by false teachings (1 Timothy 1:3-4). That is why he wrote so much to them about the power and work of God through the Holy Spirit. God's power is greater than Satan's power.

Paul wrote this letter while he was a house prisoner in Rome. He had much time to meditate and pray. He reminded his readers of the great love of God Almighty for all who accept His Son, Jesus Christ, as their Lord and Saviour. He strongly believed that God had a great plan and purpose for every follower of Jesus (2:10).

Paul explained many important Bible teachings in this letter. It was copied and sent to other churches. Paul's letter remains important for Christians today, to understand God's wonderful 'new life in Christ' and His purpose for His followers in the world. Read it with the same enthusiasm as when it was first written!

In this letter, Paul offers many opportunities for prayer, praise and thanks. He invites us to think about the 'mystery of Christ' and the 'grace of God' as well as the need to live in unity and to protect ourselves with the full armour of God.



### First read this: Ephesians Chapter 1

## SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS THROUGH CHRIST

Paul said these two things about the Christians in Ephesus (1:1):

1. They were **special** people. That is, they were now holy people of God.
2. They were **faithful** believers. That is, they trusted in Jesus as the Son of God.

Next, Paul wrote a familiar beginning to his letter:

- He claimed that he was an apostle of Christ Jesus, just as God planned. An apostle is someone sent with a message from God (1:1).
- His opening prayer for them was "May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you [His] grace and peace" (1:2).

Then, Paul eagerly told his readers the things he strongly believed about our God and Jesus our Saviour. In his original letter, verses 3 to 14 were one long sentence full of truth from God! He knew and understood the truth about God

direct from God Himself through the Holy Spirit. We can trust what he says is true.

First, Paul encouraged the Ephesian church to 'give praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ'. Why? Because we have 'every spiritual blessing'. Why? 'Because we belong to Christ' (1:3). You cannot have these blessings unless you accept Jesus as your Saviour and seek to grow in Him.

God is righteous and just. Therefore wrong doing must be punished. Sinners deserve to pay the price and die. God is also merciful so Jesus paid the price for us and died for our sins in our place.

Paul and the other New Testament writers agree:

- Everyone has sinned and is lost from God (Romans 3:23).
- Jesus came to earth and died to save us from our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3).
- His death was punishment for our sins and in our place (1 Peter 3:18).
- God's grace has saved us from the punishment we deserve, because of our faith in Jesus.



#### **God is three Persons in One:**

- God the Father who chose us before the world was created (1:4).
- God the Son, Jesus Christ, who saved us at great cost (1:7).
- God the Holy Spirit, who lives in us and has made us part of God's family (1:13-14)

Paul believed these things. He taught these truths from God in his letters.

### **GOD CHOSE US TO BE HIS HOLY SONS AND DAUGHTERS**

Paul reminded the Ephesians about the great mystery of God who blesses us so much. He said:

- "God chose us to belong to Christ before the world was created" (1:4).
- "He chose us to be holy and without blame in his eyes. He loved us" (1:4).
- "God chose us to have new life in Him. He adopted us as his children" (1:5).

Paul said, 'All those things bring praise to His glorious grace' because of His love for Jesus (1:6).

God chose to have sons and daughters who love and obey Him. He chose them to be holy and blameless like Himself. Without blame means to be without sin.

When He first calls us, we have no faith in God. He takes the first step toward us. He gives us a longing to know Him and adds faith so that we can believe in Him. That is God's grace, His free gift of love and mercy.

- *The shield of faith.* The Roman shield turned aside all arrows from the enemy. It was large enough to protect the whole body. Paul compared Satan's attacks to flaming arrows. When we lift up our shield of faith we can trust in God's power to protect us.
- *The helmet of salvation.* The helmet stops the enemy from destroying us by attacking the head and our mind. Our salvation leads to eternal life which Satan cannot take away from us.
- *The sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.* The soldier took up his sword only when he was in danger. It is used to attack and to defend. The Bible is like a sword and our greatest weapon against Satan. We stand firm and use the Word of God against him. God's word defeats Satan. Speak God's truth in Jesus and Satan will withdraw (James 4:7).

Notice that Paul requests his readers to put on ALL God's armour (6:11,13). We are often weak in body, mind or spirit. We need each piece of God's spiritual armour. If one piece is missing, then Satan will find a way in to attack us.

### **WATCH AND PRAY**

Paul warned, "At all times, pray by the power of the Spirit ... Be watchful ... Always keep on praying for all of the Lord's people" (6:18).

It is easy to fall asleep or think of wrong things while praying. The enemy makes us feel tired and we lose our concentration. The disciples of Jesus fell asleep instead of watching and praying (Matthew 26:40-41). We must watch and pray and listen as we sit, kneel, walk or stand.

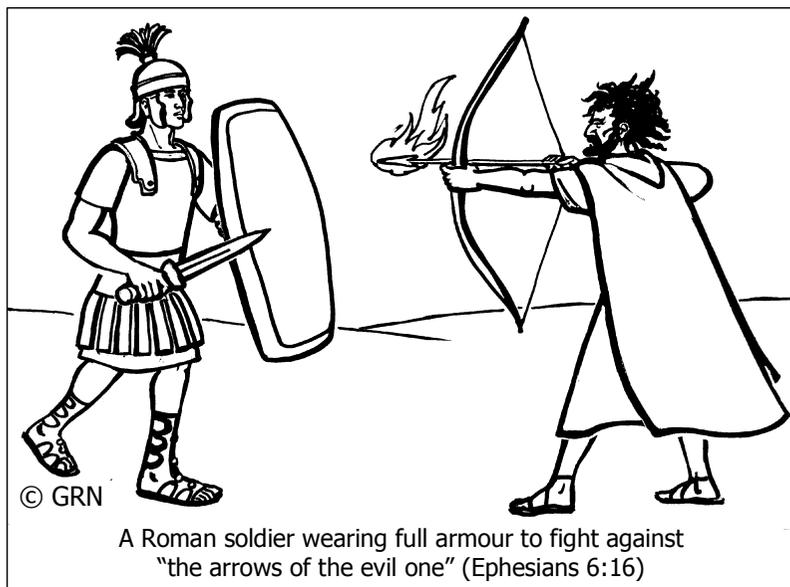
If possible, find a time and a place to pray where you can speak to God alone in silence or aloud (Matthew 6:6). Jesus did this often. Listen as you pray and expect God to answer your prayer. His answer may be:

- "No. This is not My will."
- "Not now. Be patient and wait."
- "Yes. Go and step forward in faith."

Paul also said, "Pray all kinds of prayers" (Ephesians 6:18). So be ready to expect all kinds of answers!

We are often weak or slow to understand what God wants. The Holy Spirit knows our weak minds and bodies and He keeps on helping us when we confess our weakness. He prays for us, He prays with us, and He prays through us. He is our powerful partner in prayer. He brings prayers to our minds. He gives us strength to keep praying. He tells us what God's will is. He helps us to say 'no' to our own selfish will. He searches our hearts (1 Corinthians 2:10-12). We do not know how He works 'all things together for good' for people who love Him (Romans 8:28) but God promises to do this for us when we love Him and are doing His will.

We must put on the full armour of God for ourselves. God does not put it on for us. Kneel in prayer; open your heart; read your Bible; listen for God to speak; ask Him to fill you with His Spirit. Paul said, "Our fight is not against human beings... It is against the spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 6:12).



A Roman soldier wearing full armour to fight against "the arrows of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16)

Paul described the different pieces of armour worn by Roman soldiers. He did this to explain each piece of spiritual armour we need from God to win the battle of faith (6:14-17):

- *The belt of truth.* A belt held the soldier's cloak tightly round him. It held some of the other pieces of armour in place. Our armour enables us to be free to move but ready to resist the lies of the enemy with the truth from God. Reading the Bible confirms God's truth within us and makes us ready to defend our faith and overcome doubts and fears.
- *The breastplate of God's righteousness.* In faith, we receive and put on His righteousness. Let us never doubt that we have been made righteous in the sight of God through the sacrifice of His Son for our sins. Satan tries to make us feel weak and unworthy. We must always remember that God has made us righteous because Jesus was punished in our place for our sin.
- *Feet fitted with sandals, shoes or boots to take the Good News of peace everywhere.* Christians know the Good News of Jesus Christ and carry it in their heart. They are sure of what Jesus has done for them and must be prepared to take the message of God to all people.

God did all this for us because He is rich in grace. "We have been set free because of what Christ has done. Because he bled and died, our sins have been forgiven." In Him we have been spared the punishment we deserve (1:7).

Because God loves us, He wants freely to give us His blessings through Jesus from Heaven. He does not hold anything back from those who trust Him. "By giving us great wisdom and understanding, he has shown us the mystery of his plan... It was what he had planned through Christ" (1:8-9).

Sin keeps us away from God and His blessings, so He sent Jesus to save us from the punishment for sin. His death on the cross was the punishment for our sin. When we repent and believe this, God forgives our sins. Through Jesus, we are freed from punishment for sin. In another letter, Paul wrote, "Those who belong to Christ Jesus are no longer condemned [found guilty] by God" (Romans 8:1). And "Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5).

### WHAT HAPPENED WHEN CHRIST WAS PREACHED IN EPHEBUS

Paul preached this Good News about Jesus when he was in Ephesus. Read what happened there (Acts 19:11-41). Sick people were healed. Evil spirits (demons) were ordered to leave in the name of Jesus. Many came to Paul and openly confessed their evil deeds. People who had practised witchcraft brought their charms and books and burned them in the city square (Acts 19:11-20). Many people stopped buying silver idols of Diana, a pagan goddess. This made the merchants angry and they started a riot (Acts 19:23-41).

In his letter to the Ephesian church, Paul reminds the believers, "We were ... chosen to belong to God." This was part of His plan long ago. Paul adds, "He works out everything to fit his plan and purpose" (1:11).

The moment they believed, every good thing was theirs through Jesus. Forever after, they were 'chosen to bring praise to God's glory' (1:12). Even their lives brought Him praise! The Christians in Ephesus were some of the first outside of Israel to believe in Jesus.

The temple of Diana, a heathen goddess, stood over the city of Ephesus. Many worshipped Diana. The Ephesians thought that the idol-goddess Diana would help them, and Satan tricked many into believing this.

Paul knew that gods made by man were not good for anything. All idol worship is Satan worship and behind every idol there are demon spirits. Demons often enter the person who worships the idol. The demon spirits cause fear, anger, sickness and many other bad things that happen to people who worship idols.

When Paul preached in Ephesus, many people believed in Jesus. "You also became believers in Christ. That happened when you heard the message of truth. It was the Good News about how you could be saved" (1:13).

## THEY RECEIVED A NEW BIRTH

Long ago, God's plan was unclear, even to His prophets. They looked in the Old Testament, trying to find the time and the place where Messiah would be born (1 Peter 1:10). Then Jesus came and made God's plan clear (Hebrews 1:1-2). "He made known to us the mystery of His will" (Ephesians 1:9). When we believed, God gave us His Holy Spirit that He promised (1:13). The Holy Spirit, living in our hearts, helps us to understand God's plan fulfilled in Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:12).

When a person believes and turns from their old life of sin, God's Spirit gives them a new birth (John 3:3). This is not a physical birth, but a birth by God's Spirit.

Look at the parts of verse (1:13):

- "When you heard..." You must **hear** the Good News and understand it clearly.
- "When you believed..." God's gift of **faith** takes root in your heart when you understand and believe.
- "When you received the promised Holy Spirit..." The **power** of the Spirit comes into your life.

When we understand and repent and believe, we are marked as part of God's family by the Holy Spirit. Paul says that God gives the Holy Spirit as a mark or sign to all who believe in Jesus (Romans 8:9). We are then born again and begin to reject the old life. We begin to seek the peace and purpose and provision of God in our new life. "The Spirit marks us as God's own... All these things will bring praise to His glory" (Ephesians 1:14).

Long ago, God's prophets said that His Spirit would come to live in those who believed (Joel 2:28-32). Jesus gave His disciples the same promise (John 14:16,17). God sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4). The Holy Spirit brings the blessings God gives us if we remain faithful to Him (2 Corinthians 1:22).

In the Old Testament, they were saved by obeying God and His laws through faith. In the New Testament salvation is through faith in Jesus and receiving and obeying His Spirit.

## PAUL THANKS GOD FOR THE BELIEVERS

While in prison in Rome, Paul said to the Ephesians, "I have heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus. I have also heard about your love for all God's people. I have not stopped thanking God for you" (1:15-16). He knew that they had

Paul added, "Fathers, do not make your children angry. Instead, instruct them and teach them the ways of the Lord" (6:4). Fathers are responsible to God for training and discipline in the home. They must not be harsh with their children; they should be kind but firm and fair. Do not lose patience with your children and do not have favourites.

All children need rules to live by. God's rules are the best ones. It is very important to train our children in the 'ways of the Lord' (2 Timothy 3:16), with parent and child working together. This brings God's peace to the home and in life.

Paul also taught, "Slaves, obey your masters... Respect them and honour them with a heart that is true [sincere]" (6:5). Many Christian families owned slaves at the time of Paul. Some slaves became Christians. They were part of the family. Some Christian slaves served heathen masters. Some masters treated them kindly and some harshly. Paul told these slaves, "Obey them just as you would obey Christ" (6:5).

Paul also called Christians 'slaves of Christ'. He said, "Be sure your heart does what God wants" (6:6). "Work as serving the Lord, and not as serving people" (6:7). God blesses all labour and service He has asked us to serve Him at home, in the church and in work places.

Paul told Christian masters to treat their slaves or workers fairly and equally, in the same way. He said that "God treats everyone the same" (6:9).

## FIGHT AGAINST SATAN WITH THE FULL ARMOUR OF GOD

Finally, Paul instructed his readers, "Let the Lord make you strong. Depend on His mighty power" (6:10). Satan is our enemy. We are fighting a spiritual war. This verse is the start of Paul's description of Christians in battle with Satan and His demons. Every soldier of Christ faces Satan's 'spiritual forces of evil' and their 'flaming arrows' (2:2; 6:16).

Faith in the power of the Lord will win battles. What also helps us to fight these evil powers in our daily battles?

Paul said that every believer must put on the full armour of God. "Then you can stand firm against the devil's evil plans" (6:11). Jesus is our spiritual armour. He is our salvation and truth. He is our righteousness.

When we are 'clothed in Christ', we are protected from Satan's attacks and his evil plans. We stand with Christ against everything that is evil. Paul says in another letter that we must "put on the Lord Jesus Christ as if He were our clothing. Do not think about how to satisfy sinful desires!" (Romans 13:14). We must therefore reject sin every day or the enemy will win the fight. He attacks us all the time. God gives us our spiritual clothes or armour to protect us and we have the power of the Holy Spirit to help us.

church that is holy and without blame. In the same way, husbands should love their wives" (5:27-28).

The members of the church at Ephesus accepted the teaching from the Old Testament about marriage. They knew that "a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. The two will become one" (5:31; Genesis 2:24).

Paul says it is a deep mystery that a man will leave his father and mother to be joined to his wife. In the same way, it is a mystery about Christ and the church (5:31-32).

Paul therefore reminds husbands and wives to love and respect each other (5:33). This is a self-sacrificing love usually seen only among Christians. True love is putting the other person's needs before our own needs. This is Paul's guidance for successful marriages, successful friendship and successful churches.

### **Talk about this:**

1. What must we do to shine with the light of God and avoid His anger (5:1-14)?
2. How do we use every opportunity to do what God wants us to do (5:15-20)?
3. How can we serve others in the church? (5:21)?
4. How is the relationship between Jesus and the Christian church like the relationship between a husband and wife (5:22-29)? What does this teach us about life in the church and also at home and at work?

### **Think about this:**

How can I truly serve those I live with, worship with and work with? How can I bless others with words and songs that give thanks to God for everything (5:19-20)?

### **Now read: Ephesians Chapter 6**

#### **HOW CHILDREN AND WORKERS CAN PLEASE GOD**

After Paul wrote advice for Christian parents, he wrote about their children. Children should obey their parents 'as believers in the Lord' to please God (6:1). This brings His blessing. Paul quoted "Honour your father and mother" from God's commandment given to Moses. It is one of the Ten Commandments with a promise: "Things will go well with you. You will live a long time" (6:2-3; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). Children in Israel were taught that if they obeyed their parents, God will bless them and give them a long life.

heard, believed and received His message and he wanted them to have more blessings from God. He gave thanks to God for these Christians in Ephesus and prayed for them:

- He asked God to give them 'the wisdom and understanding that come from the Holy Spirit' (1:17).
- "I want you to know God better" (1:17).
- "I pray that you may understand more clearly ... the hope God has chosen you to receive" (1:18).
- He asked that they would 'know that the things that God's people will receive are rich and glorious' (1:18).
- He asked for all who believe in Jesus to 'know God's great power' (1:19).

Paul wanted these Christian believers to understand all that God had done for them. He wanted them to praise God with hearts filled with the Holy Spirit. They knew God, but they needed to know Him better. Even Moses, the great man of God, cried out to know Almighty God better (Exodus 33:13).

Before, Satan had blinded their eyes (2 Corinthians 4:4), but now, the Holy Spirit opened them. They understood the great mysteries of God:

- He gives us great hope.
- He calls us His family.
- His great power works in our lives.

God's power in us is like the resurrection power that raised Jesus from death. And this power is 'for us who believe' today (1:19).

When we preach the Good News of the Gospel, God's power can break Satan's power in the lives of people when they believe (Romans 1:16). God wants to work in us and through us to bless others.

#### **WE ALL NEED GOD'S POWER**

God the Father glorified His Son, Jesus Christ, by raising Him from the dead and now Jesus is with His Father in Heaven (Ephesians 1:20; Hebrews 1:3). "God placed all things under Christ's rule. He appointed him to be ruler over everything for the church. The church is Christ's body" (1:22-23).

God gave Adam and Eve authority to rule over everything He created. When Adam sinned, mankind lost this authority. Satan took it from us. Now Satan has power over people and nations. He is 'the prince of this world' (John 12:31). Beware, Satan rules over all those who do not follow Jesus.

Jesus broke Satan's power. When a person truly believes that Jesus is the Son of God, Satan's power over that person is broken. All who are joined to Jesus share in His victory over Satan. Jesus protects us and our homes and

families when believers follow Him. Jesus overcomes evil spirits and we rejoice because Jesus has won the victory! (1 John 5:4-5).

As God in human form, He (Jesus) humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. God lifted Him up and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow down to worship... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (based on Philippians 2:8-11).

Satan and his demon spirits controlled the city of Ephesus. Tradesmen and citizens worshipped idols and ate the food offered to them. At their feasts people got drunk and men had sex with temple girls (Acts 19:23-34). Paul knew how much the Christians needed the Holy Spirit's power to keep them from these sins. The Holy Spirit gives Christians the power to say no to seducing and deceiving spirits and other evils. We already have this power if we let Jesus reign in our lives (Romans 5:17). We must learn to use this power to protect our leaders, marriages, families, churches and governments from the destructive work of the enemy.

One day, all governments will submit to Jesus Christ (1:22). We may not see this happening in our world now, but God is at work to make it happen soon. God is Spirit and God's Kingdom is a spiritual Kingdom of love, justice and righteousness (John 18:36; Acts 13:41). Satan will be destroyed (Revelation 20:13).

 **Talk about this:**

1. What did Paul say about the Christians at Ephesus (1:1)?
2. How can we have every spiritual blessing (1:3-8)?
3. What was God's plan for men and women from the beginning (1:4,12)?
4. Why did Paul give thanks (1:15-16)?
5. What was Paul's prayer for Christians (1:17-19a)?
6. How could the Ephesian church have God's power to resist Satan? How can we enjoy the mighty power of God today (1:19b-22)?

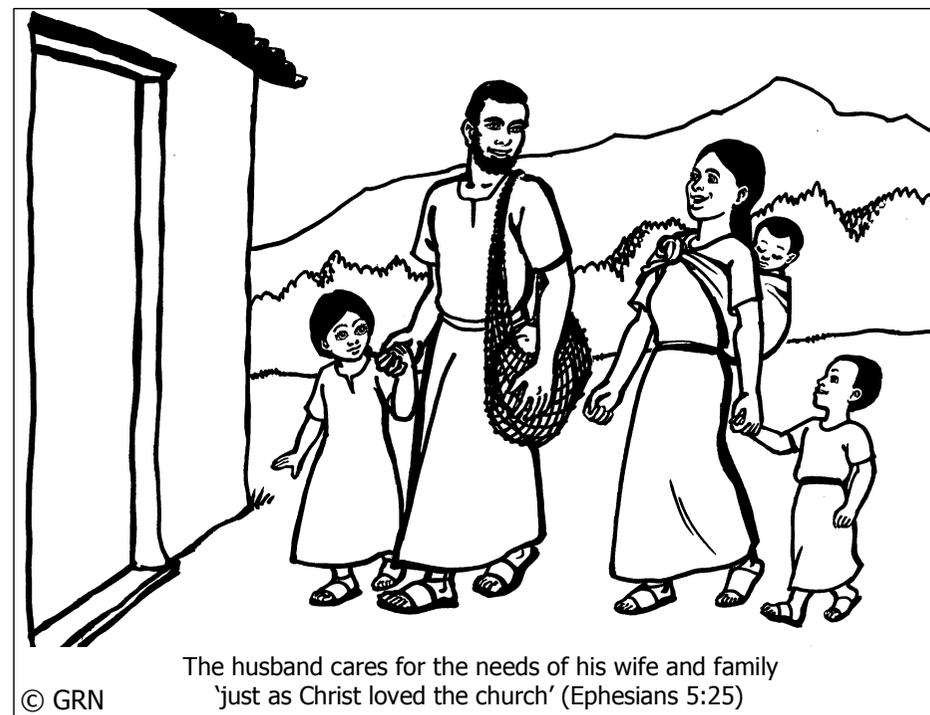
 **Think about this:**

Think about how important it is to encourage other Christians with praise, reminding them of God's purposes, giving thanks for them, with promises of prayer support. We also remind each other to remain holy in an unholy world by the power of His Spirit. Why did Christians need this power in Ephesus? Why do we need it today?

 **Now read: Ephesians Chapter 2**

Paul applied this teaching to wives and husbands. He said, "Wives, follow the lead of your husbands as you follow the Lord" (5:22). This means to respect them and submit to them as they stay committed to Jesus. This means both husbands and wives should put the other person's needs before their own needs.

The husband in Christ is given authority over the wife for the benefit of the family. In the same way, Jesus is the head of the church family of believers and died for the benefit of its members (5:23).



Paul knew there could be no peace in the churches if there was no peace between wives and husbands. Paul also said we should submit to parents (6:1) and to employers (6:5). It is also important for church members to have peace with other church members and with church leaders: and between servants and their masters as well as between workers and their bosses.

Paul said, "Husbands, love your wives. Love them just as Christ loved the church. He gave himself up for her. He did it to make her holy" (5:25-26).

God holds the husband responsible for leading his family. He has a responsibility to care for them, not to crush or to control them. It means husbands loving wives as Christ loves the church and sacrificed Himself for her. Men often fail to do this, but that is the aim. Paul said, "He [Christ] wants a

## MAKE THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY

Paul said again and again, "Be very careful how you live your life" (4:1,17; 5:2,8,15). He explained, "Make the most of every opportunity. The days are evil. Do not be foolish... Understand what the Lord wants [you to do]" (5:16-17).

Paul warned, "Do not fill yourself up with wine... Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit" (5:18). Speak from the Spirit of Christ within you and 'sing from your heart to the Lord' (5:19).

Be wise and be true to Jesus. Paul said in another letter, "Don't be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21). So, to please God we must:

- keep away from evil;
- expose it when we find it;
- do good;
- stop doing foolish things that anger God;
- understand what the Lord's will is for us;
- be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does not come to fill an empty space, but to fulfil a life which has received Jesus. We must be under His control every day. God said we are to ask for this control of Holy Spirit power in our lives (Luke 11:13). We should keep on asking. We come often, we come boldly, we come asking: that pleases our Father (Hebrews 10:19-22).

So, let us speak and sing from the heart, 'always giving thanks to God the Father for everything... in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ' (5:20).



### **Believers who are guided by the Holy Spirit:**

- sing praises to God and to each other (5:19);
  - give thanks always (5:20);
  - submit to other Christians (5:21).
- Oswald Sanders (OMF), adapted*

## RESPECT BETWEEN WIVES, HUSBANDS, FAMILIES AND CHURCH MEMBERS

Next, Paul gave advice about being humble. "Follow the lead of one another. [Do this] because of your respect for Christ" (5:21). Paul warned against trying to control others in the fellowship. This causes division. Instead, respect and follow the spiritual leadership of others. This is what it means to serve one another in love.

## MADE ALIVE THROUGH NEW LIFE IN JESUS

Before Jesus saved the Ephesian Christians:

- They were living in their sins and far from God (2:1); they were spiritually dead.
- They disobeyed God and followed the evil ways of the world; they 'served the one who rules over the spiritual forces of evil' (2:2).

Satan stops people from seeing the truth. He does this so that he can keep them as slaves. All who do not trust in Jesus are slaves to their own sinful nature. They cannot change the way they live. They need to hear God's truth and believe His Good News about Jesus. He is the only One who can change us.

## POWER OVER SATAN AND DEMONS

All of us lived sinful lives at one time. We 'followed our [sinful] desires and thoughts' (2:3). Jesus sets Satan's slaves free. Satan is angry about this and goes around making trouble (1 Peter 5:8). You won't see him, for he is a spirit, ruling over the angels of darkness. Satan's demons are very busy at work in the lives of people who do not obey God. They make people ill and violent and confused. Satan is a cruel master.

Jesus cast out demons with a word; His apostles did, too. His followers have the same authority to speak God's word and resist Satan in the name of Jesus (6:11).

When we followed the wrong ways of the world, God was angry with us (2:3). "But God loves us deeply. He is full of mercy" (2:4).

## WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE, NOT BY ANY GOOD WORKS WE DO

God has therefore given us authority over Satan through Jesus. "Jesus is ruler over everything for the church" (1:22). "God is full of mercy" (2:4). Because of this, Paul wrote, "He gave us life even when we were [spiritually] dead in sin. God's grace has saved you" (2:5).

It was God's love and mercy that saved Paul and then sent him to Ephesus. He went there to preach the Good News. When people hear the Good News of Jesus and receive it, He sets them free from sin. Many in Ephesus believed the Good News and were saved.

The truth from God reveals the darkness in people's souls. It brings the light of Jesus to them (2:5-6):

- It gives men and women new life in Jesus.
- It frees them from the power of death caused by sin.
- It promises them a place with Jesus in His Kingdom.

His grace is shown to us 'because of what Christ Jesus has done' (2:7).

"God's grace has saved you through faith in Christ." These are Paul's amazing words describing salvation (2:5,8). He adds, "It is God's gift" (2:8). God did this work, when no-one else could. "He saved us from the kingdom of darkness. He has brought us into the Kingdom of the Son He loves" (Colossians 1:13).

Two things worked together. First, God's grace came to these sinners. Then, when they heard the truth, faith rose up in their hearts and they believed (Romans 10:10; Hebrews 4:1). The Christians in Ephesus were not saved because of anything good they did to earn salvation. No-one could say, "Look what I have done!"

A sinner cannot change himself. We try hard. We want to look good and appear holy, but God sees our hearts and reads our thoughts. We are saved and made holy when we believe that Jesus Christ alone has saved us. Paul calls this God's grace. "Your salvation does not come from anything [good works] you do" (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is through faith in God's grace alone that we may enter His Kingdom. However, "God created us to belong to Christ Jesus. Now we can do [His] good works. Long ago God prepared these works for us to do" (2:10).

It is faith in God's grace through Jesus alone that enables us to receive His salvation and do good works to extend His Kingdom. Paul's last words in this letter ask for God's grace to be given to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ (6:24).

### ONE NEW FAMILY IN CHRIST

In verses 11 to 13, Paul writes to the Christians who were Gentiles, not Jews. They were often called 'the uncircumcised believers' by the Jewish Christians (2:11). Paul, a Jew, now fully believed that circumcision, the special mark of the Jews, was not required for other believers. He also wanted the Gentile believers to remember what faith in Jesus had saved them from (2:12). They had been:

- **separated** from the Almighty God of Israel;
- **outside** the family of Israel;
- **excluded** from God's Old Testament covenants of promise;
- **without hope** of God's salvation in the world of sin.

### **Talk about this:**

1. What is this new life Paul talks about (4:23)?
2. How can we control our tongues (4:25)?
3. What does forgiveness achieve (4:26-27)?
4. How should Christians talk to others (4:29)?
5. How do we upset the Holy Spirit (4:30)?

### **Think about this:**

Consider praying daily for repentance and forgiveness in your life and in your church fellowship so that the Holy Spirit can be in control and bring renewal and revival, for the glory of God. Consider reading the Word of God daily.

### **Now read: Ephesians Chapter 5**

#### LIVING IN AND REFLECTING THE LIGHT

Paul said to the Ephesian Christians, "You are the children that God dearly loves. So, follow His example" (5:1). In this way, you will become more and more like Jesus as you let the Holy Spirit work in your life. This will help you to 'lead a life of love, just as Christ did' (5:2).

Then Paul listed some of their past sins (5:3-5). Like us, they had to leave these behind and live as God's holy people.

Some had sinned with their bodies, others with their mouths. There must be no sexual sin. Unholy jokes and foolish talk needed to stop. In its place, they should give thanks to God for saving them (5:4). Paul knew that the Holy Spirit would change their talk as they followed Him. Any person who continued to sin would not 'share in the kingdom of Christ and of God' (5:5). He said, "God is angry with those who do not obey. Do not go with people like that" (5:6-7).

Paul continued, "At one time, you were in the dark. But now you are in the light because of what the Lord has done. Live like children of the light" (5:8). Light produces good things. Find out what good things please the Lord (5:9-10). Darkness produces nothing good. Paul said, "Everything that the light shines on becomes light. Wake up! Rise from the dead. Then Christ will shine on you" (5:13-14). These words are often read at the baptism of new believers.

The prophets of Israel told the people to let God's light shine in them. Daniel said, "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the sky. Those who lead many others to do what is right will be like the stars [and last] for ever" (Daniel 12:3). We must let our light shine in the dark to expose evil. We will reflect God's light if Jesus Christ is in our lives.

Did Paul tell Christians not to steal? Yes, he did! (4:28). We can steal in many ways: by not doing a good day's work; by borrowing and not paying back. Stop doing things that give the devil a way into your life.

Be honest and support yourself and your family and have some money left over to give to others (4:28).

Do not say evil things. Say only what is helpful to others who listen (4:29). In this way, you help to build others up in their faith.

### **DO NOT MAKE THE HOLY SPIRIT SAD**

We must stop doing things that make the Holy Spirit sad. The Holy Spirit within you is the sign to others that you belong to God who 'will set you completely free' (4:30). When we stop listening to the Holy Spirit, He withdraws from us.

Also, if we do good things without the Holy Spirit's power in our lives, we do things our way and in our own strength. Tell God you are sorry, repent of your sin and ask God for more of His Spirit (Luke 11:13).

We all need self-control. This is a fruit of God's Spirit. If you don't see any self-control in your own life or another person's life, then you can be sure there is no Spirit-control.

Do not get angry or lie or hate people (4:31). "Be kind and tender to one another" (4:32). Work hard to be kind to others. Remember these familiar words of Paul: "Forgive one another, just as God forgave you because of what Christ has done [for you]" (4:32). God forgives and we must forgive. If you do not forgive the other person, you cannot love them. Jesus said, "Make peace with your brother before you [serve] God" (Matthew 5:24). Whatever our gifts and skills are in life, be tender to others and true to God, then He will use us even more in His Kingdom.

Leaving the old ways is not a once-for-all thing. Old habits quickly come back to control us again. We have to resist them in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit. We must ask for the blood of Jesus to protect us against Satan. It is unwise to say you will never sin again. But you can say that from this day you choose to follow Jesus with more determination. Amen!

Many years before Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he wrote these words to the Christians in Rome. "Do not give any part of yourself to serve sin. Do not let any part of yourself be used to do evil. Instead, give yourselves to God. You have been brought from death to life. Give every part of yourself to God to do what is right. Sin will no longer control you... God's grace has set you free" (Romans 6:13-14).

All this changed for those Gentiles who trusted in Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. "You were far away from God. But now you belong to Christ Jesus", Paul said (2:13). "He spilled His blood for you. This has brought you near to God." Therefore, God says: "I will also make you a light for the Gentiles" (Isaiah 49:60).

God is holy and sinners cannot come near Him. But the blood of Jesus covered over their sins and made them holy in God's sight. Jewish converts and the believers who were not Jews were now joined together in Jesus. All followers of Jesus are no longer separated from God.

Paul states that 'Christ Himself is our peace'. He makes peace between God and mankind and between Jewish and Gentile believers from other nations. He makes peace between all who believe Jesus is the Son of God, whatever their religious background. He makes them into "one new group of people. He has destroyed the hatred that was like a wall between us. He wanted to make peace between them" (2:14-15).

In another letter, Paul spoke of the rich heritage of the Jews: they were God's people, they had His glory, His laws, His covenants, His Temple, His promises, His patriarchs (Romans 9:4). Now Jesus brings believers together as 'one body' in Him.

In Jesus, different groups around the world are made into one new group of people. We become one group or family when the dividing wall of hatred is broken down. Paul said, "Christ put hatred to death on the cross" (Ephesians 2:16). In Jesus, we are all equal before God. When we come together in Jesus there is no spiritual difference between Jew or Greek, male or female. Paul believed strongly that it is God's plan to unite Jews and Christians. We are all united in Christ Jesus through the cross (Galatians 3:26-28). Therefore, exiles, migrants and aliens all have unity with other believers.

Christians are 'one body'. This body of Christ is the whole group of church believers (Ephesians 1:23). God welcomes Jewish and Greek (Gentile) converts, and Christians from every nation. He accepts men and women, young and old, educated and disabled, popular and strangers. He sees a new community of believers with faith in Jesus as Son of God. We are the family of God. So, let us welcome believers from near and far, even if their faith and knowledge is not fully grown. But beware of those claiming to be believers whose spirits are not controlled by God (2:2).

### **JESUS PREACHED PEACE**

God planned to bring all believers as one body back to Himself through the cross. Christ put any hatred to death on that cross. Paul then wrote more words for the Gentile believers. He said, "Jesus came and preached peace. He

preached peace to you who were far away from God" (2:17). To the Jewish Christians Paul said, "He also preached peace to you who were near God."

Paul and others went to Ephesus and preached the Good News about Jesus to all. The apostles taught and shared about Jesus when there were few Christians. These believers laid for us the foundation of the New Testament church of believers. These people were called by God.

In Christ, people are united with God and to one another. Jesus took away the barrier between God and mankind and made peace. As each one is at peace with God, so we can be at peace with other Christians. This was the prayer of Jesus. "Father, I pray they will be one, just as you are in Me and I am in you" (John 17:21).

Paul said that through Jesus we all come to the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit (2:18). Because of this, those believers who are not Jews are no longer strangers to God but members of God's family (2:19).

We carry this same message of peace. The United Nations may try to bring peace to countries where there is hatred between people groups, but only Jesus, the Prince of Peace, can give lasting peace (Isaiah 9:6).

### **"YOU ARE A HOUSE ... WHERE GOD LIVES"**

The Christians at Ephesus were centred around the most important person, Jesus Christ. He is the foundation that the prophets and apostles had laid (2:20-21). The Old Testament prophets spoke about God's promised Messiah. The New Testament apostles preached this same Messiah to all the world. They laid the spiritual foundation of today's Christian church. Jesus is described by Paul as the chief foundation stone called the corner stone.

As you read this, Jesus is building His church spiritually. He is adding to it men and women from every nation, tribe and language (Revelations 5:9). Paul said that the Christians at Ephesus were "being made into a house where God lives through His Spirit" (2:22; 1 Corinthians 3:16). Paul understood that God's people are like a holy temple. It includes believers on earth together with the saints who have gone to Heaven.



#### **Talk about this:**

1. How can we be certain that we have new life in Jesus (2:4-5)?
2. How does God's Good News of Jesus change us and build us up spiritually (2:6)?
3. How are we saved (2:8-9)?
4. What did God plan long ago through His grace and through our faith (2:10)?

In Christ's body:

- each part is joined to the other (4:16);
- each part needs the other (Romans 12:5);
- each part does its own work (3:11-13);
- each part cares for the other (Galatians 6:2).

Jesus brought God's grace to mankind (4:7; John 1:14). Grace is when God reaches out in love to sinners who do not deserve His mercy (Romans 5:8).

### **TEACHING HOW TO LIVE A NEW LIFE**

Next Paul warns the Ephesian church not to live as they did before they believed (4:17). At the time of Paul, most of the people in the nations did not believe in the one true Almighty God of Israel. They worshipped false gods and idols. They were unholy and their thoughts were useless. They did not know God or understand His truth. They were stubborn and sinful. They had lost 'all feeling of what is right'. They were full of greed (4:18-19).

Paul reminded them, "That is not the way of life in Christ that you learned about... What you learned was the truth about Jesus. You were taught to renew your thinking. You were taught to start living a new life... truly good and holy, just as God is" (4:20-24). It is the life created in the image of God. Renewing the mind comes through dying to your old sinful life and being born again by the Holy Spirit. It also comes through reading the Bible and asking the Spirit to give you divine understanding.

God calls us to live in the light, seeking His will and to be free from sin in our spirits. We must think godly thoughts and follow His Son Jesus. That is what God created us for. We do this by God's grace and the Holy Spirit living in us.

The tongue is the last part of our body to be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit (James 3:6). So, Paul warns us to stop lying but speak only the truth to our neighbours and others who respect God (Ephesians 4:25).

Ask God to help you control what you say. Encourage others with your words. Every time you meet another Christian, talk about Jesus and what He has done for you (Malachi 3:16). Share a Bible verse.

When you are angry, be humble, loving and forgiving. "Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry" (Ephesians 4:26). If you feel your brother or sister has done something against you, go to them and tell them, "I forgive you". This will set your spirit free. Many try to hide their hurts, but God sees and knows them. "Do not give the devil a chance" (4:27).

1. one body
2. one Spirit
3. one hope
4. one Lord
5. one faith
6. one baptism
7. one Father

Paul prayed earlier to the Father (3:16-19):

- that they will have strong faith
- that they will know how rich they are in Christ
- that Jesus will dwell deep in them by His Spirit
- that the love of Jesus will be rooted in their hearts
- that they will experience how great His love is
- that they will be filled with all the blessings of God.

Through the grace and mercy of God we have each received a gift. Paul says, "These gifts [of God's grace] are given to us by Christ" (4:7).

### **EACH ONE JOINED TO THE OTHER IN LOVE AND UNITY**

These gifts included apostles, prophets, preachers, pastors and teachers for the church (4:11), as well as gifts of healing and caring. Paul said, that Jesus gave us these gifts 'so that they might prepare God's people to serve' (4:12). In this way the church, which is the body of Christ, is built up, as we are united by faith. We are joined together 'in the knowledge of God's Son' (4:13).

Paul said that when we first received Jesus, we were like infants, easily deceived by false teaching and error (4:14). With the gifts of God's grace, we will "grow up in every way to become the body of Christ. Christ is the head of the body" (4:15).

We cannot make peace where there is none. God gives peace when His Spirit works in our hearts (John 14:27). As the Spirit bears fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23), so we have peace. Our peace touches others and makes them peaceful, just as our stress and fears can make others feel troubled. With Christ as the head, "He makes the whole body grow and build itself up in love" (4:16).

5. How was it possible for converts from other nations to become united with Jewish Christians (2:13)?
6. What keeps the peace (2:14)? How (2:16)? Who for (2:17)?
7. Who is the foundation for the Christian church of believers? Who helped to build the foundation (2:20)?
8. Who helps to build God's church of believers today (2:22)?



#### **Think about this:**

What divides believers today in Christ's church? What unites Christians? What is God's plan for us all (2:10)?



#### **Now read: Ephesians Chapter 3**

### **PAUL PREACHED THE 'MYSTERY OF CHRIST'**

Paul wrote, "I am a prisoner because of Jesus Christ ... and my work among you" (3:1). Paul was a Jewish believer. He suffered greatly to take the Good News of Jesus to the Jews and the other nations. Jesus Himself met Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:5). After three days Jesus sent Ananias with a message to Paul. "I have chosen this man to work for Me... I will show him how much he must suffer for Me" (9:16). Paul was a prisoner in Rome because he preached about Jesus and His resurrection.

Christians at Ephesus knew this (Ephesians 3:2). Paul told them that God showed him 'the mystery of Christ' (3:3-4). This mystery was not known before. "But now the Holy Spirit has made this mystery known to the Apostles" (3:5). The mystery was that Jews and believers from other nations would be joined together in one body, the Christian church. 'They share in the promise' (3:5-6). This was the 'mystery of Christ'. "Both groups [of believers] are parts of one body... They belong to Jesus Christ."

### **GOD SHOWS HIS WISDOM THROUGH PAUL**

Paul said "God gave me His grace... His power is at work in me. I am by far the least important of all the Lord's holy people. But he gave me the grace to preach to the non-Jews [Gentiles] about... Christ" (3:7-8).

Paul often spoke in his letters about the need for Christian unity in the New Testament churches. Satan tries to find many ways to divide Christian churches and Christian families. Paul said, "God told me to make clear to everyone how the mystery [of Christ] came about... It was kept hidden in the past in the mind of God" (3:9). In the great wisdom of God, "He has fulfilled his plan through Christ Jesus our Lord" (3:10-11). Paul believed strongly that through faith in Christ, we can approach God freely and without fear. He tells

us that this was God's plan from the beginning, worked out through Jesus Christ our Lord.

This unity of all who believe that Jesus is the Son of God brings salvation, eternal life and access to the Lord God Almighty. "Through Him [Christ] and through faith in Him, we can approach God. We can come to Him freely. We can come without fear" (3:12). This is all part of the mystery. Satan's demons know that when Christ's Good News is preached on earth, it leads to their salvation. Satan also knows the power of Christian unity. This is why he tries to destroy unity in the churches.

Paul had studied the Law of Moses all his life, but he had not fully understood God's plan. Then God's eternal purposes were revealed to him and he believed that all people and tribes can approach a holy God through Jesus. Because Jesus forgives all our sins, when we believe and repent, we can come to the Father 'freely and without fear' (Hebrews 4:16). This is why he was called to preach to Gentiles, the people from other nations who were not Jews, and bring unity of faith in God with Jewish converts through Christ alone.

### PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE EPHESIANS

Paul pleads, "Do not lose hope because I am suffering for you... I bow in prayer to the Father because of my work among you" (3:13-14). In this way, Paul worshipped God and prayed for the Christians in Ephesus.

Paul wanted these Christians – and all Christians – to live as true children of God. Paul knew we are sons and daughters of God, adopted as part of His family in Heaven and on Earth (3:15).

Paul prayed that:

- God will make us strong (3:16).
- His Holy Spirit will give us power (3:16).
- Jesus will live in our hearts through faith (3:16).

Our love will have deep roots – a strong foundation (3:17).

It was Paul's great desire that everyone will understand the love of Jesus and be filled with the fullness of God Almighty. God's Spirit shows us how wide and long and high and deep is God's love and power for us (3:18). Paul believed that we will receive everything God has planned for us (3:19).

Paul also said, "God is able to do far more than we could ever ask for or imagine. Give Him glory in the church and in Christ Jesus... through all time and forever and ever" (3:20-21).

Paul's prayer is for God's love and power to be at work within the church throughout all generations. It was a prayer of blessing for the Ephesian church and for all churches today.

God is able to do more than Paul or the Ephesians could ever imagine, and the glory belongs to God (Isaiah 42:8). God will do this work in Christians today as they come to Him through Jesus, who prays for them (Hebrews 7:25).



#### **Talk about this:**

1. What was God's special gift to Paul (3:2,7)?
2. How was Paul suffering for the Christians at Ephesus (3:13)?
3. Why did God include Gentiles in His plan of salvation (3:6, 9-11)?
4. What was Paul's constant prayer for the Christians in Ephesus (3:14-19)? How should Christians pray for each other today?



#### **Think about this:**

If God can do so much more than we imagine, what blessings should we be looking for? How do you bless God and bless others (3:20-21)?



#### **Now read: Ephesians Chapter 4**

### GROWING TOGETHER IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In the first three chapters, Paul wrote about God's plan. He said this plan was to build unity in the body of Christ with each local church. His plan was to give these men and women new lives to live with Him in Heaven.

In the last three chapters of Ephesians, Paul tells us how God's sons and daughters should live now. When these Christians said that they would follow Jesus, they agreed to a new way of life – a daily calling to follow Jesus and serve God. Our new life in Christ is for the whole of life and for ever.

"I ask you to live a life worthy of what God chose for you", Paul said (4:1). When God calls us and we answer His call, our job is to be worthy of that calling.

To be worthy of our calling, means to live to honour God. We do this as we worship God together and love, forgive and help each other. We call this 'living out the gospel message'. Our witness is seen when we are humble and gentle and patient and 'put up with [accept] each other in love' (4:2; Galatians 6:2).

Being humble is not being weak. A humble heart shows a strong spirit. A humble heart also brings unity through the Holy Spirit. Paul pleads, "Try your best to remain as one." God's peace keeps believers together (4:3). Jesus was humble (Matthew 11:29). He calls us to be the same.

Paul describes seven parts of unity with each other and with God who is over all (4:4-6):