

A NEW HUMANITY

SERIES OVERVIEW | EPHESIANS

John Stott says “the letter to the Ephesians is a marvellously concise, yet comprehensive, summary of the Christian good news and its implications. Nobody can read it without being moved by to wonder and worship, and challenged to consistency of life.”

BACKGROUND

Although Paul’s first visit to Ephesus had been brief (Acts 18:19-21), his second lasted three years (Acts 19:1-20:1, 31). During this period he taught them systematically both 'in public and from house to house', and they came to know him well. At his final parting Luke writes of the deep and mutual affection between Paul the church leaders (see Acts 20:17-38).

AUTHORSHIP

The letter establishes the author as Paul the Apostle from the outset (1:1), probably writing from prison in Rome around AD 61-62. He is God’s authorised and empowered witness to the resurrection of Jesus and as such carries the responsibility to carry the gospel to the nations (3:7-8).

It is not our intention to engage in debates over Pauline authorship though commentaries will cover such discussion. Author and commentator G.G.Findlay wrote that modern scepticism about the Pauline authorship of Ephesians will in future come to be regarded as 'one of...the curiosities of a hypercritical age'. The well known F.F.Bruce states: 'The man who could write Ephesians must have been the apostle's equal, if not his superior, in mental stature and spiritual insight...Of such a second Paul early Christian history has no knowledge.'

MESSAGE

The last phrase of Ephesians 1:10 best sums up the message of the letter: **‘to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.’** This powerful goal is the purpose behind God’s plans and purposes and the *raison d’etri* for the follower of Christ. The Apostle has both a local and universal concern as he deals with the unity between Jew and Gentile (2:11-22)

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APRIL 25

EPHESIANS 1:1-14 REDEEMED

MAY 2

EPHESIANS 1:15-23 RESURRECTED

MAY 9

EPHESIANS 2:1-10 RESTORED

MAY 16

EPHESIANS 2:11-22 RECONCILED

MAY 23

EPHESIANS 3:1-13 REVEALED

MAY 30

EPHESIANS 3:14-21 RENEWED

JUNE 6

EPHESIANS 4:1-16 REBUILT

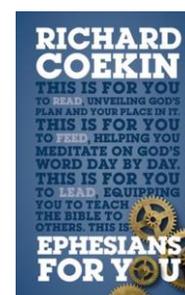
JUNE 13

EPHESIANS 4:17-5:2 REPENTANT

JUNE 20

EPHESIANS 5:3-20 REBUILT

RESOURCE



RICHARD COEKIN | EPHESIANS FOR YOU
(GOD'S WORD FOR YOU SERIES)

and at the same time calls for ‘the boundless riches of Christ’ to ‘be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms’ (3:8-9).

STRUCTURE & THEMES

Most agree that the book can be divided neatly into two halves, chs 1-3 and 4-6. Paul focuses on church doctrine in the first half and church practice in the second. The distinction should not be applied too strictly but is a helpful framework to guide us through this important letter. Our series concludes at Ephesians 5:20 and we will return to the final instructions for households at a later time.

Our sermon series (listed above) seeks to cover the riches of the gospel so that we might understand **the transformation God has made possible** through the majestic work of Christ in his death, resurrection and ascension. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is the power that is at work us who believe (1:19). The **unity** that Christ achieves is termed **a new humanity** (2:15) as Paul speaks to the power of the **reconciliation** and **peace** Christ achieves through the work of the cross. The letter will have much to say about **the new way of life** we are to enjoy as the one people of God, and urge us not to allow ungodly behaviour to divide us (4:32).

Ephesians emphasises the importance of the Christian’s **growth in knowledge** as God makes known ‘**the mystery of the gospel**’ (1:9; 6:19). Paul is not speaking about the gospel being difficult to work out, but rather something we could never work out for ourselves (3:3). This is why the letter contains two distinctive prayers for the church (1:15-22 & 3:14-21) that ask God to continue revealing himself to his people so they may grasp both **the riches** and **the reaches of Christ’s love**, which both **establishes the church** (1:22) and **equips it to grow** (3:19). The church is a holy temple in the Lord, a building in which Christ is the cornerstone in which God lives by his Spirit (2:20-22).

The contrast between **new life in Christ** and the **old life of futility** (4:17) takes up a good part of the latter half of the book as the readers are encouraged to live lives in conformity with the salvation they have received. **Maturity in Christ** is the key (4:16).

MAKING THE MOST OF THE STUDIES

Continuing our three-fold structure of *Getting Started*, *Into the Text* and *Take Away* the questions have been designed to help us to engage with the riches of God’s word and to change the way we live as a result of what we have learned. More than any other book in the New Testament Ephesians emphasizes divine disclosure. As Paul prays that ‘the eyes of your heart may be enlightened’ (1:18) so we should approach our time in the book through this term as an opportunity for growth and gain for the sake of the gospel.

Don’t feel like you have to answer all the questions. When it comes to the study of God’s word, he is more concerned for its effectiveness than your efficiency.
