



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Ephesians

| *March 16-22*

| *Ephesians 1:1-2*

Things to Know

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Studying God's Word In Community

Reminder: The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

In the opening verses of Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, he reminds believers of a foundational truth: our identity is rooted in Christ and secured by God's grace. Before addressing practical living, Paul reminds the church who they are. Their identity does not come from culture, performance, or personal achievement—it comes from being in Christ. Because we belong to Christ, we live as blessed people, united together in a new identity given by God's grace.

Who is Paul?

Paul's authority is not self-made but God-given. His apostleship is rooted in grace, not his own merit or achievements (Acts 9 conversion). Paul was a Jewish Pharisee before his conversion, trained in the law of God. After his conversion, Paul became the Apostle to the gentiles. The Ephesians first met Paul in Acts 19, where his Spirit-filled preaching disrupted idol worship and shook the city's economy. Paul writes Ephesians from prison as he is awaiting trial. Paul's authority and message were tested in a culture hostile to Christ.

Who Are the Ephesians?

Ephesus was one of the largest and most prominent cities in the 1st century. It was also the center of worship for the goddess Artemis, marking the city with idolatry, occultic magic, and power. Paul spent two years with the Ephesian church; Christians were a small minority to the growing population, and were often met with opposition, reviling, and persecution. In the midst of such cultural chaos, Revelation tells us of the believers' endurance in the midst of such trials.

What Does God Offer?

In Acts 19, Ephesus was a city of chaos — economic unrest, spiritual warfare, riots, hostility. Into that mess, Paul proclaims grace (God's unearned favor) and peace (shalom, reconciliation with God and one another). Grace and peace aren't just polite greetings; they are the gospel in summary form. What the world cannot manufacture and what we cannot earn are freely given in Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Paul starts his letter by reminding believers of who they are in Christ?
 2. How does understanding that you are "in Christ" reshape the way you see yourself?
 3. What are some identities people often build their lives around (career, success, reputation, relationships)? Why are those identities ultimately unstable?
 4. Paul addresses believers as "saints." What do you think this word means, and how is it different from how the world typically uses the term?
 5. How might forgetting God's grace affect the way someone approaches their faith or relationship with God?
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Read

Read Ephesians 1:1-2 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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Scripture

Ephesians 1:1-2

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[The Holy Bible, English Standard Version](#). ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Ephesians 1:1-2.

Living on Mission In Community

Because we are in Christ, we share a new identity and a new way of living. This new identity is not individualistic; rather, we share this identity as a collective whole. We are all connected with one another as the family of God, called to live unified in a world of sin and chaos.

Here's a Couple of Questions for Spiritual Inventory, Conversation, and Reflection:

- Spend time reflecting on what it means that you are a saint in Christ—set apart and loved by God. We will look at this more in depth next week.
- As a group, are you regularly encouraging one another and keeping each other accountable. Like the Ephesians, it would be easy to succumb to the culture around us if we are not dependent on God and one another.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
 2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
 3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*
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Leader Resources - March 16-22

Small Group Curriculum - Ephesians 1:1-2

1. Session Overview

In the greeting of his letter, Paul declares a profound reality over the believers in Ephesus- a theological declaration about the life believers now possess because they are in Christ. Everything we receive from God flows from His grace. Because of grace, believers are forgiven, adopted, and welcomed into God's family. From grace flows peace. Through Christ, the hostility between God and humanity has been removed. Believers no longer live under condemnation but in reconciliation with God.

2. Opening

Prayer:

"Lord, your grace and mercy abound in every area of our lives. We are yours, the sheep of your pasture, saints of the living God. Keep our eyes on you. Help us to live consecrated unto you, for your glory and your renown. In Jesus name, Amen. "

Icebreaker question:

Break into groups of 2-3.

Ask:

In a couple of words, define yourself. Identity directly impacts reality.

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read Ephesians 1:1-2 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1. Cultural Chaos Transcends Time and Space

We are not the first generation to live in a time of confusion, sin, and moral degradation. In fact, ancient Ephesus and present day America have a lot in common. No matter where or when we live, our aim is the same: walking faithfully with God.

2. Faith Results in Consecration

Paul addresses the people of God who have already placed their faith in Christ as “saints.” Saints means a consecrated person/people. Paul wants to make clear that our identity as a redeemed and set apart people flows from our faith in Christ.

3. We Live Under Grace and Peace

Paul greets the church with “grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Grace reminds us that our relationship with God is a gift we did not earn. Peace reminds us that through Christ we are reconciled to God and live in restored relationship with Him. While it would be easy to simply ignore this, we must never move past the fact that our Christian life centers that we have been adopted by the Father through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

5. Discussion Questions

1. In what ways is our culture similar to ancient Ephesus?
2. Why do you think Paul emphasizes believers’ identity before addressing behavior in his letter?
3. How does understanding who we are in Christ shape the way we live as Christians?
4. What practical habits help you stay aware of God’s grace in your daily life?
5. How should being blessed in Christ shape the way we respond to difficult seasons?
6. How does sharing the same identity in Christ strengthen unity within the church?
7. How might living from our identity in Christ affect the way we interact with people who do not yet know Him?

6. Application

We cannot move past these first two verses of Ephesians without making sure that you know Jesus- Paul addresses believers who have already encountered Christ. Have you?

For those of us who know Christ, Paul calls us to:

- Worship God
- Remember our Identity
- Live in His Grace and Peace

Prayer:

“Lord, we thank you that in your infinite grace and mercy, you have saved us by the death and resurrection of Jesus. Our identity flows from our confession. You are our everything, and we pray that our lives would center around who you say that we are. In Jesus name, Amen. ”

7. Memory Verse

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 1:2

8. Leader Notes

- Create a space of vulnerability.
- Point to the hope, mercy, and grace found in the gospel.
- Foster conversations on the similarities between Ephesus and today.
- Begin to discuss our identity in Christ.

