

# Paul's Prison Epistles

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## Lesson Guide

LESSON  
THREE

PAUL AND THE EPHESIANS



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## HOW TO USE THIS LESSON GUIDE

This lesson guide is designed for use in conjunction with the associated video. If you do not have access to the video, the lesson guide will also work with the audio and/or text versions of the lesson. Additionally, the video and lesson guide are intended to be used in a learning community, but they also can be used for individual study if necessary.

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- **Before you watch the lesson**
  - **Prepare** — Complete any recommended readings.
  - **Schedule viewing** — The Notes section of the lesson guide has been divided into segments that correspond to the video. Using the time codes found in parentheses beside each major division, determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may also want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
  - **Take notes** — The Notes section of the lesson guide contains a basic outline of the lesson, including the time codes for the beginning of each segment and key notes to guide you through the information. Many of the main ideas are already summarized, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
  - **Record comments and questions** — As you watch the video, you may have comments and/or questions on what you are learning. Use the margins to record your comments and questions so that you can share these with the group following the viewing session.
  - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
  - **Complete Review Questions** — Review Questions are based on the basic content of the lesson. You should answer Review Questions in the space provided. These questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
  - **Answer/discuss Application Questions** — Application Questions are questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

## Preparation

- Read the book of Ephesians.

## Notes

### I. Introduction (0:28)

### II. Background (2:35)

Paul's letters were pastoral and caring, and they spoke directly to the problems that the church faced in the first century.

#### A. Authorship (3:45)

Some modern scholars have argued that Ephesians was written by one of Paul's students, but there are good reasons to accept Paul's authorship:

- The letter states that it was written by Paul (Ephesians 1:1).
- Whenever the church discovered a letter to be a forgery, they rejected it (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).
- Ephesians closely resembles Paul's other letters in both doctrine and language.

- According to Acts 19–21, Paul had planted the church in Ephesus, and had lived in Ephesus for two years.

## **B. Audience (6:11)**

### **1. Primary Audience (6:36)**

Paul identified the church in Ephesus as his audience (Ephesians 1:1).

Ephesus was the capital city of the Roman Province of Asia.

Many details in the letter would have been particularly relevant to Ephesus:

- Paul strongly taught against “fruitless deeds of darkness” and insisted that Christians battle against false pagan gods (Ephesians 5:11; 6:11-12).
  
- Paul spoke of Christ as “feeding” or “nurturing” the church and turning the church into his “glorious,” radiant bride (Ephesians 5:27-29).

Several early church fathers testified that Paul sent this letter to the Ephesians.

“We have it on the true tradition of the Church, that this epistle was sent to the Ephesians, not to the Laodiceans” (Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, book 5 chapter 17).

## 2. **Secondary Audience (10:23)**

In the first century a number of churches grew in the Lycus Valley.

- Colosse
- Laodicea
- Hierapolis (possibly)

### a. **Unfamiliar audience**

There was a significant portion of Paul’s audience whose faith he had not seen firsthand (Ephesians 1:15; 3:2-3).

Paul letter contains no personal references, indicating that Paul wanted his letter to circulate to unfamiliar churches.

**b. Relevance**

There is evidence that Paul's letter to the Ephesians was relevant to the churches in the Lycus Valley:

- Tychicus delivered letters for Paul to Ephesus, Colosse, and possibly Laodicea (Ephesians 6:21-22; Colossians 4:7-8, 16).
- The churches in the Lycus Valley were prominent in Paul's mind during his imprisonment (Colossians 2:1; 4:12-13).
- Paul's letters to the Ephesians and Colossians address similar problems (Colossians 1:16; Ephesians 1:20-22).

**C. Purpose (18:29)**

Paul responded to the problems of several churches in different locations, many of which he had never met.

**1. Kingdom of God (19:37)**

Paul explicitly referred to God's kingdom sixteen times in his letters, and he used other royal vocabulary at least as often.



Christ's kingdom exists in the overlap of the ages:

- Present age — sin and death
- Age to come — God will pour out ultimate blessings and curses

Preaching about the kingdom of God formed the core of Paul's apostolic ministry (Acts 28:30-31).

The gospel is the message that our divine King uses his power and authority to:

- subject his enemies
- conquer sin
- redeem his people
- establish them as rulers over the new earth

When Paul instructed the Ephesians regarding the nature of the kingdom of God, he was giving them the larger picture of the gospel.

Six ways that Paul drew attention to God's kingdom in his letter to the Ephesians:

- Citizenship, 2:12, 19

In the Old Testament, God's people were organized as the kingdom of Israel.

The most valuable and well-known citizenship in Paul's day was citizenship in the Roman Empire.

- Inheritance, 1:14; 18; 5:5

Inheritance rights were only available to citizen of the kingdoms. Paul explicitly associated our inheritance with Christ's kingdom.

- Military Service, 6:10-18

War was associated most directly with the reality of life within kingdoms.

Paul's insistence that Christians engage in spiritual warfare also implied citizenship in God's kingdom.

- Rule over Creation, 1:20–2:6

Rule over creation was associated with God's kingdom.

- Source of Names, 3:15

In the Old Testament, God's people were called by his name because they were a part of his kingdom.

It was common for those who were granted Roman citizenship to take the name of their sponsor or of the emperor (Amos 9:11-12).

- Ambassador, 6:20

In both Old Testament and Roman settings, an ambassador was an official representative of the king or emperor.

## 2. **Challenges (27:33)**

Paul mentioned many challenges that faced the churches in Ephesus and the Lycus Valley:

- Sinful Nature

Paul taught that sin must not characterize the citizens of God's kingdom (5:5).

- Racial Tensions

Paul used the imagery of the kingdom of God to address racial or ethnic tension between Jews and Gentiles in the church (2:11-13).

Paul discussed the church in terms of citizenship and covenants.

Paul taught that Jews and Gentiles are reconciled to one another partly because they are now citizens in the same kingdom.

- Demonic Forces

Paul spoke against false teachers that persuaded Christians to worship spiritual powers (including demons) and the basic elements of earth, air, water and fire (2:1-2; 6:12).

### **III. Structure and Content (34:00)**

#### **A. Salutation, 1:1-2 (34:52)**

The salutation states that the letter comes from the apostle Paul, and mentions that he holds his apostleship “by the will of God.”

**B. Praise, 1:3-14 (35:20)**

This is Paul's only canonical letter in which the salutation is followed by such a section of praise to God.

Great benevolences were commonly directed by ancient kings toward their people.

Paul praised God for our inheritance in Christ.

**C. Prayer, 1:15-23 (38:34)**

The kingdom of God provides the context for Paul's prayer.

Paul mentioned God's sovereignty when he spoke of:

- The Father's "incomparably great power" and "mighty strength"
- Christ being enthroned above all other rulers

Christ shares his inheritance with us, so that his inheritance is our inheritance too.

**D. Body, 2:1–6:20 (41:40)**

The body focuses on the contrast between the righteous kingdom of God and the sinful kingdom of demons and fallen humanity.

**1. Citizenship, 2:1-22 (42:46)****• Born into the Kingdom of Darkness, 2:1-3**

The human race is sinful and fallen:

- spiritually dead
- evil natures
- God's enemies
- under God's wrath

Before God saves us, we willingly follow our sinful natures, and serve Satan, the ruler of the kingdom of the air.

**• Transferred to the Kingdom of Light, 2:4-10**

God uses his royal prerogative to transfer his people to the kingdom of light so that they can:

- be spiritually alive
- have a new nature
- serve God
- look forward to incomparable riches rather than judgment

- **Nature of Citizenship in the Kingdom of Light, 2:11-22**

God has fulfilled the Old Testament ideal of combining both Jews and Gentiles into one kingdom under God's sovereign rule.

**2. Administration, 3:1-21 (48:20)**

Just before his arrest in Jerusalem, Paul warned the Ephesian elders to guard against false teachers (Acts 20:28-30).

In Paul's day, God administered his kingdom through the office of apostle. This office no longer exists today.

The apostles possessed special grace from God that empowered their ministry and special revelation from God that taught them infallible truth (Ephesians 3:2-7).

God appointed Paul to be his apostle, making Paul's word authoritative, as if it had been spoken by God himself.

Paul prayed that the Holy Spirit would illumine the people's minds so that they would accept his authority and teaching (3:14-21).

**3. Code for Living, 4:1-6:20 (54:00)**

- **Ecclesiastical Order in the Kingdom, 4:1-16**

When each person does his or her assigned tasks, it benefits Christ. Because it benefits Christ, it benefits the whole kingdom (4:8).

Paul portrayed the Lord as a victorious king returning from battle (Psalm 68:18).

Christ has divided his gifts in ways that enable the citizens of the kingdom to serve one another.

- **Purifying the Kingdom, 4:17-5:20**

Corruption remains in the kingdom of light.



Believers within the kingdom of light have a new nature that they can rely on to overcome their sin.

God's kingdom is to be as morally pure as possible; it is to reflect the character of its king.

- **Domestic Order in the Kingdom, 5:21–6:9**

Proper relationships of authority must be maintained within all levels of Christ's kingdom.

Everyone should honor and respect those who hold positions of leadership, influence, and authority in the church.

Those in positions of leadership should work for the benefit of all.

- **Warfare of the Kingdom, 6:10-20**

Everyone in the kingdom of light is called to serve in God's army, fighting the spiritual war against the kingdom of darkness.

To make sure we can stand firm against our enemies, he suits us in his armor and arms us with his word.

**E. Final Greetings, 6:21-24 (1:00:50)**

Paul offered a closing blessing, and indicated that Tychicus would deliver this letter.

**IV. Modern Application (1:01:08)**

**A. Honoring the King (1:01:47)**

Our divine king has done many wonderful things for us. We should respond by honoring him, especially through:

- Thankfulness
- Obedience
- Loyalty

God demonstrates his love when he:

- Regenerates us
- Transfers us into his kingdom
- Places us in a position of authority and honor
- Gives us our inheritance

Love — faithfulness and devotion; expressed primarily by:

- benevolence and protection on the part of the king
- obedience and loyalty on the part of his subjects

God's faithfulness to us is demonstrated through his kindness and protection, as expressed in things like:

- Predestination
- Christ's death on our behalf
- Regeneration of our spirits
- Our citizenship in God's kingdom
- Our union with Christ the heavenly king
- The glory we will inherit in the future

Paul honored God in doxological praise by ascribing glory to him (Ephesians 3:17–4:1).

Paul exhorted his readers to honor God through their obedience, by living a worthy life.

### **1. Praise and Worship (1:05:45)**

We are to express our heartfelt gratitude in (5:19-20):

- Psalms
- Hymns
- Spiritual songs
- Music in our hearts

Paul included several models of praise for us to follow, including:

- His introductory praise (1:3-14)
- His doxological prayer (3:14-21)

## **2. Obedience (1:07:54)**

Paul taught us to render obedience to our divine king as a way of honoring him (5:8-10; 6:24).

Our love for the Lord is to be:

- Undying
- Never-ending
- Persistent
- Devoted
- Steadfast

God also created us anew in Christ so that we would be productive citizens in his kingdom, doing the good works he assigned to us (2:8-10).

## **B. Building the Kingdom (1:11:23)**

God requires that we help him expand and grow his earthly kingdom (9:19-22).

The kingdom of God is a building, with each Christian being a stone in the structure.

The goal of this building is to become God's dwelling, so that God will live in the midst of his people.

When Paul taught that both Jews and Gentiles would live in God's presence as his Temple, he meant that God's kingdom was moving toward its final goal (Isaiah 66:19-20).

The big picture:

- Honoring God
- Living in his presence
- Striving to increase Christ's glory rather than our own

We must be humble — no believer is more deserving of blessing than any other.

We must repent of:

- Wrongly dividing from one another
- Wrongly elevating ourselves to the detriment of others

We must embrace all believers as equals in the kingdom of God.

The metaphor that Paul used most frequently to explain kingdom building in Ephesians was Christ's body (4:1-16):

- Christ as the head
- All believers collectively composing Christ's body

Like the metaphor of the Temple, the image of the body described the kingdom of God:

- Christ was seated as king in heaven
- He ruled for the benefit of his people, the church

Paul's fullest use of the body imagery appears in Ephesians 4:1-16, where he argued for ecclesiastical order in the kingdom.

God has established leaders in the church who are to prepare the rest of us to minister to one another.

These leaders are to guide the church toward two goals:

- Unity in the faith
- Attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ — to bring all of creation under the rule of Christ

Love must characterize both the leader's teaching and the church's works of service.

Our love for our neighbors:

- Not merely a feeling of personal connection
- A loyal commitment and dedication that seeks their benefit

### **C. Conquering the Cosmos (1:22:53)**

God's kingdom currently co-exists with the present age of sin and death. God's forces battle against the kingdom of the demons and fallen humanity.

By our connection with Christ, we have the upper hand in the battle against demonic forces.

The very existence of the church testifies to the doom of all of God's enemies (3:8-11).

Proof that the kingdom of God has begun:

- The existence of the church
- The forgiveness of the church
- The sanctification of the church

Christ has been exalted as King of the universe in order that the church — his body — might be blessed. (1:22-23).

### **V. Conclusion (1:28:58)**

## Review Questions

1. Why should we believe that Paul wrote Ephesians?

2. Why did Paul write the letter to the Ephesians?





5. Describe Paul's teaching in Ephesians regarding the citizenship, administration and code for living within the Kingdom of God.

6. Why and how are Christians to honor our divine King?

7. Why should Christians work to build the kingdom of God?

8. Describe Paul's teaching about this age and the age to come.

9. How are Christians to respond to the blessings we receive from Christ our King?

## Application Questions

1. What blessings and benefits result from being citizens of the kingdom of God?
2. How does your understanding of the gospel fit with Paul's teaching on the kingdom of God?
3. How should Paul's teachings on the kingdom of God shape our approach to Christians from different cultural or racial backgrounds?
4. Dr. Kidd mentioned that "in Christ each believer is counted as if he or she were Jesus himself." What practical implications should this have for you in your Christian life?
5. How should our interaction with others inside the kingdom of God differ from our interaction with those who belong to the kingdom of darkness?
6. In light of Paul's teachings in Ephesians, what are some practical things you can do to be more effective in your pursuit of moral purity?
7. How is the relationship between a king and his subjects similar to God's relationship to believers?
8. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?