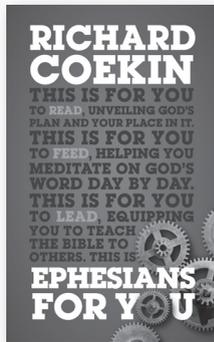




# **Your place in God's plan**

**EPHESIANS**

by Richard Coekin



## Ephesians For You

If you are reading *Ephesians For You* (see page 96) alongside this Good Book Guide, here is how the studies in this booklet link to the chapters of *Ephesians For You*:

Study One → Ch 1	Study Six → Ch 8-9
Study Two → Ch 2	Study Seven → Ch 10-11
Study Three → Ch 3-4	Study Eight → Ch 12-13
Study Four → Ch 5-6	
Study Five → Ch 7	

Your place in God's plan

The good book guide to Ephesians

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# introduction: good book guides

Every Bible-study group is different—yours may take place in a church building, in a home or in a cafe, on a train, over a leisurely mid-morning coffee or squashed into a 30-minute lunch break. Your group may include new Christians, mature Christians, non-Christians, mums and tots, students, businessmen or teens. That's why we've designed these *Good Book Guides* to be flexible for use in many different situations.

Our aim in each session is to uncover the meaning of a passage, and see how it fits into the “big picture” of the Bible. But that can never be the end. We also need to appropriately apply what we have discovered to our lives. Let's take a look at what is included:

- ↔ **Talkabout:** Most groups need to “break the ice” at the beginning of a session, and here's the question that will do that. It's designed to get people talking around a subject that will be covered in the course of the Bible study.
- ↓ **Investigate:** The Bible text for each session is broken up into manageable chunks, with questions that aim to help you understand what the passage is about. **The Leader's Guide** contains **guidance for questions**, and sometimes ☑ additional “follow-up” questions.
- ⋮ **Explore more (optional):** These questions will help you connect what you have learned to other parts of the Bible, so you can begin to fit it all together like a jig-saw; or occasionally look at a part of the passage that's not dealt with in detail in the main study.
- **Apply:** As you go through a Bible study, you'll keep coming across **apply** sections. These are questions to get the group discussing what the Bible teaching means in practice for you and your church. ⋮ **Getting personal** is an opportunity for you to think, plan and pray about the changes that you personally may need to make as a result of what you have learned.
- ↑ **Pray:** We want to encourage prayer that is rooted in God's word—in line with his concerns, purposes and promises. So each session ends with an opportunity to review the truths and challenges highlighted by the Bible study, and turn them into prayers of request and thanksgiving.

The **Leader's Guide** and introduction provide historical background information, explanations of the Bible texts for each session, ideas for **optional extra** activities, and guidance on how best to help people uncover the truths of God's word.

# why study Ephesians?

What is God's plan for this world?

And what is your place, and your church's place, in that plan?

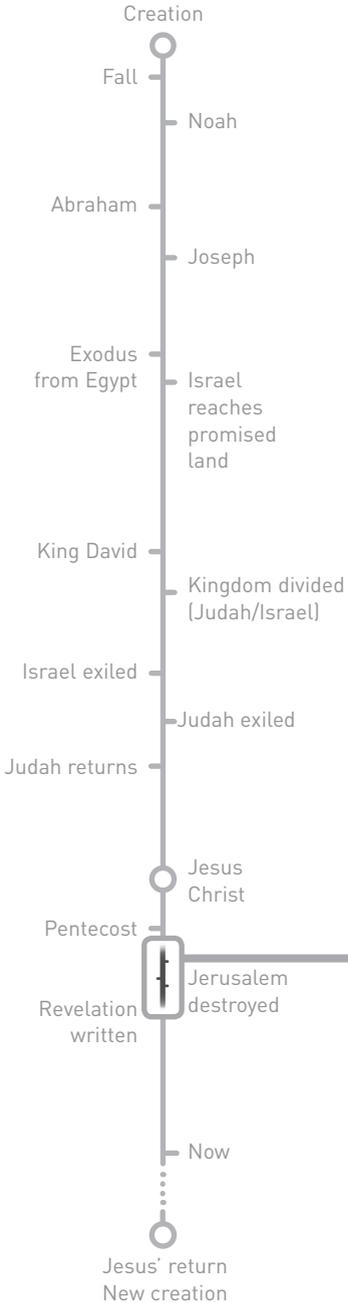
Ephesians is a spectacular letter from the apostle Paul to a group of churches living in a cosmopolitan, commercial, multi-religious setting. And Paul's message to them is this:

*God's eternal cosmic plan to unite everything under Christ has been accomplished by Christ's death and resurrection in triumph over satanic powers—and so every local church is a glimpse of our glorious future when we unite under his rule.*

Paul encourages these churches that they are like “trophy cabinets” of God's victorious grace. He reassures them that the Lord Jesus is ruler over every power in the world. He urges them to live distinctively in the world and to resist the devil's schemes through standing firm in their gospel convictions.

So as we dig into this letter, written in what is now western Turkey, we will discover precious spiritual treasures for our lives today. These eight studies will deepen our appreciation of God's sovereignty; move us to celebrate God's grace to us; blow our minds with the dimensions of Jesus' love; thrill us with the place of our own church in God's plan, and show us how we can contribute our time and gifts to it; and explain how in our everyday lives and relationships we can please God and show Christ to those around us.

Ephesians will show you God's plan for the world. It will show you your place in that plan. And as it does so, it will radically improve the spiritual health of your church and every ministry within it—including yours.



# BIBLE TIMELINE

Where does the letter to the Ephesians fit into the whole story of God's word?

## EPHESIANS c60AD

c54-56AD	Paul evangelises and teaches in Ephesus (Acts 19)
c60AD	Paul writes Ephesians, probably from prison in Rome
c95AD	Revelation written by John, including a letter to the Ephesians (2 v 1-7)

# 1

Ephesians 1 v 1-14

## EVERY BLESSING IN CHRIST



### talkabout

1. What would you say are the three best things about being a Christian?



### investigate

#### ▶ Read Ephesians 1 v 1-2

2. Who is the letter from, and to? How are the sender and the recipients described?

#### DICTIONARY

**Apostle (v 1):** a man who had seen the risen Jesus and was chosen by him to teach his word.

**Grace (v 2):** unmerited kindness and favour.

#### ▶ Read Ephesians 1 v 3-6

3. What has God the Father done for every Christian (v 3)?

- Why is “every” a stunning word in this verse?

#### DICTIONARY

**Heavenly realms (v 3):** the spiritual and eternal dimension, where God and all spiritual powers are dwelling.

**Holy (v 4):** set apart, without sin.

**Predestined (v 5):** chose the future for.

**To sonship (v 5):** as heirs.

**The One (v 6):** Jesus Christ.

- Where do we find such blessings? (Hint: Notice the repeated phrase in v 3, 4, 6.)

If we have a friend who owns an exciting sports car, although we can admire it from a distance, we only really enjoy it when we are racing along the motorway in the car with them. In the same way, Christ shares his privileges with his people—those who by trusting him are united to him—like a king with his subjects, or a husband with his wife. Indeed, Paul says that spiritually we now live “in him” as if he is the air we breathe and the clothes we wear!

Paul spends the rest of the passage (v 4-14) outlining the top three sensational blessings that we enjoy “in Christ”. As we understand each, we will be as excited by them as he is. Here is the first...

4. What has God chosen (v 4) his people for; what destination has he given them (v 5)?

In the first-century Greco-Roman world, a slave was sometimes adopted by a wealthy man to become his legal heir, his “son”, and inherit the family estate.

5. With this in mind, how do verses 4-5 tell us what an amazing, and privileged, position every Christian enjoys?

Paul is talking about election and predestination, which are often difficult doctrines to understand and accept, far less to think of as a “top blessings”. This section helps us with three natural objections to God’s election.

6. Work out how each of these verses helps us with each of these objections:

- v 13: God's election undermines evangelism ("God will certainly save his elect, so there's no need for us to bother too much with telling people about Jesus")

- v 4-5: God's election undermines humility ("We're superior—we're the chosen ones")

- v 4, see also Romans 12 v 1: God's election undermines any motivation for holiness ("We don't need to strive to please God because we're already saved, and it's only by his choice, not our actions")

➔ **apply**

7. How do the truths of verses 4-5:

- humble us?

- encourage us for the future?





## getting personal

When we arrive in heaven, God will welcome us, and we can imagine him saying: *I am so glad to welcome you into my home at last—for I chose to save you for my Son before I made the world; I sent my Son to die for you on the cross; I arranged history to ensure your birth and steer your life; I brought someone to explain the gospel to you and opened your eyes to recognise Jesus as your Saviour and Lord; I carried you when you were weak and held on to you when you tried to run away; and now, finally, I can welcome you into my home. It is so good to see you—I've loved you for such a very long time!*

How does this make you feel? What difference will the prospect of his divine welcome make to you?



## investigate

The first blessing Paul has shown us is that **we are chosen for adoption by the Father**. Here is the second...

### ▶ Read Ephesians 1 v 7-10

8. How does verse 7 explain what we have in Christ?

### DICTIONARY

**Redemption (v 7):**

freed from slavery through a payment being made.

**Lavished (v 8):** given in large quantities.

**Mystery (v 9):** secret.

- How did we get this?



## explore more

optional

### ▶ Read Exodus 12 v 1-13, 28-32; 1 Corinthians 5 v 7

*How do these verses help us to understand how Christ's blood has freed us?*



But we are not only redeemed *from* something—the guilt of sin and the fear of its punishment—but *for* something wonderful.

9. Verses 9-10 say that God has revealed the secret of his will and purpose for eternity (“when the times reach their fulfilment”). What is his great plan (v 10)?

- Why is this exciting for those of us who are forgiven through Christ’s sacrificial, redemptive death (v 7); and terrifying for anyone who is not forgiven?

So we can sum up the second top blessing as: **we are redeemed by, and for unity under, the Son.** Next, Paul celebrates the third great blessing...

**➤ Read Ephesians 1 v 11-14**

10. How is the Holy Spirit described in verses 13-14, and what do these terms mean?

**DICTIONARY**

**In conformity (v 11):** in line with.  
**Seal (v 13):** mark of ownership.  
**Deposit (v 13):** an initial payment that guarantees the rest of the money will follow.

11. How do these verses give Christians:
- confidence that they will reach eternal glory with God?

- excitement about that eternal glory with God?



So here is the third wonderful spiritual blessing we enjoy “in Christ”:  
**we are sealed for our inheritance by God’s Spirit.**

## ➔ apply

12. What repeated phrase in verses 3-14 shows us how to respond to these amazing spiritual blessings (v 3, 6, 12, 14)?

- What other repeated phrase reminds us how amazing God is (v 1, 5, 9, 11)?

13. Share together what blessings mentioned in this passage you personally have been particularly excited by as you’ve studied it, and why.



## getting personal

Whether you are riding on the highest peaks of joy and success or sinking in the lowest troughs of pain and failure, as a Christian you can always sing: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ”!

In the coming week, when will you need to make sure you remember this? And how will you?

## ↑ pray

Use your answers to Question Thirteen to prompt you to “praise ... the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”.

