



## WE ARE A KINGDOM COMMUNITY

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23 January 2022

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Welcome to the Book of Ephesians!

We invite you to study and walk through the Book of Ephesians with us. We pray that your **heart will be filled with wonder and joy as you see how Paul describes the greatness of God's salvation and His plan to put everything under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.** Paul wants you to **see the exceeding greatness of God's power in creating the church out of both Jewish and Gentile peoples.** A glorious church living out what Jesus blessed us with and purposed us to be!

- 20 weeks and 20 sermons starting today
- A Reading Plan
- A Weekly Devotion
- Involve the whole family young and old
- Individually and collectively
- Discussion and Reflection
- Trust and allow Holy Spirit to do a great work amongst us

Why Ephesians? What does God want to say to us and do in us?

- God does not want to discipline us but to stir us and grip our hearts with the beauty and wonder of His glorious salvation and redemption plan for mankind.
- He wants us to get a glimpse of what He has done for His church and how we should walk in that reality.
- Our Theme: KINGDOM COMMUNITY - IN HIM, THROUGH US - captures a picture of how God gathers and unites us under the Headship and Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- We are going to discover and be reminded of what Christ has done for us and who we are in Him.
- We are going to be greatly stirred to walk in line with this glorious grace and goodness of God as a Kingdom Minded Church Community.
- It is important to study the book of Ephesians because one of the greatest revivals in the history of the early church was based in Ephesus.

Let me whet your appetite!

- **"Ephesians" is one of the greatest of the New Testament letters.** It is written in a positive manner. Paul is not addressing serious heresies, major failures, or opponents in any obvious manner.

- Paul divided his letter to the Ephesians into two clear segments: applying the truths of the first makes possible the actions and lifestyle of the second.
- The first three chapters of Ephesians explain the gospel message as the good news **announcement that God’s anointed ruler (the Christ) has received the throne and is restoring everything under His headship as Lord.** It describes what God has done for us and who we are in Christ.
- The final three chapters then apply this truth, explaining what it looks like to live as the church - a community in His reign (in Christ).
- The book of Ephesians explains how the Church comes to full spiritual maturity in Christ.
- Ephesians makes it clear that spiritual growth occurs primarily in community with others. Our daily lives are to be characterised by unity, holiness, love, wisdom, and perseverance in spiritual warfare.

## The Team of Ephesians Preachers

We have a combination of Guests Preachers and CCA Preachers lined up.

Guests Preachers:

1. Marius Gradwell
2. Craig Botha
3. Gavin Cox
4. Rory Mole
5. Cathi Mole
6. Mark Ashfield

CCA Preachers:

1. Lester Lockyer
2. Grant Neuper
3. Henry van Rensburg
4. Jennifer Lieberum
5. Deon Lieberum
6. Nomawethu Jonas
7. Margretha Esprey

## Background and History

As you read through the Book of Acts (Chapters 19 & 20) you realise that Paul spent many years in Ephesus and the surrounding areas where he established and disciplined churches.

Ephesus was a port city (today an archaeological site in modern day Turkey). One of the 7 wonders of the world, the Temple of Artemis (Diana) is located there – although there is not much left of it today. Ephesus was the sorcery and magic hub in those days.

From the city of Ephesus, the Gospel went to the entire region of Asia Minor reaching many millions of people.

In the book of Ephesians, we learn about the impact of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and how it can transform our culture. The preaching and living of the Gospel changed everything from marriages to the economy. Many people chose to follow Jesus and burned their magic scrolls which were common in the region.

'Ephesians' was one of the letters Paul wrote while he was in prison in Rome during AD 60-62. It is quite likely that it was intended as a circular letter, to be sent to the other churches in the region as well.

To anyone reading the New Testament with objective eyes it is obvious that the church of today is different from the Early Church.

## A Divine Confrontation

We should not study through Ephesians without realising what happened historically.

How did the first believers who lived basic and modest lives, now scattered from Jerusalem and Galilee to the Roman province of Asia Minor where very wealthy and religious pagan people lived in luxury and decadence, make such a change in the beliefs and lifestyles of these wealthy pagans?

The Gospel kept on spreading and the whole of Asia Minor was greatly impacted and changed.

Persecution, economic hardships, political change, false teachings, pagan religions – none of these were able to slow down the spread of the church in those first centuries. By the third century, an estimated 6 million Christians lived in the Roman Empire alone.

And then we need to ask: What happened for it to change in that region today?

## Neutralising the Church

Just as Satan could not destroy the incarnate Christ in physical body, he could not destroy the spiritual body of Christ on earth, the church. If Satan could not destroy the church, what could he do? He would neutralise it!

First, he gave the church political sanction and social respectability. Then he set about to neutralise the church by attacking its community structure. The church was thus limited in its ability to nurture new members, apply spiritual power, edify the body, train necessary leaders, deliver the gospel to the world, encounter the presence of the living Christ, and walk in the gifts of the Spirit. God's primary purpose for the church – edification and evangelism were distorted, and the church became an audience. Virtually every part of the church was affected by the church paradigm shift in the fourth century by the hand of Constantine.

The transition from home communities to buildings in the fourth century changed the face of the church for the next seventeen centuries. All the above changes have continued to impact negatively upon the church as we know it.

Could the way we are the church today have more to do with what happened in the fourth century at the hand of Constantine than with what happened in the first century at the hand of Jesus?

## The Power of the Gospel

In the book of Ephesians, we learn about the impact of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and how it can transform our culture. The preaching of the Gospel changed everything from marriages to the economy. Many people chose to follow Jesus and burn their magic scrolls which were common in the region.

*Ephesians presents the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the answer to the brokenness in this world – to a culture that is marred by injustice and oppression.*

Ephesians reveals that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way to see true transformation in the world.

At the core, the problem is sin in the human heart. Ephesians shows that the Gospel is not about trying to force other people or circumstances to change. The Gospel is looking to Jesus and living out what He has done.

The Gospel brings about a true change in the human heart. When we all begin to live this out as the church, it begins to shift the culture of the world. The Gospel brings a true sense of hope into even the most desperate of situations.

In general, the culture of that day in Ephesus did not see women as equal to men. There was also a form of slavery that was common at that time. Sometimes Christians were persecuted, very severely at times. The Gospel eventually changed all of that from the inside-out. The Gospel conquered the Roman Empire, one heart, one marriage, one home at a time.

*The Gospel transformed the culture of the region without direct political involvement, big budgets, or mass gatherings. It was simply the raw power of the Gospel on display.*

What happened in Ephesus is an example of what can happen when people believe and live out the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is what happens when the Church comes to maturity in the full stature of Christ. **God's will for His Church is nothing less than this fullness of Christ.**

Ephesians 4:13 ESV *"...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ..."*

**A Burst of Praise – Worshipping God for the greatness of Salvation!**

Ephesians 1:3-14 ESV

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...*

- *Every blessing is in Christ – God has blessed us in Christ*
- *In Christ comes everything we need*
- *"Spiritual" blessings mean blessings that come to us by the Holy Spirit*
- *"In the Heavens" means in the "Spiritual Realm".*
- *God saves us to a new realm altogether*

**The following verses explains what Paul means by "All Spiritual Blessings".**

*(4) even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love (5) he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, (6) to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (7) In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, (8) which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight (9) making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ (10) as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. (11) In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, (12) so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. (13) In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, (14) who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think it means when we say: "God has blessed us **In Christ**"?
2. **What are the characteristics of a church that can be described as a "Kingdom Community"?**
3. How can the Gospel of Jesus Christ bring salvation to someone?