

## EPHESIANS

The Gospel shines through Ephesians from start to finish. Like a tree, the letter starts with strong roots beneath the surface, which allows for fruitful living. In a broad sense, the first half of Ephesians says, "This is who you are, by grace" and the second half says, "This is how you should live, by grace."



### WHEN YOU MEET:

Corresponds with the sermon from Sunday 14 September

#### Connect:

Spend some time greeting and welcoming each other.

#### Pause & Pray:

Take a few minutes to pause and clear your mind, letting go of what may be filling your heart and mind. Then pray:

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the wisdom of Your Word. Open our hearts to understand what it means to live out mutual love and respect in all our relationships, especially in marriage. We pray that You would guide us as we reflect on Your design for love and submission, in Jesus' name, Amen.*

**Read & re-read the passage:** Ephesians 5:21-23

#### Summary:

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is about what it means to live as a new creation in Christ. In chapters 4-6, he gets very practical, showing how the gospel transforms every part of our lives, including our relationships at home and work.

It's important to address the nuance to this context and time where the husband was culturally seen as the one 'responsible' for his wife and family, and the wife was seen to be responsible for the home. Paul is speaking to this specific culture and time, and that can help shed some light on Paul's more specific instruction to each partner. Husbands, don't forgo your responsibility to lead in the home, and make sure you love sacrificially (which would have been more of a cultural push). And to the wife, respect your husband in his role to lead the home and submit to his sacrificial love for you.

The essence of this passage is about **mutual love** and **mutual respect** within marriage. The overarching theme in Ephesians 5 is **Christ-centred relationships**—whether it's how the Church submits to Christ or how husbands and wives should interact with each other.

(continued...)



### Summary cont:

**Mutual submission** is the starting point (v.21). This submission is not about hierarchy or power, but about **humbling oneself in love for the other**. It's about honouring each other and seeking the other person's best interests. The relationship is marked by a **mutual willingness to serve** and care for one another.

This passage is also about **imaging Christ's love** for the Church. Husbands are not only called to lead but to love sacrificially, even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her. This is not about a one-sided power dynamic, but a **radical calling to selflessness**—husbands should love their wives with the same self-giving love that Christ demonstrated through His life and death.

In this passage, **submission** does not mean passivity or inferiority. Rather, it's a **willingness to serve and to submit in love**. For wives, submission is a reflection of the Church's **willing submission to Christ**, and for husbands, sacrificial love is the key to leading well in marriage. As author Tom Wright says, the man is to "give himself up for her," elevating her spiritual and personal well-being. This is an **empowering** and **nurturing** relationship.

**It is important to note that Paul never instructs women to submit to husbands who are abusive, controlling or selfish - he instructs them only to submit to a husband who loves her like Christ.**

### Questions:

1. What does "mutual submission" mean in the context of marriage? How does this challenge or affirm your view of marriage and relationships? *(Reflecting that marriage is about serving each other.)*
2. The love a husband has for his wife should reflect Christ's love for the Church. What does it look like to love your spouse sacrificially in a practical, everyday way? *(Think about your relationship—how can this be applied in your current situation?)*
3. What role does respect play in a marriage, and why is it so crucial for wives to respect their husbands, as Paul commands in verse 33? *(Consider how respect can empower a relationship and create space for both partners to thrive.)*
4. In Ephesians 5:31, Paul refers to the union of husband and wife as the two becoming "one flesh." What do you think this means in both a spiritual and practical sense? *(How does this concept shape your understanding of unity in marriage?)*
5. How does understanding marriage as a reflection of Christ's relationship with the Church impact the way we approach conflict, love, and unity in our marriages? *(N.T. Wright suggests that marriage is a mystery that speaks of God's covenantal love.)*







## Questions cont:

6. What challenges might arise when trying to live out mutual submission and sacrificial love in marriage? How can we overcome these challenges? (*Think about practical obstacles, such as communication issues, and how we can apply these principles in difficult situations.*)

7. In what ways can the broader Christian community support and encourage couples to live out the teachings of Ephesians 5? (*Consider the role of accountability, mentorship, and prayer in cultivating healthy, Christ-centred marriages.*)

## Key Takeaways:

- **Mutual Submission (v.21):** Both husbands and wives are called to submit to each other out of reverence for Christ. It is not about authority, but about serving and loving each other.
- **Husbands' Sacrificial Love (v.25-28):** Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, which means sacrificial, selfless, and nurturing love.
- **Wives' Respect (v.33):** Wives are called to respect their husbands, reflecting the Church's submission to Christ, which is rooted in love, trust, and mutual respect.
- **Christ and the Church as the Model:** The ultimate model for marriage is the relationship between Christ and the Church, marked by sacrificial love, mutual submission, and the pursuit of one another's well-being.

## Pray:

*Lord Jesus, we thank You for the love You have shown to us and for the example of sacrificial love You gave on the cross. Help us to reflect that same love in our marriages and relationships. May we be quick to submit to one another out of reverence for You, and may our marriages reflect Your glory. Give us the strength and wisdom to live out these principles in a way that honours You and draws us closer to each other. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## MORE RESOURCES:

- Discipleship Resources Hub: [grlc.org.au/discipleship-resources/](https://grlc.org.au/discipleship-resources/)
- Latest sermon: <https://grlc.org.au/grlc-hub/>





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### WHEN YOU MEET:

**Corresponds with the sermon from Sunday 3 August**

#### Connect:

Spend some time greeting and welcoming each other.

#### Pause & Pray:

Take a few minutes to pause and clear your mind, letting go of what may be filling your heart and mind. Then pray:

*Heavenly Father, thank You for gathering us together in Your name. As we open Your Word, help us to hear Your voice and understand Your truth. Teach us how to live out the gospel in our everyday relationships—with our families, coworkers, and those in authority over us. May our time together be full of grace, growth, and Your presence. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.*

**Read & re-read the passage:** Ephesians 6:1-9

#### Summary:

Paul's letter to the Ephesians is about what it means to live as a new creation in Christ. In chapters 4-6, he gets very practical, showing how the gospel transforms every part of our lives, including our relationships at home and work.

In the ancient Roman world, households included not just parents and children, but also servants and masters. Paul addresses these common roles and redefines them in light of Christ's lordship. His words elevate the dignity of each person and emphasise mutual responsibility and service—radical concepts for his time.

Though we don't live in the same cultural context, the heart of Paul's teaching still applies: All of life—including family and work—is lived before God and shaped by our relationship with Christ.

#### Question:

1. Verses 1-3 speak about children honouring and obeying parents. How do you see this principle applying at different life stages (young children, teens, adults)?
2. In verse 4, Paul tells fathers (and by extension, parents) not to provoke children but to bring them up in the Lord. What might "provoking to anger" look like in parenting? What does godly discipline look like?







## Questions cont:

3. Verses 5–8 describe how servants should serve their masters. How can we apply this today in our roles as employees or team members?
4. What does it mean to work “as to the Lord and not to man”? How might this change your motivation or attitude toward your work?
5. In verse 9, Paul warns those in authority to lead without threats and with respect. What does Christlike leadership look like in modern workplaces or homes?
6. What difference does it make to know that God is watching over both employees and employers, and shows no partiality?
7. How can we better reflect the heart of Jesus in the way we treat those under our care or authority?

## Key Takeaway:

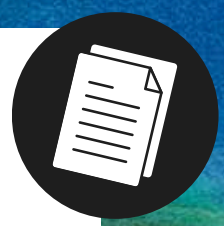
Paul invites us to see every relationship—whether family or work—as a place to live out the gospel. When Jesus is Lord over our hearts, it transforms how we lead, serve, parent, and relate to one another. Our attitudes and actions become acts of worship, done “as to the Lord.”

## Pray:

*Lord Jesus, thank You for Your Word that guides and challenges us. Help us to honour You in our families and in our work. Give us humility where we lead and diligence where we serve. Teach us to love as You love and to see others through Your eyes. Strengthen us to live out the gospel in every relationship, with grace and integrity. In Your name we pray, Amen.*

## MORE RESOURCES:

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### WHEN YOU MEET:

Corresponds with the sermon from Sunday 17 & 31 August

#### Connect:

Spend some time greeting and welcoming each other.

#### Pause & Pray:

Take a few minutes to pause and clear your mind, letting go of what may be filling your heart and mind. Then pray:

*Gracious God, You have called us to live as your people in a world that often pushes against your ways. Strengthen us now by your Spirit. Teach us to see with kingdom eyes, to walk in your truth, and to stand firm in the power of your victory. Amen.*

#### Read & re-read the passage: Ephesians 6:10–17

*Listen for repeated words or imagery that captures your attention...*

#### Summary:

This letter to the Ephesians has been building a vision of a renewed humanity—people who are no longer defined by old divisions or trapped in cycles of sin, but who now share in Christ's victory and belong to a new family. In this final section, we're not given a plan of escape but a call to stand firm in the face of resistance—not by force or fear, but by putting on the character and truth of Jesus.

The armour imagery draws from Roman military dress, but it's repurposed to describe virtues and gospel realities: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, and God's Word. These aren't weapons of violence; they are signs that we belong to the world God is making new. The enemy described here is not flesh and blood, but the spiritual forces that still seek to twist truth, stir fear, and divide what God has united.

Our task is not to win the battle—that has already been done through Jesus' death and resurrection. Our calling is to stand firm in that victory, to live in the present with confidence and courage, embodying the peace and justice of God's kingdom.



### Questions:

1. "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power." What does it mean to live from God's strength rather than our own? How does this shift your perspective on daily challenges?
2. The passage speaks of a battle not against flesh and blood. What are some of the unseen forces—cultural, spiritual, emotional—that challenge your faithfulness or peace?
3. Which piece of the armour stands out most to you right now—truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, or the Word of God? Why?
4. How does the idea of "standing firm" resonate with you? Are there areas where you feel called to take a stand today—not in aggression, but in quiet faithfulness?
5. How might the "gospel of peace" shape the way we engage in conflict, disagreements, or cultural tensions?
6. The armour of God seems deeply personal, but also corporate. How can the Church, as a community, support one another in "putting on" this armour together?
7. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God. How can Scripture shape not only what we believe but how we live, speak, and respond to others?

### Key Takeaways:

- The armour represents the character of Jesus—not just what protects us, but what shapes us.
- The battle is real, but the outcome is already secure.
- Our strength comes not from our willpower, but from our union with Christ. Intentionally living our lives in union with Jesus.
- We "put on" this armour daily not for defence alone, but for faithful witness in a world longing for redemption.

### Be encouraged!

This passage is not a call to fear a battle, but an invitation to live confidently in the power of the risen Christ. We do not face the world alone or unprotected. We are clothed in the life of Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, and called to can I call stand firm—anchored in grace, walking in truth, and bearing witness to God's kingdom come.

### Pray:

*Lord Jesus, You have already won the victory. Teach us to walk in that truth. Help us to be people of peace, people of faith, people who speak your Word with boldness and grace. As we go into this week, clothe us with your presence and power. Amen.*

### MORE RESOURCES:

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### WHEN YOU MEET:

Corresponds with the sermon from Sunday 28 September

#### Connect:

Spend some time greeting and welcoming each other.

#### Pause & Pray:

Take a few minutes to pause and clear your mind, letting go of what may be filling your heart and mind. Then pray:

*God of peace and power, As we open your Word, open our hearts. Let us listen for your Spirit, speak with boldness, and pray with perseverance. Form us into people shaped by your gospel—watchful, courageous, and full of love. Amen.*

#### Read & re-read the passage:

Have someone read Ephesians 6:18–24 aloud. Invite group members to notice any repeated themes or surprising details—especially around prayer, boldness, and peace.

#### Summary:

After describing the armour of God, Paul turns to the essential weapon of the Church: **prayer**. He calls for **unceasing, Spirit-led intercession**—not only for personal needs, but for the mission of the Church and the bold proclamation of the gospel.

This isn't a passive, internalised spirituality. It's **prayer on alert**—watchful, active, and outward-facing. Prayer becomes part of our readiness, helping us stay grounded in the love of Christ and in step with the Spirit as we live in a world where truth, peace, and faithfulness are often challenged.

Paul models this himself by asking not for protection, but for boldness in proclaiming the mystery of the gospel—even while in chains. His request reveals the tension many Christians feel: that following Jesus doesn't guarantee safety, but it does promise **peace, grace, love, and faith**.

The final verses speak of Tychicus, a faithful encourager. Paul reminds the Church that encouragement, prayer, and peace are not just private comforts—they are **public signs** of the new reality God is creating in Christ.





### Questions:

1. Paul urges believers to “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers.” What does it look like to develop a lifestyle of prayer that is alert and Spirit-led?
2. Why do you think Paul, writing from prison, asks not for safety or release, but for boldness in sharing the gospel? How might that challenge our own prayer priorities?
3. Paul emphasises alertness and perseverance in prayer. Where in your life or community do you sense a need for more intentional, watchful prayer?
4. How can we pray more effectively for one another—not just for comfort, but for boldness, clarity, and faithful witness?
5. Tychicus is sent to encourage and strengthen others. Who has encouraged your faith journey recently? How might you be that presence to someone else this week?
6. Paul ends with a blessing of peace, love, faith, and grace. Which of these do you feel most in need of today? How can we help cultivate these together in our group or church?
7. The phrase “undying love” closes the letter. What does it mean to love Jesus with undying love in the midst of a changing and often difficult world?

### Key Takeaways:

- Prayer is not a retreat from battle, but the front line of engagement in God’s mission.
- The Church’s strength comes not from strategy, but from watchful dependence on the Spirit.
- Faithful witness, even in weakness or hardship, is the boldness Paul prizes.
- Peace, love, faith, and grace are the Church’s true marks of victory.

### Be encouraged!

Prayer is not escape—it is the Church’s active participation in the life of God. Through prayer, encouragement, and gospel-cantered living, we live as people of peace and perseverance, rooted in God’s grace and bearing witness to Christ’s victory in the midst of our ordinary everyday lives.

### Pray:

*Lord Jesus, teach us to pray with endurance and love. Give us boldness to live and speak as your people. Let peace and grace rule in our hearts, and let our love for you grow stronger each day. Amen.*

### MORE RESOURCES:

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### WHEN YOU MEET:

**No corresponding sermon for this discussion**

#### Connect:

Spend some time greeting and welcoming each other.

#### Pause & Pray:

Take a few minutes to pause and clear your mind, letting go of what may be filling your heart and mind.

#### Wrapping up the Ephesians series:

For this final session, the goal is to reflect on the whole series, trying to recognise patterns of God's voice in your life, and discern next steps in your walk with Jesus.

Here are some reflective questions centred around awareness, gratitude, discernment, and invitation (invite each person to reflect on one question from each section):

#### Awareness and Growth:

Reflecting on what you've seen, learned, and how you've been shaped.

1. How has your understanding of your identity in Christ deepened or changed through this study?
2. In what ways has your view of the Church or Christian community shifted?
3. Was there a passage or theme in Ephesians that particularly stretched or surprised you?

#### Gratitude and Challenge:

Giving thanks for what God has shown you, and noticing where He's still at work.

1. What are you most grateful for as you reflect on this journey through Ephesians?
2. Which part of Paul's message has challenged or convicted you the most?
3. How has your understanding of grace become more personal or practical?
4. Are there areas where living out your calling feels especially difficult right now?





## Invitation and Response:

Considering how God is inviting you to live out what you've learned.

1. What is one truth or insight you feel called to carry forward from this study?
2. Where might God be inviting you to bring unity, peace, or healing?
3. In what area of your life do you feel a need to stand firm or be strengthened spiritually?
4. What could it look like to stay open to the Spirit's leading in the weeks ahead?

## Pray:

Spend some time thanking God and praying for each other.

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