

Ephesians – Week 1 – Fully Purposed – Bible Study Helps

Title: Fully Purposed: Introduction and Context of Ephesians

Sermon Summary: This sermon introduces the book of Ephesians by exploring the historical context and spiritual significance of the church at Ephesus. The message emphasizes that believers have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ and are "fully purposed" - equipped with everything needed to bring God glory. The sermon traces the history of the Ephesian church from its founding through Paul's three-year ministry investment, highlighting how this church became a missionary base that reached all of Asia with the gospel. However, the sermon culminates with Christ's warning in Revelation that despite their doctrinal soundness and hard work, they had left their first love. The central challenge is to maintain genuine devotion to Christ rather than allowing Christianity to become mere religion, while faithfully doing the work God has called us to do.

Key Points:

- Ephesians is one of the deepest spiritual books in the New Testament, covering time from eternity past to eternity future
- The name Ephesus means "fully purposed," describing a church that had everything needed to bring God glory
- Paul invested three years in Ephesus, the longest stay of any city in his missionary journeys
- From Ephesus, the gospel spread throughout all of Asia through church planting and missionary work
- Believers have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ
- The Ephesian church faced intense spiritual warfare, including demon possession and riots over the worship of Diana
- Despite their faithful work, doctrinal soundness, and patience in persecution, Jesus warned they had left their first love
- The danger of Christianity becoming religion rather than a love relationship with Christ
- We can have all the right doctrine and do all the right things but miss the most important thing - loving Jesus Christ
- Every word of God is pure and preserved, and we can trust the Bible completely

Scripture Reference:

- Ephesians 1:1-14 (primary focus)
- Acts 18:1-28 (Paul's first visit to Ephesus)

Ephesians – Week 1 – Fully Purposed – Bible Study Helps

- Acts 19:1-41 (Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus)
- Acts 20:17-38 (Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders)
- Revelation 2:1-5 (Christ's message to the Ephesian church)

Stories:

- The account of Aquila and Priscilla being left in Ephesus as tentmakers and disciple-makers who led Apollos to true faith in Christ
- The confrontation with demon-possessed individuals where seven sons of Sceva attempted exorcism, resulting in the evil spirit saying "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" and the possessed man attacking them, leaving them naked and wounded
- The mass burning of occult books worth 50,000 pieces of silver as new believers publicly renounced their satanic practices
- The riot in Ephesus sparked by silversmiths who made shrines for Diana, fearing their business would be destroyed by the spread of Christianity
- Paul's emotional farewell with the Ephesian elders where he reminded them of his three years of ministry among them, warning night and day with tears, and they all wept knowing they would never see his face again
- The historical context of Nero's persecution where Christians were burned on stakes in his gardens during the time of the early church

Ephesians – Week 1 – Fully Purposed – Bible Study Helps

Discipleship Questions

How can we identify when our Christian service has become merely religious routine rather than flowing from genuine love for Jesus Christ?

What does it mean practically to have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, and how should this reality change our daily perspective?

The Ephesian church was commended for their hard work and doctrinal soundness yet rebuked for leaving their first love. How can we maintain both faithful service and passionate devotion to Christ?

Paul invested three years in Ephesus, teaching daily and warning night and day with tears. What does this level of investment reveal about effective discipleship and church planting?

How does understanding the spiritual warfare in Ephesus, including demon possession and occult practices, inform our approach to ministry in our own dark culture?

The believers in Ephesus publicly burned their occult books worth 50,000 pieces of silver. What would genuine repentance and radical break from sin look like in our modern context?

Paul warned the Ephesian elders that grievous wolves would enter among them and even arise from within. How can church leaders today guard against false teaching while maintaining love and unity?

What is the relationship between knowing Scripture deeply and being able to discern and reject false teaching, based on the example of Aquila and Priscilla with Apollos?

How does the truth that we are the bride of Christ and He is our husband practically affect how we should live and make decisions?

The Ephesian church had everything they needed to bring God glory yet fell out of love with Jesus. What specific practices or heart attitudes help us maintain our first love for Christ?

Small Group Guide: Fully Purposed

Ephesians 1:1-14 - Introduction to Ephesians

OPENING PRAYER (5 minutes)

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word and to help the group grow in love for Jesus Christ.

ICEBREAKER (10 minutes)

Question: Share about a time when you received an unexpected inheritance or gift. How did it make you feel? How did it change your perspective?

REVIEW THE MESSAGE (10 minutes)

Key Points from the Sermon:

- Ephesus means "fully purposed" - they had everything they needed to bring God glory
 - Paul invested 3 years in this church, his longest stay in any city
 - The church was strong, doctrinally sound, and hardworking
 - Despite their faithfulness, Jesus said they had left their first love (Revelation 2:4)
 - We have "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3)
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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (30-40 minutes)

Understanding the Text

1. **Read Ephesians 1:3-14 together.** What spiritual blessings does Paul mention in these verses? Make a list as a group.
2. **The History of Ephesus:** What impresses you most about Paul's investment in the Ephesian church? (3 years, daily teaching, tears, working as a tentmaker, etc.)
3. **Spiritual Warfare:** In Acts 19, we see demon possession, riots, and burning of occult books. How does this context help you understand why Paul wrote about spiritual armor in Ephesians 6?

Ephesians – Week 1 – Fully Purposed – Bible Study Helps

Going Deeper

4. **Religion vs. Relationship:** How is it possible for a church (or individual) to be doctrinally sound, hardworking, and faithful, yet fall out of love with Jesus? What are the warning signs?
5. **"All Spiritual Blessings":** Why do you think Paul emphasizes *spiritual* blessings rather than physical or material blessings? How does this challenge modern "prosperity gospel" teaching?
6. **Fully Purposed:** The Ephesian church had everything they needed to bring God glory. Do you believe that's true of our church? Of you personally? Why or why not?

Personal Reflection

7. **Heart Check:** On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate your love relationship with Jesus right now? What factors have influenced that rating?
8. **Activity vs. Intimacy:** Are there areas of your Christian life that have become more about religious activity than about loving Jesus? Be honest with the group.

KEY TAKEAWAYS (10 minutes)

Have different group members read these aloud:

1. **We are spiritually wealthy in Christ** - Every believer has access to all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. We lack nothing spiritually.
2. **God's investment in us is significant** - Just as Paul invested 3 years in Ephesus, God has invested heavily in each of us through Christ, the Holy Spirit, and His Word.
3. **Faithfulness without love is religion** - We can do all the right things with the wrong motive. Jesus desires our hearts, not just our service.
4. **The solution is to remember and repent** - When we drift from our first love, we can return immediately through repentance (Revelation 2:5).
5. **We are fully purposed** - We have everything we need in Christ to bring God glory and impact the world for the gospel.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION (15 minutes)

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to focus on this week:

Option 1: First Love Audit

Ephesians – Week 1 – Fully Purposed – Bible Study Helps

- Spend 15 minutes each day this week asking God: "Have I left my first love? What needs to change?"
- Journal about what He reveals to you
- Share your insights with an accountability partner

Option 2: Wealth Inventory

- Read Ephesians 1:3-14 every day this week
- Each day, write down one spiritual blessing you have in Christ
- Thank God specifically for that blessing
- Share your list with the group next time

Option 3: Purpose Check

- Evaluate your current service in the church or ministry
- Ask yourself: "Am I doing this out of love for Jesus or out of obligation?"
- If needed, talk with a pastor or leader about realigning your service with your passion for Christ

Option 4: Daily Devotion Reset

- Commit to spending time in God's Word every day this week
- Focus on getting to know Jesus better, not just learning information
- Pray specifically: "Lord, I want to fall more in love with You"

GROUP ACCOUNTABILITY (5 minutes)

Pair up and share:

- Which application option did you choose?
- How can your partner pray for you this week?
- Exchange contact information to check in mid-week

PRAYER TIME (10 minutes)

Pray together as a group:

1. **Thanksgiving** - Thank God for all spiritual blessings in Christ
2. **Confession** - Confess areas where we've made Christianity about religion rather than relationship
3. **Petition** - Ask God to restore first love for Jesus in each person's heart

Ephesians – Week 1 – Fully Purposed – Bible Study Helps

4. **Mission** - Pray for opportunities to share the gospel and make disciples like the Ephesian church did
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PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK

- Read Ephesians 1:1-14 several times
 - Write out verses 3-14 by hand if possible
 - Come prepared to discuss: "What does it mean to be chosen before the foundation of the world?"
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LEADER'S NOTES

Key Themes to Emphasize:

- The difference between doing religious activities and being in love with Jesus
- Our incredible wealth in Christ that we often forget
- The importance of daily Bible study and prayer, not just church attendance
- The call to be "fully purposed" - equipped and ready to bring God glory

Watch For:

- Group members who may be burned out from religious activity
- Those who need encouragement that they are spiritually wealthy in Christ
- Opportunities to challenge the group toward deeper devotion, not just more activity

Follow-Up:

- Check in with group members during the week about their application choice
 - Consider planning a group service project that flows from love for Jesus, not obligation
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"Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." - Revelation 2:4-5

5-Day Devotional: Fully Purposed in Christ

Day 1: All Spiritual Blessings in Christ

Reading: Ephesians 1:3-6

Devotional: If you are saved, you possess "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Not some blessings. All of them. Your inheritance isn't based on performance but on position—you are in Christ. Today, pause and consider: Do you live like someone who has inherited immeasurable wealth? The Ephesian believers had everything they needed to bring God glory, yet they struggled to remember their riches. Don't let spiritual amnesia rob you of joy. You are adopted, accepted, and blessed beyond measure. Live like you believe it.

Day 2: The Light Shines Brightest in Darkness

Reading: Acts 19:8-20

Devotional: Ephesus was headquarters for darkness—the temple of Diana, occult practices, demon possession. Yet Paul invested three years there because light shines brightest in darkness. When believers burned their magic books worth 50,000 pieces of silver, the entire city took notice. The gospel isn't intimidated by darkness; it confronts it. Where is the darkness in your world? Your workplace? Your neighborhood? Your family? Don't retreat from hard places—that's where God does His greatest work. The darker your circumstances, the more visible Jesus should become through you. What stronghold needs confronting today? The same Spirit who empowered Paul dwells in you.

Day 3: Religion vs. Relationship

Reading: Revelation 2:1-5

Devotional: Jesus' words to Ephesus sting: "You've left your first love." This wasn't a church of heretics or immoral people—they were hardworking, doctrinally sound, and patient in suffering. They were doing right things, yet something was terribly wrong. They had replaced relationship with religion. Ministry became routine. Service became obligation. Sound familiar? You can attend every event, serve faithfully, teach accurately, and still miss Him. Jesus doesn't want your activity; He wants you. Before you do another thing for God today, simply be with God. Remember when you first believed? That wonder? That love? Return there. Repent. Let love, not duty, fuel your devotion.

Day 4: Equipped for Spiritual Warfare

Reading: Ephesians 6:10-18

Devotional: The Ephesian believers weren't fighting flesh and blood—they battled spiritual wickedness in high places. So do you. The devil doesn't want you advancing God's kingdom, making disciples, or shining light in darkness. He will oppose you. But here's the truth: you're not defenseless. God has given you armor—truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, and the sword of the Spirit. These aren't decorative; they're functional. Are you wearing them daily? The battle is real, but so is your victory in Christ. Don't be surprised by opposition—expect it. Then stand firm, fully armed, fully purposed for His glory.

Day 5: Invested for Impact

Reading: Acts 20:17-38

Devotional: Paul gave Ephesus everything—three years of daily teaching, tears, warnings, and love. He held nothing back. When he said goodbye, they wept because they knew his heart. This is what investment looks like: sacrificial, intentional, emotional. Who are you investing in? Discipleship isn't a program; it's pouring your life into others. The Ephesian church became a missionary base that reached all of Asia because Paul didn't just visit—he stayed, taught, and multiplied disciples. Your greatest legacy won't be what you accomplish alone but whom you equip. Are you spending yourself for others? God's plan is multiplication. Teach someone what you've learned. Invest deeply. The world needs fully purposed believers.