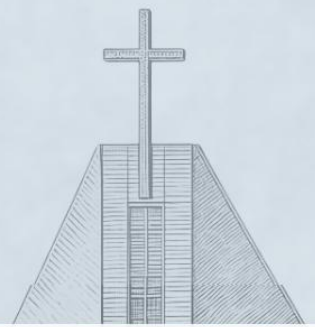


Study Guide

Shore Hope



EPHESIANS

Who are we really?



Term 3 2026

Welcome to Term 3

He himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility [...] His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. [...] Through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (Ephesians 2:14-18)

These verses speak of something good that's been happening this year at both Victoria Point and Redland Bay – we've had new people turning up. People being brought together by Jesus. Some are back to church after a long time away. Some have never really been part of a church before. They're asking good, honest questions, and it's been encouraging to watch.

But as we start this term, we are all too aware that this hasn't been everyone's experience. For more than a few of us, life has been strained and hard. And making church happen week to week – some of us have been at this a long time – and we're tired. There's just...a lot going on in people's lives.

Which is why it will be good to be in Ephesians this term. Ephesians speaks new life to people feeling disconnected from God, and disconnected from each other. It speaks of our individual identity in Christ – chosen, loved, secure. But it also speaks of how we find that identity united together: as God's church, Christ's body. As the passage above says, Jesus ended conflict between us and God, and between us and each other. The wall that used to keep people out – whether that's the newcomer who doesn't know anyone yet, or the person who's feeling isolated and running on empty – that wall's gone. Jesus tore it down himself, at the cross. We're one family now, whether we feel like it some days or not.

So, this isn't a "let's all try harder" term. It's a reminder that we don't hold this church together by being impressive or energetic. Christ already did the hard part. Our job is to keep showing up for each other – welcoming whoever's new, being patient with whoever's worn out – because it's Jesus who's at work already, bringing us together, bringing us to God.

Praying this is a good term for all of us, wherever we're at,
Russell

Introducing Jordan Paterson: Student Minister

This term we look forward to welcoming Jordan Paterson and his family as a student minister with us for the next couple of years. Jordan has been working as a student minister at Grace Bible Church Thornlands. Grace shares many of the reformed convictions we value at Redlands, but Jordan has increasingly been convicted he should minister in a Presbyterian church and so will be joining us. Here's a short interview with Jordan to help you get to know him.

Tell us a bit about your family?

My wife's name is Kristi-leigh, and we've been married for 10 years. Together we have three children: Hezekiah (4) - loves cars, books, and sport; Danielle (2) - loves babies, people, and cuddles; and Elijah (almost 3 months) - loves milk, his mum, and anyone willing to hold him. We're very thankful for the season of life God has us in, even if it is a busy one with three young kids!



You already live in the Redlands. Tell us what you love about the Redlands area/community and what you enjoy doing together here (hobbies, etc.)?

Although we previously lived in Alexandra Hills, we've spent most of our time in Cleveland and have really grown to love the Redlands area. We especially enjoy living close to the water. Before kids, we spent a lot of time walking our dog through the local parks, but these days that has mostly been replaced with bike rides and trips to playgrounds. When time (and my dodgy knee) allows, I also enjoy playing social sport. We've also appreciated the relaxed, community-oriented feel of the Redlands and have really enjoyed building our life here.

Where do you sense God leading you when it comes to future ministry?

My time working as a teacher helped me realise how much I enjoy teaching things that matter. Over time, I've become increasingly convinced that there is nothing more important than teaching the Gospel and helping God's people grow in their knowledge of Christ. Through that, I sense God placing the local church more and more on my heart, particularly in the area of pastoral ministry.

Q) How could we be praying for you and your family at the moment?

A) I would appreciate your prayers as I try to balance studying, being a husband and father, and managing the unknowns of my future. Please also keep my wife and kids in your prayers, especially as the kids grow up, that they would be continually seeking the Lord in faith, and for Kristi, that she would be encouraged and sustained in raising a young family.

Introducing Stuart, Yukiho, Leon & Noel Sharry

Stuart & Yukiho are our newest mission partners. They are preparing to go to Nagoya, Japan early next year with CMS.

Stuart is Australian and has had an interest in Japan for a long time. Stuart became a Christian while studying at university in Australia. After moving to Tokyo for postgraduate studies, he was challenged by the gospel need in Japan alongside considering vocational ministry. It was during this time he met Yukiho.



Yukiho was born in Yokohama into a Christian family. She moved to Tokyo with her parents to plant a church in the CBD. Growing up Japan, Yukiho saw firsthand the deep-rooted darkness of a society that has never known Jesus. According to the Joshua Project which maps out unreached people groups across the world, Japan has less than 2% Christian adherents and 0.4% evangelical Christians.

Stuart & Yukiho plan to serve in university ministry in the city of Nagoya which has a population of 2.4 million people and is the 4th largest city after Tokyo.

There are 26 universities in Nagoya, and more in the surrounding prefecture. University is commonly seen as an important time in young lives, and this is particularly true in Japan before young people are faced with an all-consuming work culture. Stuart & Yukiho also hope to help raise up a new generation of gospel workers through strategic partnerships with training programs and seminaries.

Stuart & Yukiho have recently finished training at St Andrew's Hall in Melbourne (CMS Training College) and have begun their first 6-month home assignment

meeting their link churches in preparation for going overseas next year. Redlands & Shore Hope will be one of their partner link churches. We will be able to meet them in person in November this year, and we are starting to partner with them now, especially 10:30 Church at Capalaba.

Although Yukiho's parents are Christians and are now pastoring a Japanese church in Melbourne, Stuart's Dad isn't a Christian. Recently Stuart and his Dad drove back from Melbourne (while the rest of the family flew up). On that journey, Stuart and his Dad listened to John Stott's Basic Christianity audiobook. This has given his Dad some things to think about. They ask for prayer that Stuart's Dad comes to know Jesus.

Stuart and Yukiho have two boys Leon (4yo) and Noel (2yo). Pray that the boys will adjust to life back on the Gold Coast for the next 7 months and will cope with moving around and visiting several different churches while they are on home assignment. Pray for the whole family as they prepare to move to Japan next year.

Guess Who's Coming to Lunch

Sunday 23rd August

We tried this for the first time last year and it was honestly one of the better things we did. You get put with people from across Shore Hope - sometimes from another congregation, sometimes just people who go to your service but you've somehow never spoken to them - and you have lunch together. That's it.

Sign-up forms will be out a few weeks into term. You can put your hand up to host, to be a guest, or just to offer your place as the venue for the day. If you host, you're not expected to cook the whole meal yourself - you'll sort out with your group who's bringing what.

It costs an afternoon. What you get back is knowing people you didn't know before: different ages, different congregations, different stages of life. Look out for the sign-up sheet and pencil in the 21st.



Receivership Update

As we enter Term 3 for 2026, the PCQ Receivership is at a significant juncture. A court application submitted by PCQ's creditor, Catalyst, to have additional Receivers appointed could have a significant impact on church properties across PCQ.

If you're still catching up on the Receivership, here's some background:

- PCQ has been in Receivership for five years because it's aged care arm, Prescare, entered into contracts it was not able to repay.
- The Receivership was voluntary, asking the courts to determine which entities within the PCQ's (quite old) trust structure were obliged to participate in paying any debt.
- In 2025, after a long court case, the court decided that those contracts were valid and needed to be paid.
- PCQ's Receivers have since appealed the decision. The appeal will be heard in November this year although the outcome of the appeal won't be known until mid 2027.
- PCQ's creditor, Catalyst, had applied to the court to have additional Receivers appointed who would have been obligated to "get in and realise the assets" of PCQ which would include congregational property.
- We give thanks that the application has since been moved off the court and is unlikely to be reconsidered until after the outcomes of the appeal has been decide (likely around mid 2027).
- The Redlands and Shore Hope Session and Committee of Management have begun planning for contingencies if our church property is to be sold sometime in the future, to ensure our ongoing ministry.

What to pray:

- Rejoice that God is our refuge and strength, our ever-present help in trouble.
- Pray that God would lead us by his Spirit to set our hope upon him in this season and not set our hopes on people or earthly things.
- Pray that God would remind us that he disciplines those he loves, and that however painful this season may be, he will use it for his glory and our good.
- Bring before God those people and congregations who are feeling particularly let down, distressed, discouraged, and even betrayed. Ask that God would lift them up and be their comfort.
- Pray that God would give us patience as we wait the outcome of the appeal, which is unlikely to be known until mid 2027.
- Pray that as the denomination faces the potential loss of property in the future, we would remember that God's church is his people, giving thanks for the great blessing of property we currently have, and acknowledging that it is all a gift from God.
- Pray that Redlands and Shore Hope would be guarded from bitterness or panic at this time. Ask God's pruning would produce the fruit of righteousness.
- Pray that we and all PCQ churches would remain focused on the work God has given us to do in making disciples to his glory.

Taste and See – How did it go?

For the second year we ran Taste & See during term 2. Four weeks of sharing a meal together and talking honestly about who Jesus is. Somewhere between 16 and 20 people came each week, a mix of people's family members and some new faces we hadn't met before.



It was good. Genuinely good. Hearing people from our own church share how they became Christians – and for a few of them, how much the Bible itself had to do with convincing them it was all actually true. Their stories seemed to open up conversation. People felt able to ask hard questions, and got honest answers back.

A few things people said afterwards:

"Clarification of a complex subject."

"A very good introduction to Christianity. Good food, people, and conversation! Thank you :)"

"Appreciated the different conversations and hearing other people's stories."

"I enjoyed the fellowship of the meal. I would also like to understand how the Bible was written."

"The honest sharing. The response to difficult questions."

Nobody's said "yes, I want to become a Christian" yet, and nobody's signed up formally to keep looking into it further. But conversations have begun and people are connecting with Home Groups where they can keep asking questions. If you know someone who came along, it might be worth checking in with them – not to push anything, just to keep the conversation going. And please keep praying.

Thanks to everyone who cooked, hosted, or just turned up ready to talk to someone they'd never met.

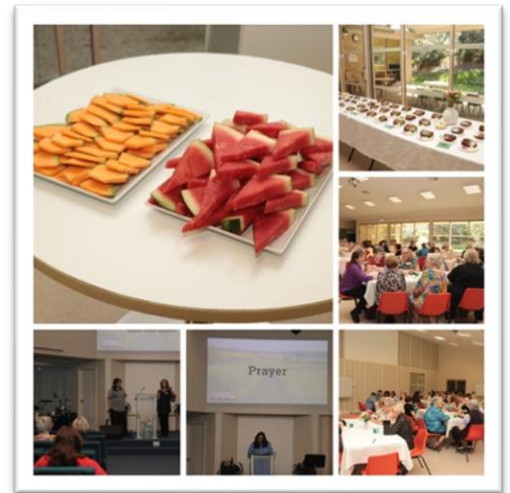
Women's Teaching Day 2026: The Good Woman

Our Women's Teaching Day this year invited us to think about who we are as women who follow Jesus. Kate Mitchell took us through two meaty seminars where we considered the different influences in our lives as women. She pointed us to Jesus and who he thinks we are and how we can grow in his likeness as women who are resting on his grace. Jennie Baddeley unpacked Proverbs 31 and reminded us that how we live for Jesus is what matters most. We enjoyed extended time for prayer, fellowship and reflection together throughout the day.

We were well fed by Kirsty Everest's excellent cooking, both at morning tea and lunch, and enjoyed browsing through the bookstall in the breaks. We were joined by women from across the Redlands congregations, as well as women from Shore Hope and other nearby churches; some had travelled from Toowoomba and elsewhere in Brisbane to attend our teaching day. It was a privilege to encourage each other to grow in Christ.

We are grateful for the work of the WTD Committee: Chloe Catchpole, Susannah Hannant, Jacalyn Macfarlane and Jennie Baddeley.

Join us next May for another great day!



Term 3 Calendar

JULY

Friday 17th
Sunday 19th
Sunday 26th

Jordan Paterson begins as Student Minister
Lord's Supper
Prayer Meeting for PCQ

AUGUST

Saturday 1st
Saturday 1st
Sunday 2nd
Tuesday 11th
Sunday 23rd

GROW Women's Conference
Men's BBQ
Monthly Lunch + Newish
Ladies' Morning Tea
Guess Who's Coming to Lunch

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 5th
Saturday 5th
Sunday 6th
Tuesday 8th
Sunday 13th

Men's BBQ
SPUR Queensland (MTS Event)
Father's Day + Lord's Supper
Ladies' Morning Tea
Monthly Lunch

Getting the most out of these Bible Studies

1. READ the relevant passage before the Sunday talk (& look through the investigate questions). Wrestling with God's Word for yourself before hearing the talk will lead to getting much more out of it.
2. PREPARE your answers to the study questions before your small group meeting. You will be in a better position to serve others in your group through thought out contributions. If everyone in the group prepares in this way, it will be easier to dig deeper, and to devote more time to application and prayer.
3. PRAY for those teaching the Word; for those leading small groups; for other members of your group; and for yourself—that your attitude will be focused on serving others and growing in knowledge and love of Jesus our Lord.



KICK OFF...

this question just gets us talking about the broad subject of the study before we see what God's Word says about it.



INVESTIGATE...

draws out what the Bible text is actually saying. Stay looking at the Bible as you answer them, & refer to verses in your answer.



THINK AND APPLY...

is where the rubber hits the road: applying it to our lives. Doing studies linked to the Sunday talks allows more time to be devoted to this vital step.



DOCTRINE DIVE... (OPTIONAL)

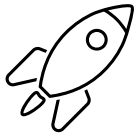
pushes more deeply into a particular area of doctrine that is present in the passage.



PRAYER...

is a key part of how we respond to listening to God in his word together—by talking to him together. It's a key part of our ministry to each other.

Your blessed life now?



Kick off

1. What images come to mind when you think of the blessed life?
What experiences does it involved? What is life like?

2. How does your life feel in comparison to that description?

It is very normal to think that a life blessed by God will be good. It will be easy, or wealthy, or at least noticeably successful. The problem is that, in comparison, most of the time our lives feel less than ordinary. We end up wondering: how can I experience more of God's blessings?

Introducing Ephesians

The exciting thing about the book of Ephesians is that it gives us the big picture of the Christian life. By listening to God in Ephesians, we discover what the normal Christian life is.

It seems unlikely that Ephesians was written to a particular church with a particular problem. In fact, when you look at most of the earliest copies of this letter, verse 1 doesn't even mention Ephesus! The letter's simply written to "the saints".¹

That means Ephesians wasn't Paul's advice to a particular church regarding a particular problem. It was a message that every church needed to hear. Ephesians isn't focussed on specific issues in a specific church. It gives the big picture that every Christian needs to hear.

Big picture blessings

No sooner have we started reading Paul's letter than we are thrown into the big picture of the Christian life. And it's all about blessings.

¹ See *Introduction to the Letter* in John Stott's *The Message of the Ephesians: God's New Society*.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

3. Looking at the things God has done. Are there any you don't understand?

4. What do you think these words mean?

a. spiritual blessings (v.3)

b. predestined (vv.4-5,11)

c. the mystery of his will (v.9)

d. for the praise of his glory (vv.12,14)

Why do you think Paul begins the letter with this 'dense' list of blessings? What effect does it have?

Verse 3 seems to summarise how Paul begins this letter. God has blessed us with everything. Nothing held back; nothing left out; nothing extra required. While different Christians receive different spiritual gifts, every Christian receives every spiritual blessing.

The how and the why

But how can Paul say this? So many Christians in the early church were persecuted, marginalised or simply an unimpressive minority. How have they suddenly become an important aspect of God's plans for his creation?

5. How many times do you see the phrase "in Christ" or something similar? What do you think it means?

6. According to this passage, why have Christians received all these blessings?



Think &
Apply

7. What self-image should we have if God has richly blessed us "in Christ" for "the praise of his glory"?

To understand the Christian life, two simple words are vitally important: “in Christ” (v.3). They tell us everything about the how and why of God’s blessings.

The How: If God has blessed us “in Christ” then we don’t have God’s blessings without Jesus. Our union with Christ is a vital part of our relationship with God.

The Why: God has blessed us “in Christ” because that brings him glory. God loves to see his Son honoured and when we trust in him that’s exactly what happens. We learn to love Jesus like God loves Jesus. We realise our lives should be centred around Jesus because that’s where God has centred all his plans for this world. It’s all about Jesus.



Think &
Apply

Enjoying our blessings

Considering all we’ve learnt from Ephesians:

8. Compared to the description of the blessed life discussed in the kick-off, what will a richly blessed life look like?

9. If I want a greater appreciation of God’s blessings in my life, what should I do?



Prayer

Thank God for his blessings and pray that you would see them.



Doctrine
Dive

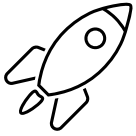
Predestination

The doctrine of predestination can seem to be more an intellectual challenge instead of a praiseworthy blessing. Here’s what our confession, the Westminster Confession of Faith teaches about it:

Those of mankind that are predestined unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his free grace and love alone, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving him thereunto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace. (WCF 3.5)

How should this be an encouragement to Christians that leads to praise of God?

The things we pray for...



Kick off

1. What do you most regularly pray for your friends? ... your family? ... yourself?

What do we pray for each other? Sometimes it can boil down to little more than 'happy thoughts' or a general attitude toward the other person that they will be 'all right'. It's no wonder we find intercession, praying for others, at times tedious and uninspiring. In contrast, Paul's prayers were beefy and sharp, with the focus of God's Christ-filled purposes at work in the lives of others.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

2. Why does Paul thank God for what has gone on in the lives of his readers?
3. Why can Paul be confident that the LORD will hear and answer this prayer?
4. What are the two characteristics of the Ephesians that demonstrate the power of God in their life?
5. What does it mean to have 'faith in the Lord Jesus'?
6. What does 'love for all the saints' mean?

7. What do new Christians normally know about the Christian faith and why is this prayer appropriate not only for new Christians but older ones as well?

Prayer Point 1 - To Know God Better v17



Think &
Apply

8. How do we get to know God better (v17)?

9. How does Paul describe the God that the Spirit reveals to us?

Prayer Point 2 - Enlightenment about we are called to be v18

10. How does Paul describe the hope before us?

11. How does Prayer Point 2 link in with our response to God?
Ephesians 4:1 'As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.'

12. What power is at work in us for change to take place now in our lives?

13. What confidence does this passage give us as we face bad habits/sin in our lives?

14. In what ways should this passage reshape your prayers? List some of the things you have learned.



Prayer

Thank God for prayer. Pray now for each other using the insights you've gained from this study.



Doctrine
Dive

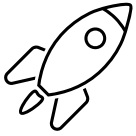
Faith

Here's the Westminster Confession of Faith teaching on faith:

By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently, upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principle acts of saving faith are, accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace. (WCF 14.2)

How is faith more than simply believing the truths of the Bible at an intellectual level? How might the word "trust" better reflect this?

The things we fear



Kick off

1. Write down three things that you feel are far beyond your control but significantly affect your life. (eg. the economy, the government, the company you work for)

The world of Spiritual powers

Paul began his letter emphasising how God has blessed everyone who is “in Christ” (which is every Christian). As we read on, we learn why. Paul wants every Christian to know that God is on their side:

*I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and **his incomparably great power for us who believe.*** Ephesians 1:18-19

We fail to appreciate how significant this statement is because we do not live in fear of spiritual powers. The Roman world was full of temples and priests. The gods controlled wealth and sickness, life and death. And so, an important part of life in the Roman world was influencing these powers. Offering sacrifices to appease the gods’ anger. Making vows and offerings in the hope that the gods would use their power to help you. And living in constant fear that the gods might turn against you.

By contrast, Paul’s understanding of how the spiritual powers were at work was very different.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

2. Rather than humans harnessing spiritual powers to do their will, what was really going on?
3. How does the way God uses his power contrast with the way the “prince of the air” uses his?

4. How did the people Paul was writing to need to change their perspective on life? How should it change ours?
5. Where do we look to see this change clearly?

In a society that feared spiritual powers and sought to control them, God revealed that people were actually slaves. As Bob Dylan says, “we all gotta serve somebody”. The normal situation is that people are slaves of “the prince of the air”—Satan. We think we’re pursuing our own desires and purposes but we’re actually serving his. And in doing so we make God angry (v.3).

However, rather than stay angry with us, God chooses to love us. In his generosity, or grace, he changes us. We now live lives to please him. Notice how God acts first. We’re not influencing or controlling God. Quite the opposite. God makes our lives pleasing to him. Rather than serve the powers in fear, God’s power makes us his delight.

So, the way to live is “in Christ”. Letting God work for you. You are “made alive with”, “raised up with” and “seated with” Jesus. Without Jesus you would still be ruled by Satan. But with Jesus you become what God wants you to be so that you don’t need to fear.

From Enemies to Citizens

Paul wants us to appreciate what a huge difference this makes. Especially if we weren’t born Jews.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

6. Why was it true that at one time the Jews had a better relationship with God than anyone else? What were the signs of this relationship?
7. How has relationship with God been changed by Jesus?
8. How is Paul indicating continuity between the relationship the Jews used to have and the relationship that Jews and Gentiles now have?

Once again, Paul wants these Christians to know how much things have changed. They have nothing to fear because they have the same access to God as the Jews once had. They are citizens of God's city.

Nothing to fear

In the ancient world generally, there was plenty to fear. The world was seen as the battle ground of many and various divine powers. But the Jews had a different worldview. God was in control and acted for his people.

The amazing news of the gospel is (a) that God is using his power to rescue people from the powers of this world, and (b) that God is doing this for not only Jews but also Gentiles who connect to God "in Christ" and share by faith in Jesus' death and resurrection.



Think &
Apply

9. Look at the three things beyond your control from the start of the study. Does growing in your understanding of how God's power is at work for you affect how you view them?

10. Who do we listen to for confidence and advice, instead of listening to God and his word?



Prayer

Thank God for our security in Christ. Bring any particular fears or concerns members of the group are facing to him.



Doctrine
Dive

Free Will

We often talk about free will as our ability to choose between doing good or evil. Ephesians 2:2-3 indicates that our will has been impacted by sin. Here's how the Westminster Confession of Faith describes it:

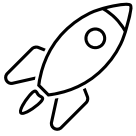
Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto. (WCF 9.3)

Some might describe that as a negative view of humanity. But how does it enlarge our understanding of what God has done for us in saving us?

Study 4 - United in Christ

Ephesians 2:11-3:21

How does our church family honour God?



Kick off

1. If you had to choose something that was the most important thing our church family did to honour God, what would it be?

The Dividing Wall

Paul has been unfolding the importance of being 'in Christ'. Part of being 'in Christ' is that we are united to others who are also 'in Christ'. This may not sound very radical to us, but, when you are used to thinking of certain sections of your society as 'the bad people', it's hard when God declares that you are united to them. This was certainly the case for the Jews and Gentiles in the early church. They were trained to think that the other mob were 'the bad people'. So, when Paul and others come preaching the gospel, it started to make some waves.

This is a picture of the Temple area. In the centre of the precinct, towering above it all, was the Temple. The high wall around the Temple is the dividing wall. Jews could go through the gates, but a Gentile was forbidden to proceed. A Gentile could only go as far as the Court of the Gentiles, the enormous area surrounding the Temple.



The distinction between Jews and Gentiles was set in stone, at the heart of Jewish worship, in Jerusalem—the Temple. On the Soreg, or dividing wall, there was an inscription that has been found in Jerusalem, and this is what it says:

"No foreigner is to enter the barriers surrounding the sanctuary. He who is caught will have himself to blame for his death which will follow."



Investigate

Read Acts 21:17-31

2. How seriously do the Jews take the purity of the temple?

'Brought near through the blood of Christ...'



Investigate

Read Ephesians 2:11-22

3. Describe the place of Gentiles **before** the coming of Jesus and how it is represented in the Temple.

4. Describe the place of Jews **before** the coming of Christ and how it is represented in the Temple.

5. List what has happened since the coming of Christ for both Jew and Gentile and how it fulfils the purpose of the Temple.

6. How does this fulfil the great promises that God has made in the past (read Genesis 12:1-3)?

7. What is God's purpose for the world in Christ?

Read Ephesians 3:1-21

8. What is the "reason" Paul refers to in 3:1, and how does that shape Paul's ministry?

9. What does it look like to make known the manifold (or many and various) wisdom of God (3:10)?
10. How does Paul's prayer in 3:14-21 flow from his understanding of the breadth of the gospel and his own mission in 3:1-13?



Think &
Apply

11. Having read this passage, what would you now say is the most important way a church family can honour God?

God had done something that nobody expected. While he had always promised to bless the nations through the Israelites (remember God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12), no one expected that non-Israelites would one day have equal status before God. It wasn't that God had devalued the status of Israelites, but that he'd increased the status of Gentiles.

This changed Paul's view of the Church. It wasn't just a bunch of people with a common interest. It was the place where God was revealing his unexpected and diversely creative wisdom. God was creating a new identity for humanity. Christians no longer saw themselves as "Jew" or "Gentile" but as "in Christ"—people identified with and ruled by Jesus.

Our role and goal

Paul's role was unique in the unfolding purposes of God, yet God continues the same work within our church family. That should profoundly affect what we think is important at church.



Think &
Apply

12. What social barriers are there in our society that have no place in our church family?
13. Sometimes churches talk about 'targeting a specific segment of the market'. What warnings does this passage have for that kind of church-planting?



Prayer

Pray for relationships in our church family, particularly in light of Paul's prayer in 3:14-21.



Doctrine
Dive

Church

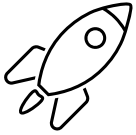
Here's how the Westminster Confession of Faith describes the Church:

The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. (WCF 25.1)

How does this understanding of the Church align with what Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:11-22?

Relationships in church families

When we hang around a group of people for a long time, they can get to know us pretty well. And that's definitely true of church families.



Kick off

1. What would you say is the value of being well known by others in your church family?
2. What events have helped you get to know others in your church family better?

Our unity

The great thing about our relationship with God is that it is initiated by Him. We don't need to make the first move. God does. And up until now in the letter, Paul has been telling us what God has done for us. But now we learn what we should be doing for God.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

3. Looking back, what is the calling we've received?
4. Is there anything in the list of "ones" that strikes you? What is the point Paul is making?
5. In a typical church family, when is it hard to be humble and gentle? What might it take to bear with each other in love?

Christians are united. Whether we're Baptist or Presbyterian, Australian or Indonesian, every Christian is united by the same God. But that doesn't make unity easy. Paul expects it will take hard work.

This is encouraging because sometimes it can be hard getting on together. Paul isn't telling us to sweep our differences under the carpet. He wants us to work hard at accepting each other with our differences. Just like God has accepted us.

Our Diversity

What's more, we need our diversity. God has made each person different for a purpose.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 4:7-13

6. How is our diversity a good and necessary thing?
7. What is the goal of our diversity?
8. How does involvement in a church contrast with involvement in, say, a school or university?

Our Maturity

When we are united and use our diversity well, what happens?

Read Ephesians 4:14-16

9. What does a mature church look like? What illustrations does Paul use to describe one?
10. What happens if either truth or love is missing as we build maturity together?
11. What warning is there for us in verse 14? Where is that relevant today?

Maximising our church family

We depend on each other to grow. It's why we have Growth Groups. But it involves much more than that.



Think &
Apply

12. What are 'works of service' you could be doing for people in your church each Sunday? During the rest of your week?



Prayer

Discuss the people you are seeking to encourage and serve around our church family. Then pray for each other and those people.



Doctrine
Dive

Communion of Saints

Here's how the Westminster Confession of Faith describes our unity together as Christians:

All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as to conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man. (WCF 26.1)

Give the depth of union we share as members of the body of Christ, who is it that suffers when we fail to use our gifts in the service of the church?

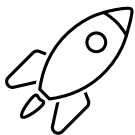
New in Christ

Put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Ephesians 6:13

Last week we began to see what life “in Christ” looks like. It means being part of a community building each other up in trusting Jesus. It means being united but using our diverse gifts to serve other. But that is only the beginning of the picture for Paul. In this next section of Ephesians, Paul speaks of the life that a Christian has been called to. It’s a new and holy life.

But, before we get to the new life, we are told ‘why’ we would live a new life.

A Different Life



Kick off

1. Someone you know has become a Christian. They are involved in the mob. Yes, the mafia. They ask you whether you think this is a good idea. What do you say? What reason do you give for your answer?



Investigate

Read Ephesians 4:17-31

2. What does Paul insist on in the Lord (v17)?
3. How does this fit in with the great change that he has already described in Eph.2.11-22?
4. What are the characteristics of ‘Gentile’ thinking and how does it relate to Eph.2.1-2?

5. Read Eph. 4:17, 20-24. What part does the mind and the understanding play in how we behave?

The New Life

Paul now begins to describe the new life. He tells us what it looks like. It's important to note how the new life is connected to the new way of thinking.



Read Ephesians 4:25-32

Investigate

Fill out the table below. Noting how Paul connects the belief to the action.

Attitude/Action	Alternative	Reason



Think &
Apply

6. How will a changed life impact your witness at home and at work?

7. How will a changed and changing life enable you to make the most of every opportunity when it comes to telling others about the Lord?

You changing does not depend on anybody else changing their behaviour – it is your responsibility to be like Christ. You can't change others only God can, but you being a fellow worker with God, in being changed, can provide change in others.



Prayer

Pray for each other as you seek to live out the new life you have in Christ. If people are willing to share specific areas they need to grow in, pray about them.



Doctrine
Dive

Sanctification

Here's how the Westminster Confession of Faith describes our sanctification:

They who are effectually called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified, really and personally, through the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection, by his Word and Spirit dwelling in them; the dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the several lusts thereof are more and more weakened and mortified, and they more and more quickened and strengthened, in all saving graces, to the practice of true holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. (WCF 13.1)

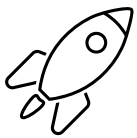
What is an area of life where you have experienced God sanctifying you?

Life in Christ

Last week we saw that life in Christ involves taking off our old self, and putting on our new, sanctified self. In the next section of Ephesians he gives us three pictures of what life “in Christ” looks like.

But threaded through each of these sections is what the NIV usually translates as “living”. So, what are these three ways of living?

A Different Life



Kick off

Why do you care?

1. A friend asks why they’ve never seen you get drunk. What do you say?

Living in love

First, we are to live in love (5:2). The metaphor Paul uses is of genetic inheritance.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 4:32-5:7

2. We saw last week that Christians are called to live a new life. How would summarise what we saw in Ephesians 4:17-32?
3. In what areas should there be a family likeness between us and our heavenly Father?
4. If God saves us because of Jesus, and not our own obedience, why is Paul reminding us of deeds that are the cause of God’s coming judgement?

God is making everything new and he’s started that by resurrecting Jesus. If we are “in Christ” then we are part of that new creation. But if what we really want is a lifestyle just like the world that is under God’s judgement, are we really in Christ?

Living in the light

Second, we live like children of the light (5:8) and so the metaphor is of day and night.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 5:8-14

5. What fruitless deeds of darkness do you think Paul has in mind?
6. What do you think "exposing" them would look like?

Paul is calling us to a life where we would never fear being exposed. If all of your actions, motives and even secret thoughts were to come out in the open you wouldn't be ashamed. You'd choose the same movie whether you were watching it on your own or with the whole Home Group around. It's a big call.

Living wisely

Finally, we are to live wisely (5:15). The metaphor of being drunk simply brings that out more clearly.

Read Ephesians 5:15-21

7. In contrast to being filled with wine, what does being filled with the Spirit look like? (vv.19-21 are all part of the same sentence)
8. How does this description of being filled with the Spirit compare with how some Christians behave when they claim to be filled with the Spirit?

The problem with alcohol is that it seems to take control and change our thinking and behaviour. But rather than that "spirit" we are to give over control to God's Spirit who will teach us to live a life glorifying God and serving others. What a contrast!

Helping each other live “in Christ”

Putting this section together with the start of chapter 4 (last study), it's great to realise this new life is not the responsibility of me as an individual. It is the concern of our church family. We can model to each other what it looks like. And “speaking the truth in love” (Eph 4:15), we can help each other to identify areas where we are yet to reflect God's holiness as we see it in Jesus.



Think &
Apply

9. What problems can there be when we speak to each other about areas of sin (or even just unwise) that we identify in each other's lives?

10. What wisdom can we use so that these conversations are more likely to build up than cause dispute and tension?



Prayer

Pray for each other as you seek to live out the new life you have in Christ. If people are willing to share specific areas they need to grow in, pray about them.



Doctrine
Dive

Good Works

Here's how the Westminster Confession of Faith describes our living our life in Christ:

These good works, done in obedience to God's commandments, are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith: and by them believers manifest their thankfulness, strengthen their assurance, edify their brethren, adorn the profession of the gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries, and glorify God, whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus thereunto, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life (WCF 16.2)

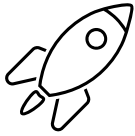
What are the results of the good works worked in us by the Holy Spirit?

Study 8 - Listening in Christ Ephesians 5:21-6:9

Leaving the past behind

Submission is not a popular idea in our culture.

A Different Life



Kick off

1. If you talked about submission to your non-Christian friends, what do you think would be the first image that would come to their minds?

We live in a world that believes freedom is a fundamental moral good. Every person should be free to do what they want, when they want, how they want. (Oh, provided they don't hurt anyone).

This belief is so strong that, when we come to passages like Ephesians 5:21-6:9, many will claim that they reflect beliefs of a different era and are no longer relevant to our generation. There was even a minister who refused to read this section out when preaching through Ephesians.

And yet it's hard to imagine it was a popular passage in its own day. At the time of the early church many people objected to living a life of submission. Because many Roman husbands were cheating on their wives and regularly involved in orgies, some Roman wives started to openly live independent of their husbands and flaunt their beauty in the pursuit of power. Slaves regularly ran away from their masters seeking freedom, independence and sometimes safety. This is not an easy passage.

Answering some objections

To help us hear the Bible on its terms, it can help to clear up some common objections to the idea of submission. One common objection is that being a person in submission means we are inferior to the people we submit to.



Investigate

2. How does Mark 10:42-45 challenge us to change those assumptions?

Another common assumption is that having a different role or place in society means we have different importance (eg. being a doctor is of different importance to being an at-home-mum).

3. How has the message of Ephesians already been challenging that assumption? (eg. Eph 2; Eph 4:4-7)

As some of us are given particular roles, and as some of those roles require submission, we must not mistakenly think that God is saying anything about our personal worth or importance. Jesus, our King, came to take on the role of a servant and submit to his Father's will. We are all equally valued by God, and yet we are all different in the way God has created us.

Submission "in Christ"

This section of Ephesians is summarised in 5:21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." And the instructions for husbands and wives help us see what these relationships are entirely appropriate for people who are "in Christ".



Investigate

Read Ephesians 5:22-33

4. How does the way Christians relate to Christ help wives to understand their role in marriage?

5. How does the way Christ relates to his Church help husbands to understand their role in marriage?



Think &
Apply

6. What will a marriage be like where both partners are living in this way?

In God's design, marriage works best when a husband and wife have different roles. The husband is intended to be the leader and head of the house responsible for taking a lead that acts in self-sacrificial love. Where he takes the lead it is never to be in his own interests but always in the interest of his wife. The wife is intended to gladly submit to his leadership, supporting him rather than undermining him. And in this way people will see what the relationship between Jesus and his Church is like.

But this submission and loving self-sacrifice is not restricted to marriage.



Think &
Apply

Read Ephesians 6:1-4

7. What different roles does God intend for parents and children?
8. Is there an age limit to these instructions?



Investigate

Read Ephesians 6:5-9

9. What are the responsibilities of slaves and masters?

Our real problem with submission

As we think about how to live out this submission in our own relationships, there is one final concern we are likely to have. And looking to Jesus is our only answer.



Investigate

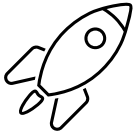
10. If we are worried that submitting to others makes us vulnerable to harm, what does the example of Jesus' submission teach us? How did God deal with the injustice done to him?
11. Does God in any way give permission for the person in authority to harm the other person? If we were aware of a person abusing their authority, what should we do (cf. Eph 4:15)?
12. What are specific ways a husband can love his wife and lay down his life for her?



Prayer

Ask for help in the areas of your life where you know you should submit or should act in self-sacrificial love.

Do you believe in the devil?



Kick off

1. If you told your non-Christian friends you believe there is a devil and other evil powers at work in this world, what would they say?

Many people would just laugh. Others would think you strange. Others would agree with you and go on to paint vivid pictures and offer methods and strategies of being safe from those evil powers. But what are we to think of Satan and of the other powers standing opposed to us?

Taking Satan seriously

As we have already seen, there is no question that Paul takes his belief in supernatural powers seriously. He is firmly convinced that there are dark powers at work in this world.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 6:10-13

2. Why has Paul mentioned these powers?

3. What do we have to do to protect ourselves from these powers?



Think &
Apply

4. Is your attitude to spiritual powers the same as Paul's?

When it comes to speaking about Satanic powers, Paul is very serious. Our efforts to put on the new life that God has made possible, to be controlled by God's Spirit and to submit to one another in love will not be easy because we are part of a far larger struggle. We can expect opposition and we should not be naive.

Taking Satan too seriously

But with all that said, we must be careful not to take these evil powers too seriously.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 6:13-17

5. List out the pieces of armour and what they represent.
6. How does this list compare with Ephesians 1:13? What does that tell us?
7. Are we taking up an offensive or defensive position?

While we are involved in the battle, we discover that God is really the one doing the fighting. We are called only to stand.

Notice that many Christians do not think this way. The number of books on sale teaching “techniques” of “Spiritual Warfare” seem to multiply every month. They suggest prayer marches, naming of demons, exorcism of objects and even of families. But God’s method of warfare is to equip us with his promises in the gospel and call us to stand firm, holding on to that hope. And that’s all we need because in the death and resurrection of Jesus, Satan was defeated. Don’t forget we’re already seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph 2:6). So long as we are in Christ, nothing can touch us.

The power of prayer

But that’s not to say we sit idle.



Investigate

Read Ephesians 6:18-24

8. How does verse 17 help us to understand what it means to pray “in the Spirit”? (cf. Eph 5:18)
9. Why does Paul want them to pray?

Time to act

Hopefully you've found it a rewarding journey as we've worked our way through the book of Ephesians. We have learnt a lot about what God has done and we've better understood how the Christian life is a response to and shaped by what God has done in Christ.

But the book concludes with a call to action. We must be alert in prayer and we must hold fast to the message that we have received in this letter.



Think &
Apply

10. What is one area where you need the others in your Home Group/Bible Study Group to encourage you to make a change as a result of studying Ephesians?

11. How are you likely to be tempted to stop trusting the message of Ephesians? Are there particular challenges you can see ahead?

12. How can we help each other to stand firm in the coming weeks?



Prayer

Pray for each other to stand firm in faith and to have a right view of Satan and his power.



S H O R E H O P E
A REDLANDS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH