

GROUP GUIDE TO

Loving and living the Gospel in Ephesians

(Based on the commentary available from www.friends-first.com in 'Free Resources' and in 'Explore the Bible')

THE BIBLE IN OUR GROUPS

- A Christian cannot happily live without the Bible anymore than a person could happily live without air, food, water, heat or direction. That's why it's important that Christians - *preferably on a daily basis* - learn to breathe its oxygen, feed on its nourishment, drink its refreshment, absorb its energy, and obey its instruction.
- The very first thing that the first church devoted themselves to in their gathering was "the apostle's teaching" (see Acts 2:42) which is now recorded for us in the Bible. That's why God's Word is so central in our gatherings, both our large Sunday ones, and in our small groups.
- Getting into God's Word *together* helps us get even deeper into God's Word, and it helps the Word get deeper into us. Someone said, "It doesn't matter how much of the Bible you go through, what really matters is how much of the Bible goes through you." That's why we explore the Bible alone *and* together. What's more, exploring the Bible together greatly motivates us all to explore the Bible alone.
- The average weekly small group gathering consists of three main components: 1) Bonding time (where we get into each other's lives); 2) The prayer encounter (where we get into God's presence); and 3) Life-shaping conversation (where we get into God's Word). This guide impacts the life-shaping conversation part of the gathering.
- In your group devote six weeks to Ephesians, focussing in a chapter per week. Everyone in the group is to read a chapter (usually), with the commentary as an aid when needed, as preparation and come ready to have a "life-shaping conversation" based on it in the group.

OUTLINE

Week Before

- The small group leader needs to:
 - Make sure everyone has an electronic or printed out copy of the Mark commentary, called “Loving and living the Gospel in Ephesians”.
 - Motivate everyone to read through chapter 1 of Ephesians in their daily devotions during the week.
 - Explain that they don’t need to read all of the commentary, but that it will help them when they come across those verses that either don’t make sense, or they don’t know how to apply to their lives. In other words, when you want to ‘double-click’ on a verse so that you can understand or apply it better you now can - by referring to the commentary.
 - Encouragingly instruct them to try come ready to share:
 - *1) What is the most fascinating thing you found out in this chapter?*
 - *2) What one or two things really impacted you personally?*
 - *3) In what ways is your life changing or still in need of change in the light of what God is saying to you through this chapter?*
 - Assure everyone that even if they don’t do this reading, they should still come, because they will get much out of the time next week. (This is why it’s also suitable to keep inviting new people to the group).

Week One (based on Ephesians 1)

- **Ice-breaker question:** (Note to leader: an ice-breaker is meant to be brief, to get the ball rolling, to not necessarily be spiritual and to help people get to know each other) Ephesians 1 speaks of the awesome beauty of Christ. Have you ever had a wow-moment in nature where you were just blown away by the beauty of creation? If so, tell us about it?
- Read through Ephesians 1 using the headings below to clarify the flow of thought. Either as you go along in the reading, or once the reading is done, discuss these three questions:
- **Discover Bible insights:** “Of all you read in Ephesians this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?”
- **Discern God’s message:** “As you pondered this chapter, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?”
- **Respond to God’s message:** “In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?”
- Remind people: ‘This week, please read Ephesians 2 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share answers to the same three questions we answered today.’

WE ARE IN CHRIST (1:1-3)
WE ARE CHOSEN (1:4-6a)
A MIGHTY PLAN (1: 6b-10)
INHERITANCE (1:11-13)
THE SPIRIT (1:13b-14)
OPENED EYES (1:15-19)
THE RESURRECTED, LIVING CHRIST! (1:20-23)

Week Two (based on Ephesians 2)

- **Ice-breaker question:** Ephesians 2 speaks about being rescued or saved. Have you ever experienced a situation where you were in despair or danger and someone rescued you? If so, tell us about it.
- Read through Ephesians 2 using the headings below to clarify the flow of thought. Either as you go along in the reading, or once the reading is done, discuss these three questions:
- **Discover Bible insights:** “Of all you read in Ephesians this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?”
- **Discern God’s message:** “As you pondered this chapter, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?”
- **Respond to God’s message:** “In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?”
- Remind people: ‘This week, please read Ephesians 3 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share answers to the same three questions we answered today.’

WHAT WE ARE SAVED FROM (2:1-3)
WHAT WE ARE SAVED INTO (2:4-7)
HOW AND WHY WE ARE SAVED (2:8-10)
MAKING ONE OUT OF THE TWO (2:11-18)
THE CHURCH: A NATION, A FAMILY, A BUILDING (2:19-22)

Week Three (based on Ephesians 3)

- **Ice-breaker question:** Ephesians 3 speaks of how an unanswered question has finally been answered. Is there any question about life or the world or anything that you are hoping to get an answer to? If so, what is it?
- Read through Ephesians 3 using the headings below to clarify the flow of thought. Either as you go along in the reading, or once the reading is done, discuss these three questions:
- **Discover Bible insights:** “Of all you read in Ephesians this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?”
- **Discern God’s message:** “As you pondered this chapter, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?”
- **Respond to God’s message:** “In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?”
- Remind people: ‘This week, please read Ephesians 4 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share answers to the same three questions we answered today.’

<p><i>THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST (3:1-6)</i> <i>UNSEARCHABLE RICHES (3:7-13)</i> <i>BECOMING GOD-FILLED (3:14-21)</i></p>
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Week Four (based on Ephesians 4)

- **Ice-breaker question:** Ephesians 4 speaks affirmatively about our unique contributions. In a team setting what is one unique contribution or strength that you bring to a team, and one weakness?
- Read through Ephesians 4 using the headings below to clarify the flow of thought. Either as you go along in the reading, or once the reading is done, discuss these three questions:
- **Discover Bible insights:** “Of all you read in Ephesians this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?”
- **Discern God’s message:** “As you pondered this chapter, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?”
- **Respond to God’s message:** “In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?”
- Remind people: ‘This week, please read Ephesians 5 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share answers to the same three questions we answered today.’

UNITY IN COMMUNITY (4:1-6)
GIFTS FOR THE CHURCH (4:7-11)
THE GOALS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE BODY OF CHRIST (4:12-16)
HATING THE PAST (4:17-19)
BECOMING THE NEW YOU (4:20-24)
WORKING OUT THE DETAILS (4:25-32 and beyond)

Week Five (based on Ephesians 5)

- **Ice-breaker question:** Ephesians 5 speaks about marriage. What is the most inspiring marriage you've ever been exposed to? Tell us about it.
- Read through Ephesians 5 using the headings below to clarify the flow of thought. Either as you go along in the reading, or once the reading is done, discuss these three questions:
- **Discover Bible insights:** "Of all you read in Ephesians this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?"
- **Discern God's message:** "As you pondered this chapter, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?"
- **Respond to God's message:** "In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?"
- Remind people: 'This week please read Ephesians 6 in your daily devotions. Next week, try come ready to share answers to the same three questions we answered today.'

RECEIVING AND EXTENDING CHRIST'S LOVE (5:1-2)

WARNING: SINS TO BE AVOIDED (5:3-6)

WALKING IN THE LIGHT (5:7-14)

LIVING WISELY (5:15-17)

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT (5:18-21)

WIVES AND HUSBANDS, part 1 (5:22-24)

HUSBANDS AND WIVES, part 2 (5:25-33)

CHRIST AND THE CHURCH (5:22-33)

Week Six (based on Ephesians 6)

- **Ice-breaker question:** Ephesians 6 speaks of parenting. Who is the most inspiring parent you've ever been exposed to? Tell us about their parenting.
- Read through Ephesians 6 using the headings below to clarify the flow of thought. Either as you go along in the reading, or once the reading is done, discuss these three questions:
- **Discover Bible insights:** "Of all you read in Ephesians this week, what did you find most fascinating or interesting?"
- **Discern God's message:** "As you pondered this chapter, were there any one or two things that God seemed to be saying to you, specifically?"
- **Respond to God's message:** "In light of what you believe God said to you, how is your life being changed, or in what ways does it still need to change?"
- "Well done for listening to God in Ephesians. Don't stop there, because there are 65 other books waiting for us, so don't stop reading through them in your own devotions. Keep expecting God to speak to you through his Word. Also be sure to make use of the **other** commentaries available on www.friends-first.com."

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS IN THE LORD (6:1-4)
EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE LORD (6:5-9)
READY FOR BATTLE (6:10-13)
THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR (6:14-17)
PRAYER (6:18-20)
LAST WORDS (6:21-24)