

# THE CHURCH & GOD'S PLAN

## M O N D A Y

### As You Get Started

#### Read

- The book of [Ephesians](#) (6 chapters).

#### Question to Consider

- What stands out as you read? Write down your initial thoughts and impressions about this letter.

## T U E S D A Y

### In Order to Uncover the Overarching Ideas of the Book

#### Watch

- [The Bible Project](#) (Book of Ephesians) on YouTube.

#### Read

- Reread Ephesians, looking for repeated words and ideas. Write down what you notice.
- Options for Reading
  - Reread the entire book today.
  - Read Chapters 1-3 today and chapters 4-6 tomorrow.

## Getting Acquainted with the Book of Ephesians

The audience of Ephesians was well-known to the apostle Paul ([Acts 19](#)). For two years, Paul reasoned with them daily concerning the kingdom of God as he taught the Scriptures ([Acts 19:8–10](#)). This ministry resulted in a gospel witness spreading throughout the Roman province of Asia. The message of Christ reached those practicing dark arts and worshiping Artemis in this great ancient city, where demonic influence was strong.

Paul explains that these believers' formation into a church was the work of Christ alone. The decree of God always included the formation of the beautiful bride of Christ: the body of Christ, of which Christ is the head.

Ephesians is about the mystery of the church in the plan of God. The letter calls believers to walk in love, holiness, and wisdom within their local church congregation and in the world. Paul reveals that this mystery concerns present earthly matters, as well as matters in the invisible realm—both in the present world and in the world to come. (For further background, see the ESV study Bible, pages 2257-2261, available online at [www.esvbible.org](http://www.esvbible.org).)

### Questions to Consider

- Why do you think the church exists? Paul seems to think the church is very important to God's plans—why do you think that is?
- In what ways, large or small, does your life reflect this belief in the church's importance to God's plans? What would it look like if your life were more closely aligned with this belief?

### Prayer Point

- Pray the Lord would empower FPC to see the church as God sees her, and to live according to that reality.

## Placing it in the Larger Story

### Definition: Messiah

Transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning “anointed one,” the equivalent of the Greek word *Christ*. Originally applied to a person specially designated for a particular serving role, such as king or priest. Jesus Himself affirmed that He was the Messiah sent from God ([Matt. 16:16–17](#)).

The Lord revealed the inclusion of Gentiles in His plan of salvation when he called Abram and promised to bless all nations through him ([Gen. 12:1–3](#)). God's naming of the Israelite people as His people did not exclude other ethnicities—the very opposite was true. When God called the Israelites His own, it was for the very purpose of extending that same invitation to all tribes and tongues ([Gen. 22:18](#)). Gentiles came to the God of Israel from the very beginning—as when Rahab and Ruth left their gods to follow Him.

Jesus told His initial followers that He would build the church, and that they would have a significant role in its growth ([Matt. 16:18](#)). In doing so, he indicated that something new had dawned in the messianic age: whereas Israel had been His chosen instrument of blessing, now the church was the new Israel, God's chosen instrument to share His salvation with the world.

The book of Acts shows that soon after the church's formation, Gentiles joined the assembly without converting to Judaism or following the Mosaic law. The inclusion of the Gentiles into the largely Jewish church raised strong feelings among both believing and unbelieving Jews ([Acts 11:1–3](#); [21:20–25](#)).

Ephesians explains the theology of the inclusion of those formerly outside the covenant with Israel—believing Jews and Gentiles alike are part of a larger design. The church will transform the marriages, work, parenting, and morality of her members—what we at FPC call covenant partners. The church will become the true temple of God—a temple made of Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female.

## Read

- [Genesis 12:1-3](#)
- [Matthew 16:16-18](#)
- [Acts 11:1-3; 21:20-25](#)

## Questions to Consider

- How have you seen the Holy Spirit use the church to transform the marriages, work, parenting, and morality of covenant partners? If you have not seen this happen, why do you think that is?

## Prayer Points

- In a culture that often seems increasingly antagonistic toward the Christian faith, pray the Lord would strengthen His church to boldly stand for truth and grace.
- Pray the Lord would give us the strength to face the persecution we fear experiencing as we live into God's design for marriage, work relationships, parenting, and morality.

## Date and Historical Background

Paul wrote Ephesians during his first imprisonment ([Eph. 3:1; 4:1; 6:20](#)). He is likely writing ca. AD 62, about five years after his final meeting with the elders of this assembly ([Acts 20:17–35](#)). Christianity is still in its infancy—at this point, only a 30-year-old movement. Unlike other New Testament letters, it does not seem that any error, conflict, or misunderstanding prompted the writing of this letter—Paul writes simply to advance Christian insight and maturity.

## As You Finish This Week

- Using the prayer of [Ephesians 1:17–23](#), take a few minutes to ask the Lord to reveal to you and the FPC community more and more of His will for His glory as you (and we, as a church) rediscover God's plan for His Church.

## OUTLINE

1. Believers' Spiritual Blessings in Christ in God's Plan ([Eph. 1:1-14](#))
2. Prayer for Revelation about the Blessings in Christ the Head ([Eph. 1:15-23](#))
3. Mercy Making the Dead Alive by Grace ([Eph. 2:1-10](#))
4. Breaking a Wall to Make One New Man ([Eph. 2:11-22](#))
5. Interlude on the Stewardship of the Mystery of Gentile Inclusion ([Eph. 3:1-13](#))
6. Prayer for Love to Shape the Church, to the Glory of Christ ([Eph. 3:14-21](#))
7. Christian Maturity as Trinitarian Unity within Gifted Diversity ([Eph. 4:1-16](#))
8. Call to Live (Walk in) a New Life ([Eph. 4:17-32](#))
9. Walking in Love ([Eph. 5:1-14](#))
10. Walking in the Spirit in Marriage, Parenting, and Work ([Eph. 5:15-6:9](#))
11. Standing Firm in the Real War ([Eph. 6:10-20](#))
12. Final Greetings ([Eph. 6:21-24](#))

