

# How to Stand and How to Walk



*"Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to **STAND**..."*

Ephesians 6:11 (ESV)

*"...**WALK** in a manner worthy of the calling..."*

Ephesians 4:1 (ESV)

## **These Studies and Growth Group**

Time spent studying the Bible is central to our church Growth Group and should shape everything we do. BUT Growth Group is more than just a Bible Study - we want to share our lives, pray and encourage each other in growing as followers of Jesus.

These studies are intended to help us read the Bible. The prepared questions are meant to take us to the Bible passage for answers - so that our discussion is shaped by what we find in the God's word.

Growth Group should be a safe place to ask questions, float ideas and think through implications of what we have read and even to disagree. We expect that the truth of God's word will impact on our lives, our church and our world.

The New Testament epistle of Ephesians is encouraging to read as it grows our appreciation of all God has done and continues to do for his church through the proclamation of the gospel - with the goal of seeing all things placed under Jesus. There is much for us to learn about how to walk (often translated 'live') as Christians with implications for church, homes and families. The apostle describes the way God works in us with the same power by which he raised Jesus from the dead and he urges us to be prepared to stand in the battle against evil. There is a lot packed into this short letter.

Study 1  
**LOTS to thank God for...**  
Ephesians 1:1-14

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Ephesus, most likely while he was under guard in Rome (he mentions being a prisoner and in chains - 3:1,6:20).

Reading Acts we discover Paul made more than one visit to Ephesus and grew quite close to the new Christians and their elders. Paul experienced significant opposition - a local silversmith (who made shrines of Artemis and felt his business was threatened by Paul's message) stirred up a riot, with encouragement from Jews in town. After this Paul left Ephesus.

**Background Reading**

In your own time, read these passages so as to appreciate the background to this letter.

Acts 18:18-22  
Acts 19:1-20:1  
Acts 20:13-38  
Timothy 1:3-7, 3:14-16  
Revelation 2:1-7

It appears Timothy remained in Ephesus to defend the truth and to build up the church. Paul's letters to Timothy indicate there were issues with false teaching that needed correcting.

Ephesus is one of the churches mentioned in Revelation chapter 2.



(screenshot from Zondervan Atlas of the Bible in Accordance Bible Software)

The opening verses of this letter are encouraging as Paul reminds the Ephesians, and us, of all we have when we are included in Christ!

## Read Ephesians 1:1-10

Let's work backwards through what we just read.

1. Consider verses 9-10. How does Paul summarise *the mystery of God's will* in verse 10?
2. Consider verses 4-8. What privileges are ours as Christians?
3. With verses 4-10 in mind, put the second half of verse 3 into your own words.

What Paul says to the Ephesian Christians applies to all Christians - we have everything we could possibly need, in Christ. There's nothing to feel inadequate about, no need to compare ourselves with other Christians and nothing extra we need. But in the end, it's not about us anyway - it's about Jesus being exalted over everyone and everything. Put all that together and there's lots to thank God for!

The fact God chose us before creation is intended to be a source of encouragement here in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It's a shame when Christians instead make predestination or election into a theological football in a way that questions God's goodness.

## Read Ephesians 1:11-14

4. Who is (or who are) the 'we'/'us' in these verses, and who is the 'you'? Is there any difference between them?
5. How were 'you' included in Christ?

'we'/'us' could refer to Paul and those with him as he writes, and 'you' could simply refer to the recipients of their letter. OR if we assume the Ephesian church is made up mostly of Gentiles,<sup>1</sup> Paul may be drawing a distinction

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<sup>1</sup> \* Gentile = non-Jew (literally 'nations')



between Jews and Gentiles like he does in 2:11 and following. Either way - they are all together in Christ now.

6. Compare verse 14 in two English translations and discuss what you think the verse is saying about the Holy Spirit.
7. Come back to 1:3 and review, update or adjust your answer to question 3 (that is - how you have put the last part of the verse into your own words).
8. How would you summarise what God has done?

When we respond appropriately to the gospel of Jesus we are included in Christ and we have every spiritual blessing. It's pretty amazing! Sometimes we don't appreciate it. In fact, sometimes we can feel quite flat as Christians. Which makes this part of the Bible important to read and re-read.

9. Look back over Ephesians 1:1-14 and discuss what you find encouraging or comforting. Make a list of all the things we can thank God for from these few short verses.

While these verses are encouraging for us, they are less about us and more about God. Glance back across all we have looked at and notice how many times Paul mentions God's glory, God's pleasure, God's will, and giving praise to God. What makes our position so special as Christians - is that we have been included in God's plans - to the praise of his glory.

10. Christ is at the centre of God's plans for this world (v10). His goal is to see everything brought under Christ. Have a think about what ways you need to sort things out so that Christ is at the centre of your plans.

**Pray together** and thank God for all these blessings.

Study 2  
**The kind of prayer we should all be praying**  
Ephesians 1:15-23

1. Remind each other what you discussed from Ephesians 1:1-14 last week.

As we read the apostle's prayer for the Ephesian Christians think about what it would be like to pray in a similar way for the people that make up our church.

**Read Ephesians 1:15-23**

2. What is Paul's primary prayer request?
3. And what else does this lead him to pray about?
4. Glance back at Ephesians 1:3. Paul says the Ephesian Christians already have every spiritual blessing. How does that fit with Paul's prayer (v17)?
5. What benefit is there to have the 'eyes of your hearts' enlightened (v18)?
6. Consider God's power (v19-21) - what has God done and what is he doing, using this power?

7. Read vs 22-23 in a couple of different versions and discuss what Paul is saying. Where does the church fit in God's plans?

The apostle has shared the content of an amazing prayer which shows an appreciation of God's plans and our place in them. It is incredible to reflect on the fact that God is at work in us, with the same power by which he raised Jesus from the dead. And then there's the place the church has in God's plans too! We really do have every blessing as Christians.

Paul's prayer also shows that we can always grow in our maturity and our gratitude as followers of Jesus. We can grow to know God better, and better appreciate all God has done and is continuing to do.

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is the kind of prayer we ought to pray for each other and for others too. Have a go now!

Re-read Ephesians 1:15-23 and then **pray together**.



Study 3  
**United in Jesus**  
Ephesians 2:1-22

Here are two key verses from what we have looked at so far in Ephesians:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3 (NIV)

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” Ephesians 1:17 (NIV)

Chapter breaks and headings in our English bibles were not in the original letter from Paul - what we are about to read flows seamlessly from Paul sharing his pray for the Ephesians.

**Read Ephesians 2:1-10**

These verses are a clear reminder that Christians are saved from the consequences of our sin by God’s grace and not by our own effort. That sounds straightforward, but it is a simple truth which Christians manage to complicate or forget so it’s worth revisiting here.

**Re-read 2:1-3**

1. How does Paul describe the Ephesians ‘before Christ’?
2. Talk about what you think that sort of life would look like ‘today’?

**Re-read 2:4-7**

3. How does Paul describe the Ephesians now?
4. Why do you think Paul takes care to point out that Christians are ‘made alive in Christ, even *when we were dead in transgressions*’?
5. How can Christians be ‘seated with Christ’ now? What does that mean?
6. For what purpose does Paul say that God has raised us up with Christ?



### **Re-read 2:8-10**

7. How does Paul emphasise that salvation is by grace?
8. What place does Paul give 'good works'?
9. Is 'faith' something that we do (ie a work)?

These are things we should be familiar with - but it's good to think them through again. We are not made alive in Christ due to growing up in a Christian home, or through active involvement in church, or by earning favour with God. New life in Christ is not something we achieve by status, merit or effort - it is a gift God gives. God himself makes us alive through the completed work of Jesus.

Once we are included in Christ there are no grades or levels among Christians - no-one is better than anyone else.

In the rest of the chapter the apostle explains that Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians are united in Jesus, one is not better than the other. This appears to have been difficult for both Gentile and Jewish Christians to accept. The word translated 'Gentile' is simply the word for 'nations' and is a shorthand way of referring to anyone who is not Jewish, that is, not able to trace their descent from Abraham.

### **Read Ephesians 2:11-13**

10. How does Paul spell-out the significance of the Jew/Gentile distinction?
11. Why were Gentiles without hope in the world?
12. Now, through Jesus, Gentiles have been 'brought near'<sup>v13</sup>. How do you think being reminded of our Gentile-ness, helps us to appreciate God's grace to us?

**Read 2:14-18**

13. How has God 'made the two one'? (Did he just include Gentiles into the Jewish race? What part does Jesus play?)
  
14. What do you think it means for the law and the commandments to be abolished?
  
15. Was it God's purpose to unite Jew and Gentile, or to see them both saved? (v15b-18)

**Read 2:19-22**

It's hard for us to appreciate the significance of this reconciliation - not just between God and mankind, but between mankind – Jew and Gentile. Compare v19ff with what they once were in v12.

16. Have a go at drawing the 'building' that Paul describes!
  
17. How is this analogy helpful?

**Think about it**

18. What is this passage saying about unity?

Jesus has changed *everything*. Jesus brings people together. When we become friends with God we become united with people from all sorts of backgrounds. The early Christians struggled to come to terms with Jews and Gentiles being united in Christ. Don't worry - I'm guessing our struggle is with other distinctive groups (remember how we talked about the 'you' and the 'we' in chapter one - there's every chance the apostle was talking about Jews and Gentiles then too).

**Thank God** that salvation is a gift, not something we must earn. And thank God for the way he unites everyone under Jesus.

Study 4  
**A Mystery revealed!**  
Ephesians 3:1-21

Here's some key verses from the passages we have looked at so far:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3 (NIV)

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” Ephesians 1:17 (NIV)

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...” Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)

“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..” Ephesians 2:15b-16a (NIV)

1. How would you describe a mystery?
2. What was the mystery of God's will back in chapter 1:9-10?

In tonight's passage Paul keeps referring to 'the mystery', which he defines in 3:6 (take a look ahead). This mystery is like a subset of the bigger picture (1:9-10) and it is directly related to last week's passage too.

Last thing before we read the passage - notice that verses 2-13 are a big 'aside' before Paul gets into his prayer he very nearly began in verse 1.

**Read 3:1-13**

3. What does Paul see as his 'job'/task/mission? v1, v2, 7 (And why is he a prisoner v1?)

4. What role does the church have in God's purposes v10ff?
5. And what was the point of Paul sharing this 'aside'? v13 cf v1.

The Ephesians may have been discouraged to know that Paul is in chains. They might have questioned if God is in control. Paul takes time to explain that God is well and truly in control - then he returns to the prayer he was about to share. Let's have a look at Paul's amazing prayer.

**Read 3:14-21.**

6. For what reason? v14, v1?
7. How would you summarise Paul's prayer?
8. Look back over verses 14-21. What is encouraging about Paul's prayer?

Next week we'll see how Paul gets practical with the Ephesians. To this point he has been reminding them of their place in God's amazing plans - in particular the fact that they have been saved by God's grace, that they are united together in Christ (both Jew and Gentile) and that God is at work in them.

**Pray together** in a way that reflects Paul's prayer for the Ephesians Christians.



Study 5  
**Body building**  
Ephesians 4:1-16

Here's a growing sample of key verses from Ephesians so far:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3 (NIV)

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” Ephesians 1:17 (NIV)

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God...” Ephesians 2:8 (NIV)

“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..” Ephesians 2:15b-16a (NIV)

“This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus” Ephesians 3:6 (NIV)

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.” Ephesians 3:16 (NIV)

After three chapters of encouragement and rehearsing gospel truth - sharing how Jews and Gentiles are united in Christ and how all this is part of God's plan to see *everything* under Jesus - Paul turns to application and exhortation as he urges the Ephesian Christians to live (literally “walk”) in a way that shows they understand their identity in Christ.

**Read 4:1-6**

1. What is the calling we have received?
2. How can we *keep the unity*?
3. What does it mean to bear with one-another in love. v2

### **Read 4:7-13**

Paul quotes Psalm 68 - a Psalm of David which praises God for his victories - and applies the Psalm to Jesus. Jesus descended to earth and has ascended again, victorious. As the victor, Jesus has gifts to distribute.

4. What gifts has Jesus given? And what is their purpose?

5. Who is involved in building up the body of Christ?

### **Read 4:14-16**

6. How does Paul describe a mature church?

7. What part do truth and love play in building a mature church?

### **Think about it?**

8. What are some practical ways that YOU can do 'works of service'?  
Sunday or any other day?

9. What place do denominations have?

10. When can the desire for unity become unhelpful?

**Pray together** for our church in the light of all this.



Study 6  
**Out with the old and in with the new**  
Ephesians 4:17-5:20

Here's a shortened sample of key verses from what we have looked at so far:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Ephesians 1:3 (NIV)

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.” Ephesians 3:16 (NIV)

“...to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” Ephesians 4:12 (NIV)

At the start of chapter four the apostle moved from talking about God's plans and our place in them, to urging the Ephesians (and us) to walk in a way this is worthy of being called as a follower of Jesus.

**Read Ephesians 4:17-24**

1. Summarise Paul's description of life before & after becoming a Christian.

Before	After

2. What makes and motivates the difference?

**Read Ephesians 4:25-5:4**

The apostle gets extremely practical. He addresses six areas where Christian living will impact our relationships. Living as a Christian is not purely intellectual nor individual. For each area we are given a don't, a do and a reason.

3. Talk your way through each of the six examples of how Christians are to be different.

Verses	Don't	Do	Reason
4:25			
4:26-27			
4:28			
4:29-30			
4:31-5:2			
5:3-4			

You would have noticed mention of the devil (vs 27) and the Holy Spirit (v30). Both verses remind us of the battle we are part of and to which the apostle will return in chapter 6:10-20.

From verse five onward it feels like the apostle moves from specific examples, of how Christians are to be different, to the motivation for not continuing to live like a non-Christian. There's the certainty of judgement (5:5-7), living as children of light (5:8-14), understanding true wisdom (5:15-17) and living as people who are filled with the Spirit (5:18-21).

**Read Ephesians 5:5-20**

4. Consider 5:5-7 and discuss how we might be deceived into thinking that sin does not really matter.
5. Consider 5:8-14. Quite often sin and secrecy go hand-in hand whereas there's nothing to hide if you're doing right. What are some ways we will stand-out as we live as children of light?



6. Consider 5:15-17. How will godly wisdom change the way we live?
  
7. Consider 5:18-20. In what practical ways will our life show we are filled with the Spirit?

In the next verse (5:21) Paul returns to the impact of Christian living on relationships as we're told to submit to one another - but we'll save that till next week.

### **Prayer**

Today's passage is very practical - with many things we can work on. Pray for each other that we would be living in a way that shows we understand all God has done for us in Christ.

Study 7  
**Christian Living in Christian Homes**  
Ephesians 5:21-6:9

**Recap...**

After three chapters explaining God's plans for individual Christians and for Christ's Church and after sharing his prayers for the Ephesian Christians - the apostle Paul turns to explain how they should live in a manner worthy of their calling. At Ephesians 4:1 we turn from theory to practical implications. The chapter opens with implications for church - maintaining the unity which Jesus has achieved and building to maturity (Ephesians 4:1-16). Paul moves to how Christian living will impact relationships, with practical examples (4:17-5:4). Then Paul gives further reasons and motivation for not continuing to walk/live like non-Christians (5:5-20).

At 5:21 Paul turns our attention back to relationships and in particular Christian Living in Christian homes. As Paul gets deeper into details - God's plans for his Church are not far from the surface. All the detailed practical instructions are shaped by God's big-picture plans - so in 5:32 Paul reminds us that it's Christ and his Church that he really has in mind.

**Read Ephesians 5:21**

1. In what practical ways might Christians submit to each other - talk about real examples to get a feel for it.
2. How can submission show reverence for Christ?
3. In what ways can Christian submission be misunderstood?
4. Can you think of examples where a failure to submit might have negative consequences?

Christians submitting to one another appears to sit behind what follows as Paul addresses wives, husbands, children, parents and slaves - covering everyone who may have made up a Christian home back then.

**Read Ephesians 5:22-33**

5. How should Christian wives treat their Christian husband?

6. How should Christian husbands treat their Christian wife – what goal/s should he have?
7. How should Christians relate to Christ? How does this help us understand marriage?
8. How does Christ relate to his church? How does this help us understand marriage?
9. What does Genesis 2:24 add to this picture of Christian marriage? (v31)

Verse 32 is interesting because Paul calls what he is describing a “profound mystery” (*mega mysterion*) and then adds “but I’m referring to Christ and the Church”. Then he summarises what he has been saying about marriage “.. each one of you also must **love his wife** as he loves himself, and the wife must **respect her husband.**” Love and respect sums it up.

### **Think about it**

10. How might Paul’s description of Christian marriage be misunderstood?

### **Read Ephesians 6:1-9**

11. Why should children obey their parents?
12. And how should parents (assuming fathers and mothers are working as a team) treat their children?
13. Any thoughts on what it means not to ‘exasperate your children’?
13. A more difficult question (because it does not involve simple comprehension) - how might the instructions to children and parents make a Christian family look different to a non-Christian family?

Now we turn to 'slaves and masters'. Slavery was a normal part of life in the Roman Empire with slaves making up a workforce that would have included domestic servants, labourers and also educated people like teachers or even doctors. Slaves were an everyday part of homes. Life was so different that it's hard for us to get our head around.

From a first century perspective it's remarkable that the apostle addresses slaves: including them, rather than ignoring or overlooking them. For Paul, slaves are as much Christians as their masters are. Elsewhere Paul says to slaves:

*"Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you - although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly the one who was free when called is Christ's slave" (1 Corinthians 7:21-22 NIV).*

To Paul there is something more important than slaves gaining freedom - and that is living for Jesus in whatever setting you find yourself.

Our world is very different in terms of human rights and freedoms - perhaps what the apostle says to slaves and masters is now more relevant to our workplaces than to our homes.

### **Read Ephesians 6:5-9**

14. In his instructions to slaves (v5-8) Paul mentions Jesus (Christ/Lord) in each verse. How do you think a similar Christ-centred perspective might shape our approach to our jobs or to serving others?

15. How might Paul's instructions to "masters" apply to Christian supervisors, employees, managers etc?

### **Pray**

These instructions to family/home members began back in 5:21 with the instruction to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Pray for the members of your Growth Group as you each try to live for Jesus in your homes, families and places of work.



Study 8  
**Know how to stand**  
Ephesians 6:10-24

**Recap...**

So far in Ephesians we have read three theological chapters covering salvation, unity and church. Those three chapters were followed by two and a half chapters of very practical implications. All the way through the apostle keeps lifting our eyes from everyday life and helps us stand back and consider the bigger picture. In chapter six, as he begins to wrap-up, he describes the Christian's struggle to live for Jesus as a 'battle' and then urges us to pray constantly for all God's people.

**Read Ephesians 6:10-12**

1. What else have we read about the power of God?
  - i. Ephesians 1:18-21
  - ii. Ephesians 3:7-8
  - iii. Ephesians 3:16-19

How does this background shape what we read in Ephesians 6:10?

2. What else have we read about the devil and evil?
  - i. Read Ephesians 2:1-3
  - ii. Read Ephesians 4:25-27

How does this background shape what we read in Ephesians 6:11-12?

These next verses make for a fun Sunday School lesson with the scope for playing dress-ups. You may like to do the same in Growth Group - that's up to you! More important than playing dress-ups is to make sure you are prepared to stand firm because the battle we each engage in daily is real - as we seek to live for Jesus.

**Read Ephesians 6:13-17**

3. Discuss each part of the armour we are to wear, and its importance:
  - belt
  - breastplate
  - shoes

shield  
helmet  
sword

The goal of being equipped and **standing** firm echoes what we read back in chapter 4. In chapter 4 the apostle described how word/teaching gifts (4:11) are used to equip God's people for service (4:12) so the body of Christ might be built-up in unity and knowledge, becoming mature (4:12-13), so we will not be tossed back and forth.

As the apostle pulls things together he returns to the encouragement to **walk**/live in a way that is worthy of our calling and **stand** firm as followers of Jesus. This flows naturally into an exhortation to pray - because it is God's power that will make it possible for us to **stand** firm and **walk** for Jesus.

### **Read Ephesians 6:18-24**

4. Discuss each of the things Paul says about prayer:

in the Spirit

on all occasions

with all kinds of requests

for the Lord's people

for his proclamation of the mystery of the gospel

The final greetings in this letter remind us that Paul is working in partnership with others to see the gospel advancing.

### **Prayer**

Pray for each other as we seek to stand firm in the gospel and walk for Jesus. Thank God for all that we have been reminded of and encouraged by on our way through Ephesians.