



Background to Paul's letter to the Ephesians

The letter to the Ephesians was written by Paul, in about AD 60, from prison. It was probably a circular letter, to be read by several churches, rather than just to the Ephesians.

In Acts 19, we read about the time Paul spent in Ephesus – he was there for about three years. When he arrived, the people knew John the Baptist's teaching, and had been baptised by John, but didn't know about Jesus. They hadn't heard the conclusion to John's prophecies so Paul started off by baptising them in Jesus' name. Paul then teaches in the synagogue, from which he is eventually pushed out, and then in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. The local church starts as a consequence of Paul's teaching. The Ephesian church was later led by Timothy (thus the letters from Paul to Timothy refer to the Ephesian church) and John.

Ephesus was the most important city in Turkey, was on an intersection of trade routes and had a harbour. It was the site of the temple to Diana (Artemis), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

The Ephesian church flourished for a while, but within one generation, the warning of Revelation 2 v 1-7 is sent – they had forgotten their first love, Jesus, and were caught up in serving Him but no longer loving Him.

As you study this book, remember it's written from a prison cell!

Bible studies from Ephesians

Structure of the studies.

These studies are designed for a group who are already Christians, but should not exclude people who have not made a profession of faith. This letter was written to Christians and assumes that the reader understands the basic gospel story. You may have to back-track sometimes to re-explain the gospel.

There are a lot of questions in each study, but you will notice that several of them are simple comprehension questions and should not take more than a couple of minutes. I recommend that you do the study yourself before running it with prisoners, so you can see which questions are likely to take up more time, and have a good understanding of the answers, and where the study is going.

Each study is designed to last for about 90 minutes. Guidance for timings are given, which should help you to see when to keep discussion brief and when to go a bit deeper! If you get diverted, and don't finish the first set of questions, make sure you study at least one application question before you close. I would suggest that you take a 10 minute break around half-way. If you only have an hour, just do the starred * questions.

Each study is written out twice, once for leaders (*with a guide to answers*) and once for participants. The questions are in various formats:

LEADER LED QUESTIONS

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING – SDL – 3 questions for the group to work on in pairs. When they are finished, download the answers together, with a leader co-ordinating the discussion.

STICKERS – Write the question on the top of a flip-chart sheet. Give the group stickers or post-it's and ask them to write the answer to the question on their sticker. Ask them to stick their stickers on the flip-chart. When they are finished, the leader reads out the answers, and then explains the right answer to the group.

SHOUT-OUT – Write the question on the top of a flip-chart sheet. Ask the group to suggest answers, and write their answers up, so that they can see the results of their brainstorm. If someone gives an answer that is unacceptably wrong (i.e. not just slightly wrong), don't

write it up, but do explain why you are not writing it.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

Each study contains some application questions in boxes. These application questions are very important, but should not be tackled without understanding what the Bible says – we cannot apply the Bible to our lives if we have not read and understood it!

Key verse:

'You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.'

(Eph 4 v 22-24)

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