

**EPHESIANS  
DEVOTIONAL**

By Pastor Phil Emerson

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

## OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

*"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6*

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

**Lifegroup 12s**

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

**Lifegroup 3s**

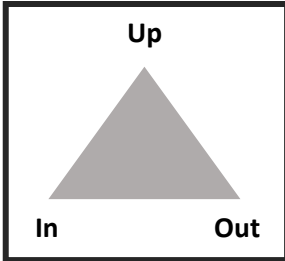
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

## A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

### Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

### In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

### Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

# HOW TO USE THE BOOK

## First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

## Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

## Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

## Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

**This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.**

## INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

We enter into a new book today and I am just a little excited. I feel like I'm opening another present from under the Christmas tree and this could well be my favourite. Ephesians is one of Paul's four prison epistles (the others are Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon), meaning that's where they were written from, most likely from a prison in Rome. He probably wrote this book of Ephesians around AD 61-64.

It is thought that, unlike other epistles written to specific churches, this epistle was aimed at a group of new churches in the area. It does not deal with specific problems in a local congregation. Instead, Paul addresses great themes that pertain to the Christian's position in Christ as a member of the body of Christ, the Church. The Christian movement was established in this region in AD 53. Then, a year later, Paul returned on his third missionary journey and stayed for three years. It was to this place he sent Timothy at a later date as a leader and pastor.

This book is all about the nature and appearance of the Church, how it should function, and what it should look like.

I truly hope you will enjoy. You will note my comments are mostly repeating what Paul has said – there is no better way to describe the Church! So, grab your journal, Bible, pen, and a brew ... and off we go!!!

Love and prayers,  
Phil

**Live**

By the time of writing, Paul had been a believer for thirty years. He had made three missionary journeys and was now under house arrest in Rome. After a brief salutation, Paul begins with praise for the spiritual blessings that are in Christ. This list of blessings is divided into three sections. The first describes blessings related to the Father, how He has chosen us in Christ before the worlds were formed, predestined us (worked it all out before we were born) to adoption as sons, and made us accepted in the Beloved. The second section focuses on blessings in relation to the Son: redemption through His blood, forgiveness of sins, the revelation of His will, and the inheritance we have obtained. The third section describes blessings related to the Holy Spirit, how we are sealed with the Spirit of promise, and how He serves as a guarantee of our inheritance. The key phrase throughout this section is “*in Him*” or “*in whom*” which stresses the point that all spiritual blessings come through Jesus Christ and are enjoyed by those who are “*in Him*”.

The last half of the chapter contains the first of Paul's two prayers in this epistle. This prayer is for their enlightenment, that their knowledge and understanding might increase. Paul especially desires that they might know God more fully, what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the great power of God toward those who believe.

This is one of those chapters that deserves to be read and reread and reread until the awesome language of it engulfs your spirit. Sometimes when I bask in this chapter, I feel like I need to come up for air. God has blessed us; chosen us; predestined us; accepted us; redeemed us; abounded in wisdom towards us; revealed the mystery of His will to us; given us an inheritance; and made us the praise of His glory.

**Pray**

Father, thank You for this incredible prayer from Paul, having the eyes of my heart enlightened, that I may know the hope to which You have called me, the riches of Your glorious inheritance in me, and the immeasurable greatness of Your power toward me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

Having expressed his desire that his readers might know the exceeding greatness of God's power, Paul now reminds them of how they had been dead in sin but were made alive together with Christ. Indeed, they were raised and made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places, that God might show even more riches of His grace in the ages to come. All this God did by His love, grace, and mercy. And while it involved their faith, it did not involve any works so no one could boast. The end result is that they have been created in Christ to walk in good works, as God planned beforehand.

The aim of Paul in this chapter is to get us to consider the riches of God's grace toward sinners, how we are saved by grace through faith, to understand the Gentiles' condition outside of Christ, the effect Jesus' death had on the Law, and what Gentiles can now become in Christ. It's awesome stuff when we allow it to sink in. Paul also wants the Ephesians to remember how far they have come as Gentiles, courtesy of Jesus Christ. Once strangers from the promises made to Israel, they can now draw near through the blood of Jesus. By His death on the cross, Jesus abolished the law of commandments which separated Jews and Gentiles and has reconciled them both to God in one body. The Gentiles can therefore be fellow-citizens and members of God's family. They are part of that grand temple being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus as the cornerstone.

Join me in thankfulness that Christ has redeemed us by His own blood, *“in whom the whole structure is joined together”*. We are no longer aliens or strangers, but we are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's incredible household. We never deserved it, but God chose us from before time that we would be with Him forever. A pretty encouraging thought!

## Pray

Father, to stand beside the greats of history for all eternity as Your eternal family is astounding. I am gobsmacked and breathless at the power of Your love towards me, a sinner, washed and made pure by the blood of the Lamb. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

It's important to remember that Paul is under house arrest for preaching about Christ. By reading what he had written earlier, the Ephesians would understand how the mystery pertained to Gentiles becoming fellow heirs in Christ. Paul felt privileged to preach among the Gentiles things that for ages had been hidden. Knowing that what he did was part of God's eternal purpose in Christ to make His manifold wisdom known by the Church, he asked his brethren not to be discouraged by any tribulations he experienced on their behalf. Paul exhorts the Church in his generation, and also in ours, to reach out and make Jesus visible to everyone.

This chapter contains Paul's second prayer for the Ephesians. He prays for their enablement, that the Father would strengthen them by His Spirit, that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith, that they may be able to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, and so be filled with all the fullness of God. He concludes his prayer by ascribing glory to God for all eternity.

For as long as I can remember, verse 20 has been my favourite verse in all Scripture. Read, read, and then read it again. Allow it to sink in. And start believing it. I thought today for our daily prayer we would join with the great Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Let's personalise Paul's prayer.

**Pray**

Father, for this reason I bow my knees before You, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of Your glory You may grant me to be strengthened with power through Your Spirit in my inner being, so that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith—that I, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that I may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to You, Lord, who is able to do far more abundantly than all that I ask or think, according to the power at work within me, to You be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Paul exhorts the Ephesians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. Having described how Jesus attained unity between Jew and Gentile through His death on the cross, Paul now pleads with them to **walk in unity**. With humility, gentleness, longsuffering, forbearance and love, they should be diligent to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. The unity of the Spirit is defined as consisting of one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God. I love this! It is one of the meatiest passages in the New Testament.

Paul reminds them of the powerful gifts Christ gave His Church following His ascension to heaven. These gifts included the offices of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, designed to equip the saints for ministry, bring the body of Christ to maturity, and edify the body. Speaking the truth in love, the Church should grow in Christ as each member does its share.

The last half of this chapter addresses the need to **walk in purity**. The Ephesians are called upon to put away lying, anger, theft, and all forms of evil speaking, lest they grieve the Holy Spirit. Instead, they are to speak with truth and grace, work hard to help those in need, be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving, just as God has forgiven them in Christ. You couldn't put that much better, could you? Remember, it was Jesus who turned the chaos of an unformed world into the beauty of creation; it was Him who calmed the waves and storm in clear view of fearful disciples; it was Him who spoke peace to the broken woman who washed His feet with her tears. And so, we say to Him, "Do the same with all the chaos swirling around us and in us. Replace our restlessness and confusion with order and beauty, for You are the Prince of Peace."

**Pray**

Father, for the things over which I have no control, give me a fresh vision of the occupied throne of heaven. For the things I *do* have control over, grant me wisdom and strength to act accordingly. Please help me steward my anger, my sadness, and my weariness to Your glory. I don't want to waste this moment or these feelings. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

Paul starts this chapter like the last one, by exhorting Christians to walk in a manner worthy of their calling. Having described the need to walk in unity and purity, he urges them to imitate God and **walk in love** with Christ as their example. Such love requires that all forms of immorality and filthy speech be not even named among them. Since the wrath of God is to come upon the sons of disobedience, Christians must not be deceived by, nor partake with, those who engage in such evil deeds. Paul says we should also walk as "*children of light*" which includes producing the fruit of the Spirit such as goodness, righteousness and truth, thereby demonstrating what is acceptable to the Lord. We cannot participate in the shameful works of darkness, but must expose them. We do this by letting Christ's light shine in us; that light exposes darkness because it is stronger. As the days are evil and the time is short, Christians must **walk as wise** and make the best use of their time. This requires an understanding of the Lord's will. Christians are also to be filled with the Spirit; singing together, praying with thanksgiving, and submitting to one another in the fear of God. I love this process Paul sets out in this epistle: walk in unity, purity, love, light, wisdom, and thanksgiving.

The chapter ends with a call to strong marriages. Wives are exhorted to respect their husbands, submitting to them as to the Lord. Husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. I find it interesting that Paul uses twice as many words telling husbands to love their wives as telling women to submit to their husbands ... just saying! In the course of such instructions Paul takes the opportunity to reveal the Lord's desire to present to Himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish, which is why He gave Himself for it. Beautiful imagery.

## Pray

Father, You've not only promised to turn the barrenness of my life into a well-watered garden (Isaiah 58:11; Jeremiah 31:12), You've also promised to use me as a means of making all things new, beautiful, lush, and fruitful. Cause the living water of Jesus to well up inside me and spill over into my neighbourhood and community. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

The final chapter begins with an exhortation to **walk in family harmony**. Children are told to obey their parents; fathers are instructed not to provoke their children to anger but to bring them up to love and revere the Lord. As many households in the first century had servants, commands are also given on the duties of servants and their masters.

The last major section of this epistle is a call to **walk in victory**, with a charge to stand strong in the power of the Lord's might. I pointed out in an earlier chapter that the word "*power*" in the Greek refers to the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. We need this to be able to withstand the wiles of the devil and spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. Christians need to put on the whole armour of God. Notice the little phrase "*put on*" which is an active verb. You and I must do this. It doesn't happen automatically. This armour includes elements such as truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, and the Word of God. Standing strong also requires fervent and watchful prayer, not just for one's self, but for all Christians. Even Paul asks for their prayers that he might be bold as an ambassador in chains as he makes known the mystery of the gospel.

The epistle concludes with a prayer for peace to the brethren, love with faith, and grace for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in all sincerity. I love this. Because the gospel is true, we can pray with confidence. Because of Jesus' finished work on the cross, terror is terrified and one day evil will be eradicated. Satan knows his time is short, and demons tremble with fear. Because of Jesus' resurrection, His kingdom will surely come and His will *will* be done on earth as it is in heaven. Because of the Holy Spirit, we can and must find our place in God's incredible story, pushing back the effects of the Fall, and offering the first fruits of the city whose builder and maker is God. Because of His matchless grace, let's declare we will do this with a heart of passion and great anticipation.

## Pray

Father, today I don my armour afresh and declare You are the King of kings and Lord of lords. I stand in You alone. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

