

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

# THE EPISTLE TO THE **EPHESIANS**

*7 Day Devotional*



**foundations**  
daily devotional



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**EPHESIANS**

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**SOUTHLAND**  
CHURCH

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Versions of scripture quotations are noted.

**DAY 1****READ:** Acts 19-20 & the Introduction to Ephesians (if your Bible has one)

During his third missionary journey, the Apostle Paul spent three years in Ephesus. When he first arrived there were a handful of men seeking God. At their first meeting, Paul preached the Gospel of Jesus to these men and they received the Holy Spirit. Paul spent the next two years sharing the Gospel in Ephesus, “so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the words of the Lord” (19:1-10). During his ministry in Ephesus, Paul witnessed miracles, great waves of repentance and riotous uprisings from opponents. He built strong relationships with the Ephesians, and especially so with the Church elders. We are witness to a moment of intimate friendship when Paul says his final farewell to the Ephesian elders (20:13-38).

Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians while he was imprisoned in Rome. It was likely intended as a cyclical letter – one that would be passed around between many churches in the area. Chapters 1-3 focus primarily on what Christians should believe. Chapters 4-6 describe how a Christian’s beliefs should be displayed practically through their lifestyle. This format – beginning with right belief and then moving into right action – is common of Paul’s letters to the Church.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Why is it important that believers balance right belief with right action? Do you practice this in your own life?
2. Pray for the Canadian Church today. Pray that we would grow in our beliefs, seeking the full truth of the Gospel. Pray that we would not be complacent, but that we would have a constant desire for deeper revelation of God’s truth. Pray also that this knowledge of truth would produce a harvest of righteousness in the Canadian Church. Pray that believers in our nation would be set apart from the world. Pray that our actions would reflect God’s character to those around us.

**DAY 2****READ:** Ephesians 1

Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians to encourage them and to strengthen their faith. Paul begins the letter by giving a lengthy list of the blessings God gives us through Christ. God has not merely given us some blessings, or many blessings, He has given us *every* spiritual blessing. In the North American Church, we often have a distorted view of what “blessing” is. We think that God should display His love by giving us worldly comfort, removing any troubles from our path, and giving us financial success. This denies God’s ability to bless us and grow us through difficulty. Surely the blessings listed here are the truest blessings on which we should focus. God is a generous, loving Father. He lavishes these blessings on us that we might be empowered to love Him and fulfill His mission on earth. Trusting in God’s promises is vital to our Christian walk. If we cannot trust His promises, we cannot trust His character. If we cannot trust God’s character, certainly we will not live in full submission to Him. Thus, attacking our belief in God’s promises is a tactic commonly used by the enemy.

The second section of Chapter 1 consists of a prayer. Paul provides a wonderful model for us here. Instead of merely telling the Ephesians he is praying for them, he actually prays for them! Prayer minister to hearts in an extremely powerful way. Imagine the fruit that would grow if, instead of constantly seeking human advice, we asked our brothers and sisters to pray with us. There are five key points in Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. First, he genuinely thanks God for them (v 16). Second, he prays that God would give them wisdom (v 17). Third, he prays that God would reveal Himself to the Ephesians, that they would know Him better (v 17). Fourth, he prays that the Ephesians would understand the hope found in following God's calling (v 18). Finally, Paul prays that God would reveal "the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe" (v 18). Having these revelations planted firmly in our hearts will help us navigate any situation that comes our way in a manner that is pleasing to God.



### JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. A large portion of this chapter is dedicated to describing some of the spiritual blessings God gives us through Christ (v 3-14). Re-read this passage and make a list of as many spiritual blessings as you can see here. Meditate on each of these blessings and thank God for them.
2. Are any of the promised blessings in this passage hard for you to believe? For example, many people struggle to believe that God truly loves them or that He wants them to be holy and blameless (v 4). Ask God to show you why you have a difficult time believing this specific promise. When He shows you something, pray that He would heal this area of your heart and ask Him to speak truth to you. If believing God in this area is a big struggle, consider signing up for Personal Ministry at the church.
3. There are many powerful prayers found in the Bible. Praying the words of Scripture is a beautiful tool we are given in intercession. When we simply do not know what to pray, we can open up the Bible and begin to pray God's words. One such prayer is in Ephesians 1:15-19. Spend some time praying these things for your family today. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you insight into how you can pray each verse over your family's unique situations.

## DAY 3



### READ: Ephesians 2

Life with Christ is abundant and purposeful. We were once dead in our trespasses and sins, but now we are alive in the righteousness given to us by Christ! God saves us that we might know His mercy and great love. Part of His love for us is revealed in His desire to partner with us in spreading His kingdom. He created every single human being with specific gifts and characteristics, so that we could do the specific good works He has prepared for us (v 10).

Before we submitted ourselves to Jesus' leadership, we lived according to the desires and passions of the sinful nature. As Christians it is easy to forget that many of the people we interact with daily are still slaves to sin. Our friends, family, neighbours, co-workers and loved ones are living apart from Christ, not part of God's people and not knowing His promises. They live in this world without God and without hope (v 12). This is one of

the saddest statements in Scripture and it is a true description of our world. Our world is lost and desperate. We must become urgent for Christ to restore people's lives and give ourselves to shine His light in the darkness.



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. How has your life changed as a result of knowing Christ? How have you moved from death to life, from despair to hope? Thank God for these things.
2. God made you in a specific way, and wants to use you to advance His kingdom. Ask God to show you how He made you: what gifts, abilities, characteristics, personality traits, etc. did He choose to give you? How does He desire to use these unique things about you to advance His kingdom?
3. God does not discriminate. He desires all people to be saved (v 14-17). Are there any individuals or groups of people that you avoid ministering to? Confess and ask God to reveal why you struggle with these particular people. Ask God to give you His love and compassion for these people. Where our love for people is never enough, God's love for people is always more than enough.
4. Pray that the Church in Canada would grow in our burden to reach the lost. Pray that we would not be happy playing church, but that our eyes would be opened to the broken, hopeless state of the people around us. Pray that God would prepare the hearts of many in our nation, in anticipation of a great harvest. Ask God to begin or strengthen strategic relationships that He desires to use to lead people to Him. Pray for boldness and grace on the part of believers. Pray that our love for God would burn so strongly that we could not help but desire for all to know Him more!

## DAY 4

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### READ: Ephesians 3

Ephesians 3 contains one of the most well-known prayers in Scripture (v 16-21). Unfortunately, when we are extremely familiar with one passage of Scripture, it can be easy to skim past the lesser-known sections to get to the familiar passage. Careful study of the surrounding passages reveals an important piece of information: why the Holy Spirit chose to include this prayer in Scripture. Verse 14 says, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father". This phrase indicates that Paul's reason for praying is found directly before the prayer itself.

The first half of Ephesians 3 describes Paul's ministry to the Gentiles. The prayer in the second half of the chapter, therefore, comes out of His heart for the Gentiles to know "the unfathomable riches of Christ" (v 8). The first three chapters of Ephesians are dedicated to deepening the readers' understanding of the Gospel. It is interesting to note that this section is bookended by prayer (1:15-19, 3:16-21). If we desire to know Christ on a more intimate level it is crucial that we spend time seeking Him in prayer.



## JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. God's plan was always for Christ to save both the Jews and the Gentiles. However, He waited until the timing was perfect to reveal that the Gospel was for everyone, not

just the Jews (v 10). Worship God for His wisdom. He knows all things and His timing is perfect. Think of a difficult situation in your own life. Thank God that He is wise, sovereign, loving and powerful in this situation.

2. Take stock of your prayer life today. What does it look like? How are you growing in prayer? Is prayer a vital lifeline for you or do you only pray (begrudgingly) when you are prompted to do so? Ask God to show you how you can grow in prayer.
3. Intercede for the children of our church today. Pray that they would grow to become mighty prayer warriors. Ask God to protect their childlike faith from the evil tactics of the enemy. Pray that their closeness with God would influence many, including their own families.

## DAY 5

### READ: Ephesians 4

God wants His Body to be holy and mature. He desires that we would “walk in a manner worthy of the calling we’ve received” (v 1). Once we have knowledge of the truth of Christ is and what He has done for us, we are responsible for how we handle that knowledge. Once we have experienced God and known His saving power, we must live out of this knowledge. We cannot claim to know Christ and continue living in sin. This is hypocritical and self-deceiving. The life that has met Christ must be the life that is submitted to Christ. His holiness demands this of us.

While God demands that we do our part to live a holy life, He understands that we are imperfect humans. Our sin nature prevents us from fully living in holiness. Because of this, He gives us His grace to help us live rightly. In this passage of Scripture alone, we see three key ways God helps believers live lives of holiness. First, He empowers people with gifts. God appoints people to the different roles of the fivefold ministry (apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers) “to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church” (v 11-12). We can grow in holiness with the help of the ministers God places in our lives. Second, God provides us with warnings against falling back into our former lives (v 17-24). The enemy would have us forget the ugliness of a sinful life. Sometimes we need to be reminded of how things were without Christ in order to be motivated to continue our pursuit of Christ. Third, God helps us grow in holiness by giving us specific guidance (v 25-32). He uses Scripture to give us practical instruction on how to make our lives pleasing to Him.



### JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. God wants you 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” (v 22-24). Are there any areas of hidden sin in your life here you haven’t put off your old self? Confess these to God. Receive His forgiveness and ask for His grace to change.
2. Re-read Ephesians 4:25-32. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you through this passage. What verses or thoughts stand out to you? Ask God to show you how you can live out these words.

3. Pray for Christians in the marketplace. Their character is a huge factor in how people in their spheres of influence view Christianity. Pray that God would empower them to live in a manner worthy of their calling. Pray that they would see that their greatest calling in life is to bring God glory.

## DAY 6

### READ: Ephesians 5

Ephesians 5 picks up where Ephesians 4 left off, describing what a life filled with the Holy Spirit will look like. The first sentence sums up Paul's focus for the entire letter: Because we have such a great, loving Father, we should try to become like Him. Imitating God is our purest form of obedience. On the contrary, choosing to live in sin is putting our own desires and standards above God's. It is saying we know better and God is not worthy of our obedient love. It is therefore no surprise that "no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ" (v 5).

Just as we must be on guard against sin, we must also be on guard against deception (v 6-15). One day all things will be exposed (v 13). On this day our lives will either prove faithful to Christ or rebellious against Him. We have little time on earth. We live in an evil age, with an enemy always prowling like a lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). We must be on guard, using our precious time for good, to the advancement of God's kingdom, rather than giving our enemy free reign.

From this warning, Paul moves into instruction. He tells the Ephesians to be "filled with the Holy Spirit" (v 18). Paul describes what some practical outworkings of this filling will be: speaking to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (v 19a); singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord (v 19b); always giving thanks (v 20a); and submitting to one another (v 21). Translated properly from Greek, the passage would read, "Submit to one another out of reverence to Christ. Wives, to your husbands... Husbands, to your wives." God cares deeply about marriages because they are a picture of Christ and the Church. Husbands and wives are to deny themselves and put their spouse's needs first. In the same way "Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (v25). The Church's response is to serve Christ with everything we have. When husbands and wives love and serve one another in obedience to God, it declares the work of Jesus to everyone they encounter.



### JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Let God speak to you about how you are his "dearly beloved child" (v 1). Write down what He shows you.
2. Meditate on Ephesians 5:22-33. "This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church" (v 32). Ask God to speak to you about how godly marriages bring Him glory.
3. Godly marriages are worth fighting for. Intercede for marriage in the Church today, knowing that God's heart breaks over the condition of many marriages. Pray that He would strengthen marriages. Ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit in marriages, that husbands and wives would be empowered to love and submit to one another. Ask God to teach spouses how to practically serve and respect each other. Pray that Jesus

would receive much glory because of marriages in His Church. Pray that, because of godly marriages, many people would come to a greater understanding of Christ's work.

## DAY 7



### READ: Ephesians 6

Ephesians 5 closed with a description of how we can honour God in marriage. Ephesians 6 opens by describing how we can honour God in two other types of relationships: parent-child and master-slave. While marriage is designed as a relationship of equality, the examples in Ephesians 6 have a clear hierarchy. The general principle for those with lesser influence (children and slaves) is to serve and obey from the heart, not just in outward action (v 1-3, 5-8). The fact that Paul addresses children, slaves and women, acknowledging that they have a choice in their heart about how to behave is empowering. At the time Paul wrote, these groups would never be acknowledged by society, much less given a choice about their lives. God loves everybody and demands obedient hearts for all, regardless of social status. For those of greater power in relationships (parents and masters), Paul simply says to treat others well, "knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality in Him" (v 4, 9).

Paul closes his letter to the Ephesians with an acknowledgement of reality. He knows the Holy Spirit has set the bar high for believers. He also knows that we are in a spiritual battle for our lives. If we ignore this battle, we will fall prey to our enemy. However, if we fight with courage and the Holy Spirit's help, we will win (v 11). The armour of God refers to a set of tools God has given us to help us in this battle (v 13-17). Our strength comes from Him (v 10), but we must actively use His strength.



### JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask God to speak to you about your relationships. How do you act when you have greater power or influence in a relationship? What is the condition of your heart? What about when you are in a position where somebody had power or influence over you? What is God saying about this?
2. The armour of God is such a common passage of Scripture that we often skim over it, not pausing to apply it to our lives. Spend some time thinking about each of the pieces of armour listed in Ephesians 6:13-17. Ask God how He wants you to use this armour in your life.
3. Pray for your family today. Ask God to reveal specific tactics that the enemy is using against your family. Pray that God would empower you to battle on behalf of your family. Ask God to protect and strengthen your loved ones in the fight. Pray that Jesus would gain ground in your family, and ultimately have victory in their lives. Pray for people in your family by name, that they would come to know Him and love Him more.





## The Epistle to the Ephesians

Paul's letter to the Ephesians gives us a brief, practical guide to Christianity. It centres on what Christ has done for us and how we are to live as a result. Christ came to bring new life to all, both Jew and Gentile. He saves, changes and empowers us so we might live in a manner that spreads His kingdom on earth.

### Ephesians 5:1-2 (ESV)

*"Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma."*



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