



# EPH ESI ANS

*God's Work*

*Our Walk*



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# Introduction

We are embarking on a 6-week journey through the powerful book of Ephesians! The Apostle Paul wrote this book from prison to Christ followers in the city of Ephesus. In this letter Paul summarizes the Gospel story and how that story should reshape and impact every part of our life stories – personally, in our neighborhoods, and in our families.

This book of the Bible is filled with foundational truths and wisdom for everyday living. So, take some time to read through the book of Ephesians and then work your way through the pages of this devotional. You might do this as a family around the dinner table, over coffee with friends, or at your life group.

We pray this resource will help to remind you of the glorious gospel message, spark conversation, and transform the way you engage and interact with the world around you.

Listen to, watch, or share weekly messages on the book of Ephesians online @ [gracecovenant.org](https://gracecovenant.org)



# 01.

WHEN YOUR  
IDENTITY IS  
IN CHRIST  
ANYTHING  
BECOMES  
POSSIBLE.



# Locating Your Identity

by Johnny Rocco

Imagine you're standing in an empty room. At the other end of the room there is a single, solitary mirror hanging on the wall. You step up to the mirror and a familiar image comes into focus. Now pause a moment. Who is the person looking back at you? The question triggers a flood of memories recalling everything from your upbringing, relationships, failures, deeply held convictions, fears, and aspirations. Somewhere in the midst of this swirling deluge of thoughts and experiences you are seeking to answer the question; who am I?

The question of our identity seems to really begin to surface during those turbulent years of adolescence and for some the answer can remain elusive well through adulthood. Is life really supposed to feel like some never-ending scavenger hunt that requires you to continually search for tiny clues and pieces to the puzzle of your identity?

In Ephesians 1 Paul offers his readers the key that unlocks the location of their true identity. The key is found in a phrase that is repeated over and over throughout this passage. It is found "in Him." Because of the work of Jesus Christ there is a new identity that is reserved for each of us. Amazingly, God determines who we are not by what we have done but by what he has granted us access to "in Him."

You have probably heard the phrase "location is everything" or seen an advertisement shouting "location, location, location!" Likewise, when it comes to identity location is everything. If you can't be found in Him you will never discover who you are through him.

Throughout the Bible we see examples of people who had a previous identity attached to them. Then God just shows up, speaks, and a new identity is revealed. Think of Moses in exile as a murderer who was then commissioned to carry God's message to Pharaoh. Consider Gideon hiding in a winepress from his enemies when God addresses him as a mighty man of valor. When God steps in and speaks affirmation into our identity it can often seem absurd to us because the location of our identity has its roots planted in the wrong place.

For example, Paul says in verse 4 that God has chosen you to be holy and blameless. Do you ever actually FEEL holy and blameless? (If you said yes to that you just lied and thus rendered yourself unholy). However, when your identity is located in Christ anything becomes possible. The problem for you and I is that we often choose to identify ourselves according to what we have already been, but God chooses to identify us by what we are yet to be.

If you've ever used GPS you know it's an incredibly convenient tool for traveling. You plug in where you are, tell it where you need to be, and you are on your way. Navigating our own lives tends to be a little less convenient. We are pretty good at determining where we've been, maybe even where we are, but we struggle at determining where we should really be. The true location of your identity rests in the completed, redemptive work of Christ and that can only be found "in Him."

Maybe it is time for you to step up to the mirror again and try asking a different question. Instead of asking "who am I?" consider asking "who am I supposed to be?"

### Questions

We all had an identity before Jesus. Write down the words you would use to describe who you were and what your life looked like before you received Christ?

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Ephesians chapter 1 is bursting with promises, proclamations, and purpose for God's people. As you read back through it try to write down all the words that describe how God sees you when you are found in Him.

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Now compare the two lists. Where have you been anchoring your identity lately? Take a moment to ask God to remind you who you are to him. Then pray for the courage to embrace that identity even when you don't feel it.

# 02. *The Prayers of Paul*

by Angela Buchanan

I love being outdoors in nature – the mountains, the ocean, trees, and all the beautiful varieties of flowers. I believe God has so much to show and teach us through the beauty of His creation.

While I appreciate the beauty of flowers, I don't have much time to plant and maintain many in my small courtyard. However, every year I plant some flowers and varieties of ivy in a series of large pots. Early in the spring, I was replacing last year's geraniums with some bright new red versions. My intention was to pull up the roots of the old plants and place the new ones in a batch of fresh topsoil. The dry geraniums pulled up easily, but when I went to remove the ivy I had to use all my strength to even budge the roots. In the end I gave up and the ivy continues to grow and flourish in my pots.

As I was pulling at the roots I sensed the Lord was reminding me of my need to be deeply rooted in His love the same way the ivy had immersed itself in the soil. That regardless of the circumstances, conflicts, or daily stresses I was facing I needed to remember my solid and secure place in Christ. So many situations in life can make us feel insecure and vulnerable, especially when we fail to consistently maintain our connection with Jesus.

In the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul prays two significant prayers for the believers there. I want to focus on the second one, found in chapter 3:16-19.

*"I ask that out of the riches of His glory He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Then you, being rooted and grounded in love, will have power, together with all the saints, to comprehend the length and width and height and depth of His love, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*

To give you some background to the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul found himself in prison and was writing to instruct and encourage the saints in Ephesus. In the prayer above he was communicating the absolute necessity of establishing and building their lives on the foundation of Christ's love for them.

As roots receive their nourishment from the soil in order to produce leaves and blooms, the early church would need the steadfast love of God to empower their efforts to bear fruit for the Kingdom of God. No other “soil” would do. Without the grounding His love would provide, the storms of persecution and opposition would uproot and down them personally and corporately.

Today it is no different. God has a purpose for each one of us to extend His love and grace to a world that so desperately needs it. If we plant and build our lives on any other foundation than Christ, we will easily be shaken and uprooted when challenges come.

But, when the roots of our lives go down into the reality of Christ’s love for us, assurance, certainty, security, and an overwhelming sense of belonging to Him grounds our existence. His love nourishes us and provides us the ability to produce fruit. And out of that overflow of love we are compelled to share that love with others.

### **Questions**

What do you think it would look like to live rooted and grounded in the love of God?

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How would you feel?

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How does an understanding that God’s love is our source and our stability inspire you to pursue a deeper relationship with Him?

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Why do you think there is relationship between the depth of our relationship with Christ and our ability to be fruitful?

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A black and white photograph of a hand holding a plant stem with small flowers. The hand is in the foreground, and the plant is in the center. The background is blurred. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, cursive font.

*I will build my life  
upon your love,  
it is a firm foundation.*

*I will put my trust  
in you alone,  
and I will not be shaken.*

# God's Work

by Farrell Lemings

Some years ago, there was a popular television show that aired called "Extreme Home Makeover." Contractors and design specialists would come in and take a home that was dilapidated and in disrepair and make it beautiful. The before and after pictures of the homes were stunning. And the amazing part of the story is that all the work and investment was given as a gift to the homeowners. They did absolutely nothing to earn the home makeover. They were given the gift of the old being made new. They were given a gift that they did not deserve.

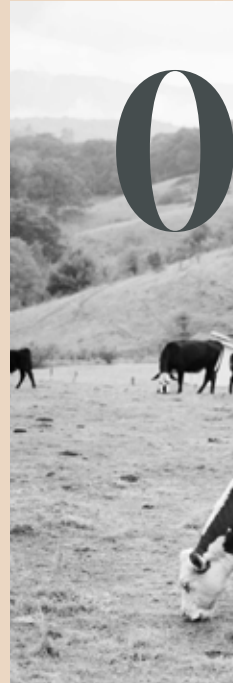
That is exactly what God has done for each of us. Ephesians 2:4 says, *"But because of God's great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions."* Our lives were in disrepair and we were without hope due to sin in our lives. We were separated from God and without hope. There was absolutely nothing we could do to change our situation.

But God stepped in and made a way by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to address our sin problem and bring about the possibility of a complete makeover in our lives. Because of God's mercy and grace, we have the privilege of not only having our sin forgiven, but we get to daily process life in relationship with God.

All of this is possible because of God's grace. Salvation is available to us not because of what we have done but because of what God has done for us. He acted on our behalf that we might be forgiven and free.

A few months ago, my family and I were enjoying an evening at a restaurant. We looked over in the corner and saw a couple from our church. We waved at them and they winked back in our direction. Just before they left, they came to our table, shook hands and said "Hi". When our meal was over, I got up and walked to the cash register and said, "I didn't get a check for our meal." They said, "Oh, you don't have to worry about it because someone else paid for it." I asked, "Who paid for it?" They said, "Well, we don't know who they are, but they were the couple that walked over and said 'Hello' to you." It was paid in full. I had the hardest time accepting that.

God's grace says, "I've picked up the tab. Accept it. Believe it. Celebrate it. And live it out."



God's grace to us makes the way of salvation possible that should change who we are and how we live. We certainly cannot work our way to salvation because we could never be good enough or work hard enough. Again, it is a gift from God. But the gift of grace should result in a changed life and good works. The Apostle Paul goes on to say in Ephesians 2:10 that, *"We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."* The good works come as a result of God's grace to us and it is our gift back to God.

My encouragement to you today is to gratefully live free in the grace of God and then look for the opportunity to live that grace out to others.



**Questions**

If someone were to ask you what God's grace is and what does it mean for you, how would you respond?

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How do you think the gift of God's grace should change your life?

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What is the difference between the mercy of God and the grace of God?

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Grace means the sin debt has been paid in full, so is there an area in your life that you need to embrace God's grace to be truly free from a past failure?

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# 04.



**LIFE IN CHRIST IS NOT JUST A THEOLOGICAL CONCEPT.  
IT HAS BEHAVIORAL IMPLICATIONS ON OUR  
DAY-TO-DAY RELATIONSHIPS.**

# Our Walk

by Sam Dobrotka

Overall, the book of Ephesians is somewhat unique compared to the rest of Paul's letters. The letter was written specifically to Gentiles and it does not address specific behavioral problems within the Ephesus church. Its content is broad in nature, allowing for easier application across both time and cultures. That doesn't mean the group was without problems. In particular, Paul felt they needed to grow and make progress in a few areas. Towards that end, he reminded them of who they were in Christ, and of the work God had already done on their behalf. The tone is one of encouragement and exhortation. And then we come to chapter 4.

Chapter 4 begins with Paul reminding the Ephesian church there are implications to being part of God's family. Although there were undoubtedly racial, gender, and economic differences within the group, they were part of one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (verses 4-6). Unity was to be the defining characteristic among them. Paul even referenced the metaphor of a body to illustrate the united nature of their life together (verses 15-16). The shift in Paul's focus is completed with verse 17, "So I tell you this...." Everything up to that point was to lay the foundation for what comes next. Namely, life in Christ is not just a theological concept, it has behavioral implications on our day-to-day relationships, as well. It's not enough to talk-the-talk, we need to walk-the-walk.

During my youth ministry days, I recall a high school student once telling me, "I can show you the stop sign where my dad becomes spiritual on the way to church every Sunday morning. From that moment until a few hours after church his faith is evident. However, outside of those few hours he's just like any other dad. There's nothing about his life that marks him as a Christ-follower during the week." To this day, recalling that conversation makes me so very sad. It's important to point out that I knew the dad. He wasn't a bad man. He provided a good home and living environment for his family. He wasn't physically or emotionally abusive. But as far as his faith was concerned, this man had nothing his son wanted for his own life.

Paul addressed some behavioral implications of our faith in Christ. He gave specific warnings against lying, anger, stealing, unwholesome talk, bitterness, rage, brawling, slander, and malice. The father referenced above might read that list and feel pretty good about himself (especially the brawling reference). But Paul didn't just tell us what NOT to do, he also told us what we SHOULD do. As Christ-followers we should put on our new self (verse 24), speak truthfully (25), do something useful with our hands (28), build up others (29), be kind and compassionate,

and forgive one another (32). Paul was telling the group in Ephesus (and us today, as well) that the absence of bad – while a good thing – isn't the point. All of us need to be proactive in our relationships with others, allowing the light of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to flow through us. Whether we realize it or not, others are watching and taking note if there is anything about our faith that is desirable for them.

**Questions**

Who in your life might be watching how you live out your faith?

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Are there things in your life that might detract others from seeing Jesus in you?

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Is there a relationship in your life that needs to be mended because of your past attitude or behavior? If so, what is one step you can take today to begin the process?

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05.

For you  
were once  
darkness,  
but now  
you are  
light in  
the Lord.  
live as  
children  
of light.

# Spiritual Health

by Lisa Hummel

Everyone knows that walking is good exercise. It's simply taking steps and repeating those steps over and over again to achieve momentum. If you only take a step or two, you won't go very far. However, if you keep taking steps one after another, you start intentionally moving forward. If you commit to this everyday, it can develop into a healthy and enjoyable habit with many benefits.

Walking in the Spirit is a similar process. It's creating momentum through new habits of thinking and acting, casting off our old self and putting on our new self - choosing daily to take steps of self-sacrifice and love. The "health benefits" of spiritual walking include a more intimate relationship with God, stronger families and new, more fulfilled lives. This is what Christian living is all about. Here are four steps Paul urges us to take.

## Step 1: Imitate God By Loving Others

Children who know they are loved naturally want to be like their parents. As children of God we should naturally desire to be like our heavenly Father, and to love on others as he loves on us. But, in order for us to love others we first need to have a revelation of God's profound love for us. That is the key to our ability to imitate God and grow into a more loving person.

## Step 2: Walk as Children of Light

Paul's instructions are pretty clear regarding immorality, and the way we should speak. Paul warns us to not take this lightly and to understand the damage that our actions can have on ourselves as well as others. Imitating God means we are intentional about taking steps away from darkness in order to pursue holiness. God's Word is the light, and nothing we do should be in conflict with the Word of God.

## Step 3: Be Filled with the Holy Spirit

Being filled with the Spirit means letting the Holy Spirit lead you, empower you, control and influence you in the way you think, speak and act. Just as we can make the bad decision of drinking to excess, we can make the right choice to drink of the Holy Spirit. It is our choice and responsibility to stay full of Christ. Paul goes on to tell us how...by speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, by making music to the Lord in our hearts, and by giving thanks in all things. The key to being and staying filled with God's Spirit is spending time in the presence





of God daily - filling your heart with praise and gratitude so your heart is overflowing with love and joy.

#### Step 4: Submit to One Another

One final step and the key to building God-glorifying relationships is submission. Submission requires an attitude of humility and means to place ourselves under each other. We do this by sacrificing willingly and loving one another unselfishly. It's the opposite of self-centeredness and requires us to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It is through our attitude of submission that God is glorified and others are encouraged.

You cannot walk in the Spirit by your strength alone; God wants to be your daily walking partner as you move forward in relationship with Him and others. The spiritual health benefits will overflow from your life and into the lives of everyone around you.

#### Questions

Read Ephesians 5

What's one step you can take today to receive your heavenly Father's love for you, so you can give that same love away to someone else?

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What is one step you can take today that will move you away from darkness and into light - aligning yourself with God's word in order to pursue a life of purity and holiness?

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What is one step you can take today to fill yourself with God's Spirit through worship, offering gratitude and thanks to God?

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What is one step you can take today to glorify God by showing an attitude of submission and a heart of humility to those around you?

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# Our Armor

by Stan Willson

In the summer of 1998, I had the privilege of accompanying a group of twenty students to London for two weeks of evangelistic outreach. While engaging in the work we had been sent to do, something strange began to happen. I suddenly found myself falling in love with both the city and its people. That summer was the first of a series of outreach visits stretching over a nine-year period.

With each visit I set out to learn as much about the city's rich history as I possibly could. My quest took me to museums, cathedrals, parks, and palaces. Always with guidebook in hand, I soaked in each amazing story while trying my best to imagine what life must have been like so long ago.

Among all the historic sites I visited, I found myself drawn to the Tower of London. The Tower tells the story of London as it boasts of protective ravens, the Queen's Yeoman Guards, and of course the Crown Jewels. Not to be forgotten is the Tower's Royal Armoury. Today, more like a museum, the Armoury contains an impressive and extensive display of the beautiful and ornate armor of Britain's past Kings and Queens.

Contained in the collection is the armor of King Charles I. It is said to be the most extravagant suite of armor in the entire collection and perhaps the most extravagant ever created. With a base of steel, it is intricately decorated with delicate gold design work throughout. This particular piece of armor is a masterpiece showcasing the King's power and control. Interestingly enough, it was never actually worn in battle. In fact, while it was tailor-made for the King, he may never have worn it at all. Even though it was a purposeful, visual display of the King's heavy-handed leadership it was completely impractical for battle.

In the sixth chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians he devotes eight verses to the details of effective spiritual warfare. In reading Paul's narrative, we learn several important realities of our warfare in a very short period of time. Paul affirms that we are in a battle and that the battle is not ordinary in nature. It is a spiritual battle and therefore, requires spiritual armor which God has provided. Paul reveals that our enemy is no ordinary enemy. Rather than one human fighting against another human, we engage with spiritually dark forces living and fighting within the unseen realm of the heavenlies.



Paul declares the mode of operation of our enemy, the devil. He operates as a schemer. He is smart. He is crafty. He is organized. He is strategic. He is intentional and therefore the schemes he devises are planned and fashioned with our weaknesses in mind. In fact, his schemes are tailor-made to our vulnerabilities and our weaknesses.

The devil will use whatever people, means, or circumstances he can to succeed in his schemes. It is for this very reason that God has provided us with a practical suite of battle armor that can and must be worn if we are going to be successful in spiritual warfare. When worn in full, God's armor protects those parts of us that are weakest and most vulnerable to temptation. It is for this reason that Paul said, *"Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes."*



**Questions**

Take a moment to identify the area(s) where you are weak and most vulnerable to the schemes of the enemy? What areas of your life have you left exposed to the enemy?

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Paul directs that we are to put on the full armor of God. Read through Ephesians 6:13-17 and identify the pieces of God's spiritual armor.

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Begin a routine of praying through the armor and putting each piece on in preparation for daily battles.

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