

Ephesians

and the

Local Church

Class Booklet in Outline Format

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Ephesians and the Local Church

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Session 1

PART ONE: INTRODUCTORY TRUTHS

A. An essential truth – doctrine precedes practice

1. Doctrine – the teaching of God’s Word, specifically regarding what He has done in Christ
2. Right doctrine brings right practice; wrong doctrine brings wrong practice
3. I Corinthians 11:18, 19
 - a. that (*hina*) – and so
 - b. heresies (*hairesis*) – a difference in doctrine
 - c. must – from the evidence of division, wrong doctrine must be present

B. This is equally applicable to both the individual and the church

1. If we want a fruitful, loving, and bountiful church, it starts with right doctrine—not with laws, regulations, and programs
2. Consider Romans 12:1, Ephesians 4:1

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3. As with the individual, this doctrine must be applied in the daily life of the church

C. Church (*ekklesia*) – used in one of two ways:

1. The whole body of all places and all times of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ
2. The local group that lives and studies God's Word together

D. It is incumbent upon us to believe Romans if Ephesians is going to be lived

1. Nine epistles contain the great foundational truths for the Christian
 - a. Romans, Corinthians, Galatians – settle the basic issues of identity and righteousness for the individual
 - b. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians – emphasis on the life of the church and the purpose of the church
 - c. Thessalonians – the future of the church
2. How can we even approach Ephesians if we are not grounded in Romans?

PART TWO: THE DOCTRINE OF EPHESIANS

A. Ephesians is not just an extension of Romans—Ephesians is a whole new dimension

1. Romans deals *primarily* with “me;” Ephesians deals *primarily* with “us”

a. e.g., Ephesians 1:3-8 “we,” “us” – the subject is the church

b. Note emphasis in Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21

2. This should be our focus also – not just upon ourselves, but upon *each other*

B. Our Peace

1. Ephesians 2:11-13 – Jew/Gentile and all other divisions resolved in Christ

2. Ephesians 2:14 – peace = an end of warfare

a. Romans – peace with God

b. Ephesians – peace with other believers

3. Ephesians 2:15-18 – in this one new man, we are brought in to the presence of God; neither Jew nor Gentile had access previously

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4. Ephesians 2:19 – once strangers and foreigners; now fellowcitizens and household

5. Ephesians 2:20-22 – the church very literally is where God lives—God’s habitation
 - a. Not limited by space and time

 - b. Invisible but nonetheless real

 - c. The primary vehicle by which God is working in this age

- C. Ephesians 1:3 – “in heavenly places” = “in the heavenly realm” or “in the spiritual realm”
 1. Used five times in Ephesians (1:3; 1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12)

 2. This is the sphere within which the church operates – invisible, yet real

- D. The great reason for learning to live these truths
 1. Ephesians 1:12 – in the church, praise and worship go beyond words

 2. Ephesians 5:25-27 – should we be more interested in a holy life or in a holy church?

3. Ephesians 3:10, 11 – the purpose of the ages: bigger than one life, one group, or one generation
4. Ephesians 3:20, 21 – the church: a place where God is glorified

Session 2

PART THREE: THE PURPOSE OF THE AGES IN PRACTICE

A. Ephesians 4:1 – chapters 4, 5, and 6 of Ephesians deal with how the church is to live

1. “Therefore” – this walk is built upon the truths revealed in the first three chapters
2. Worthy (*axios*) – the walk is to be in balance with, commensurate with the calling

B. Ephesians 4:2 – lowliness = humility

1. Longsuffering – this will be essential
2. Forbearing – to hold up, to support; primarily in the realm of our thoughts
3. In love

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4. Any actions or activities that appear to foster unity are pointless unless these attitudes are first in place
5. Obviously, this is a change; man is concerned with acts and services—God is primarily concerned with the underlying thoughts and motives

C. Ephesians 4:3 – endeavor = to put forth an effort

1. Keep = to **guard**
 - a. We are not to build it – God has already built it
 - b. We are to guard the unity, in the bond of peace
2. Two kinds of unity mentioned in Ephesians
 - a. Ephesians 4:3 – the unity of the spirit
 - b. Ephesians 4:13 – a unity of knowledge and believing
3. Specific points of this unity are summed up in Ephesians 4:4-6

D. Ephesians 4:7 – BUT: sets in contrast; what we all share contrasted with that which is given to each in particular

1. Grace – one use is in reference to a help of some sort (Hebrews 4:16; II Corinthians 9:8; James 4:5, 6)
2. The phrase “given grace” or “grace given” often used in speaking of the ministry which has been bestowed on an individual (Romans 15:15, 16; I Corinthians 3:10; Galatians 2:9, 10; Acts 7:10; I Corinthians 1:4; Ephesians 3:5-8)

E. Ephesians 4:8

1. “Wherefore” – refers back to the “giving of Christ” in verse 7
2. Verses 9 and 10 are parenthetical

F. Ephesians 4:11 “some” – but He gave others as well

1. These are not the only ministries
2. Why are these five singled out? The context is the “how” of the church living as the church; these five are integral in initiating this functioning

G. Ephesians 4:12 – NOT a list of three things which these ministries do

1. They primarily do ONE thing (perfect, or equip, the saints)

2. The saints then do a SECOND thing (the work, or operation of *their* ministries)
3. This results in a THIRD thing (the Body of Christ being edified)

H. How is this perfecting, or equipping, accomplished?

1. Ephesians 4:12 – perfecting (*katartizo*) [students are encouraged to study the many translations and uses of this word on their own]
2. I Thessalonians 3:9, 10 – Personal presence allows one to help others in this fashion
3. Believing necessitates a knowledge of God's Word
4. See also I Corinthians 1:10
5. A comparison of *katartizo* and *exartizo* might be helpful (II Timothy 3:16, 17)
6. Galatians 6:1 – note that these are things all believers should do for each other, but these five ministries are particularly enabled and responsible
7. Romans 1:10-12 – same truth illustrated (note mutual believing)
8. Gift (*charisma*) – a gift of God's grace (compare Romans 12:5, 6)

Session 3

PART FOUR: THE PURPOSE OF THE AGES IN PRACTICE (CONTINUED)

A. Romans gives us additional insight

1. Romans 12:1-3 – measure = an instrument of measure
 - a. Believing is a response to God’s Word (cf. Romans 10:17)
 - b. The measure of faith is the Word which God has given
2. Romans 12:4-6 – notice that Paul, through the grace given unto him (verse 3), now proceeds to equip them to operate the grace given unto them (verse 6)
3. Romans 12:6-8 – some examples of ministries, or functions
4. I Corinthians 12:4-6 – ministries, the services they perform, and the effects produced will differ, but all come from the same spirit, the same Lord, the same God
5. Romans 12:6 – proportion: the degree to which an individual believes; the proportion of faith can vary, and can grow (or diminish) according to my free will
6. An illustration from the Old Testament – Exodus 31:1-7; 35:30 – 36:2

B. One Body, many members

1. I Corinthians 12:12-20 – one great obstacle: thinking that I have no place in the Body
2. I Corinthians 12:21-24 – another obstacle: thinking that *you* have no place in the Body
3. The Body of Christ in operation offers tremendous potential for the work of God to be done, and for the needs of each individual to be fully met
4. For the Body to work properly, I need to believe, to trust, that God will work in what He has put together
5. I Corinthians 12:25, 26 – this doesn't occur automatically: it requires deliberate upholding of each other in our minds (Ephesians 4:2)

C. The result of these ministries working properly

1. Ephesians 4:13-15 – speaking the truth = living the truth, being the truth
2. Ephesians 4:16 – summarizes the working described in verses 11-15
 - a. Joints – tendons and ligaments (probably describing the ministries of verse 11)

- b. The operation of the Body begins with the head
- c. The ministries of verse 11 “pull the Body together” so that each member can then begin working in conjunction with each other
- d. The result is edification of the Body, by the Body
- e. Finally, in love – the only way for this process to occur genuinely

D. With an accurate understanding of Ephesians 4:1-16, the remainder of Ephesians gains a new depth and clarity; for example:

1. Ephesians 4:22-24 – change occurs through putting on the truths regarding the new man
2. Ephesians 4:25, 28, 29 – note that what is emphasized is not just the proper activity, but the proper substitute *and* the reason for it
3. Marriage (Ephesians 5:22 ff.) – submitting and love are not a new thing for those who are living as active members of the Body of Christ
4. Putting on the Whole Armor of God (Ephesians 6:10ff.)

Session 4

PART FIVE: CHURCH POSSIBILITIES

A. The church of the First Century

1. Precedence of right doctrine – Acts 2:41-47
 - a. Our doctrine is to be found primarily in the Epistles, not in the Book of Acts
 - b. Acts records the lives and actions of men and women who believed right doctrine
2. Identification with Christ – Acts 4:23-27; 9:4

B. Stewards of God's grace

1. I Peter 4:10 – “the gift” = “a gift”
2. I Peter 4:11 – “oracles of God” = “Word of God”

C. The time required for individual local churches to grow may vary greatly

1. Continued faithful teaching of right doctrine is the one great requirement

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2. Consider the addresses to local churches in the epistles (and how they differ)

D. The Christian does have a relationship with the entire Body of Christ, but the truths of Ephesians are lived out *primarily* on a local level

E. I Timothy 3:15 – the pillar and ground of the truth

1. Other than the worldwide church and the local church, any other groupings of Christians (based on common beliefs, common practices, or other shared traits) must be recognized as man-made
2. Such associations may be helpful, but they must not be confused with “the Body of Christ”

F. New bottles – Luke 5:36-39

1. Must be careful not to carry Old Testament systems or promises into the church
2. Some structure is needed, but the structure must serve the life of the church, and not the reverse

Session 5

PART SIX: ACCOUNTABILITY

A. Philippians 2:1-4 – unity in the church is the result of each member choosing to respond to right doctrine

1. Ephesians 4:2 – love is a necessity
2. Ephesians 5:21 – submitting is a necessity
3. Both love and submitting are acts of believing

B. Submitting to leadership – Hebrews 13:7, 17

1. Past experiences are not to be my standard
2. Romans 13:1, 2 – “the powers that be” = the authorities that are (from above)
3. We can and should recognize a ministry which God is directing (Ephesians 4:12; II Corinthians 4:5; etc.)
4. Some falsely claim to be ministers of God – God promises to deal with them

C. Regardless of one's ministry or responsibilities, we are still members of the Body of Christ, thus all are accountable to love and submit

1. Didn't Paul and others operate their ministries to the entire world?
Consider Acts 13:1-3; 14:24-28 – they were sent *by* the church and returned *to* the church
2. Compare Agabus (Acts 21:10, 11) – came from Judaea for a particular purpose
3. No ministry is exempt from the need for the other members of the Body of Christ – for oversight and for needs to be met (consider II Corinthians 7:5, 6 as an example)

D. A further example from Acts – Acts 16:8-10

1. Paul submitted also – Acts 16:4
2. The result – Acts 16:5

E. Many great benefits seen in the church whose members are committed both to operating their ministries and to submitting to the ministries of others:

1. The weight is shared
2. The church is not limited by the short suits of a few leaders

3. All giving, all receiving, all praying one for another

F. Accountability includes taking the responsibility to resolve conflicts promptly, with the Word of God (cf. Matthew 18:15-17)

1. When the Word of God is not heeded, the instruction of II Thessalonians 3:6 might become necessary

2. Note the desired result of such actions – II Thessalonians 3:14, 15 (cf. I Timothy 1:19, 20)

3. The church must stand unified in these matters also

Session 6

PART SEVEN: FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

A. Accountability to our Lord – Colossians 2:18, 19

1. We desire to “walk worthy” in order that the Lord can live and work in and for his church

2. He builds the church – Matthew 16:13-18

3. He works with us – Mark 16:15-20

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4. He adds to the church – Acts 2:42-47
5. He opens hearts to our words – Acts 16:14
6. He continues to play a part in the nurturing of the flock – I Peter 5:1-4
7. There was always to be a partnership between the Lord and the church

B. Practical conclusions

1. I Corinthians 1:10-12 – wrong doctrine precedes division
2. Perhaps the declaration among the Corinthians should have been “we are of Christ”
3. Colossians 3:12-15 – by putting on, not by efforts of the flesh
4. Ephesians 3:10, 11 – how much more is available?
5. Romans 15:5, 6 – the ultimate purpose of walking in these truths
6. Ephesians 3:14-21

