

# EPHESIANS Bible Reading Schedule

## 1 Week

### WEEK 1

I am happy to reignite our readings from God's Word as the fall season begins with some notes for deeper study and reflection, plus, highlighting points of application for our everyday lives. It is hard to believe that we didn't read through Ephesians last year because it is one of my favorites. The letter is written to the Church in Ephesus, but its message is for every believer and applies to any church. It is sometimes referred to as an encyclical letter because most believe that this letter was sent to Ephesus and then shared with all the churches in the province of Asia. The Apostle Paul wrote such powerful and timeless truths that the leaders of these churches wanted fellow believers in other towns and villages to receive Paul's teaching. Also, this letter has a simple outline with chapters 1 thru 3 addressing the theology of the Gospel and then the next three chapters emphasize living this truth. First, he shares the theology and then the practicality of living for Christ.

You will love reading about the overwhelming goodness that God in Christ has showered on believers. You will be blessed to read of God's amazing plan to unite Gentiles with Jews in a new community. This concept has been in the mind of God since the beginning of time and is now made possible as Christ broke down the dividing wall between Jew and Gentile on the cross. This Gospel had been hidden in times past but is now revealed opening the door for all mankind to receive salvation through Christ. The ramifications of what Christ has done lead to a marvelous adventure of service, testimony, dynamic relationships, and victory over the enemy. We can anticipate an incredible week of reading Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

#### DAY 1 – Ephesians 1

The first thing you might be wondering about is the length of these daily readings. Today, we are reading 23 power-packed verses which could seem like a lot for one day. But I want us to enjoy the riches of God's Word but also the fullness of God's Word. It might be challenging to read and spend time contemplating a chapter like you just read but I want to expand your understanding and increase your nourishment from the Word of God. Did you know that verses 3 to 14 are actually one sentence in Greek? This means that Paul meant to weave these spiritual truths together because they are interwoven highlighting the amazing grace of God. Please pick a phrase from this section and ask God to help you understand it and embrace it as your own. Verse 14 tells me that the Holy Spirit is given to me as a foretaste of eternity. I am sure there are times when the truth that the Holy Spirit is living in you doesn't even seem very real. But I also am sure that there are times when God's Spirit is very strong and evident within. I am submitting myself to the Spirit today as I read about the gift of His presence in my life. Also, the inspiration of Paul's prayer in verses 15 to 20 is especially relevant because I often forget about my confident hope in Christ as well as the power that is available to me as a child of God especially

noted in verse 19. If I pray this prayer for myself and for those who come to mind, I imagine that good things will take place and their lives will be enhanced, right? Please slow down enough to pray these verses and insert your name, or even better, insert the name of someone that God brings to mind. The prayers of the Bible are meant to guide us so that we might pray more effectively. This is definitely one of those prayers. How has God spoken to you through this first chapter?

## DAY 2 – Ephesians 2

I can see how this chapter could be easily divided into two parts. Maybe this morning you can focus on verses 1 to 10 and then tonight pray over verses 11 to 22. There's no question that Paul is writing about one's new life in Christ in these first ten verses and then writing about how we are not only united with Christ but united to each other. Both of these topics are so crucial to us because they define our spiritual relationship with the Lord and our community relationship with each other. Verse 4 says so much in two words, "But God." Simply put, because of God's mercy and love, those who are joined to Jesus (you & me) are saved from the terrible consequences of their sin and enjoy the benefits of Christ's resurrection... all of this because of grace. And even though I don't always "feel" like this is true, the Lord says I am seated in the heavenly realms with Christ right now (V6). But don't forget verse 10 which reminds us that God wants to use us for his glory by preparing opportunities for us to demonstrate his love and grace to others. Verse 10 must be included in this section. Previously, these first ten verses were always my main focus in this chapter but I have appreciated the significance of the second half of this chapter because I live in such a divided world. The grace of God is bigger than our differences. Jews and Gentiles were as far apart as you can imagine. But not anymore; "(Christ) broke down the wall of hostility that separated us." (V14) Because the Church comprises people of different ethnic groups, it is a community of harmony and peace as believers live together in love, bound together by the shared experience of knowing Christ. One of the most powerful traits that show the work of God's Spirit is the togetherness of believers in a polarized society. Paul's description of the church points to God's temple in the last paragraph which is the idea of God's house being filled with God's family which is also referred to as Christ's Body. How do these powerful themes of God's grace and One Body impact you?

## DAY 3 – Ephesians 3

I appreciate Paul's humility knowing that God revealed the hidden mystery to him and he didn't deserve the privilege of being in the inner circle of God's plan for the Gospel. "Though I am the least deserving of all God's people, he graciously gave me the privilege of telling the Gentiles about the endless treasures available to them in Christ." (Verse 8) It seems to me that Paul was the strategic tool in God's hand for establishing the Early Church. One very important criterion is humility. Do you remember the description of Moses as the most humble man on the face of the earth? There's something about humility that goes a long way with the Lord. I remember reading Isaiah 57:15, "The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: 'I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts.'" God has a special place in his heart for those who have genuine humility. But the beauty of this chapter, in my opinion, is the depth of Paul's prayer in verses 14 to 21. This prayer is one of my favorites without question. I have highlighted it many times in the prayer groups that I have led. Praying for the spiritual well-being of fellow believers is a crucial concern of Paul. He demonstrates that prayer is

essential to the spiritual growth in my life and in the lives of those I pray for. What phrase might you identify as especially meaningful? Why? The emphasis on love is my point of inspiration. The way that Paul prays focusing on how wide, how long, how high, and how deep is the love of Christ, fills my heart every time I pray these words. What would it mean for you to pray for those you love in this way? Do you think God wants to answer this prayer when you pray it? What does Paul's prayer teach you about prayer?

#### DAY 4 – Ephesians 4

Paul's letter takes a major shift toward living the Christian life; "lead a life worthy of your calling." (V1) These 32 verses are packed with practical advice on the nature of living out your faith. Can you think of any other place in the Bible that points out as many important topics to live by? I was reminded by Paul that following Christ is doing what Jesus would do. Or, as the bracelet highlights, "WWJD = what would Jesus do?" I can identify at least 35 topics of concern for Christian living in this chapter. If I asked you to select 5 of these topics to write down and also write out how each one applies to your life, which 5 would you pick and what would you write about them that would help you live them? These verses are connected to growing as a believer. Paul's prayer in chapter 3 says, "I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit." (3:16) That's how you are enabled to live a life worthy of the calling. You and I need God's power and presence to help us. All of these beautiful characteristics in Chapter 4 are beyond our human ability. But a relationship with Christ gives us a partnership that will give us what we need because we will be doing our lives through him. There are two principles that divide these character traits into two groups: "put off and put on," found in verses 22 thru 24. Most every command Paul gives tells us about something to get rid of or something to live into. We, as a church, have highlighted the importance of "consecration." The two responses are like shedding dirty clothing (cleansing) and putting on new garments (devotion). I am sure you can sort through which commands are shedding and which commands pertain to putting on something new. Before you head out today or close your eyes for rest, please identify one or two of these topics for putting off and putting on. I encourage you to pray for God's help in these areas of growth and change.

#### DAY 5 – Ephesians 5

There are so many places to "pull off" on the side of the road and take a closer look at what Paul has written for the churches in this chapter. I contemplate several inspiring and challenging words like, "following the example of Christ." (V1) "Don't be fooled by those who try to excuse these sins," also, gets my attention, for sure. (V6) "Carefully determine what pleases the Lord." (V10) "Be filled with the Holy Spirit." (V18) "For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church." (V25) "Each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." (V33) Have you read Emerson Eggerichs' book, "Love and Respect?" I think he does a marvelous job at explaining the meaning and depth in marriages that honor the principle of love and respect. I wanted you to see how many thought-provoking insights are given by Paul in this one chapter. But the call to be "filled with the Spirit" is "tops" for me. I think it gives meaning to the whole chapter, especially the need to live wisely and make the most of every opportunity. I know that we need the Spirit's help to do that. But also, the call to serve each other in marriage is far from easy and points to my need to be filled with the Spirit as a husband. Let me add the fact that the grammar suggests that believers are to be continuously filled with

and led by the Spirit. It is a present tense imperative; that is a command that is both progressive and ongoing. The need to be filled is for each individual but it also has a community side to it, since it is meant for all of us together because it is written in the “plural.” Evidence of the Spirit’s filling in a church community is often connected to music, worship, and also, how we speak to one another. Would you say our church is filled with the Spirit? Where are you led to “pull off” to the side and incorporate prayer into your contemplation of this marvelous chapter?

#### DAY 6 – Ephesians 6

The Apostle Paul continues his instruction about key relationships in your life... family, business, & parenting, for example. He gives us some concise counsel for such an important aspect of life. This points to how to treat those closest to us! But the teaching on spiritual warfare jumps right off the page. There is no question that this is the deepest and most helpful instruction on overcoming the Devil in the whole Bible. The NT writers were convinced of the reality of evil and the activity of Satan and his cohorts. Peter wrote that he prowls around like a roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus was tempted by the Devil in the desert as recorded in the Gospels. I John 4:4 assures us that God’s Spirit within us is greater than the god of this world referring to the Devil. Revelation 12:7-12 has given me insight into the spiritual realm and Satan’s intense fury. But nothing is stronger or more helpful to me than these verses that outline the weapons of God available to me and to you as followers of Christ. It is called the “armor of God.” Verses 10-12 tell us about the nature of the battle which rages on in the unseen world. But we do not need to fear. God has given us everything we need to overcome. The power of the Devil is no match for the power of God. The pieces of the armor would be easily identified by Paul’s readers. They match the armor worn by a Roman soldier. We have armor to protect us and we have weapons to attack, if necessary. The pieces of the armor are reflections of a deeper truth that coincides with the gifts God gives his children. Which aspect of the armor are you thinking about most? Why? Is there any aspect of your spiritual life that might be vulnerable to the devil like faith, assurance of salvation, truth... prayer? However, as powerful as this teaching is in our lives, spiritual warfare is not the center of our focus as believers, but rather on a joyful life of obedience in the Spirit. Amen!