

# **Ephesians Series – Autumn 2020 Including Life**

## **Group Leaders Brief**

Taken from the book **Ephesians: How Jesus creates a New People in a New World** by Brad Wilson

### **‘How Jesus creates a new people in a new world’**

A major series preaching through this book, with each message formed of three parts:

- Head – Renewal of our minds by the knowledge of God
- Heart – Restoration of our souls by the application of this truth
- Hands – Transformation of our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit

There are eight parts (weeks) each has a reading(s) a brief synopsis and some suggested questions. Please note that the first three parts all have two sections, the remaining parts one section each.

Suggested questions for life groups have been **highlighted**.

### **Part 1 - A church adopted (1:1-14)**

#### ***Head***

We are told that as a Christians we are ADOPTED as Sons & Daughters (v5)  
REDEMPTION by grace (v7) (Romans3: 23-24) Freely given in Christ (v6)

Adoption:

- a proactive choice by God, His pleasure and will.
- rights of a child
- fully included in God’s family
- inheritance

C. S. Lewis “the Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God”

Adoption ref; Romans 8:15, 23. Galatians 4:5

REDEMPTION by grace (v7) (Romans 3: 23-24) Freely given in Christ (v6)

#### ***Heart***

To place our hope in Christ (v12)

To bring praise to God (v12, v14)

To realise the gift of the Holy Spirit marks us out as believers (v13) (John14: 16-18)

How does it affect our feelings/affections to know we are adopted children of God, by His choice?

#### ***Hands***

To bring praise and glory to God by seeking God’s will for our lives both individually and together as His body.

When we know we are chosen by God, adopted into His family, by His choice and total cost to Him we need to live from that place of total security.

**Do you ever feel abandoned? Do you feel you need to earn acceptance?**

**Thinking about your story and this passage, how has God glorified Himself by making you an heir?**

**How can you make space in your life to listen to what the Holy Spirit tells you about Jesus, your identity, and God's glory?**

**Part 1 continued: And Belonging to Jesus (1:15-23)**

***Head***

As Christians we belong to Jesus, the church, His body. In order to bring more people into that family, for the glory of God.

Paul prays for wisdom and revelation so that the Ephesians may know:

- God better (v17)
- the hope to which they have been called
- His incomparably great power
- His authoritative position over all.

Who are we in the light of who God is?

***Heart***

Christ to have the preeminent place (first call) on our lives (v22-23)

To give him authority over all aspects of our lives

**Where in our life do you feel out of control? Why?**

**Thinking about your story and this passage, how have you seen the power of the resurrection in your life?**

***Hands***

We must walk daily in the knowledge/wisdom/revelation (v17)/power that the Holy Spirit gives us in our current situation.

**What difference would it make in our community if we did just that? If we fully lived in the reality of adopted sons and daughters of the King?**

**How do we live this out as individuals and church?**

## **Part 2 – A church raised by grace (2:1-10)**

### ***Head***

Jesus came for the broken/sinners. Dead in our sin and therefore incapable of releasing ourselves. We fitted in with the ways of the world, we wanted to be the same. Satan ruled us. All we wanted to do was gratify the cravings of our sinful nature.

Love for us, even in our sinful state motivated God.

Grace is what God shows us when he accepts us as cleansed from sin into His family. He cleansed us of our sin and adopted us into his family.

We need to grasp hold of what grace is, to appreciate it, value it and rejoice in it.

We are given a gift of new life, without Jesus we are nothing, with him we have everything.

Vs 6: we are seated with Christ. That is our position!

### **Who are we apart from Christ, and who are we in Christ?**

### ***Heart***

We were dead in trespasses and sins. (v1) but made alive God's mercy and love.

Do we realise how sinful we are without Christ and how with Him we are a new creation.

**Do we sometimes try to earn that grace/mercy/affection in how we interact with God and others?**

**How does knowing God loves us, shows us grace and mercy affect our attitude towards Him?**

**Do I love God?**

### ***Hands***

We are God's masterpiece created for good works that God prepared for us to do(v10).

God made us for a purpose and He is love! He made us the way we are to do the good works He has prepared for us.

**What would your life look like if you walked constantly in what Jesus is calling you to do?**

## **Part 2 continued and united without borders (2:11-22)**

### ***Head***

We are united together on the same basis into one body: the church.

Christ's purpose was to make the two one. To get rid of the hostility between Jews and Gentiles.

Same foundation, same building.

We were once outside of this covenant.

Paul reminds us we were not part of God's family, but now, as Christians we are, united together (v13).

Christ is the chief cornerstone.

The church is the dwelling in which God lives.

**What does this passage say about the church, and what Jesus has done in shaping the church?**

**Why do you think it's important to remember that we were once far off from God?**

### ***Heart***

Have you ever felt like a stranger, or gone somewhere where you feel uncomfortable and out of place?  
God's covenants began with Abraham/ later the Children of Israel/ David.

**God's presence brings peace (v14) how do we experience Gods presence & peace in the life of our church, life group, missional community?  
How does this truth create unity within the body?**

### ***Hands***

God brings together diverse people together into the church (us)!  
God lives in us. As a church we are to bring glory to Him.

**How does it affect us to know we are to show a united front in our mission for God (redeeming and restoring the world)?**

### **Part 3 - A church for God's mission (3:1-13)**

#### ***Head***

Those who follow Jesus join His mission by making disciples of all ethnic groups by going, teaching and baptising (Mathew 28: 18-20)

We are called ambassadors and reconcilers (2Cor.5: 17-20)

See Isaiah 52:7.

The good news is not just for us, but for the whole world, we should live on mission!

We cannot separate our identity in Christ from our purpose in Christ.

We should be rejoicing that we can approach God in freedom and confidence.

**Do we look at the church as a 'safe place'? A place we meet together to reaffirm our beliefs & doctrine?**

#### ***Heart***

It is a privilege to be able to share God's good news to a world with no hope.

Vs7 Paul sees it as a gift of God's grace that he has become a servant of the gospel. Is that how we see it?

Our hope in Christ is certain, not like the relativism of the world we live in.

**What makes us hesitate to share the gospel? comfort, security, significance, pain, lack of conviction?**

#### **Hands**

Paul longed to keep sharing the gospel, he was compelled to do so.

See: Philippians 1:12-14, 18, 21. 1 Corinthians 9:16.

**How can we individually and together embrace this calling, to be bold in sharing this message of Ephesians to not just each other, but with our friends and neighbours?**

### **Part 3 continued and with high expectations (3:14-21)**

#### ***Head***

Before Paul urges the church to live according to their calling, he prays a very significant prayer, that we may:

- be strengthened with power as He lives in us
- know the extent of God's love
- we may be rooted in His love

Revival comes to a city, town, church as each individual allows God to change them.

So often our prayers are asking God to help us in our current circumstances. There is another sort of prayer that focuses on the Holy Spirit changing us rather than our circumstances.

**Do we share Paul's focus on striving to see our community presented complete in Christ?**

#### ***Heart***

Christ may dwell in our hearts though faith. What does this mean? How do we go about making this happen?

How will our hearts change as Christ lives in us? See Philippians 1:6.

**How do we understand God's love?**

**In what areas do we need the Spirit's power to help us understand?**

*Hands*

**Thinking back through the first three chapters of Ephesians if all of this is true then how should we live individually and together as church, and do we have to do anything differently?**

## **Part 4 - A church transformed by Christ (4:1-16)**

### ***Head***

The gospel not only gives salvation and hope for the future, the power of the resurrection of Jesus is coursing through our hearts, minds and life, through the Holy Spirit.

Up to this point in Ephesians Paul has been proclaiming the work of God in Jesus, the mystery of God's infinite love put directly in our souls, later he will go on to share the "rules for Christian living". The Holy Spirit comes alongside us and invites us on a journey of a lifetime, living the abundant lives we were made for...

We need to understand the life we have received, the position we are in as children of God (1John 3:1).

We need to understand our heavenly calling: into relationship with God, able to approach the Holy perfect God without fear, fully redeemed. Compare with the Old Testament priest going into the holy of holies. We can call God, Abba Father (Romans 8:15).

God has given His individuals in His church gifts to ensure the church is built up, reaches unity, and becomes mature.

**How do we ensure the characteristics of our relationships are in keeping with the above?**

**How should we deal with conflict? See also Philippians 2:3-4.**

**How do we strive to "keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace"? How do we do this when we disagree?**

### ***Heart***

Often, we see the bible as giving us truths to believe or rules to obey, but here Paul is clearly saying there is a life to be lived in community, where every part of life is filled with the singular love of God to us and in us.

He is talking not about rules but about personal transformation.

Our reactions and interactions should have a new character.

Our behaviour must reflect our calling.

Our affections are changed by our calling.

How do we address areas in our lives when we don't see transformed reactions and interactions?

To change requires discipline, ongoing discipline and commitment or we tend to go back to our default position.

2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Galatians 6:15, Romans 12:2.

**What is our response?**

**Is there a distance between what we read and what we believe?**

**Do our actions reflect what we believe?**

**As the Holy Spirit leads us in this abundant life, we begin to understand and mature so we are not tossed to and fro... (v14)**

**Do we still feel our lives are chaotic and led by our ungodly nature? How should this be corrected?**

### ***Hands***

The nature of our interactions are listed by Paul as:

- be completely humble
- gentle
- patient
- bearing with one another in love
- keep the unity of the Spirit though the bond of peace

cf with the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

We need to understand the oneness in Christ v4-5

**Paul is here encouraging us to walk worthy of the gospel, what does this mean to you?**  
**How often do we encourage others?**  
**How can we allow the Holy Spirit to be our constant guide in all aspects of our life?**

## **Part 5 - A messy church (4:17-32)**

### ***Head***

After all the encouragement to live well Paul has given us so far in Ephesians, we see him turn to the reality of the situation!

The people Paul describes here, as being ignorant and impure are not non-Christians but the church! Paul assumes the church in Ephesus had among them thieves (v28) people prone to anger, and foul language. We are all messy, redeemed sinners.

If we see the church as tidy, with the dust swept under the rugs, there is little room for God to work, but if we embrace the gospel, we will give room for the Holy Spirit to bring abundance and forgiveness to our lives and the lives of others.

We need God to show us the areas in our lives that need changing:

Psalm 19:12-13, Proverbs 28:13, Psalm 44:20-21, Hebrews 4:12-13.

New way of thinking, no longer futile: Psalm 139:23, Hebrews 3:1.

**What is Paul telling us to do and not to do? Why?**

**How do we avoid futile thinking?**

### ***Heart***

We are encouraged to put off the old life and embrace the new life as we grow into the likeness of Christ and live holy and righteous lives.

Our hearts must not be hard, they must be open to God to allow Him to change us.

Our outward actions readily overflow from our inward lives, they reflect what we believe.

Where are our affections: are they for being more like Christ or do they in reality want to conform to the standards of the world? It is often with our heart we make decision not our heads.

What is the root cause for: speaking falsely to our neighbour, for wanting to go to bed still angry, for stealing, for not sharing, for futile thinking, giving ourselves over to sensuality, not building others up, not forgiving, not being kind?

**What are the effects on those around us when you live in the new self, not the old self?**

**How do we go about changing?**

### ***Hands***

So, we have a renewed mind, new thought patterns, changed affections. We long for our behaviour to be like that of Jesus. How do we make sure that is how we behave and not just think?

We need discipline, ask God to show us where we are getting it wrong, remember Jesus died for everyone.

We have to remember it is a constant struggle.

Daily do Galatians 2:20 and Ephesians 4:23-24.

Keep our speech in check: no unwholesome talk.

Examples:

Falsehood vs. Speaking truth to Neighbours

Just anger vs. Judgmental anger

Stealing for yourself vs. Labour for others

Corrupt talk vs. Building each other up

Malice and wrath vs. Kindness and tenderness

Bitterness vs. Forgiveness

**How will we pursue putting off our old selves and putting on our new selves in the power of the Holy Spirit?**

**What difference would this make to the village/town city we live in?**

**What do you find is your reactive natural behaviour? Does this change if you are more stressed/tired? Why does it change?**

## **Part 6 - A church living out the truth (5:1-21)**

### ***Head***

Up to now Paul has stated the truth about God, the gospel of what he has done, your identity, adopted as children of God, His masterpiece, His people.

Identity: we live from the position of our identity; it is the reference point for our thoughts and actions. We need to keep revisiting our identity in Christ, a bit like a mental fitness exercise to get ingrained in our thoughts. We have to pursue it relentlessly. We are safe in His hands; our identity does not come from the responses we get from our interaction with others.

There are two extremes: Those who think how we behave defines who we are, if we obey God, He will love us, if we are good enough, we can belong, this is legalism. Some go the other way and think that God loves us, gives us a new identity and so it doesn't matter how we live. This is apathy, not just to our lives but to the gospel as well. If how we live doesn't matter then why did Jesus die?

To be imitators of God we need to know what God is like. See 1 John 4:8. Sacrificial love.

How do we balance love and godliness? Ephesians 4:15

We need to ask God to show us where our thoughts are wrong so we can change our thoughts so our behaviour is right. God wants us to be free from the destructive effects of sin. We can't tolerate a bit of a house fire.

Quote "in our freedom we make ourselves slaves" in relation to the thinking of our age.

The call, in these verses is to be vigilant in our thoughts and behaviours, to be aware of how our behaviours look or may look to others. To cognitively take stock of how our life style may appear to others even if we know we aren't sinning, we are called to try and look objectively at ourselves through the eyes of our culture and ensure there isn't even a hint of sin. If we love God we don't want to dishonour Him by our behaviour, if we love others we don't want to lead them astray.

### ***Heart***

Paul calls out apathy, or sleeping (v14), and calls us to wake up! Apathy is one of the indicators of a disconnect between our heads and our hearts.

We need to change our affections from ourselves to others, do we need to give things up/alter our life style so God is honoured.

**Have we been in a season of "sleepwalking"? Knowing the gospel in our heads but not experiencing it in our lives?**

### ***Hands***

The commands of Paul (Jesus) are not random, they are purposeful for our good and the good of those around us, they say something about Jesus to the world around us.

Our actions speak louder than words.

What you do reveals what you believe.

How we live flows from who we are.

Vs 15: how do we live with wisdom?

**What would be the impact of living a life completely submitted to Jesus look like, how would it affect those around you / our town?**

**What does it mean to live a life without even "a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity or greed" in our culture today?**

**How is the Holy Spirit stirring our hearts in response to what you have heard today? Is there an area of your life where He is asking you to take a step of obedience?**

**What does it mean to live a life of love?**

**What is real love? (think about God's love to help shape your thoughts).**

## **Part 7 - A relational church (5:15-6:9)**

### ***Head***

Genesis 3 is about the breaking of the world through sin, death and evil and the breakdown of every facet of human relationship. Producing anxiety, stress abuse and pain. Ephesians is about a world reshaped by the power of the resurrection and a people born out of the unending grace of Jesus. If every human relationship was made alive in Christ (Eph 2: 5), we are not only reconciled to God, but also have been made reconcilers to one another.

**What do we learn about in this passage about Jesus, His character, actions and desires?**

**How does the church submit to Christ and how does that reflect in our relationships with each other?**

**How do our relationships tell the story of the gospel and reflect the character of Jesus?**

### ***Heart***

Paul says “submit to each other out of reverence for Christ” (v21) Submit means to to yield and consider with great weight. Consider with great weight, your neighbour, their life, their passions, their needs, their desires.

Paul takes it further; he says there is a direct correlation between how much time we spend listening and watching Jesus and how we treat one another.

**How have you felt disrespected, disregarded, provoked, dishonoured, ignored, or threatened by others? How does the gospel of Jesus bring life to those wounds?**

### ***Hands***

**How would your neighbourhood be transformed if it had a regular encounter with a community that “submitted one to another out of reverence to Jesus”?**

**What area(s) of your life do you sense the Holy Spirit asking you to submit to Jesus as you submit to others in your life? What are the hardest areas of life to submit to Jesus?**

## Part 8 - A church at war (6:10-23)

### Head

Paul is reminding the church we have a mission, it's dangerous, but we have everything we need. There is a realm in the unseen that is motivated, personal, evil, and set on the destruction of the joy of God's Church, and the dulling of the Church's mission. It is not sociological, psychological, or physical, but spiritual.

Paul ends Ephesians with an appeal to embrace this battle, but more importantly, to remember the power of God, and that the victory of Jesus is cosmic in nature, comprehensive in scope and catastrophic to all evil. Jesus has won and given that victory to the church as our inheritance.

This passage is not about defense from the world, but about a confident and gracious offensive into the world, knowing we are armed with the power to raise souls from the dead.

With spiritual warfare there are two extremes: people who say "There is no such thing as evil spiritual forces" and others who say "The devil is behind everything". Ignoring or refusing to see the power of darkness in our world, our communities, and our personal lives, limits our readiness. On the other hand, when the devil is the reason for every difficult circumstance, we fail to see the sovereign grace of God even in suffering.

### Heart

The spiritual forces of evil will not stop until you are bathed in lies, until you're so busy, distracted by comfort, or disillusioned by circumstances you will not utter a word of worship to God nor a word of hope to those around you.

**What are the lies that keep us from Jesus, Joy and the mission of God? How can we deal with them?**

### Hands

The key to this passage is v18-20. They describe the purpose of the battle, and the battlefield itself. They are about the proclamation of the greatest hope with extraordinary boldness.

**What kind of life would require ongoing prayer for endurance and what would happen if we boldly proclaimed the mystery of the gospel?**

**How is the Holy Spirit calling you to respond?**

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### Final word

Ephesians is our letter, this is our moment of the story. This is who we are. We are the Church, created by the the gospel of Jesus for the sake of the gospel of Jesus. He's given us every spiritual blessing, and all the power to embody the mission He's given us. Let's not take this letter merely as information to add to our mental filing cabinet, but as the words of God that transform us and our towns and villages. Expand your imagination for what God might do in you and through you. He can do more than you could ever imagine because He has already has, when He raised you from the dead.