

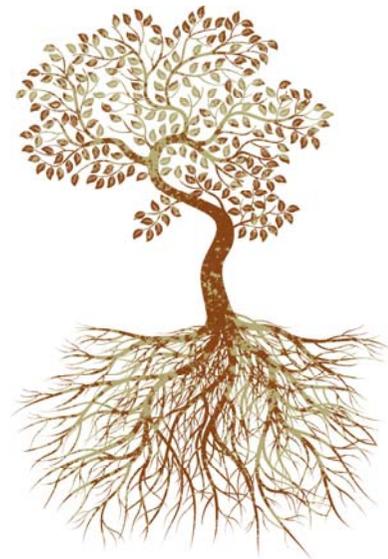
Roots

A series of studies in Ephesians



Contents

	Page
Introduction	1
Following Jesus	2
Reaching Out	5
Extended Family	7
Everything in Love	10
Free and United	12



Introduction

Paul visited Ephesus twice, the first time only briefly, the second time spending more than 2 years preaching and teaching. Later, on his return to Jerusalem from his third missionary journey, he passed nearby and invited the Ephesian elders to meet with him before he moved on. You can read about Paul's visits to Ephesus and his emotional final conversation with the elders in the following passages in Acts:

- Chapter 18:19-21** - short stay
- Chapter 19:1 – chapter 20:1** - 2 years
- Chapter 20:17-38** - brief farewell to elders

Paul had been involved in establishing this church and wrote this letter from prison in Rome to encourage them. It was probably originally intended to be circulated and read to a number of churches in the area.

These studies complement and support the Roots discipleship booklet. By developing your knowledge and understanding of the book of Ephesians we hope it will help you to make the most of the material.

Study 1: Following Jesus

Ephesians 1:1-23



Connect

1. Petty irritations can often make frequent and unwelcome appearances into our lives. What effects can they or do they have on our walk with Jesus? In your experience do they tend to impact you a lot or a little?



Discover

Read Ephesians 1:1-23

Verses 1-2

2. What is said about the writer and the recipients? Why does Paul use these particular words to describe himself and those he is writing to? What does each one mean?

Verses 3-10

3. What does Paul say about God's blessings for us as followers of Jesus with reference to the past (v 4), the present (vs 5-8) and the future (vs 9-10)?

Verses 11-14

4. What responsibilities does the privilege of being adopted children of God bring with it? (vs 11-12) How are we to respond to this?

Ephesus was a strategic port on route from Rome to the east. Traders in logging used to float their logs through this city along the river to the coast. As they passed through they would be marked with a seal identifying the owner of the logs to prevent them from being stolen or mistaken as belonging to another trader.

5. Why is the Holy Spirit here described as “a seal” and “a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance”? What significance do these phrases have for us?
6. Biblical scholars vary in opinion on the doctrine of election and have wrestled with scripture for centuries to understand it. “How can we have free choice if God first chose us?” We will probably never fully understand this mystery until we reach heaven but there are some unshakeable truths we can be sure of now. Can you pick out what these truths are from vs 3-14?

Verses 15-23

7. What had Paul heard about the Ephesian Christians? What did he do as a result?
8. Break into 2's or 3's now and discuss the following questions together. Give yourselves a few minutes discussion and then pray through this prayer for each other still in your 2's and 3's:
 - What does Paul ask God to give the Ephesians? What is the purpose of this request?
 - In these verses what are the three things that Paul wants them to know?



Apply

9. As you think about the blessings we have in following Jesus how does what you have discussed today help you to deal with the petty irritations you talked about in question one?

10. What was it like having such things prayed for you today from verses 16-19?

11. Who else do you know you could pray this prayer for? How could you let them know you are praying this for them?

Finish by talking together about how you can best use the “Roots” booklet with someone.

Study 2: Reaching Out



Ephesians 2:1-13



Connect

1. In 2's and 3's discuss together what things you have in common and what differences there are amongst you. In what ways, if at all, do these similarities and differences affect the way you relate to each other?



Discover

Read Ephesians 2:1-13

Verses 1-3

2. What were we like without Christ and what was the consequence of this?

Verses 4-10

3. What has God done for us, and how does this relate to Christ?

4. Why (on what basis) did God do all this for us?

5. Why (for what purpose) did God do all this for us?

Verses 11-13

A Gentile was anyone who was not a Jew. Before Christ came Jews and Gentiles were not only alienated from God but also from each other. William Barclay says “Until Christ came, the Gentiles were an object of contempt to the Jews. The barrier between them was absolute. If a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, or if a Jewish girl married a Gentile boy, the funeral of that Jewish boy or girl was carried out. Such contact with a Gentile was the equivalent of death.” **See also John 4:9**

Why is it helpful for the Gentiles to remember how things once were?

7. Why is it helpful for us to remember what we once were?
8. What is the difference that the coming of Jesus made to the relationship between Jews and Gentiles?



9. Brighton and Hove is a colourful mixture of people through different races, sexual orientation and faiths. What does this passage say about how God sees the people we share our city with? In light of this how does He want us to relate to them?
10. You are here because while you were still alienated from Him, God reached out to you. In your 2s and 3s again tell each other in 2–3 minutes each the story of how God reached out to you.
11. Who do you know you could reach out to this week simply to see how they are and take an interest in them? Pause now and ask God to show you if there is anyone He wants you to contact.

Study 3: Extended Family

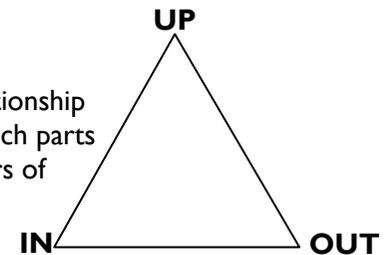
Ephesians 2: 14-22



Connect

1. What does the phrase "extended family" mean to you? (Think broadly about church family, neighbours, relatives by blood or marriage, or any other acquaintances).

2. Remind yourselves of the different types of relationship represented by the UP, IN, OUT triangle. In which parts of the triangle do you mostly find those members of your "extended family"?



Discover

Read Ephesians 2:14-22

Verses 14-18

3. The abolition of “commandments and regulations” probably refers particularly to the rules by which Jews could keep themselves ritually clean, and by which Gentiles were always considered unclean. Discuss what you imagine it would feel like for (a) a Jew, and (b) a Gentile, to find themselves equal members of a new spiritual family.
4. Paul emphasizes again the double reconciliation Christ has brought about. What relevance does this have to you as we think about Church as an extended family?

Verses 19-22

5. What three illustrations does Paul use to describe God's new society?
6. Which characteristics that God desires to see in His people does each illustration portray?
7. Thinking especially of the illustration of the temple, verses 20-22, can you identify the parts played by the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus and ourselves? What is the importance of each one?
8. How do you see yourself living up to what Paul writes about?



Apply

9. Following your study of this passage do you have an attitude or an action that you recognise is wrong? You may want to confess this privately to someone in the group who can help you to get rid of it.
10. Spend some time together praising God for the reconciliation He has brought about and for the unity we can have with each other. Pray also for places where there are divisions, false teaching and sinful practices within the church.
11. Try to meet up with someone outside the group time. This does not have to be someone from within your group, it can be anyone. Try to include an element of spiritual conversation such as an issue that has arisen from doing these studies, using the FREE card to see how each other is doing or just

talking about what you are learning from your daily Bible readings. You might talk about something from the "Roots" booklet, such as the first page, or part 3 "Extended family". If a face to face meeting is not possible because of work or family time commitments, what other way could you connect with them?

Study 4: Everything in Love

Ephesians 3:1-21



Connect

1. What are some of the different expressions of love? How can you tell if someone is doing something out of love for you or out of duty?



Discover

Read Ephesians 3:1-21

Verses 1-2

2. What has been the motivation or driving force that has led Paul to prison for the sake of the Gentiles? What is the source of this motivation?

Verses 3-6

3. What is the “mystery” Paul refers to in verses 3, 4 and 6?

“The Greek word “mysterion” means “a truth hitherto hidden from human knowledge or understanding but now disclosed by the revelation of God.”

John Stott

Verses 7-13

4. What was Paul’s special ministry? What was the intended result of this for:
 - The heavenly rulers and authorities?

- His readers including ourselves?

5. Why does Paul urge the Ephesians not to be discouraged by his sufferings? How are his sufferings their glory? See also Acts 20:22-24

Verse 14-21

6. Paul begins again here as he did in v.1. From chapter 2:14 onwards, then, what is the reason for this prayer?

7. Break into 2s or 3s now and discuss the following questions together. Give yourselves a few minutes discussion and then pray through this prayer for each other still in your 2s and 3s:

- List the things that Paul prays and praises for. Why does he ask for these things?
- How is God’s ability to answer prayer stated? Why does Paul do this?



Apply

8. The love of Christ is all encompassing and incomprehensible vs 18 and 19. Read aloud I John 3:16-20, I Corinthians 13:4-7, I Peter 3:8-9. As they are read ask God to speak to you about His love and the way He wants you to express love to others. Spend a few minutes in silence and then share anything God has said to you.
9. Is there anything getting in the way of you either receiving or expressing God’s love?

Study 5: Free and United

Ephesians 4:1-6



Connect

“There are two freedoms - the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where he is free to do what he ought.”

Charles Kingsley (19th Century English clergyman)

“None are so hopelessly enslaved as those who falsely believe they are free.”

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (18th Century German writer who was considered a genius of his day).

“Everything can be taken from a man but ... the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way.”

Victor Frankl (Holocaust survivor).

1. Do you agree or disagree with these statements? Why?



Discover

Read Ephesians 4:1-6

Verse 1

2. What does it mean to be a “prisoner of the Lord”? In 1 Corinthians 9:19 Paul also claims to be a free man. How can you be a prisoner and free at the same time? What things are Christians free from? Make a list: part 5 of the Roots booklet, “FREE in Christ”, could help you to get started.

Verse 2-3

3. What are the aspects of character that make for unity in the church? How does each one of these demonstrate itself in a person and how does it contribute to unity in the church?
4. What does it mean in practice to “keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace”? Of unity and disunity, which is the greater state of freedom, and why?

Verses 4-6

“It is no more possible to split the church than it is possible to split the Godhead”.

John Stott

5. What grounds does he have to make this statement based on the content of these verses?
6. How does this fit with what we know of divisions within the church over the centuries even continuing today?
7. If the unity of the church is indestructible because of the unity of the Trinity why does Paul urge us to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit”? Why did Jesus feel compelled to pray for the unity of the church in his final hours before his death (John 17:20-23)?



Apply

The following passages give guidance on how we are to relate to each other and resolve our differences:

- * **1 Corinthians 12:12**
- * **Colossians 3:12–15**
- * **Matthew 18:15–17**
- * **Titus 3:9–11**
- * **Proverbs 6:16–19**
- * **Hebrews 12:14–15**
- * **Philippians 2:1–4**
- * **Philippians 4:2-3**
- * **Romans 12:16–18**

8. Break into 3 groups and look up 3 each. Discuss:

- What makes for unity in the church?
- What can lead to disunity?
- How are we to handle disunity when it erupts?

9. Come back together and share the Biblical teaching from your verses with each other.

10. Galatians 5:13 says “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love.” How might we be tempted to “use our freedom to indulge the sinful nature” in relation to the issue of unity/disunity? Look back at the list you made in question 2: how does the proper use of our freedom inspire and equip us to serve one another?

11. Using John 17:20–26 echo Jesus’ prayer and pray for each other and our church family.

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