

# SLOW FOOD BIBLE STUDIES: EPHESIANS

## 1:1-4:16 (34 studies); 4:17-6:24 (34 studies)

Did Paul write Ephesians, and if so, where was he and whom was he addressing? It has to be said that the evidence is inconclusive on all three questions. The traditional view is that it was indeed written by the apostle Paul from his house arrest situation in Rome around AD 61-2; and that it was sent to a church or churches in the Ephesus region of Asia Minor, at roughly the same time as Colossians and Philemon. Opponents of this view (basing their arguments on style, theological content and lack of personal references) have tried to produce alternative hypotheses, but these raise more problems than they solve. Perhaps Ephesians reads more like a homily, or an essay, than a letter, because it was a circular to a group of churches – it may even have been ‘the letter from Laodicea’ (Col 4:16). If it wasn’t by Paul, then it was by someone else equally inspired, because by any standards it is an amazing piece of work.

The standard commentary on Ephesians is John Stott *The Message of Ephesians* (IVP BST 1979). H C G Moule *Studies in Ephesians* (1893, reprinted Kregel 1977) is full of good things despite its age. Tom Wright *Paul for Everyone: the Prison Letters* (SPCK 2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2004) is a favourite of many. Watchman Nee *Sit Walk Stand* (Victory Press 4<sup>th</sup> ed 1964) isn’t a commentary but has much to offer devotionally. Some might also wish to dip into Ben Witherington III *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians and the Ephesians* (Eerdmans 2007) which calls itself ‘a socio-rhetorical commentary on the captivity epistles’ and offers an interesting defence of Pauline authorship based on the stylistic expectations of the target audience.

### 1:1-4:16

**1:1-2 Substitute my own location for ‘Ephesus’. What encouragement does this opening greeting bring me?** *Ps 139:7, 17; 1 Cor 1:1-3; Eph 6:23-24.*

**1:3 Has God blessed me as much as he has other people I know?**

*Lk 15:25-32; 2 Cor 10:7, 12; Phil 4:11-12.*

**1:4-6 What am I predestined for?** *Rom 8:29-30; 2Thess 2:13-14; 1 Pet 2:2.*

**1:7-8 What does ‘grace’ mean to me?** *Job 33:24; Ps 107:10-16; Isa 43:25.*

**1:9-10 Is Christ the centre of my universe?** *Ps 73:25; Phil 2:9-11; Col 1:15-20.*

**1:11-12 Does the idea that God has an inheritance in store for us encourage or perplex me?**

*Rom 8:17; 1 Pet 1:4; 1 Jn 3:1.*

**1:13-14 When I put my trust in Christ, what happened on the human side, and what happened on the divine side?** *Acts 19:1-7; Rom 10:9-14; 1 Thess 1:4-6.*

**1:15-17 Why is Paul’s first prayer that the Ephesians should know God?**

*Jn 17:3; Col 1:9; 2 Pet 1:2-3.*

**1:18-19a What is the difference between head knowledge and heart knowledge? Are both necessary?** *Hos 4:6; Jn 14:26; 1 Cor 2:12; 2 Pet 1:4-5.*

**1:19b-21 Do I have to feel strong as I face today?** *Ps 18:1-2, 29-35; 2 Cor 12:9-10; 1 Jn 4:4.*

**1:22-23 Do I tend to rubbish the church?** *Dt 4:20; Song 6:10; Heb 2:11; 1 Pet 2:4-10.*

**2:1-3 Why does Paul describe all of us as ‘dead’? Surely that doesn’t apply to me!**

*Gen 6:5-6; Lk 15:24; Col 3:5-7.*

**2:4-7 How has God transformed this hopeless situation?** *Isa 53:10-12; Rom 6:3-4; Tit 3:3-7.*

**2:8-9 Do I still think there is something in me that has convinced God I’m worth saving?**

*Job 2:2-6; Rom 3:27-28; 1 Cor 1:29-31.*

**2:10 Do I see my life today (at home, at work, whatever) as part of God's creative purpose?**

*Ps 138:8 (KJV, NIV); Phil 1:6; Col 3:10.*

**2:11-13 Sometimes it is a useful exercise to recall the time (if my memory goes back that far) when I didn't have a living faith in Christ. What was my spiritual state then?**

*Ps 88:3-7; Prov 16:25; Lk 15:13; Rom 10:2-3.*

**2:14-16 Jot down a few things that tend to divide people where I live and work. Do I have a vision for the unity of all God's people (whoever they are)?** *Mic 5:4-5a; Jn 17:20-23; Col 3:11.*

**2:17-18 Do I believe that Jesus is the one way to God? Is this belief exclusive or inclusive?**

*Mk 15:38; Jn 12:32; Jn 14:6; Heb 10:19-22.*

**2:19-22 Am I doing anything to erect barriers or turnstiles between those who are 'in' and those who are 'out'?** *Amos 9:7; Zeph 3:9-10; 1 Jn 2:1-2; Rev 7:9-10.*

**3:1-2 If I am experiencing difficulties in my present situation, what can I learn from Paul's attitude?** *Jn 12:24-26; 2 Cor 4:7-15.*

**3:3-6 Do I have to have special prophetic insight to understand God's will?**

*Num 11:29; Jer 31:33-34; Acts 2:17-18.*

**3:7-8 Am I proud of the way God has used me to speak to others (if he has)?**

*1 Cor 15:9-11; 1 Tim 1:12-16; 2 Pet 2:16.*

**3:9-10 When God's word is proclaimed in church, chapel or assembly, what is happening in the spiritual realm?** *Isa 55:10-11; 2 Cor 4:5-6; 1Pet 1:12.*

**3:11-13 Does God want idiots like me bothering him night and day?** *Isa 45:18-25; 2 Cor 3:4-5.*

**3:14-17a Is my relationship with Christ any more than a few minutes spent saying 'good morning'?** *Prov 8:34-35; Song 2:3b-4; Phil 3:10.*

**3:17b-19 How close does the Lord want me to get to him?** *Isa 57:15; Mic 6:6-8; Jn 15:5.*

**3:20-21 Is God reluctant to answer my prayers?**

*Mk 11:22-25; Jn 14:13-14; Rev 8:3-5.*

**4:1-2 What Christlike qualities do I lack? Why?**

*Phil 2:13; 2:20-21; 3:14; 4:1; 4:9.*

**4:3-6 Am I a unifying or divisive influence in the fellowship in which the Lord has placed me?** *1 Chr 12:16-18; Jn 10:16; 1 Cor 12:12-13.*

**4:7-10 Am I thankful for the gifts Christ has given me? What has he given them to me for?**

*Jn 20:22-23; 1 Pet 4:10-11; 2 Tim 2:24-26.*

**4:11 Am I Christ's gift to those I teach?** *Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:7-8; Acts 18:24-26; 2 Tim 2:15, 3:16.*

**4:12-13 What 'work of ministry' have I been given to do?** *Rom 12:6-8; Eph 2:10; 2 Tim 1:6, 2:2.*

**4:14 How can I make sure that (a) I am not misleading others (b) I am not being misled myself?** *Ps 71:14-18; Col 2:8; 1 Tim 4:16.*

**4:15-16 'God wants us to stand on our own feet, not to be running for help to him the whole time.' What is true 'grown-up' faith?** *Ps 92:12-15; Jer 17:7-8; Hos 14:5-9; 2 Pet 3:18.*

#### **4:17-6:24**

**4:17-19 How can I reconcile what Paul says here about non-Christians with my experience of people in everyday life?** *Isa 53:6; Jn 16:3; Rom 1:21-22.*

**4:20-21 Do I consider myself to have graduated from the school of Christ?**

*Job 36:22; Ps 119:102; Phil 3:12-16.*

**4:22-24 If I am a new person in Christ, how can I cooperate in the transformation process?**

*2 Cor 5:17; Col 3:9-10; 1 Jn 2:28-3:10. 'Put off ... be made new ... put on' could be either a statement ('you have put off etc') or a command ('you are to put off') or both at the same time.*

**4:25 Am I living a lie?** *1 Sam 16:7b; Ps 139:23-24; Jer 17:9; 1 Jn 1:6-7. This and the next six studies form a short course in practical self-examination. They can be combined; but it is recommended that they are taken one by one.*

**4:26-27 Have I lost my temper recently?** *Lam 3:40; Prov 14:29; Jas 1:19-20.*

**4:28 Am I in it for what I can get out of it?** *Ps 51:6; Prov 30:8-9; 2 Cor 9:6-7.*

**4:29 Should I have said that?** *Prov 15:4; 23; 16:24; 25:11.*

**4:30 Do I make it my aim to please the Lord?** *Isa 63:9-10; 1 Cor 6:17, 19; 2 Cor 5:9; 1 Jn 3:19-24.*

**4:31-32 Is there anyone (or anything) I can't forgive?**

*Gen 50:15-21; Lk 23:34; Acts 15:36-39 with 2 Tim 4:11.*

**5:1-2 Could I be more loving towards others? But how?** *Rom 15:1-7; Gal 6:2; 1 Pet 1:22-23.*

**5:3-6 Am I being taken in by the gospel of sexual 'freedom'?** *Mt 5:8; 1 Thess 4:1-8; 2 Tim 2:22.*

**5:7-10 If I'm called to be different from the world around, what should be my guiding principle?** *Ps 16.*

**5:11-14 Am I meant to be a searchlight or a beacon?** *Mt 5:14-16; Phil 2:15-16a; Tit 2:10b-14.*

**5:15-17 Am I expected to find my own way through the day ahead?** *Prov 3:5-6; Jas 1:5; 1 Pet 5:7.*

**5:18-20 Is 'being filled with the Spirit' a one-off experience or a settled attitude?**

*Lam 3:22-24; Ezek 36:26-27; Jn 14:15-23.*

**5:21-24 Is marriage an equal partnership?** *Eccl 4:9-12; Prov 31:10-12; Col 3:12-18; 1 Pet 3:1-6.*

**5:25-27 If I am married, what am I in it for?** *Prov 5:15-19; 31:28-31; Mal 2:14-16; 1 Pet 3:7. This and the next two studies are mainly addressed to married men; but others are surely permitted to eavesdrop.*

**5:28-30 Could I be more loving?** *Gen 2:23; Hos 2:19-20; 1 Cor 13:4-7; Col 3:19.*

**5:31-33 How does God's original intention for marriage work out in the practical realities of life?** *Gen 2:24; Mk 10:2-9; 1 Cor 7:12-16, 29-35.*

**6:1-4 Is discipline in school any different from discipline in a Christian home?**

*Prov 15:31-33; 22:6; Col 3:20-21; Heb 12:7-11.*

**6:5-8 If I am in paid (or unpaid) employment, how should being a Christian make a difference to my attitude?** *Mt 5:41; Col 3:22-25; 2 Thess 3:6-10.*

**6:9 If I am in a position of authority or leadership, do my assumptions need correcting?**

*Mk 10:42-45; Col 4:1; 1 Pet 5:1-5.*

**6:10 How can I keep going?** *2 Chron 20:15-17;25:8; Phil 4:13; 2 Tim 4:17.*

**6:11-12 Does it matter whether I believe in a personal power of evil?**  
*Mt 4:1; Lk 10:17-20; 2 Cor 2:11; 1 Pet 5:8; Rev 12:7-10.*

**6:13 Can I win?** *Ps 44:5-7; 1 Cor 15:57; Rev 12:11.*

**6:14a How honest am I with God?** *Ps 51:6; Jn 8:32; Heb 4:16; 1 Jn 1:9.*

**6:14b Am I prone to self-justification?** *Lk 16:15; Rom 3:24, 5:1; Gal 5:5-6.*

**6:15 Am I prepared to let people know, by whatever means, that the war with God is over?**  
*Isa 52:7; Rom 10:14-17; Acts 1:8.*

**6:16 When attacks on my faith occur, do I take refuge behind a form of words or the Word himself?** *Gen 3:1; Rom 8:37; 1 Jn 5:4-5.*

**6:17a Am I in danger of losing hope?** *Isa 59:17; 2 Cor 1:8-10; 1 Thess 5:8.*

**6:17b Have I given up daily sword-practice?** *Josh 1:8-9; Prov 8:34; Jn 5:39-40; Acts 17:11.*

**6:18 How can I pray more effectively?** *Zech 12:10a; Rom 8:26-27; Phil 4:6-7; Col 4:2.*

**6:19-20 Why do those who proclaim God's word need special prayer?**  
*Acts 12:5; Rom 15:30-31; 2Cor 1:11.*

**6:21-24 What does this letter tell us about grace – past, present and future?**  
*Eph 1:6-7; 2:5-8; 3:2, 7-8; 4:7, 29.*