

DAY
4

The New Way of Life Together

Ephesians 4:1-5:2

“Follow God’s example...”

While Paul has already been practical, now the practical ways of living become central. He makes the full shift from theology to ethical living, or from doctrinal belief to moral behavior. As you read today’s chapter (and tomorrow’s as well), you realize that the Christian way of life is an entirely different way of life. And the way of Christianity is in stark contrast to the world’s way of living. Paul will make that contrast over and over. A new people in a new community need a new way of living. We will dive into those particulars in the month of August.

This leads to a basic question: HOW can I live in such a radically different way when the world’s way is so easy, so common, and such an ingrained habit already established in my life? Paul is going to show you the way, but it involves the theme of POWER, which is throughout Ephesians.

In Ephesians, Paul talks about the power of sin, the power of a fallen world and its ideologies (or belief systems), and the power of supernatural forces of evil. These powers against you are sinful, ideological, and demonic. Alone, each is enough to ruin you— together they are a juggernaut.

But God’s power is greater. Much greater. As you read through all of Ephesians, Paul wants you to know the power of God to forgive you and change you (power against sin); the power of God to enlighten you (power against the false beliefs of the world); and the power of God to defeat the supernatural schemes against you (power against demonic oppression).

Yes, you need the power of Father, Son, and Spirit so you can walk in the new way of Christian community. Yes, you need a power greater than yourself if you are to walk in the way of Christ. But the good news is this: God gives you all the power you need. He has already done this. He is doing it right now.

As you read, get a new vision of what your life can become by the power of Christ in you. Be humble, be grateful, and be hopeful.

DAY
5

Living As Children of Light

Ephesians 5:3-21; 6:10-24

What started with yesterday’s reading, continues today. All of Ephesians 4:1-5:21 is instructions on how to live in peace and unity with one another. You notice we are skipping over 5:22-6:9. This is the section on specific relationships—marriage, parenting, and economic/work (for the culture of the time that meant a type of slavery or bond service). We covered these relationships in the fall 2020 sermon series Relationships. If you have time, you can read that as well.

You have seen that the words TRUTH and POWER are central to Ephesians. So are the words PEACE, GRACE, and LOVE. Paul begins Ephesians with the words grace and peace (1:2) and he will end Ephesians with those same words (6:23-24).

Paul knows the plan and work of God is the death of division. That is the series title for this summer: The Death of Division. God the Father, through the work of Christ and the presence of the Spirit, is ending all division and restoring all relationship.

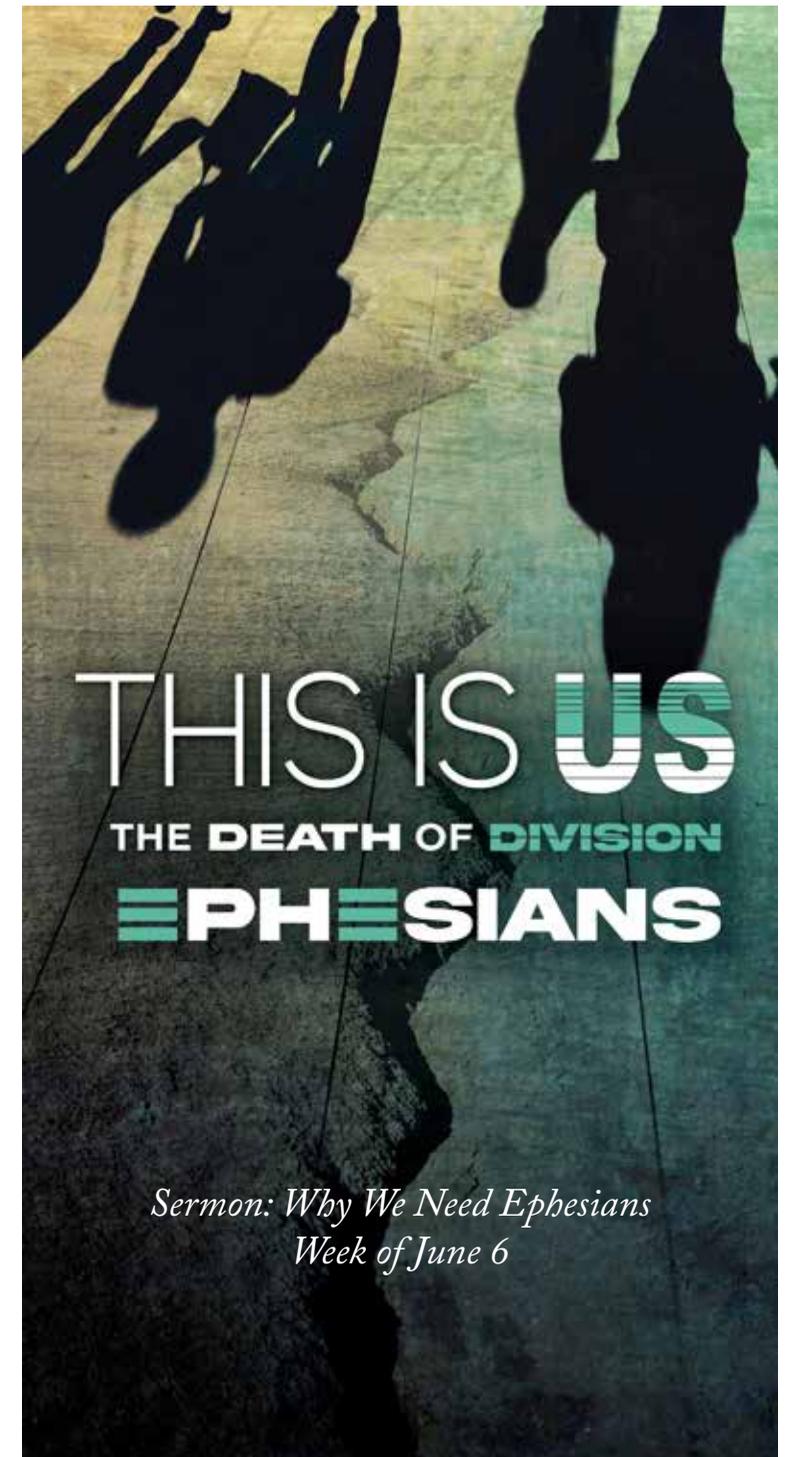
First, he has ended our alienation from God. Instead of being his enemies, we now have peace. Second, he has ended our internal conflict caused by our sinful nature. We are being transformed from the inside out and are at peace within. Third, he has ended our interpersonal divisions. We have peace with others.

It is by the power of God’s grace and God’s truth that we are at peace and can now live in LOVE.

How? It is by the power of God’s grace and God’s truth that we are at peace and can now live in LOVE. Look again at the core verses of 4:32-5:2. Every practical instruction and exhortation Paul gives about leaving the old unloving, divided way of life behind and embracing a new life is really just ongoing examples of how to love

others like Jesus loves them (and how Jesus loves you). It is the way of life the world needs, and the world needs to see it from you and in the church.

As you read, may you be inspired and empowered for a totally new way of life. It is the way of flourishing in Christ.



DAY
1

Every Spiritual Blessing Ephesians 1:1-23

“Blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

Welcome to Paul’s letter to the Ephesians. You can read about Paul’s missionary and pastoral work in the region/city of Ephesus in Acts 19 and 20:13-38. Paul spent about 3 years there building the church and preaching the gospel of Christ.

We will take the entire summer and work through this letter. June will focus on the New You: your new nature, new identity, and new purpose. It is the theme of how great a salvation we have. In July we will learn about the New Community called the Church. Paul paints a breathtaking picture of God’s plan for the Church. In August, we shift to the New Lifestyle for New People who belong to a New Community.

We will go deep into this letter. When we are done, you will know this teaching of the New Testament inside and out. Better still, as you study, reflect, and pray your way through Ephesians, you will discover God is making all things new, as you put into practice what Paul teaches. This week you will read through most of Ephesians and get the big picture of the letter.

If you read commentaries on Ephesians, you find superlative descriptions used for this letter. The themes and the way Paul writes are magnificent, majestic, soaring, and uplifting. It is thrilling theology and practical spirituality. It is a life-changing message from the heart of God to your heart.

Ephesians is God-soaked. It is Trinitarian (Father, Son, and Spirit). But it is also Christ-centered. Paul uses the language of “in Christ” and “in him” more than in all his other letters. This is incredibly important for your life.

Ephesians is focused, not on the individual, but on the community of disciples, who together are being blessed, formed into a new humanity, and enjoying a radically new way of life. As you read Ephesians 1, be sure to notice every spiritual blessing you have received.

DAY
2

New Life and a New People Ephesians 2:1-22

“The incomparable riches of his grace...”

The great novelist and Christian Victor Hugo (who wrote *Les Misérables* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*) said, “Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come.” If that is true, then Ephesians is going to be exceedingly powerful, for it has a steady stream of beautiful ideas/truths that just don’t stop coming your way.

From time to time, we talk about one’s worldview. A worldview is a collection of ideas about the most important questions of life. What is the nature of reality? Who am I? What am I? Why am I here? Is there meaning and purpose? How do I know what is true? Am I loved? Where do I belong?

In Ephesians every one of these questions is answered. And the answers are profound. Actually, they are beyond profound. This summer will be a complete reformatting and major upgrading of your view of the world. Your worldview will become God’s view of the world and how God views you.

Therefore, a major theme throughout Ephesians is TRUTH and knowledge and being enlightened. You will also discover the tragic consequences of living in ignorance and deception. In Romans 12:1-2 Paul tells us NOT to conform to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Ephesians is one long process of minds renewed and lives transformed by the power of TRUTH.

As you read Ephesians 2, notice the first 10 verses are still describing “every spiritual blessing.” But in verse 11, Paul now changes his focus to the new community God is creating in Jesus. May these words whet your appetite for what is coming your way in July.

As you read, are there any transforming truths that already grab hold of your heart and mind?

DAY
3

A Beautiful Mystery Ephesians 3:1-21

“The boundless riches of Christ...”

Ephesians is primarily about a new community and a new people called the Church. Sometimes we need to pay attention to the little details, like pronouns—particularly the little word “you.” The great majority of pronouns in Ephesians are plural (us, we, our). And almost every time you encounter “you” it is not singular, it is plural. Paul is writing “youse” or “you’all.” It is a major limitation of English that the same word (you) is used for singular and plural, but in Ephesians, “you” is plural—ALL of you.

In our 21st-century North-America culture, hyper-individualism is rampant. The person matters more than anything else. The person matters more than the group. The person is supreme, autonomous, independent, self-sufficient, self-determining, and isolated. What you want matters most. Therefore, we are incredibly consumerist in our worldview. What will satisfy my needs? What rights do I need to assert? What personal pursuits am I interested in? It is now simply the air we breathe. And this air is poisonous and is killing us.

The biblical worldview is so refreshingly different. Certainly, individual people matter to God. Obviously! But even more plainly, the community of people matters most. Therefore, Ephesians talks about life together, best relational practices, and what it means to deny self and live for the sake of others.

Sin divides and separates us. We are divided internally, separated from God, and terribly divided and at odds with others. Most of all, we are divided from those who are not like us. Ephesians will show a better way—a way of PEACE and LOVE and UNITY, all in Jesus. God is creating a counter-cultural community radically different from anything else in the world. It is his mysterious, marvelous plan. It will also take a lot of hard work.

As you read, be on the lookout for what Paul is telling us about the new community, the new family, the new people of God.