

Ephesians

IGNATIUS CATHOLIC STUDY BIBLE QUESTIONS

Welcome

“You are approaching the ‘word of God’. But for thousands of years, ... the Word of God has been approaching you.”

The following guide is provided to enhance your reading of the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians using the *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*. If you are new to this resource or to reading the Bible, we recommend you read the general Introduction before you begin. It explains what it means that Scripture is the Word of God as well as how we understand and interpret it as Catholics. It also introduces the special features of the Study Bible and tells how they can enrich your reading and study. Additionally, the *Introduction to Paul and His Letters* will provide valuable context for your reading.

A simple rhythm of prayer followed by reading and reflection is offered below to guide you through the book one chapter at a time. Questions draw attention to key footnotes and word studies to lead you into a deeper understanding of what you read and then prompt you to consider how to apply what you have learned. For a deeper dive, take advantage of additional features as you go: not just the other footnotes but also cross-references to Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC)* that are provided above the footnotes as well as any maps, charts, or essays that are not touched on in the questions.

Don't miss these helpful icons as you read! They highlight footnotes that pertain to the Church's criteria for interpreting Scripture (see CCC 112–14):



Be attentive to the content and unity of Scripture

Notes marked with a Bible icon connect Old Testament passages and New Testament mysteries, fostering appreciation for God's unified plan.



Read Scripture in light of the Church's living tradition

This icon marks notes drawn from the Holy Spirit's guidance of Church teaching and the spiritual senses of scripture. Here you'll find official teaching as well as interpretations from Fathers, Doctors, and saints of the Church.



Be attentive to the “analogy of faith”

Explore notes marked with an icon of keys to learn how the mysteries of faith, revealed in Scripture and defined by the Church, clarify and connect with one another in a unified, coherent way.

May God bless you as you read his word!

of God,* did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,⁷but emptied himself,[†] taking the form of a servant,[‡] being born in the likeness of men.[§]And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.[¶]Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name,^{||}that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,^{|||}and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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12 Therefore, obeyed, so now much more in salvation with f work in you, bo pleasure.
14 Do all thi tioning,¹⁵that y children of God crooked and per

2:9–11: Rom 10:9; 14:9; Eph 1:20–21. 2:13: 1 Cor 15:10. 2

2:7 emptied himself: The Greek verb *kenōō* means “empty out” or “render void”. The idea is, not that Christ divested himself of divinity when he united himself with humanity, but that he restricted his rightful exercise of certain divine abilities during his earthly life and accepted certain limitations of the human condition. In effect, the Son of God made himself poor in order to make us rich with his grace (2 Cor 8:9) (CCC 472). • Christ emptied himself by compressing the glory of his Godhead within our smallness. What he always was remained perfect and incomprehensible, but what he assumed was in proportion to the measure of our nature (St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*).

2:8 death on a cross: The ultimate indignity. Death by crucifixion was the most awful and degrading form of criminal execution in the ancient world. The Romans reserved it for slaves and insurrectionists. See note on Mk 15:24.

2:9 exalted him: By raising him from the dead, enthroning him in heaven, and clothing his humanity with divine glory. A similar destiny awaits all who humble themselves as Jesus did (3:21; Lk 14:11).

2:10 every knee should bow: An allusion to the divine oath in Is 45:23. • Yahweh swore that all peoples, to the very end of the earth, would acknowledge his Lordship and bow before him in homage. Paul moves Christ into the center of this prophecy as the divine Lord destined to be revered by all. **heaven ... earth ... under the earth:** The three principal realms in the world view of ancient Israel (Ex 20:4). Homage will come from all creatures great and small—the angels and saints above, the family of man and beasts spread over the earth, and the dead and the demons of the underworld.

2:11 confess: I.e., acknowledge. Included in this open dec

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Prepare

Read the Introduction to Ephesians, paying particular attention to the *Themes and Characteristics* of the book. What one thing stands out to you, that you would like to remember?

Read the Outline of Ephesians to get an overview of the book. What are its major divisions?

Pray

Use the following questions to guide your reading of Ephesians, going at a pace that is comfortable to you. Before you begin each new section, pray simply for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit:

Come, Holy Spirit, open my heart to hear and receive these words as what they truly are, the Word of God. Enlighten my understanding and give me grace to put what I read into practice in my life. Amen.

Read and Reflect

Read and reflect on Ephesians as follows:

- Pray before you read
- Read a section of biblical text by itself
- Read the text again, referring to the notes that accompany the text
- For deeper understanding and to aid in applying what you read, answer the questions that follow. The references at the top of each numbered question correspond to particular notes.

At the end of each chapter, review what you have written and linger where you feel drawn, asking the Lord to speak to your heart and into your life. What do you hear? Respond in prayer and ask his help to live what you hear in your attitudes and actions this week.

STUDY QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

For understanding

1. **1:3–14.** How does Paul open this letter? What is his principle of organization? What is significant about the blessings that Paul celebrates? What Jewish prayer form does Paul's blessing follow?
2. **1:5.** For what has the Father predestined believers? Which two mysteries does the doctrine of predestination hold together? What can we *not* know about in regard to predestination, and what can we indeed know? What was God unconcerned about when he predestined us?
3. **Word Study: Unite (1:10).** What does the rarely used Greek word for “recapitulate” or “sum up under one head” refer to in normal usage? How does Paul use this Greek word in Rom 13:9? in this verse? How do the figures of Adam and Christ form the background of Paul's idea?
4. **1:21.** To what does the expression “rule and authority and power” refer here? What point is Paul making? What are the nine “choirs” of angels recognized by Catholic theologians, and how are they arranged?

For application

1. **1:9.** How aware are you of the mystery behind the ways you think or make choices or even of who you are? For example, how well do you understand yourself? What does it mean for you that God's will—which Paul says is made known to us—even so remains a mystery?
2. **1:13.** Since you “have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”, how would you show that you actually believe it? How seriously do you take your Confirmation?
3. **1:17.** What does “knowledge” of God mean? How does Paul pray that you will acquire it?
4. **1:19.** Paul refers to the “immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe”. What is that power? How have you experienced it *as power* in your life? If you do not experience spiritual power, what do you need to do to receive it?

Chapter 2

For understanding

1. **2:8.** To what does the word *grace* refer, here? What does each meaning designate? What is the meaning of salvation in this context?
2. **2:10.** What works are made possible by the grace of God within us? What did the Second Council of Orange teach in A.D. 529 about grace and good works?
3. **2:14.** What is the dividing wall that Paul is thinking of in this verse, and what does it symbolize? What has Christ done to it?
4. **2:20.** What symbolic architectural role do the apostles and prophets play in the Church? What is the role of a cornerstone, and how does it apply to Christ? How does Jewish tradition treat the idea of a cornerstone?

For application

1. **2:1–2.** What characteristic behavior might a person show who is physically alive but spiritually dead? Though Paul does not specify here what “trespasses and sins” would cause spiritual death, which of them pose the greatest threat to you? What are “sons of disobedience”, and what spirit do they follow?
2. **2:4–10.** What do these verses have to say to those who feel unworthy of God's consideration or that their sins are unforgivable?
3. **2:14–16.** Within your family—whether immediate or extended—how might Christ bring peace where there might have been feuds, long-term disagreements, or strained relationships? What should your own role be in bringing that peace to bear on such problems?
4. **2:19–22.** How would you characterize your relationship with the Catholic Church? Do you see yourself as a spiritual nobody or as a fellow citizen with all the saints? Alternatively, do you regard yourself as a stranger just passing through or as a member of the household? How might you change from being a nobody or a passerby to a family member?

Chapter 3

For understanding

1. **Word Study: Mystery (3:3).** When Paul uses the term *mystery*, what is he teaching about? What is the OT background of this notion? How does Daniel's use of "mystery" apply to what Paul is teaching?
2. **3:14.** What is the significance of "bowing the knee"? What does it express?
3. **3:15.** To what kind of grouping does the Greek word for *family* refer? How does that meaning apply to the family role of God?
4. **3:18.** To what do the dimensions listed here refer? What are some other possibilities? How did St. Gregory of Nyssa understand these terms?

For application

1. **3:4–6.** From whom did you "inherit" your faith? Why are you a Christian and not a member of some other religion? What appreciation do you have for the value of this inheritance?
2. **3:8.** Where would you rank yourself among the saints? By what standard would you rank yourself at all? In comparison with the grace Paul claims for himself here, what grace would you claim God has given you for the benefit of others?
3. **3:14–19.** How would you apply Paul's prayer to yourself? What kind of inner strength do you most need? What does it mean to be "rooted and grounded in love"? Of what kind of power do vv. 18 and 19 speak?
4. **3:20–21.** What are some of the limits you set yourself for the things you can "ask or think" in your relationship with the Father? What do you *avoid* asking for? How might praise of the Father expand those limits?

Chapter 4

For understanding

1. **Chart: The Four Marks of the Church (Eph 4).** In Ephesians, how does Paul touch upon the four essential characteristics of the Church? What does he understand them to mean? What specific verses refer to each of the four marks?
2. **4:11.** What are the ecclesial ministries listed by Paul in this verse established to promote, and how?
3. **4:26.** What is an example of anger that is an appropriate response? When insulted, why should we strive for reconciliation before the day's end? To which psalm is Paul alluding?
4. **4:30.** By warning us not to "grieve the Holy Spirit", of what is Paul primarily thinking? What do his words confirm about the Holy Spirit? What does Isaiah 63 (to which Paul here alludes) mention as having grieved the Spirit?

For application

1. **4:15.** According to Paul, how should you speak the truth to others? How does love "improve" the truth of what you say? What are some other ways you can speak the truth to others, and what are the likely consequences of speaking it in those ways?
2. **4:17–24.** According to Paul, what causes the mental futility, darkened understanding, and alienation of our pagan society? To what types of behavior does it lead? What might be the effects of the change he proposes in the last three verses?
3. **4:25.** Compare this verse with v. 15. What is the motive he gives in each verse for telling the truth? As you read from here to the end of chapter 4, what kind of emphasis is Paul placing on truthful speech?
4. **4:29.** What are some of your negative speech habits? For example, how habitually do you speak in a way that criticizes or labels others, especially those to whom you are close? If you were typically to speak to them in an edifying way, how "natural" do you think such a speech habit would feel to you at first? in the long run?

Chapter 5

For understanding

1. **5:22–33.** How does Paul view Christian marriage in these verses? What three aspects of marriage does this analogy of faith highlight? What Old Covenant relationship does the marital union between Christ and the Church recall?
2. **5:22.** What does the Greek imply about the submission of the wife? What are the limits of that submission? What is the difference between the perspective of Paul and that of ancient society?

3. **Word Study: Head (5:23).** How is the term “head” used in the Bible? How do non-biblical writers of antiquity use the term? How does Paul use the term in reference to husbands? How does he use Genesis in his thinking, and what reference does it have to Christ?
4. **5:26.** To what sacrament is Paul alluding here? To what might the term *word* refer? How were Jewish brides prepared for presentation to their grooms? What OT imagery stands in the background?

For application

1. **5:8–13.** What kinds of behavior or activities do you keep secret from friends or relatives or try to explain away? Which do you let others see or are proud of? Which class of behavior best fits the standard of v. 9?
2. **5:18–20.** How might following Paul’s recommendations make a difference in the way you speak and even pray?
3. **5:21–24.** Look up paragraph 1605 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: What is the meaning that the *Catechism* attaches to the word “helpmate”? How should the wife relate to the husband? For that matter, how should anyone (male or female) relate to Christ?
4. **5:25.** How is the husband to love his wife? To what (implied) extent?

Chapter 6

For understanding

1. **6:2.** Which commandment is Paul quoting, and what is its OT source? What blessing accompanies it? How seriously did ancient Israel treat rebellion against parental authority?
2. **6:5.** What is the difference between the usual treatment of slaves and Paul’s view of slavery? What are the reciprocal duties of Christian slaves and Christian masters?
3. **6:10–17.** What is the “armor of God” we need in order to resist the daily attacks by malevolent spirits? In Paul’s inventory, what kinds of weapons do we have? How do the OT books of Wisdom and Isaiah, to which Paul alludes, picture Yahweh? What does this OT background suggest for our reading of the passage?
4. **6:18.** What does Paul’s command to “pray at all times” indicate for us? What can we expect in our spiritual warfare?

For application

1. **6:1–4.** If you are a parent, how do you discipline your children? What forms of praise and punishment do you use? Which of these seems to predominate?
2. **6:5–9.** If you are an employee, how would you apply vv. 5–8 to yourself? If you are an employer, a manager, or a supervisor, how might your management style be affected by applying v. 9 to your subordinates?
3. **6:12–13.** Do you believe in the reality of spiritual warfare? How have you experienced its reality in your own life? What is going on now that you might call spiritual warfare? If you do not believe that events—especially negative ones—reflect “warfare” of a spiritual nature, how would you explain what Paul is talking about?
4. **6:18.** In what ways do you engage in intercessory prayer? For whom do you pray? For whom might you be neglecting to pray, and what will you do about it?