



Bible
BOOK CLUB

September 2021 - EPHESIANS

OPENING PRAYER

Holy God, Blessed are you! And blessed are we! Before the foundation of the world you have chosen us and all creation to live together in the unity of faith and in the riches of your grace and life. Be with us in this time together. Open our hearts to you and to one another; draw us together in Jesus your Son who is our peace and peace for the whole of the world. Amen.

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. The introduction to Ephesians notes that some of the sentences contained in this book are usually long—in particular, Ephesians 1:3–14—the longest sentence in the Bible. Honestly, it is a sentence that comes across as convoluted and difficult to find our way through. But perhaps a way to begin is to read and ask yourself the following questions:
 - What words or phrases catch your attention? How do they affect you and why?
 - What feelings come through this text? What is your sense of the feelings of the author at the time of writing? What feelings did you feel as you heard these words?
 - How do you picture God as you hear these words?
 - How do you picture yourself in this text? Yourself in relation to God?
2. Can you say that again? Many times the clue to a text and its meaning can be found in words and phrases that repeat themselves. Generally speaking, when someone says something more than once, it means they want to make sure you get the message.
 - What words and phrases are repeated in this passage?
 - What seems important to the author; what might the author be trying to say?
3. Ephesians 1:, 5, 9, 11 refer to God's will. In Christian circles, this is a BIG topic. How do we know when we are 'doing' God's will? What does God's will look like?
 - Have you ever heard someone use the phrase, "It was God's will that this happened?" How do you think people understand what the will of God might be? How do you understand God's will in your life?
 - Based on these verses in Ephesians, how do you think the author understands God's will? What does the author say God's will is?

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BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

4. The Lord's Prayer: Each Sunday as we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." So, in classic Lutheran style, what does this mean? The following is asked in Luther's Small Catechism - The Third Petition":

What does this mean? The good and gracious will of God is done even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

What does this mean? God's will is done when God breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, which do not want us to hallow God's name or let his kingdom come; and when God strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and faith until we die. This is God's good and gracious will.

- How does Luther describe God's will?
 - What three things does Luther list as opposition to God's will? How does God handle this opposition?
 - Do you think the author of Ephesians would agree with Luther's summary? Explain.
5. Grace (not what we say before we eat, but...) The Pivotal Foundation. Nestled in the middle of Ephesians 2, come only a few short verses which become the pivotal foundation of the argument in this letter. Once we were... but now we are something else, not because of anything we have done, but because of God's grace alone.
- Read Ephesians 2:5-9. What do these verses tell us about grace? If you had to explain "grace" to someone else, how would you define it?
 - Luther argued that the church stands or falls on grace alone. Do you agree with Luther's assessment? Why or why not?
6. Walls that divide.... Read Ephesians 2:11-18. Notice the language used in this passage.
- What seems to be the issue being addressed here?
 - The pain of division is a universal human experience. We all know of walls in our world that have been built or are threatening to be built with specific purposes of division. What are the walls (physical or otherwise that our world struggles with today?) What is the effect on our communities? Our churches? Our families?
 - Read Ephesians 2:14-16. What does this suggest about our walls and the divisions we construct? Whenever we set ourselves in a position to decide who belongs and who doesn't; who is the ultimate decision-maker? If Jesus IS our peace and makes us one, is there anything we can say or do that makes it otherwise?
7. In the *Lutheran Study Bible*, the beginning of chapter 4 is titled "Unity in the Body of Christ;" and the chapters that follow include topics like the Christian Household (including husbands and wives), Children and Parents, Slaves and Masters.

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BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

- What do you find difficult in these verses? Why?
 - How do we interpret scripture in light of changing cultural contexts?
 - Despite troubling passages that seem to condone slavery, or suggest one gender over another; what intention might we draw from these verses that still applies today?
- 8.** Where chapter 2 sets the foundation of our lives in Christ; chapter 4 sets the foundation for how we live out our faith together as the Body of Christ in the world. Read chapter 4:1–16.
- What is the foundation of our lives together? How do we model our lives and why?
 - What do you see as the role and purpose of the church? Of the gifts we have been given?
 - As you think about the earlier conversation about “God’s will;” how do you understand God’s will in light of these verses? What would you summarize as the “take-home” message of Ephesians?

CLOSING PRAYER

God of grace, we give you thanks for this time together; for your presence here with us; for your presence in our world. You are the foundation of our lives together. You have gifted us with one another and call us into communities of love. As we go, send us in hope for what you are doing right now. Where we are divided, unite us by your Spirit. Accomplish your will in us and in our world; that all creation might come to maturity; to fullness of life and grace and joy; in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

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This month’s resource was prepared by Rev. Kathy Calkins.