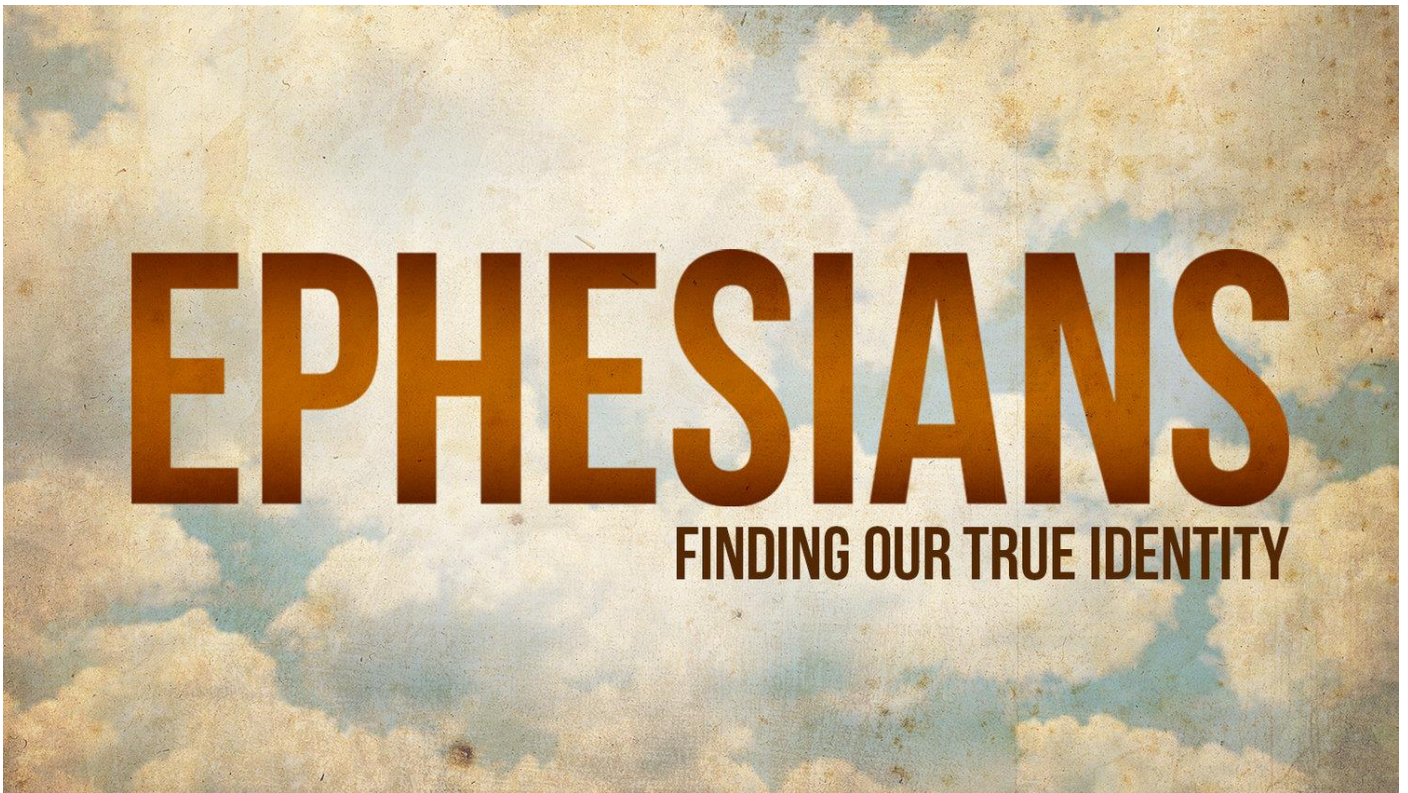


Ephesians – Who do you think you are?



Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Introductory Material:

Author, Date, and Place of Writing

The author identifies himself as Paul (1:1; 3:1; cf. 3:7,13; 4:1; 6:19–20). Some have taken the absence of the usual personal greetings and the verbal similarity of many parts to Colossians, among other reasons, as grounds for doubting authorship by the apostle Paul. However, this was probably a circular letter, intended for other churches in addition to the one in Ephesus (see notes on 1:1,15; 6:21–23). Paul may have written it about the same time as Colossians, c. a.d. 60, while he was in prison at Rome see 3:1; 4:1; 6:20.

The City of Ephesus

Ephesus was the most important city in western Asia Minor (now Turkey). It had a harbour that at that time opened into the Cayster River, which in turn emptied into the Aegean Sea. Because it was also at an intersection of major trade routes, Ephesus became a commercial centre. It boasted a pagan temple dedicated to the Roman goddess Diana (Greek *Artemis*); cf. Ac 19:23–31. Paul made Ephesus a centre for evangelism for about three years (Acts 19:10), and the church there apparently flourished for some time, but later needed the warning of Rev 2:1–7.

Theological Message

Unlike several of the other letters Paul wrote, Ephesians does not address any particular error or heresy. Paul wrote to expand the horizons of his readers, so that they might understand better the dimensions of God's eternal purpose and grace and come to appreciate the high goals God has for the church.

The letter opens with a sequence of statements about God's blessings, which are interspersed with a remarkable variety of expressions drawing attention to God's wisdom, forethought and purpose. Paul emphasizes that we have been saved, not only for our personal benefit, but also to bring praise and glory to God. The climax of God's purpose, "when the times will have reached their fulfilment," is to bring all things in the universe together under Christ (1:10). It is crucially important that Christians realize this, so in 1:15–23 Paul prays for their understanding (a second prayer occurs in 3:14–21).

Having explained God's great goals for the church, Paul proceeds to show the steps toward their fulfilment. First, God has reconciled individuals to himself as an act of grace (2:1–10). Second, God has reconciled these saved individuals to each other, Christ having broken down the barriers through his own death (2:11–22). But God has done something even beyond this: He has united these reconciled individuals in one body, the church. This is a "mystery" not fully known until it was revealed to Paul (3:1–6). Now Paul is able to state even more clearly what God has intended for the church, namely, that it be the means by which he displays his "manifold wisdom" to the "rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms" (3:7–13). It is clear through the repetition of "heavenly realms" (1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) that Christian existence is not merely on an earthly plane. It receives its meaning and significance from heaven, where Christ is exalted at the right hand of God (1:20).

Nevertheless, that life is lived out on earth, where the practical daily life of the believer continues to work out the purposes of God. The ascended Lord gave "gifts" to the members of his church to enable them to minister to one another and so promote unity and maturity (4:1–16). The unity of the church under the

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

headship of Christ foreshadows the uniting of “all things in heaven and on earth” under Christ (1:10). The new life of purity and mutual deference stands in contrast to the old way of life without Christ (4:17—6:9). Those who are “strong in the Lord” have victory over the evil one in the great spiritual conflict, especially through the power of prayer (6:10–20).

Outline

- Greetings (1:1–2)
- The Divine Purpose: The Glory and Headship of Christ (1:3–14)
- Prayer That Christians May Realize God’s Purpose and Power (1:15–23)
- Steps Toward the Fulfilment of God’s Purpose (chs. 2–3)
 1. Salvation of Individuals by Grace (2:1–10)
 2. Reconciliation of Jew and Gentile through the Cross (2:11–18)
 3. Uniting of Jew and Gentile in One Household (2:19–22)
 4. Revelation of God’s Wisdom through the Church (3:1–13)
 5. Prayer for Deeper Experience of God’s Fullness (3:14–21)
- Practical Ways to Fulfil God’s Purpose in the Church (4:1—6:20)
 1. Unity (4:1–6)
 2. Maturity (4:7–16)
 3. Renewal of Personal Life (4:17—5:20)
 4. Deference in Personal Relationships (5:21—6:9)
 1. Principle (5:21)
 2. Husbands and wives (5:22–33)
 3. Children and parents (6:1–4)
 4. Slaves and masters (6:5–9)
 5. Strength in the Spiritual Conflict (6:10–20)
- Conclusion, Final Greetings and Benediction (6:21–24)

The Bible Project has produced an excellent introductory video to the Book of Ephesians

[Book of Ephesians Summary | Watch an Overview Video \(bibleproject.com\)](#)

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

How to use this course:

Use these materials on your own, in your Growth Group or in your Micro Group.

It would be helpful to try to read the whole of the book of Ephesians prior to starting this course.

The material is particularly designed to help new groups get to know one another and build relationships within the group.

Each session contains the following elements:



Start Here:

A discussion starter that introduces a theme within the study.



Reflection:

These are notes, comments or questions that help provide additional insights into the passage we are studying together.



Bible:

We look at the Bible together and explore its message through some questions and discussion ideas.



Sharing Time:

An opportunity to relate the Bible passage to our own lives.



Life Application:

An opportunity to consider how to apply the material we have explored into our lives.



Prayer Activity:

An opportunity to pick up the theme(s) of the study in a shared time of prayer.

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 1: Who are you?



Start Here:

Ephesians 1:1,2. 'Paul an Apostle' - pick five words to describe yourself and share these with the group. Why did you choose the words that you did? What words did you decide not to use?



Reflection:

The TV Programme 'Who do you think you are?' Often throws up surprising information about the lives of the famous people who appear. What surprising information about yourself might the group be surprised to discover about yourself. You might like to share two things that are true and one thing that is false and see if the group can correctly tell truth from fiction!



Bible:

After the opening verses Chapter 1 of Ephesians focuses on two big ideas

1. The Divine Purpose: The Glory and Headship of Christ (1:3–14)
2. Prayer That Christians May Realize God's Purpose and Power (1:15–23)

We will begin with the second of these themes and focus on the idea of thankfulness. Read Ephesians 1:15-23



Sharing Time:

- 1:16 I have not stopped giving thanks...
 - What things cause you to be thankful?
- 1:16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you,
 - What are you thankful for about St John's and/or the Christians you know well?



Life Application:

How could you express thankfulness in the coming week?



Prayer activity:

1:16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

Pray for the person on your left and thank God for the things that you have learnt about them today.

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 2: Curry and Christ - Ephesians 1:3-14



Start Here:

There is a very big difference between Patak's Curry Sauce and Patak's Curry paste! - (other brands of curry ingredients are also available.) When using the curry sauce you pour in the whole jar, with the curry paste you are only meant to use three tablespoons to make a curry. I mistakenly used a whole jar and nearly blew the family's heads off with how hot the curry was! Share as a group cooking triumphs or disasters.



Bible:

Ephesians 1:3-14 is a bit like a jar of curry paste, there are a lot of ideas all condensed together and it can be a bit overwhelming. Read the passage together and give some time for the members of your group to pick out three phrases that stand out or strike them.



Sharing Time:

What have you picked and why? Share your thoughts together.

Have people in the group picked similar ideas and phrases or have they picked a wide range of themes?



Reflection:

Why do you think Paul included all the ideas and images that he has written in this section of his letter?

It is a very concentrated expression of 'The Glory and Headship of Christ' and powerful stuff!



Life Application:

If you were talking with someone who also followed Jesus, what phrases or ideas would you use to describe what Jesus means to you?

Imagine chatting with someone who wasn't a committed Christian; how would you talk about Jesus?



Prayer:

Spend some time thanking God for what he has done in Jesus. You might like to use some worship songs as a way of giving thanks. Or use phrase from Ephesians as part of your time of praise and worship.

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 3: Going for Growth - Ephesians 1:15-23



Start Here:

Have you got green fingers or do plants wither and die as soon as you look at them?

On a scale of 1- 10 where 1 is I hate it; and 10 it's something I love doing - how enthusiastic are you about gardening?



Bible:

Ephesians 1:15-13 is an astounding prayer offered for the readers of the letter asking the Lord to help them grow in their faith. Once again there are lots of ideas captured in these verses. Read the passage together.



Sharing Time:

Imagine Paul (probably the writer of this letter) is offering to pray for you just as he prayed for the Christians in Ephesus. From the passage you've just read, what three things from the various prayer themes he wants the Ephesian Christians to experience would you want to receive?

Why did you make the choices you did?



Reflection:

Looking back over the last three years in what ways would you say your faith has grown and your relationship with Jesus deepened?



Life Application:

Thinking back to the prayer in the passage, what steps could you practically take to grow in faith? Share your ideas with one another.

How might your small group help you in your faith journey?



Prayer:

Pray for each other that together you can grow in faith '*...that you may know the hope to which he has called you.*'

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 4: Excluded and Included – Ephesians 2:11-22



Start Here:

You can invite three famous people (living or dead) to a meal, who is on the guest list. Is there a person you wouldn't want to come?



Bible:

Ephesians 2:1-10 explores our need of salvation and how through Christ's grace this is made available to all people – everyone is invited!

Read together Ephesians 2:11-23



Sharing Time:

Share some examples of times when you have felt excluded or left on the outside (only share things that you are comfortable speaking about). As you reflect on these experiences what thoughts or feelings do you connect to these life moments.

The writer (Paul) is trying to emphasise what a big deal it is that Gentiles (non-Jewish people) are now included as part of God's people.

How does Paul get this idea across in the letter, what language and images does he use?



Reflection:

As you look at St John's, do you think we communicate that everyone is welcome? Do you think any groups of people might feel excluded?



Life Application:

'Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household' Ephesians 2:19

List three practical ways in which you can make sure everyone feels included at St John's.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Prayer:

Praise God that Jesus has brought reconciliation through the cross. Pray for those who feel excluded in life.

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 5: Getting a 'God Job' - Ephesians 3:1-12



Start Here:

What was your first job? Is there a job that you've done that you have loved or hated?



Bible:

In this passage Paul outlines the call that God has on his life and how he has tried to live out that calling. He also indicates some of the consequences! Read Ephesians 3:1-12.



Sharing Time:

Verses 1-3 Paul speaks about how he became conscious of God's call (The story of Paul's conversion is recounted in Acts 9). Share briefly as a group your journeys in faith.



Reflection: (Share at a level you feel comfortable with)

'I became a servant of this gospel by the grace given me through the working of his power.'
Ephesians 3:7

- In what ways do you feel able to serve God?
- Is this expressed in the jobs that you do in church?
- Do you think your daily life is also a way of serving God?

Share your experiences and ideas.



Life Application:

In the book 'Practice in the Presence of God', Brother Lawrence speaks about trying to do everything as an expression of praise, worship and service to the Lord even the jobs he doesn't like doing such as washing up! In the coming week think of ways you could serve God and others in everyday tasks.



Prayer:

Pray for one another and for the events and jobs that are going to be part of the week ahead.

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 6: Indescribable! - Ephesians 3:13-21



Start Here:

Think of a place or an experience that took your breath away, try to describe it to the people in your group.



Bible:

Read Ephesians 3:13-21. In this passage Paul is trying to describe things that are difficult to put into words! We will focus on two main ideas the love of God and the power of God.



Sharing Time:

- High: What have been your spiritual high points?
- Wide: Share experiences where we have seen God's love revealed in an unlikely or unusual situation.
- Long: How many years have you been following Jesus?
- Deep: Are there any moments when you have been aware of the depth of God's love and care?

Share your responses together.



Reflection:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3:20,21

'Immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine...' Wow this is a huge promise that is hard to put into words! Paul seems to be inviting us to take these verses on trust and pray some 'big and bold' prayers. What are the 'big and bold' prayers you want to bring to the Lord?



Life Application:

Look for examples of height, breadth, length and depth of God's love in the world around you.
Look for examples of God doing immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine...



Prayer:

In the light of Ephesians 3:20,21; bring your big and bold prayers to God!

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 7: United We Stand - Ephesians 4:1-6



Start Here:

Bob Marley sang about 'One Love' and Queen about 'One Vision', what ideas do these song titles express? Alternatively, you might like to work together to define the word unity.



Bible:

In the NIV translation of this passage the word one appears eight times plus a reference to unity – perhaps Paul is trying to say something quite important here! Read the passage and then consider the points below.



Reflection:

What do the following phrases mean to you and the members of your group:

1) bear with one another in love, 2) make every effort to keep to the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace, 3) one body, 4) one Spirit, 5) one hope, 6) one Lord, 7) one faith, 8) one baptism, 9) One God and Father of all

Why do you think there is such an emphasis on unity (oneness) in this passage?



Sharing Time:

In John 17 Jesus prayed that all believers might be one; sadly, the existence of thousands of different Christian denominations indicates that we are not very good at unity!

Within St John's where do you see unity being expressed? Where do you see disunity?

What can we do to encourage unity?



Life Application:

'Make every effort to keep to the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.' Ephesians 4:3

How could you live out this verse in your home, relationships, workplace, church?



Prayer:

Use Ephesians 4:3 as a basis for your prayer time.

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 8: Maturity - Ephesians 4:7-13



Start Here:

What's your favourite kind of sandwich?



Bible:

The passage is like a sandwich! Two pieces of bread focusing on maturity and in the middle (v14) a vivid picture of immature faith. Read the passage and consider the following questions.



Sharing Time:

Bread (1) the passage speaks about the role of:

- Apostles – visionary, big picture leaders who inspire and challenge.
- Prophets – those who reveal God's heart and help us see where God is at work.
- Evangelists – people who clearly express what it means to follow Jesus through their actions and words.
- Pastors/Shepherds – people who tend 'the flock' and show care and compassion, while guiding people in the right direction.
- Teachers – those who help us discover more about prayer and develop our understanding of the Bible and God's plan.

How has your faith grown through people who have exercised these gifts? Share your experiences.



Reflection:

Filling – looking back on your Christian life in what ways has your faith changed or developed?

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.
Eph.4:14



Life Application and Prayer

Bread (2)

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Eph. 4:15,16

Speaking, loving, growing, maturing, joining, holding, supporting, building, working

In what ways might your Christian faith find expression in these actions?



Pray for the members of the group that everyone might '*become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*' Eph. 4:13b

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 9: Wardrobe Makeover! - Ephesians 4:17-32



Start Here:

Describe either an outfit that you love and or your worst ever clothing disaster!



Bible:

Consider the passage below (Ephesians 4:17-12), Paul uses the imagery of getting dressed 'put on' and 'take off'; underline things to be removed from the life of a Christian and circle those attitudes and habits we should 'wear'.

¹⁷ So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. ¹⁹ Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.

²⁰ That, however, is not the way of life you learned ²¹ when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. ²² You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; ²³ to be made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵ Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbour, for we are all members of one body. ²⁶ "In your anger do not sin"^[d]: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, ²⁷ and do not give the devil a foothold. ²⁸ Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

²⁹ Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. ³² Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.



Sharing Together:

What struck you as you did this exercise? Did you identify some qualities or attitudes that you need to wear more often and did you find some outfits that you need to dispose of?

Share your responses.

Life Application:



What is the main item (attitude, behaviour) that is going to be part of your 'wardrobe' going forward?

Prayer:

Pray as a group, as you try to live out your lives following the 'Wardrobe Makeover'.



Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 10: The Imitation Game – Ephesians 5:1-21



Start Here:

When babies are born people often comment on physical similarities to their parents. Are you aware of similarities between you and your parents or you and your children, this could be physical likeness or similar personality traits.



Bible:

In many ways our passage is similar to the Bible verses we looked at last time. Ephesians 5:1a *Since you are God's dear children try to be like him (GNB) be imitators of God as dearly loved children (NIV)* captures the essence of this passage. This verse is about imitating or living out the likeness of Christ as part of God's family. Read the passage (Ephesians 5:1-21) and consider the following questions.



Reflection:

Verses 3-7 speak about sexual immorality and the way in which we speak. The passage also speaks about greed and apparent lack of control. Chicken and Egg Question: What comes first, attitudes or actions. Discuss your thoughts together.



Sharing Time:

The passage highlights sharp contrasts:

Impurity and holiness, light and darkness, Hidden/secret and visible, wise and unwise/foolish, filled with wine and filled with the spirit, saying inappropriate things and praising God.

Share your thoughts on reflections on these contrasts.



Life Application:

Christians can sometimes have a 'league table' of sins with some things seen as particularly bad and others as not a big deal. Do you recognize this attitude? Does this passage support the 'league table' approach? Is it appropriate to categorize sin? Discuss your responses. How might the discussion you have shape the way you live in the future?



Prayer:

'Be imitators of God... as dearly loved children (NIV). Use this verse as a basis for your prayers.

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 11: Relationships (part 1) – Ephesians 5:22-33



Start Here:

What do you think are the most important qualities in a good relationship? Create a list of qualities and attitudes that you would expect to be in a good relationship.



Reflection:

It is important to recognize that Paul's teaching is set in a particular cultural context. Please be sensitive and thoughtful in the way in which you explore these verses. Also be aware that there could be people within the group who have experienced difficult, abusive or controlling relationships. It is also important to be sensitive to broken relationships, bereavement and singleness.



Bible:

Read the passage and consider the following questions.



Sharing Time:

Look at the list of relational qualities and attitudes represented in the passage and compare these to the list you created earlier; what made both lists, what did you come up with that you don't find in the passage, what is listed in the passage that didn't appear in your list. Discuss what you have discovered.



Life Application:

Paul is sometimes accused of being sexist. However, his writings are extraordinarily liberated for the cultural context in which he lived.

Consider if it is right to re-examine some, long held values and principles in the light of cultural changes in society.



Prayer:

Pray for one another and the relationships that are important to the people in your group.

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 12: Relationships (part 2) - Ephesians 6:1-9



Start Here:

What exasperates you, makes you blow your top or really winds you up?



Reflection:

It is important to recognize that Paul's teaching is once again set in a particular cultural context. Consider the passage about slaves and masters as guidance for behaviour within the workplace.

As in our last session, it is again important to apply principles from Scripture into our current day cultural context.



Bible:

Read the passage (Ephesians 6:1-9) and consider the following questions.



Sharing Time:

What do you think exasperates children and young people?

What place does obedience have in parenting?

Bring them (children) up in the training and instruction of the Lord Eph4:4 You may wish to consider how this guidance has worked out within the young people you know. Share at a level that feels comfortable to you.

What guidance about attitudes and actions amongst slaves and master are applicable to the present-day workplace?



Life Application:

In the light of the passage, we have looked at in this session how might your attitudes to your parents and the children and young people you know change?

Based on Paul's words what might you do differently at work?



Prayer:

Take some time to pray for the families of people within your group. Pray also for those in your group who try to express their faith in the workplace.

Ephesians – Who do you think you are?

Session 13: Warfare and Warriors – Ephesians 6:10-20



Start Here:

Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Ephesians 6:10 In what ways would you describe yourself as a strong person? This obviously is much more than physical strength!



Bible:

Read the passage (Ephesians 6:10-20) and consider the following questions.



Sharing Time:

What experiences have you had of coming under attack or being got at. This doesn't need to only be examples of spiritual warfare it can be situations where life was tough. Please only share at a level you feel comfortable with.



Reflection:

During the battles in North Africa in WW2 the British General Montgomery had a picture of the German General Rommel hanging up in his headquarters as a reminder of the adversary that he was battling. Why do you think General Montgomery did this?

Without hanging up pictures of the devil (very bad idea!), what awareness of the adversary we a battling against do we need?



Life Application:

Paul lists various items to use in the battle against evil.

- The Belt of Truth
- Breastplate of Righteousness
- Shoes of the Gospel of Peace
- Shield of Faith
- Helmet of Salvation
- Sword of the Spirit: Word of God

Why are these items important? Discuss your ideas together.



Prayer:

Pray for the folk known to you who are facing tough battles. Pray also for the Church, its leaders and people to stand firm against the attacks of the evil one.