



Week One: A Letter for All Time

Problem & Solution: (for leaders)

**We think Christianity is largely about us/ourselves when, in fact, it's all about God. We don't regard his Word as worth our time in reading it, studying it, or obeying it. – Through Christ the dead and divided are made alive and united in order to walk rightly for God's glory. As we read and study and obey his Word we are equipped to serve his purposes for his glory and our good.*

Introduction:

- What subject has filled your thoughts most often throughout the day? Why? What does this tell you about what is important to you?

The Biblical Text: Ephesians 1:1-2

The Introduction (Verses 1-2):

*Based upon these two verses, what type of literature might this be?

*Who is writing to whom?

*Based upon the repeated words and tone of this introduction and greeting, what might the topic or content of this letter be?

Book Introduction:

Author: Paul the Apostle (see Acts 9, 19, 28)

Date: Written around A.D.62 during Paul's imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28). Themes:

1) Christ has reconciled all creation to himself and to God.

2) Christ has united people from all nations to himself and to one another in the church.

Background: Ephesus was a pagan city, known for the temple of Artemis (one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world). It was "an important port city on the west coast of Asia." It also contained a "grandiose theater" which "held an estimated 20,000 or more spectators. There were both Jews and Gentiles in the city, no doubt part of the reason that one of the themes of the book has to do with unity.

Conclusion:

*Why might the contents of a letter written almost two thousand years ago be applicable today? What do we have to gain from studying this letter?

*Why is it worthwhile to spend our time studying a specific book of the Bible?

*Do you ever feel like God is the one you think most about during the course of the day? How can we get to a place where that's actually true of us?

G o i n g D e e p e r

Summary:

The more we make much of God, the more we see Him and know Him as He truly is. The more we see Him and know Him, the more we become like Him.

The more we become like Him, the more we experience His grace and peace.

BUT

The more we make much of ourselves, the less we see Him and know Him as He truly is. The less we see Him and know Him, the less we become like Him.

The less we become like Him, less we experience His grace and peace.

Cross-Referencing: Paul's Experiences in Ephesus (Acts 19)

*What characterizes the church in Ephesus before Paul's arrival? (see esp. v.1-6) *What observations can we make about the city of Ephesus on the basis of Acts 19?

*What types of things does our culture cry out about repeatedly? If the Ephesians chanted "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" what are the types of things that our culture extols the greatness of?

Archaeological Background: The City of Ephesus

*Check out the following link: <http://blog.beliefnet.com/bibleandculture/2009/12/the-ephesian-terrace-houses.html> or just google "ephesian beliefnet" and click on the first link. This is an article discussing the implications of the archaeological digs that have uncovered a number of terrace houses in what was ancient Ephesus. Interesting stuff.

How do others teach this text?

*Check out Covenant Life Church's series on Ephesians. The intro sermon taught by Joshua Harris can be found here:

http://www.covlife.org/resources/2671713-Introduction_to_Ephesians

or simply search Covenant Life Church's resource library under the series "Ephesians: Planned in Eternity, Displayed in Community."

Other Resources:

*The ESV Study Bible includes a number of excellent articles discussing Ephesians including: historical background, an outline, themes of the book and comments on the text itself.

*If you want to use a commentary as you teach through Ephesians, check out the following: