

# Exploring Scripture: The Book of Ephesians

## Introduction:

### **Read the book of Ephesians as a Synod along with Bishop deForest during the Easter Season**

During the season of Easter, Bishop deForest invites you to join him and the rest of the Synod in reading the book of Ephesians. Our 2026 Synod Assembly theme verse comes from Ephesians 3:20. As we prepare for Synod Assembly, we can immerse ourselves in the entire book of Ephesians and see where the imaginings of the Spirit lead us.

Beginning on Sunday, April 12 join with others across the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod as we explore Scripture together. You can read the book of Ephesians by yourself as a spiritual discipline or gather with a group of friends or Bible study group to discuss what you are reading. Don't have a group? Join Bishop deForest for a Synod-wide Zoom to discuss Ephesians chapter by chapter each week on Mondays at 5:00pm. Feel free to sign up to receive a weekly email reminder with the materials for that week's chapter of Ephesians as well as the Zoom link. You can sign up and download the entire series at [godslove.org/ephesians](https://godslove.org/ephesians)

## Reading Plan:

Easter Season is 6 weeks long and runs from April 5 (Easter Sunday) through Saturday, May 23. Each week beginning the Sunday/week after Easter, we will read one chapter of Ephesians. You are invited to read alongside others throughout the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

<u>Week 1:</u> April 12 – April 18	Chapter 1
<u>Week 2:</u> April 19 – April 25	Chapter 2
<u>Week 3:</u> April 26 – May 2	Chapter 3
<u>Week 4:</u> May 3 – May 9	Chapter 4
<u>Week 5:</u> May 10 - May 16	Chapter 5
<u>Week 6:</u> May 17 – May 23	Chapter 6

### **Links for reading the book of Ephesians online:**

Week 1 - <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%201&version=NRSVUE>  
Week 2 - <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%202&version=NRSVUE>  
Week 3 - <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%203&version=NRSVUE>  
Week 4 - <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%204&version=NRSVUE>  
Week 5 - <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205&version=NRSVUE>  
Week 6 - <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%206&version=NRSVUE>  
Weekly Zoom Link with Bishop deForest - <https://zoom.us/j/91811819234>

## **Study Notes and Reflection Questions:**

**Reflection Questions for Each Chapter** (Written by Deacon Kat Tigerman and Pastor John Wertz, Jr.)

Each week you will find a variety of ways to engage with the text, including:

- A watchword
- An Around the Dinner Table activity
- Questions for the chapter
- Go Deeper opportunities

The “watchword” for each week can be thought of as a mantra or word to keep in the back of your mind as you go about your daily routines throughout that week. Notice where, how, and when this word pops up throughout the week and if that stirs any new connections for you. For example, week 1’s watchword is “Gift.” This might be something that is offered to you as a gift (time, friendship, a meal, etc.) or something that you offer someone else as a gift or a moment when you notice God extending a gift to you or perhaps you offering something to God as a gift. The key is to remain open – staying on the lookout for where you notice these watchword moments throughout the week, especially in *unexpected* places.

The “Around the dinner table” activity is meant to be an opportunity for you to connect as a family, couple, or friends around the text. It is a simple activity or question that you can do during dinner (or another chosen meal or time). It is geared towards families as a way that kids can also participate, but anyone of any age can certainly use it too!

There are five questions for each chapter/week. You can use them for personal reflection. You can use them to guide a group discussion. You can use all of them or only one. Let these be a jumping off point for you as you reflect on the words of each chapter and listen for what God may be speaking to you now. You can also skip the questions altogether and use a lectio divina approach – such as reading the text 3 times in one sitting reflecting on it in different ways or 3 times throughout the week, noticing how the text speaks to you at each reading. Click [here](#) for a quick guide on lectio divina.

There is also some optional “Go Deeper” possibilities for the week. These are some ideas about how you might further reflect on the text or put a piece of the text into action. Many of the ideas include a kinesthetic opportunity, creative opportunity, a pause moment, and/or an opportunity to learn more about a particular connection point.

## **EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1**

**April 12 – April 18**

### **Online Bible link:**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%201&version=NRSVUE>

### **Watchword:** Gift

**Around the dinner table:** Name a gift (talent, skill, personality trait) you see in someone around the table. Take turns so everyone has an opportunity to name a gift in someone else and receive hearing others' name a gift about themselves.

### **Questions:**

- Where have you seen God's spiritual blessings in your life?
- God's grace is lavish – where have you experienced God's grace? What is the most meaningful (or lavish) gift you have given? Received?
- How do you “live for the praise of Christ's glory”? (verse 12)
- What do you feel when you read that God chose, loved, and redeemed you before the world was even created?
- What images and phrases of baptism do you notice throughout this chapter?

### **Go Deeper:**

- Pray for God to give you a “spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know” God more over these next 6 weeks. (verse 17)
- Reflect on what spiritual blessings and gifts God has given you.
- Notice what spiritual blessings and gifts God has given 2-3 other people around you.
- Read Luther's writings from the Small Catechism on the gift of baptism found on pages 1164-1165 in the back of the Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW) hymnal. Alternatively, or in addition, read through the service of Holy Baptism on pages 227-231 or the Affirmation of Baptism on pages 234-237 in the front of the Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Note the *baptismal promises* on page 236 (under Affirmation in the Presence of the Assembly) or on page 228 (under the Response of the Parents, as entrusted with baptismal responsibilities).

## **EPHESIANS CHAPTER 2**

**April 19 – April 25**

### **Online Bible link:**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%202&version=NRSVUE>

### **Watchword:** Grace

**Around the dinner table:** Share a table “grace” (prayer) together. What makes the prayer a grace?

### **Questions:**

- How have you heard others or the church talk about grace? When have you experienced grace?
- Where do you need peace? Where do you see peace most needed (in your congregation, your community, your family, the world)? What would it look like for Christ to break down the hostility between us and bring that peace?
- When have you been disobedient? In that time, who were you following instead?
- What good works might God have prepared for you? Knowing that these good works are not needed for salvation or to be loved by God, how might this influence your response to knowing God has things prepared for you?
- Where have we created walls of hostility and barriers to relationship in our congregations? What examples can you name of unnecessary structures, rules, or programs – even for the sake of order – that may in fact prevent access to the one Spirit?

### **Go Deeper:**

- Think about a time when you felt “alive together with Christ.” (verse 5) What was this like?
- Where do you feel hostility? Ask Jesus to break down that “wall of hostility” so that you become a person of peace.
- Create an artistic expression of grace.
- Spend a little time reflecting, dreaming, doodling about what the world might look like if we were truly all one in the Spirit and there were no barriers between us.

## **EPHESIANS CHAPTER 3**

**April 26 – May 2**

### **Online Bible link:**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%203&version=NRSVUE>

**Watchword:** Mystery

**Around the dinner table:** Share a time when you were waiting for something. Were you excited? Nervous? Afraid? Frustrated? What were you feeling while you had to wait and how did you feel after the waiting was over?

### **Questions:**

- What questions do you have about God? What things about God or church feel mysterious, hidden, or not yet revealed?
- What does it feel like knowing “we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith”? (verse 12) How does this verse speak to your prayer life?
- When do you feel most rooted and grounded in love? (verse 17)
- What is the value of knowledge in this chapter? In your life? How does God’s love for you relate or not relate to knowledge?
- How can mystery be a gift?

### **Go Deeper :**

- Ephesians 3:20 is our 2026 Synod Assembly theme verse. We will be focusing on this verse as well as Ephesians 3:14-21. Trusting that God has power to accomplish *abundantly* more than we can ask or imagine, what dreams have you imagined that would bring peace and love? What ideas for ministry have you wondered about or longed for? Read the verse one more time. Reflect on any new thoughts, ideas, questions, imaginings, and/or Spirit-nudges you notice. What might God be inviting you into?
- List some practices, activities, places, or people who help you feel rooted and grounded in love. Keep this list in a handy place for when you start to feel ungrounded. Spend time in one of these places or doing one of these activities this week. Send a quick text or note of gratitude to any people you listed.
- If you could ask God anything and get an immediate answer, what would you ask? Journal about this question, also reflecting on how you might like God to answer it.
- Read more about the new ministries sprouting up across the NEPA Synod and ELCA. If you live near one, consider attending one of their worship services, meals, or community events. You can read about our Synod shared ministries here: <https://nepasynod.org/sawc-saom/>. You can explore creating a new ministry here: <https://nepasynod.org/new-ministries/>.

## **EPHESIANS CHAPTER 4**

**May 3 – May 9**

### **Online Bible link:**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%204&version=NRSVUE>

### **Watchword:** Unity

**Around the dinner table:** When do you feel most like a team as a family? Share a time when you felt united.

### **Questions:**

- In the church we use the word “call” frequently. We talk about pastors and deacons and licensed lay ministers being “called” to ministry. We talk about hearing God’s voice as a “call” to do something or to work on a particular aspect of ourselves. We talk about our congregation having a “call” to feed the hungry. We can understand “call” in many ways, both collectively and individually. “Call” can be further defined as a summons or invitation. When have you felt called or strongly urged by God to (do) something? How have you felt invited into a ministry?
- Where do you see the Church “making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace”? (verse 3) How did you notice “one” and “unity” being used throughout this chapter?
- When do you feel “tossed to and fro and blown about”? How do we recognize trickery and craftiness in deceitful scheming? (verse 14)
- What was the first way you learned Christ? (verse 20)
- When you think of an old life and a new life, what comes to mind? What does it look like to “put away your former way of life, your old self”? (verse 22) What does it look like to be “renewed in the spirit of your mind” and to “clothe yourself with the new self, created according to the likeness of God”? (verses 23-24)

### **Go Deeper:**

- Read the list of gifts in verse 11. Try to think of at least one person you know (whether at your congregation or not) who has that particular gift. How might you encourage them in that gift?
- Reflect on your own temperament, tendencies, and thought-patterns. Have you been angry but not sinning? When have you put away all bitterness, wrath, anger, wrangling, slander, and malice? What helps you put those things away? How do you practice kindness, forgiveness, and being tenderhearted?
- Recalling the first ways you learned about Christ, think about other impactful ways your faith grew. How might you use some of these ways to share Christ with others? Try one of these ways with someone this week. (It can be someone from church, someone who knows Christ well, or someone who may not yet know Christ).

- Create some space to quietly and calmly settle into your body. A gentle posture and slow breathing may help. Close your eyes if you are comfortable and imagine/visualize yourself being clothed with a new self that is created according to the likeness of God. What does this look like? What does this feel like? Let the love of God flow over and through you. Dwell in this connection with God.

## **EPHESIANS CHAPTER 5**

**May 10 - May 16**

### **Online Bible link:**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205&version=NRSVUE>

*Ephesians 5:21 - 6:9 is called a “Household code” for the Christian community. The early Christians were entering a new reality as they realized the second coming of Christ might take much longer than they originally expected. Seeing they were now living on earth for the long haul, leaders wanted to set longer-term expectations for everyday relationships.*

**Watchword:** Beloved

**Around the dinner table:** Turn to each person around the table, one at a time, and say, “There is always a place for you at this table. You are beloved.”

### **Questions:**

- How are you living in love? How is your community living in love? Where is there room to live deeper into God’s love?
- When are we most easily deceived? And by whom or what?
- There is a lot of imagery with “light” and “darkness.” We know that God is light. At times in the Church’s history, Christians have misapplied this beautiful image – with some white Christians going so far as to equate themselves with God because their skin was “lighter” than others. In addition to racism, we would call this idolatry or blasphemy - a breach of the first commandment. Unfortunately, this has led some people of color to be wary of white Christians using these images. Is there a way to be sensitive to this without losing the original image entirely? If so, how?
- Paul talks about wives and husbands and how marriage is a great mystery which he is using as a metaphor for the Church. At times, this text has been used to justify gender inequality. When have you experienced this metaphor in helpful or harmful ways? How might Paul have intended this passage to reveal God’s love in community?

### **Go Deeper:**

- Dwell in the word “Beloved.” Trace this word across your hand or forehead each morning this week as you remember that you are God’s beloved. Feel free to use oil if you would like to anoint yourself in this way. Before you go to bed each night, trace the word “beloved” again or use the word in your evening prayer.
- Reflect on what is pleasing to the Lord (verse 10). This could be in general, but try to be specific about your own life, talents, and choices. How can you continue to live into those areas that are pleasing to God?
- Look up one of your favorite hymns or songs. Read or sing through the lyrics. Consider writing some of them out as a form or prayer. Feel free to color, draw, and add artistic elements as an offering to God and a filling of your own spirit.

- Learn more about the NEPA Synod Racial Justice Team here: <https://nepasynod.org/racial-justice-team/>. Read one of the resources or blog posts. Consider other ways you might get involved.

## **EPHESIANS CHAPTER 6**

**May 17 – May 23**

### **Online Bible link:**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%206&version=NRSVUE>

*Ephesians 5:21 - 6:9 is called a “Household code” for the Christian community. The early Christians were entering a new reality as they realized the second coming of Christ might take much longer than they originally expected. Seeing they were now living on earth for the long haul, leaders wanted to set longer-term expectations for everyday relationships.*

**Watchword:** Prepare

**Around the dinner table:** If you were going on a trip and could only take 3 things with you, what would you take?

### **Questions:**

- Slavery in Paul’s day was largely related to military conquest or economic debt (indentured servants). It was not explicitly about race as slavery was in the United States nor was it necessarily permanent. Even so, passages like Ephesians 6:5-8 were used to justify slavery, including in the United States. How might verse 9, where God is the master of all of us and has no partiality, have influenced conversations about slavery and abolishing it?
- Have you experienced evil forces, spirits, or powers? How might evil forces, spirits, or powers be at work in the world and in our own lives?
- What is the role of prayer? How has prayer impacted your life?
- How do you prepare for stressful situations or hard conversations? What helps you feel prepared?
- The book of Ephesians ends with a salutation of grace through Jesus Christ. When did an interaction end with grace for you? What was it like? How might you end other interactions with grace?

### **Go Deeper:**

- Throughout the centuries and even today, Christians often have different interpretations of the Bible. It can be tempting to use certain passages to justify actions that benefit us or that focus only on the good things. This is often referred to as “proof texting.” One way to think about proof texting is to imagine a 5-gallon bucket of multi-flavor ice cream (like Neapolitan). You have one ice cream scoop. You can’t get the whole 5-gallons with that one scoop so you will likely get choosy with it. You might want to avoid the strawberry or vanilla sections; you might want go for the parts with all the cookies and chocolate chips, ensuring you get the best possible scoop for your personal ice cream cone. What are the dangers with this approach? Spend some time journaling or sharing with a friend the parts of Ephesians that have been harder to hear and are tempting to scoop around. How might you practice getting a wider (5-gallon) view of Scripture in the future?

- Reflect on a time when you have been provoked to anger. When have you provoked someone else to anger? What led to the incident? How might you have reacted or acted differently?
- Create an image/drawing of all the items of the armor of God. What have you chosen for your shoes that “make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace? (verse 15) Do you feel ready? If you’d like – imagine yourself wearing all the items you have sketched. Imagine God’s love pouring over you and the Spirit filling you. Do you feel more ready now?
- Share with someone what you have learned, felt, or noticed during these last 6 weeks as you’ve read through and reflected on Ephesians. Where has God spoken the strongest to you? Do you have a sense of what might be a next faithful step?