



## NG Study Guide: Eph. 1:1-2 "In Christ" [10.15.17]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. **Leader note:** *Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

### The Study

#### Thesis:

The term "In Christ" is used 27 times in the book of Ephesians. Christ is in us and we are in Him. Believers reside in the world and in Christ. Like a scuba diver in an alien environment, the world can be a challenging environment, and a wonderful place. How can you grow in Christ in a place like Ephesus or Ventura County? Here, we'll consider an overview of Ephesians as we seek to grow in Christ.

**Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus:  
2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ [Eph. 1:1-2]**

#### A. Following Christ in Ephesus [1:1-2]

The author, Paul, and the recipients are identified at the beginning of the letter as was the style of the time. He identifies himself as an apostle. The Greek term *apostolos* refers generally to one sent on a mission, and in Paul's case the special authority resulting from his encounter with the risen Lord and direct commission by Jesus [Ac. 9, Ac. 26:16-18, 1Cor. 9]. He is writing to the saints or believers who are in Ephesus. Paul refers to believers as saints nine times in this letter. Saints refers to set-apart ones, and all believers are set-apart to God in Christ. Paul wrote this letter about 60 A.D. during his first imprisonment in Rome. He also wrote Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon during that season. Ephesus was the largest city in the Roman province of Asia Minor [Turkey] with a population of about 300,000. It had the best harbor in the area and was a wealthy seaport. The Temple of Diana in Ephesus was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The impressive temple had 127 marble columns each over 200 feet high. Diana was worshipped as the fertility goddess, and temple prostitutes promoted worship of the goddess through sexual pleasure. Silversmiths prospered selling idols of Diana.

The ruins of Ephesus testify of the great wealth of the city. In a city characterized by material comfort, sexual pleasure, and where worship of a God that forbids idols would be opposed, it may seem surprising to find people faithful in Christ Jesus [1]. Yet, the church at Ephesus is arguably the most influential early church. Almost one-third of the NT books [8] are connected to Ephesus (Ephesians, Acts, Revelation, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> John, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy). The seven churches mentioned in Rev. 2-3 were all likely birthed from the church at Ephesus. So how did the church become so effective in such a place like Ephesus? It's important to discover, because our community is relatively affluent, and the pursuit of material and sexual pleasure seem to dominate our culture.

## **B. How to grow in Christ [Acts 19:1-10]**

Paul was at Ephesus for the better part of three years [Ac.20:31]. When Paul arrived at Ephesus, there was a small group of twelve who claimed to be disciples [1,7].

### **1. We need the Spirit to grow in Christ [1-6]**

Paul asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit [2]?" Why did Paul ask? Something was obviously missing from their spiritual lives. They didn't know about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They had been exposed to John the Baptist's teaching that emphasized the need for repentance [3-4]. Repentance involves changing your thinking about God and your sin. Yet, even when you want to do the right things and want to stop doing the wrong things you discover how difficult it is in our own strength. C.S. Lewis observed, "No one knows how bad they are until they try to be good." The problem relates to the weakness of the flesh [Rom. 7:13-25]. So, Paul explained more fully about the ministry of Jesus, and faith in Christ's atoning death on the cross, and the resurrected life empowered by the Spirit [4-5]. Then they were baptized in the authority of Christ and the Holy Spirit came upon them [5-6]. The Holy Spirit is *with* us to convict us of sin and draw us to Christ, and *in* you when you receive Christ [Jn. 16:17]. Jesus promised, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come *upon* you" [Ac. 1:8]. When the Holy Spirit comes upon a believer, there is evidence of transformation.

The disciples at Ephesus spoke with tongues and prophesied [6]. Tongues is a language of heaven or earth previously unknown to the speaker and is used to praise God. Prophecy is foretelling the future or revealing God's encouragement to build up others. Not all believers have the gifts of prophecy or tongues [1Cor. 14]. The most common manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Acts was boldness to share faith in Christ. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in Christ. Being filled with the Holy Spirit means to be controlled by God, directed by and empowered by His Spirit. In contrast, we can grieve and quench the Holy Spirit [1 Th.5:19, Eph. 4:30] by resisting the Spirit and living contrary to God dominated by the flesh. God desires to make His Spirit available to you, and is waiting for you to ask and seek Him [Lu. 11:9-13]. We need to remember that life in Christ is a spiritual experience, and not simply self-discipline or intellectual assent to a creed or set of rules.

### **2. We need the Scriptures to grow in Christ [7-10]**

For the first three months, Paul went to the synagogue and would reason with the Jews using logic and passion to show how the Old Testament Scriptures reveal that Jesus is the Messiah [8]. When Paul was opposed by some of the Jews he moved away from the synagogue. During the midday while the School of Tyrannus was on break, Paul would use that space to teach the Scriptures [9]. After two years of teaching, the word of the Lord and His gospel spread through the whole city and the region [10]. Paul had taught the whole counsel of God [Ac. 20:20-27]. Thus, Paul did not avoid sensitive, unpopular, or even uncomfortable portions of the Scripture. He understood that the Bible is uniquely inspired by God and is profitable to learn doctrine, correction, reproof, and instruct us how to be right with God, be mature, and be prepared for what God has called us to be and do [2Tim. 3:16]. At Calvary Nexus, we emphasize teaching the Bible verse-by-verse. After spending the last 75 weeks studying the gospel of Matthew, we now begin a verse-by-verse study through Ephesians. Bible learning is necessary to be disciples [Matt. 28:16-20]. We encourage personal Bible reading and learning. We have Bible reading plans on our site to encourage this discipline.

## **C. How growth in Christ can transform an individual and community [Eph. 1:2, Ac. 19:18-27]**

**1. Grace and Peace:** grace is God's undeserved favor, and peace speaks of spiritual completeness. We are in Christ because of His grace. We have peace with God, and experience the peace of God, because we are in Christ.

**2. People turned to the true God:** they turned from false religions, philosophies, the occult, and idolatry [Ac. 19:26-27].

**3. The word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed:** The community became saturated with people learning about Jesus, His gospel, and the Word of God.

### Study Guide Qs

**Q1. What are some of the characteristics of your community that make it a challenging culture to follow Christ?**

**Q2. What have you been reading in the Bible lately? What are you learning, or how has God been speaking to you from the Scriptures?**

**Q3. Read Rev. 2:1-7 regarding Jesus' exhortation to the church at Ephesus. What does He commend them for, and what does He correct them about? What might it mean to "lose your first love"? What does Jesus say is the remedy for that condition? How have you applied these truths in your life?**

### "Digging Deeper" (optional or alternative study)

**1. In John 4 we read of Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman. Jesus emphasized that God is seeking worshipers who will worship in spirit and in truth [21-24]. Therein Jesus connects the need for the truth of the Scriptures and the work of the Holy Spirit. In what area were the Jews of Jerusalem likely lacking, and in what area were the Samaritans lacking? How would you like to be strengthened in both areas in this season?**

**2. Search the terms "Grieving the Spirit" and "Quenching the Spirit" [1 Th.5:19, Eph. 4:30]. How do these ideas impede our ability to be controlled and empowered by God's Spirit?**

**3. Search the terms "Baptism of the Spirit" and "Filling of the Spirit." What are some of the various views that you discovered. What did you discover and what questions arose?**

### Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?

2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?

3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Ask people that you play with how you can pray for them during the week.

**Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:**

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

**Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

**Leader Notes:**

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
  - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.