

Ephesians and Colossians

A note of introduction

Do you love a great mystery? Well get ready as Paul reveals God's "great mystery" in the books of Ephesians and Colossians! The apostle Paul writes these books from prison, probably in Rome around A.D. 60, as a source of **encouragement** to the first century Christians and **to us today**. The Christians of the first century dealt with many of the same temptations and struggles we do. We can learn much from Paul's advice and admonitions.

In the first half of Ephesians, Paul discusses **God's great plan** to redeem and unify the world. In the second half he gives practical advice on **living a Christian life**. The Ephesians were surrounded by false gods and great materialism. Ephesus was a mighty city and the center of Artemis/Diana worship (Acts 19:23-41), an enormous source of income. There was great opposition to the gospel being taught since this threatened the locals' livelihood. Although faithful at the time of Paul's writing, the church at Ephesus did not continue to follow the teaching put forth in the letter of Ephesians, since the Ephesian church is described as lawful but loveless in Revelation chapter 2. They are told if they do not return to their first love their lampstand/church will be removed. Would this warning be sent to your congregation today?

In Colossians, the theme of living a Christian life is continued as Paul stresses the **power and glory of Christ**. The Colossians struggled with false teachings. Although now extinct, Colosse was once a prominent city that had dwindled in size over the years. Despite its smallness, Paul took note of the faithful brothers in Christ there and sent them a letter. He prayed that God would fill the Colossians with the knowledge of His will so they would be able to see false teachings that relied on false humility, basic principles of this world and man's traditions (Colossians 2). Is your church, regardless of size or prominence, aware of the traps of human wisdom that threaten to keep the true gospel of Christ from bearing fruit?

Like other Illuminations studies, this workbook is designed to be completed on your own and then shared in a small group. The lessons are based on the New International Version of the Bible. You should be able to answer all the questions by examining the text, your heart, your experiences and occasionally your favorite dictionary. Sometimes you will be looking at Ephesians and Colossians simultaneously, studying scriptures from both when they approach the same subject or theme. Come prepared to share with your group what God has spoken to you through His Word during your weekly study.

The lessons are divided into a daily format so you can spread your study time out over several days and let God's words sink in as you pray for **clear understanding and spiritual wisdom**. Prayer is an integral part of this study. You will be asked to pray at the end of every study and sometimes during the lesson itself.

We give thanks to God for your willingness to open your heart to these lessons. We will not stop remembering you in our prayers.

Debbie McAfee and Marilyn Stinson

Ephesians and Colossians

God Has a Plan

Lesson 1 Eph. 1 & Col. 1:15-20, 26-28

Section 1: Read Ephesians 1:1-8

1. The author of Ephesians introduced himself as Paul, an apostle of Christ. By whose authority/will did Paul become an apostle?
2. a. Where was the apostle Paul when he wrote to encourage and admonish the saints at Ephesus (Eph. 3:1; 4:1)?
b. Recall a time when someone encouraged you even though they were involved in a great trial of their own.
3. a. Paul often referred to “saints” in Ephesians (1:1, 15, 18; 3:18; 6:18) and Colossians (1:4, 12, 26). In the verses below what are some blessings of being a saint?
I Sam. 2:9 _____
Psalm 34:9 _____
Rom. 8:27 _____
Col. 1:26 _____
Jude 3 _____
b. Share which blessings of being a saint encourage you the most. Why?
4. a. List several things Paul said God has blessed you with in verses 3-8.
b. Discuss how one of these blessings affects your daily walk with the Lord.

Section 2: Read Ephesians 1:7-12 & Colossians 1:26-28

5. What is God’s plan/will that is mentioned in Ephesians 1:9-10?

6. a. How is the mystery mentioned defined by the following scriptures?
Rom. 16:25-26 _____
Eph. 3:6 _____
Col. 1:26-28 _____
I Tim. 3:16 _____
- b. In your own words, state what the mystery is.

Section 3: Read Ephesians 1:13-14

7. What is the role of each of the following in the fulfillment of God's plan?
- The Father's part (3-6).
 - Jesus' part (7-12).
 - The Spirit's part (13-14).
 - Your part (12-13).
8. a. Give the dictionary definition of "deposit."
- b. What does the deposit of the Holy Spirit guarantee?
- c. Using your experience in the world of "putting down a deposit," describe what the Holy Spirit has done for you.

Section 4: Read the prayer offered up for the saints by Paul in Ephesians 1:15-23

9. a. What had Paul heard about the Christians in Ephesus and what response had this evoked from him?
- b. Share a time in your life that you had a similar response to believers with these characteristics.
- 10.a. About what 3 things did Paul pray the Ephesians would be enlightened?

10.b. Stop now and pray these three things for your group. How do you expect God to bring about the changes for which you have prayed?

Section 5: Read Ephesians 1:19-23 and Colossians 1:15-20

11.a. What did God put under Christ's rule (Eph. 1:10, 20-23)?

b. From your knowledge of the Old Testament, describe how God's people act when they have a strong ruler (e.g. Joshua or David) versus when they have a weak ruler (e.g. Rehoboam or Ahab).

c. What do you think the church would be like today without Christ as the head?

12. Fill in the blanks from Col. 1:16-18. By Christ all things were created: things in heaven and on _____, visible and _____, whether thrones or powers or _____ or authorities; all things were created by _____ and for _____. He is _____ all things, and in Him all things hold _____...so that in _____ He might have the _____.

13.a. What is the dictionary definition of "supremacy/supreme?"

b. In what area(s) of your life have you failed to let Christ have supremacy?

c. What blessings do you receive when you live like ALL THINGS were created by Christ and He has supremacy in EVERYTHING?

Praise God now in prayer for revealing His plan and for the spiritual blessings you receive through Jesus Christ having supremacy in your life!