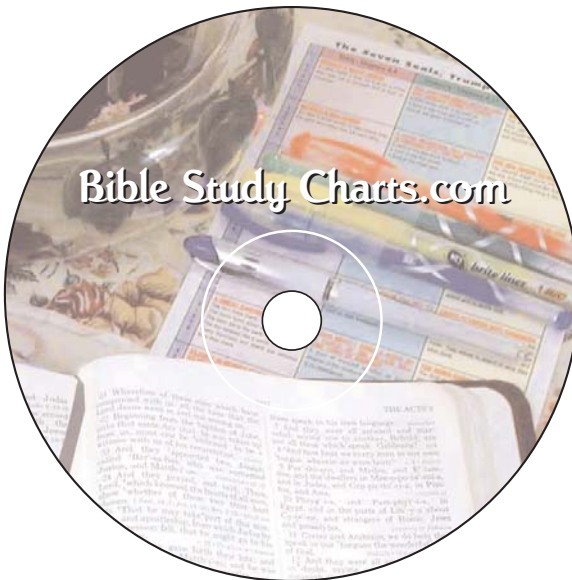


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THE OUTLINE OF EPHESIANS

Formal opening, 1:1-2

- I. A doxology of doctrine: the position of believers in the exalted Christ, 1:3-3:21
 - A. The eternal purpose of God for His people, 1:3-14
 1. Preamble: the God of all blessings (v. 3)
 2. God's eternal plan to bless us (vv. 4-6)
 3. The realization of these blessings in time (vv. 7-14)
 - B. Prayer for the believer's understanding, 1:15-23
 1. For a spirit of wisdom and revelation (v. 17)
 2. For inner enlightenment (vv. 18-19)
 3. For grasp of the power displayed in Christ (vv. 20-23)
 - C. Our present salvation: contrast with the past, 2:1-22
 1. From death to life (vv. 1-10)
 1. From alien status to citizenship (vv. 11-22)
 - D. Paul's ministry in preaching and prayer, 3:1-21
 1. Paul's stewardship in the gospel (vv. 1-13)
 2. Prayer for the readers (vv. 14-21)
- II. Practical instruction: a walk worthy of our standing, 4:1-6:20
 - A. The functioning of the Body of Christ, 4:1-16
 1. The unity of the Spirit (vv. 1-6)
 2. A diversity of gifts (vv. 7-11)
 3. Functioning together toward maturity (vv. 12-16)
 - B. The walk of the new man, 4:17-5:21
 1. The condition of unbelievers (4:17-19)
 2. Conversion to a new way of life (4:20-24)
 3. Putting on "the new man" (4:25-31)
 4. Living as children of God (5:1-7)
 5. The difference between light and darkness (5:8-17)
 6. Being filled with the Spirit (5:18-21)
 - C. Christian family life, 5:22-6:9
 1. Wives and husbands (5:22-33)
 2. Children and parents (6:1-4)
 3. Slaves and masters (6:5-9)
 - D. A call to arms, 6:10-20

Conclusion, 6:21-24

The theme of Ephesians

There are certain emphases that characterize Ephesians, and a brief mention of these will help you prepare for a closer study of the contents of the letter.

In contrast with Colossians, there is a similar emphasis on the preeminence of Christ, on His headship over all things and over the church, on His exalted place as Lord over all creation—[1:10](#), [20–23](#) provide good examples. Where Colossians emphasizes Christ's preeminent place, Ephesians develops a truth only barely touched on in Colossians, namely, that believers being in Christ, have an exalted standing with Him. In one sense, the entire first three chapters of Ephesians describe that position we have as believers in Him.

There is also an emphasis placed on the Holy Spirit. As noted, [Colossians 1:8](#) is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in that letter. Ephesians stands in obvious contrast, with the Holy Spirit mentioned in [1:13](#), [17](#); [2:18](#); [3:5](#), [16](#); [4:3–4](#), [30](#); [5:9](#), [18](#); [6:17–18](#). Among other things, the possession of the Spirit within is seen as part of the believer's spiritual treasure in Christ in Chapters 1–3. As such, He is both "seal" ([1:13](#); [4:30](#)) and "pledge" ([1:14](#)). Most important, in chapters 4–6 the believers' relationship to the Spirit is seen as the secret of victorious living. Being filled with the Spirit ([5:18](#)) at least includes experiencing a full measure of the unity that the Spirit creates ([4:3–4](#)), not grieving the Spirit ([4:30](#)), and yielding the fruit of the Spirit ([5:9](#)). It also manifests itself in a special way in the believers' community life ([5:18–21](#)).

Finally, one of the emphasis of Ephesians is certainly the church as the Body of Christ, meaning especially the church in general rather than its local manifestation. When most of Paul's letters use the word church, particular local churches are meant. Colossians and Ephesians, however, turn our attention to the so-called invisible church. Ephesians develops this theme in detail. Thus [1:22–23](#) begins the treatment; [2:19–22](#) presents the church not only as God's household but as a house—a temple—being built for Him to inhabit. And [4:4–16](#) (especially [vv. 11–16](#)) is as helpful a picture of the functioning of the church as can be found. Finally, the section [15:25–33](#) is unique, comparing the church to Christ's bride.

Paul's purposes in writing Ephesians

The Colossians' need for correction and Onesimus's return to his master produced the letters to the Colossians and Philemon. Tychichus and Onesimus delivered those letters. Apparently Paul decided to write Ephesians to be delivered at the same time, to the same general area.

These assumptions provide us with a general purpose for Ephesians. Paul wrote to expound further some of the themes touched on in Colossians. Not that the heresy at Colosse was equally threatening at the other churches in Asia. In that case he would have sent Colossians to them all. But Paul knew that falsehood has a way of spreading, and so he wanted to share some of the same truths with other churches in the area. Some have compared Colossians to the "pound of cure," and Ephesians to the "ounce of prevention."

Beyond this we can only tell about Paul's purposes only by what he wrote. Obviously he wanted to give teaching on the standing of believers in Christ ([chaps. 1–3](#)), on a Spirit-controlled walk that is worthy of that standing ([chaps. 4–6](#)), and on the need for a strong stand in the battle against the forces of evil ([6:10–20](#)). Some have called this the wealth, walk, and warfare of the believers, a popular summary that is better than many such oversimplifications.