

In Christ: The message of Ephesians

Abby Van Solkema

What is the church? Do you remember the answer to this question from your *Essentials* catechism book? “*The church is the elect body of Christ, which is revealed on earth as the gathering of elect believers and their seed.*”¹ The epistle of Paul to the Ephesians elaborates on this basic truth by presenting us with several more descriptive terms for the church. In chapter 1 we are reminded that the church is a body (vv. 22–23), a picture that is further described in chapter 4 and various other places in Scripture as well. Paul also refers to the church as “the household of God” (2:19), a “building fitly framed together” (2:21), a “holy temple” (2:21), and the “habitation of God” (2:22). In the familiar passage on marriage in Ephesians 5, the church is described as the bride of Christ (vv. 23–32). And in the final chapter of Ephesians, we learn that the church is a soldier, called to put on the armor of God to fight against the devil and all his powers of evil.

1 Herman Hoeksema & Herman Hanko, *Essentials of Reformed Doctrine: A Guide in Catechetical Instruction* (2002), 50.

As you will see in your reading of Ephesians this month, each of these different descriptive pictures of the church in Scripture teaches us an important lesson about how its members should live in the spheres of church, world, and home. But the most important lesson they teach us is that the church would not exist apart from Christ. What is a body without its head? What is a building without its chief cornerstone? What is a bride without her groom? The Holy Spirit led Paul to see that the glory and victory of the church is not in who its members are and what they can do, but in the person and work of Christ. Christ is the head and leader of the church and the foundation on which the church rests.

The first three chapters of Ephesians contain powerful doctrinal truths that highlight the extent of God’s grace to us in Christ. Through Christ, God unites his chosen people unto himself and “bless[es] us with all spiritual blessings” (1:3). We cannot receive any of these blessings, great or small, apart from Christ, and we

receive these blessings on no other condition than being in Christ. In Christ, we are adopted, accepted, redeemed, and forgiven (1:5–7). In Christ, we are confident that an eternal inheritance is waiting for us in heaven (1:11). In Christ, we have the Holy Spirit in us so that we can experience a small taste of this inheritance while still on this earth (1:13–14).

You may be wondering, how is the church “in Christ”? Since this relationship between Christ and the church is spiritual, not physical, it is often difficult for us to understand. Ephesians 5:32 refers to it as “a great mystery” for good reason. But by faith, we can trust that this connection is real. Though it defies human comprehension, the church’s union with Christ provides incredible comfort for every child of God. As the popular hymn expresses so beautifully, “what heights of love, what depths of peace” are found “in Christ alone!”²

In the latter three chapters of Ephesians, Paul applies this doctrine by showing how those who have been redeemed are called to live as the body of Christ for the glory of God. The truth of our union with Christ is a help and encouragement to us as we seek to “walk as children of light” in this dark world (5:8). We know that we could never do

these things apart from him. In Christ, we are able to live in unity with our fellow believers in the church. In Christ, we are able to walk a path that is radically different from the world around us. In Christ, we are able to faithfully serve in whatever role God has given us, whether it be child or parent, mother or father, master or servant. In Christ, we are equipped to wake up every single morning and fight our daily battle against sin and Satan.

As you read the book of Ephesians this month, take time to marvel at the “exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (2:7). Then pray with a thankful heart that he will help you to “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (4:15).

Abby is a wife and mother in the home. She attends Trinity Protestant Reformed Church with her husband, Tedd, and three children

2 Keith Getty & Stuart Townend, “In Christ Alone,” www.gettymusic.com, accessed April 15, 2022.

Date	Read	Study	Psalter
June 8	Ephesians 1:1-6	How is the truth of predestination a comfort to you as a child of God?	3
June 9	Ephesians 1:7-10	What do you learn about the riches of God's grace from the phrase "he hath abounded toward us"?	125
June 10	Ephesians 1:11-14	What is the promise of being sealed with the Holy Spirit?	126
June 11	Ephesians 1:15-19	Why does Paul pray that the believers would increase in their knowledge of God? Do you pray for this as well?	131
June 12	Ephesians 1:20-23	What does it mean that Christ is the head of the church?	133
June 13	Ephesians 2:1-7	What amazing work has the grace of God accomplished in you according to these verses? Have you thanked God for his great mercy and love today?	137
June 14	Ephesians 2:8-10	What is the role of good works in the life of a Christian according to these verses? Why do you think there is so often controversy over this issue in the church?	180
June 15	Ephesians 2:11-17	How did Christ's death remove the division between Jews and Gentiles?	182
June 16	Ephesians 2:17-22	What does it mean that Christ is the chief cornerstone of the church?	186
June 17	Ephesians 3:1-7	What was the "mystery" that Paul was given to make known to the people? Why is this good news for you?	207
June 18	Ephesians 3:8-10	What are the "riches of Christ" that Paul was called to preach to the Gentiles? What does he mean when he says they are "unsearchable"?	211
June 19	Ephesians 3:11-13	How does the "boldness and access" that believers have in Christ impact your own prayer life?	220
June 20	Ephesians 3:14-19	What spiritual blessings does Paul ask of God for the church at Ephesus? Do you regularly include these things in your prayers?	238
June 21	Ephesians 3:20-21	What is the primary purpose of the church? How can you carry out this purpose?	275

June 22	Ephesians 4:1-3	Why is it necessary for the church to work to maintain unity? How do the members do this according to verse 2?	277
June 23	Ephesians 4:4-6	What eternal realities that are listed in this verse serve as an example for the unity of the church?	278
June 24	Ephesians 4:7-12	How can difference in spiritual gifts unite the body of Christ instead of dividing it?	279
June 25	Ephesians 4:13-16	What is the relationship between spiritual maturity and maintaining unity in the church?	280
June 26	Ephesians 4:17-24	Why must Christians live differently from those in the world around us?	281
June 27	Ephesians 4:25-32	What are some specific ways that the behavior of a Christian should be different from that of an unbeliever?	283
June 28	Ephesians 5:1-7	What will your life look like if you are walking in love? What will it look like if you are walking down the wrong path?	306
June 29	Ephesians 5:8-14	What is the light that shows you the right path to take in this life?	368
June 30	Ephesians 5:15-16	Do you spend your time wisely? How could you improve in this area?	381
July 1	Ephesians 5:17-21	How does the life of someone who is filled with the Spirit differ from someone who is filled with the intoxicating things of this world?	402
July 2	Ephesians 5:22-24, 33	Why are wives called to submit to and respect their husbands?	403
July 3	Ephesians 5:25-33, 6:4	Why are husbands called to lead their families in love?	407
July 4	Ephesians 6:1-3	Why are children called to obey their parents?	408
July 5	Ephesians 6:5-9	Why are slaves and masters called to be faithful in the roles that God has given them?	419
July 6	Ephesians 6:10-17	How does the fact that you are always engaged in spiritual warfare impact your daily life?	421
July 7	Ephesians 6:18-24	How does prayer equip you in your daily fight against the devil?	425