

A *Discover Together*
BIBLE STUDY

by Sue Edwards

Ephesians

*Discovering Your Identity
and Purpose in Christ*



LEADER'S GUIDE

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Publications

Ephesians: Discovering Your Identity and Purpose in Christ
Leader's Guide
©2013 Sue Edwards

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Before You Begin . . .

I'm delighted that you've chosen *Ephesians: Discovering Your Identity and Purpose in Christ* to enrich your understanding of God's Word and help others in the process. Familiarize yourself with this overview as you prepare to lead the study and invite women to join you.

You'll want to acquaint yourself and your students with the resources available to enhance your study experience:

- *Videos.* Supplemental teaching videos of various lengths are available for individual or group use at www.discovertogetherseries.com. For quick access with your smart phone or other handheld device, QR codes within each lesson correspond to these videos. These videos contain personal testimonies, related stories, and historical background. The introductory video can be used in your initial gathering to excite and inform your students as they embark on this adventure together.
- *Digging Deeper.* Some women will want to work the optional Digging Deeper questions located in the margins of the study guide. Determine with your group how you want to use these study prompts. You may want to include them in your discussion, use them at the end if time allows, or simply suggest that women who want to spend more time in deeper study work on these on their own. If a particular woman shows an aptitude for Scripture study, you may want to ask her to tackle a particular Digging Deeper question and report her findings in the next session. Then ask if any other women also worked on that particular Digging Deeper, widening the discussion if possible.
- *Quotes, Background Info, and Extras.* Soak up the inspiring sidebars that relate to particular parts of each lesson. If any especially resonates with you, use it as a springboard for discussion or personal application.

In addition, there is a "Training Guide for Small-Group Leaders" available at www.discovertogetherseries.com.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Many Christian women don't know who they are or why they are on earth—their identity or purpose. Paul wrote Ephesians to tell them. In six chapters, Paul gives us the tools to live an abundant Christian



life. Almost every word is pregnant with meaning and significance. This study will walk you through the epistle verse by verse so that you don’t miss any of its treasures. Encourage women in your group to set aside quality time during the week to work through each lesson. Promise them rich rewards if they do.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

We can think about the structure of the book in several ways. First, like so many of Paul’s letters, the book divides easily into two halves. The first half, chapters 1–3, shows us what God has done for us. We could label this half the doctrinal portion of the letter. The second half, chapters 4–6, tells us how we should live as a result of the marvelous redemption God provided in Christ.

The second half can also be divided into two parts: first, how to live in the midst of this world (4:1–6:9); second, how to live in response to our enemy, Satan, and the reality of spiritual warfare (6:10–24).

There is another way, however, to see the structure of the book, based on three action verbs—*sit*, *walk*, and *stand*. Your lessons are organized according to these three key words. The great Chinese writer and preacher Watchman Nee argues that the book is best seen in this light:

In the first section of the letter, we note the word *sit* (2:6 κτν) which is the key to that section and the secret of a true Christian experience. God has made us to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, and every Christian must begin his spiritual life from that place of rest. In the second part we select the word *walk* (4:1) as expressive of our life in the world, which is its subject. We are challenged there to display in our Christian walk conduct that is in keeping with our high calling. And finally, in the third part we find the key to our attitude toward the enemy contained in the one word *stand* (6:11), expressive of our place of triumph to the end. Thus we have:

1. Our Position in Christ—“SIT” (2:6)
2. Our Life in the World—“WALK” (4:1)
3. Our Attitude to the Enemy—“STAND” (6:11)¹

EMPHASIS ON THE SUPERNATURAL AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Several years ago, a witch attended my Bible study for the entire fall semester. Her Christian neighbor invited her. Knowing of her presence, I commented from the lectern that there were “no good witches.” She leaned over to her neighbor and

whispered, “Oh yes, there are.” She completed her lessons, participated in the small-group discussion, and prayed with the group. But she did not return in the spring. I suspect her neighbor still prays for her to leave Wicca and come to faith in Jesus.

Interest in alternative spiritualities such as Wicca and goddess worship is growing in America. Interest in institutionalized religion is waning, but people are fascinated by the spiritual. CNN interviews psychics, and the soaps feature supernatural story lines—a phenomenon that would have shocked and repelled viewers twenty years ago. Check out the prime-time TV lineup. New shows feature psychics, mediums, and witches. The culture, once ruled by rationalism, now values the supernatural. And the culture is at least partially correct—the supernatural is real and spiritual warfare exists.

The topic of “spiritual warfare” has captured the attention of many Christians during the past decade. Exorcism, deliverance ministry, territorial spirits, magic, witchcraft, sorcery, the occult, mother goddess traditions, and communicating with spirits are just a few of the issues Christians have been discussing. The interest in the supernatural has caused many believers to search the Scriptures anew for biblical perspectives on these issues. Ephesians, possibly more than any other book in the Bible, provides insight into this battle. Satan strategizes to destroy our lives and God’s work on the earth, but Ephesians also shows us how to arm ourselves God’s way for spiritual warfare. Ephesians is the first place most people turn for biblical teaching on spiritual warfare because it provides extensive teaching about the believers’ struggle with the powers of darkness, culminating with the well-known passage about the armor of God.² As you lead women through the lessons, note this theme.

WILL YOU END WITH A WRAP-UP MESSAGE?

Leading small groups and teaching are different skills. The “Training Guide for Small-Group Leaders” provides sound principles to help you lead your group. Note that when you wear your small-group leader’s hat, you do not lecture. But you may want to end your time by putting on a teacher’s hat. Participants often enjoy hearing a message to crystallize biblical truth.

Your wrap-up might be a ten-minute informal presentation, allowing for interaction and questions, or a forty-five-minute formal lecture, more like a pastor’s Sunday message. If your study consists of several small groups, you may prefer a formal lecture. If you’re meeting in a home, your group may prefer a more interactive format. Use what works for you and your group.

If you believe that God may want you to teach the Bible, step out and try. Resources to sharpen your teaching skills are provided on the following pages. Women love to hear their own leaders teach them rather than hear virtual teachers on DVD or over

the Internet. At first, your skills may not be as honed as those of more experienced teachers, but in time and with practice, you should improve. And you have advantages over a virtual teacher. Women need models they can watch, hug, and talk to. And when one of their own steps out and is used by God, it inspires everyone to step forward and use their gifts, too. So if something in you says, “teach!”—then go for it!

AN INTRODUCTORY LECTURE IDEA

If you plan to include lecture in your format, the first week you meet you may want to familiarize the women with Paul’s adventures in Ephesus found in Acts 19. The setting of the book is critical in understanding why Paul wrote about spiritual warfare in his letter to the Ephesians. As you consider the culture there, and compare it to ours, you will equip the women to study the letter with added insight. Emphasize the fact that Ephesus was the occult center of the Roman Empire and that America is fast becoming a similar kind of place.

ENLIST WOMEN TO TEACH WITH YOU

Other women have something to say that would benefit the group. Listen attentively when they tell how God works in their lives. Identify women who inspire others. Who holds a high view of the Bible and has spent time studying? Who walks close to Jesus? Who lives wisely? Who is articulate? Passionate? Growing? Mature? Organized in their thinking?

If you add a teaching element to your Bible study format, consider asking one of these women to share a short testimony or deliver the message for the entire group that week. She will need a cooperative attitude. When you give a woman the platform, you give her influence. I’ve worked with a few women who took advantage of this opportunity. They spoke twice as long as time allotted. Or they refused to prepare, wandering aimlessly. Or they became so emotional that they broke down, upsetting women in the study.

To alleviate these problems, set a time limit and ask women to write out what they will say. Insist they review their message with you. Stress that if they’re a “time hog,” group time will be shorter, irritating group participants. Use wisdom as you select women presenters, but consider how much women will benefit by hearing a variety of voices.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU TEACH WITH ACCURACY AND SKILL

- LaFever, Marlene D. *Creative Teaching Methods*. Colorado Springs, CO: Cook Ministry Resources, 1985.
- Mathews, Alice P. *Preaching That Speaks to Women*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003.
- Robinson, Haddon. *Biblical Preaching: The Development and Delivery of Expository Messages*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001. (See also <http://christiancourses.com> for an online course.)
- Stanley, Andy, and Lane Jones. *Communicating for a Change*. Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah, 2006.
- Stott, John. *Between Two Worlds: The Art of Preaching in the Twentieth Century*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.
- Willhite, Keith, and Scott Gibson, eds. *The Big Idea of Biblical Preaching: Connecting the Bible to People*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU STUDY THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

- Arnold, Clifton E. *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992.
- McGee, J. Vernon. *Ephesians*. Thru the Bible Commentary Series. Vol. 47. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991.
- Snodgrass, Klyne. *Ephesians*. The NIV Application Commentary Series. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.
- Stott, John R. W. *The Message of Ephesians*. The Bible Speaks Today. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979.

LESSON 1

Learn to Sit

GET ACQUAINTED

Open with prayer. Should you pray or invite one of the participants to do so? Be sensitive to the women. If they're comfortable praying out loud, give them opportunity. If not, you, as the leader, pray. Then spend some time getting to know one another. You might, for example, ask each woman to introduce herself by telling something about family, hobbies, what she likes to do on a Saturday night, a pet peeve, or what she hopes to gain from the study. If time allows, spend your first meeting connecting with questions or icebreaker games.

For an extended community builder, ask participants to create a list of words that describe who they are. In explaining the exercise, you might ask them to answer the question, "How might you introduce yourself to a stranger who desires to learn more about you?" After they have compiled and shared their lists, explain that this study may change their perceptions of who they are. Keep their lists and ask them to complete this exercise again after you finish *Ephesians: Discovering Your Identity and Purpose in Christ*. Women may find it enlightening to compare the two lists as a way to measure what they have learned.

GET FOCUSED

Look over the study guide with your group and express your excitement about the topic. Discuss ground rules. If women join later, remember to orient them. Stress the importance of confidentiality.

Some women come to Bible study for the sole purpose of studying Scripture. Others come for community, to find friends. Regardless of your own bent, honor both desires. We all need a relationship with God through serious Bible study, *and* we all need relationships through connecting in authentic community. Be sure the schedule reflects time for both.

DISCUSS LESSON 1

To enhance your small-group leading skills, study the "Training Guide for Small-Group Leaders." Leading a small group is a complex skill, requiring lots of practice. Be patient and reread the training guide often.



If you did not have a separate meeting time for an introductory lecture, begin by discussing the “Historical Background” (pages 9–10). Stress the setting to help women grasp the underlying theme related to spiritual warfare. Explain the structure of the study centered around the three action verbs—*sit*, *walk*, and *stand* (explained above).

LESSON CONTENT

The first fourteen verses of Ephesians are a majestic hymn of praise to God. In verse 3, Paul is praising God because he has “blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” Then Paul lists specific blessings in verses 4–14. The lesson walks your group through each blessing one by one. Notice there is a qualification to receive these spiritual blessings: one must be “in Christ.” This phrase is repeated more than forty times in the letter. Help group members understand that these blessings are true about them only if they belong to God the Father through Jesus Christ.

One way to enumerate the spiritual blessings in verses 4–14 can be as follows: believers are chosen (vv. 4–5, 11), rich (v. 6), redeemed (v. 7), forgiven (vv. 7–8), blessed forever because we know our future (vv. 9–10), and we have a guarantee—the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14). If you end the group time with a wrap-up lecture, you may want to consider these blessings as the outline for your message.

As we understand these blessings, we change our view of who we are in Christ. A flawed identity discourages and limits women. But when we understand our true identity in Christ, as expressed in these first fourteen verses of Ephesians, we can change the way we live, because we know who we are.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Verse 3 says we are “blessed in the heavenly realms.” This phrase often confuses students. Some mistakenly assume these are future blessings we will enjoy when we get to heaven. But note that Paul used the past tense. We are already blessed with these spiritual blessings. Ephesians 2:6 sheds light on Paul’s meaning: “And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.” The Bible says that, in a positional sense, believers *are* seated with Christ in the heavens—right now!

Another way to think about this idea is to envision reality in three realms or dimensions. First, picture the highest realm—God the Father is there with Christ seated at his right hand. Below is the realm of angels, ministering spirits, both good and evil. And below that is the realm of people and things—the place where we live now—the material world occupied by both believers and unbelievers. Many people live as if the only realm that exists is the lowest realm. But the Bible refutes that error.

Although we are in one sense now tied to the lower realm of people and things, Ephesians 2:6 tells us that in reality we are positionally seated with Christ in the highest heavenly realm. Note that this upper realm is above the realm of Satan and evil spirits. Our heavenly position reveals that as long as we sit with Christ in the heavenly realms, Satan cannot defeat us. He is under the feet of Christ, and we sit *with* Christ so he is under our feet too, as long as we abide in Christ. This picture enables us to understand and experience victory over Satan and his strategies. Help your group grasp this important truth!

We must learn to sit, to rest, in Christ in the heavenly places. This rest is our birthright as believers. Every Christian must begin her spiritual life from that place of rest. Everything else is predicated on this principle. Be sure your group also grasps this concept before they move on in the study.

CREATIVE ARTS IDEAS

- Give each woman a fake million dollar bill. Contrast the value of this money with the immeasurable value of her spiritual blessings in Christ in the heavenly realms.
- Create and then laminate a bookmark or picture with verses that express who we are in Christ. For example, in addition to the blessings in Ephesians 1:4–14, you might consider the following:
 - a. You are a child of God (John 1:12).
 - b. You are a member of God's royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9).
 - c. You are a joint heir with Christ (Rom. 8:17).
 - d. You are a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).
 - e. You are a friend of Christ (John 15:15).
 - f. You are born of God and the enemy cannot touch you (1 John 5:18).
 - g. You are free from condemnation (Rom. 8:1).
 - h. You are established, anointed, and sealed by God (2 Cor. 1:21–22).
 - i. You will be with the Lord forever (1 Thess. 4:15–18).

IN PARTING

Point out that there is a prayer log at the end of next week's lesson. Encourage women to use it for monitoring their prayer life during the upcoming week.

LESSON 2

Sit and Pray

LESSON CONTENT

This lesson looks at two great Pauline prayers as an incentive to help women pray consistently and to consider the content of their prayers. Normally, my lessons walk you through the text sequentially, but studying these prayers in tandem seemed fitting.

Be careful. Studying prayer often causes women to feel guilty. After all, who among us prays enough? Satan can use guilt to discourage us from praying. Work to create an atmosphere where women are inspired to pray more—not because they should, but because they want to. Set this tone by taking on the attitude of a fellow struggler and by setting an accepting atmosphere.

CREATE A POSITIVE GROUP ETHOS

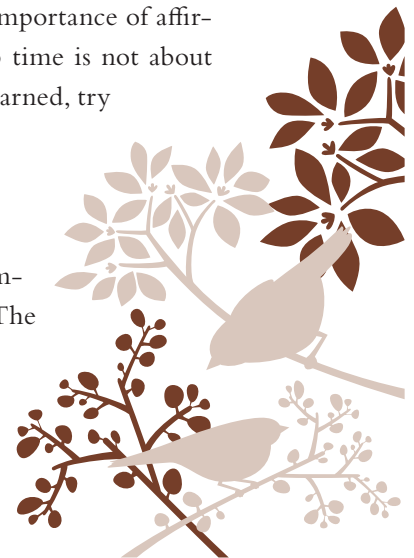
Ethos (e-thas) is the distinguishing environment or atmosphere of a group. Its character, if you will. As the leader you set the ethos, and although you cannot see it, women respond or shut down in response. Every home has ethos. In some homes children experience unconditional love and fair discipline. As a result they usually grow up confident and secure. Other homes exude a chill—children walk on eggshells knowing that performance earns affection, easily withdrawn when they mess up.

Ethos impacts classrooms. In some classes, you are comfortable asking questions, even dumb ones. You know the teacher won't intentionally embarrass you and has your best interest at heart. In others, you don't dare open your mouth. Why? Ethos.

And women in your small group are influenced by the ethos you create. Will it be a place where women can voice their deep hurts and difficult questions? Can women be honest and do business with God in your group? Only then can the process of forgiveness and healing take root. To learn how to create positive group ethos, review the "Training Guide for Small-Group Leaders," focusing on the importance of affirmation and controlling your own talking. Remember the group time is not about you! It's about giving the women a safe place to discuss what *they* learned, try out *their* new ideas, and articulate *their* convictions.

TROUBLESHOOTING

In question 13, women are asked to designate what kind of "incomparably great power" Paul is talking about in Ephesians 1:19a. The answer is *resurrection* power! Every Christian has access to the



power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead and then seat Jesus at his right hand in the heavenly realms. Help women see that they must learn to draw on that power in accordance with God’s will. When they do, they have all they need to enjoy victory over circumstances and pursue God’s purposes in their lives.

Reiterate that to live well in Christ and for Christ, we must remember our seated position in him. Prayer is an important ingredient in the seated and restful life—our foundation.

If time permits, ask women what they learned as they filled in the prayer log and how they might use this tool to help them live in a constant attitude of prayer. Guard against the temptation to compare.

WILL YOU PRAY TOGETHER AS A GROUP?

Lesson 2 might be a good catalyst to discuss whether or not your group wants to pray together. Give them the freedom to decide either way. If they desire to spend time in conversational prayer, see the “Training Guide for Small-Group Leaders” for suggestions.

RESOURCE

Dean, Jennifer Kennedy. *Heart’s Cry: Principles of Prayer*. Birmingham, AL: New Hope, 1992.

LESSON 3

Sit Down to Work

LESSON CONTENT

Lesson 3 covers ten verses that spell out the relationship between grace and works. Women must learn to rest in Christ while doing the good works God wants them to do. This is a profound truth, a difficult concept to grasp, but basic and essential. Every other world religion teaches that good works earn God's acceptance. Christianity alone is founded on the truth that God reaches down to us with grace. Grace is God's complete provision apart from and in spite of anything we have done or can do. We must learn to sit before we walk!

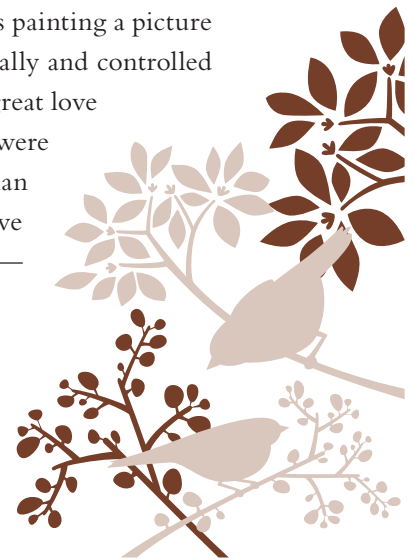
In the normal Christian life, believers work out of gratitude for his grace and mercy. This thinking is unnatural to our finite minds—attesting to the reality that this is God's way and not man's. Only God would create a salvation based on grace instead of works. God's work in us always comes before his work through us.

If women in your group struggle with this concept, don't let the discussion disintegrate into an argument. Let women articulate their ideas and then call on women whom you know understand this foundational Christian doctrine. Trust the Holy Spirit to lead women to believe this principle as they continue in their study of the Bible.

TROUBLESHOOTING

In the New International Version of the Bible, verse 2 ends with the word *disobedient*. This translation can easily lead women to think that if they ever disobey God, they may still be “dead in trespasses and sins.” The Greek word, however, is *apeitheia*, where we get our English word *apathetic*. A better translation is *unbelieving* or *unregenerate*. The first three verses of chapter 2 describe the unbeliever—the way we were. Paul writes in the past tense.

He is not claiming that Christians are never disobedient. He is painting a picture of the way we were *before* we came to faith. We were dead spiritually and controlled by Satan. Verses 4–5 set up a grand contrast: “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ.” We were dead but now we are alive. We still sin, but in the normal Christian life, we should sin less and less over the years. See the extensive note in lesson 7 (pages 93–94) for insight into abnormal Christians—people who are not experiencing more and more victory over sin.



INVITE WOMEN TO EXPERIENCE GOD’S GRACE

Are there women in your small group who may not be Christians? Pray that God will identify these women, help you discern their readiness, and show you how to encourage them toward a relationship with Jesus. Women who thought they were Christians may realize that they are not, and may need you to help them understand how to come to authentic faith. Other passages that clarify the gospel are 1 Corinthians 15:3, 5 (the gospel in a nutshell); Romans 3:23; 6:23; and John 5:24. Familiarize yourself with these verses in preparation. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your words and enable you to know what to say and when to say it. You may want to discuss how to become a Christian with the whole group and then challenge women to make a decision on their own or with you later. Tell them you would love to talk privately to anyone who would like to discuss salvation further. Use discretion, remembering salvation is the Spirit’s work, and that you must sit with Christ as you carry out his work of evangelism.

CREATIVE ARTS IDEAS

- If you lead a large Bible study with multiple small groups, decorate the stage with interesting chairs decked out with life-size figures of people with signs around their necks of phrases that relate to resting in Christ, such as “I’m seated with Christ in the heavenlies” or “Resting in the arms of my Savior.”
- Icebreaker: ask the women to tell about their favorite chair and why they like it.
- Play musical chairs as a fun activity to cement the concept of resting in Christ.

RESOURCES

Swindoll, Charles R. *The Grace Awakening*. Dallas: Word, 1990.

Yancey, Philip. *What’s So Amazing About Grace?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997.

LESSON 4

Sit Down Together

LESSON CONTENT

I live in a metropolitan city that is changing. Twenty years ago when I walked the aisle of my grocery store, I heard only English spoken. Today I hear multiple languages. My husband and I live on a canal and often walk there for exercise. We pass people of various ethnicities, many dressed in native garb, also out for a stroll on the waterway. The nations are in our neighborhoods, and our borders are dissolving. These changes have not taken God by surprise. How will the church respond? This passage can help us prepare for changing demographics already upon us.

Former Artemis worshippers and legalistic Jews came to faith in Ephesus and were called to fellowship and to serve Christ together in that metropolitan city. Paul's advice to them can guide us today. His strong message of unity, however, while respecting diversity, could make your group uncomfortable. Many of us harbor resentments toward people who are different, yet we are often unaware of these deep-seated prejudices. Help your group open their hearts and minds to Paul's advice as you work your way through the questions.

Reiterate that all views are respected. Remind the women that different views and even disagreements can be helpful, as long as we disagree with kindness and grace. We can all learn from one another and from God's Word. Pray that your group will be open to God's instructions in this lesson.

IN PARTING

- *A possible creative arts idea for next week:* Suggest that women attend the study in walking attire to illustrate the theme.

RESOURCES

DeYoung, Curtiss Paul, Michael O. Emerson, George Yancey, and Karen Chai Kim.

United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Evans, Anthony. *America's Only Hope.* Chicago: Moody, 1990.

Mathews, Tony. *There's More Than One Color in the Pew.* Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2003.

Perkins, John. *With Justice for All.* Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1982.



EPHESIANS: *Discovering Your Identity and Purpose in Christ*—Leader's Guide

Yancey, George. *Beyond Black and White: Reflections on Racial Reconciliation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996.

———. *One Body One Spirit: Principles of Successful Multiracial Churches*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

LESSON 5

Sit Down to Walk

LESSON CONTENT

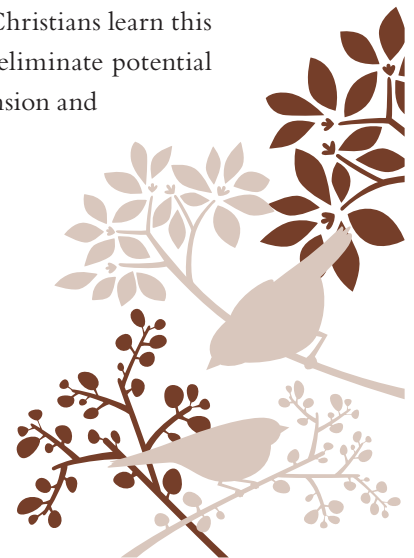
Remember the outline of Ephesians is based on three action verbs. Our first four lessons came under the action verb *sit*. We learned that positionally we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies, and we live the abundant Christian life from that place of rest. We also learned about our identity in Christ, the priority of prayer, who we were before we came to faith and who we are now, and the unity that Christ requires. In lesson 5 we begin lessons that come under the action verb *walk*. Lessons 5, 6, and 7 focus on how we are to walk worthy of our position and identity.

Lesson 5 reiterates the importance of unity but then moves quickly into the value of diversity in the church. Christ gave different gifts to each of us, not for our personal enjoyment, but to serve one another and win the lost to Jesus. As we all work together, we will mature, glorifying God in the process.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Verses 8–10 often confuse women. Paul is quoting several psalms in the Old Testament, which contain words similar to Psalm 68:18. The essence of these verses is that an ancient military victor had the right to give gifts to those who are identified with him. Christ, having redeemed a captive people, gives gifts to them, too.³ Don't get bogged down in a discussion of verses 8–10. Instead, focus on the fact that Jesus gives gifts to all believers. Then direct the discussion to ways we identify, use, and develop those gifts.

Verse 15 includes an interesting phrase, “truthing in love.” English translations include the word *speaking* before *truth* but that word is absent in the Greek. This phrase contains a critical and often overlooked lesson, required for harmony. We must tell each other the truth in a loving and gracious manner. If Christians learn this important principle, conflict will be diminished because we will eliminate potential problems before they fester in serious disagreements, causing dissension and destroying unity. Draw out discussion on this important text.



CREATIVE ARTS IDEAS

- Wrap a gift box for each participant, illustrating the reality that each woman has been given a gift for the building up of the church.
- Find a spiritual gifts test and administer it to the women to help them identify their spiritual gift(s).
- Suggest that women attend the study in walking attire to illustrate the theme.

RESOURCE

Wagner, Peter C. *Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1994.

LESSON 6

Tripping Over Your Tongue? Talk Your Walk!

LESSON CONTENT

Lesson 6 contains many opinion and sharing questions on an important topic—a runaway tongue. If many of the participants in your group talk too much or unwisely, consider dividing this lesson into two parts. Don't miss helping women rein in their tongues.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Question 24 asks, “What is the difference between gossip and slander?” *Gossip* is words that are true but inappropriate to share. *Slander* is false words, obviously not to be spoken. Help women in your group understand that both gossip and slander damage unity in the church, destroy relationships, and blacken God's reputation. The seriousness of this subject for women must not be understated.

CREATIVE ARTS IDEA

- Show a film clip illustrating a character who has lost control of his or her words.



LESSON 7

Walking “Under the Influence”

LESSON CONTENT

Have you ever considered how “driving while intoxicated” and walking under the influence of the Holy Spirit are alike? Both impact the way a person thinks and behaves. When people are drunk, their speech may be slurred and they may stumble. They have given themselves over to the control of a substance that is not good for them. In contrast, Christians can choose to put themselves under the influence of the Holy Spirit, giving control to God for good. They may find that they say things they did not know they could say and do things they did not know they could do. They may respond to irritants with patience and to a struggle with unexplained peace. This lesson covers numerous topics. As we cooperate with the Holy Spirit within us, we can overcome potential outcomes such as sexual indiscretions, greed, anger, and obscene, course language. Without God’s help we are easy prey for Satan in these vulnerable areas.

If you wrap up the study with a lecture, consider as your main idea contrasting the influence of alcohol and the Holy Spirit.

TROUBLESHOOTING

Verses 5–7 can easily lead women to believe that because they still sin, they are not Christians. Digest the detailed note within the lesson (on pages 93–94) to help women interpret these verses correctly and to clear up confusion over assurance of salvation.



LESSON 8

Walk Worthy in Relationships

LESSON CONTENT

Lesson 8 is the final lesson on walking, instructing us in key relationships—between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves.

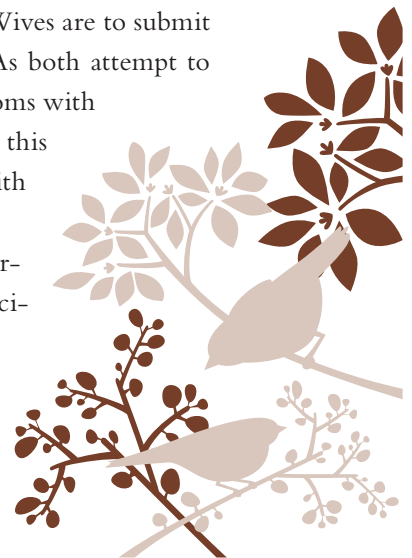
TROUBLESHOOTING

Often preachers and teachers compare the relationship between masters and slaves with bosses and workers, and some similarities exist, but there are also real differences. For example, workers can choose to leave their workplace; slaves could not. Masters had complete power over their slave’s personal as well as professional lives—not true for bosses today. Nevertheless, employees should work hard and respect their superiors, but bosses today should not expect complete obedience as masters did of slaves. Be careful in your application as you think through ways to apply verses 5–9 for today.

Instructions on the relationship between bosses and workers, however, won’t be your greatest challenge in this lesson. In some groups, expect fireworks when you discuss relationships between husbands and wives. The mere mention of the word *submission* causes some women’s blood pressure to rise. If participants bring unhealthy preconceived ideas to the discussion, you may have a heated interchange to control. If this is likely, I suggest you state this danger before women discuss the questions. If you include a lecture in your format, you might want to teach on the passage first. Normally, I recommend that you teach after the discussion, giving women opportunity to voice their ideas before you color them with your teaching. But if you believe your group will react emotionally to this lesson, consider teaching first.

Call attention to Ephesians 5:21, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” These words serve as the headline or subject of the entire passage, showing us the spirit in which we are to interact in all these relationships. Wives are to submit to their husbands and husbands are to sacrifice for their wives. As both attempt to out-submit and out-sacrifice for one another, their marriage blossoms with health and reciprocal love and respect. To prepare to teach or lead this lesson, see *Women and Men in Ministry* by Robert Saucy and Judith Tenelshof, and *Men and Women in the Church* by Sarah Sumner.

When discussing the questions on the relationship between parents and children, be sure to balance the admonitions to both discipline *and* nurture children. One without the other spells disaster.



Above all, help women understand that this lesson is based on the previous lesson. In other words, the only way anyone can walk worthy in relationships is to walk under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

RESOURCES

Saucy, Robert, and Judith Tenelshof, eds. *Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective*. Chicago: Moody, 2001.

Sumner, Sarah. *Men and Women in the Church*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

LESSON 9

Sit Down to Stand

LESSON CONTENT

Remember the action verbs that serve as our outline. Now we are ready to *stand* as we face spiritual warfare every day. Ephesians 6:10–24 instructs us to stand in the armor of God. Often this passage is taught as a list of things we must do to defeat Satan. Those who are always true, righteous, faithful, at peace, and know God’s Word are thoroughly armed and ready for battle. And these are worthy goals. But even if we possess these qualities, we cannot stand against Satan. The key to overcoming Satan’s strategies takes us back to the beginning of Ephesians. Only as we sit with Christ in the heavenly realms can we experience victory over evil. Jesus is our armor, and victory comes through his strength, as we abide in him. Emphasize this truth as you guide your small group through this final lesson. Be sure to save time for the last question set, “Conclusions and Endings.”

CREATIVE ARTS IDEAS

- Buy or rent the pieces of armor described in the passage and refer to them during the lesson. One of my students found them in a costume store and used them in my “Women Teaching Women” course as she taught this passage. She dressed herself in each piece of armor as she explained the text, to the delight of the rest of the class.
- Buy a metal knight and use as a visual aid. I found one that stands six feet tall in a local novelty store for a reasonable price and placed him next to me during the lecture. The impact was quite effective.

SAYING GOOD-BYE OR GOING ON TOGETHER?

Is this a short-term group, or do you, as the leader, want to continue meeting? The first decision is yours. Count the cost. Is the group thriving? Bonding? Committed? Worth the effort you are investing? Answer these questions honestly. Every group has a beginning and an end. Is this the time for your group to disband? If so, tell the group your reasons, kindly but emphatically. Don’t be pressured into continuing against your better judgment and God’s leading.

If you determine you’re excited about leading the group through



another study, you may want to poll the group to learn their desires. If they, too, wish to continue, plan a date to meet for a brainstorming session on what to study and what changes might be in order, if any.

Either way, use this last gathering of *Ephesians: Discovering Your Identity and Purpose in Christ* to reflect, review, and celebrate what has been accomplished. Plan a time that fosters a sense of closure, possibly festive food, a potluck brunch or luncheon, or some other special activity. An example of an activity might be writing a psalm of praise or listing benefits in the lives of women as a result of the study. Share changes you observed in the members as a result of sharing this study. In some way, celebrate this final chapter in your group experience. Praise and thank God for what he has done in your lives individually and as a worshipping community. If any of the participants are leaving the group, be sure to say good-bye and to pray for them.

NOTES

1. Watchman Nee, *Sit, Walk, Stand* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1977), 11–12.
2. Clifton Arnold, preface to *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), ix.
3. Harold Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, an exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Seminary Faculty, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 634.