

SPRING 2023

EPHESIANS

ALLIANCE BIBLE FELLOWSHIP
COLLEGE CONNECTION
Written by Dr. John LaShell

Welcome to the study of an amazing and rich epistle. My hope is that as you work through Ephesians –

1) You will become thoroughly Trinitarian in your daily walk with God.

2) You will see more clearly the importance of unity in the body of Christ and how you can foster that unity.

This letter of Paul teaches many other life-changing truths. Expect not only to learn, but also to be transformed by what God shows you. As an aid to the transforming power of this epistle, each lesson closes with what I am calling Heart-Health Verses. God’s word has its greatest effect in our lives as it sinks deeply into our hearts. Do not try to memorize these verses. Just read them aloud, looking at the text, ten times every day for the following week. Be sure to repeat the reference each time. The purpose is to drive the words of Scripture deep into your heart, not to memorize a verse the day before the test and then forget it. During your next small group meeting you can recite the previous week’s verse together. (Reading your verse(s) ten times should take you less than five minutes a day—often less than two minutes.)

When you are saturating your heart with God’s word, it is normally best to use the translation you plan to read for the rest of your life. (I learned many passages in the King James Version. When I switched to the New American Standard Version, much of what I had learned became garbled in my mind.) However, in this case, since you are working on this project as a group, I encourage you to use the translation printed in your workbook.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Week 1—Ephesians 1:1-14.....	3
Week 2—Ephesians 1:15-23.....	9
Week 3—Ephesians 2:1-10.....	15
Week 4—Ephesians 2:11-3:13	21
Week 5—Ephesians 3:14-21.....	27
Week 6—Ephesians 4:1-16.....	33
Week 7—Ephesians 4:17-32.....	39
Week 8—Ephesians 5:1-14.....	45
Week 9—Ephesians 5:15-21.....	51
Week 10—Ephesians 5:22-6:9.....	57
Week 11—Ephesians 6:10-24	63
Appendix.....	69



WEEK 1
EPHESIANS 1:1-14

THEME: THE TRIUNE GOD AND OUR SALVATION

BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK

The city of Ephesus, which is now a magnificent archeological site, sits on the western tip of Turkey. In Paul's day it was the chief city of the Roman province of Asia. On his second missionary journey, Paul stopped briefly in Ephesus, where he left his coworkers Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:18-28). On his third missionary journey, Paul spent between two and three years there (Acts 19:1-20:1 and 20:17-38). As a result of his ministry "all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). You might want to read these chapters in Acts on your own.

Paul wrote Ephesians while he was a prisoner in Rome waiting for his case to come before the emperor. Although Paul knew many people in Ephesus, he greets none of them by name. That seems strange, but perhaps the letter was supposed to be read not only in Ephesus, but also in the other cities in the region.

It has often been noted that chapters 1-3 are more doctrinal and chapters 4-6 are more practical, but this is a somewhat misleading dichotomy. The doctrines in chapters 1-3 are immensely practical, and the exhortations in chapters 4-6 are firmly grounded in Christian doctrine.

WARM UP QUESTION

In this first session, spend a few minutes allowing members of the group to introduce themselves. If you all know each other spend a few minutes catching up.

PRAYER SUGGESTION

We cannot read God's word with spiritual profit unless God Himself opens the eyes of our hearts to see what He is saying to us and to love Him more. Ask someone to pray for the Holy Spirit's help as you study God's word together.

OBSERVE AND INTERPRET

In this portion of the study you will use the following questions to gather observations from the text. Application to your own life comes later in the study.

Read **Ephesians 1:1-14** two times, possibly in different versions.

1. How does the author of the letter describe himself?

2. How does the author describe the recipients of the letter?

3. How does the passage describe God the Father? What does the Father do?

4. How does the passage describe Jesus? What part does Jesus play in our salvation?

5. How does the passage describe the Holy Spirit? What part does the Spirit play in our salvation? (See also Ephesians 4:30.)

6. What words and phrases do you see repeated in this section? Why are they important?

APPLY

1. How does this passage reassure anxious believers in Christ that their salvation is secure?

2. How does this passage stimulate our love for God?

3. What questions does this passage raise in your mind?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

You may briefly share prayer concerns either in the large group or in smaller groups. Thank the individual Persons of the Trinity for their role in your salvation.

HEART-HEALTH VERSE

Ephesians 1:3-4:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 1:1-14



WEEK 2
EPHESIANS 1:15-23

THEME: PAUL'S FIRST PRAYER FOR THESE BELIEVERS

WARM UP QUESTION

It is clear that God wants us to pray, but most believers have trouble praying, at least some of the time. What difficulties in prayer have you experienced?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Since you will be looking at how Paul prayed, perhaps it would be good to ask God to help you learn to pray better.

OBSERVE AND INTERPRET

In this portion of the study you will use the following questions to gather observations from the text. Application to your own life comes later in the study.

1. Which Person of the Trinity does Paul address in his prayers for the Ephesians? Why do you think he does this?
2. List and explain the things for which Paul prays. Are there any of these requests you don't understand?
3. What do you learn about God and Christ in this passage?
4. What do you learn about the church in this passage?

APPLY

1. For what things do you normally pray? How do your prayers compare with this prayer of Paul?

2. Why do you think Paul prays that God will enlighten their hearts regarding certain truths? How would your life change if your heart grasped these truths more fully?

3. The church is the body of Christ. What is your part in the body? In other words, what is your place or purpose or function in the church?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Often we pray for the sick or we pray for material needs or for help in work or school. We ought to do that, but this passage suggests that we can do more. As Paul prayed for the spiritual needs of the Ephesians, you might share some of your spiritual needs with each other so that you can pray for each other better.

HEART-HEALTH VERSES

Ephesians 1:18-19a:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 1:15-23



WEEK 3
EPHESIANS 2:1-10

THEME: SALVATION BY GRACE ALONE

WARM UP QUESTION

What have you earned or done that you are most proud of? (Your first check for working at Chick-fil-A? Your trophy in a tiddlywinks competition? Climbing Mount Everest?)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Ask God to stir your hearts with deeper appreciation for His grace in the gospel as you study this passage.

OBSERVE AND INTERPRET

In this portion of the study you will use the following questions to gather observations from the text. Application to your own life comes later in the study.

1. Begin by looking for repeated words in the passage. List these below.

2. How many truths about salvation can you find in this passage? (Hint: Our need for salvation; God's purpose in saving us; the way of salvation; the result of salvation—and more.) You might have a contest to see who can make the most observations because we often content ourselves with finding one or two things in a passage when there might be ten.

3. How does this passage tie in with what we observed in Ephesians 1?

APPLY

1. How does this passage undercut our tendency to boast?

2. How do you feel about the fact that you have contributed zero, zilch, nada, nothing, to your salvation? Would you feel better if you had done some small thing at least?

3. What do you think God has prepared beforehand for you to do today or this week (v. 10)?

4. What would you say to him if you were discussing “Invictus” with the author, William Ernest Henley. By the way, he’s dead, so of necessity this is an imaginary conversation. If your group is feeling extraordinarily creative, you might do an impromptu skit with someone representing Henley.

Invictus

*Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.
In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.
It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.*

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Before you pray for each other’s requests, why not spend some quiet time examining your heart for the “I can do it myself!” attitude, especially as it relates to your relationship with God?

HEART-HEALTH VERSES

Ephesians 2:8-10:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 2:1-10



WEEK 4
EPHESIANS 2:11-3:13

THEME: ONE CHURCH FOR ALL PEOPLES

Read **Ephesians 3:1-13**.

1. How does Paul describe himself and his mission in this passage?

2. What was the mystery (hidden before Christ came) that God revealed to Paul and the rest of the apostles?

APPLY

1. Our churches do not experience Jewish/Gentile tensions. What kinds of tensions do evangelical churches experience today?

2. How should the gospel unity we see in Ephesians help us to deal with these church tensions? How should gospel unity help you as an individual deal with tensions with other believers?

3. What do Ephesians 2:17-18 and 3:11-12 teach us about prayer and our access to God? How do you think these principles relate to Paul's theme of unity in the church?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Before you pray for each other's needs, I encourage you to pray for Alliance Bible Fellowship and for your church back home. Pray that God will keep the church unified (or heal the brokenness of your home church). It may be suitable also to pray for God's help to restore gospel harmony between yourself and other believers.

HEART-HEALTH VERSES

Ephesians 2:17-18:

And He came and preached peace to you who were far away, and peace to those who were near; for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 2:11-3:13



WEEK 5
EPHESIANS 3:14-21

THEME: PAUL'S SECOND PRAYER FOR THESE BELIEVERS

BACKGROUND

Paul's first prayer for these believers expressed a desire for them to have a heart-knowledge of the glorious future ahead for them in the light of God's amazing power, which He demonstrated in the resurrection of Christ (Ephesians 1:15-23). His second prayer is a wonderful, rich petition for them to experience the life of Christ in their inner being.

WARM UP QUESTION

An outsider might, with good reason, think that "Fun, Food, and Fellowship" was a secondary Christian trinity. When have you experienced spiritual fellowship with your brothers and sisters in Christ? What has fellowship with God been like in your experience?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

This is one of the richest, most profound passages in the Bible. Ask the Holy Spirit to enable you both to understand it and to apply it to your life.

OBSERVE AND INTERPRET

In this portion of the study you will use the following questions to gather observations from the text. Application to your own life comes later in the study. You may want to break up into small groups for this portion of the study.

Read **Ephesians 3:14-21** slowly five or six times before you write down a single observation.

1. Work together in your small group to make a flow chart of verses 14-19. Use arrows to connect the various phrases of the prayer so that you can see how one part leads logically to the next. Put explanatory phrases in the prayer in parentheses, or perhaps off to one side.

2. Paul doesn't tell us what "breadth and length and height and depth" mean (v. 18). Use your imagination and your general knowledge of the Bible to give suitable descriptions of these dimensions of Christ's love.

3. How should these verses affect how we pray and what we should pray for?

APPLY

1. “So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (v. 17)—this phrase does not refer to Christ coming into your heart at conversion. It refers to Christ settling down and being at home in your heart. How much of your heart and life does Christ have access to? Are there rooms in your “heart-home” where He is not welcome?

2. Why do you need power from the Holy Spirit in order for Christ to be fully at home in your heart?

3. How can you know something that surpasses knowledge, that is, the love of Christ?

4. How can you seek this deeper fellowship and fullness of God?

5. Do you have any questions as a result of this study?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pour out your hearts in earnest prayer to the Father that Christ will fill you more fully and grant you ever deepening fellowship with Him.

When you get back to your apartment, I encourage you to read the short essay “My Heart Christ’s Home” by Robert Boyd Munger. It is printed as an appendix at the end of our lessons on Ephesians.

HEART-HEALTH VERSES

Ephesians 3:20-21:

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 3:14-21



WEEK 6
EPHESIANS 4:1-16

THEME: CHRISTIAN UNITY

4. What does a unified body of believers look like in this passage?

APPLY

1. When have you experienced conflict with other believers? Were you able to resolve that conflict? If so, how? If not, why not?

2. How does good leadership (vv. 11-12) help to create unity in the church?

3. Why is a good grasp of Bible doctrine (vv. 13-14) important for Christian unity and stability in a local church?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

You might begin by asking God to enable your Bible study group to experience greater unity in Christ. You might share some relationship problems and ask the group to pray about those with you.

HEART-HEALTH VERSES

Ephesians 4:1-3:

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 4:1-16



WEEK 7
EPHESIANS 4:17-32

THEME: OLD SELF/NEW SELF

BACKGROUND FOR THIS PASSAGE

The “old self” (v. 22) and the “new self” (v. 24) are literally the “old man” and the “new man.” The “old self” is our old identity in Adam before we were saved. The “new self” is our new identity in Christ after He has saved us. In our passage for this evening the apostle Paul exhorts us to live in accordance with our new identity in Christ.

WARM UP QUESTION

When you fail to live up to your own expectations and goals, how do you feel? (You may think in terms of school, or New Year’s resolutions, or your weekly planner, or your relationship with God, etc.)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray that God will forgive the sins and failures of group members, and that He will use the study tonight to make all in the group more like Christ.

OBSERVE AND INTERPRET

In this portion of the study you will use the following questions to gather observations from the text. Application to your own life comes later in the study.

Read **Ephesians 4:17-32**.

1. Describe the old way of life which is the natural outgrowth of the old self.

2. Describe the new way of life which is suitable for a Christian’s new identity.

3. According to this passage, how can you put on the new self (which you have already put on at conversion)? In other words, how do you live out what you are?

APPLY

1. Are there any of the commands in this section that are particularly challenging for you to obey? How can your brothers/sisters in the Bible study group help you in these areas?
2. Ephesians 4:30. Why does sin grieve the Holy Spirit? Why, for instance, doesn't the verse say instead that sin makes Him mad or ticks Him off? How do you feel about grieving Him? How might the thought of grieving Him change your attitude toward sin?
3. How do the commands in this section relate to the general theme of Christian unity, which we saw earlier in this chapter and in chapter 2? Discuss several specific commands with unity in view.

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Read Psalm 133. As you begin to pray thank God for the pleasantness you have experienced in unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ or pray that you might have this experience.

HEART-HEALTH VERSE

Ephesians 4:30:

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 4:17-32



WEEK 8
EPHESIANS 5:1-14

THEME: IMITATORS OF GOD

APPLY

1. According to the “sniff test,” (v. 2) how should a Christian “smell” different from the world? Do you “smell” any different than people without Christ (perhaps in your class or in your dorm)?
2. How should verses 4 and 12 affect a Christian’s speech patterns?
3. Has God transferred you from the “sons of disobedience” (v. 6) to the “children of Light” (v. 8)? Would you like to share with the group your testimony of what God has done for you?
4. Do you have any questions regarding this passage, or any insights that have not already been shared?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray that the holiness of God will be increasingly reproduced in your life.

HEART-HEALTH VERSES

Ephesians 5:1-2:

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 5:1-14



WEEK 9
EPHESIANS 5:15-21

THEME: THE FILLING OF THE SPIRIT

BACKGROUND FOR THIS PASSAGE

For the past two weeks we have been studying characteristics of the transformed life. In this week's study we look at the Holy Spirit, who is the One who transforms us.

WARM UP QUESTION

How do people act when they are controlled by a master passion, whether it is a love for football, or politics, or Marvel movies, or something else?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Since we are studying the filling of the Holy Spirit this week, it might be good to ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and heart to understand and surrender to His work in your lives.

OBSERVE AND INTERPRET

Our passage this week commands us to be filled with the Spirit. Because baptism in the Spirit, filling with the Spirit, and the gift of tongues all happened on the day of Pentecost, some have mistakenly thought they were all the same. It will be helpful to see from other passages that they are different before we turn to Ephesians 5.

1 Corinthians 12 describes a number of spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to Christians. Then the passage uses the metaphor of the body to show how the different spiritual gifts work together, just as the members of our bodies need each other. (You may remember that in lesson 2 we saw that the Church is called the body of Christ, Ephesians 1:22-23.)

1. Read **1 Corinthians 12:12-14**. How many members of the body of Christ have been baptized in (or with) the Holy Spirit? How many were made to drink of the one Spirit?

2. Read **1 Corinthians 12:27-31**. Do all Christians or only some receive each of the gifts listed? Which gifts does this text put first? Which are the last in the list?

3. Read **1 Corinthians 13:1-3**. What is more important than the showy gifts?

4. Read **Acts 4:31**. What resulted from this prayer meeting by the early church?

5. Read **Ephesians 5:15-21**.

5.1 How is this section related to the passage we studied last week (5:1-14)? Give reasons for your answer.

5.2 Verses 19-21 give some of the results of being filled with the Spirit. Paraphrase these in a short paragraph of your own words.

5.3 With your answers to question 5.1 and 5.2 in mind, how does being filled with the Spirit resemble being drunk with wine? How do the two differ?

APPLY

1. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person, not an impersonal force. How can you relate personally to Him, as you do to God the Father and Jesus?

2. What sorts of things might hinder the work of the Spirit in your life?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray humbly and earnestly for the filling of the Spirit. Ask Him to show you anything that might be hindering His work in your life. We have seen some of the results of His filling in Acts 5:31 and in Ephesians 5:19-21, so you might ask for these things specifically.

HEART-HEALTH VERSES

Ephesians 5:17-18:

So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 5:15-21



WEEK 10
EPHESIANS 5:22-6:9

THEME: FAMILY AND WORK

BACKGROUND FOR THIS PASSAGE

Last week we saw that one result of being filled with the Spirit is that believers submit to one another in the fear of Christ (5:21). In the passage for this lesson, the apostle gives concrete examples of what mutual submission looks like.

WARM UP QUESTION

People are different (surprise!!). Some find it more natural to lead; others find it more natural to follow. Many are a mixture, depending on the situation. How about you?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

You might pray that the Holy Spirit will fill you so that you are able to submit your naturally selfish desires to meeting the needs of others in the name of Christ.

OBSERVE AND INTERPRET

Read **Ephesians 5:22-6:9**.

1. Note any repeated words or concepts.
2. List the leadership positions mentioned in the text.
3. What should characterize godly leaders in these positions?
4. List the follower positions mentioned in the text.
5. What should characterize godly followers?

APPLY

1. Is there anything in the passage that surprises you or that you find difficult?
2. Christ is Lord of all, yet He submitted to His Father's will. What does His example mean for the situations described in our passage? What does His example mean for you in the leader/follower situations that you face now?
3. How are leaders supposed to "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (Ephesians 5:21)?
4. Are there any other applications to your life that arise out of this passage?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

It requires as much grace to lead in a Christ-like manner as it does to follow in a Christ-like manner. Why not pray that God would give you leading and following grace in whatever situation He may put you?

HEART-HEALTH VERSES

Ephesians 6:5-8:

Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 5:22-6:9



WEEK 11
EPHESIANS 6:10-24

THEME: STANDING STRONG AGAINST EVIL

WARM UP QUESTION

Have you ever been in a fight before (not necessarily with fists)? How did it turn out?

PRAYER SUGGESTION

You might pray that God will keep the devil from hindering or distracting your study of this important passage.

OBSERVE AND INTERPRET

1. Look for repeated words, phrases or ideas.

2. What is the general message or theme of this passage?

3. There is a tendency for students of this passage to focus on the construction and use of individual pieces of armor. Instead of doing that, look at the passage as a whole, and consider how Christians are to use the truth of the gospel message to fight the evil one.

4. How does this passage relate to or pick up themes from earlier in the letter?

APPLY

1. How do the forces of darkness attack your soul?
2. What schemes of the devil are at work in our world?
3. How can you use the weapons of Scripture and prayer to confront the spiritual forces of wickedness?
4. In the Lord's prayer, "deliver us from evil" may also be translated "deliver us from the evil one" (Matthew 6:13). The devil makes plans; he has evil "schemes" (Ephesians 6:11). How does it change your understanding of temptation in your life and terror in the world if you think in terms of a personal enemy instead of an impersonal evil—like the dark side of the force in Star Wars?

HEART-HEALTH VERSES

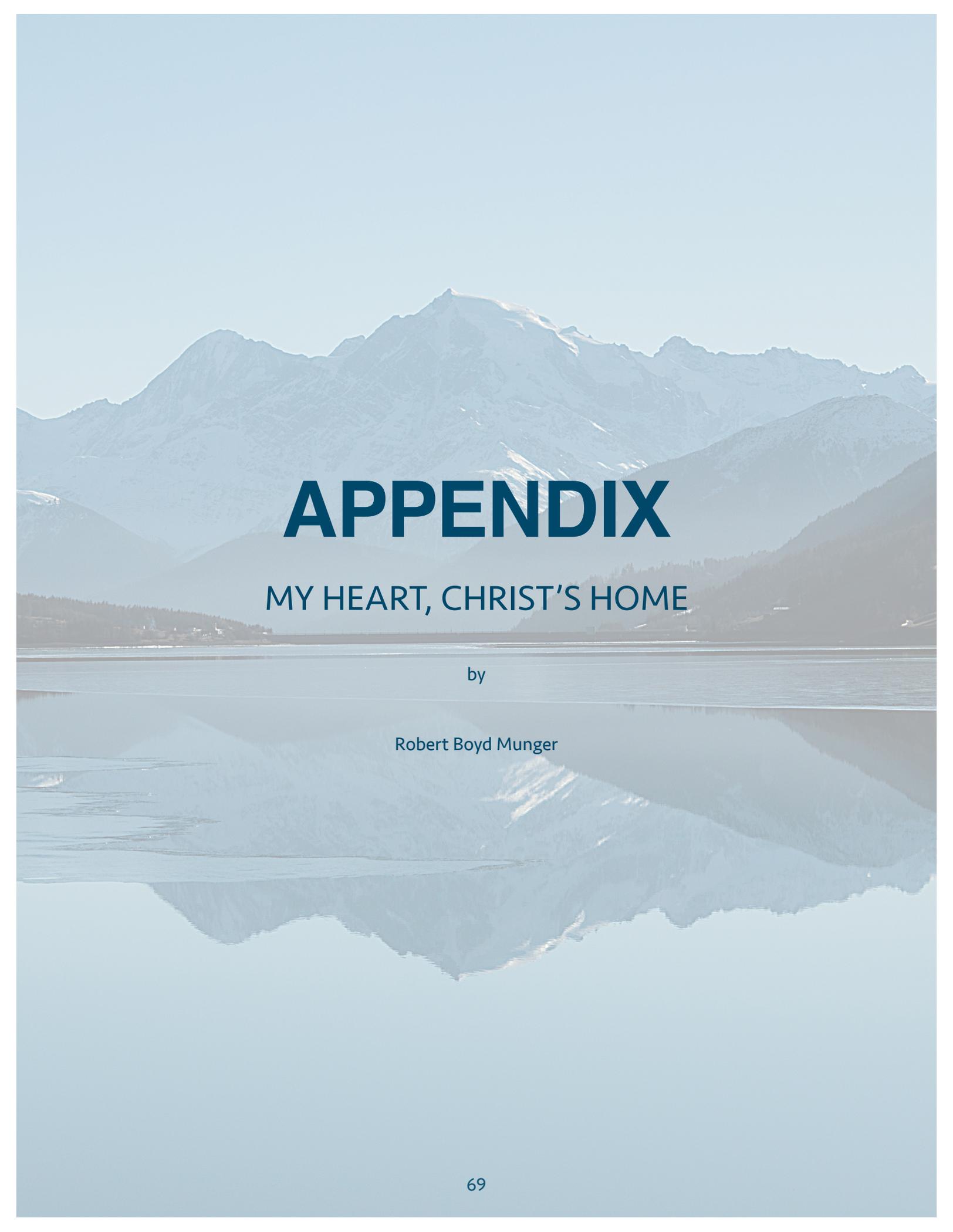
Ephesians 6:18-19:

With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel.

PRAYER REQUESTS

SERMON NOTES

EPH 6:10-24



APPENDIX

MY HEART, CHRIST'S HOME

by

Robert Boyd Munger

In Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, we find these words:

"That (God) would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:16). Or, as another has translated, "That Christ may settle down and be at home in your hearts by faith."

Without question one of the most remarkable Christian doctrines is that Jesus Christ Himself through the presence of the Holy Spirit will actually enter a heart, settle down and be at home there. Christ will make the human heart His abode.

Our Lord said to His disciples, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). It was difficult for them to understand what He was saying. How was it possible for Him to make his abode with them in this sense?

It is interesting that our Lord used the same word here that He gave them in the first of the fourteenth chapter of John: "I go to prepare a place for you .. that where I am, ye may be also." Our Lord was promising his disciples that, just as He was going to heaven to prepare a place for them and would welcome them one day, now it would be possible for them to prepare a place for Him in their hearts and He would come and make His abode with them.

They could not understand this. How could it be?

Then came Pentecost. The Spirit of the living Christ was given to the church and they understood. God did not dwell in Herod's temple in Jerusalem! God did not dwell in a temple made with hands; but now, through the miracle of the outpoured Spirit, God would dwell in human hearts. The body of the believer would be the temple of the living God and the human heart would be the home of Jesus Christ. It is difficult for me to think of a higher privilege than to make Christ a home in my heart, to welcome, to serve, to please, to fellowship with him there.

One evening I invited Jesus Christ into my heart. What an entrance He made! It was not a spectacular, emotional thing, but very real. It was at the very center of my life. He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light. He built a fire in the cold hearth and banished the chill. He started music where there had been stillness, and He filled the emptiness with His own loving, wonderful fellowship. I have never regretted opening the door to Christ and I never will - not into eternity!

This, of course, is the first step in making the heart Christ's home. He has said, "Behold I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20). If you are interested in making your life an abode of the living God, let me encourage you to invite Christ into your heart and He will surely come.

After Christ entered my heart and in the joy of this new relationship I said to Him, "Lord, I want this heart of mine to be Yours. I want to have You settle down here and be perfectly at home. Everything I have belongs to You. Let me show You around and introduce you to the various features of the home that you may be more comfortable and that we may have fuller fellowship together."

He was very glad to come, of course, and happier still to be given a place in the heart

The Library

The first room was the study - the library. Let us call it the study of the mind. Now in my home this room of the mind is a very small room with very thick walls. But it is an important room. In a sense, it is the control room of the house. He entered with me and looked around at the books in the bookcase, the magazines upon the table, the pictures on the walls. As I followed His gaze I became uncomfortable. Strangely enough, I had not felt badly about this before, but now that He was there looking at these things I was embarrassed. There were some books there that His eyes were too pure to behold. There was a lot of trash and literature on the table that a Christian had no business reading, and as for the pictures on the walls - the imaginations and thoughts of the mind - these were shameful.

I turned to Him and said, "Master, I know that this room needs a radical alteration. Will You help me make it what it ought to be? - to bring every thought into captivity to you?"

"Surely!" He said. "Gladly will I help you. First of all, take all the things that you are reading and looking at which are not helpful, pure, good and true, and throw them out! Now put on the empty shelves the books of the Bible. Fill the library with Scriptures and meditate on them day and night. As for the pictures on the walls, you will have difficulty controlling these images, but here is an aid" He gave me a full-size portrait of Himself. "Hang this centrally," He said, "on the wall of the mind."

I did, and I have discovered through the years that when my thoughts are centered upon Christ Himself, His purity and power cause impure thoughts to back away. So He has helped me to bring my thoughts into captivity.

May I suggest to you if you have difficulty with this little room of the mind, that you bring Christ in there. Pack it full with the Word of God, meditate upon it and keep before it the immediate presence of the Lord Jesus.

The Dining Room

From the study we went into the dining room, the room of appetites and desires. Now this was a very large room. I spent a good deal of time in the dining room and much effort in satisfying my wants.

I said to Him, "This is a favorite room. I am quite sure You will be pleased with what we serve."

He seated Himself at the table with me and asked, "What is on the menu for dinner?"

"Well," I said, "my favorite dishes: money, academic degrees and stocks, with newspaper articles of fame and fortune as side dishes." These were the things I liked - worldly fare. I suppose there was nothing radically wrong in any particular item, but it was not the food that should satisfy the life of a real Christian. When the food was placed before Him, He said nothing about it. However, I observed that He did not eat it, and I said to Him, somewhat disturbed, "Master, don't You care for this food? What is the trouble?"

He answered, "I have meat to eat that you do not know of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." He looked at me again and said, "If you want food that really satisfies you, seek the will of the Father, not your own pleasures, not your own desires, and not your own satisfaction. Seek to please Me and that food will satisfy you." And there at the table He gave me a taste of doing God's will. What a flavor! There is no food like it in all the world. It alone satisfies. Everything else is dissatisfying in the end.

Now if Christ is in your heart, and I trust He is, what kind of food are you serving Him and what kind of food are you eating yourself? Are you living for the lust of the flesh and the pride of life - selfishly? Or are you choosing God's will for your meat and drink?

The Living Room

We walked next into the living room. This room was rather intimate and comfortable. I liked it. It had a fireplace, overstuffed chairs, a sofa, and a quiet atmosphere.

He also seemed pleased with it. He said, "This is indeed a delightful room. Let us come here often. It is secluded and quiet, and we can fellowship together."

Well, naturally as a young Christian I was thrilled. I couldn't think of anything I would rather do than have a few minutes with Christ in intimate companionship.

He promised, "I will be here early every morning. Meet me here, and we will start the day together." So morning after morning, I would come downstairs to the living room and He would take a book of the Bible from the bookcase. He would open it and then we would read together. He would tell me of its riches and unfold to me its truths. He would make my heart warm as He revealed His love and His grace He had toward me. These were wonderful hours together. In fact, we called the living room the "withdrawing room." It was a period when we had our quiet time together.

But, little by little, under the pressure of many responsibilities, this time began to be shortened. Why, I'm don't know, but I thought I was just too busy to spend time with Christ. This was not intentional, you understand; it just happened that way. Finally, not only was the time shortened, but I began to miss a day now and then. It was examination time at the university. Then it was some other urgent emergency. I would miss it two days in a row and often more.

I remember one morning when I was in a hurry, rushing downstairs, eager to be on my way.

As I passed the living room, the door was open. Looking in, I saw a fire in the fireplace and Jesus was sitting there. Suddenly in dismay I thought to myself, "He was my guest. I invited Him into my heart! He has come as Lord of my home. And yet here I am neglecting Him."

I turned and went in. With downcast glance, I said, "Blessed Master, forgive me. Have You been here all these mornings?"

"Yes," He said, "I told you I would be here every morning to meet with you." Then I was even more ashamed. He had been faithful in spite of my faithfulness. I asked His forgiveness and He readily forgave me as He does when we are truly repentant.

"The trouble with you is this: you have been thinking of the quiet time, of the Bible study and prayer time, as a factor in your own spiritual progress, but you have forgotten that this hour means something to me also. Remember, I love you. I have redeemed you at great cost. I value your fellowship. Now," He said, "do not neglect this hour if only for my sake. Whatever else may be your desire, remember I want your fellowship!"

You know, the truth that Christ desires my companionship, that He loves me, wants me to be with Him, wants to be with me and waits for me, has done more to transform my quiet time with God than any other single fact. Don't let Christ wait alone in the living room of your heart, but every day find some time when, with your Bible and in prayer, you may be together with Him.

The Workroom

Before long, He asked, "Do you have a workroom in your home?" Down in the basement of the home of my heart I had a workbench and some equipment, but I was not doing much with it. Once in a while I would play around with a few little gadgets, but I wasn't producing anything substantial or worthwhile. I led Him down there.

He looked over the workbench and what little talents and skills I had. He said, "This is quite well furnished. What are you producing with your life for the Kingdom of God?" He looked at one or two little toys that I had thrown together on the bench and held one up to me. "Are these little toys all that you are doing for others in your Christian life?"

"Well," I said, "Lord, that is the best I can do. I know it isn't much, and I really want to do more, but after all, I have no skill or strength to do more."

"Would you like to do better?" He asked.

"Certainly," I replied.

"All right. Let me have your hands. Now relax in me and let my Spirit work through you. I know that you are unskilled, clumsy and awkward, but the Holy Spirit is the Master-Worker, and if He controls your hands and your heart, He will work through you." And so, stepping around behind me and putting

His great, strong hands over mine, controlling the tools with His skilled fingers He began to work through me.

There's much more that I must still learn and I am very far from satisfied with the product that is being turned out, but I do know that whatever has been produced for God has been through His strong hand and through the power of His Spirit in me.

Do not become discouraged because you cannot do much for God. Your ability is not the fundamental condition. It is He who is controlling your fingers and upon whom you are relying. Give your talents and gifts to God and He will do things with them that will surprise you...

The Rec Room

I remember the time He asked me about the playroom. I was hoping He would not ask about that. There were certain associations and friendships, activities and amusements that I wanted to keep for myself. I did not think Christ would enjoy them or approve of them, so I evaded the question.

But there came an evening when I was on my way out with some of my friends, and as I was about to cross the threshold, He stopped me with a glance and asked, "Are you going out?"

I replied, "Yes."

"Good," He said, "I would like to go with you."

"Oh," I answered rather awkwardly. "I don't think, Lord Jesus, that You would really want to go with us. Let's go out tomorrow night. Tomorrow night we will go to prayer meeting, but tonight I have another appointment."

He said. "That's alright. Only I thought that when I came into your home, we were going to do everything together, to be close companions. I just want you to know that I am willing to go with you."
"Well," I said, "we will go someplace together tomorrow night."

That evening I spent some miserable hours. I felt wretched. What kind of a friend was I to Jesus when I was deliberately leaving Him out of my associations, doing things and going places that I knew very well He would not enjoy? When I returned that evening, there was a light in His room, and I went up to talk it over with Him. I said, "Lord, I have learned my lesson. I can't have a good time without You. From now on we will do everything together."

Then we went down into the playroom of the house and He transformed it. He brought into life real joy, real happiness, real satisfacion, new friends, new excitement, new joys. Laughter and music have been ringing through the house ever since.

The Hall Closet

There is just one more matter that I might share with you. One day I found Him waiting for me at the door. An arresting look was in His eye. As I entered, He said to me, "There is a peculiar odor in the house. There is something dead around here. It's upstairs. I think it is in the hall closet." As soon as He said this, I knew what He was talking about. Yes, there was a small closet up there on the landing, just a few feet square, and in that closet, behind lock and key, I had one or two little personal things that I did not want anyone to know about and certainly I did not want Christ to see them. I knew they were dead and rotting things left over from the old life. And yet I loved them, and I wanted them so for myself that I was afraid to admit they were there.

Reluctantly, I went up with Him, and as we mounted the stairs the odor became stronger and stronger. He pointed at the door. "It's in there! Some dead thing!"

I was angry. That's the only way I can put it. I had given Him access to the library, the dining room, the living room, the workroom, the playroom, and now He was asking me about a little two-by-four closet. I said to myself, "This is too much. I am not going to give Him the key."

"Well," He said, reading my thoughts, "if you think I'm going to stay up here on the second floor with this odor, you are mistaken. I will take my bed out on the back porch. I'm certainly not going to put up with that." Then I saw Him start down the stairs.

When you have come to know and love Christ, the worst thing that can happen is to sense His fellowship retreating from you. I had to surrender. "I'll give You the key," I said sadly, "but You'll have to open the closet and clean it out. I haven't the strength to do it."

"I know," He said. "I know you haven't. Just give me the key. Just authorize me to take care of that closet and I will." So with trembling fingers I passed the key to Him. He took it from my hand, walked over to the door, opened it, entered it, took out all the putrefying stuff that was rotting there, and threw it away. Then He cleaned the closet and painted it, fixed it up, doing it all in a moment's time. Oh, what victory and release to have that dead thing out of my life!

Transferring the Title

Then a thought came to me. I said to myself, "I have been trying to keep this heart of mine clear for Christ. I start on one room and no sooner have I cleaned that then another room is dirty. I begin on the second room and the first room becomes dusty again. I am so tired and weary trying to maintain a clean heart and an obedient life. I am just not up to it!"

So I ventured a question: "Lord, is there any chance that You would take over the responsibility of the whole house and operate it for me and with me just as You did that closet? Would You take the responsibility to keep my heart what it ought to be and my life where it ought to be?"

I could see His face light up as He replied, "Certainly, that is what I came to do. You cannot be a victorious Christian in your own strength. That is impossible. Let me do it through you and for you. That is the way. But," He added slowly, "I am not owner of this house. I am just a guest. I have no authority to proceed, since the property is not mine."

I saw it in a minute and dropping to my knees, I said, "Lord, You have been a guest and I have been the host. From now on I am going to be the servant. You are going to be the owner and Master and Lord."

Running as fast as I could to the strongbox, I took out the title deed to the house describing its assets and liabilities, location and situation and condition. I eagerly signed it over to belong to Him alone for time and eternity. "Here," I said. "Here it is, all that I am and have forever. Now You run the house. I'll just remain with You as a servant and friend."

He took my life that day and I can give you my word, there is no better way to live the Christian life. He knows how to keep it in shape and deep peace settles down on the soul. May Christ settle down and be at home in your heart as Lord of all!



ALLIANCE BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

COLLEGE CONNECTION

1035 NC Highway 105 Bypass
Boone, NC 28607

828-264-8312

abfboone.org/college