

What is the true story of the world? Who is Jesus? What has He done? Who are we? How do we live? These are the crucial questions of the life of every disciple. In Ephesians we read a powerful letter answering those questions in remarkable ways: the story is about God making all things new through Jesus. The Church is a family saved by grace. The life of a disciple is an empowered life of resurrection. The purpose of the Church is more than we could ask or imagine.

In this guide you will walk through the book of Ephesians with an ear for the essentials of the Christian life. It will encourage and challenge you to examine what you believe, who you are, and how you live. The Scriptures, studied in community and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, change us. This guide aims to make space and help communities engage Ephesians that way.



EPHESIANS | By Brad Watson

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How Jesus Creates a New
People in a New World

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How Jesus Creates a New
People in a New World
An Everyday Discipleship Study

By Brad Watson



EPHESIANS: How Jesus Creates a New People in a New World

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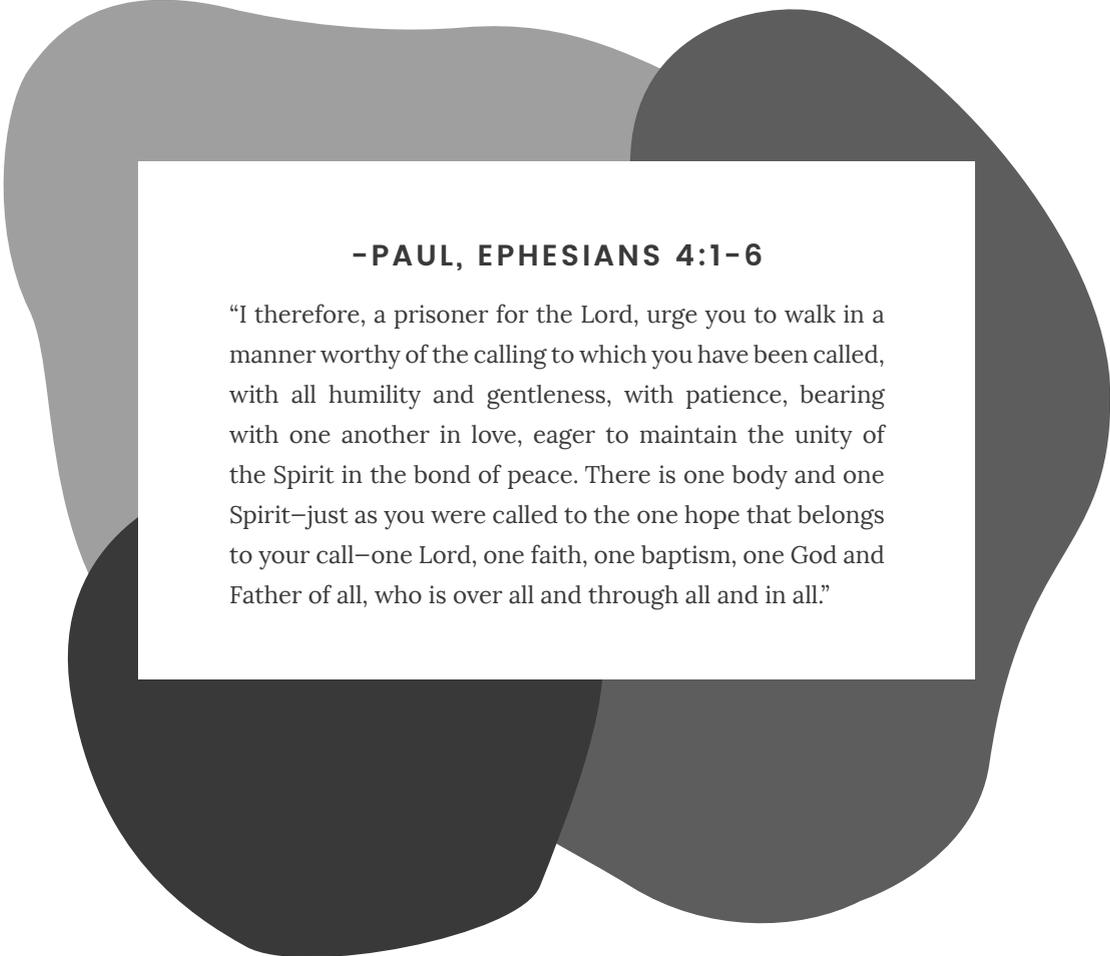
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-PAUL, EPHESIANS 4:1-6

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

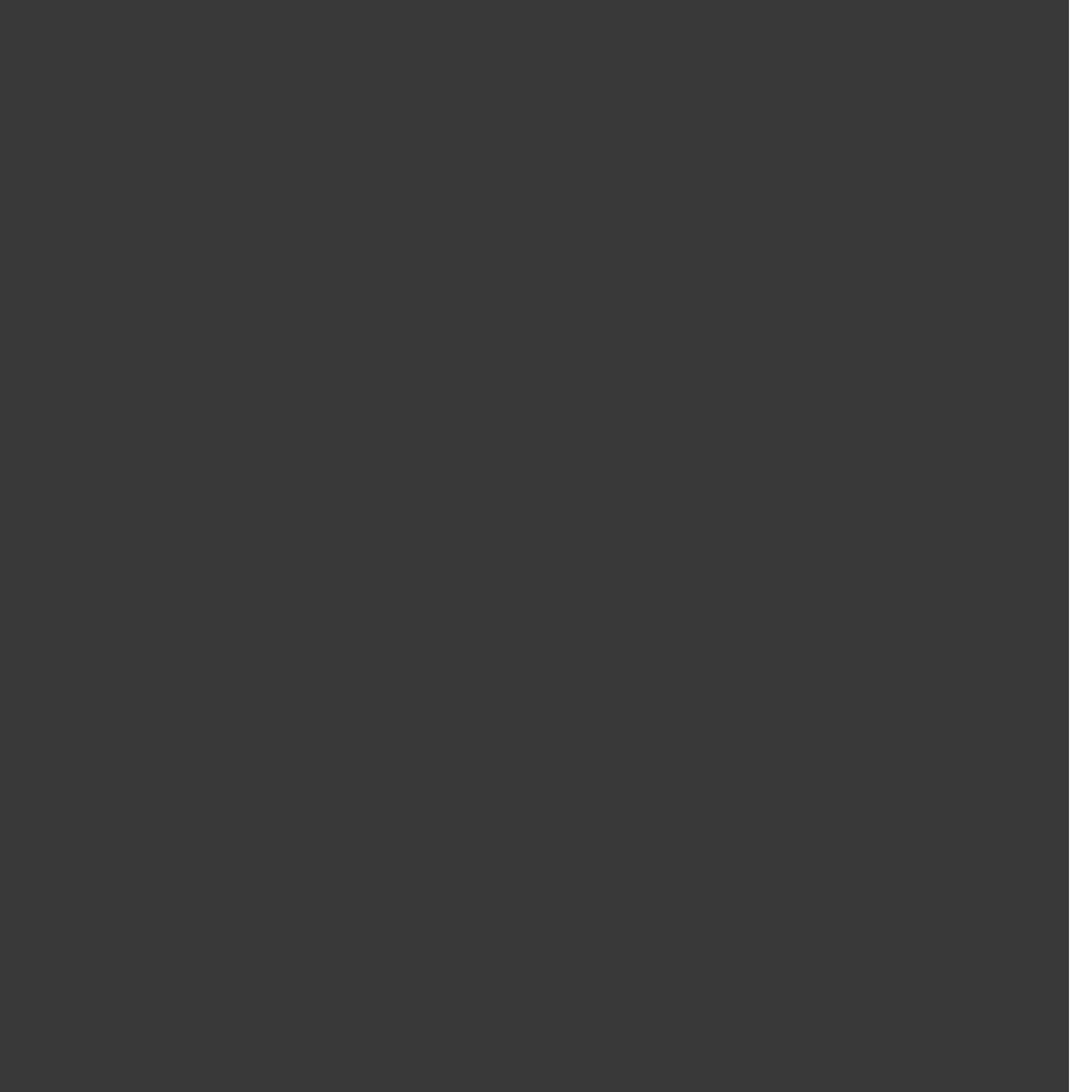


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INTRO DUCTION TO SERIES

Each fall as a church in Los Angeles, we take eight to twelve weeks to teach through our core convictions, beliefs, and practices as a church. We often do this through sermons that outline the purpose and power of the gospel, our gospel identity, and the rhythms of life that overflow from the gospel.¹ It's more than a sermon series for us. These are the gospel basics, the primer, and the foundation on which everything we do as a missional church is laid.

You can read through these convictions on our website (saturatetheworld.com), or in Jeff Vanderstelt's book, *Saturate*, or you could even attend a Saturate training event or Soma School to have a deep dive instruction on them. We don't just train on these things as topics, they saturate every aspect of life in our church. They come out in each sermon, we sing them in our gatherings,

and we find them through the whole of the Bible in both its grand narrative and in each particular scene or book of Scripture. It could honestly and humbly be said that this is our church's culture and the vision for the intentional and steady study of the Scriptures in our missional communities. This series of guided Bible studies is built around and from church cultures like ours from the ever-multiplying family of churches called Soma.

Our aim of this series is to help communities small and large engage the Scriptures from the context of the Story of God and grow deeper in the richness of understanding, speaking, and living the gospel of Jesus. Five core principles hold each of these studies together:

¹If you're unfamiliar with these concepts, further explanation is given in the glossary of this study.

● Discipleship Environment

Disciples are made in community on mission, and a disciple is someone who is increasingly submitting every aspect of life to God the Father, Son, and Spirit.

● Holistic

Good theology isn't just understanding the truths of God in our heads, it is believing and applying the truths to our hearts, and it's obeying the truths in our everyday lives. A fully formed disciple is growing in their head, heart, and hands.

● Bible

The Bible is the authoritative grand narrative of God's mission to restore all things. This is the true story of the entire world.

● The Gospel

The good news of Jesus is He has defeated sin, death, and evil through His life, death, and resurrection and is making all things new, even us.

● Empowered

Prayer is the oxygen of every gospel-focused community of disciples.

We believe that through each study, a community will be reintroduced to the foundations of discipleship while also growing in a deeper understanding of how the gospel applies to every aspect of life.

USING THIS GUIDE

This guide has been designed for disciples who are committed to the process of learning to find Jesus in such a way they see their lives and neighborhoods made new. Disciple-making environments create space for followers of Jesus to thrive by repeated reintroduction of the gospel to the hearts of each disciple. This guide is designed to facilitate that type of space.

This guide can work well in multiple settings. It can be used on your own as a personal and enriching study. Large community groups, like a weekly meal within a missional community, can adapt it for their purposes. Or smaller groups, like what many Soma churches call DNA Groups when two or three disciples meet together, can use it to facilitate study and connection. You are an expert in the communities and disciples you're leading. Use it in whatever context you believe is most beneficial.

Personal Reading and Reflection: The Four Questions

In preparation for each week, we encourage each participant to take time to read the passage and reflect on how it introduces us to the gospel. Use these four questions that help disciples focus their Scripture reading on the gospel of God.

1. **Who is God?**—What does this passage tell us about God's character, motives, and identity? The Bible is about Him.
2. **What Has He Done?**—What do we see God doing in this passage? What work do we observe?
3. **Who Are We?**—What does this passage tell us about our identity?
4. **How Do We Live?**—Lastly, how is God calling us to live based on who we are, what He has done, and who He is?

This is important because personal reading and reflection are a crucial part of a disciple's journey and they allow each person the opportunity to come into the group discussions ready to engage.

INTRO DUCTION TO EPHESIANS

Have you ever watched the “Director’s Commentary” on your favorite movie? If you’re a nerd like me, I’m sure you have. In the commentary, you get to watch the entire movie, but instead of listening to the original soundtrack and dialogue, you get to listen to the director and usually the screenwriter talk about each scene. They dive into the plot, lighting, important bits of dialogue, nuances, and back stories. Essentially, you’re welcomed into the depths of the story and discover insights into what exactly is happening, what the writer’s intent really was, and it adds a whole new level of understanding. If you know the story, these “movie extras” are incredible! However, if you’ve never seen the film and don’t know the story, the director’s commentary is simply noise.

Ephesians functions like the Director’s Commentary to the Story of God. It’s written to the Church to remind us of the Story, to tell us once again: “This is what was going on when Jesus died and rose again.” Paul is pulling back the curtain and saying, “You might not have noticed, but when you were saved, you were saved into a Church, and the Church was created for God’s purposes. Maybe you weren’t fully aware, but this New Life is ushered in and upheld by both the power and grace of God.”

Paul is giving us the “movie extras” to the greatest story ever told. It’s the true story of the cosmos, humanity, and God’s relentless pursuit to make Himself known. Here’s the SparkNotes version of that Story:

Creation

In the beginning, God created everything and it was good. He created humans to reflect His glory and goodness. To be united to Him and with one another. The world was thriving and bustling with joy, purpose, and even understanding.

Promise

But God promised to defeat sin, evil, and death and make the world new. He chose Abraham to be the father of a family that would bless all the peoples of the world. Through their uniqueness, obedience, and worship, the world would once again see what God is like. But most pressing, God promised that through His family, a King would come who would redeem the world from sin, death, and evil.

Restoration

One day, Jesus will return, rule, and restore all creation. All sin, death, and suffering from evil will be wiped away. God will dwell with His people and we will worship Him forever, just as we were created to: delighting in God's loving resolve to restore us and His world.

Rebellion

Later, humanity rebelled against the living God who created them, knew them, and provided abundant life for them. Sinning against God, they seemingly broke the world forever. Shame, guilt, destruction, murder, pride, greed, and many more sins rushed into the world. All human life orbited around sin, death, and evil.

Redemption

Jesus is that King. The good news about Jesus is that through His life, death, and resurrection He has defeated sin, death, and evil and is making all things new, including humanity!

Church

Jesus sends His Spirit into all who believe, and they're called not just into salvation but into the people of God—the Church. The Church is a remarkable resurrected family that exists in this world as a signpost of the gospel and agents of reconciliation in a world still gripped with death.

These symbols were created by Kevin Platt and Chris Gonzalez and used with permission.

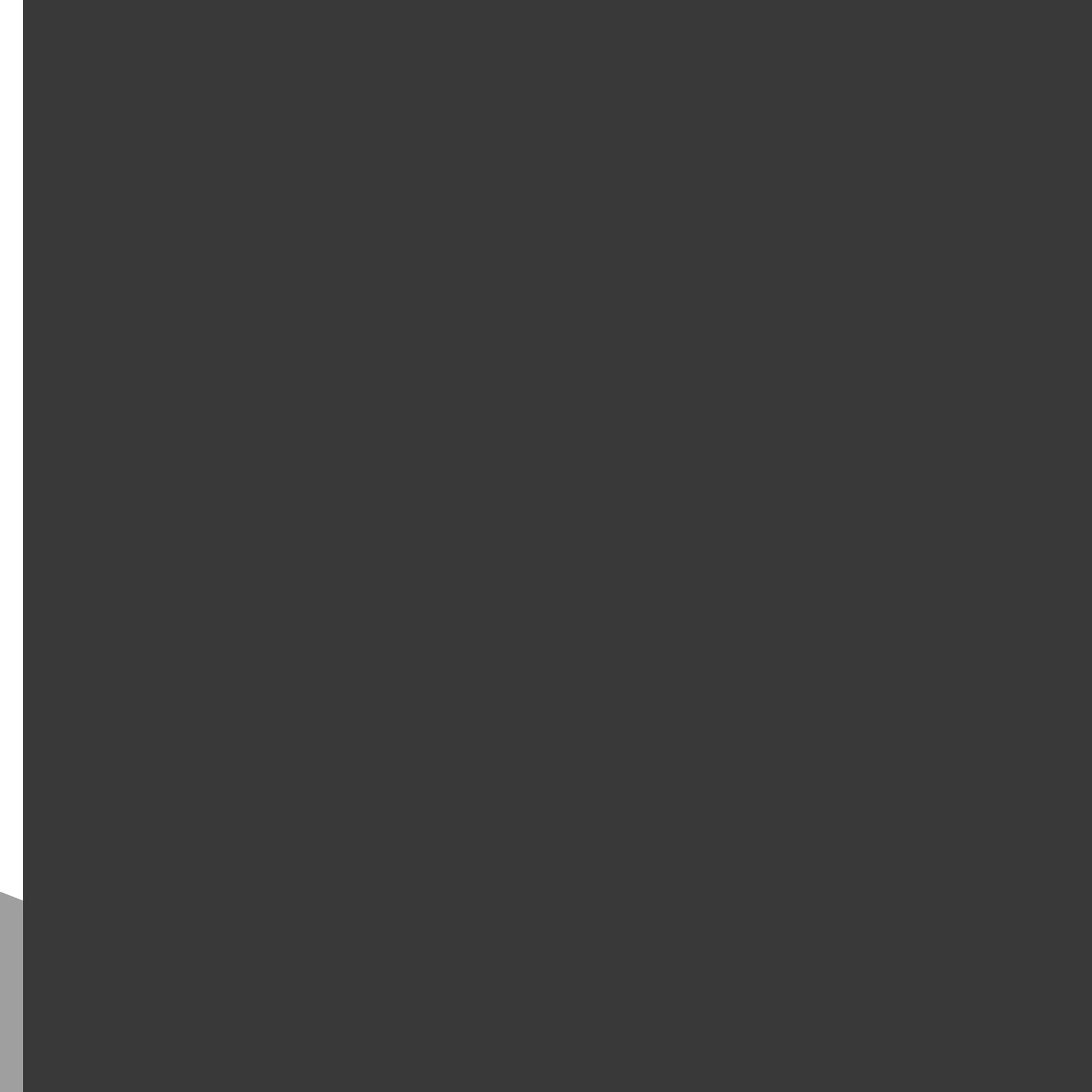
That is the story Paul expects to be in his readers' minds as he describes the power of the gospel, the Church, and our mission in this world.

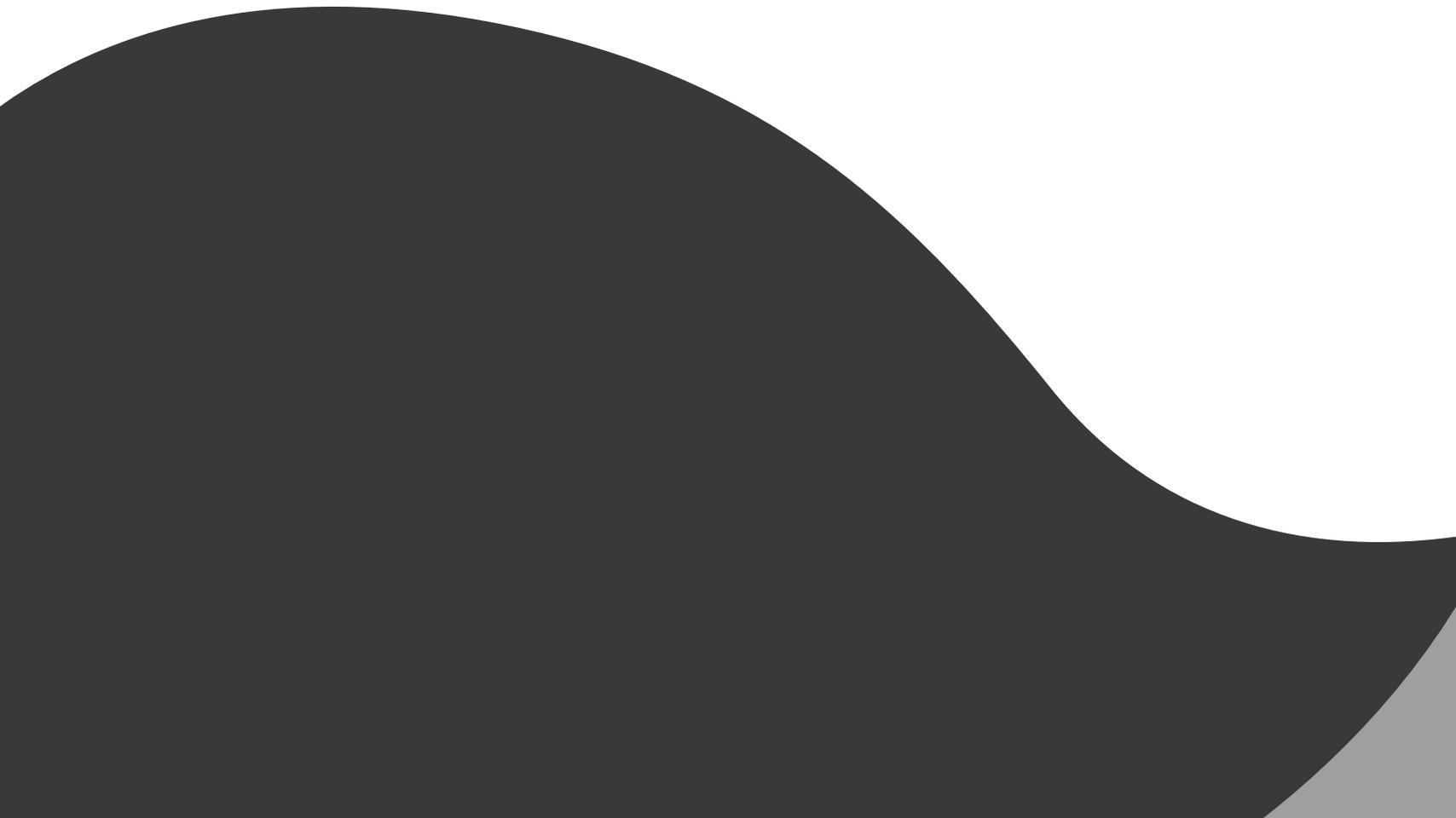
Ephesians is all about how the Father, Son, and Spirit have created a whole new people and a whole new world. Paul describes the overwhelming power of God to make all things new, including our lives, including our neighbors, and including our planet.

What's going on in your life, Ephesians tells us, is more incredible than you know. What's going on in our world is more beautiful than we imagine. Who we are as the Church is far more sacred and purposeful than we ever dreamed!

In this letter, who the Church is, what the Church is, and how the Church lives takes center stage. This is our moment of the story. This is who we are.







WEEK 1

A CHURCH ADOPTED

WEEK 1

Ephesians 1:1-14

● PERSONAL REFLECTION: FOUR QUESTIONS

Spend time reading this passage and reflecting on these questions in order. Think through all the explicit and implied statements about who God is, then what He has done, who we are, and how we should live. As you answer these questions, you can even connect them to each other. For example: If that's what God has done, who does that make me? And how do I live in light of that truth?

- **Who is God?**

- **What has He done?**

- **Who are we?**

- **How do we live?**

INTRODUCTION

On seven peaceful acres in the hill country of Texas, my grandparents have an ever-extending table. They must have ten leaves they can add to make room for any guests. Chairs appear out of rooms, closets, and even their barn. I grew up around this table. Even as a child, I was welcomed to it. I sat on a chair with a stack of books and a belt buckled around my waist and the back of the chair to keep me from falling.

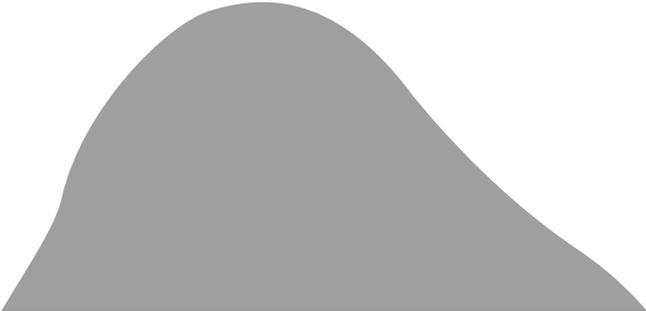
The only thing that outnumbered the people around the table was the food on top of it. I often wondered what kind of magical wood created this platform that could sustain the weight of both the comfort and food—and elbows. It didn't matter who you were, as you sat at that table, you were identified by the one seated at the head as he reached out his hands and gathered his herd. He prayed graciously and simply, then uttered the final words of the liturgy: “Grab root and growl.” I know Greek, Hebrew, Portuguese, and English, and I still don't understand the words, but I understand what it means: “Eat.”

As I grew older, I realized this table was the center of life—not just for my family, but for their community. The people gathered around were welcomed as family, but it wasn't biology that bound us. It was the invitation of my

grandparents, their love, their preparation of fajitas, BBQ, and so many other specialties. I also realized this was their theology, missiology, and ecclesiology all wrapped into one. For decades, from Texas to Panama, and in English and Spanish, they welcomed teenagers, mothers, soldiers, doctors, elderly, siblings, coaches, and anyone else to the table—into the family.

The opening lines of Ephesians are a poem of worship about the glory and majesty of God the Father and His remarkable work in Jesus to adopt us into His family. We're welcomed not just to a feast, but into every spiritual blessing that could ever be offered a human soul—we're with God and the recipients of His love. We are given an eternal inheritance purchased on the cross, secured in the empty tomb, and sealed by the giving of the Holy Spirit that inhabits us. Through the gospel, as Paul writes in this letter, we are empty tombs now filled with the grace, love, and power of God. This is who we are.

Later in this letter, Paul describes this grace as a mystery for himself but also for every believer. And it is just that. It's a profound and beautiful mystery of God's incredible grace to bless us as His children with everything we could ever need in Christ.



THE POWER OF ADOPTION

J.I. Packer put it simply in *Knowing God*: “What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God for his Father...Adoption is the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher even than justification. To be right with God the Judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is greater.” Our highest privilege and deepest need is to experience the holy God as our loving Father, to approach Him without fear, and to be assured of His fatherly care and concern.

When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives, we too can cry, “Abba, Father.” The same Spirit that

proceeds from the relationship between the Father and Son is implanted in us. The difference between us and Jesus is that He is the natural Son of the Father, whereas we are adopted into the family through His sacrifice.

Apart from Jesus, we are all spiritual orphans. Our rebellious and sinful nature cut us off from God the Father. The Bible says quite clearly that we are not born children of God and therefore must go through an adoption process. The price of our adoption was the death of God’s Son. C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*, “The Son of God became a man to enable men to become the sons of God.”

HEART:

This passage describes our unconditional adoption into God's family to bring the Father glory and Jesus praise. We often abandon this truth in our hearts, or it feels distant. Use these questions to dig deeper.

- *Where in your life do you feel abandoned? Why?*
- *Where do you feel like you need to earn acceptance? Why?*
- *When do you desire glory and praise? Why?*
- *Thinking about your story and this passage, how has God glorified Himself by making you an heir?*

HANDS:

This passage also describes the Holy Spirit as the mark of our adoption. A Christian who lives a life empowered by the Spirit will be reminded of who Jesus is and what He taught, of His character, and their identity in Christ. The Spirit gives us power to speak the gospel and demonstrate the gospel, to be disciples and make disciples. Essentially, the Holy Spirit compels us to glorify God.

- *How can you make space in your life to listen to what the Holy Spirit tells you about Jesus, your identity, and God's glory?*

- *What would it look like to live as family with the Church?*

PRAY

Spend time praying for each other as you reflect on this passage and your own lives. Pray to be empowered by the Spirit as you walk in obedience.

