

Ephesians Part 6 -Signing off!



Ephesians 6



Today is our final session in the Bassline Ephesians series. We'll be exploring some of the challenging and controversial aspects of Paul's teaching. How should children honour their parents? Was Paul really OK with slavery, and why did he ask the slaves to obey their 'earthly masters with respect and fear' (Ephesians 6:5)? We'll consider if there is anything in Ephesians 6 that is relevant to us today. To bring the series to a close, we'll put on the whole armour of God and recognise the spiritual battle we face as Christians.

You will need:

- Paper and pencils/felt-tips
- Ephesians 6:10-17 Amplified Version



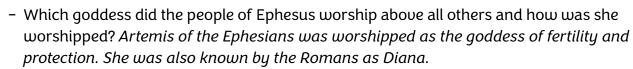
Say:

For our Beat activity today, we will go right back to the start of the Bassline Ephesians series. In Session One we watched a clip that gave us background information about the church at Ephesus. Let's see how much you can remember from our very first session. You can also use the knowledge you have gained throughout the sessions so far.

Leader's notes:

Feel free to give the group clues to jog their memory. The answers are in italics.

- What kind of city was Ephesus? A large important city in the Roman Empire with a focus on business and trade.
- Who was attracted to Ephesus? What did they bring with them? Immigrants came to the city who brought with them their cultures, worldviews and religious beliefs.
- How did the people of Ephesus view worship? Many different gods were worshipped and people were free to worship whoever they wanted.



- What was special about the temple built for Artemis? It was regarded as one of the seven wonders of the world and thousands of people would visit as a pilgrimage. Images of how the temple of Artemis might have appeared are available online, though it was destroyed in 262 AD.
- How did the Ephesians view the spiritual world and what did they do to protect themselves? The Ephesians saw the world as full of demons and dark spirits plotting their downfall. They would protect themselves by practising superstitions and magical rituals.
- How was the Jewish community different within the ancient city of Ephesus? How did this cause division? The Jews worshipped only one God. This created tension as they kept themselves separate from the rest of the population.

Ask:

- Since Session One you have spent a lot of time studying Paul's letter. As you think about the church community at Ephesus, how would you summarise Paul's main message?

Bridge

2226

Ask:

Think back to Session One of the Ephesians series. Which famous sports company owes their name and logo to a goddess worshipped in Ephesus? The goddess Nike.

Watch:

The Goddess Nike: ancient symbols and sportswear – Bible Trek – Ephesus Series – O5 (O:59) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Y10zVRWx5E



Leader's notes:

Before we move into the final chapter of Ephesians 6, ask the group to recap the key themes of Paul's letter so far.

Say:

In last week's session, we read these words by theologian Tom Wright as he talked about passages in the Bible that appear to sit uncomfortably in our contemporary world.

'But – as so often when reading the Bible – there's a lot to be said for checking our natural, and (let's admit it) sometimes aggressive attitude to passages that strike us as



objectionable, and for thinking through why we react like this, and whether we have really understood the passage or not.'

– Tom Wright, *Ephesians for Everyone*, p66.

Ask:

What is Tom Wright encouraging us to do when we study God's word?

Say:

We should remember these words as we read the first section of Ephesians 6. Despite our first impression, Paul's words were radical for the time they were written and deeply countercultural.

Read:

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² 'Honour your father and mother'– which is the first commandment with a promise – ³ 'so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.'

⁴ Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

- (Ephesians 6:1-4)

Leader's notes:

Discuss with the young people their initial reaction to these verses and their place in our modern world. Unfortunately, there is not enough time to unpack these verses in depth, but you may want to pick up on some of the following discussion points.

- Paul takes time to address children in his letter. Culturally, children's views were not considered important, so it was significant for Paul not only to mention them but also address them specifically.
- These words didn't just relate to young children, but to anyone still living at home with their parents.
- Some had found a loophole in the Jewish law so that they didn't have to care for their parents and follow the commandment to honour them (Mark 7).
- Fathers traditionally took a back seat in their children's lives until the boys began their education around the age of seven. It was radical for Paul to suggest that children had the right to be treated fairly by their authoritative fathers.

Say:

Now we move on to another controversial section of this letter. Some have used this text to suggest that Paul condoned slavery. Think about all you learned at school about Ancient Rome and consider whether you think this criticism is fair.

Read:

⁵ Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. ⁶ Obey them not only to win their favour when their



eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. ⁷ Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, ⁸ because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.

⁹ And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with him.

(Ephesians 6:5-9)

Say:

There are lots of different interpretations of these verses. Some compare the ancient slaves mentioned in the text to the modern-day workers we have today. They encourage us to apply Paul's words to employer/employee relationships we experience today.

Ask:

What are your thoughts about this interpretation?

Say:

Others point to the cultural norms of Ancient Rome. Whether Paul liked it or not, slavery was part of everyday life across most of the globe. In some cases, slaves were seen as valued members of the family (and some of Rome's most important administrators were technically slaves); in other cases, they were treated horrendously. This is the culture in which Paul said these words.

Ask:

- Regardless of the interpretation you prefer, what is the overriding message Paul is trying to communicate to both slaves and masters within the church at Ephesus?
- Read Ephesians 6:9. What do you think was so radical and countercultural about Paul's words?

Say:

Whether it's wives or husbands, children and parents or slaves and masters, Paul was asking all Christians to live their lives as God had called them to live. Whatever the circumstances they found themselves in, they were all required to obey Jesus and honour his name in their actions, treating one another with love and kindness.

Ask:

- We may find Paul's advice a bit dated today, but what would the world be like if every Christian lived in total obedience to Christ?
- How would our family relationships change?
- How would our school/work relationships change?



Bridge

ass

Group Youth Disciplesh

Ask:

Think about everything you have learned from the letter to the Ephesians. What part of Paul's teaching is challenging to apply to our modern-day experience of Christianity? Explain the reasons for your choice.

Leader's notes:

Watch the following clip with the group to summarise the teaching in Ephesians 6:10–17. This clip is aimed at a younger age group, but is still valuable to understand the main elements of the armour of God.

Watch:

The Armour of God: Stories of the Bible (2:42) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFNzSpXhI_c

Say:

Using the world of Marvel as your inspiration, create a design for the armour of God. Make sure you annotate the design with all the qualities of each item. Use the Amplified Version translation of the Bible to help you to understand the role of each item in the armour of God and explain your design choices.

Leader's notes:

Give each member of the group a copy of Ephesians 6:10–17 from the *Amplified Version*. Provide the group with paper and pens to complete their design. Share the ideas together and summarise the main purpose of each element of the armour of God.

Read:

¹⁰ In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [draw your strength from him and be empowered through your union with him] and in the power of his [boundless] might. ¹¹ Put on the full armour of God [for his precepts are like the splendid armour of a heavily-armed soldier], so that you may be able to [successfully] stand up against all the schemes and the strategies and the deceits of the devil. ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this [present] darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) places. ¹³ Therefore, put on the complete armour of God, so that you will be able to [successfully] resist and stand your ground in the evil day [of danger], and having done everything [that the crisis demands], to stand



firm [in your place, fully prepared, immovable, victorious]. ¹⁴ So stand firm and hold your ground, having tightened the wide band of truth (personal integrity, moral courage) around your waist and having put on the breastplate of righteousness (an upright heart), ¹⁵ and having strapped on your feet the gospel of peace in preparation [to face the enemy with firm-footed stability and the readiness produced by the good news]. ¹⁶ Above all, lift up the [protective] shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

- (Ephesians 6:10-17 AMP)



Leader's notes:

If your group would like to discover more about the spiritual battle we face as Christians, then watch and discuss the clip together.

Watch:

Are You Battle Ready? - Ephesians 6:12 - Our Daily Bread Video Devotional (stop at 1:43) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wScEDYddDw

🕕 Selah

Leader's notes:

The final Selah of this series gives the opportunity to reflect on everything we have learned from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The clip provided summarises the key themes found throughout the letter. When the clip has finished, give the young people time to look through their journals and share together what they have discovered during the Bassline Ephesians series.

Ask each member of the group to share a prayer of thanks for one thing they have learned from Paul's letter.

Watch:

Letter of Ephesians Overview Commentary – Valley Creek Church (5:17) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qEE4mEUILOY

Leader's notes:

To bring this time of reflection to a close, read the final verses of Ephesians 6 as a prayer.



Read:

¹⁸ Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying for God's people. ¹⁹ Pray that I will be given the message to speak and that I may fearlessly explain the mystery about the good news. ²⁰ I was sent to do this work, and this is the reason I am in jail. So pray that I will be brave and will speak as I should.

²¹⁻²² I want you to know how I am getting along and what I am doing. This is why I am sending Tychicus to you. He is a dear friend, as well as a faithful servant of the Lord. He will tell you how I am doing, and he will cheer you up.

²³ I pray that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will give peace, love, and faith to every follower! ²⁴ May God be kind to everyone who keeps on loving our Lord Jesus Christ.

- (Ephesians 6:18-24 CEV)



Say:

In a piece of music, the coda brings the different aspects of the melody, harmonies and bassline to a conclusion. It pulls together the different themes and often, but not always, brings resolution to a piece of music.

Ask:

As you reflect on everything you have learned today, what is your coda?

What is the one thing you will take away from the sixth chapter of Ephesians?

Leader's notes:

Give the young people a moment to think about your question and briefly share their coda with the group before the session comes to an end.



