

Summer Reading Introduction: The Book of Ephesians

This summer, you'll be reading and annotating the book of Ephesians from *The Message Bible*—a practical and encouraging letter that will challenge you to think about your identity, purpose, relationships, and what it truly means to thrive as a follower of Christ. To help you get started, here's what you need to know before you begin. (Don't forget to check out the other handouts in the summer reading folder to learn how you can earn rewards.)

Quick Summary/Checklist:

- ☐ Read this entire handout to be sure you know the whats, the whys, and the hows.
 - ☐ Read the Summer Reading Challenge handout to know how to earn rewards and win contests.
 - ☐ Read your copy of **Ephesians** in *The Message* or ESV translations. (Please ask if you would like to use another translation.)
 - ☐ Annotate at least **once per verse chunk**. (Please review the **annotation handouts** in this packet for more instructions.)
 - ☐ **53 quality annotations** required.
 - ☐ Ephesians 1 = 7 annotations
 - ☐ Ephesians 2 = 6 annotations
 - ☐ Ephesians 3 = 7 annotations
 - ☐ Ephesians 4 = 12 annotations
 - ☐ Ephesians 5 = 12 annotations
 - ☐ Ephesians 6 = 9 annotations
 - ☐ *Students may not use outside resources, AI, the internet, etc. to help them. Students may use a dictionary.*
 - ☐ **Bonus 1:** You may annotate more for bonus points.¹
 - ☐ Use the different types of annotation options. Be sure to try different types from the “How to Annotate” section of this handout.
 - ☐ Use the “What to Annotate” section of this handout to help you practice your literary analysis and regents testing skills.
 - ☐ Bring your copy of Ephesians to class for grading by the due date.
 - ☐ **Due Date:** One week after the first day of school.
 - ☐ **Bonus 2:** Bring your completed copy of Ephesians on the first day of school for coupons.²
 - ☐ **Bonus 3:** Complete the different challenges on the Summer Reading Challenge handout. (The Challenge begins on June 13th.)³
 - ☐ **Compile your evidence. Be sure to check what qualifies as evidence.**
 - ☐ Please contact Miss McDivitt if you have any questions: smcdivitt@twintiersca.org.
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¹ Bonus given if all directions fully followed.

² Bonus given if all directions fully followed.

³ Bonus given if all directions fully followed.

Next Year's Chapel Theme: How to **Survive THRIVE**

Next fall, Pastor Doug will lead us through a chapel series called **How to *Survive* THRIVE**. Throughout the year, we will explore how the **gospel speaks** to real struggles such as **identity, anger, fear, anxiety, depression, trauma**, and extending **grace to hurting people**.

Our **premise statement** is:

"The gospel of Jesus Christ is the most transforming force for good in the universe. As such it is the fundamental answer to humanity's fundamental problems. There is, therefore, no struggle it cannot overcome, no hurt it cannot heal, and no regret it cannot redeem."

The book of Ephesians fits this theme perfectly. In this letter, Paul reminds believers **who they are in Christ, what God has done for them through the gospel**, and **how they should live in response**. Ephesians teaches us that thriving is not determined by our circumstances but by **our relationship with Christ** and our **understanding of His grace**.

Why Are We Using *The Message*?

The Message is a **modern paraphrase** of the Bible by Eugene Peterson. It's not a word-for-word translation—instead, it's written to help contemporary readers understand the **meaning, emotion, and impact** of Scripture in everyday language.

You'll notice:

- Clearer sentence structure
- More conversational language
- Modern vocabulary and expressions

Ephesians was originally written as a letter, and *The Message* often helps readers experience it that way. Rather than feeling like a textbook, Ephesians reads more like a personal letter encouraging Christians to understand who they are in Christ and how they can live lives that honor Him.

While *The Message* is not ideal for detailed doctrinal study, it is helpful for an initial reading and personal reflection. During chapel and Bible classes, you will continue using the ESV translation. You may read and annotate either *The Message* or the ESV. **Please ask for permission before using another translation.**

Tip: If something sounds unusual or unexpected, it's okay! Consider looking it up in another version (like the ESV or NIV), or jot it down to ask about later.

Who Wrote Ephesians?

Ephesians was written by the **Apostle Paul** while he was **imprisoned** for preaching the gospel. Even though Paul was facing difficult circumstances, he wrote one of the most encouraging and hope-filled books in the New Testament.

Paul wrote this letter to believers in and around the city of Ephesus to **remind them** of the incredible blessings they have in Christ and to **encourage them** to live lives worthy of the calling God had given them.

What Kind of Book Is This?

Ephesians is a letter, or epistle, found in the New Testament.

The first half of the book focuses on what God has done for believers:

- Salvation by grace
- Identity in Christ
- God's plan of redemption
- Unity among believers

The second half focuses on how believers should respond:

- Living differently from the world
- Healthy relationships
- Dealing with anger and conflict
- Walking in wisdom
- Standing firm in spiritual battles

One way to think about Ephesians is this:

Chapters 1–3: What God has done for us

Chapters 4–6: How we should live because of it

Final Encouragement

Many people spend their lives searching for identity, purpose, acceptance, and hope. Ephesians reminds us that all of these things are ultimately found in Jesus Christ.

As you read this summer, ask yourself:

- What does God say is true about me?
- What blessings do I have because of Christ?
- How does the Gospel change the way I view my struggles?
- What does it look like to thrive as a follower of Christ?
- How should my identity affect my choices, relationships, and attitudes?

As you read, remember that Paul wrote these words from prison, yet his letter overflows with hope, gratitude, and confidence in God. That's a powerful reminder that thriving is not determined by our circumstances but by our relationship with Christ.

"Everything—and I do mean everything—connected with that old way of life has to go. It's rotten through and through. Get rid of it! And then take on an entirely new way of life—a God-fashioned life."

—Ephesians 4:22–24 (*The Message*)

How to Annotate

As you read, **underline**, **circle**, **highlight**, but always write **margin notes** when you mark up a text.

Remember: highlighting alone is not an annotation. Your goal is to interact with Paul's ideas and think deeply about what he is teaching.

Try using these prompts, questions, and types of annotations:

- ☐  **Thoughts & Reflections:** Write your reaction to the author's ideas. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 - ☐  "I wonder why..." Ask questions about what Paul says or why he says it.
 - ☐  "This teaches me..." What truth is Paul communicating?
 - ☐  What does this passage say about my identity in Christ?
 - ☐  What blessings or promises does God give believers in this passage?
 - ☐  What truths can I take from this—and how do they contrast with what the world says?
 - ☐  What does this teach me about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, grace, salvation, or the Christian life?
 - ☐  How does this passage show someone thriving as a follower of Christ?
- ☐  **Author's Message:** What is Paul really trying to communicate in this section? What is the big idea?
- ☐  **Personal Response:** What surprised, challenged, convicted, or encouraged you?
 - ☐  "This reminds me of..." Make connections to your own life, church, chapel, Bible class, literature, or current events.
- ☐  **Inferences & Guesses:** What can you infer about Paul's audience? What struggles or questions were they facing?
- ☐  **Favorite Lines:** Highlight a line that is meaningful, beautiful, challenging, or powerful. Explain why it stood out.
- ☐  **Unusual or Interesting Words:** Mark words or phrases that stand out. Look them up if needed and write what you learned.
- ☐  **Patterns & Repetition:** Underline repeated words, phrases, or ideas. Ask why Paul keeps returning to them.
- ☐  **Literary Devices:** Label metaphors, imagery, symbolism, contrasts, allusions, repetition, and other writing techniques.
 - ☐ See the list of other literary devices mentioned in the next page.
- ☐  **Contrasts:** What two ideas, lifestyles, attitudes, or groups of people is Paul comparing?
- ☐  **Connections to Life:** How does this passage connect to your life or the lives of people around you?
 - ☐  "This connects with what we learned in chapel/Bible class/church..."
- ☐  **Questions:** What confuses you? What would you like to ask Paul?
- ☐  **Answers:** Try answering your own questions—even if your answer is only a guess.
- ☐  **Arguments with the Author:** Respectfully disagree or wrestle with something Paul says. Explain your thinking.
- ☐  **Vocabulary:** Define unfamiliar words or phrases. Use a dictionary or footnote if needed.
- ☐  **Drawings:** Sketch a picture or symbol that represents an idea in the passage.
- ☐  **Passage Outline:** Summarize the section with bullet points or a brief outline.

If you're not sure what something means—**write that down too!** Wrestling with Scripture is part of learning to read it well.

Literary and Annotation Skills: What to Annotate

Use this summer to sharpen your reading and annotation skills! As you read Ephesians, be on the lookout for:

Repetition

- ☐ Look for repeated words and phrases.
- ☐ What themes or questions does the author repeat? Why?
- ☐ Ask yourself: What is Paul trying to emphasize?
 - ☐ Try to answer this question.

Figurative Language: Imagery, Simile, and Metaphor

- ☐ Paul uses **vivid images** throughout Ephesians.
- ☐ Mark these images and ask: How do they help me understand Paul's message?
- ☐ Mark word images that strike you. Draw pictures of what this would look like.

Tone and Voice

- ☐ Notice how Paul's tone changes. Sometimes he is:
 - Celebrating
 - Praising
 - Teaching
 - Encouraging
 - Challenging
 - Warning
- ☐ Ask: Why does Paul's tone change here?
 - Annotate for this and try to answer the above question.

Contrast and Comparison

- ☐ Paul frequently compares:
 - The old life and the new life
 - Darkness and light
 - Death and life
 - The world's way and God's way
- ☐ Ask: What is Paul teaching through these contrasts?

Lists and Structure

- ☐ Paul often builds long lists of blessings, qualities, commands, or instructions.
- ☐ Notice:
 - What belongs together?
 - Why are these items grouped?
 - What is the main point of the list?

Biblical Connections and Allusions

- ☐ Ephesians connects to many themes found throughout Scripture.
- ☐ Look for references to:

- Salvation
- The Church
- Redemption
- God's family
- Creation
- Spiritual warfare

☐ Note any passages that remind you of something you've read elsewhere in the Bible.

Thriving Themes

Since our chapel theme is *How to ~~Survive~~ THRIVE*, look for passages that answer questions such as:

- ☐ What does it mean to thrive as a Christian?
- ☐ How does God help believers grow?
- ☐ What should Christians do when they struggle?
- ☐ How does knowing Christ change a person's life?
- ☐ What habits, attitudes, or beliefs help believers flourish?

Mark these passages and explain why they matter.