

Ephesians: A Call to Carry On

When Paul wrote the final words of his letter to his old friends in Ephesus, he said, “Grace be with all who have undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 6:24). That’s his message: Undying love. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is a call to carry on with an undying love for our Lord. Because he knew.

Paul knew some strange ideas about God would soon perforate the faith of new believers. He knew the message of grace would be challenged. He knew the believers would be tempted to forget their First Love. Paul also knew his remaining days were few. With every dip of his quill in ink, the metal links of his chains clanked and clattered about him. Affixed to a Roman guard, Paul understood the reality of his likely execution, so the letter we call Ephesians reads like a farewell address. These were his final, parting words, his last chance to impart what was most important to him, for it succinctly summarizes God’s plan of salvation and the practices believers in Christ should follow.

At the time, the recipients of this letter would have understood Paul’s intention for it to be shared, not only among themselves, but among other believers as well. In this way the book of Ephesians can be read not only as a letter to the believers in Ephesus, but also as a letter to all believers, including us today.

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is a call to carry on with an undying love for our Lord.

#WordWriters

Day 1

But God

Open my eyes so that I may contemplate wonderful things from Your instruction.

PSALM 119:18

I grew up attending church. It's sort of a requisite when your dad is the pastor. My father preached. My mom led worship. And my grandma played piano. I knew all the Sunday school stories, and I can even remember sitting in a Sunday school class, repeating the teacher's prayer for Jesus to come into my heart. I believed in Him. I really did. But I grew up confusing Christ-as-a-way-of-life with church-as-a-way-of-life. Not that church is bad. Not at all. I just had some growing up to do. Still do. We all do. But God, in His rich and infinite mercy, loves us too much to let us settle for anything less than the fullness that is ours in Christ.

Every believer has a "But God" story. For me it was an invitation to read the Bible alone for 20 minutes. That's when my life changed forever. For you it might have been something else. Maybe it was a sermon. Or an altar call. Or a conversation with a friend over coffee. God woos each of us individually and differently.

Are we focused more on church-as-a-way-of-life or Christ-as-a-way-of-life?

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Paul, the writer of Ephesians, had a dramatic "But God" story. He grew up attending synagogue, and he knew the Scriptures as well as anyone. His life was steeped in religious culture. He knew plenty *about* God. And he thought that was enough. But God literally

stopped Paul in his tracks as he walked the dusty road to Damascus. He encountered the risen Jesus and was never the same again. A man once filled with a murderous hatred for believers was transformed by God's grace (see Acts 9:1-25). And the same saving grace that changed Paul's life continues to change

lives today. This is true in every believer's life. We were heading down a certain road, maybe not to Damascus, but down a path that would eventually lead to our own destruction. But God had other plans.

Now let's dive into Ephesians!

Read Ephesians 1:1-2

The journey of growing in spiritual maturity—becoming more like Christ in thought and deed—begins the moment we surrender our lives to God. Even Paul, knowing the Scriptures as well as he did, had some growing to do. This is the overarching theme in his letter to the Ephesians. We've been saved by grace. Yes. But we still have some growing to do. Paul's letter is a call to carry on in our growth and understanding of who God is and how we are to live as His children.

Diving Deeper

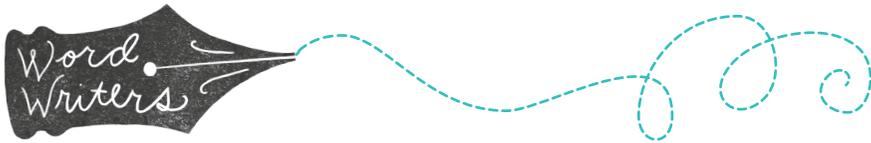
Who determined Paul would be an apostle?

To whom did Paul explicitly write his letter?

Not everyone has a dramatic conversion like Paul's. But every believer, at some point along life's journey, has encountered the risen Christ. We were heading in a certain direction. But God had other plans. Take a few moments and write down your own "But God" story below or in a separate special place. Who can you share your "But God" story with today?

You might think that Paul is being somewhat braggadocios by calling himself an apostle. But a closer look shows that Paul says he's an apostle by God's will. It wasn't his doing. It was God's doing. Put another way, Paul is acknowledging that he can't take any credit or glory for the work he's doing for the kingdom. It's all because of God. God not only saved Paul but He also gave him a mission: to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, which was basically anyone who wasn't a Jew. In the same way, God not only saves us, but He also calls us to a kingdom purpose. What is the kingdom purpose for which God has called you?

If you're not sure, that's okay too. Let's make it our prayer that through this study, God will reveal His kingdom purpose for each of our lives.



Okay, friends. This is where the rubber meets the road—or where the pen meets the paper! Turn to the lined pages in the back of this book and write out Ephesians 1:1-2.

Prayer: Thank You, Lord, for the work You have begun in my life. As I begin this new journey through the book of Ephesians, I pray that You will open the eyes of my heart to the kingdom purpose for which You have called me. And with each word from Scripture I write, I pray the Holy Spirit will continue to teach me the truth of the Word. Amen.



*As you begin this journey of writing the Word,
I pray the truth and beauty of Scripture will be inscribed
on the tablet of your heart, drawing you nearer to Him.*

~ Denise

Ephesians _____

SAMPLE