

Books of the Bible Series

Ephesians

7-15-23

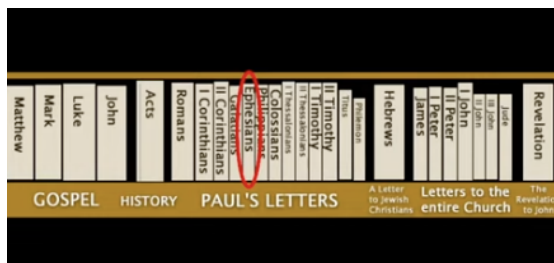
Sue Cepin

We are in year 5 in a summer series at the Village covering each book of the Bible. I personally am also in the middle of a two-month sabbatical: When we signed up for this last year, I signed up for Ephesians: I had memorized it and wanted to do it! I didn't know then that Eric's sabbatical would also be my sabbatical. This made me think, what are the other mysteries in my life?

One mystery for me is that I love to paint watercolors but I don't know the secret to getting better: I hope the secret is to get a better paintbrush and not more practice. What are the secrets in your life? Is there a secret ingredient to make those cookies better? There are mysteries everywhere that we want to know the answers to:

1. How can I feel good in my body?
2. How can I manage my emotions better?
3. How can I live with this person, manage this kid?
4. What about life on earth; what are we here for?

God loves a good secret: He likes to craft them and give us hints of what is to come: these are the best surprises! God is planning a party and it will be good! Have you ever been the honored recipient of a surprise party where the elaborate scheme to keep you from knowing is better than the party? I once planned a surprise b-day for Eric: the decoy was a dinner with friends with artichoke soup (this is actually an amazing soup). Just before the dinner, our friends called us with a flat tire and asked for help: but we ended up at a party! The problem was that Eric was really looking forward to this small dinner with the soup. God's party plans are always better and best!



Michael's bookshelf: Ephesians follows Galatians because the order is in descending length, not chronology.

Event	Reference	Year (AD)
Third Missionary Journey Begun	Acts 18:23–21:17	54
Writing of I Corinthians	I Corinthians	57
Writing of Galatians	Galatians	57
Writing of II Corinthians	II Corinthians	58
Writing of Romans	Romans	58
Writing of Luke's Gospel	Luke	59
Paul's Arrest at Jerusalem	Acts 21:26-22:29	58
Paul at Caesarea	Acts 23:23-26:32	59
Paul Starts for Rome	Acts 27:1-2	60
Paul Reaches Rome	Acts 28:11-16a	61
Paul's Imprisonment at Rome	Acts 28:16-31	62
Paul Writes Ephesians	Ephesians	62
Paul Writes Philippians	Philippians	62
Paul Writes Colossians	Colossians	62
Paul Writes Philemon	Philemon	62

Ephesians, like Galatians, was written to a region of Gentile believers, the non-Jewish new believers. Paul is bringing the Gentiles onboard.

Paul wants to reveal some secrets, the first one in

Eph 1:9-10

9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. **10** And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

God is bringing everything together in heaven and on earth under the authority of Jesus. This breaks out in Ephesians and starts with Jesus and YOU, the Gentile believer, which is most of us.

Eph 1:4-5

4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. **5** God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

Before the creation of the world, God chose us to behold and be apart of his family. This gave him great pleasure: he was really excited when you believed and became part of His family.

As a member of His family, we have wisdom to understand mysteries: for example, we were dead and are now alive and we have been given spiritual gifts to function in God's family. This brings us to Jesus and us: For Paul, this was that all the Gentile and Jews were made into ONE. The Jewish believers had a whole history of hearing the clues from God: they knew the true God and they had the invitation. When Jesus came on the scene, some of them recognized him, and then when he died and was resurrected, they put it all together and believed. Now the Gentiles have also heard. This makes up the CHURCH. Paul has a lot to say about this: These gifts lead people out of captivity into freedom...not so we can play with our own toys but so we can equip the church to grow into maturity and fullness and see God in the world and what he's doing.

Jesus and THEM: These are the unseen powers. Ephesians talks a lot about these unseen forces and how God has brought Jesus to manage them for our benefit. Jesus is now seated at the right hand of God and is far above all other powers and rules. Even though we cannot see this, it is happening. He holds this power FOR US who are his bride, body, and church.

The structure of Ephesians:

SIT, WALK, and STAND to understand & reveal the wisdom of God in Christ

Ch 1-3 How we sit

Ch 4-5 How we walk

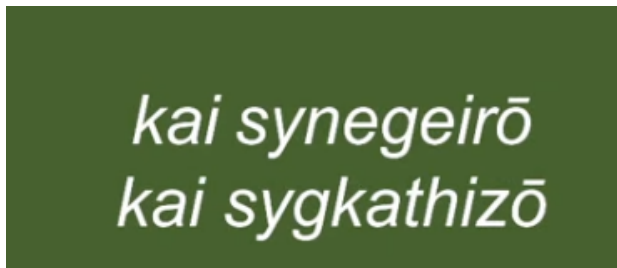
Ch 5-6 How we stand

We cannot understand the secrets without doing these things. We know them as we sit, walk, and stand: and the whole universe knows it with us!

SIT

Ch 1-3- 2:6

This is our true Identity: We are actually seated with Christ in heavenly realms. Nothing can



remove us. He raised us, he set us down in Christ: We were dead: he brought us to life and set us down. What is true for Christ is true for us. Paul says SIT over three chapters: we need to sit in this reality. We need to remember who we are: if we don't, we will act like orphans and try to protect ourselves and take what we need from other people. But we

are kids of the living God and have access to the resources of heaven: this will change how we behave in the world.

We sit when we are **alone**, when we **worship** and tell Jesus who he is, and when we do it **together** as we sit and listen to the words spoken as we sing, when we remember who the other people around us are. You don't have to be sitting to sit! You can go jogging.

WE WALK!

Eph 4:1-6:9

Eph 5:1-2

1 Imitate God, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children. **2** Live a life filled with love, following the example of Christ. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

I think this is a big thing to do: to walk like God and imitate Jesus. The beginning of this section says to be completely gentle and humble: I have a long way to go. Have you ever been lost? If you calmed yourself down and looked up you were most likely found. Once I got lost coming home from the airport in pre-GPS days. I stopped and looked around and saw Mt. Lemon's craggy peak was really small. But I knew if I started driving towards that peak, I would know where I was when it was the "right" size again.

The Gentiles also had the Holy Spirit in them; they would get help in finding where to go. We walk alone and we walk together. We walk in some specifics: Turn around and take a step! There is no shame in stopping some behaviors and adding others. “Quit it and do this instead.” If you’re a thief, quit stealing and get a job. If you’ve been lying, stop lying and tell the truth. We want to move toward unity; what we do and how we do is how we walk. If you read Eph 4 and 5, it will give clear directions to you, toward a life that sacrifices itself to others. We do this alone and together.

WE STAND

Eph 6:11-12 Putting on God’s armor

11 Put on all of God’s armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. **12** For we[a] are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

These are the things we can’t see in the cosmic realm. We find out in Eph 3:10 that God’s purpose in the church is to reveal God’s wisdom to these things in the unseen places.

There is a call to prayer in **Eph 3**: Prayer moves things in the seen and unseen world. But we get opportunities to stand when we are sitting. Sometimes we don’t believe what Scripture tells us about Jesus: whenever we tell the story about Jesus, we are standing. When we walk, we get lots of opportunities to stand! If you push back on the unseen powers, they don’t want this. Your friends who are thieves do not want you to push back. We also have the opportunities to stand for each when we proclaim who Jesus is and who we are: we have many opportunities to stand and proclaim the identity of Jesus in others. We also do this for those who don’t know Jesus.

Paul stood up and proclaimed the Gospel again under much pressure: he was beaten, thrown out of town and yet he came back over and over. As we proclaim the gospel to those who don’t know Jesus, we stand and invite them to come.

This week, I invite you to **sit, walk, and stand** so you can know the mysteries of God and reveal them to the world around us. Here are two ways to do this:

1. Read Ephesian each day:
 - M-W: Read one chapter each day and reflect who Jesus: Sit in it
 - Th-F: Reflect on Ch 4-5 and reflect about how you’re walking. Think about how it shakes out in your immediate family
 - On Saturday, stand in prayer
2. If you are driving, jogging, or whatever, remember who you are, remember that you are God’s kid and that He wants to do something with you today! Then in the afternoon,

think about how you are walking. In the evening, stand for someone in conversation. Or stand for someone in prayer and ask God to do his will in their life.

If you are not IN CHRIST because you haven't believed him or encountered him or are estranged from Him: I invite you to SIT. Just take some time this week to think about who you are, how he sees you, ask for an encounter with you to make sense.

SIT, WALK, and STAND to know and reveal the mysteries of God in Christ.