

Ephesians

Week 01 – Ephesus

Transition: We are starting off the new year by digging into one of the New Testament's most potent and influential books...Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus. If you are interested in the background of the letter and the city, please consider following this link from The Gospel Coalition's website ([Ephesians background](#)). Paul founded the church when he stopped in Ephesus on his way back to his sending church (Antioch of Syria) near the end of his second missionary journey. Before he left, he placed the care of the church in the capable hands of his traveling companions, Priscilla and Aquila. The letter was written when Paul was imprisoned in Rome in (approximately) AD 62.

Context: The first message is focused on understanding the mindset of the people and the culture of the city. One critical consideration is that a temple dedicated to the Greek goddess Artemis was located there. In that day, Artemis was revered nearly as much as Zeus, which meant that most of a typical citizen's life centered on her veneration. Her influence was enormous, affecting every area of life, including the economy. Consider listening to the following podcast ([Artemis podcast](#)) if you would like more information about Artemis of the Ephesians.

Opening Questions:

- Imagine that you are trying to describe the culture of Knoxville to someone who lives in another country. What would you say?
- Why is understanding culture and context important before studying any book of the Bible? In your own effort to do this, what have you found to be helpful in the past?

Scripture/Storying: Ephesians 1:1, Acts 18:18—19:41

Discipleship Questions:

- What do you know about the Apostle Paul (think of everything you can)? How would you describe him? What do you admire most about him?
- After reading the passage in Acts, what are some things you notice about the people of Ephesus? How would you describe them?
- What similarities do you notice between the culture of Ephesus in Paul's day and the culture of Knoxville and/or the US?
- Early in its founding, the people in the church at Ephesus were taught by at least four distinct people (Paul, Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos). What do you know about these people? (Read Acts 18:1-4, 24-28, and 1 Corinthians 3:1-6 for more info about them.) What is your perspective on having multiple teachers?
- In chapter 19, Luke mentions three prominent things that happened in Ephesus ...Paul's arrival and teaching, the sons of Sceva episode, and a riot over Artemis. Why do you think he mentions each of these specifically? How did each contribute to the spread of Christianity in that area? What do you learn from this?
- What is the Holy Spirit leading you to do in response to today's discussion?

Prayer time: This week we are praying for our youth. Josh Smith has asked us to pray for the following...

1. that the current seniors going to Cross Con 24 (a mission conference for college students geared towards pursuing the Great Commission) will gain divine insight into whatever direction God has for each one.
2. that the Lord of the Harvest will raise up disciple-making small group leaders in/from the next generation.
3. that God will save students this semester through evangelistic nights, summer camps, and primarily, through missional living throughout the week.