

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO HAS BLESSED US IN CHRIST WITH EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING IN THE HEAVENLY PLACES, EVEN AS HE CHOSE US **IN HIM** BEFORE THE FOUNDATION AND BLAMELESS BEFORE HIM. IN LOVE HE PREDESTINED US FOR ADOPTION TO HIMSELF AS SONS THROUGH JESUS CHRIST, ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIS WILL, TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORIOUS GRACE, WITH WHICH HE HAS BLESSED US IN THE BELOVED. **IN HIM** WE HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH HIS BLOOD, THE FORGIVENESS OF OUR TRESPASSES, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE, WHICH HE LAVISHED UPON US, IN ALL WISDOM AND INSIGHT MAKING KNOWN TO US THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL, ACCORDING TO THE HE SET FORTH IN CHRIST AS A PLAN FOR THE FULLNESS OF TIME, TO UNITE ALL THINGS **IN HIM**, THINGS IN HEAVEN AND THINGS ON EARTH. **IN HIM** WE HAVE OBTAINED AN INHERITANCE, HAVING BEEN PREDESTINED ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKS ALL THINGS ACCORDING TO THE COUNSEL OF HIS WILL, SO THAT WE WHO WERE THE FIRST TO HOPE IN CHRIST MIGHT BE TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY. **IN HIM** YOU ALSO, WHEN YOU HEARD THE WORD OF TRUTH, THE GOSPEL OF YOUR SALVATION, AND BELIEVED **IN HIM**, WERE SEALED WITH THE PROMISED HOLY SPIRIT, WHO IS THE GUARANTEE OF OUR INHERITANCE UNTIL WE ACQUIRE POSSESSION OF IT, TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY.

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

OVERVIEW

In a recent interview, Tim Keller spoke of the spiritual climate of the American church in light of the events of the last two years. In this interview he stated:

I'd say that the culture is definitely more polarized than it ever has been, and I've never seen the kind of conflicts in churches in the past that we see today.

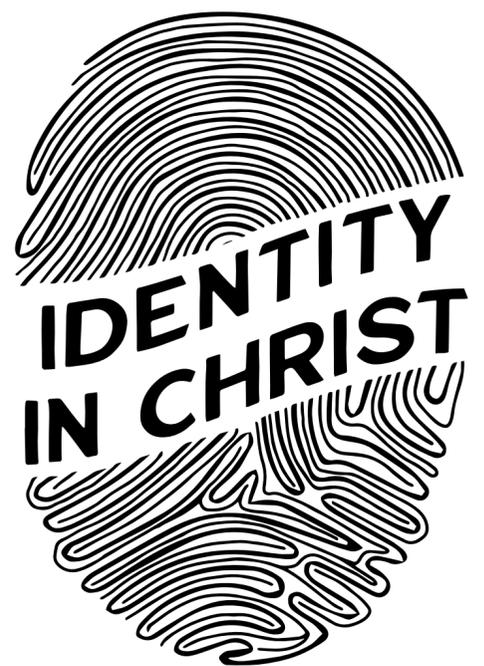
In virtually every church there is a smaller or larger body of Christians who have been radicalized to the Left or to the Right by extremely effective and completely immersive internet and social media loops, newsfeeds, and communities. People are bombarded 12 hours a day with pieces that present a particular political point of view, and the main way it seeks to persuade is not through argument but through outrage. People are being formed by this immersive form of public discourse—far more than they are being formed by the Church.

This is creating a crisis.

You can read the whole interview with Keller, [part 1](#) and [part 2](#).

These are wise, yet sobering words from Keller. Much of our culture is divided and it is bleeding into the church at large. The question becomes, how can believers in Jesus Christ avoid this? How can we be a unified people? These questions are not new. Throughout history, the church has been confronted with this tension. We find solutions to this tension in the book of Ephesians.

The church at Ephesus was faced with similar challenges that we are often faced with in the church today. Ephesus was the third-largest city in the Roman empire (approx 250,000 people). It was a harbor city and the largest commerce center on the west. Prior to Christianity reaching the city, it was well-known for pagan worship. It was deeply entrenched in the worship of Artemis (Diana according to the Romans). The temple itself was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. People worshiped this false god, seeing it as a goddess of fertility, magic, and astrology. Its commerce was deeply tied and connected to idol worship, and as Christianity's influence spread, it quickly disrupted the city's culture and economy, and many tried to stop the spread of the gospel through violence (Acts 19).



OVERVIEW

By the grace of God, and in spite of many challenges, the Apostle Paul planted the church at Ephesus. He spent nearly 3 years there preaching the gospel and raising up leaders. The church quickly grew, so much so that everyone in Asia Minor was impacted (Acts 19:10). Although the church gained remarkable influence, Paul's deepest concern was that it would fall out of love with Jesus. In fact, Paul even warns the other pastors of the church to be aware of false teachers who could come from within the church to steer the flock away from the gospel of Jesus (Acts 20:29). We find out later, in Paul's letter to Timothy, what Paul predicted came true. By the time Timothy arrived, the church encountered several false teachers who were more interested in "endless myths" than sound biblical teaching (1 Timothy 1:4-7). Furthermore, we see John's final words to the church at Ephesus stating that they "lost their first love" (Revelation 2:4).

Clearly, what Paul set out to share in his letter to the Ephesians was not taken to heart by the church. Tragically, the church did not remain focused on Jesus, nor did they stay unified. However, the heart and the intention of Ephesians is still vitally important for believers today. Ephesians is six chapters long, containing 155 verses of rich, Holy Spirit-inspired words, which speak to the mind, heart, and soul.

Ephesians has played a crucial role in the Church throughout the ages in terms of both doctrine and practical living. Famous pastor and theologian John Calvin stated that it was his favorite part of the Bible. Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge described it as "the divinest composition of man." Many New Testament scholars say it is the pinnacle of Paul's work. Outside of the book of Romans, Ephesians is perhaps the most theologically dense book of the New Testament.

The predominant theme in Ephesians is identity in Christ. In this letter, Paul mentions union with Christ and being "in Christ" more than any other letter (about 36 times). The reason is because our ability to endure and grow is all rooted in how we see who we are based on what Christ has done for us. Without our identity in Christ, we cannot be grounded and we will be led astray just like the church of Ephesus.

As a church, it is our hope that we remain rooted in who Christ is and what He says about us. May we take time to study this book together, as we seek to grow in our understanding of Jesus. And may we find common ground in the redemptive hope of the gospel.

SCHEDULE

January 23	Ephesians 1:1-6
January 30	Ephesians 1:7-10
February 6	Ephesians 1:11-14
February 13	Ephesians 1:15-23
February 20	Ephesians 2:1-10
February 27	Ephesians 2:11-18
March 6	Ephesians 2:19-22
March 13	Ephesians 3:1-13
March 20	Ephesians 3:14-21
March 27	Ephesians 4:1-10
April 3	Ephesians 4:11-16
April 10	Ephesians 4:17-24
April 17	Easter Weekend
April 24	Ephesians 4:25-32
May 1	Ephesians 5:1-14
May 8	Ephesians 5:15-21
May 15	Ephesians 5:22-33
May 22	Ephesians 6:1-9
May 29	Ephesians 6:10-24