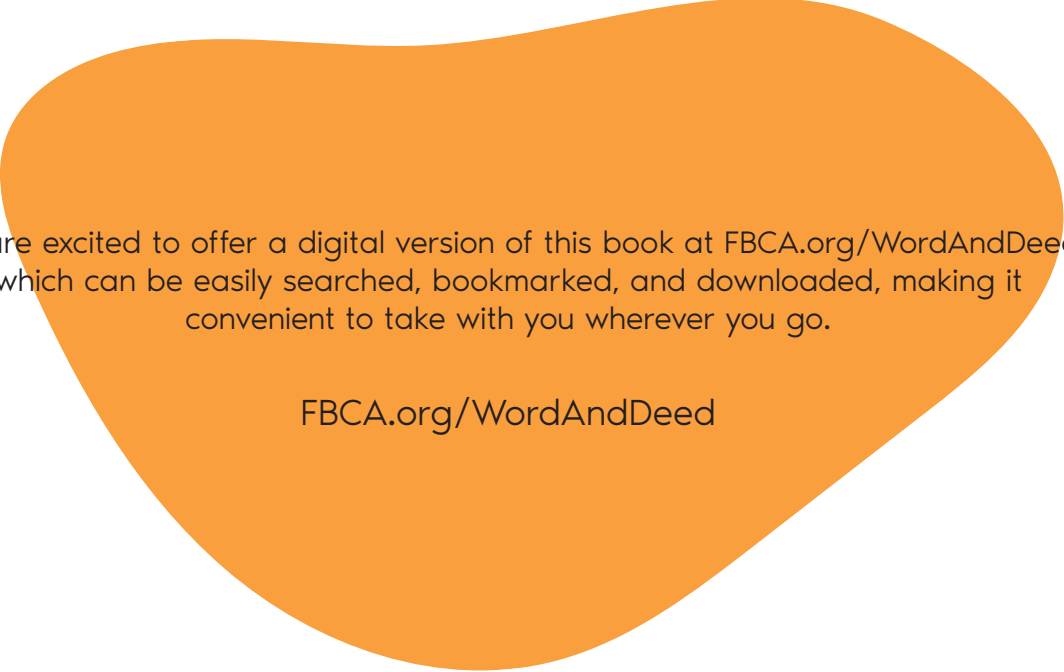


FIRST BAPTIST

Togvethen

ARLINGTON



We are excited to offer a digital version of this book at FBCA.org/WordAndDeed, which can be easily searched, bookmarked, and downloaded, making it convenient to take with you wherever you go.

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Together

And just like that, summer is winding down and a new school year is upon us. How can it already be August?

This month provides a time of transition as we head into fall. Teachers, students, and parents prepare to adjust to the structure of a new semester. And everyone else looks forward to (eventually) cooler temperatures.

After focusing on the Gospel of Mark during June and July, we will continue our theme of “Together” with a deep dive into Ephesians. New Testament scholar, Clinton E. Arnold, says: “Ephesians is rightly regarded as one of the most significant letters of human history.” Certainly, it warrants our thoughtful consideration over the next 4 weeks.

Ephesians reminds us of who we are and why we’re here as a church. Ephesians 4:13 offers the worthy goals of unity in the faith, knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity. Eugene Peterson puts it like this: “Through followers of Jesus like yourselves gathered in churches, this extraordinary plan of God is becoming known and talked about even among the angels!” (Ephesians 3:10). Essentially, this letter is a call for you and me to be transformed together in community.

As you read and study the text, listen to the sermons, and prayerfully choose a practice, we hope that you will become even more equipped and empowered to glorify God by following The Jesus Way!



Curt Grice
Associate Pastor of Spiritual Formation

Each week we will have a focal passage for the week that will serve as our Together in Word reading. However, we will encourage our church to read the entire letter to the Ephesians each week. This will keep the grand sweep of the letter in our minds as we make our way through the month. We will refer to this as the Big Picture Reading each week.

TOGETHER IN WORD:

Ephesians 1:3-14

This majestic text is one long sentence in the original Greek New Testament. It is densely packed with incredible insight. As you read through it this week, take time to reflect on the truth that you and I have been called to live in community with one another in and through the church. God is at work in His world through the church! This text challenges us to lift our view of the church to match God's plan for us. Our identity as the people of God is set forth in this powerful passage. Take some time this week as you read and reflect to pray for the church to live fully into its mission in this world.

Parent Spotlight

Parents, your goal this week is to teach your child about God's love. The topic of predestination in the Bible can be complex, especially for teenagers and adolescents. Instead of delving into the intricacies of predestination, why not direct them to the essence of it, which is God's love? Amid the complexity of Ephesians 1:3-15, there's a profound sentence that says, "In love He predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to Himself (Eph. 1:4-5)." Are you able to fully explain predestination to a child? Probably not. But they can understand that however God works, He works in love.

Lead your child to reflect on the mystery of God's love. Before the world was even created, God knew that we would be here and, what's more, through Jesus, He has provided us a way to know Him. "How marvelous, how wonderful is my Savior's love for me."

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Memorize Ephesians 1:3-6.
- Learn to rephrase this passage in your own words. How would you explain it to someone who doesn't know Jesus that they can be adopted as God's children through Jesus Christ?
- Spend time thanking God this week for choosing you and loving you. Write a prayer to God expressing your gratitude.
- How can you participate in God's work of bringing all things to unity in heaven and on Earth under Christ? Who do you need to share the Good News of Jesus with this week?

REFLECT:



TOGETHER IN WORD: **Ephesians 1:15-23**

This week's focal passage is the beautiful prayer that follows the introductory doxology. In this prayer, Paul prays through the various themes associated with God's plan for the church. Paul did not want the church to fall short in its vision of God's will for it. He prayed for wisdom, revelation, knowledge, and vision. The church of every age needs this prayer!



Parent Spotlight

Parents, what kind of prayers do you say for your children? This is a good week to examine what you are asking God to do in your family's life. Consider looking deeply at what Paul prays for the church in Ephesians 1:15-23. We often pray for things like happiness or success. Paul prays for wisdom and knowledge. He prays that the eyes of their heart are opened so that they can see how wonderful life with God is. Those are prayers worth praying over our kids. The richness of life with God is more important than any worldly wealth.

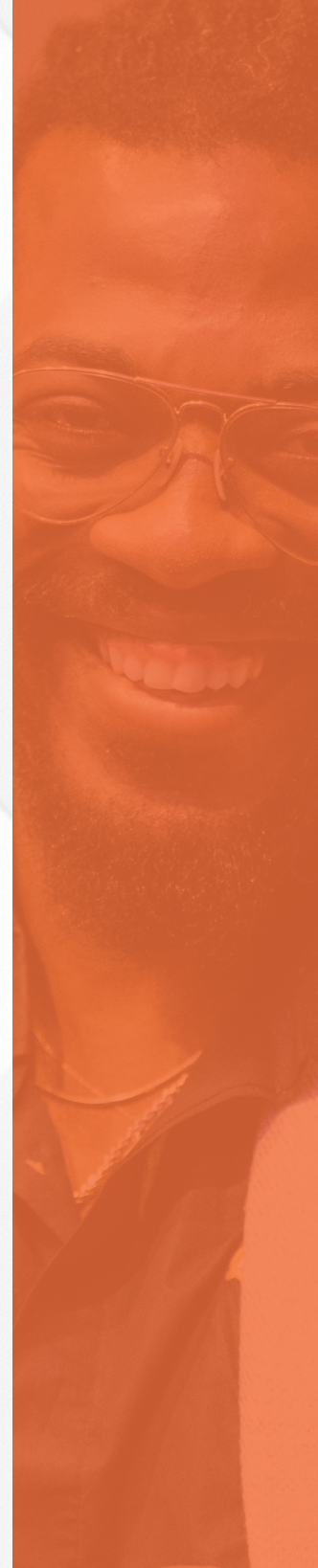
Consider rewriting Paul's prayer for your family and then start praying it for them. Eventually, work up to the point where you are even praying it over them. It's important that your family hears these prayers, the truest desires of our hearts for them. Prayer will change your household.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Commit to praying Ephesians 1:16-19 over our church every day this week. How does praying this shift your perception of our church?
- How is God leading you to participate more fully in the life of our church? Is it participation in a Bible study or engaging in service in our church or with us out in the community? This week, ask God to lead you to deeper engagement in the Body of Christ.
- While our teachers and school employees have gone back to work already, our students are beginning school this week. Pray for them as they begin this school year.
- Did you know that teachers spend an estimated \$500-\$860 annually of their own money on classroom supplies and expenses? Gift a teacher in our church with an Amazon, Target, or Walmart gift card this week along with a note of encouragement for the upcoming school year.

REFLECT:



TOGETHER IN WORD: **Ephesians 4:25-5:2**

In this text we are reminded that our walk with the Lord must be translated into how we walk with everyone else. We live among people who are not “in Christ” so their lives are very different than ours. We are to demonstrate to our world what it truly means to know Christ and to be “in Christ.” Every area of our lives is affected by our relationship to Jesus and our calling to live in community with fellow believers. This passage challenges us to evaluate our everyday lives to see if they truly reflect the glory of God.

Parent Spotlight

Parents, does your family have problems getting along? You’re not alone. This is a good week to talk about family dynamics with our children. Occasionally, our families are the setting for some of our worst behavior. But how we talk to one another and treat each other matters. Help your children and teenagers understand that treating each other with kindness is an expression of gratitude to God for treating us with kindness. This is what Paul expressly says in Ephesians 4:32. “Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.”

Not only is it a matter of gratitude, it’s also a matter of calling. Paul continues, “Therefore be imitators of God (Eph. 5:1) ...” As God’s people, we are called to shape our lives according to His image. Consider leading your family in a prayer time using this prompt: “God, help me to imitate You...” and then let them voice areas of their life that need more of God’s presence (e.g. “God, help me to imitate You when my little brother steals my toys.” “God, help me imitate You when my mom frustrates me.”)

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Many of our university students are starting back at college this week, and our church is celebrating the return of area college students. Commit to praying for our college ministry, led by Connor Torrealba, this week as they seek to engage and meet new students on campus throughout this month.
- Audit your speech this week. What comes out of your mouth? Is it useful? Is it helpful? Does it build others up, or is it unwholesome and riddled with anger? Monitor the words you say and their impact on others this week.
- In a world of differences, what would it look like for you to live harmoniously in the Body of Christ? Ask that God would reveal to you areas in your life where you are causing disunity and repent.
- Are you harboring resentment towards someone in the church, or in your life in general? If you struggle to forgive them, ask God for help. Forgive that person as you have been forgiven.

REFLECT:



TOGETHER IN WORD: **Ephesians 6:10-17**

Our modern world often seeks to force us into its mold. This is particularly true regarding the acknowledgment of evil. Our world no longer believes in the forces of darkness. The presence of evil is undeniable, but most moderns do not believe in the forces that lie behind evil. As Christians, we know that the spiritual realm is real, and we are to live as spiritual people. The good news is that God has equipped us to do just that! He has provided the spiritual weapons that actualize His power in our lives each day. How are you using the spiritual equipment God has graciously given to you?

Parent Spotlight

Parents, if we're not careful, the topic of "spiritual forces" can scare our kids and teenagers. Nevertheless, we have a responsibility to help them understand that we have a real enemy that wants to lead them away from God. After all, there would be no need for armor if there was no war. You know your family best, so as you talk with them about this part of Ephesians 6:10-17, be discerning. Briefly talk about our enemy, and then turn their attention to the parts of the Armor of God.

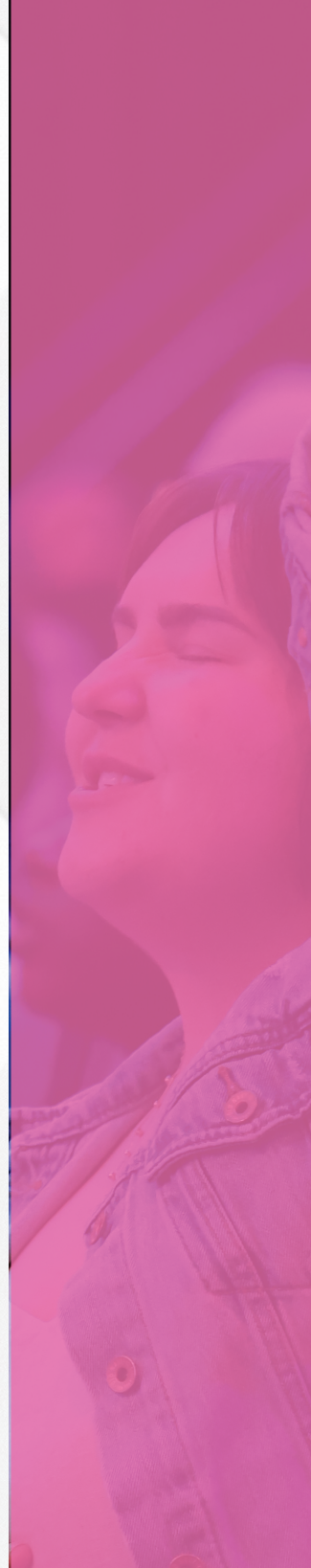
For parents of younger families, consider walking through each one of these armor pieces and explaining to them what each means (e.g., truth = right belief; righteousness = perfection in Christ, etc.). For parents of older kids and teenagers, consider talking to your family about spiritual habits (e.g., Bible study, prayer, fasting, etc.). This is one of Paul's main points in Ephesians, after all. Take off the old, put on the new.

TOGETHER IN DEED:

Choose a Practice

- Are there areas where you have fallen victim to the agendas, plans, values, or beliefs of the rulers, authorities, or powers of this dark world or the spiritual forces of evil? Ask God to reveal to you the truth and to enable you to stand firm in the truth.
- We are called to pray on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests, and to pray for all the Lord's people. Choose three people in our church this week, and pray for them every day. Pray that they will have words to share the mystery of the Gospel and that they will do it fearlessly.
- We are more susceptible to persuasion than we realize, and all forms of media, from social to cable news, are seeking to change our perception. Take a week off from social media, TV, and the news and replace that time with engagement in Scripture or spiritual songs.
- Spend time prayer walking this week in places where you or your family spend lots of time - neighborhoods, around schools, ball fields, places of work. Pray that the Spirit of God will guide people into truth and pray for opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus in those spaces.

REFLECT:





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