



St Mary's Woodford  
Home Group  
Study Notes  
Ephesians 1

## Introduction

These notes are meant to be your servant and not your master. The aim of your group meeting should be to understand God better, and to get to know one another better, through your study of the text and discussion. To the extent that you are fulfilling these aims, feel free to omit parts from these notes, or to supplement them with material from elsewhere. The sermons preached on this chapter are on the church website, but are *not* required reading.

## Background

The city of Ephesus in New Testament times was near the west coast of what we now call Turkey. It was a major city and an important centre of:

- government, being the capital of the Roman province of Asia;
- commerce, with its sheltered port a few miles up-river from the sea;
- culture, with a theatre seating at least 25,000;
- religion, with the temple of the goddess Artemis (Diana).

Paul visited briefly during his 'second journey' (Acts 18:19-21) and for an extended period during his 'third journey' (Acts 19:1 - 20:1).

## Starter activities

Either:

- 1) as a group, compare two different translations of Ephesus 1, reading a few verses at a time;
- 2) quietly as individuals, choose what you think are three key verses in the passage, then compare your selections.

## Issues and questions

The starter activities may naturally lead you into discussing any of the following issues. Don't worry if you don't tackle them all, but be sure to

cover at least three.

- a) **Saints:** Paul addresses all the Christians in Ephesus as 'saints', because they are holy in God's sight. However, the church has often used the word 'saint' to refer to a spiritual hero. Are you comfortable with both ways of using the word?
- b) **Freedom and predestination:** what major choices have you made in your life? Some have interpreted verses 4 and 5 to mean that each Christian was personally chosen for salvation by God before the creation of the world. Is it possible to reconcile that interpretation with incidents in scripture implying choice? For example: Joshua's appeal to the Israelites about whom they will choose to serve (Josh 24:15); Jesus calling people to enter through the narrow gate (Matt 7:13-14); Peter calling for repentance (Acts 2:36-41).
- c) **Forgiven and redeemed:** how would you explain these ideas to somebody outside the Christian community?
- d) **Inheritance:** have you ever inherited something of value? Were you expecting it? How did you feel about it? What is the inheritance about which Paul is writing?
- e) **Seal and guarantee:** Paul tells his readers to see their experience of the Holy Spirit as confirmation of the inheritance that awaits them. He may have been referring to the incident in Acts 19:1-7 when some of the Ephesian Christians spoke in tongues and prophesied. What spiritual experiences do *we* look back on to encourage us in our own faith?
- f) **Power:** Paul writes of the power of God which raised Christ from the dead. Do *we* expect to see God's power at work in our lives?

## For prayer and reflection

Paul prays for the church in Ephesus that they might know:

- the hope to which they are called
- the richness of their inheritance
- and the power of God.

Discuss what you would like God to do for *our* church.

Then spend some time praying, either out loud or in silence.