



Ephesians

Discover Your Inheritance

JEFF CAVINS and THOMAS SMITH



Nihil obstat: Rev. Robert A. Pesarchick, S.T.L., S.T.D.
Censor librorum
November 8, 2016

Imprimatur: +Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.
Archbishop of Philadelphia
November 22, 2016

Ephesians: Discover Your Inheritance is a resource of *The Great Adventure*® Catholic Bible Study Program.

Jeff Cavins, general editor, *The Great Adventure* Catholic Bible Study Program
Thomas Smith, co-author and presenter, *The Prophets: Messengers of God's Mercy*

Copyright © 2016, 2019 Ascension Publishing Group, LLC. All rights reserved.

With the exception of short excerpts used in articles and critical reviews, no part of this work may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in any form whatsoever, printed or electronic, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Excerpts from the English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* for use in the United States of America. Copyright © 1994, 1997 United States Catholic Conference, Inc.–Libreria Editrice Vaticana. All rights reserved.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture passages are from the *Revised Standard Version Bible*, Second Catholic Edition, Copyright © 2006 Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Ascension
Post Office Box 1990
West Chester, PA 19380
1-800-376-0520
ascensionpress.com

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN 978-1-945179-90-7

CONTENTS

Welcome to <i>The Great Adventure</i>	v
About <i>Ephesians: Discover Your Inheritance</i>	vii

QUESTIONS AND TALK NOTES

Session One – Introduction	1
Session Two – To the Praise of His Glorious Grace	9
Session Three – Saved by Grace Through Faith	17
Session Four – The Mystery Revealed	23
Session Five – A Life Worthy of Your Calling	29
Session Six – Be Imitators of God	35
Session Seven – As Christ Loved the Church	41
Session Eight – Put On the Whole Armor of God	47

RESPONSES TO THE STUDY QUESTIONS

How to Use These Responses	53
Session Two – To the Praise of His Glorious Grace	55
Session Three – Saved by Grace Through Faith	59
Session Four – The Mystery Revealed	61
Session Five – A Life Worthy of Your Calling	63
Session Six – Be Imitators of God	65
Session Seven – As Christ Loved the Church	67
Session Eight – Put On the Whole Armor of God	71
What's Next?	75

Welcome to *The Great Adventure*



“To fall in love with God is the greatest of all romances; to seek him, the greatest adventure.”
– St. Augustine of Hippo

The Bible is at the heart of our Catholic Faith—and our relationship with God. It is the living Word of God, where our Father meets with us and lovingly speaks to us. Reading the Bible should bring us closer to Christ, but understanding it is not always easy. Many people tell us they have tried time and again to prayerfully read Scripture, but they get frustrated because they “just don’t get it.”

The Great Adventure is designed so that anyone can make sense of the Bible and experience the life-changing power of God’s Word. At the core of *The Great Adventure* is the concept that there is a story running through the seventy-three books of the Bible that ties all of Scripture together and makes sense not just of the Bible but of our lives as well.

That story is God’s plan as it has unfolded throughout salvation history and continues to unfold today. Once we grasp this “big picture,” the readings at Mass begin to make more sense, our Scripture reading and study come to life, and we see how our lives fit into God’s loving plan.

Hundreds of thousands of participants have discovered the riches of Scripture by experiencing one or more *Great Adventure* Bible studies. It is our prayer that you will gain a newfound understanding of God’s Word that will transform your life and bring you closer to Christ.

Jeff Cavins, creator and president, *The Great Adventure*
Sarah Christmyer, co-developer and author, *The Great Adventure*

About *The Great Adventure* Catholic Bible Study Program

At the core of *The Great Adventure* is *The Bible Timeline*® Learning System: a simple way to get the “big picture” of the Bible by focusing on the story that runs throughout Sacred Scripture. *Great Adventure* Bible studies explore the biblical narrative in light of Catholic teaching and the historical, cultural, and literary context of the Scriptures to discover what Scripture reveals about God’s plan and our place within it. Studies of individual books of the Bible are supplemented by thematic and “life application” studies.

Every *Great Adventure* study is designed to foster

- Familiarity with the Bible and ease of reading it
- Bible study habits consistent with the guidelines of the Catholic Church
- Personal engagement in the Word of God
- Faith-sharing based on the Word of God
- Growth in knowledge about Scripture and the Catholic Faith

Not for Duplication

About *Ephesians: Discover Your Inheritance*



St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians reveals many remarkable gifts that we as Christians are given in the Church. This letter tells us about the nature of this Church—as a body, as a household, as a mystery, as a communion, as a bride, and as an army. It shows us the great inheritance that awaits us as adopted sons and daughters in the family of God, and it reveals how God's great love for us can transform our lives. *Ephesians: Discover Your Inheritance* will enrich your faith and show you how to live it out.

Materials

Materials for *Ephesians: Discover Your Inheritance* include:

- **Workbook:** contains engaging study questions (with session summaries, home reading assignments, and talk notes) and responses to the questions. (You will need one Study Set for every participant, study leader, and small-group facilitator.)
- **Video Presentations** (eight 20- to 25-minute sessions): in these engaging videos, Jeff Cavins presents comprehensive teaching and commentary, providing you with a uniquely personal encounter with St. Paul and his letter to the Ephesians. (You will need one DVD set to run a study.)

In addition, every participant, leader, and small-group facilitator should have a Catholic Bible and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. For this study, we recommend *The Great Adventure Catholic Bible*, an RSV-2CE Bible that incorporates the same color-coded *Bible Timeline* Learning System that you will use throughout this program.

How the Study Works

Every *Great Adventure* study includes four essential steps, which are designed to fit together and build upon each other. Following these steps in order will help you get the most out of each session.



STEP ONE: HOME PREPARATION

NOTE: *There is no home preparation required for Session One.*

Each session begins with personal study that involves reading Scripture and answering a series of questions that will help you understand and think more deeply about what you have read. Some questions will include additional reading from other parts of the Bible or from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to help you consider the passage in light of the bigger picture of salvation history and Catholic teaching.

We recommend that you allow at least 90 minutes to complete the reading and answer the questions for each session. We also suggest that home preparation be done in several sittings over the course of a week. This will help you create a habit of daily Bible reading and prayerful meditation.

NOTE: *Although the responses to the questions are provided in the back of the workbook, the richness that comes from individual insights can be lost when participants view the responses prior to the discussion. Your small-group facilitator will incorporate the points made in the responses section during your discussion time when you meet.*

STEP TWO: SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION

One of the most rewarding parts of a *Great Adventure* Bible study is the small-group discussion. During this discussion, you and the other members of your small group will have the opportunity to share the insights you gained by reading the Scripture passages and answering the questions at home. This small-group discussion will allow you to obtain a richer understanding of these readings and will help you apply them to your life. Trained facilitators will guide the small-group discussions and keep them on track. Be sure to follow the Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion on page xi.

STEP THREE: VIDEO PRESENTATION

Jeff Cavins wraps up each session with a video presentation that offers unique insights and profound connections to help you gain a deeper understanding of the Bible and its relationship to the Catholic Faith, with a special emphasis on ways to apply what you have learned to your life.

At the end of each video presentation in this study, Jeff Cavins challenges participants to choose a Takeaway to further connect to the readings. After viewing the video, participants should take a moment to look over these Takeaways and decide on one to engage with in the week to come.

The study leader will conclude the session with the closing prayer provided in the workbook.

STEP FOUR: REVIEW OF RESPONSES

NOTE: *There are no responses for Session One.*

The final step—reviewing the responses at the back of this workbook—is done at home prior to beginning the reading for the next session. The responses will help you read the Scripture passages for the next session in the proper context.

For the richest study experience, complete these steps in order: (1) Read and answer the questions, (2) discuss them in your small group, (3) view the video presentation, and (4) review the responses.

For more information about how to plan and promote a Bible study and how to facilitate a small-group discussion, visit ascensionpress.com or call 1-800-376-0520.

Session Outline and Reading Guide

Each session in this workbook has the following sections. (Note: Session One follows a different format.)

- 1. Session Questions** (used during **Step 1: Home Preparation** and **Step 2: Small-Group Discussion**)
 - A.** Establish the Context
 - B.** Read the Story
 - C.** Take a Deeper Look
- 2. Session Talk Notes** (used during **Step 3: Video Presentation**) followed by **Takeaways** (used by participants on their own for reflection at home)
- 3. Session Responses** (used by facilitators to prepare for **Step 2: Small-Group Discussion** and by participants at home in **Step 4: Review of Responses**)

The following chart offers an overview of the home preparation readings assigned in each session of the study. The main reading is listed in section **B. Read the Story** and should be read before you answer the session questions. Additional Bible readings and *Catechism* readings are provided in section **C. Take a Deeper Look** and should be read as you answer the study questions for each session.

Session (Video Times)	Title	Readings
Session One (19:43)	Introduction	—
Session Two (21:21)	To the Praise of His Glorious Grace	Ephesians 1
Session Three (21:23)	Saved by Grace Through Faith	Ephesians 2
Session Four (21:33)	The Mystery Revealed	Ephesians 3
Session Five (18:18)	A Life Worthy of Your Calling	Ephesians 4
Session Six (24:52)	Be Imitators of God	Ephesians 5:1-20
Session Seven (18:14)	As Christ Loved the Church	Ephesians 5:21-6:9
Session Eight (22:06)	Put On the Whole Armor of God	Ephesians 6:10-24

What to Do for Each Session

1. Welcome and Introduction (10 minutes)
2. Small-Group Discussion (40 minutes)
3. **Note to Study Leaders:** There is no small-group discussion for the first week. Instead, use this time to divide participants into small groups of eight to twelve people, ensure that everyone has the study materials, and explain how the study works. Each small group should be led by a trained facilitator.
4. Video Presentation (20–25 minutes)
5. Closing and Prayer (5 minutes)

Getting the Most Out of This Study

This study will help you understand the Bible and St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians in a new way. The "head knowledge" you gain will help you grow in "heart knowledge" as you follow up on what you have learned. The Bible will always remain a mystery, though, and that is part of the beauty of it: We can never exhaust the treasures of Scripture. Fortunately for us, the Bible is not a subject to master; it is a place to encounter the living Word of God.

Whenever you open your Bible to read, *start with prayer* and place yourself in God's presence. You might take Samuel's prayer as your own: "Speak, for your servant hears" (1 Samuel 3:10). When you read, adopt an attitude of listening. Try to treat Scripture not as a text but as a personal message from God. What is he saying? What does it mean? And what does it mean for my life? If you come to the Word focused on having an encounter with the Lord, he will speak to your heart, and you will be transformed.

Responses to the study questions are provided in the back of this workbook to help facilitators prepare for the small-group discussion and for participants to review after the small-group discussion.

Participants should not review the responses for each session until after the session is completed. Although it might be tempting to look at these responses in advance, it is important to wait, for the following reasons:

1. Bible study is not about simply watching a video presentation or reading a Bible commentary. It is just as important to immerse yourself in the Word of God itself and engage it with your heart and mind. The questions in *The Great Adventure* studies are designed to draw you into the Scriptures so that the Word of God will be planted and grow in your heart. Reading a response written by someone else may satisfy your mind for a moment, but it will not result in the kind of growth that will occur if you attempt to answer the question on your own first.
2. The success of a small group depends on a good discussion. A group of participants who have spent time pondering the Scripture passages on their own will have more varied insights to discuss.

When you follow the steps of this study as intended, you will explore the Word of God in different ways: in the reading, the small-group discussion, the video presentation, and finally in the responses. Follow these steps over time and you will be more than fed—you will learn to feed yourself.

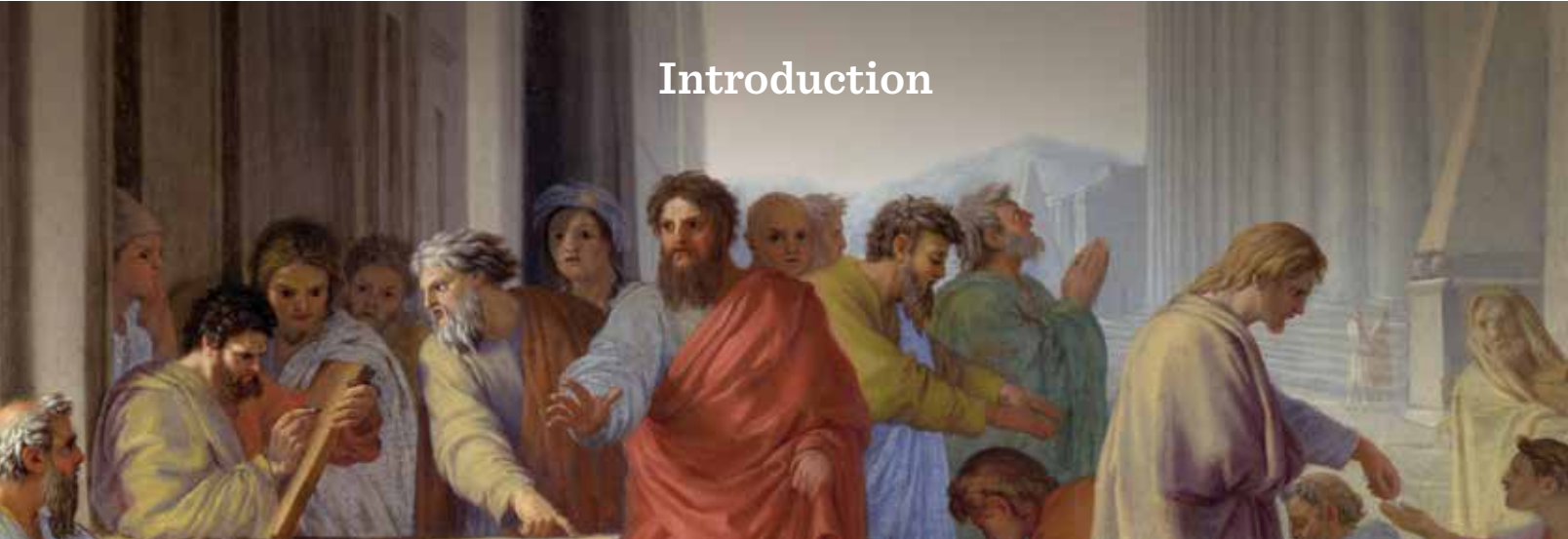
Ten Commandments of Small-Group Discussion¹

- 1.** Enjoy yourself!
- 2.** Speak with respect and charity.
- 3.** Do not ridicule or dismiss what others say. Keep comments positive.
- 4.** Come prepared.
- 5.** If you were not able to prepare, let others speak first.
- 6.** Stick to the topic and questions at hand.
- 7.** Start and end on time.
- 8.** Allow silence. Give people a chance to think.
- 9.** Listen to others without interrupting.
- 10.** Keep personal matters within the group.

¹ Adapted from Thomas Smith's original "10 Commandments of a Small Group."

Session One

Introduction



The Preaching of St. Paul at Ephesus by Eustache Le Sueur

Introduction

Ephesians has been called “the crown and climax” of Pauline thought. In fact, Catholic scholar Fr. Raymond Brown, S.J., argued that Ephesians rivaled Romans for “exercising the most influence on Christian thought and spirituality.”¹ It was one of the most widely circulated of Paul’s writings because of its powerful, practical instructions for disciples of Christ and communities of faith. The six short chapters of Ephesians contain some of the most discussed passages in the New Testament, which remain popular themes in today’s Christian culture and society: the nature of marriage, the purpose and role of the Church, the preeminence of grace in God’s plan, the reality of spiritual warfare, and more.

Authorship

The internal and external evidence for Pauline authorship of Ephesians is strong. The letter itself identifies the author as St. Paul (see Ephesians 1:1 and 3:1), and our earliest Church writers universally confirm this fact. The first example is Pope St. Clement I of Rome (in AD 96), widely considered the first of the Apostolic Fathers. Both St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Polycarp quote St. Paul; and his letter to the Ephesians is included among the epistles in the earliest listings of New Testament books, including the Marcion Canon (AD 140) and the later Muratorian Fragment (AD 180). Pauline authorship was not questioned until the sixteenth century, and the argument rests mainly on differences in language, tone, and style from the apostle’s other epistles. But those elements alone do not rule out Pauline authorship. After all, Paul was writing to a more mature community, free of the conflict and controversies besetting other churches and therefore was able to explore theological themes more deeply. Additionally, he employed an *amanuensis* (Greek), a literary assistant who helped the apostle organize and communicate his thoughts (see Ephesians 6:21; 1 Corinthians 16:21; Galatians 6:11).

¹ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 620.

Date of Composition

Those who argue for Pauline authorship typically date the letter between AD 61–63, during his house arrest in Rome while he was awaiting trial (see Ephesians 4:1; Acts 28:30-31), though it is possible it was composed as early as AD 58 during his custody in Caesarea Maritima (see Acts 23:33–26:32). Although he was in chains, his preaching, writing, and counseling were not impeded. He preached to his captors and judges, encouraged fellow Christians, and very likely penned Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, and 2 Timothy (see Acts 24–26, 28:23-31; Philippians 1:13; 2 Timothy 4:17).

The Audience of St. Paul's Letter

The audience for the letter to the Ephesians is broad: “To the saints who are also faithful in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 1:1b). Other early manuscripts are more specific: “To the saints who are at Ephesus and faithful.” These variations in manuscript should not surprise us as this letter was widely circulated in Asia Minor and was recopied and distributed to many small communities. This also explains why the epistle does not address specific church elders or respond to particular controversies, as Paul does in other targeted letters.

The ancient land of Ephesus was located in what is now western Turkey. While many pilgrims visit the Holy Land in Israel, it is worth noting that around two-thirds of the New Testament was written from or to Christians living in this small region of the world.

The Third Missionary Journey of St. Paul



Pilgrims can still walk the streets of Ephesus—the statues and buildings are breathtaking, and only about twenty to thirty percent of the city has been excavated. In New Testament times, it was the third largest city of Roman Asia and home to one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World: the Temple of Artemis. To Christians, it would be one of the most important centers of the growing movement called “the Way” (see Acts 9:2, 18:25, 19:9, 19:23).

St. Paul lived in Ephesus for three years, working his trade, building a community of faith, and confronting the pagans who made their livelihood from pilgrims coming to the Artemis temple (see Acts 19). As the community grew, early Christian evidence tells us that St. Paul ordained the young man Timothy as its first bishop (see 1 and 2 Timothy). Tradition places St. John and the Blessed Virgin Mary here, and it is probably the place where St. Luke interviewed them for the composition of his Gospel. Other famous New Testament figures can be found here as well, like Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos (see Acts 18). The Revelation of Jesus Christ to St. John (see Revelation 2:1-7) included a letter to the church in Ephesus commending the church’s faithfulness and challenging the people to “repent and do the works you did at first” (Revelation 2:5). As time marched on, this city would also receive a letter from the famous martyr St. Ignatius of Antioch and would be home to the Council of Ephesus (in AD 431), one of the most important Church councils.

We have a lot of information about the spiritual state of this particular body of believers over many generations, and it calls to us in the twenty-first century as we continue to consider our similarities and reflect on what it means to follow Christ and to be his Church.

As you read through St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, consider keeping the following questions with you throughout the study:

- How does this help me as a Catholic to better appreciate the Church in the twenty-first century?
- What practical advice does Paul offer to help me be a more faithful and fruitful member of the Church?
- If St. Paul wrote a letter to my local parish, what themes, commendations, and challenges would he offer it?

Themes, Purpose, and Structure

The simplest way to outline Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians is along the lines of orthodoxy (right worship or belief) and orthopraxy (right action or behavior):

Ephesians 1–3: right worship or belief

Ephesians 4–6: right action or behavior

In other words, the first three chapters remind us of our privileged *position* “in Christ” above, and the final three chapters show us how that relates to our faithful *practice* “in Christ” while here on earth. This gives us a powerful cruciform image of our vertical relationship and unity with the exalted Risen Christ (Ephesians 1–3) and our horizontal unity within the body of Christ below (Ephesians 4–6).

The sessions of this study are as follows:

1. Introduction
2. To the Praise of His Glorious Grace (Ephesians 1)
3. Saved by Grace Through Faith (Ephesians 2)
4. The Mystery Revealed (Ephesians 3)

- 5.** A Life Worthy of Your Calling (Ephesians 4)
- 6.** Be Imitators of God (Ephesians 5:1-20)
- 7.** As Christ Loved the Church (Ephesians 5:21–6:9)
- 8.** Put On the Whole Armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-24)

While much of the letter to the Ephesians is aimed at reminding individual Christians of their exalted position “in Christ,” it is by no means an individualistic gospel. Our identity is only understood in community, the mystery of which is explained in nearly every chapter of Ephesians.

Paul discusses the following images of the Church: the Church as a body (Ephesians 1), the Church as a family household or temple (Ephesians 2), the Church as a mystery (Ephesians 3), the Church as a communion (Ephesians 4), the Church as a bride (Ephesians 5), and the Church as an army equipped for battle (Ephesians 6).

Even the four marks of the Church as “one, holy, catholic, and apostolic” can be found in this amazing correspondence from Paul to the Ephesians (see Ephesians 2:19, 2:20, 4:5, 5:27). There is much more to learn about the gift of the Church in these six short chapters, so let’s get started!

Not for Duplication

SESSION ONE TALK NOTES**Introduction****I. Some Initial Thoughts: Mary, Ephesus, and St. Paul****II. Paul's Unique Position****A. Aim of Paul's letter to the Ephesians**

1. Love
2. Inheritance

B. Who is Paul?

1. Jewish believer, scholar, and martyr
2. Dual citizen: Jewish and Roman
3. Apostle to the Gentiles
4. Lived in Ephesus for three years (AD 54–57)
5. Wrote from prison

III. Ephesus**A. Geography**

1. Part of Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey)
2. Third or fourth largest city in the ancient Roman world
3. Said to be the largest archaeological dig in the world

B. The Ephesians

1. Known for magic: charms, rites, spells, and astrology
2. Worshiped Artemis
3. Hostile to the message of the gospel

C. Economy

1. Based on Artemis
2. Silversmiths sold “good luck charms” and souvenirs

IV. Counterfeit versus Authentic**A. Artemis versus Mary****B. Magic versus sacramentals****C. Caesar versus Jesus**

V. Themes

- A.** Inheritance in Christ
- B.** Members of the body of Christ: a household
- C.** Unity and communion
- D.** Knowing versus living
 - 1.** Give up old lifestyle to follow Jesus
 - 2.** Do not simply be a fan of Jesus: be a follower who walks in the truths he reveals

VI. Structure of the Letter

- A.** Ephesians 1–3
 - 1.** Orthodoxy
 - 2.** Right believing, theology, dogma
- B.** Ephesians 4–6
 - 1.** Orthopraxy
 - 2.** Right living, verbs, put beliefs into practice

T • A • K • E • A • W • A • Y • S

After considering the following Takeaway options, commit to responding to God in a practical way with one of them.

1. Take note of those things in the world that focus on power and ask yourself if there is a relationship between what the world is seeking and what Paul has to offer in Ephesians. Take a moment this week to read the whole letter—it does not take very long—and just acquaint yourself with it.
2. Take this week to pray to both St. Paul and the Blessed Virgin Mary and ask them to help you in this study to become the son or daughter that God has truly called you to become.

Closing Prayer

God our Father, thank you for giving us a community of brothers and sisters who desire to study your Word together. Open our hearts and make us receptive to what you want us to learn about ourselves and our role in God's household as we grow ever closer to you. Amen.

