



## *Week 1:* GOD'S BIG PICTURE OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

The book of Ephesians is one of the many great books found in the Bible! It is a letter from God, written by Paul to every person and church that follows Christ Jesus. Like a treasure hunt, searching every word and passage reveals beautiful gems of truth that will enrich our lives and bring abundance to our souls. However, to truly glean all God has for us as we read the Bible, we must understand the BIG PICTURE.

As a child, do you remember a time when you simply could not see the big picture? Maybe it was resisting treatment and howling in pain as your dad carefully removed the splinter from your foot. Or the time you felt so frustrated when your mom refused to give you another cookie. Then there's the time your parents gave you a curfew. How ridiculous was that?

As children, the big picture is hard to understand. As a child grows and matures, those answers become a lot clearer. This is also true when it comes to God and His plans for us. While there are some things we may not understand until heaven, God decided to make some things very clear and available for us to grasp. As we grow and mature in our relationship with Christ, we grow in understanding God's plans.

As we love God and follow His design, we find ourselves experiencing *the best life!*

## Conversation No. 1

### THE BIG PICTURE

“Mom, are we there yet?” This familiar question inevitably occurs somewhere within the first 15 minutes of the 10-hour family road trip! Without understanding maps, directions, and travel time, children have no concept of the big picture. All they can see is the snippet of scenery that races by the car window. And, unless someone with understanding is at the wheel, that family will never reach their destination!

**Do you love traveling? Why or why not?**

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**Where is your favorite traveling destination?**

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Our journey through Ephesians is a trip worth taking! As we read the book of Ephesians, there are several “Big Picture” details we must embrace in order to successfully reach our destination of knowing God, understanding His Word, and following His design for *the best life*. Before we can understand Ephesians, we have to understand how Ephesians fits in God’s bigger picture. As you read this great book, remember it does not stand alone. Ephesians is one book inside *the Book*. The Bible. Ephesians is one important moment inside the grand drama unfolding between God and man. Before you can appreciate the book of Ephesians and what it has to say, you have to appreciate the entire Word of God. So, let’s look at the BIG PICTURE!

Before you can appreciate the book of Ephesians and what it has to say, you have to appreciate the entire Word of God.

## THE BIG STORY

### THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

### ♥ Let's Hear from God

*The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of our God stands forever.*

(Isaiah 40:8)

Explain the comparison and contrast described in this passage.

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According to God, His Word stands forever. In a world where people leave, beauty fades, and life is fragile, how does this truth impact your life?

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## THE BIBLE IS A LOVE STORY

In the beginning, God created the entire world and it was good. God created people and delighted in them! Unlike any other created thing, God made people in His image (Genesis 1-2). Then, the unspeakable happened. Humanity rejected God and sin crashed into Creation like a tidal wave, leaving death and destruction in its wake (Genesis 3). In that moment, we became messed up! All people sin and fall short of God's glorious standard (Romans 3:23).

Despite our sin, God loves people and enacted a plan to save us. Through His chosen man, Abraham, God made a promise to bless all people. God created the nation of Israel as people chosen by God to be a light in the darkness and point others back to God (Genesis 12). However, the people of Israel had a hard time letting their light shine. Like those before them, they continued to fail and reject God.

In a pinnacle moment in mankind's history, God sent the Ultimate Solution to mankind's problem. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth in human form. Though innocent, Christ died a criminal's death on the cross to pay for our sins. Three days later, God raised Jesus from the dead! He is alive! Jesus is God's redemption plan and greatest act of love.

## Let's Hear from God

*<sup>8</sup> But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. <sup>9</sup> And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. <sup>10</sup> For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. (Romans 5:8–10)*

**How did God show His great love for us (v. 8)?**

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**How are we made right in God's sight (v. 9)?**

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## ♥ Let's Hear from God

*Therefore, since we have been made right in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us. (Romans 5:1)*

According to this verse, why can you and I have peace with God?

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Why do you believe our faith is important to God?

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## ♥ Let's Hear from God

*Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her. (Ephesians 5:25b)*

“Who” is the Church?

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According to this verse, how does Christ feel about the Church and what has Christ done for her?

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At Christ's command, the Church was born and carries on to this very day (Acts 2). It was during those early days after Christ returned to God the Father that the book of

Ephesians was written. And now, all of creation groans as we await the final chapter of God's story (Romans 8:22). We wait expectantly for the day when all things will be made new, restoration complete . . . the day when Jesus Christ returns to earth and the new Kingdom is revealed (Revelation 21)!

## Conversation No. 2

### YOUR STORY IS PART OF GOD'S STORY

God created you! Your whole life is part of God's big plan. Psalm 139 offers a clear picture of how intimately God is involved in your life. I encourage you to read this amazing passage on your own!

### ♥ Let's Hear from God

*<sup>1</sup> O LORD, You have examined my heart and know everything about me. . . . <sup>4</sup> You know what I am going to say even before I say it, LORD. . . . <sup>13</sup> You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.*

(Psalm 139:1, 4, 13)

According to these verses, how well does God know you?

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Why do you think God is interested in your life?

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What do you believe God wants from you?

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## ♥ Let's Hear from God

*<sup>37</sup> Jesus replied, "You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind."<sup>38</sup> This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matthew 22:37–38)*

What is the first and greatest commandment?

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Is it easy or difficult for you to understand that God wants a loving relationship with you? Why?

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What keeps us from loving God?

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God is ultimately interested in a loving relationship with you. He is not interested in you simply gaining information or getting smarter with your knowledge of the Bible. God loves you! He desires that you love Him. It is within that loving relationship that the truths of the Bible *come alive!*

A romance novel (*if it's clean* ☺) is great to read—but how much greater to actually live out a real-life romance with your beloved! If given the choice, most of us would like

to live the dream rather than simply read about it. God offers this love to you. Until you embrace a tenderness and love for the Lord, the book of Ephesians will not have full impact on your life. In order to understand God's big picture, establishing a loving relationship with God through Jesus is the first step.

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## Conversation No. 3

### THE BIG CHOICE

#### ♥ Let's Hear from God

*Choose today whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my family, we will serve the LORD. (Joshua 24:15b)*

God's sovereignty and mankind's free will weave throughout the Bible like threads in a tapestry. When we rejected God in the Garden, God had a huge choice in front of Him. He could have chosen to scrap humanity altogether. Instead, God chose to enact a plan to save us through Christ. In His supreme authority, God gives us the choice to receive or reject His gift of salvation.

God is not interested in a one-way relationship with you. He is not excited about you merely gaining more knowledge as you study Ephesians. You were not created as a robot. You have the choice and ability to love Him, follow Him, and respond to His great love. What do you choose today?

#### ♥ Let's Talk with God

*Dear God, help us want to know and love You. Walk with us as we seek You in this study of Your Word. Please open our ears. We want to hear Your voice. We believe following You is the best way to live! Help us when we doubt and go our own way. Thank You for choosing us! Help us love You back. In Jesus' name, amen.*



