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truth sender
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*From sender to receiver
issues discussed
and truth retold.*



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The *Kingdom of God Interpreting Scripture Short Course* is a journey through God's
love story the Bible. Through this course, each one is empowered to understand
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Letters - Part 1

Welcome to the Kingdom of God Interpreting Scripture Short Course Sessions on understanding God's intended meaning in the Letters.

To get the most out of these sessions, as you watch each video, follow the 00:00 [TIMECODES] in this workbook and **⏏** [PAUSE] the video to write your answers.

The books of the Bible that are categorised as letters are:

Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John, Jude (and possibly Hebrews).

What makes these books categorised as letters? **⏏** [01:29 - 01:47]

What are the letters often written in response to? **⏏** [01:55]

Why is it difficult to discover God's intended meaning from the letters? **⏏** [02:09]

What are the three things we need to discover within each letter to help us understand God's intended meaning? **⏏** [02:10-02:19]

1.

2.

3.



Journey through Ephesians

To help us discover God's intended meaning in the book of Ephesians we will ask the 6 questions, Who? How? Where? When? What? Why?

Read **Ephesians 1:1-2**

Who is the writer of this letter?  [03:59]

Who are the recipients of this letter?  [04:06]

Why is this letter unique amongst other letters in the Bible?  [04:12 - 04:27]

Read **Ephesians 1:9-10** and **verses 17-23**

What is the eternal plan of God that the writer reveals? Read **verses 9-10**

 [06:11]

What does the writer pray for until the fulfilment of God's eternal plan?

Read **verses 17-23**  [06:16 - 06:29]



In summary, **what** was the writer's reason for writing?  [06:44]

Reading the entire letter written to the saints of Ephesus (who are all those who have received Jesus, received God), we discover two main themes.

What are the two main themes throughout this letter?  [06:57]

Throughout the letter of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul illustrates how these two key themes are outworked in everyday life. As the majority of this letter contains universal principles of God's eternal truth, much of what Paul writes to the saints in Ephesus is the same for us today.

What aspects of our inheritance in Christ Jesus are included in the first half of this letter?  [07:27 - 07:36]

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

What is included in the rest (second half) of this letter?  [07:43]

Let us discover more about the recipients' situation, culture, and environment at the time of writing.

Read **Acts 18:18-19**

Who did the Apostle Paul leave in Ephesus to continue the ministry?  [08:43]



What were their positions of leadership, equal or unequal? 🎧 [08:51]

Read **Acts 19:18-20**

What happened amongst those who heard the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
🎧 [09:37 - 09:46]

What does this demonstration of repentance and giving allegiance to God give us insight into? 🎧 [09:55]

What were the spiritual dynamics in Ephesus at the time of writing? 🎧 [10:13]

Read **Acts 20:28-31**

At the end of Paul's ministry time in Ephesus, **what** does he warn will take place?
🎧 [11:25]

Read **Revelation 2:1a** and **4**

What do we learn eventually happened to the saints in Ephesus? 🎧 [11:58]

What is their first love? 🎧 [12:02]



Having gained a greater insight into the situation in Ephesus at the time of writing, we can understand the depth of Paul's concern to convey the fullness of the truth to them.

Personal reflection

From the Letters - Part 1, what is something about God and His character that has resonated with you?

What is your response/prayer?

Heavenly Father, we thank you that you love so deeply and care so much for all people. That your eternal plan is for all things to be one in Christ Jesus. A oneness of equality and respect. We thank you Father that you give us your power to live in the fullness of all you have given us. In Jesus' mighty name, amen.

Letters - Part 2

As we learnt in Letters - Part 1, letters are half of a conversation addressing a specific situation, within a specific community and cultural environment.

Let us continue our journey through Ephesians by completing a practical together on the power and relationships dynamics of living in God's kingdom in this world damaged by evil.



Practical

Read **Ephesians 5:21-33**

Other than the writer (Paul) and the recipients of this letter (the saints in Ephesus), **who** are the characters? 🎧 [03:10 - 03:29]

How do the writer and the first recipients interact? 🎧 [03:45]

What is the first interaction within the passage? Read **verse 21** 🎧 [03:53]

In this context, **what** is the fear of God? 🎧 [03:59]

Where does this reverence and awe come from? 🎧 [04:07]

In this context, **what** is submitting to one another? 🎧 [04:26]

We will go deeper on what submission is as we study this passage of scripture further.

What is the interaction between wives and husbands? 🎧 [04:33 - 04:45]



What is the interaction between Jesus and the church (every disciple of Jesus)?

▮ [04:48 - 04:58]

What is the final interactions within this text? ▮ [05:05]

For us to understand God's intended meaning of this scripture, we need to look at it in the context of God's whole love story, the bible. To understand how God's kingdom of equality can become a reality on earth in our relationships in this world of inequality, we need to go back to the beginning.



Read **Genesis 1:27-28**

How did God originally create male and female? ▮ [06:19]



What did the first man and woman receive equally from God? [06:20 - 06:30]

Out of God's perfect selfless love, **what** did God give the first man and woman?
[06:36]

What was the choice God gave the first man and woman? [06:37 - 06:50]

What did humanity choose? [06:58]

What was the result of humanity's choice? [07:04]

Read **Genesis 3:16**

What is God revealing to the first man and woman? [07:38]

What has happened as a result of their choice to be one with both good and evil?
[07:47]

In this context, **what** does the word desire mean for the woman? [07:56]



In this context, **what** does rule over mean for the man? 🎧 [08:08]

What are humanity's selfish desires? 🎧 [08:11 - 08:18]

To help us understand the words used in Genesis 3:16, let us go to the next instance where the Hebrew words that have been translated as 'desire' and 'rule' are linked together.

Read **Genesis 4:7**

What is the context of this verse? 🎧 [09:04]

What does God explain to Cain? 🎧 [09:10]

What does God reveal to Cain? 🎧 [09:15 - 09:25]

To understand more about how to understand God's intended meaning in Genesis, please go to the Narrative videos and workbook.

The first man and woman chose to give power to their selfish desires and evil. As a result, **what** are humanity's relationships, equal or unequal? 🎧 [09:41]

Back to **Ephesians 5:21-33**

What is the Apostle Paul's reason for writing these verses? 🎧 [10:02]



In this context, **what** is submitting? [10:09]

When we surrender our selfish desires to God to control and manipulate another to get what self wants, **what** does it bring? [10:37]

Who is the writer Paul speaking to in **verse 21**? [10:42]

Remembering that God's purpose and plan is to bring all things into one in Christ Jesus, and the key themes are power and relationships, this oneness in Christ Jesus is when everyone and everything is equal. Where each one is in surrender of their self-will, to that of the Father's will. As a result of being in daily surrender, the abuses of power and hierarchical positions of this world fade away.

To maintain the oneness we have already been given in Christ Jesus, **what** does the writer Paul emphasise every disciple of Jesus needs to do? [11:25]

In this context, **what** does submit mean? [11:25 - 11:39]

How do we honour God and each other in our relationships? [11:51]

How do we bring God's kingdom of equality into our everyday life? [11:58]



How can the wife be free of the controlling forces of her selfish desires? [12:23]

Generally speaking, in most cultures, the male is the one with the power. Paul acknowledges the power imbalance in the world and the church and speaks into any abuses.

What does the husband need to do to bring God's kingdom of equality into his relationship with his wife? [12:53]

What does God, who is the ultimate power and authority, use His power for? [13:13]

What does the writer Paul state to the man? [13:19]

What will the man do with his power if he loves his wife? [13:56 - 14:04]

What happens with mutual surrender? [14:12]

Why was it written? [14:21 - 14:41]



What is the result if we are willing to continually surrender our selfish desires to God?

🎧 [14:45 - 15:07]

In summary, submitting to one another is to surrender our selfish desires to control and manipulate or dominate to get what self wants. In submitting to one another, we are surrendering those selfish desires to God. In surrender to God, He transforms and renews so that we see each other equal through His eyes of love.

Personal reflection

From Letters - Part 2, what is something about God and His character that has resonated with you?

What is your response/prayer?

Heavenly Father, we thank you that your desire is for us to be truly free. Thank you that you bring true justice, freedom and equality for us to know and experience, even in this world damaged by evil. Help us to surrender our selfish desires to you, each and every moment. So that we may live in the fullness of the victory that you have given us. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.



Letters - Part 3

In Letters Part 2, we continued our journey through the letter to the saints in Ephesus, going deeper into what it means to submit to one another. That is, to surrender our selfish desires to control and manipulate or dominate another to get what self wants, and how this surrender sets us free.

Remembering that the key themes of the book of Ephesians being power and authority and relationships, we will now go to Paul's first letter to Timothy, a Pastor of the saints in Ephesus.

Practical

Read **1 Timothy 2:8-15**

Who are the characters? 📖 [03:12 - 03:17]

Let us discover who 'I' is. Read **1 Timothy 1:1**

Who is 'I'? 📖 [03:39]

Who is 'I' writing to? 📖 [03:44]

Back to **1 Timothy 2:8-15**

How do the characters interact? 📖 [03:56 - 04:10]



To understand why Paul is giving these specific instructions, we need to discover what the situation was that caused Paul to write this letter.

Let us read **1 Timothy 1:3-7**

What was the situation of the congregation that had been entrusted into Timothy's pastoral care?  [05:08 - 05:31]

What did the world culture at that time worship and what did it involve?  [05:44 - 05:53]

Back to **1 Timothy 2:8-15**

Given the chaos within the church and the selfish desires of the people ruling and reigning, **what** is Paul's main concern?  [06:17]

In Paul's instructions, **what** is he reinforcing?  [06:40]

Who is the mediator between God and humanity?  [06:48]

What is lifting up holy hands without anger or dispute in one's heart an act of?  [06:59]



In Paul's instructions for the women, **what** is he contrasting? 📖 [07:14]

What is Paul encouraging the women to do? 📖 [07:25 - 7:41]

What culture does Paul want to bring into the church? 📖 [07:45]

Let us now look at Paul's statement to Timothy where he says 'let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man.'

What is Paul's intent in writing this letter? 📖 [08:27]

As we read in 1 Timothy 1:7, there were those in the church wanting to teach yet they had no understanding of the truth.

What does Paul instruct Timothy to do in **chapter 2 verse 11**? 📖 [08:40]

What does Paul instruct Timothy to do for the women? 📖 [08:54]

In **what** manner does Paul instruct the women to learn in? 📖 [09:09]



What do the words that have been translated as 'have authority over a man' mean?

▮ [09:21]

What is Paul giving Timothy? ▮ [09:38]

What is Paul concerned about? ▮ [09:45]

As we discovered in video 2 of the letter to the Ephesians, true freedom from our selfish desires to control and manipulate or oppress and dominate others to get what one wants comes through surrendering those desires to God. This is what Paul is talking about when he says the women are to learn in silence with all submission. That is, to learn with a teachable spirit.

Read **1 Timothy 2:13-15**

What analogy is Paul using in **verses 13-15**? ▮ [10:50]

Who is Paul using as an analogy for the woman? ▮ [11:01]

Who is the one who brings salvation, born of a woman by the seed of the Holy Spirit?

▮ [11:18]



How will these women, along with all creation, be saved? 📖 [11:30]

What are the characteristics of God that Paul uses to speak life into the women?

📖 [11:51 - 11:57]

In this passage of scripture, **what** are some aspects of God's kingdom that are revealed? 📖 [12:13 - 12:26]

What is Paul advising Timothy to do? 📖 [12:30 - 12:41]

As this letter is half a conversation written to address a specific situation for a specific community, we cannot take Paul's instruction to not let the women teach as a universal principle. We cannot say that women should not be allowed to teach as in fact Paul was saying the exact opposite.

Paul was addressing a specific situation where women were teaching who didn't have sound doctrine because they had not been permitted to learn. Instead, Paul directs Timothy to let the women learn! To God and Paul it is irrelevant whether the teacher is male or female. What is important to God and Paul is that we teach the truth, include all people, and empower them to go and do likewise.



Personal reflection

From Letters - Part 3, what is something about God and His character that has resonated with you?

What is your response/prayer?

Heavenly Father, we thank you that yours is a kingdom of equality and respect. That you care so much and went to such lengths to empower us all to know the truth. We pray that each one of us will be empowered to multiply your truth in teaching others, as that is your heart's desire. We thank you, in Jesus' name, amen.

Letters Further Study

Frequently asked question

Given that Ephesians 2:8-9 says we are saved through faith and not of works, why does James 2:17 say faith without works is dead?

To discover God's intended meaning of what James is saying, we will complete a practical together.



Read **James 2:14-26**

Other from the writer, **who** are the characters?

verse 14: 1. _____ 2. _____

verse 15: 3. _____

verse 19: 4. _____ 5. _____

verse 20: 6. _____

verse 21: 7. _____ 8. _____

verse 25: 9. _____ 10. _____

Who is the writer of this letter? Read **James 1:1**

Who is the letter written to? Read **James 1:1**

Who are the twelve tribes? To discover this, read **Matthew 19:28**

We have discovered that the twelve tribes are those of Jewish lineage. In chapter 1:2, James calls them 'my brethren'. Whenever the word brethren is used, it is referring to those who have received Jesus, received God. In chapter 2:1, James links the term 'my brethren' with the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, James is writing to those of Jewish lineage who say they have received Jesus as their Messiah, Saviour and King.

As we learnt in the letters videos, the letters were often written to address a specific situation that was occurring within the recipients' community. Now that we know who the writer and the recipients were, we need to discover the purpose of the letter and the situation within the recipients' community at the time of writing.



What was the situation at the time of writing that James is addressing?

James 1:2 _____

James 1:14-15 _____

James 1:16 and **22** _____

James 1:26 _____

James 2:3 and **6** _____

James 4:1-2 _____

James 4:3 _____

James 4:4 _____

From these verses we read that some of the recipients were undergoing various trials. There were also those who were following after their own selfish desires and conceiving sin within their hearts. Even though they had heard the truth, many were deceiving themselves with prideful claims of being 'religious'.

In their pride they were showing partiality to the wealthy and oppressing the poor. There were wars and fights amongst them. They were lusting after what they did not have, they coveted after what they could not obtain. When they asked God for things they asked amiss, for they were wanting to spend it on their own pleasures. Thus James describes these desires as being friends with the world and as a result, an enemy of God.

This was the situation that James was responding to in writing this letter. With a Jewish style of teaching and direct speech, James addresses these issues and speaks the gospel truth into their hearts and minds in a way they will understand.



Back to **James 2:14-26**

How do the characters interact?

As this is a letter written by James to his brethren, James interacts with his brethren throughout this whole passage by questioning and reasoning with them about faith and works. In doing this, James often asks questions to reveal the deceptions of their thinking, desires and behaviour.

What are the first two questions James challenges his brethren with? Read **verse 14**

What is the next question James challenges his brethren with? Read **verses 15-16**

In the context of James' brethren claiming with great pride to be religious, **what** statement does James make to them? Read **verse 17**

What is James' response to someone who says, "You have faith, and I have works."? Read **verse 18**

What does James reveal about believing there is one God? Read **verse 19**

What is the next question James challenges his brethren with? Read **verse 20**

What is the next question James challenges his brethren with? Read **verse 21**



What is the next question James challenges his brethren with? Read **verse 22**

As a result of Abraham believing God and receiving his right to rule and reign, **what** was God's response? Read **verse 23**

In the context of works and faith, James reveals that one cannot be separated from the other, as together they are believing God and receiving His right to rule and reign. In verse 26, James explains that as the body without the spirit is dead, so too faith (believing God exists) without works (receiving God's right to rule and reign, that is, being surrendered to Him) is dead.

To live in the fullness of this truth is a daily journey of continual surrender to God. In this letter, James addresses each of the issues within the recipient's church community and challenges them to surrender their desires for self-glorification and self-gratification. For James knows that in surrender of these destructive desires to God, He will transform their hearts and minds.

Understanding what faith and works are in the context of this letter, **what** does James say to the prideful who desire for the pleasures of this world?

Read **James 4:7-10**



How can the prideful who desire the pleasures of this world be cleansed from their offences, have their hearts purified and their minds renewed? Read **verse 7**

What will God do in the prideful if they draw near to Him with a surrendered heart? Read **verse 8**

What will God do in the prideful if they are willing to surrender their pride to God? Read **verse 10**

Understanding the writer's reason for writing and the situation of the recipients at the time of writing the letter helps us gain a greater understanding of God's intended meaning.

Let's take a moment to consider the different contexts of Ephesians 2:8-9 and James 2:17.

As we discovered in the letters videos, Ephesians was written to a different group of recipients to that of James. The recipients of the letter to the Ephesians were from many different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs. Unlike the recipients of James' letter, many of the recipients of Paul's letter to the Ephesians were from non-Jewish lineage.

Another notable difference is that the Ephesians letter was to all the churches within the region and contains many universal truths about God and our identity being in Christ. In this context, Paul writes that all who receive Jesus, receive God are saved through faith and not of works.

God does the work of salvation by providing the sacrifice, for He has paid the cost for all the offences of humanity. By God giving salvation to all who receive Him and His right to rule and reign, God protects us from the destructive forces of pride. Living in the fullness of Jesus' victory through surrender is central to Paul's letter to those in Ephesus.



It is also central to James' letter to those of Jewish lineage who as his brethren had received Jesus, received God. As the recipients of James' letter were trapped in their desires for the things of this world, including self-glorification and self-gratification, James exposes these deceptions and presents them with the choice.

The choice of continuing to live in the bondage of their selfish desires, hurting self and each other. Or to continually surrender them to God and be transformed by Him, living in the reality of Jesus' victory, humility, justice and equality, and patience.

Where and **when** did it happen? Read **James 1:1**

What is the style of writing?

What is the context of this scripture (**James 2:14-26**) in God's whole story?

Refer to timeline illustration on page 8.

Why was it written?

What are some of the things that are the same today?



Personal reflection

From this question on faith and works, what is something about God and His character that has resonated with you?

What is your response/prayer?

