

# Equip: Resources on the Book of Ephesians

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Paul's letter to the Ephesians encapsulates his comprehensive and mature theology in a compact, balanced and eloquent form.

Renowned for its literary beauty and theological depth, it has been acclaimed as "the crown of St. Paul's writings" (Armitage Robinson), "the queen of the epistles" (William Barclay), "the quintessence of Paulinism" (F.F. Bruce), "one of the greatest letters of the apostle Paul" (Markus Barth), and "one of the most significant documents ever written" (Peter O'Brien).

The letter's focus is telescopic, progressively narrowing from the cosmic to the corporate and finally to the individual. From a theological perspective, this progression moves from the person and work of God the Father to the person and work of Christ (Christology) and the Holy Spirit (Pneumatology), to individual salvation (soteriology), to the church and ministry (ecclesiology), and finally to practical exhortations (ethics).

## Preaching commentaries

***NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians* by Klyne Snodgrass and *The Message of Ephesians, Revised Edition* by John Stott**

Several commentaries aim to assist pastors and Bible teachers by bridging the gap between exegesis and homiletics and making the exegetical insights relevant to contemporary audiences. Snodgrass's *NIV Application Commentary* and Stott's well-known commentary are examples of such

efforts.

These commentaries are recommended as examples of the efforts to combine exegesis with homiletics and offer valuable guidance on how to apply the text to real-life situations. The homiletic task is ultimately the calling of pastors, and these two commentaries offer valuable insights and guidelines for that purpose.

## **Exegetical commentaries**

These commentaries are well-crafted, intermediate-level exegetical commentaries authored by evangelical scholars.

### ***Pillar New Testament Commentary: The Letter to the Ephesians* by Constantine R. Campbell (Eerdmans, 2023)**

Australian New Testament scholar Constantin Campbell's commentary replaced Peter O'Brien's in the *Pillar New Testament Commentary* series after O'Brien's was retracted following accusations of plagiarism.

Campbell significantly shortened the commentary by limiting interactions with other scholars but maintained the exegetical quality. His major contribution lies in offering theological insights, particularly on Paul's concept of union with Christ, and incorporating the perspectives from contemporary Pauline scholarship, such as the language of faith and grace/gift.

In his book *Paul and Union with Christ*, he engages extensively with my work, *Corporate Elements in Pauline Anthropology*. While we agree on the importance of these concepts, Campbell understands them more as metaphorical expressions, whereas I approach them from a more realistic perspective.

***New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* by F.F. Bruce (Eerdmans, 1984)**

Although F.F. Bruce's one commentary covers three letters—Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon—and is now dated, it advanced the conversation at the time of its publication, setting a standard for subsequent evangelical exegetical commentaries.

While Bruce does not provide extensive grammatical and literary analysis, his textual, historical and theological insights remain valuable.

***New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Letter to the Ephesians* by Lynn H. Cohick (Eerdmans, 2020)**

Lynn Cohick took the significant step of replacing Bruce's commentary. While following the framework of the *New International Commentary on the New Testament* series, she focuses exclusively on Ephesians, greatly expanding its volume by incorporating new insights from recent commentaries, Pauline studies and her specialized research on women and families in the Jewish and Greco-Roman world.

Her writing is clear and coherent, and her exegetical and theological insights are both refreshing and valuable.

***Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* by Harold Hoehner**

This is Harold Hoehner's magnum opus and, by far, the most comprehensive and detailed commentary on Ephesians.

After an extensive discussion on the introductory issues, Hoehner delves

into the text of Ephesians verse by verse, providing detailed commentary in constant interaction with other scholars and providing a fair and thorough examination of every disputed point in the letter.

He thoroughly explores every aspect, lifting and examining every detail. While his meticulous attention to detail can be overwhelming and may seem too technical for those without a strong foundation in Greek, his commentary remains the definitive resource for those seeking a comprehensive, conservative evangelical treatment of Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

## **Language-based exegetical commentaries**

These commentaries are language-based exegetical works. The first two are intermediate-level, exegetical commentaries written by evangelical scholars who support Paul's authorship of Ephesians. The last two are top-notch critical, exegetical commentaries by scholars who reject or seriously doubt Paul's authorship.

### ***Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians* by Clinton Arnold and *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians* by Frank Thielman**

Published in 2010, both commentaries are similar in their exegetical approaches and offer an excellent verse-by-verse analysis.

Arnold's commentary is more clearly organized, consistently following a pattern: literary context, main idea, structure, exegetical outline, explanation of the text, and theology in application. It also enhances the text's meaning significantly by examining the text within the religious

context of Asia Minor.

Thielman's commentary stands out for its simplicity in design and structure, offering fresh insights into the Greco-Roman background, Paul's theological perspective on the Law and his use of the Old Testament.

While both commentaries balance academic rigor with pastoral needs, Arnold's commentary seems to have several advantages over Thielman's.

***Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians* by Andrew T. Lincoln and *International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* by Ernest Best**

These two commentaries are top-notch critical and exegetical works on Ephesians, despite being somewhat dated. The authors reject (Lincoln) or doubt (Best) Paul's authorship of the letter, which influences their treatment of the text to some extent. Nevertheless, their exegesis is thorough and judicious, and theological discussions remain insightful and thought-provoking.

Lincoln focuses on Pauline eschatology, while Best emphasizes Paul's concept of one body.

Interestingly, while questioning Paul's authorship, Lincoln argues for the priority of Colossians over Ephesians, while Best insists on the priority of Ephesians.

Lincoln also provides an excellent summary of Paul's theology of Ephesians in his concise *Theology of Later Pauline Letters*.

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