

S T U D Y G U I D E



UNION WITH CHRIST

THE BLESSINGS
OF BEING IN HIM

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Union with Christ

STUDY GUIDE



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

Union with Christ Study Guide
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How to Use This Study Guide

This study guide includes a chapter synopsis, a lesson objective, key passages, key points, and discussion questions from each chapter in *Union with Christ*, as well as questions that focus on a relevant passage of Scripture from each chapter. Participants should first read each corresponding chapter of the book in order to make the best use of this guide.

Chapter Synopsis: This section summarizes the material in the chapter and provides a reminder of what the chapter covered. It serves to help readers remember what they've already read in the book.

Lesson Objective: This section explains the purpose of the chapter and the intended outcome of the study guide lesson.

Key Passages: This section quotes several passages from the chapter so that readers can remember some of the more significant things the author said. It can also serve as a starting point for discussion if the group leader would like to ask questions or provide thoughts related to excerpts from the book.

Key Points: This section outlines many of the basic ideas that the author mentioned in the chapter. It helps readers recall not just the big idea of the chapter but also its supporting ideas and their flow.

Scripture Reading: This section highlights one of the chapter's key points in God's Word. It helps readers identify the scriptural basis of important Christian doctrines and develops their ability to understand Scripture through questions about the reading. These questions are also ideal for group study.

UNION WITH CHRIST STUDY GUIDE

Reflection Questions: This section provides readers with questions that could be asked of themselves or in a small-group setting. The questions are designed to help readers understand the chapter and apply that knowledge to their lives.

Prayer: This section closes the study with an opportunity to come before the Lord in prayer based on what readers have learned.

In Christ

CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

The Apostle Paul's frequent use of the phrase "in Christ" demonstrates how the doctrine of union with Christ is foundational to a right understanding of salvation, identity, and Christian living. Union with Christ is something that is bigger than us, for Christ unites *all things* to Himself, in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1:10). Yet we live out the Christian life here, where we are, so we take heart that the doctrine of union with Christ is incredibly practical, shaping our relationships and strengthening us for spiritual battle, not empowered by our own resources but by Christ Himself. All our spiritual blessings flow from our union with Christ.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

This chapter will introduce union with Christ as central to a Christian's identity through a survey of Ephesians so that you might see how the Christian life depends not on your own strength but on Christ's.

KEY PASSAGES

Capture these two words "in Christ" and their equivalents (e.g., "in him") in your mind. Then take a quick browse through the sixty or so pages in your Bible that contain Paul's thirteen letters. You will find the expression "in Christ" or a variant of it over eighty times. (p. 4)

We are not to look for spiritual blessings outside of or apart from Christ. It is to Jesus Christ and our union with Him that we need to look in order to experience and appreciate the riches of salvation. (p. 6)

UNION WITH CHRIST STUDY GUIDE

We have now been brought into Christ's kingdom, but this means from Satan's perspective that we have therefore aligned ourselves with "the Enemy." We are now in a spiritual battleground, caught up in a conflict. (p. 10)

Our need is to get out of ourselves, not merely to "add" Christ to what we already are. We are called to abandon ourselves to Christ. (p. 11)

KEY POINTS

The Centrality of Union with Christ (pp. 3–5): What would you say if someone asked you about who you are in terms of your faith? You might name a denominational affiliation, or you might simply say, "I'm a Christian." Paul's favorite way to describe a believer's identity is "in Christ" because that fundamentally defines who we are as Christians. Union with Christ is not just a doctrine to understand but a reality to rest your entire identity in.

Ephesians 1: Famous First Words (pp. 5–6): Ephesians 1 is well known in the Bible for its rich teaching on election and predestination, but all of its 202-word, first sentence places these glorious realities "in Christ," for God "chose us in him" (v. 4). This passage teaches that every spiritual blessing is found in Christ, whether it be our election, redemption, adoption, forgiveness, or eternal inheritance.

Union with Christ Transcends Us (pp. 7–8): Being in Christ connects us to a cosmic reality, for Christ unifies all things in heaven and earth (Eph. 1:10). Christ brings us into an angelic family in heaven. Furthermore, we have not experienced the fullness of what it means to be united to Christ but have a glorious inheritance and birthright as Christians, guaranteed by the Holy Spirit. For the Ephesians, this reality meant that they were more than "Ephesians," people who happened to be in Ephesus and struggled there as a Christian minority, but were "in Christ."

New Reality in Christ (pp. 8–11): The rest of Ephesians describes our new status in Christ, that we, though once dead in trespasses and sins, have been raised in Him. Because this reality is true of every Christian, we are united to one another through Christ (Eph. 2), so Paul goes on to tell of the gospel reality that there are no longer barriers between people (Eph. 3), and he instructs us how to live in our various relationships with the church and world (Eph. 4–6). Ephesians ends with the reality that union with Christ brings us into a spiritual war, but this warfare is waged with the armor of God (Eph. 6). Throughout

IN CHRIST

Paul's letter, we see that the Christian life is not about merely adding Christ to what we are but finding ourselves to Him. Living "in Christ" means drawing on His strength, His blessings, and His victory.

SCRIPTURE READING

Ephesians 2:1–10 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- How many times does the phrase "in Christ" or a parallel appear in this passage?
- Is being united to Christ something we perform, why or why not?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

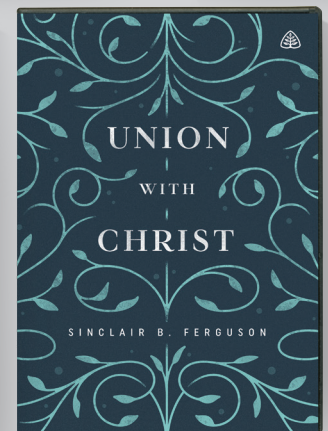
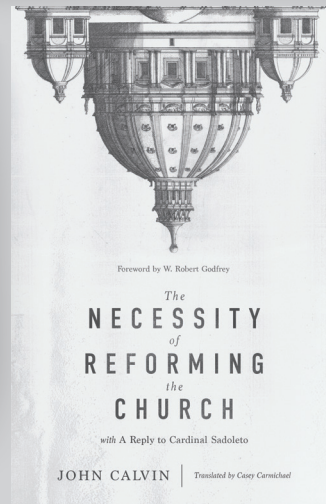
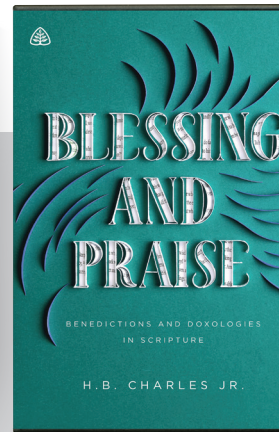
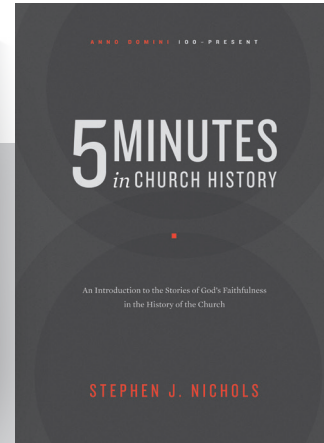
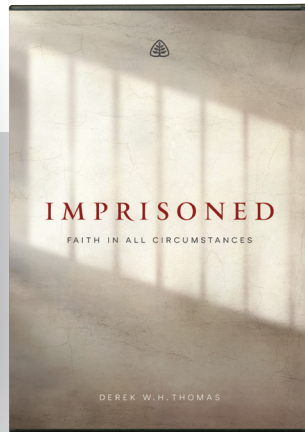
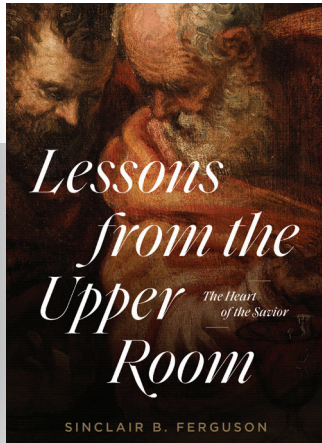
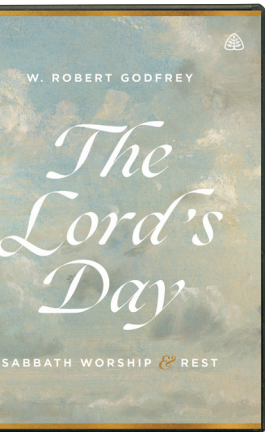
1. How might union with Christ influence the way you live in your local context, like Paul's readers living in Ephesus? What challenges do you face that require you to be reminded that you are "in Christ"?
2. How ought the reality of being "in Christ" affect our relationship with other believers?
3. Why is it that someone's life can become harder after he or she has become a Christian? Have you ever experienced this? How would you counsel someone who is experiencing it?
4. What's the difference between "letting Jesus into your heart" and "getting out of yourself and into Christ"?

UNION WITH CHRIST STUDY GUIDE

PRAYER

- Praise God that He is a loving God and that He set His love on us in Christ
- Confess ways that you rely on yourself instead of relying on the resources found in Christ.
- Thank God for providing us with the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance.
- Ask God to arm you with the armor of God, that you might stand with the strength of Christ in your spiritual battles.

We want to see men and women around the world connect
the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



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