

Welcome, Ladies! I am so happy you're here!

My name is Annie Notary, and I have the privilege of being the Women's Ministry Coordinator here at New Life.

Pam Baird, Chrissy Glowacki, and I lead this study together as the WBS Admin Team — Pam, Chrissy, would you stand up? We all love this study and want to see it flourish and we really do work as a team, so if you ever need anything, please don't hesitate to reach out to any one of us.

Here's what I want to do this morning: give you a quick intro to the Bible study as a whole, then walk you through an overview of the book of Ephesians.

So, what exactly is New Life Dresher's Women's Bible Study?

At the core, we are simply a Bible study. We're coming to God's Word looking for wisdom, truth, hope, and purpose — because that's exactly what He offers us there. We're letting God speak to us through Scripture, rather than filtering His Word through our own opinions and preferences.

If this is all brand new to you, that's more than okay — I'm genuinely glad you decided to give it a try, and I respect you for it. If you have questions about the Bible or about the study itself, come find me or send me an email. I will always do my best to help.

Our mission here at NLD is simple: *"To know Jesus and make Him known."* In Matthew 28:19–20 Jesus tells His followers to make disciples — "teaching them to know and obey all that I have commanded you." But we can't obey what we don't know. You showing up here, week after week, faithfully spending time in Scripture — that's how you grow in the knowledge of God's Word. There's no shortcut around it.

One thing I love about the Bible's message meets us *wherever* we are. God will use it to speak into the deep, quiet places of your heart — places you may not even have words for yet. The same Holy Spirit who inspired the human authors of Scripture will help you understand it and apply it to your own life. So before you jump into Bible Study each week, take a moment and pray. Ask God to show you what the passage is really about.

Now, let's talk about how the study actually works.

We have three main parts of Bible Study each week:

1. **Questions** — found in your study guide booklet
2. **Teaching time** — a speaker shares what she's learned from studying the passage
3. **Small group time** — where you discuss the passage together and process what you heard

A word about the questions

Most small groups use these questions as their discussion guide, but their real purpose runs deeper — they're there to help *you* dig into the passage on your own. The teaching times give us a lot to chew on, but we don't just want to feed you; we want to teach you how to feed yourself. So please, make a real commitment to work through the questions. It's a skill — one that builds your own relationship with the Lord, independent of anyone else. As Jen Wilkin puts it: *"Learning is not a spectator sport. You actually need to be on the field playing in order to grow."*

And it is completely fine if you don't know the answer to a question. The goal is not to get the answer "right" — it's to spend time with the Lord in His Word. Even our teachers aren't expected to answer every single question in their talks, and your small group won't necessarily cover every question you worked through at home either.

In your small group, feel free to bring your questions to the table. Honestly, that's one of my favorite parts of small group: when someone raises a question and we get to wrestle with it together. And here's a little secret — none of us are omniscient. "I don't know" is a completely acceptable answer from your small group leader! Part of the beauty of worshiping a God this vast is that "His ways are higher than our ways" — we'll never fully wrap our minds around Him or His Word, and that's okay.

Teaching Time

Our teachers are all lay women from our own church family. They pour hours into studying and praying over their passage, and then bravely stand up here to share what God has taught them — in a 25–30 minute talk. I genuinely love that we get to hear from so many different women and see how God is working in each of their lives. We are ridiculously blessed to have this many women who love Jesus and His Word — and who are brave enough to stand up here and speak. As Ron Lutz used to say, "Our church has an embarrassment of riches." So I am happily embarrassed for us.

Small Group Time

After the talk we'll break off into small groups for discussion and prayer, digging into the passage from the teaching time and using the questions you worked through at home.

Let's take a moment to introduce your small group leaders — if you would, please stand when I call your name:

Room 101	Solt, Pat	Stricker, Carol
Room 208	Snyder, Janet	McShea, Catherine
Room 301	Joos, Maureen	King, Kim
Room 302	Notary, Annie	Dutcher, Rachel
Room 303	Wilkinson, Nancy	McLaughlin, Donna
Room 304	Eide, Tracy	Keyton, Linnea
Room 305	Knaak, Jennifer	Leary, Lynn
Room 307	Jenkins, Beth	Gimbal, Andrea

Nancy Beale and Sue Lauer also lead a group together, but their group is downstairs in childcare today.

(If you're not sure who your leader is, just find me afterward — I'll get you sorted!)

Our prayer for these small groups is simple: that they point you to Jesus and help you see Scripture as living and active in your everyday life.

For me personally it's often in the middle of small group discussion, as I'm processing the passage out loud, that the Lord shows me exactly how to apply it to my own life. Small group is also a great place to meet new people and build real friendships. But you get out what you put in. If you take the time to pray and reach out to people during the week in between WBS your relationships will grow more quickly.

Your small group is not going to solve all the problems in your life. Small group leaders aren't professional counselors, and let's be real — 45 minutes goes by real fast! Not everyone will get a chance to share what's going on every single week. So please, seek each other out beyond just this hour on Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Your group can't fix your circumstances, but they absolutely can support, encourage, and walk alongside you as God does the work of changing and growing you — whether or not your circumstances ever change.

Our hope is that as you dig into God's Word together, you'll start to see how the real, messy concerns of your life connect to Scripture — and that the Bible will begin to shape how you pray and how you respond to everything life throws at you.

A Few Logistics to Help Our Mornings Run Smoothly

We kick things off at 9:15am — enough time to drop kids downstairs and grab a cup of coffee before teaching time starts at 9:30 sharp. We really do try to start on time, and we'd love your help with that. One small courtesy: if you slip in the back door after it's closed, hold the handle down and ease it shut slowly. That little click is louder (and more distracting) than you'd think.

Babies are always welcome. I spent many mornings on those back couches with all three of my own kids and was so grateful for the chance to be here. The only ask: if your little one starts getting fussy or chatty, please step out to the hallway or another classroom. The acoustics in this room just aren't forgiving — sweet baby sounds carry more than you'd expect, both for the group and on the talk recordings. This is absolutely nothing against you or your baby (we love babies!) — it's just about looking out for everyone in the room. Thanks so much for understanding.

Childcare: it's a "we," not a "they." Four times a year, every small group takes a turn helping downstairs. We have a lot of little ones who deserve to feel safe and loved, and if you're part of this study on Wednesday mornings, you're part of that ministry too. Taking your turn is a beautiful, natural way to give as well as receive — and it's how these kids get to know that Jesus has a heart for them. So if you're here, we're counting on you to serve, unless you've already talked with us about a specific limitation.

Childcare schedules are posted on the Bible study schedule. Please go ahead and put your childcare weeks on your calendar *now*. If you miss your assigned week, please stop by the desk downstairs the following week to check in; you'll be added to a list Beth Anne can text if we're short-staffed one morning.

One more important note: Clearances Every woman in our daytime study needs a state clearance on file before serving her week. Yes, it's a hassle — but it keeps us compliant with the law and keeps our kids safe. We've made the process as painless as possible: **Tara Lehman**, one of our church admins, is a rockstar and will walk you through it step by step if you meet with her downstairs.

Small Groups wrap up at 11:00. If you have children downstairs, please leave your group on time to pick them up — even mid-prayer. Small group leaders are setting a timer for 11:03am, and when it goes off, it's time to go. We know it can feel a little abrupt, but it's the system that keeps things running smoothly for moms, kids, and teachers alike.

Speaking of teachers, I want to give a big thank-you to **Cheryl McCann**, teaching our preschoolers again this year, and **Katie Harper**, leading the 2s class — both are such gifts to this study! If you see them, tell them so.

A word about attendance

Last thing — let's talk attendance. I can promise you there will be mornings when getting here feels nearly impossible. Tires go flat. Diapers explode at the worst moment. Coffee ends up on your shirt right as you're walking out the door. Life happens — we get it! I'm convinced there's some real spiritual battles happening behind the scenes to keep us away — because the enemy knows exactly how much we need the Word, prayer, and each other.

So, here are two things I'd love for you to consider:

1. Make WBS a priority — a "big rock."

You know the object lesson with the rocks and the jar? If you try to fit big rocks in around a pile of small pebbles, they simply won't fit. But put the big rocks in *first*, and the pebbles slide in easily around them. Let Bible study be a "big rock" in your week — commit to it now, before life gets in the way, and let the smaller things arrange themselves around it.

Decide *now*, before the busyness hits, to make bible study your priority over hair, drs appointments, lunch dates. Before life starts coming at you, give Bible study a priority place for the year. Take care of your spiritual life first, and ask the Lord to help you fit the other things around it.

Do what you need to do to get yourself here each week. One friend told me her mantra is simply: *"There is no real reason I can't go WBS."*

2. If you truly can't make it — don't give up.

Call someone in your small group and ask them to pray for you, then come back ready for next week. Catch the talk on the church website, or listen to it as a podcast while you're doing the dishes. Don't let one missed week turn into quitting. Your small group needs *you* — it might feel like your absence only affects you, but it really does affect the whole group.

Those are my tips, feel free to share them with anyone who wasn't here this morning.

Overview of Ephesians

Ok, so that's the nuts and bolts of Bible Study no lets talk specifics about the Book of Ephesians. I relied primarily on Meghan Hill's commentary "Ephesians: Life together in Christ" for this overview.

The apostle Paul wrote the book of Ephesians as a letter to the Ephesian church sometime between AD 60-62. Ephesus was a large port city in what is now Turkey. You can read about Paul's time in Ephesus in Acts 19. As a result of God's work through Paul's visit there a church was started. This letter was written over a decade later. Many scholars believe this letter was written to be circulated through the churches in the region, which would explain its lack of personal greetings.

The book of Ephesians breaks easily into two parts. The first part (chapters 1-3) is more theological and lays out the gospel of Jesus Christ. It expounds on God's work in believers and the blessings He gives us through Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf. The second part (chapters 4-6) is more practical and shows us what a life based on these truths should look like as we love and serve one another in the church, home and workplace. We see that we are called to imitate God, submit to one another and resist sin through the power God has given us.

If you are a part of a local church, you know that life together as followers of Jesus can be challenging. Each human being is so different from each other and even though the Holy Spirit is at work among us we still battle our sins and hurt each other. Paul helps us embrace life together in the church in a surprising way. He does not give us a detailed how to manual, but instead points us to the head of the church: Jesus!

I love the language and contrasts in this quote from John Stott. He says, "Ephesians sets forth God's eternal purpose to create through Jesus Christ a new society which stands out in bright relief against the somber background of the old world. For God's new society is characterized by life in place of death, by unity and reconciliation in place of division and alienation, by the wholesome standards of righteousness in place of the corruption of wickedness, by love and peace in place of hatred and strife, and by the unremitting conflict with evil in place of a flabby compromise with it."

I hope that after we finish this study you will see the gospel of Jesus Christ for the beautiful thing it is and come away with a deeper love for your local body of believers. I hope that your love of the church is rooted in a deeper love and understanding of our Savior! I'm praying that you'll experience Him more deeply through His Word this year.