Epistle to the Ephesians

St Ignatius of Antioch · Died c. 108–110 · Text: ANF translation (1885), shorter Greek recension

Who wrote it

Ignatius was bishop of Antioch in Syria. Arrested under the emperor Trajan, he was taken under guard to Rome to be executed, and on the way wrote seven letters to churches. This one was written from Smyrna to the Christians of Ephesus, who had sent delegates to meet him.

What to look for

- His repeated call to unity with the bishop, presbyters and deacons, and why he links unity with worship.
- Warnings about false teachers, especially those who denied that Christ truly came in the flesh.
- The value he places on gathering often for the Eucharist and prayer.
- His view of silence and actions speaking louder than words (chapter XV).
- How a man facing death writes about the Cross and the mysteries of Christ's birth (XVIII–XIX).

Reading plan

Session 1	Praise and unity Chapters I–VII
Session 2	False teachers, prayer and humility Chapters VIII–XIV
Session 3	The Cross and the mysteries of Christ Chapters XV–XXI

Discussion questions

1. What does Ignatius's situation as a prisoner on the way to death add to the way you read this letter?
2. Why does he treat unity in the church as so important?
3. What did the false teachers he warns about deny, and why does it matter for him?
4. What does he say about meeting together frequently? How does that apply now?
5. How does he describe the relationship between faith and love?
6. Which line or image from the letter stayed with you, and why?

Tips for a group

Read each session's pages before meeting. Bring one sentence that struck you and one question. Keep discussion to 45–60 minutes and end by sharing one thing to carry into the week.

Read it free

The full text is free to read online, with EPUB and plain-text downloads:
ancienttalks.com/books/ignatius-ephesians.html