

# *Graceful Beginnings*

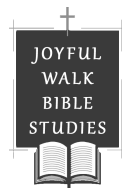
Short and Easy for Anyone New to the Bible

# *Seek the Treasure*



Unearthing the riches of Christ in Ephesians

MELANIE NEWTON



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# Introduction

## GRACEFUL BEGINNINGS

The *Graceful Beginnings* books are Bible studies specifically designed for anyone new to the Bible—whether you are a new Christian or you just feel insecure about understanding the Bible. The short and easy lessons will introduce you to your God and His way of approaching life in simple terms that can be easily understood.

Just as a newborn baby needs to know the love and trustworthiness of her parents, the new Christian needs to know and experience the love and trustworthiness of her God. *A Fresh Start* is the first book in the series, laying a good foundation of truth for you to grasp and apply to your life. The other books in the series can be done in any order although we do make suggestions at the end of each book regarding what to study next.

## SOME BIBLE BASICS

Throughout these lessons, you will use a Bible to answer questions as you discover treasure about your life with Christ. The Bible is one book containing a collection of 66 books combined together for our benefit. It is divided into two main parts: Old Testament and New Testament.

The Old Testament tells the story of the beginning of the world and God's promises to mankind given through the nation of Israel. It tells how the people of Israel obeyed and disobeyed God over many, many years. All the stories and messages in the Old Testament lead up to Jesus Christ's coming to the earth.

The New Testament tells the story of Jesus Christ, the early Christians, and God's promises to all those who believe in Jesus. You can think of the Old Testament as "before Christ" and the New Testament as "after Christ."

Each book of the Bible is divided into chapters and verses within those chapters to make it easier to study. Bible references include the book name, chapter number and verse number(s). For example, Ephesians 2:8 refers to the New Testament book of Ephesians, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, and verse 8 within that 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter. Printed Bibles have a "Table of Contents" in the front to help you locate books by page number. Bible apps also have a contents list by book and chapter.

The Bible verses highlighted at the beginning of each lesson in this study are from the New International Version® (NIV®) unless otherwise indicated. You can use any version of the Bible to answer the questions, but using an easy-to-read translation (NIRV, NLT, NET, ESV) will help you gain confidence in understanding what you are reading. You can find all these translations in the “YouVersion App” or on [biblegateway.com](http://biblegateway.com).

This study capitalizes certain pronouns referring to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit—He, Him, His, Himself—just to make the reading of the study information less confusing. Some Bible translations likewise capitalize those pronouns referring to God; others do not. It is simply a matter of preference, not a requirement.

## **NEW TESTAMENT SUMMARY**

The New Testament opens with the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. About 30 years later, John challenged the Jews to indicate their repentance (turning from sin and toward God) by submitting to water baptism—a familiar Old Testament practice used for repentance as well as when a non-Jew (often called Gentiles) converted to Judaism (to be washed clean of idolatry).

Jesus, who is also known by the title “Christ,” is God's Son, fully God and fully man. Jesus publicly showed the world what God is like and taught His perfect ways for 3 – 3½ years. After preparing 12 disciples to continue Christ's earthly work, He died voluntarily on a cross for mankind's sin, rose from the dead, and returned to Heaven. The account of His earthly life is recorded in 4 books known as the Gospels (the biblical books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John named after the compiler of each account).

After Jesus' return to Heaven, the followers of Christ were then empowered by the Holy Spirit and spread God's salvation message among the Jews, a number of whom believed in Christ. The apostle Paul and others carried the good news to the Gentiles during 3 missionary journeys (much of this recorded in the book of Acts). Paul wrote 13 New Testament letters to churches & individuals (Romans through Philemon). The section in our Bible from Hebrews to Jude contains 8 additional letters penned by five men, including two apostles (Peter and John) and two of Jesus' half-brothers (James and Jude, whose mother was Mary). The author of Hebrews is unknown. The apostle John also recorded Revelation, which summarizes God's final program for the world. The Bible ends as it began—with a new, sinless creation.

## ELEMENTS OF EACH LESSON

This book covers Paul’s letter known as “Ephesians.” It is a short and easy study covering the basic information that you need to know as a believer in Christ.

Each lesson begins with a Bible verse that relates to the focus of the lesson and a prayer. Prayer is just talking to God as conversation with someone who loves you dearly. The beginning prayer simply asks Jesus to teach you through the lesson.

This is followed by a simple study of the passage being covered by the lesson. Read the Bible verses and answer the associated questions. This study uses the NIV translation. We recommend you use that or other easy-to-read translations (NIRV, NLT, NET, ESV). See “Bible Basics” above for online sources of these.

In the “Your Treasure in Christ” section at the end of the study questions, you will be encouraged to dwell more on what you learned in the lesson that applies to your life today.

A short teaching session (“Seek the Treasure”) follows each lesson giving additional insight into the verses covered by the lesson plus application. You can listen to this as a podcast from [melanienewton.com/podcasts](http://melanienewton.com/podcasts). Look for “16: Seek the Treasure (Ephesians)” to find the one for each lesson. You can also find these podcasts on most podcast providers.

Every “Seek the Treasure” section is followed by a “Reflect” time for you to respond to what you learned and a prayer of trust that Jesus will help you recognize anything that you are substituting for Him.

## SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

While you can work through these lessons as a personal study, this topic is perfect to use for small groups. Share the following suggested guidelines with the group members to maximize your discussion group experience.

- Set aside some time each week to do the study questions so that you will get to know God better.
- Consistently attend whether your lesson is done or not. You will learn from the discussion.
- Respect each other’s insights. Listen thoughtfully. Share your own insights, but do not dominate the discussion.

- Celebrate unity in Christ by avoiding controversial subjects such as politics, divisive issues and denominational differences.
- Maintain confidentiality of whatever is shared within the group.

Enjoy your small group discussion and learn from one another. As you journal parts of your story and share that with your group members, you will have a greater connection with each other. And, you'll have more reason to praise our ever-faithful God as you see and hear how He has been faithful to each of you through the years. A small group is a great place to share how you are seeking the treasure of Christ in your life. Discussing the lesson and the teaching session should take about an hour, making this an easy study to fit into a busy workday schedule.

### **Suggested Leader Guide for Group Discussion:**

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit to teach you what He wants you to know through the lesson.
2. Work through the LESSON together, reading the Bible verses and discussing the questions. Predetermine which of the explanatory paragraphs you will read as a group.
3. Read the "YOUR TREASURE IN CHRIST" summary and share responses to any included application questions.
5. Discuss parts of the "SEEK THE TREASURE" section that you want to emphasize. Or, listen to the podcast together. REFLECT on the teaching.
6. Pray for the group members – ask Jesus to satisfy your hearts through knowing Him. Thank God for His grace toward you and His love for you.
7. Remind each person to do the next lesson and listen to the related podcast before the group meets again.

## **SEEK THE TREASURE**

Do you have a special little box or shelf that contain personal treasures that are important to who you are? We all love the idea of some kind of treasure in a treasure chest.

Humans seek anything that will satisfy the spiritual hunger in our souls and "guarantee" successful living. God intended that hunger to be filled with Himself. Yet, instead of relying on God, we shop around at

different sources to see what we want to put in our treasure chest. Will it work to make me lucky? Or, solve my problem? Or, make my soul happy?

There are so many things out there on the internet or in social media that we can try. We look for the latest thing that guarantees success at ... whatever. Then, we go for it. These can be powerful influences on us as women, but they are substitutes for the real thing.

Everything that we already have in Christ is more powerful and valuable for successful living than any of those substitutes. The problem is that we have to recognize that substitute treasure is worthless. We will be unearthing the riches of Christ throughout our study of Ephesians. Our God offers us the most wonderful treasure we could ever want—by faith in Christ.

Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the confidence that the treasure you have in Him is more powerful and valuable than anything you could substitute for Him.

It's going to be a great journey. And, I'm so glad to be walking beside you!

*Melanie Newton*



# The Treasure of Jesus Christ

*“That power is the same as the mighty strength [God] exerted when He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.” (Ephesians 1:19-21, NIV)*

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast [“WHAT IS IN YOUR TREASURE CHEST?”](#) before doing this lesson to get some background for the whole study. Use the following listener guide. Some of the information is also included in the lesson itself.

Two thousand years ago, God took in a rebel named Paul, gave him the treasure of Himself and sent him out to invite others to receive that treasure, also. Some of those who responded lived in the region of Ephesus on the west coast of modern Turkey. The letter we’ll be studying together was originally written by Paul to those Ephesians.

## *The Ephesians and their treasure chest*

Two words described Ephesus—**prominent** and **obsessed**. Ephesus was a prominent city along major highways, commercially prosperous, and had a large population of at least ¼ million people. And, Ephesus was a city obsessed with the supernatural, especially the power of evil spirits that could make life miserable. The people tried anything that would defeat the enemy and guarantee a “successful” life.

Prominent and obsessed are both related to power. For the Ephesians, life was all about power. Who or what had the most power? And, their identity came from their power sources. That was reflected in their treasure chests. They had magic formulas, self-help scrolls, and figurines of their superhero goddess named Artemis. Those things were what the Ephesians had in their treasure chests, often kept in a secret place in their houses. They thought all that was powerful enough and valuable enough to satisfy their spiritual needs.

Then, God introduced them to Jesus Christ through Paul. They soon found out that their own treasure chests were worthless compared to what God offered them.



## *Seeking treasure for our treasure chests today*

Humans today are still fascinated by treasure-seeking. People spend millions of dollars seeking legendary treasure, and we watch as they do it.

- We seek today to fill our personal treasure chests with whatever will make us successful in life but are told there's no devil, no supernatural, and no need for God because science will find the answer to everything.
- Yet, we are drawn to supernatural power, though not necessarily God's power. At its core, this is seeking anything to satisfy the spiritual hunger in our souls and "guarantee" successful living.
- God intended that hunger to be filled with Himself. Yet, instead of relying on God, we shop around at different sources to see what we want to put in our treasure chest.

We look for the latest thing that guarantees success at ... whatever. Then, we go for it. These can be powerful influences on us as women, but they are substitutes for the real thing.

*Your heart will be where your treasure is.*

*"Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be." (Matthew 6:19-21, NLT)*

Where your treasure is, that's where the desires of your heart will be. Dear listener, what are you relying on for success in your life?

Everything that we already have in Christ is more powerful and valuable for successful living than any of those substitutes. The problem is this: We have to recognize that **substitute** treasure is **worthless**. Together, as we study Ephesians, we will learn how to recognize substitute treasure and see that our God offers us the most wonderful treasure we could ever want in Christ.

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the confidence that the treasure you have in Him is more powerful and valuable than anything you could substitute for Him.*

*Pray: Lord Jesus, please teach me through this lesson.*

## **THE ABC'S OF EPHESIANS—AUTHOR, BACKGROUND, AND CONTEXT**

Like any book you read, it always helps to know a bit about the author, the background setting for the story, and where the book fits into a series (its context). The same is true of Bible books.

### *Author*

A man named Paul authored the letter we know as Ephesians. He lived at the same time as Jesus and for many years afterwards. But, we have no indication that he ever met Jesus before the Resurrection. Paul was a well-educated, devout Jew. Jews believed in the one true God and followed the Mosaic Law, which was God's law for them.

In the Bible, he is known by two names: his Hebrew name "Saul" and his Roman name "Paul." To keep things simple, we will call him by his Roman name because that's what he mainly used in his travels and ministry.

At first, Paul didn't believe Jesus was the Son of God and fought against Christians, dragging them out of their homes and putting them in prison. He was determined to wipe out all the Christians. Then, one day, Jesus appeared to him and grabbed his attention. After believing in Jesus Christ as his Savior, Paul was sent by Jesus to take the gospel to the people who were not Jews, called Gentiles in the Bible.

Paul took "missionary journeys" to many cities in the Roman Empire. Wherever Paul and his co-workers visited, people heard the message about Jesus and became Christians. The new believers met together and formed a church in that city. Paul loved those people very much and wanted to hear how the young churches were doing. Someone would bring him news about the church members in a particular city. Then, Paul would write them a letter, usually answering some questions they had or teaching them something they needed to know about living as Christians.

The Holy Spirit guided Paul to write those letters and preserved 13 of them for us to have in our Bibles. In fact, Paul authored more of the New Testament writings than anyone else. These letters are a gift to us 2000 years later.

## *Background*

On his third missionary journey, Paul went to the large city of Ephesus. The Ephesians were obsessed with power, especially the use of magic. They were very afraid of evil spirits and bad luck so they clung to anything that would keep them safe. That included magic words written on socks or recited aloud to chase evil spirits away, necklaces with magic power to give them luck when playing sports, and books of magic spells to use for protection. So, Paul spent three years with the Ephesians, teaching classes every day to those who wanted to learn a new way to live. Many became Christians and gave up their old way of life.

A few years later, on a visit to Jerusalem, Paul was falsely accused and arrested. After a long time of waiting to be released, he finally appealed to Caesar and was sent to Rome. That's where Paul was when he wrote this letter—imprisoned in Rome, chained to a Roman soldier 24/7. But, he was given the freedom to have visitors and write letters, including this letter to the Ephesians.

The letter to the Ephesians was written about 4-5 years after Paul left Ephesus. Before his arrest, Paul had met briefly with the Ephesian church leaders in a nearby city to give them words of encouragement. He received news about the church from various sources. But, he had not been back to Ephesus.

## *Context*

The letter to the Ephesians is one of four letters Paul wrote from his Roman imprisonment that the Holy Spirit chose to preserve in our New Testaments. The others are the letters to the Philippians in northern Greece, to the Colossians in central Turkey, and to Philemon who was a leader in the Colossian church.

The order in which we find Paul's letters in the New Testament is not based on chronology but mostly on size. Ephesians is found after Galatians which was written more than 10 years earlier. Philippians and Colossians follow. But, Philemon, the shortest letter, is found at the end of Paul's letters.

## **EPHESUS AND ITS TREASURE CHEST**

Two words described Ephesus—prominent and obsessed. The city was prominent because of its location along major highways, its commercial prosperity, and its large population of ¼ million people. It also had impressive buildings, including the Roman governor's office.

Ephesians were obsessed with the supernatural, especially the power of evil spirits that could make their lives miserable. The city was filled with magicians, psychics, and astrologers. The people tried anything that would defeat the enemy and guarantee a “successful” life.

Prominent and obsessed are both related to power. For the Ephesians, life was all about power. Who or what had the most power? And, their identity came from their power sources. That was reflected in their treasure chests.

## **GOD’S TREASURE FOR THEM AND FOR US**

Paul taught the Ephesians that Jesus Christ was the Son of God who came to earth to live as a human, died for their sins, and was resurrected from the dead to give them new life. Paul’s message everywhere was consistently the same. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”

Paul started as usual in the synagogue preaching to Jews and interested Gentiles. Some of the synagogue leaders put a stop to that. So, Paul took the new Christians with him and began daily teaching sessions in a local lecture hall for the next two years. The book of Acts describes this time.

### **Read Acts 19:8-12.**

*How effective and far-reaching was Paul’s teaching in Ephesus (verse 10)?*

*The Ephesians’ concept of power was that of an impersonal substance one could use to one’s own advantage. What did God do through Paul to get their attention on Him instead (verses 11-12)?*

Miracles are already amazing, but God did more than usual. The Greek word translated “extraordinary” means “to hit the mark like one

who is throwing a javelin or arrow.” God was targeting their need for spiritual power with “extra-miraculous” miracles. God showed them that He was **more powerful** than their magicians, lucky charms, and magic words. God was more powerful than the evil spirits or any substitute they might trust for protection against evil. God knew what they really needed—Himself!

*Our very creative God knows how to use His power to target your spiritual need as well. How has God targeted your need and drawn you closer to Him?*

**Read Acts 19:13-20.**

Invoking names to control evil spirits was a form of magic practiced in Ephesus. The practice had been taken up even by Jews.

*When the news about the magicians who tried to imitate Paul became known, what happened (verse 17)?*

*What did the new believers in Christ do (verses 18-19)?*

*What was the result (verse 20)?*

Many Ephesians trusted in Jesus for their protection, so they got rid of their substitutes. They had a big bonfire to burn their sorcerer’s manuals, lucky socks, and magic necklaces. They attended Paul’s classes then spread out and shared the good news about Jesus throughout western Turkey, establishing churches all over the place.

The letter to the Ephesians was written to the church in Ephesus and to the churches in the surrounding area. The Holy Spirit guided the writing of this letter so it is a gift from God to us. Let's dig into it.

**Read Ephesians 1:1-2.**

As mentioned in the ABC's of Ephesians, Paul wrote this letter to the Christians living in Ephesus.

**Read Ephesians 3:1 and 3:8.**

*What does Paul say about himself (verse 1)?*

*What was his mission from God (verse 8)?*

Paul knew he was a prisoner of Rome, but he considered himself a prisoner of Christ in whom he had entrusted his life.

## **THE POWER OF JESUS CHRIST**

As you study Ephesians, you will see that Paul reminded them, and us, that no matter how hard life gets, Jesus Christ is still more powerful than any substitute "good luck charm." And, Christ's power makes it possible for us to live God's way today and not be afraid.

Let's find out how powerful Christ is and how His power works for us.

**Read Ephesians 1:19-23.**

*In verses 19-20, what does Paul want the Ephesians to know about the might of God's power?*

***Where is Christ (verse 20)?***

***Over what does He have authority (verse 21)?***

***Over what else does He have authority (verse 22)?***

What is meant by “all rule and authority, power and dominion” in verse 21? That phrase includes all spiritual powers—the good angels, the demons, and Satan himself. We’ve mentioned evil spirits in this lesson so far, but we really haven’t answered the question, “Who are they?”

Evil spirits are demons. They are angels created at the beginning of creation. The Bible teaches that one angel rebelled against God and took 1/3 of the angels with him. We know that rebel leader as Satan, also called “the devil,” and those with him in rebellion against God as “demons.” Satan and his demonic forces do everything they can to thwart the good purposes of God—gaining control over people through deception, counterfeits, fear, manipulation, and torment.

In His life on earth, Jesus as the Son of God demonstrated that He had greater power over all the spirit world—the good angels who served Him plus Satan and his demonic forces. The resurrected Jesus, in heaven once again, is still more powerful than Satan and any demon. Jesus Christ has the power of a great king who is king above all other powers and kings.

“Every title that can be given” refers to those names used in magical formulas to control evil spirits as you saw in Acts 19:13. Demons were behind every reference to evil spirits.

**Read Ephesians 2:6.**

*Where does God place us as believers?*

In the mind and plan of God, all Christians are seated with Christ in heaven under His powerful authority. Notice that we are not under Christ's feet like all the angelic powers. We are seated within His authority over anything that could come against us.

People in a western culture don't consciously admit to being afraid of evil spirits like the Ephesians were and like some parts of our world still are. But, we do fear bad things happening and try to manage supernatural or cosmic power in such a way that results are "virtually guaranteed" in our favor. As a culture, and really as humans everywhere, we seek anything that will satisfy the spiritual hunger in our souls and "guarantee" successful living.

What are your substitute powers?

*Do you possess anything that you think gives you good luck—special socks, a bead necklace, or a rabbit's foot? Why do you think that item has power to give you good luck?*

*Some things are associated with causing bad luck—walking under a ladder, breaking a mirror, or jinxing a pitcher throwing a no-hitter. But, do you think those things really have power to give you or others bad luck?*

Those are substitute treasures. The most powerful treasure we could ever have is Jesus Christ. *We have no need for any substitutes to keep bad things from happening to us.* We don't need lucky socks,



magic words, or special charms to make sure good things happen to us. Substitute treasure is worthless.

## **YOUR TREASURE IN CHRIST**

*What do you tend to rely upon in order to be “successful” in life or to defeat any perceived “enemies?” Self-sufficiency? Academic degree? Social status? What else?*

*Are you willing to learn how to get rid of your substitutes and cling to your treasure in Christ alone? Why or why not?*

Through Paul’s message to the Ephesians, our God is saying to you and me, “Why trust in any substitute power to help you live a good life?” Nothing is as powerful as Jesus Christ Himself. His power is available to every believer through His Spirit living inside you.

Christ wants you to get rid of those substitutes in your head as well as in your heart and your experiences. You can say to Him, *“My treasure in you, Lord Jesus, is more powerful and valuable than anything I could substitute for You. Please confirm that in my heart.”*



## SEEK YOUR TREASURE IN JESUS CHRIST

**Recommended:** Listen to the podcast "[SEEK THE TREASURE OF JESUS CHRIST.](#)" Use the section below as a listener guide.

As Paul taught the Ephesians about Jesus, God validated Paul's words by doing miracles through him. Miracles in the Bible authenticate the message and the messenger. They also demonstrate God's compassion for women, men, and children. And, miracles show that God's power is beyond that of any human as well as Satan and his demonic forces. God knew that the Ephesians believed in supernatural power. They were just seeking the wrong ones. So, God did extra-miraculous miracles that targeted their need, drawing their attention to His Son, Jesus Christ. He does the same for us.

Christianity is Christ! It is not a lifestyle. It's not rules of conduct. It's not a society of people who are joined together by the sprinkling or covering of water. Christianity is a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. And, Jesus invites every man, woman, and child into a close relationship with Himself as brothers, sisters, and friends.

But, who is Jesus? The New Testament teaches that He is the Son of God who died for our sins and rose again so that we could have eternal life just by believing in Him as the Savior.

*Jesus is fully God.*

Jesus claimed to be fully God and demonstrated it through His life and His words. That is clearly seen in the text of the first four books of the New Testament which tell of Jesus' life.

Jesus not only claimed to be God, but He also claimed to be the answer to the needs of the human heart as God would. Jesus consistently called God His father. He declared His right to judge and said that He deserves the honor that belongs to God. The works He was doing could only be done by God. He clearly and boldly claimed His identity as the promised anointed one of God. He claimed to be the Son of Man who was also the Son of God. Those are all radical statements.

All God's powers and attributes are in Jesus. There is nothing missing. There is nothing more of God that we can get apart from Jesus (Colossians 1:19).

In the New Testament, Jesus is called the **Lord** Jesus Christ. Christ is His title. It comes from the Greek word *christos*, which translates the Hebrew title “Messiah” meaning “anointed one.” According to Psalm 110:1, the Messiah would sit at the right hand of God and be called Lord. Jesus claimed this for Himself. Jesus is the Son of God who is Christ the Lord.

*Jesus is fully human.*

Jesus is also fully human. We have a harder time wrapping our brains around **that** fact than we do believing He was God. Yet, Jesus experienced the normal process of body development from a child to an adult man. He obeyed His parents and learned to live with at least 4 brothers and 2 sisters (Mark 6:3).

In His human body, Jesus felt hunger and thirst. Tears fell down His cheeks when His friends were hurting. He had the normal human response of anger against the stubborn hearts of the religious people who opposed Him and were not teachable. During the last hours before His death, He experienced distress and pain just as you would.

And, because Jesus was fully human, He understands every single one of your heartaches. He experienced human life for more than 30 years. He gets your physical pain, your feelings of rejection, and your strained relationships. He gets your abuse, your grief, and your impatience because those were part of His life as well.

Jesus also demonstrated in His life on earth how much He loved and valued women. He taught them truth about God, forgave them for their sins, accepted them in His circle of followers, and gave new life to them after His resurrection. His care for them was so countercultural to what they had previously known. Women recognized that and responded with love for Him and a desire to serve Him. He does the same for you today.

Jesus was fully human and lived as a human, but He did not sin. Why is that? He lived in perfect love for God the Father, His Father. Because He loved God perfectly, He lived in perfect dependence on God the Father and perfect obedience. And, He gave us a pattern to follow so that we can learn to love God and to depend upon Him and obey Him by faith, too.

Jesus was completely human while being completely God. None of us can really understand how this is, but we must accept it as truth. His death on the cross and His resurrection from the dead provided everything you needed to have a relationship with God and satisfying spiritual life.

## *When Christians lose confidence in God*

We can know all this about Christ to be true. But, then life's challenges hit us squarely in the face. What happens when you get tired of waiting for God to answer your prayer? What happens when you don't see Him rescuing you from a tough situation? What happens when He doesn't heal your disease? When you lose confidence in God's power to manage whatever is burdening you, where are you tempted to turn?

When Christians lose confidence in the one true God to meet our needs, we look for something that will work, such as formulas for "success," religious experiences, and lucky practices. We saw that happening in Ephesus in Acts 19:13-16. Those verses tell us two things: 1) demons are real and dangerous forces and 2) the spiritualism of the culture invaded even Judaism. Those Jews had turned to using an acceptable practice in their culture to bring about success in their work—relying on substitute powers rather than on God.

This is really a very sad passage because it hits close to home. Whenever Christians lose confidence in the one true God to meet our needs, we begin to rely on the aid of other powers, even subconsciously. This is evidenced by what we do and say, even by what we post on Facebook and other social media.

- Do you do anything to avoid "bad luck" or to guarantee "good luck?" Those are substitute powers.
- What picture do you post on social media, claiming that it is the answer for the day's stressful challenges? That's a substitute power.
- Do you follow a certain formula for prayer guaranteeing that God hears you and will answer your prayer? The formula becomes the substitute. Not using it might make you feel like you can't pray.
- Do you follow a certain procedure to get on a higher level with God and expect to hear His voice audibly every time you pray? The procedure becomes the substitute for submission to the authority of Christ.

When you recognize your use of substitutes, remember what the Ephesians did in Acts 19. They burned it up! They deleted it from daily life. They saw that the treasure they had in Jesus was more powerful than any of their substitutes. So, they were willing to get rid of their substitutes and cling to their treasure in Christ alone.

*Jesus Christ is fully powerful.*

Jesus is your treasure and your power source to overcome anything you picture coming against you. In fact, the Greek word for power, *dunamis*, is where we get our word dynamite and is often translated as “miracles” in the New Testament. And, Paul used the word, *dunamis*, seven times in this short letter to refer to the power of God available to every believer to meet every need. God’s dynamite power is **for** us.

Jesus Christ is over everything. Evil is under His feet. As we sit with Him in heaven, evil is under our feet. All we have to do is remember our place with Him. So, picture yourself sitting with Jesus in the heavenly realms, with your treasure chest containing all the wonderful blessings you get from Him. It’s not about something you do. It’s something that has already been done and given to you by faith in Christ. You can rest in that and all the treasure that comes with it. That’s the way to guarantee successful living—God’s way of successful living. You can trust in that!

*Let Jesus satisfy your heart with the confidence that the treasure you have in Him is more powerful and valuable than anything you could substitute for Him.*

### *Reflect*

***Read the words to this beautiful worship song. Then, respond to God with the prayer prompts given in the box below.***

Death could not hold You, The veil tore before You, You silence  
the boast of sin and grave. The heavens are roaring, The praise of  
Your glory, For You are raised to life again. You have no rival,  
You have no equal, Now and forever, God You reign. Yours is the  
kingdom, Yours is the glory, Yours is the Name above all names  
What a powerful Name it is, What a powerful Name it is, The  
Name of Jesus Christ my King. What a powerful Name it is,  
Nothing can stand against. What a powerful Name it is, The  
Name of Jesus.

(“What A Beautiful Name” by Ben Fielding & Brooke Ligertwood)

*Pray: Thank God for the treasure He has given you in Jesus Christ. Ask Him to help you recognize anything that you are substituting for Him. Ask Him to help you trust in Him alone for the power to be “successful” in life.*