

## Ephesians 1:1-14

### Week 1 - God's Eternal Plan: Who God Is and Who We Are

#### Learning Objectives

- Discuss our identity in Christ
- Discuss who God is and what he does for us
- Plan how we will strive for ongoing unity with other believers

#### Materials Needed

- 3" x 5" cards or pieces of paper (one per person at the study, for the icebreaker)
- Pens (one per person at the study)

#### Introduction

Pray for your time together as a group!

Optional Introduction: This is the first study in the book of Ephesians. A quick overview of Ephesians:

**WHO:** The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Ephesus, an ancient city near the present-day city of Selçuk on the southwest coast of Turkey.

**WHAT:** Paul wrote this letter to strengthen and encourage the believers in their faith and understanding of God and the church.

**WHEN:** Paul wrote this letter in approximately 60 A.D.

**WHERE:** Paul was imprisoned in Rome when he wrote the letter; he had been in Ephesus for three years before his imprisonment (Acts 19:1–20). We can infer he was pretty close with the church there!

Optional Introduction Video: The Bible Project's "Read Scripture: Ephesians"

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y71r-T98E2Q>)

**?** Write three things that are unique to you and fit into your identity onto a 3" x 5" card. Collect, mix, and hand out the group members' cards to new people. Read each card and guess who wrote it. Did any of the facts surprise you? What else would you like to know about your group members?

#### Read Out Loud: Ephesians 1:1–14 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup> Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in

accordance with his pleasure and will—<sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace<sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding,<sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,<sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

<sup>11</sup> In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,<sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.<sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,<sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

**?** How does Paul choose to identify himself at the beginning of the letter? What does that show about him?

*Possible answers: He identifies himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, showing that he is dedicated to serving God and was chosen by God to do so.*

**?** How does he identify the people he is writing to? What does that show about them?

*Possible answers: He writes to the holy people, the faithful in Christ Jesus, showing that the Christians he is addressing are set apart by God, and that they choose to be faithful to Jesus.*

**?** If you had to write your identity as a Christian, how would you describe yourself in God?

*Possible answers: I obey God; I love people; I seek to do right things and not sin; etc. Answers may vary. This is a good chance to share in a vulnerable way to encourage openness in your group.*

**?** What does this passage say about God? What does it say about us? Fill in the chart below with what you find in the passage.

<p>Who God is and what He does:</p> <p><i>Possible answers:</i></p> <p><i>He blesses</i></p> <p><i>He chooses</i></p> <p><i>He adopts</i></p> <p><i>Full of grace</i></p> <p><i>Forgives</i></p>	<p>Who we are and what we do:</p> <p><i>Possible answers:</i></p> <p><i>We are blessed</i></p> <p><i>We are chosen</i></p> <p><i>Adopted</i></p> <p><i>Receive redemption</i></p> <p><i>Are forgiven</i></p>
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<p><i>Wise and understanding</i></p> <p><i>Makes things known</i></p> <p><i>Brings unity</i></p> <p><i>Marks us</i></p> <p><i>Guarantees our inheritance</i></p> <p><i>Worthy of praise</i></p> <p><i>True to His word</i></p>	<p><i>We learn</i></p> <p><i>We give praise and glory</i></p> <p><i>Hearers of the gospel</i></p> <p><i>We receive the Holy Spirit</i></p> <p><i>Redeemed</i></p>
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? What do you notice about the differences between who God is and what He does, and who we are and what we do?

*Possible answers: God is the active, giving, powerful person in this relationship. He acts, and we receive the action. Everything that we are is because of who God is. Our actions are a response to the outpouring of His grace.*

? What spiritual blessings is Paul referring to in verse 3? What does it mean that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing?

*Possible answers: We have been predestined, we have been adopted by God, we have been redeemed by Christ and forgiven of our sins. He has made known to us His will and has guaranteed our salvation by giving us the Holy Spirit.*

? When someone is adopted today, what does that mean for them? What's exciting or frightening about being adopted?

*Possible answers: You are now part of the family that adopted you. You get a family, a home, support, love, and people who are on your side. You cannot control who adopts you, you have to trust them as your guardian even if you're not sure of what their plans are, you want a forever place with them, etc.*

? What does adoption to sonship mean for believers?

*Possible answers: Being adopted by God means we are now part of His family. In the same way a child receives their parents' inheritance, we also receive an inheritance from God (vs. 14).*

This adoption to sonship applies to all believers regardless of gender. It shows that we have the best and strongest relationship and benefit from God choosing us as His own, and that all of us are eligible to inherit the benefits of being part of the family of God.

? How do you feel about the idea that God chose and adopted you?

*Possible answers: It's wonderful and exciting, but it is also scary in that I will have to give up some of the things I innately want. I'm very happy to be saved and going to Heaven! But I also sometimes wish I could have things on my terms instead of God's.*

**?** In verse 14, the Holy Spirit is identified as “a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.” How does the Holy Spirit act as a deposit?

*Possible answers: God is totally serious about having us as His children! He gives us the Holy Spirit, a part of Himself, to show that He is all in on having us in His family, now and forever. A deposit or down payment is a sum of money given to guarantee something, such as a car purchase, a rental, or a home purchase. The deposit shows how serious the person making the deposit is, so the person renting or selling to them can have confidence that they'll follow through on what they promised to do.*

**Leader's note:** In John 14:15-31, specifically vs. 26, Jesus promises the Holy Spirit to believers.

**?** We all have a relationship with the Holy Spirit; that relationship ties us together as Christians. In verse 10, Paul says God made His will known to us “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.” Why is unity in the body of Christ important?

*Possible answers: Unity is important because it shows people are working toward the same goal and have the same heart and mindset. When we are unified we are in God's will, and we can accomplish more as a body than we ever could apart.*

**?** What roadblocks or challenges make unity difficult?

*Possible answers: Unity is difficult because we all have our own gifts, desires, and inclinations—some of which guide us to follow God, and some of which pull us away. Other people can be infuriating in both their foibles and in their gifts that we don't have, and it can be tempting to withdraw and try to go your own way. Striving for unity is worthwhile because we are made to function as the body of Christ in community, and we can serve God together as we were made to be.*

### **For Discussion and Accountability**

**?** How can you personally strive for unity this week?

*Possible answers/ideas for discussion: This week I can: seek to understand other Christians, step back to let people act so they are part of the body of Christ, step up to act where I have been holding back or hesitant, listen to those around me to gain a deeper understanding of their heart, and actively initiate activities with people around me to grow closer to them and to God.*

**?** How do we find our identity in Christ and what He has done for us, rather than in ourselves?