

EPHESIANS 1:1-14

Before the Foundation of the World

Memory Verse

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”

Ephesians 1:3

Real-life Problems

Have you ever considered the importance of your last name? While your parents chose your first name, you inherited your last name. Your last name identifies you as a member of your specific family. In a similar way, even though we were created with a beautiful identity as God's children, sin has distorted our understanding of this identity. Instead of seeing ourselves as image bearers of God, we often look to the world around us to tell us who we are. This is the reason why, as young children, we love to play dress up. It is in all our natures to wonder who we are or who we will be. This lesson will help point us back to the true identity we have in Christ and remind us how this identity restores our relationship with God.

The Good News

Ephesians will not only remind us of the identity we have in Christ as God's children, but will remind us that, as His children, all the gifts from our Father are free. While we have to work for many things in life, the blessings and gifts of God are not one of them. By grace alone, God is pleased to lavish His blessings on those who are in Christ.

I. Introduction

OPENING QUESTIONS

Idea #1: Have you ever received a gift from someone for no particular reason or occasion? How did it make you feel to receive that type of gift?

Idea #2: What is something you have inherited from your parents or family (this could be a physical object, a name, or personality/physical trait)?

Idea #3: If you were to receive a letter from the government, what would you look for to know it is real the real thing?

PRAY

Open your time together in prayer.

REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

What does gospel mean?

Good news

What's the good news?

Jesus died for my sins

Why did He die for your sins?

So that I can have abundant life in relationship with Him now and forever

What is grace?

God's love for undeserving sinners

REVIEW

1) Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

Paul was in prison for his work in spreading the gospel.

2) To whom was Paul writing this letter?

The church, or followers of Jesus Christ, in Ephesus

3) What are the two purposes of this book?

One, to remind the church of the power of the gospel. Two, to encourage believers to live in light of their new identity as the church.

What's going on?

REMIND

Paul, an apostle of Jesus and a missionary of the gospel, has been imprisoned because of his work in spreading the gospel across Asia. During his time in prison, he writes a letter of encouragement to the church in Ephesus, among whom he spent several years living. In Paul's letter, he reminds the church of their new identity in Christ and encourages them to live transformed lives in light of their new identity.

TODAY WE'LL LEARN

- 1) By God, we are chosen as His children.
- 2) In Christ, we are given every spiritual blessing from God.
- 3) Through the Spirit, we are kept in God.

Read

Read **Ephesians 1:1-14** aloud in your group.

II. Questions for Discussion

A. WHAT?

1) How many times does this passage use the phrase "in Christ" (or any other word that references Christ)?

Ten (vv. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 [twice])

2) According to verse 4, when did God chose us?

Before the foundation of the world

3) According to verses 4-5, what are the two reasons God has chosen, or predestined, us before the foundation of the world?

1) To be made holy and blameless before Him 2) For adoption as His sons

4) What are the spiritual blessings you see named in this passage that are given to those who are in Christ?

Holiness (v. 4), blamelessness (v. 4), sonship (v. 5), redemption (v. 7), forgiveness (v. 7), an inheritance (v. 11)

5) Based on verses 11-12, apart from our redemption, for what other reason were we chosen in God?

For the praise of His glory

B. SO WHAT?

1) Think back to the number of times Paul uses the phrasing "in Christ." Why would our relationship with Christ be so important to receiving spiritual blessings?

By our human nature, it is easy for us to think we can work for our salvation. We believe that the more we do, the more we deserve. This is why Paul is emphasizing the truth that it is only because of Christ and His work, that we can receive blessings from God. By emphasizing that only "in Christ" we receive the blessings of God, we are reminded that it the gifts of God are not based on who we are and what we've done. Instead, the spiritual blessings we have are only because of God's grace extended to us in Christ. This means that nothing we can do, or nothing we have done, will change our inheritance as God's children. It is only by His grace that we have been chosen to be His people.

2) What do you think it means to be a son of God? Why does Christ's death and resurrection matter in our being adopted?

When parents choose to adopt a child, they are doing more than simply welcoming that child into their home. They are saying that all they have, all that belongs to their children, now belongs to them. Throughout the story of the Bible, God's blessings have always been first for His children. From the time God made a promise to Abraham that He would bless the nations through Abraham's children, He made those people His own and gave His blessings to them. They were His people and He was their God. Then, what Christ did in His death and resurrection was to extend the blessings of God beyond one nation. Through Christ, not only can we now worship God, but we have been adopted into the family of God. This changes everything. It is through the blood of Christ alone that the family of God has now been extended to all who are in Him.

Chosen as Son

Watch the scene from *Bonanza* here (start at 16:23-18:29): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MCrFPY6Uz5EO> On this episode of the old TV show *Bonanza* one of the characters, Benjamin Cartwright, adopts a teenager names Jamie Hunter.

On their ride home from the lawyer's office, Jamie makes mention to his new father that while his last name may change he knows he wont be exactly like his father's two biological sons.

Ben tells Jamie he is right. No, he will not be like his other sons. While those sons were gifts, in that they were given to him, he did not chose them. Ben tells Jame that he is different because he chose him. He wanted Jamie to be his son, so he chose Jamie.

This is what God did when He adopted us as sons. He chose us. We need not earn our place through birthright or work; but in God's grace, He chose us because He wanted us to be His son.

3) Where else have you heard the word redemption used outside of the church? What are some other words you could use to describe redemption?

4) What does it mean to be sealed by the Holy Spirit? Why would this seal matter?

A seal is a unique, official mark of an organization, such as the seal of the President of the United States. If a document has the official presidential seal on it, that is a symbol to indicate that the document is valid. It bears witness that the president himself has either sent or approved the document. It is a guarantee of the document's identity. The same is true when it comes to the Holy Spirit's role in the Christian's life. The Holy Spirit serves as a mark of God on the believer. It is the evidence of the Christian's identity in God, and gives the guarantee of their inheritance as God's child.

C. NOW WHAT?

1) How does the knowledge that God chose you before the foundation of the world change the way you view your self-worth?

Answers will vary, but this is a moment to help your students understand the beauty of grace. For God to choose them before they were born means that their worth is not in what they do, but in what Christ has done. For God to choose them before they were born means that it is only by unmerited grace that we are His children.

2) How do the spiritual blessings offer hope and peace in your everyday life?

3) In what ways does being a son of God change the way you think about your relationship with God?

This is an opportunity to help your students personally apply what sonship means for them. To be a son is a much more personal relationship than any other relationship. As a son, you not only bear your Father's name, but your identity as son cannot change. A son is the one who inherits the riches of the Father, not because of what they have done, but simply because they are His son.

4) When you consider all the spiritual blessings offered in Christ, which one stands out the most to you? Why?

Main takeaway

Through Christ, we have received a new identity as children of God which means we have access to every spiritual blessing of God through His grace.

III. Closing

REMEMBERING THE GOOD NEWS

Ephesians not only reminds us of the identity we have in Christ as God's children, but also how all our spiritual blessings are free gifts. While we have to work for many things in life, the blessings and gifts of God are not one of them. By grace alone, God is pleased to lavish His blessings on those who are in Christ.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we praise You for the many gifts You have freely given to us in Christ. Thank You for choosing us and bringing us into Your family as Your children. Help us to see ourselves as You see us. Give us the wisdom to use our gift to the glory of Your name in our lives. In Christ's name we ask these things. Amen.

Supporting resources

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1) Take time to consider how you would describe yourself. Write down what you believe God sees when He looks at you. Now, look back at the passage and write down all the words used to describe those who are in Christ. Ask God to help you see yourself in light of this truth and not the lies you might be believing.
- 2) Consider all the spiritual blessings listed in this passage. Spend time praising God for each blessing and ask Him to help you steward that gift well.
- 3) Write down the spiritual gifts listed in this passage. Now spend time considering how each of these gifts changes the way you experience suffering in your life. If you're having trouble answering this question, consider asking God to show you one way over the next week.

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- 1) Ask your child to consider the fact that God chose them before they were ever even born. Knowing this, ask them what tells them about why God picked them? Then ask, if they did nothing to earn God's blessings, then do they believe they do anything to lose them?
- 2) Ask your child to consider how the spiritual blessings they have been given by God might change the way they live our everyday lives? Consider giving examples of how you see the spiritual blessings of God changing your own life.