

Ephesians 1:1-14

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

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?

Ephesians 1:1–14 (NIV)

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

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

² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ 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. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹ he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

¹¹ 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, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ 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?

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

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

? 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.

Who God is and what He does:	Who we are and what we do:

? What do you notice about the differences between who God is and what He does, and who we are and what we do?

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

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

? What does adoption to sonship mean for believers?

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

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.

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

? 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?

? What roadblocks or challenges make unity difficult?

For Discussion and Accountability

? How can you personally strive for unity this week?

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