

Week 8 - Unconditional Election

Free For Life

Learning Objectives

- Praise God for his mercy in sending his son to die on our behalf – not because He had to and not because we deserved it.
- Consider how election is ultimately about God making the first move, and how we should respond and give Him glory as the author of our salvation.

Pray for your time together as a group.

Leader's Note: This is a tough topic. Our aim is not to "solve" the age-old question of how God's sovereignty and our responsibility work together. Our aim is to affirm BOTH God's sovereignty AND our responsibility. We hope that you would move your groups away from a debate on the validity of unconditional election. You may also want to encourage your group to watch Hope's sermon on this topic prior to study, as it may answer a lot of questions. To that end, we recommend reading the learning objectives to your group at both the beginning and end of the study. If the group seems to be hung up on some point, invite them to reflect on how they were saved. Hopefully this will awaken a greater sense of wonder that God saved us.

Icebreaker: How do you feel when someone gives you a surprise gift and expects nothing in return?

Part One: How Understanding Election Leads To Thankfulness

Read Out Loud: Ephesians 1: 3-14 (NIV)

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

What is Unconditional Election?

As the word "unconditional" implies, this view states that Jesus' salvation comes with no conditions attached. God elects people for salvation by His own sovereign choice and not because of some actions they perform or condition they meet. Those who come to Christ become His children by His will, not by theirs.

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 Ephesians describe our salvation through Christ?

Possible Answers: He chose us before creation. We have become blameless in his sight. We have been adopted into his family. Our salvation lines up with the Father's pleasure and will.

? Versus 11 and 12 are hard to parse. How would you rephrase them in everyday language?

Possible Answers: Before we were born, God chose to save us from our sins. Jesus was working according to the Father's will, which is good. When we put our faith in Christ we are able to glorify the Father through our salvation.

? What has the Lord shown us in these verses that should lead us to have a thankful heart?

Possible Answers: In Christ we now have every spiritual blessing, and we were chosen before the world even began, before we could even do anything, to be in Him. He has adopted us, redemption and forgiveness of sins.

? How can an increased understanding of election help us be thankful for what the Lord has done for us through the Cross?

Possible Answers: It should lead us to have a greater sense of wonder that we are saved and bring us to praise God! There has never been anything we have done since birth or could do to achieve this gift, but God did it all.

Part Two: How Understanding Election Leads To Humility

Read Out Loud: 1 Corinthians 1: 26-31 (NIV)

²⁶ Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”

? *What does Paul say about why God chooses to save people?*

Possible Answers: It is God who initiates and chooses, and He often chooses the lowly and unaccomplished. "So that no human being might boast in the presence God." God's election is designed to make us humble. It is God who raises up and saves--no merit of our saves us from our sin. It is the lowly who realize their cup is empty.

? *How does Paul's statement run counter to modern society's philosophy on living a good life?*

Possible Answers: Our culture says that we are supposed to pursue wealth and happiness. Paul says that those who seem to have it "all together" will ultimately be humbled by God who extends his grace to those who seem least deserving.

? *Unconditional Election means that God has chosen to save us even though we don't deserve it. How does that make you feel?*

Possible Answers: Answers may vary. It's natural to feel uncomfortable at the thought. We want to earn our salvation, but it wouldn't be Grace if we had to earn it. This should drive us to worship God more.

? *God chose us when we didn't deserve it. How should this free us to glorify Him and love others better?*

Possible Answers: It should also make us courageous to preach the good news to a world hostile to it. Knowing that we didn't do anything to earn our salvation means that we don't have to work to earn God's love. We can give ourselves grace when we mess up and continue to pursue more Christ-like behavior.

For Discussion and Accountability

? *How have I taken my election for granted, and how should God's desires for my life move me towards kindness, compassion and repentance?*

? *How am I sometimes tempted to earn my salvation? What feels so important that I need to do it in order to be a good/just person? What is the Gospel's response to that?*

Additional Resources:

<https://www.gotquestions.org/unconditional-election.html>

<https://www.gty.org/library/articles/A191/is-the-doctrine-of-election-biblical>

Chapter 32 in Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem