

Small Group Discussion Outline



This is the second study in our series through the book of Ephesians.

In the first study we looked at the background of the book and placed it in a historical context. This week we will examine the opening dialogue which gives us an overview of what is to follow.



Read: Ephesians 1:1-10

Paul's letter to the Ephesians follows his typical style of writing in that the first section of the letter contains most of the teaching material, and the second section contains mostly practical application of the teaching.

This first passage (verses 3-10) contains an overview of the main themes we will discover in Ephesians. It is written in language that is poetic and resembles that of a typical Jewish blessing. It is a prayer and worship but contains some essential truths about God's Big Plan.

First, though, Paul puts the picture into perspective for the Church and explains the position of Christians before God.



Read: Ephesians 1:3-8



1. There are four things in this passage which describe what God has done for those who follow Him. What are they?

Paul writes that believers have been: Blessed, Chosen, Adopted, and Redeemed.



2. What do these words mean and what are the implications for us if we believe them?

To be blessed by God is to receive something good and something specific from Him, in this context the blessing is something spiritual which He gives us through the holy Spirit. The blessings are actually that we have been Chosen, Redeemed, and Adopted by God. These things are spiritual blessings.

To be Chosen by God means that He values us. Ephesians 1:4 says that we were chosen to be "holy" and "blameless." This is the result of being chosen by God - that we are made holy and blameless before Him.



3. What might the result of believing that God chose us be?

"If man can accomplish much in the natural, what may we accomplish if we take the revealed Word as the actual truth and demonstrate and apply it?"¹

¹ Quote from Ps. Ken Harrison in AGNZ National Magazine.

Ephesians #2 The Big Plan

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Adoption into God's family is an amazing concept. Under Roman law (the law of the world of the New Testament) an adopted child had the same rights, privileges, status and responsibilities as that of a natural-born child.



4. What do you think this means, then, to be God's adopted children?

5. Does this imply certain responsibilities as well as privileges?

6. Is this something that is optional for Christians?

To be a Christian means that we accept our position as God's Children - we cannot be Christians without this *adoption* occurring. Naturally, though, the choice is up to us as to what kind of children we will be!

The last blessing we come across in this section is that we have been Redeemed. The concept of *redemption* that Paul is writing about is that of a slave being bought from their master and given freedom. The price of their freedom is the value that the purchaser put on their life and paid.

This price of our redemption, and thus, the value that God put on our lives is His own through the death of Jesus. This freedom that we can now experience comes with the forgiveness of sins that Jesus' life bought.

In the first study we saw how Ephesians was written primarily to broaden the churches horizons of God's plans and the role they play in them. Before we can truly and completely unite with the greater church in playing our part as individuals and as a body of believers in God's plans we need to recognise where we stand as individuals before God.



7. Why do you think this is?

Many of the reasons that people struggle to commit to a body of believers (local Church) come from an incomplete or deficient grasp of God's revealed view of where they stand before God and of God's plan for all Christians to be in unity with a Church as the means by which He has chosen to fulfil His plans and purposes in the world.



Read: Ephesians 1:9-10



8. According to this passage, what is God's Big Plan?

9. What role does the Church play in this (remembering that Ephesians was written to the Church as a body rather than to individuals)

10. What role do we, as individuals, play in this plan?

God's Big Plan is to bring "all things" into unity, or relationship, with Him through Jesus. This will happen when Jesus returns, but it's present manifestation is demonstrated and promoted through His Church. Unity in the Church, something made possible only because of our shared love of God and His love for us, is something which God has ordained to demonstrate to those around us the awesome future He has planned and that, for those who believe, it is available today.

As a Church we have a responsibility to demonstrate God's love and unity to others. As individuals we have a responsibility to commit to Church as part of God's plan and to promote unity with one another.

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