

# Small Group Discussion Outline



Usually the NIV Bible is the best translation for in-depth study, however, sometimes other translations bring out a particular point brilliantly and warrant use. This is the case for the particular angle we're approaching this passage from.



**Ephesians 1:11** *It's in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ and got our hopes up, he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, <sup>12</sup> part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.*

<sup>13</sup> *It's in Christ that you, once you heard the truth and believed it (this Message of your salvation), found yourselves home free - signed, sealed, and delivered by the Holy Spirit. <sup>14</sup> This signet from God is the first instalment on what's coming, a reminder that we'll get everything God has planned for us, a praising and glorious life.*

THE MESSAGE BIBLE

This passage is characterised by two words: "in Christ." Everything described in these verse hangs on those two words.



## 1. What do you think it means to be "in Christ"?

It is because of Jesus that all these blessings are available, it is only in relationship with Jesus that we discover a meaningful future and destiny. The first paragraph could refer to anyone in the universe - because God has plans for everyone should they choose to respond to Him, the second paragraph, however, speaks only of those who have responded to God's call.

In Ephesians 1:3-10, which we covered in the previous study, we discovered an incredible description of who we are "in Christ."

We are: blessed, chosen, created to be holy and blameless, adopted, free, forgiven and have received God's revelation of His Big Plan.



- 2. What would the result be if the Church actually believed and acted upon who they are "in Christ"?** (E.g. What will happen & how will people act if they believe they have been adopted by God?)
- 3. If the results of the above question are not evident, what does that say about the belief of the Church?**
- 4. Is there a difference between acknowledging a fact and a belief in something that prompts us to act?**

Christians accept the Bible as God's Word, His truth revealed to us, however, judging by the lack of results of this belief, it would seem that belief needs to be something which prompts us to act in order for it to be effective.

# Ephesians #3 In Him

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Read: James 2:14-26

Read: Ephesians 1:12 in the Message Bible (over page)

Read: Ephesians 1:9-10 (any translation)



5. Why do you think our belief needs to be accompanied by action?

6. What does God's Big Plan have to do with us? (Eph 1:12)

7. What is God's Big Plan (Eph 1:9-10)

True belief is something that becomes a part of us and prompts us into action. The things we say and do reveal what we *really* believe. All followers of Jesus are part of God's Big Plan - it's something that we are intimately involved, with God, in fulfilling. This Big Plan is for Jesus to bring everything into His Kingdom when He returns, our part in this plan is to demonstrate to the world what this future will be like by living lives under God's blessing and in unity with one another.

Pastor Jack Hayford, commenting on prayer, writes: "*Without God we cannot, but without us God will not.*"<sup>1</sup>

This is equally true regarding the fulfilling of His purposes; God will fulfil them anyway. If we choose not to be involved then He will find someone else, but we will fail to fulfil the very reasons He created us for.



**Exercise:** In your group, discuss how you can begin to live as God has called you to by demonstrating belief in the things He has revealed about you (*blessed, chosen, created to be holy and blameless, adopted, free, forgiven and having received God's revelation of His Big Plan*) through specific actions. Come up with some plans which include specific actions to demonstrate belief. These experiences will reinforce that belief and lead towards a greater experience of life "in Christ."

**Example:** 'In order to demonstrate that I believe I am part of God's plan to demonstrate to the world the unity that He brings, I will commit to strengthening my relationships with those in my small group by joining in with social events' etc...

This exercise will be as effective or ineffective as you choose. This is a great, and relatively simple, opportunity to develop relationships that actually mean something and to become accountable to those in your group for following through with these actions.



8. As a group, come up with ONE practical example/action that you are prepared to undertake together either in the community or in the Church which will reinforce the exercise above.

Much of what we accept and build our faith on is intangible. There is one element of our Christian lives which is demonstrable evidence that God's Word to us is true.



Read: Ephesians 1:13-14 (try several different Bibles, including the NIV and the Message)



9. What/Who is the evidence that God's Word is true?

As Pentecostals we have the characterising experience of the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues, who is God's official seal to declare to us that His Word is true and that He will keep His promises to us!!!

Allow this to build your faith, and watch as your life, and the lives of those around you are transformed by God as, together, we allow our belief to be translated into action...

<sup>1</sup> Hayford, Jack, *Prayer is Invading the Impossible*, Bridge-Logos Publishers, 1977

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