

Explore the Bible.®

DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

...wind of doctrine by the cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

16 From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Put On the New Man

17 ¶ This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gen'-tiles walk, in the vanity of their mind.

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the "blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 "If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Je-sus:

22 That ye "put off concerning "the former conversation "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true houness.

25 ¶ Wherefore putting away "all unclean-

Ephesians

Fall 2019

David O. Dykes, General Editor

LifeWay | Adults



BUT GOD

A person cannot earn salvation by being good or doing good.

The Bible tells us that before faith in Christ, we were dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1). This is true of the whole of humanity. Regardless of how moral and upright a person might appear, he or she cannot escape this indictment of deadness. Apart from Christ, we are dead in our sins—not sick, not dying, but dead. But God, because of His love for us, makes us alive with Christ. Salvation is by God’s grace apart from our good works, “it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

To the Galatians, Paul wrote that “a person is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ” (2:16), and “if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died for nothing” (2:21).

Jesus Himself said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Jesus is waiting for you now.

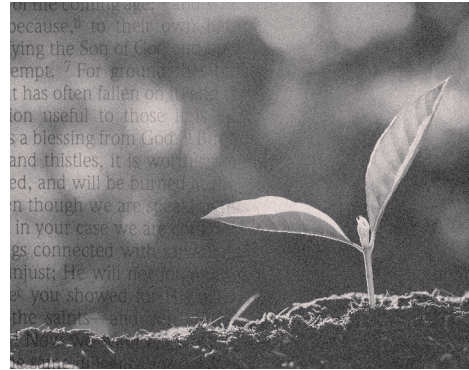
- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God’s Son and accept Jesus’ gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus’ name I pray, amen.”

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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» MEET THE WRITER



Kerry Smith

Kerry Smith is hard of hearing. He lives in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He grew up in Oklahoma and attended the Oklahoma School for the Deaf from

preschool until the middle of the seventh grade. At that time his parents put him in the public schools where there were no deaf programs or interpreters. Kerry became a Christian in 1988 after realizing that God had been working on him for a long time to trust in Christ. He is a member of Deaf Church Oklahoma in Oklahoma City where he teaches Bible study in the men's group. He is married and has two grown daughters and two grandchildren. This is Kerry's first time to write for LifeWay.

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A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR



Often people will say to us, “Good luck!” You don’t have to be around me for very long to discover that I don’t believe in luck. I only believe in luck if it stands for Living Under Christ’s Knowledge! As followers of Jesus, we have something so much better than luck; we enjoy the blessings of Almighty God. In Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians, we discover

some of the richest blessings that are ours as saints—we discover what it means to be “in Christ.”

Even though the apostle Paul was in prison when he wrote the Letter of Ephesians, he knew and we know that the Word of God cannot be bound. The decrees of ancient rulers of Paul’s day and time are forgotten today. The laws of the mighty Roman Empire are disregarded today. But a letter written from a prison cell almost two thousand years ago is being read and studied by millions of people around the world in the 21st century.

Of course, this isn’t just true of the Ephesians. The Bible is still the world’s most-read book. Although it was written by over forty men spanning over 1,600 years writing in three languages, it has one central theme: God’s loving redemption of fallen humanity. This theme is reflected in Ephesians.

As you study this letter, I pray that God will revitalize you and bring revival to you and to your church.

David O. Dykes

David Orlo Dykes has been pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas since 1991. He is a graduate of Samford University, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and completed post-doctoral study at Cambridge University, Cambridge, England. He has written sixteen Christian living books including *Handling Life’s Disappointments*; *No, That’s NOT in the Bible*; *Finding Peace in Your Pain*; and *Pastor David’s Travel Guide to Heaven*. In addition, he is completing a trilogy of novels that are set in Israel. Writing as David Orlo, he has published *The Cloud Strike Prophecy*, and *The Jerusalem Protocol*. *The Masada Proposal* is scheduled for publication in late 2019.



INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

The Apostle Paul wrote the Book of Ephesians. Ephesians 1:1 states this clearly. Both Ephesians 3:1 and Ephesians 4:1 state that Paul was in prison when he wrote the book. Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were also written while Paul was in prison and were probably written at the same time. Bible teachers debate when Paul wrote the letter. Most agree that he wrote it while in prison in Rome. He was also in prison in Caesarea so some have thought he might have written from there. Paul was in prison in Rome during the early 60s AD. Most people give the dates of about 61-63 AD as the writing dates.

The letter, as it is in our Bibles, states in Ephesians 1:1 that Paul wrote the letter to the Christians in Ephesus. However, some of the oldest copies of the letter did not have the title “Ephesians” in the letter. Because of this, some Bible teachers think Paul likely meant for the churches in Asia Minor (Turkey today) to pass the letter around to each other. Some think he may have intended the letter to be for the church in Ephesus, but he wrote it in a way as to be helpful to other churches in the area. All Bible teachers agree that Ephesus was in Paul’s mind as he wrote the letter, for what Paul wrote would have met the needs of that church. Paul was very familiar with the church and the city of Ephesus. He lived there during his third missionary journey for about three years.

In the first three chapters of Ephesians, Paul explained God’s plan to offer salvation to the whole world, not only to the Jews. Those chapters talk about a secret plan for the Gentiles and the offer of grace through Jesus Christ. Paul explained how God had plans to adopt us and accept us by offering redemption and forgiveness. Paul wrote how in God’s plan all believers would have the same Holy Spirit. In chapters 4–6, Paul discussed the body of Christ. Paul said we are to live like children of the light and live a life that shows we are followers of Christ. The new life in Christ is fully different from the old life. This new life will show up in how we live, how we think, how we deal with people, and how we live in our families. Many Bible teachers think Ephesians to be one of the highest statements of the Christians life.

OUTLINES OF **EPHESIANS**

I. A New Life (1:1–3:21)

- a. Greeting (1:1-2)
- b. The Purpose of Christ (1:3-14)
- c. Paul's First Prayer (1:15-23)
- d. Salvation through Grace (2:1-10)
- e. Unity Restored (2:11-22)
- f. Mystery Revealed (3:1-13)
- g. Paul's Second Prayer (3:14-21)

II. A New Walk (4:1–6:24)

- a. Walk Worthy (4:1-16)
- b. A New Self (4:17-32)
- c. Imitators of God (5:1-21)
- d. Right Relationships (5:22–6:9)
- e. Readied for Warfare (6:10-20)
- f. Closing (6:21-24)

WORD LIST

Antioch—Antioch was a city in what is today the country of Turkey. Paul lived there for several years, and the church in this city sent him as a missionary.

Belief—trust, faith, or confidence in someone or something

Caesar—the title used for the rulers of ancient Rome

Circumcision—a medical procedure of removing the foreskin from a male's genitals. It has special religious meaning for Jews.

Cornerstone—An important part of the foundation of a house or building at the corner of two walls. It was very important for supporting the weight of the building.

Deceiver—someone who tries to make you believe something that is not true

Epaphras—a faithful servant who worked with Paul

Foreigners—someone who was born in a different country

Foreknowledge—To know something before it happens. God has foreknowledge of those who will be saved.

Gentiles—The people of the world who were not Jews

Gnosticism—A system of religious beliefs that stressed salvation by knowing special things. This religious system of beliefs was a threat to early Christianity.

Grace—a gift we do not deserve

House Arrest—staying in a house but not able to leave; having a guard like being in jail

Incarnation—The word we use to mean that God became a human. God took on human flesh.

Messiah—The Hebrew word that means anointed one. Christ means the same thing.

Mystery or Secret—Paul used this word to mean a truth that was true all along, but only after the life of Jesus was this truth made clear to everyone to know.

Omnipotence—powerful and has no limit in power

Pah—The spelling of the sign we use that is somewhat like “success.” It is a sign that has no real English equivalent.

Pantheism—The idea that everything is god

Reconciled—to be friendly again; to have a relationship again

Redemptive—acting to save from wrong or evil

Resurrection—raise to life after being dead

Revelation, Reveal—to show something, see something new

Sanctification—The process God uses to make us more like Christ

Sovereign—To have full control

Spiritual Death—To be separate from God. One might be living physically but be dead spiritually.

Spiritual War—To battle in spiritual ways like against the devil and against sin

Spoils of War—The items that the winner of a war takes from the loser

Submission—accepting someone else to be in charge

Trinity—God in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

BIBLE READING PLAN

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ 1. Ephesians 1:1-2
- ☐ 2. Ephesians 1:3
- ☐ 3. Ephesians 1:4
- ☐ 4. Ephesians 1:5-6
- ☐ 5. Ephesians 1:7-8
- ☐ 6. Ephesians 1:9-10
- ☐ 7. Ephesians 1:11-12
- ☐ 8. Ephesians 1:13
- ☐ 9. Ephesians 1:14
- ☐ 10. Ephesians 1:15-16
- ☐ 11. Ephesians 1:17
- ☐ 12. Ephesians 1:18-19
- ☐ 13. Ephesians 1:20-21
- ☐ 14. Ephesians 1:22-23
- ☐ 15. Ephesians 2:1-2
- ☐ 16. Ephesians 2:3
- ☐ 17. Ephesians 2:4-5
- ☐ 18. Ephesians 2:6-7
- ☐ 19. Ephesians 2:8-9
- ☐ 20. Ephesians 2:10
- ☐ 21. Ephesians 2:11
- ☐ 22. Ephesians 2:12
- ☐ 23. Ephesians 2:13
- ☐ 24. Ephesians 2:14-15
- ☐ 25. Ephesians 2:16
- ☐ 26. Ephesians 2:17
- ☐ 27. Ephesians 2:18
- ☐ 28. Ephesians 2:19-20
- ☐ 29. Ephesians 2:21
- ☐ 30. Ephesians 2:22

☐ OCTOBER

- ☐ 1. Ephesians 3:1-2
- ☐ 2. Ephesians 3:3
- ☐ 3. Ephesians 3:4
- ☐ 4. Ephesians 3:5-6
- ☐ 5. Ephesians 3:7
- ☐ 6. Ephesians 3:8-9
- ☐ 7. Ephesians 3:10
- ☐ 8. Ephesians 3:11
- ☐ 9. Ephesians 3:12-13
- ☐ 10. Ephesians 3:14-15
- ☐ 11. Ephesians 3:16
- ☐ 12. Ephesians 3:17-19
- ☐ 13. Ephesians 3:20-21
- ☐ 14. Ephesians 4:1-3
- ☐ 15. Ephesians 4:4-6
- ☐ 16. Ephesians 4:7-10
- ☐ 17. Ephesians 4:11-13
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- ☐ 25. Ephesians 4:25
- ☐ 26. Ephesians 4:26-27
- ☐ 27. Ephesians 4:28
- ☐ 28. Ephesians 4:29
- ☐ 29. Ephesians 4:30
- ☐ 30. Ephesians 4:31
- ☐ 31. Ephesians 4:32

☐ NOVEMBER

- ☐ 1. Ephesians 5:1-2
- ☐ 2. Ephesians 5:3
- ☐ 3. Ephesians 5:4-5
- ☐ 4. Ephesians 5:6-7
- ☐ 5. Ephesians 5:8-10
- ☐ 6. Ephesians 5:11-12
- ☐ 7. Ephesians 5:13-14
- ☐ 8. Ephesians 5:15-16
- ☐ 9. Ephesians 5:17-18
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- ☐ 11. Ephesians 5:22-24
- ☐ 12. Ephesians 5:25-27
- ☐ 13. Ephesians 5:28-30
- ☐ 14. Ephesians 5:31-32
- ☐ 15. Ephesians 5:33
- ☐ 16. Ephesians 6:1-3
- ☐ 17. Ephesians 6:4
- ☐ 18. Ephesians 6:5-6
- ☐ 19. Ephesians 6:7-8
- ☐ 20. Ephesians 6:9
- ☐ 21. Ephesians 6:10-11
- ☐ 22. Ephesians 6:12
- ☐ 23. Ephesians 6:13
- ☐ 24. Ephesians 6:14-15
- ☐ 25. Ephesians 6:16
- ☐ 26. Ephesians 6:17
- ☐ 27. Ephesians 6:18
- ☐ 28. Ephesians 6:19-20
- ☐ 29. Ephesians 6:21-22
- ☐ 30. Ephesians 6:23-24

REJOICE

God chose to give us all the blessings that come with salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

Many Deaf people went to the School for the Deaf in their state. We see many stories of the good things they experienced. They got education, but they also got ASL, friends for a lifetime, and Deaf culture. In some ways we had an experience like this in Christ. We got salvation, but we also received all the blessings that come with salvation.

Paul wrote the Book of Ephesians to the church in Ephesus. In the opening verses he helped them (and us) see the blessings of salvation. Paul revealed God's secret because it wasn't revealed to the prophets in the Old Testament. We can see in these Scriptures that God had a plan before He created the world. Because of His love, He was ready and knew we would need Jesus to provide us with salvation. We would need the Holy Spirit to guide us. It was His choice and pleasure to make us His children. God gives His grace freely and fully to those who believe in Jesus.

EPHESIANS 1:3-14

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. In Christ, God has given us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world. **4** That is, in Christ, **he chose us before the world was made** **A** so that we would be his holy people—people without blame before him. **5** Because of his love, God had already decided to **make us his own children through Jesus Christ**. **B** That was what he wanted and what pleased him, **6** and it brings praise to God because of his wonderful grace. God gave that grace to us freely, in Christ, the One he loves. **7 In Christ we are set free by the blood of his death**, **C** and so we have forgiveness of sins. How rich is God's grace, **8** which he has given to us so fully and freely. God, with full wisdom and understanding, **9 let us know his secret purpose**. **D** This was what God wanted, and he planned to do it through Christ. **10** His goal was to carry out his plan, when the right time came, that all things in heaven and on earth would be joined together in Christ as the head. **11** In Christ we were chosen to be God's people, because from the very beginning God had decided this in keeping with his plan. And he is the One who makes everything agree with what he decides and wants. **12** We are the **first people who hoped in Christ**, **E** and we were chosen so that we would bring praise to God's glory. **13** So it is with you. When you heard the true teaching—**the Good News about your salvation** **F**—you believed in Christ. And in Christ, God put his **special mark of ownership** **G** on you by giving you the Holy Spirit that he had promised. **14** That Holy Spirit is the guarantee that we will receive what God promised for his people until God gives full freedom to those who are his—to bring praise to God's glory.

- a. In His foreknowledge, He made a sovereign choice of all who would come in salvation.
- b. God's choice was that we would be children of God. He adopted us through Jesus Christ.
- c. When Paul writes of the blood of His death, he is writing about the death of Jesus on the cross.
- d. His secret was grace to all people through Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. This was at the heart of Paul's message that all people, including non-Jews, were part of God's plan for salvation.
- e. The first to hope in Christ were the Jews. But now in God's plan, the Gentiles were included in salvation.
- f. Paul preached the Good News to the Ephesians. He told of God's gift through His Son for those who are willing to accept the gift.
- g. Many English Bibles here use the word "seal." The Holy Spirit in our lives helps us know that all the blessings that come with salvation are ours.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. What are the blessings that come with salvation?
2. God chose us before the world was made. How did He know who would trust Him?
3. Scripture says: "Because of His love..." Why is love important?
4. Do we have to accept Jesus as our Savior? Why or why not?
5. What must we do to get God's grace?
6. How can believers bring praise to God's glory?
7. How does the blood of Jesus' death set us free?
8. What does it mean to have God's special mark or God's seal on our lives?
9. How can believers know they are the children of God?

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare Verses*

Read the verses below. What do the verses tell us about God's plan? How do these verses compare with the verses in today's lesson?

Romans 8:28 _____

Romans 8:29 _____

1 Corinthians 1:21 _____

Hebrews 9:12 _____

2 Thessalonians 2:13 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Before the beginning, God chose us to be His children through Jesus Christ. It is a gift of His grace. We have no reason to brag about working for our salvation.
- Jesus died and rose again. His sacrifice gave us a way to forgiveness and an eternal home in heaven.
- Those who believe in Jesus receive the Holy Spirit in their hearts. The Holy Spirit shows we belong to Him.

Discuss with your group what it means that God chose us to be His children from the very beginning. How can this idea make you love God even more?

What does it mean to you that the sacrifice of Jesus has given you a way to forgiveness and a home in heaven? How can you share God's salvation with your Deaf friends?

What is important about having the Holy Spirit in your life? How does the presence of the Spirit help you to know you are God's child?

MEMORY VERSE

In Christ we are set free by the blood of His death, and so we have forgiveness of sins. How rich is God's grace. – Ephesians 1:7

DAY ONE

Read Ephesians 1:3-4, drawing a line under when God chose His people.

Paul often praised God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his letters. Paul showed us by his example that we can and should praise God in our prayers. Why should we do this? It is through Him we receive God's blessings. And here is the greatest blessing: God chose us before He made the world. His plan was for us to become His holy people. Let us learn from Paul to praise our heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ because of His gift to us.

God chose us to be His holy people. Holy means to be separate from the ways of the world. Adam sinned by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam disobeyed God's instruction not to eat the fruit and caused sin to be passed down to us. Sin separated us from the Lord's fellowship. The good news is God already chose us from the beginning to give us the spiritual heavenly blessing. We should not be proud or think we are better than others. We should be grateful and humbled that He planned this salvation before we were born.

How does it make you feel when you see God planned your salvation before the world was made?

In what ways can you show others that you are part of His holy people?

DAY TWO

Read Ephesians 1:5-6, circling each time God's love shows up.

Because of His love, God decided to make us His own children through Jesus Christ. Before we knew Him, we were sinners and only cared about ourselves. Romans 5:8 tells us God showed His love to us while we were still sinners. As sinners, we were rebellious. We wanted things to be our way. We did not want anyone to tell us what we can or can't do. We thought just like the world thinks. But God did not give up on us. He did not give up because He loved us fully.

Sometimes I wonder why God forgives like He does. I would never give someone another chance if they rebelled against me like we rebel against God. I wonder how God could think we are worth saving. Of course,

the answer is in God's love. He loved us first. Out of His great love, He makes us His own children when we believe in His Son, Jesus. Paul said God wanted to do this. It pleases Him to give His grace to us freely. Do we have to do anything to receive His grace? No. He gives it freely through Jesus Christ, whom we have believed.

Are you willing to show the kind of love God has to others? How can you do this?

How can you explain God's free gift of grace?

DAY THREE

Read Ephesians 1:7-10, looking for God's plan to save the world.

Paul clearly writes that our sins are forgiven because Jesus died. The sacrifice of His blood was the sacrifice for our sins. In Old Testament times, the priests offered sacrifices of sheep or other animals for the people's sins. They had to do it every year. In Ephesians, Paul explained how Jesus' blood and death are the true way to forgiveness. We don't have to bring sheep to sacrifice every year. We don't need a priest to go before God for us. We don't need the blood of animals to wash away our sin. The Scriptures say God let us know His secret purpose that was not clear to the Old Testament prophets. They did not understand God's plan to give grace to us by trusting Jesus.

The Jews thought they were the only ones to have the one true God in their lives. They thought the Messiah would be their earthly king forever in the land of Israel. But God was doing a new thing in Jesus. God was bringing everything together in Him. Even though this was new, it had always been God's plan.

How did the death of Jesus redeem us from sin? How does His death fulfill God's plan for the world?

DAY FOUR

Read Ephesians 1:11-12, finding the blessings we have in Christ.

Paul said God chose us to be His people because He had decided it from the beginning and it was His plan. From the Old Testament we know God chose the Jewish people to be His holy people. God promised Abraham that He would bring salvation through Abraham's children and all people would be blessed by the Jewish nation. The Jews believed this blessing was only for the Israelites. Paul explained that since God planned it, it is His decision and His plan is for all of us, both Jews and Gentiles.

Not only are the Jews included in God's blessings, but in God's plan the Ephesians and all the peoples of the world can have forgiveness of sin. In addition to the blessing of forgiveness, God gives us spiritual understanding and an eternal inheritance in Christ. He planned this from the beginning and is still working His plan today. When we trust Christ, we live into His plan and give Him glory. We are right, then, when we thank Him for providing forgiveness and an eternal home in heaven.

How do you praise God every day? What actions do you do that bring Him glory?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God's Plan of Salvation*

God made His own plan to save people from sin. That plan is based on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. People are saved when they believe in Jesus. Jesus saves us by the power of His blood offered as a sacrifice for our sin. At salvation we receive the Holy Spirit who works within us to teach and guide us. The Spirit seals us, marking us as God's children. There is no salvation without a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

DAY FIVE

Read Ephesians 1:13-14, underlining what the Holy Spirit does in our lives.

Can you remember the moment you knew God was working in your heart and mind? God, through His Son by the Holy Spirit spoke to you and your eyes were opened. All believers had a time when they saw the truth for the first time. We wanted the joy and the love that comes from our heavenly Father. We knew something happened in our souls when we said, “Yes, I am a sinner. I believe in Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came to the world so I may have forgiveness. I want a relationship with the Lord.”

The moment we believed, Christ sent the Holy Spirit to be our helper and guide. It is the Spirit who gives us spiritual understanding. Before we accepted Christ, we belonged to the world and did not understand why God sent His son Jesus to die for us. With the Holy Spirit, we learn how to live. The Holy Spirit is our guarantee that we will receive what God has promised us because we belong to Him. The Holy Spirit is the seal on us showing we belong to God for all eternity.

How does the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life help you know you are a child of God?

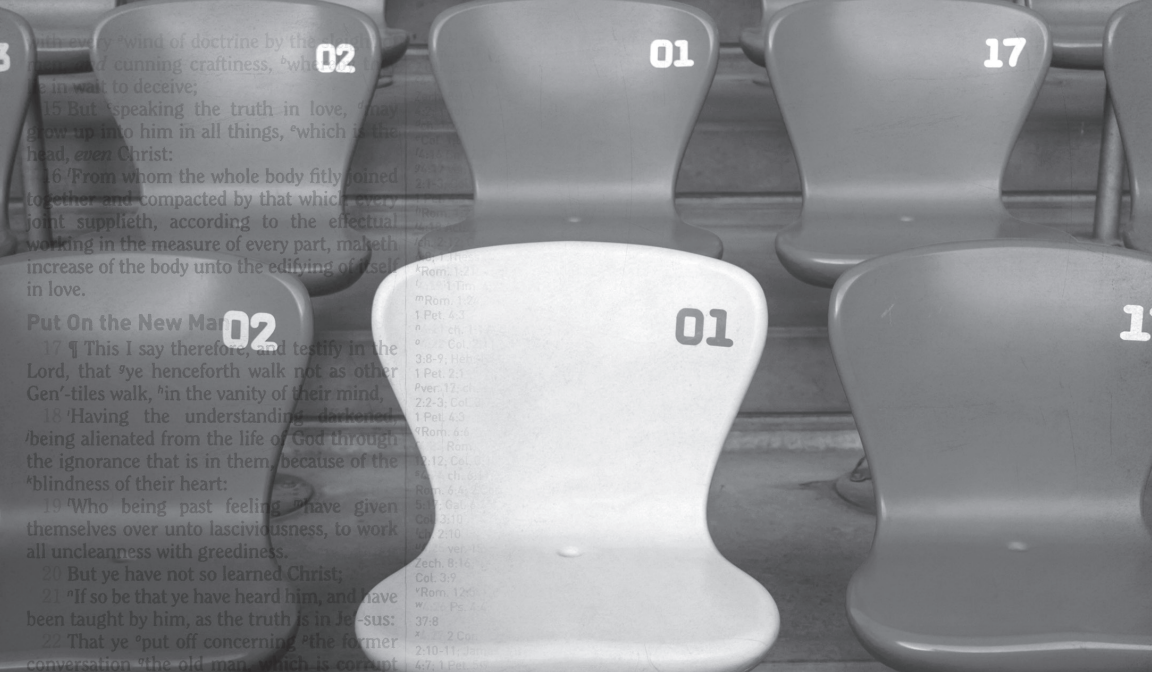
CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from Ephesians 1:3-14. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Discuss with your group what it means that God chose from the beginning for you to be His child. How does this fact lead you to love and trust Him even more?

What are the many blessings you have because you are a believer? How can you show thanks for His many blessings?

How do you see the Holy Spirit working in your life? How can you depend on the Holy Spirit this week to lead your daily life?



LEADER HELPS

As the leader of the group, you can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, and by facilitating smaller groups.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, and challenge the group to act on that passage. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Study the Bible passage.
- Pay careful attention to the In My Context section for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.

Through the Week

- Ask God to direct your creation of the group plan.
- Create a group plan, adapting the group plans to fit the needs of your group. (Consult *QuickSource* and the weekly Extra post for additional ideas Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible/Adults/LeaderExtras).
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Connect and Share to start your conversation.
- Pull needed posters from the Explore the Bible: Leader Pack (or create your own using the ideas on pages 144-145).

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early.
- Pray for the study and the group members.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.

After the Group Study Time

- Contact all group members, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests.
- Record insights gained about teaching, group members, and Scripture.
- Do it all again.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

- Encourage everyone on your ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.
- Ask them. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement such as, "I hope you took a look at the Day Three activity for this week."
- Tell them. Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- Show them. Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day One as a group.

- Invite them. Call on volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they use the Daily Exploration section.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

At the end of every session, you will find a section entitled Connect and Share. This section is designed for smaller groups of one or two people to meet weekly, holding each other accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Allow group members to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups)
- Allow groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
- You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
- Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new group members and guests.
- As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
- Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
- Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
- Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.
- Be in a smaller group as well. You may even want to host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

REJOICE

Ephesians 1:3-14

PLAN AHEAD

PRAY for the group to understand more about the Holy Spirit's work in their lives.

ENLIST a volunteer to study the Introduction to the Book of Ephesians and summarize it for the group during the meeting.

ENLIST a volunteer to be prepared to sign Galatians 5:22-23.

WRITE the outline on the board.

BRING a box wrapped as a gift (or a picture of a gift box) to the group meeting.

FOCUS ATTENTION

INVITE the volunteer to share information from the Introduction to the Book of Ephesians.

BEGIN with the following questions and **EXPLAIN:** *When did God decide to save us? Why did He want to save us? In Paul's letter, he answered these questions. It may be hard for us to imagine, but God knew us before He created the world. He knew we would sin, and He made a plan to bring us to Himself. How did He know these things? God knows everything! Nothing surprises Him.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. God Chose Us (Ephesians 1:3-6)

CALL FOR a volunteer to sign Ephesians 1:3-6. Before they sign the verses, **DIRECT** the group to watch for reasons God chose us. **ASK** members to share the reasons they noticed. **DISCUSS** the reasons Paul gave: 1) God wanted us to be His holy people; 2) He loved us; 3) It is what He wanted; 4) It pleased Him and; 5) It brings praise to Him.

ASK: *What is grace?* (One way to explain it is God's love and mercy He gives because He wants to give it. People do not deserve or earn it. It is a gift.) **SHOW** the group the gift box you brought. Offer it to someone in the group. **EXPLAIN** that you just want to give it to them. They did not do anything to earn it. This is just a small picture of God's gift of grace to us. **SUPPLEMENT** the discussion by using questions one through three from Explore the Text.

2. Saved through Christ (Ephesians 1:7-12)

EXPLAIN: *In the next verses, Paul explained more of the blessings from God.*

SIGN Ephesians 1:7-12. **ASK:** *What does verse 7 say has happened to us in Christ?*

EXPLAIN: *Verse 9 talks about a secret purpose. Paul meant God's plan to unite Jews and Gentiles in His kingdom. He will explain more about this in chapter 3. It important to notice in verse 9 Paul again said, "This was what God wanted." We can trust God to do what He has planned because it is what He wants.*

SUPPLEMENT the discussion by using questions four through seven from Explore the Text.

3. Sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14)

SIGN Ephesians 1:13-14. **EXPLAIN:** *God's mark shows we belong to Him. It is like a seal on our lives. In Bible times, when a king wrote a letter, he would put wax on it and mark it with a seal to prove it was from him. Ranchers put a brand on their cattle to show they belong to the rancher.* **ASK:** *What is God's mark to show we are His? What are some ways believers know the Holy Spirit is in their lives?* Answers could include: He helps us remember Bible verses when we need them; He convicts us when we do wrong; He helps us recognize the truth; He helps us develop the fruit of the Spirit. **CALL FOR** the volunteer to sign Galatians 5:22-23. God will help us develop these characteristics because of the Spirit in us. **SUPPLEMENT** the discussion by using questions eight or nine from Explore the Text.

IN MY CONTEXT

REVIEW the main points from In My Context in the personal study guide. **DISCUSS** the questions. **ENCOURAGE** members to do the daily readings this week and meet with someone for Connect and Share.

CLOSE with prayer. **ASK** God to help us rejoice always as Paul did because of His great gift of grace.