



**Week 1**

# The basics of our faith

## **Memory Verse:**

*In him we were also chosen,[e] having been  
predestined according to the plan of him who works  
out everything in conformity with the purpose of his  
will... Ephesians 1:11 (NIV)*



# PERSONAL STUDY

## Read Ephesians 1:1-14

### OPENING REMARKS:

The NIV Zondervan Study Bible gives us the following introduction to this section of Ephesians 1:

*“This section is often called a “doxology” (a liturgical formulae of praise to God, an expression of praise to God, especially a short hymn sung as part of Christian worship). Paul praises God for his spiritual blessings in Christ.*

*These blessings are based on the work of the triune God:*

- *Election and adoption by the Father (verses 4-6);*
- *Redemption in Christ (verses 7-12) and*
- *Sealing in the Holy spirit (verses 13-14).*

*Each of these sub-sections concludes with a similar refrain that praises God’s glory (verses 6, 12 & 14). It gives us a grand sweep of God’s saving purposes. It begins with our election from “before the creation of the world” and climaxes with the pronouncement of God’s will to bring unity to the cosmos under Christ.”*

Paul wanted to challenge his brothers and sisters in faith to grow in grace and to stand firm against or amidst the evil of the age. He begins his letter with a quick refresher on theology, instead of a list of dos and don'ts, because he knew that God-honouring behaviour always springs from right beliefs. Christians who lack a proper theological foundation will not have a proper understanding and appreciation for what God has done for them.

**STUDY QUESTIONS:**

Read Ephesians 1:1-2. Paul introduced himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus. Why do you think it is important for the receivers of this letter to know who wrote it?

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What does the concept of "Grace" mean? How do you see Grace in your life?

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Read Ephesians 1:3-6. What blessings has God the Father given every believer?

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Read verse 4 & 5 again. What has God chosen his people for (verse 4)? What destination has He given them (verse 5)?

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In the first-century Greco-Roman world, a wealthy man sometimes adopted a slave to become his legal heir, his “son”, to inherit the family estate. With this in mind, how do verses 4 & 5 tell us what an amazing and privileged position every Christian enjoys?

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How does the truth of verses 4 and 5 humble you and encourage you for the future?

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Read Ephesians 1:7-12. What other blessings do we have in Jesus Christ?

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How does verse 7 explain what we have in Christ and how we got it?

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We are not only redeemed from the guilt of sin and the fear of its punishment, but for something wonderful. What is God's ultimate goal and purpose for eternity? (Refer to verse 9-10)

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Read Ephesians 1:13-14. How is the Holy spirit described? What does this image/example mean?

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What blessing do we receive through the Holy Spirit?

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How does these verses give you confidence and excitement about the eternal glory with God?

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In this section, Paul is talking about being chosen (elected) and predestination, which are often difficult doctrines to understand and accept, far less to think of as a blessing.

This has led to many objections over the years. Some of these objections are:

- God’s election undermines evangelism – there is no need to bother telling other people about Jesus, as He will only save His elect (refer to verse 13).
- God’s election undermines humility – we are superior because we are the chosen ones (refer to verses 4- 5 and Romans 8:29-30).
- God’s election undermines any motivation for holiness – we have been elected, we do not need to strive to please God (verse 4, Colossians 1:22 and Romans 12:1).

How would you answer these objections? Refer to the verses indicated.

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### **Closing remarks:**

Many people, the first time they encounter the doctrine of election, are upset by what seems to them to be a horribly unfair arrangement. Unfortunately, that is where many people end the discussion. A proper biblical view of election and predestination, however, leads to the conclusion that God's choice in predestination is an incredibly loving act.

John MacArthur says the following about predestination and election: *"It is His perfect plan for our destiny and it conforms with both His love and grace and with our responsibility to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour."*

The website, Gotquestions, describes the plan of God as follows:

*Some may say that God's plan is simply unfair—some are chosen to be saved while others are passed over and have no chance. This objection often assumes a faulty picture of salvation, one in which people are lining up to be saved, pleading with God to save them, but He says, "No, I have not chosen you. Your name's not on the list, so I reject you." But that's not what happens. The reality is that everyone is given a choice to obey God, and everyone, great and small, chooses to sin. Scripture reveals that, in*



*His grace, God has chosen to save some in spite of their rebellion. He works in their hearts and wins them over. The others God simply allows to continue in the ways they have freely chosen and desire to continue in. Those who reject Christ do so freely. Those who receive Christ also do so freely, but only because God has worked in their hearts to win them over so that they now want to receive Him. God is perfectly free; He is obligated to save no one, and the fact that He saves some shows that He is loving.*

*No one is saved without the election and predestination of God. If there were no election and predestination, the entire human race would be eternally lost. The only reason a rebellious sinner ever comes to faith in Christ is that God has chosen to win him over instead of allowing him to continue down the path to destruction. God is in charge. "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Revelation 7:10).*

Fairness is not the issue; Grace is the issue. Election and predestination are the highest expression of God's loving grace. For Christians, the knowledge that we are saved because of God's choice is the ultimate source of security.

# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Prayer

### Memory verse:

*In him we were also chosen,[e] having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will... Ephesians 1:11 (NIV)*

### Reflection:

Share with the group members how God worked in your life during this week.

### Scripture Reading:

Ephesians 1:1-14

## Discussion questions

From this passage, identify the past, present and future aspects of God's work in our lives.

Verses 3-6	
Verses 6-11	
Versus 12-14	

What unique role does the members of the Trinity – God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit – play in the salvation process?

God the Father	
The Son	
The Holy Spirit	

Why did God predestine us to adoption as sons (Refer to verse 5)? How does this knowledge influence the way you live?

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Over the years, people, worldwide, develop various objections against the teaching of predestination. Some of these objections are:

- God's election undermines evangelism – there is no need to bother telling other people about Jesus, as He will only save His elect (refer to verse 13).
- God's election undermines humility – we are superior because we are the chosen ones (refer to verses 4- 5 and Romans 8:29-30).
- God's election undermines any motivation for holiness – we have been election, we do not need to strive to please God (verse 4, Colossians 1:22 and Romans 12:1).

How would you answer theses objections?

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From the information given in this study, try to formulate a clear statement of what it means to be chosen by God.

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**Close in prayer**