

COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY GUIDE**Blessed in Christ**

EPHESIANS 1:3-4

OVERVIEW

Everything—literally everything—in heaven and on earth is being united in Christ (1:10). Only when we understand who Christ is can we begin to understand who we are. We often read Paul’s letters thinking about all Scripture calls us to do. But before Ephesians calls us to do anything, it reminds us what God has done in Christ.

Our identity is not based on what we do, but who we are. Our identity is not earned and achieved but declared and received. Our identity, as Christians, is found “in Christ.” We are united to Christ—and that changes everything about us! Paul’s letter to the church in Ephesus explains what we were (apart from Christ), who we are (in Christ), and then how we should live as followers of Christ, all for the glory of Christ.

APPLY // EPHESIANS 1:1-2

1. Paul begins by identifying himself as “an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ.” How does this truth inform how we read/receive this book of the Bible?
2. Paul describes the Ephesian believers as “saints who in are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.” John Stott comments, “They are ‘saints’ because they belong to God; they are ‘faithful’ because they have trusted in Christ; and they have two homes for they reside equally ‘in Christ’ and ‘in Ephesus.’” How do these same truths apply to us and inform how we live?
3. Paul begins his letter with “grace and peace.” How do these words remind us of the gospel? What’s the significance for the Ephesians believers and us that these are some of the first words offered by Paul?
4. Read Ephesians 6:18-20. It appears that Paul is in prison while writing this letter. Yet, where is Paul’s focus? How does Paul’s mindset, despite his earthly circumstances both challenge and encourage us?

STUDY // EPHESIANS 1:3-4

Study the passage of Scripture aiming to faithfully interpret and apply what you observe. Remember we study God’s word not just to increase our knowledge, but to increase our trust in and treasuring of Jesus Christ.

1. Read Ephesians 1:3-14.
2. Identify the main theme(s) of this opening section of Ephesians.
3. Identify repeated words, ideas, phrases.
4. How do you see the Trinitarian nature of God in these verses?
5. In light of the main theme and repetition, how would you summarize the authorial intent of Paul’s words in verses 3-14?

6. Paul starts with the words “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What does this phrase mean? Why is it significant Paul starts with praise?
 7. Paul says the Ephesians are “blessed in Christ” and “chose us in Christ.”
 - a. Why is it significant that both “blessed” and “chose” are in the “past tense”?¹
 - b. Notice that both the blessing and choosing are “in Christ.” What does this mean? Why is it important to understand Christ as the sphere of our blessing and choosing?
 8. What does Paul say the Father has blessed us with? What does “every spiritual blessing mean”?
 - a. The phrase “in the heavenly places” is used five times in Ephesians (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). Use these other references to define “in the heavenly places.”
 9. The text says the Father did all this “before the foundation of the world.” What does this mean? See also 1 Timothy 1:8-10.
 - a. Note: this truth is commonly referred to as the “Doctrine of election.”
 10. What does this truth tell us about the character of God?
 - a. Do not get into a debate about “predestination.” The text stands with clarity. This mind-blowing truth should cause us to wonder at God, not analyze him. Paul offers these words not to confuse, but to comfort.
 - b. Also, don’t go down the path of “What about those God didn’t choose?” That’s not the point of this text. And, as the rest of Scripture makes plain, there is no one searching for God desiring to worship him who God refuses. We always do that which we most want to do.
 11. One of the reasons for the Father chose us is so that we would “be holy and blameless.” Notice the phrase is “be” (i.e., position) not do (i.e., practice). What does this tell us about the meaning of Paul’s words?
 - a. Paul uses this same phrase in 5:27 for the reason Christ died for the church.
 - b. How is this phrase both a present reality and future promise?
 12. Notice that Paul says believers are “before him.” What does this mean? Why are these two words significant? What do they tell us about the nature of the Christian life?
- General Bible study questions:
 - **God:** What does this passage teach me about the character of God?
 - **Humanity:** What does this passage teach me about myself and my need for God?
 - **Christ:** How does this passage teach me that God has met my needs in the person and work of Jesus Christ?
 - **Response:** How should I respond with my affections and my actions?

ACCOUNTABILITY

Relationships developed and deepened during accountability provide regular encouragement, and when necessary admonition, to spur each other on to delight in the supremacy of Jesus Christ. Ask one another heart-probing, clarifying questions, and help each other apply the gospel to your lives.

QUESTION: Follow up on anything that was shared last week. Encourage one another with evidences of grace.

¹ Technically, these words are in the “aorist” tense.