

Discussion Guide on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

Praise for God's Gracious Call (Ephesians 1:3-14)

1. Paul praises God because he chose us and predestined us (1:4-5) to be part of His family. How does it make you feel to know that God chose you for salvation? (Be honest and note: The question is not "How *should* it make you feel..." but "How *does* it make you feel...").
2. Verse 3 is a general statement about God's gracious blessings to us in salvation. Verses 4-14 unpack the idea of "every spiritual blessing," bestowed on us by God. Can you identify some of these blessings in the following verses?
3. We always feel "blessed" by God when he has given us a surplus in material provision. How much more should we feel blessed because God has "blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ?" We are wealthy beyond measure!
4. Typically, we have the persistent notion that our choices are free and that we're entirely responsible for the consequences of all our decisions. However, 1:3-14 indicates God is responsible for our salvation rather than us. Who is the active one in vv. 3-9 ("he blessed us," "he chose us," "he predestined us," "he has freely given us," "he lavished on us," "he made known to us")? Reflect on Romans 8:29-30, Titus 3:5-7, and 1 Peter 1:2 and note that it is God who actively pursues us.

Observation: Clearly, if God does not first do something in our heart, then we would not choose Christ on our own. Left to ourselves, no one is free to choose Christ. It cannot be any other way because the very concept of grace means that God does for us what we can never do for ourselves. Moreover, we are dead in our trespasses and sins and unable to respond to God's gift of salvation without him taking the first step (Eph. 2:1-5). A beautiful example is God opening Lydia's heart to respond to the Gospel (Acts 16:14; see also John 6:44, 65; Rom. 9:16). In fact, one cannot even repent (change their lives) without God first granting the ability (see Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25).

5. So, why does God choose some and not others? Does God's choice of me override my choice of believing in him? Doesn't my choice to believe in Jesus count for anything?
6. According to 1:4 when did God choose us? (To dig a bit deeper, compare Romans 9:10-24 with Eph. 1:4). According to the latter half of verse 4, what is the result of God's choosing some for salvation?
7. Compare Deut. 7:7-9 with Eph. 1:5 (read "In love" of verse 4 as part of verse 5). Do you see any parallel of thought in terms of why God chooses?
8. To have redemption is to be forgiven, according to 1:7. When you forgive others do you think of it as prompted by grace or by mere obligation and duty? In other words, is forgiveness something owed or something bestowed?
9. Look at the expressions "the praise of his glorious grace" (1:6), "for the praise of his glory" (1:12), and "to the praise of his glory" (1:14). How do these expressions factor into the larger story that Paul is trying to tell us? Are we chosen for our own sake or for another? In your own words, describe why you were picked for salvation. How might this encourage you with purpose and meaning in life? How can you encourage other believers with this truth?
10. Read 1:13 and list the progression of events that led up to you receiving the Holy Spirit. Is this progression of events significant?
11. In 1:14 the Holy Spirit is referred to as a "deposit" or "earnest money" or "down payment" (see also

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2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5). God's initial installment of the Spirit guarantees an inheritance from him. What is this "inheritance" (Hint: Review verse 10)? When does this guarantee from God expire (see verse 14)?

12. Ephesians 1:3-14 is a hymn of praise for God's gracious call in our salvation. How can you begin singing this hymn of praise in your life?