

EPHESIANS

WHO I AM AND WHY IT MATTERS

This summer, we're going to work our way through Ephesians. There's nothing like moving slowly through a book of the Bible. That's what we're going to do together this summer with the Book of Ephesians. We're also excited about the Ephesians booklet we've provided for everyone to use on this journey together. We encourage you to bring it to church each Sunday, take notes, and use it as you reflect on the sermon with your small group. The subtitle, and the title of today's study, are: "Who I Am and Why It Matters."

Scripture: Ephesians 1:1-14

Discussion Questions:

1. Looking back at your notes, what encouraged or challenged you the most?

Read Ephesians 1:1-2.

2. Your identity speaks to *who* you are and *what* you're about. What do these opening verses reveal about Paul's identity? When people look at your life, what can they identify about you?

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God..."

Read Ephesians 1:3-14.

3. What mental picture do these verses create regarding your place before God?
4. What does it mean that before creation, God "loved you and chose you in Christ" for salvation? What power does this truth have for you on your worst day, never mind your best day?

If you're a follower of Christ, God has chosen you. This is what the Bible calls election. Before the foundation of the world, God chose you for salvation. So, before God created the world, He thought of you and chose you to be saved. Your whole life is a process of God drawing you to salvation. If you're a follower of Christ, these verses should lead you to feel loved. The topic of election shouldn't lead us to confusion but to gratefulness. God loved you so much that He chose you to be saved before you lived your first day.

Furthermore, God knew what He was doing when He chose us. He knew everything there was to know about us before we took our first breath. Psalm 139:16 says, "You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day has passed."

Paul informs us that God indeed chooses us. Let that sink in for a moment...God chose you. It's important to note there is a difference between being chosen by man and being chosen by God. Man chooses us based on our goodness and what we bring to the table, but God chooses us solely based on the goodness of His Son and because of His great love for us. "For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16).

Our all-knowing, omniscient Heavenly Father, who knows everything about us, doesn't look at the good things we have accomplished in this life and say, "Oh, I want this one on my team." Nor does He look at the bad things we have done, the wrong decisions, and all the selfish ways we have chosen to live and say, "Unwanted. Unloved."

Based on what scripture tells us, we will never be good enough. We can never meet the expectations of a Holy God simply because, left to ourselves, we can never be holy. And yet, at the same time, His grace flows down to the messiest, most broken places of our lives and speaks kindly to our hearts in a way only a loving Father would.

5. What do these verses reveal about God's grace toward you? How is God's grace described in these verses? How are we tempted to view God's grace differently from what we see in these verses?

God's grace toward us is glorious. He's rich in His grace towards us; He lavishes grace upon us.

We have all we need in Him because of His great grace that has been lavished on us. The definition of the word lavish here as a verb means "to bestow something in generous or extravagant quantities." How amazing is this?

1 John 3:1, "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him."

Amazing Grace:

"Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see"

6. What does it mean to be *redeemed* and *adopted* into the family of God? What hope does this give us? How should our redemption and adoption shape our identity and purpose?

As a Believer, not only is Christ in you, but you are also in Him. We are sealed, protected, carried, kept, and watched over. We have been cleansed of all sin, past, present, and future. We are secure in His love and loving care over our lives. To be redeemed means to be released from a state of slavery. The Bible shows us that before we meet Christ, we are all enslaved to sin and naturally gravitate towards sin, not God. When we get saved, we are redeemed – we are forgiven, set free from a life of bondage to the sin that kills us.

What does it mean that we are adopted into the family of God? It means that God looked down upon us, chose us, and marked us as part of His family. We were once spiritual orphans outside of the family of God, but now we are the children of God with all the rights of a child of God. The Bible says that all of this was according to the purpose of His will and the praise of His glorious grace.

How should our redemption and adoption shape our identity and purpose?

God chose you to change you. If you still look like you did before you got saved, either you didn't get saved or you're not really submitting your life to Christ like you need to be. There should be an ongoing, demonstrative difference in who you are after getting saved and you change and then keep on changing.

7. Why is the phrase "when you...*believed in Him*" pivotal to the context of verses 3-14?

Whoever wants to be saved must choose Jesus (don't neglect what the Bible says – people *must* surrender to Christ; people *must* hear the gospel to be saved; that's *why* we share it, and this is *how* God uses us.

Romans 10:13 "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

8. What should our response be to the truth of these verses? Why should they lead us to live with joy each day, regardless of our circumstances? How can we keep our hearts anchored to these truths?

The proper response to Ephesians 1 is to fall on our knees in gratitude toward God. Ephesians 2 speaks of salvation – "this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, lest anyone boast." He has graciously chosen us and changed everything about our lives. Furthermore, we have an inheritance of which the presence of the Holy Spirit is a down payment and guarantee. What is the inheritance that we are given at salvation? It is Jesus and all that comes with Him: The Holy Spirit's indwelling power and guidance, forgiveness of sins, the presence of God with us, and eternity in Heaven.

9. What's one personal takeaway from today's study you can focus on applying in your life this week?