Grace Filled Instruments: Foster and Adoption Sunday

Primary Text: Ephesians 1:3–14

Main Idea: Those who have received God's grace in Christ become instruments of his compassion.[1]

Leader Preparation

Ephesians 1:3–14 begins with what God has done for us, not what we must accomplish for him. Pastor Matt traced our identity in Christ—chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, heirs, and sealed by the Spirit—and called us to respond through compassionate lives of worship. Before leading, ask God to make his grace fresh to you and reveal where comfort or fear limits your compassion. Lead from gratitude rather than guilt, remembering that foster care and adoption may touch deeply personal experiences within your group.

Suggested Group Flow

- Welcome and connection: 10 minutes
- Read Scripture: 5 minutes
- Read Together: Understanding the Passage: 10–15 minutes
- Discuss: 35–45 minutes
- Pray and identify next steps: 10 minutes

For a 75-minute gathering, use the shorter time ranges. For a 60-minute gathering, shorten connection and the read-together portion, and prioritize discussion questions that address your group's needs rather than rushing every response.

Read Together: Understanding the Passage

Introduction to the Passage

Near the beginning of his letter, Paul leads believers in praise for everything God has given them in Jesus Christ. Before explaining how Christians should live, he reminds them whose they are. Ephesians 1:3–14 is one extended sentence in the original language, overflowing with gratitude for God's saving work.

As you read, notice the repeated phrases "in Christ" and "in him." These blessings belong to those who have heard the gospel and believed in Jesus. Paul is describing more than a religious label or family background: he is describing a living relationship with Christ that reshapes our identity, our future, and our everyday choices.

Background and Key Insights

In Christ, we are chosen and adopted (verses 4–6). God's love did not begin when we became impressive or useful; he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. Adoption means that believers belong to God as his sons and daughters, with the welcome and inheritance that belonging brings. Our deepest identity rests not in who has overlooked us, but in the God who has made us his own.

In Christ, we are redeemed and forgiven (verses 7–10). Redemption carries the idea of release through the payment of a price. Our freedom came through Jesus' blood, not our ability to improve ourselves. Forgiveness flows from the riches of God's grace. Paul also places our salvation within God's larger purpose of bringing everything together in Christ: God's grace directs our attention beyond ourselves to his purposes.

In Christ, we have an inheritance and are sealed with the Holy Spirit (verses 11–14). The Spirit is God's promised presence and the down payment guaranteeing our inheritance. Our future with God is secure, and we are not abandoned in the present. That assurance enables obedience when compassion becomes costly. Paul repeatedly connects these blessings to the praise of God's glory: practical service can become worship that points people toward him.

The interview with Seth Morris of Baptist Children's Homes of North Carolina gave this compassion a local focus. Seth described children losing familiar relationships and routines, the importance of supporting foster families, and the goal of reunification with biological families when safe. Pastor Matt invited everyone to ask how God would have them engage—not necessarily by fostering, but by taking a meaningful part. Everyday Grace offers opportunities to serve at the foster closet on Saturdays from 9–10 a.m., wash and organize children's clothes, prepare frozen meals, provide support-group dinners, or

donate children's clothing, diapers, and wipes. Others may explore fostering, adoption, or becoming a guardian ad litem. These are concrete responses to grace, not ways to earn it.

Scriptures to Read Together

- Galatians 4:4–7 — God sent his Son to redeem us and bring us into his family, giving us the Spirit and the privilege of calling him Father.
- Ephesians 2:8–10 — Salvation is God's gift of grace, and good works are the resulting purpose of our new life in Christ.
- Romans 12:1 — Offering our lives to God in response to his mercy helps us understand practical, sacrificial service as worship.

Main Idea

Recipients of God's grace become instruments of his compassion. Because we belong to Christ, we can move toward others with love, trusting his Spirit and seeking his glory.

Reflection Question

Where have you grown comfortable receiving God's care while keeping someone else's needs at a safe distance?

Discussion Guide

Leader Insight 1: Let Grace Shape Your Identity

Paul begins with God's generosity, not a volunteer assignment. That order matters: serving to prove our worth makes compassion feel like another performance, while remembering our welcome in Christ frees us to love without earning recognition. Pastor Matt also asked us not to confuse a Christian upbringing or religious label with personally trusting Jesus. Make room for honest questions without requiring anyone to give a polished testimony. Keep the conversation anchored in what Christ has done rather than debates about what Paul does not explain here. Our purpose is to let these truths reshape how we live.

Discuss:
Which blessing in Ephesians 1:3–14 is hardest for you to live as though it is true, and how does that struggle show up in an ordinary week?

Leader: Read Galatians 4:4–7 for deeper understanding of the belonging and access to God that believers receive through Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. When you feel overlooked, inadequate, or unsuccessful, what do you usually do to regain a sense of worth, and how might being chosen in Christ change that response this week?
   Leader: Return to Ephesians 1:4–6 before inviting responses.

2. Because forgiveness in Christ is a gift rather than something we earn, where could you replace a scorekeeping attitude with patient compassion toward someone at home, at work, or in your neighborhood?
   Leader: Read Ephesians 4:32 for deeper understanding of how receiving God's forgiveness shapes our treatment of others.

3. What recurring habit in your calendar or spending makes it difficult to notice and respond to another person's needs, and what practical adjustment could make room for compassion?
   Leader: Read Romans 12:1 for deeper understanding of offering everyday life to God as worship.

4. Which friend, neighbor, or coworker could you intentionally spend time with this week, and how could you naturally connect your care for them with a brief story of God's grace in your life or an invitation to church?
   Leader: Read Colossians 4:5–6 for deeper understanding of wise, gracious engagement with people outside the faith.

5. After hearing the invitation to foster and adoption care, what specific part could you take through Everyday Grace or another opportunity named Sunday, and what first action will you take this week to explore or begin it?
   Leader: Read Ephesians 2:8–10 for deeper understanding of service as a response to grace rather than a way to earn God's acceptance.

Leader Insight 2: Compassion That Lasts

Seth reminded us that practical support helps foster parents give attention to children navigating significant loss. Pastor Matt connected that service to worship: a prepared meal or a bag of clean clothes can express gratitude to God and help another family persevere. Not everyone has the same calling, but everyone was invited to ask God how to engage. Avoid treating fostering or adoption as a measure of spiritual maturity, or portraying children and their families as projects. Encourage prayerful, informed

obedience and dependable support. The Spirit's presence gives us courage to take the next step without pretending the road will be easy.

Discuss:
What is one manageable way our group could share a recurring responsibility in foster-family support, and how could we keep that commitment from falling on the same one or two people?

Leader: Read Galatians 6:2 for deeper understanding of sharing burdens as an expression of Christlike love.

Prayer and Response

- Thank God for the grace he has given us in Christ: adoption, redemption, forgiveness, a secure inheritance, and the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for children in foster care, their biological families, foster and adoptive families, Baptist Children's Homes, and Everyday Grace—for safety, healing, endurance, and opportunities to know Jesus.
- Ask the Spirit to expose indifference and fear, deepen compassion, and open doors to serve others and speak naturally about Christ.

Give everyone a quiet moment to identify one obedient next step for this week. Make it concrete by completing this sentence: "Because of God's grace, I will _____ by _____, and I will ask _____ to follow up with me."

Close by praying for one another in pairs or groups of three.