

## **What Does It Mean To Be Part Of God's Family?**

### **Ephesians 1**

**Have you ever thought about how your family has shaped you? Good or bad.**

**Families are the foundation of Relationships.**

**Have you ever thought about how being part of God's family has shaped you?**

**What does it look like to be in God's family?**

**What Does The Bible Say?**

3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. (Ephesians 1:3 NLT)

**As a child of God, We have "all spiritual blessings."**

**Spiritual blessings can be translated as "all the blessings of the Spirit," referring to the Holy Spirit of God.**

“If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully keep all his commands that I am giving you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the world. 2 You will experience all these blessings if you obey the Lord your God: 3 Your towns and your fields will be blessed. 4 Your children and your crops will be blessed. The offspring of your herds and flocks will be blessed. 5 Your fruit baskets and breadboards will be blessed. 6 Wherever you go and whatever you do, you will be blessed. 7 “The Lord will conquer your enemies when they attack you. They will attack you from one direction, but they will scatter from you in seven! 8 “The Lord will guarantee a blessing on everything you do and will fill your storehouses with grain. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. 9 “If you obey the commands of the Lord your God and walk in his ways, the Lord will establish you as his holy people as he swore he would do. 10 Then all the nations

of the world will see that you are a people claimed by the Lord, and they will stand in awe of you. 11 “The Lord will give you prosperity in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you, blessing you with many children, numerous livestock, and abundant crops. (Deuteronomy 28:1–11 NLT)

**In the Old Testament, blessings were material.**

**In the New Testament, the blessings become spiritual, which is better.**

**Spiritual Blessing from God the Father (Ephesians 1:4–6)**

4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. (Ephesians 1:4 NLT)

**He chose us.**

5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he

wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. (Ephesians 1:5 NLT)

### **He adopted us.**

6 So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. (Ephesians 1:6 NLT)

### **He accepted us.**

### **Spiritual Blessing from God the Son (Ephesians 1:7–12).**

7 He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.

(Ephesians 1:7 NLT)

### **He bought us and forgave us.**

8 He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. 9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan.

10 And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring

everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. (Ephesians 1:8–10 NLT)

**He revealed God’s will to us.**

11 Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

12 God’s purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. (Ephesians 1:11–12 NLT)

**He made us an inheritance.**

**Spiritual Blessing from God the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14).**

13 And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. (Ephesians 1:13 NLT)

**He sealed us.**

## **How Can You Obey?**

14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

(Ephesians 1:14 NLT)

## **How are you praising and glorifying God?**

**You point people to His Kingdom, not yours.**

### **Additional Notes:**

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at [www.crosswaveschurch.com/host](http://www.crosswaveschurch.com/host). Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

### **Additional Notes:**

This week's Talking Theology is inspired from Philip Graham Ryken, *Written in Stone: The Ten Commandments and Today's Moral Crisis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2003), 107-116.

**Explore:**

Some scholars view this epistle as encyclical, a circular letter to be distributed to several undesignated local churches in the province of Asia or some other area. This is supported by two observations: (1) the words "in Ephesus" (1:1) do not appear in three early Alexandrian Greek manuscripts, and (2) it is strange for Paul not to mention by name any of the individuals in a church where he had lived and worked for three years (Acts 20:31).

Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F.

Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 613.

## **Explore:**

Ephesus was a leading center in the Roman Empire. Paul had spent a short time in Ephesus on his way back to Antioch from his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19–22). On his third missionary journey he stayed in Ephesus three years (Acts 20:31). Several remarkable things happened in Ephesus. Paul baptized a dozen of John the Baptist’s followers (Acts 19:1–7). He had discussions in the hall of Tyrannus (19:8–10). Unusual miracles occurred (19:11–12), strange events took place (19:13–16), sorcerers were converted (19:17–20), and the city rioted over silversmith Demetrius’ loss of business because of people who turned to Christ from worshiping the great Ephesian goddess Artemis (19:23–41). On Paul’s return to Jerusalem from his third missionary journey he gave a moving farewell address to the Ephesian elders at the coastal town of Miletus



(20:13–35). That was his last time to see them (20:36–38), unless Paul visited Ephesus after he was in Rome (cf. 1 Tim. 1:3 with 3:14).

Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 613–614.

### **Explore:**

Since Ephesians gives no hint of his release from prison, as do Philippians (1:19–26) and Philemon (v. 22), it is reasonable to think that he wrote it in the early part of his stay, or about a.d. 60. This would have been when Paul was kept under guard in rental quarters (Acts 28:30). Following his release he traveled, wrote 1 Timothy and Titus, was arrested again, wrote 2 Timothy, and was martyred in Rome.

Harold W. Hoehner, "Ephesians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 614.

### **Explore:**

On the return from his third missionary journey Paul told the Ephesian elders at Miletus (a.d. 57) to beware of evil teachers from without and of professing believers within who would teach perverse things (Acts 20:29–30). From Revelation one can see that the Ephesian church had succeeded in keeping out the false teachers (Rev. 2:2) but had failed to maintain the vibrancy of their first love for Christ (Rev. 2:4). This is substantiated in 1 Timothy 1:5, when Paul wrote from Macedonia to Timothy at Ephesus (ca a.d. 62) that the goal of his instruction was "love which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a

sincere faith.” Thus the theme of love needed to be stressed for the saints at Ephesus.

Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F.

Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 614.

### **Explore:**

Pagan deities were marked by supposed great power, moral imperfection (to say the least!), and inscrutable, arbitrary decisions about who would obtain their favor. Jehovah God is not at all like such false gods. His power is great, yes, but He exercises it with absolute moral perfection. He is not arbitrary in His determination of who will and will not receive His favor. It has been determined since . . . forever! Those who through faith are in Christ will receive with Jesus the full inheritance reserved

for the sons (legal heirs) of God. Nor will God capriciously change His mind on this as the pagan deities so often were said to do. The Holy Spirit Himself acts as the seal, the guarantee that God will keep His word.

**Explore:**

Like a boa constrictor, sin binds people more and more tightly until their hearts no longer beat. Our debt was the required separation from God, to suffer His wrath and live without Him. Jesus took on that debt in our place, on the cross. God's store of grace is unlimited. He has poured it out extravagantly on us. His bucket of grace will never run dry. He can pour it over us for as long as He needs to.

**Explore:**

Redemption refers to a special kind of purchase. In the Bible, it often refers to purchasing the freedom of another who is either

enslaved or constrained in some special way. For instance, Boaz redeemed the family of his relative, Elimelech. That family had been reduced to just two widows, Naomi, and her daughter-in-law Ruth. Elimelech's land had been tied up in debt. Boaz redeemed the land, taking on the liability that came with it. In our case, we have become constrained and indebted by our captivity to sin.

**Explore:**

Paul's reference to predestination often provokes needless and fruitless quarrels. Many Christians believe Paul meant that from eternity past, God chose in advance who would be saved and who would be lost. His choice, they say, involved nothing more than the mystery of His own will. However, if that interpretation is valid, what then are we to make of the Bible's teaching that God loved the world so much that He gave Jesus to save whosoever believed (John 3:16)? Other Christians believe that

God's predestination involved adopting as "sons" (adult heirs) those who are in Christ—believers. In this interpretation predestination does not determine who would believe and who would not. Instead it was a pre-destination that all who believed would become part of God's marvelous family (Romans 8:17). God knew in eternity past who would believe and who would not. That is not the same thing as to claim that God determined in eternity past who would believe and who would not. We are wise to stay within the bounds of what Scripture says: that God determined long before this world was made that belief in Christ would be the key to the salvation He intended to bring about. The duty of faithful mature believers on both sides is to speak the truth in love and to treat those with another viewpoint as Christian brothers and sisters.

**Explore:**

It is through the Church that the great spiritual truth, power, and reality of the gospel break out into this world. The Church lives in the hope of God's promise. By definition, that means the Church will have difficult times, for it is only in difficult times that people need hope. We will not understand true hope without difficulty. The Church will often incur the suspicion, jealousy, or wrath of the world's powers. What those powers do not know, however, is that their opposition to the Church is opposition to Christ, its head.

**Explore:**

Scholars estimate that Ephesus had a population of around 200,000 people. It began as a seaport on the Aegean Sea, but silt from its river—the Cayster—built up such that by Paul's day it was on the river a modest distance from the sea itself. It was already 1,000 years old when Paul brought the gospel. The

Roman emperor Augustus had honored Ephesus as the primary Roman city of the region—today's Turkey, but then known as Asia (Minor).

In the Greek manuscripts, verses 3-14 form one long sentence! Translators face the task of how to take all the clauses and phrases and fit them into English (or Spanish, Japanese, etc.) modes of expression.

**Believers Enjoy Spiritual Blessings That Include Adoption Into God's Family, Forgiveness of Sins, and an Eternal Inheritance (Ephesians 1:3-14)**

Paul believed it is natural for believers to praise God because He has blessed us so richly in Christ (verse 3). Those blessings are spiritual—they last forever, never fading over time. They are in heavenly places—high above this world, unconstrained by politics, history, or geography.



God predestined us for adoption as sons (verses 4-5). God's blessing is unearned. God arranged it before the world began. That timeless choice carried a focus: we are to live life holy and blameless before God (verse 4). In the Roman culture, only adult sons were legal heirs. Paul extended this status to all believers, regardless of age, gender, or ethnicity.

Christ, the Son of God, was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. God chose to place those who are in Christ, who believe in Him, into His own family (verse 5). That is another way to describe salvation, and it is according to God's will and purposes. Again, the focus is outside of us. It is to the glory of our gracious God (verse 6).

The plan of salvation we find in the Bible is not the invention of modern day preachers and evangelists. It was God's idea. Even before the world began, God had determined that those who believe in Christ, all of them, become children of God. They do

not see to their own salvation—indeed we will later see how they have no contribution to make. They need only believe, the condition established by God.

Paul began to speak in verse 7 of another blessing we have in Christ. This blessing involves how God has redeemed us. We can perhaps understand more easily if we take his thoughts in reverse order, starting with a conclusion:

- Verse 10: The arrival of sin in this world began causing division, and humanity has been dividing ever since. God's plan for His creation is to re-unite that which sin has divided and broken, whether in Heaven or on earth.
- Verse 9: God has not hidden that plan from us. Instead, He has revealed it to us in Christ. Without Christ, we cannot understand God's ultimate purpose for human history.
- Verse 8: With all wisdom and insight, God has poured out something upon us.

- Verse 7: What He poured out is redemption and the forgiveness of our sin.

The spiritual blessings God has poured out over us relate directly to God's plan to unite all things in Christ on earth and in Heaven. How could we compare such blessing to any material blessing! Our salvation is much more than a personal experience of some kind of celestial fire insurance. It involves our participation in God's marvelous plan for the ages, known only to those in Christ.

Another blessing for believers is inheritance. Jesus was the Son of God. Sons are heirs to what belongs to their father. Jesus is heir to all that belongs to God the Father, which means everything. In Christ, we get an inheritance as well (verse 11). God determined before human history began that those who would come to Him in Christ, would be treated as co-heirs with Him. God's purpose was to redeem mankind, to heal the breach

brought by sin. His way to accomplish that was to send Messiah and to redeem those who would trust in Him.

We who were the first likely refers to the Jews. God entered into a covenant with Abraham long before Messiah sent out His followers to the ends of the earth. The Jews' hope in their coming Messiah was to be for God's glory, not their own (verse 12).

In verse 13, Paul turned from the Jewish believers to the Gentile believers of the congregation: you too, through belief in Christ, received the same promised Holy Spirit. God's church has no second-class or associate members. And what of this Holy Spirit (verse 14)? He is the guarantee of our awaited inheritance. Think of a down payment or the earnest money that a homebuyer will deposit when offering to purchase a home. Our full inheritance is yet to come. In the meantime, we know it will come because of God's deposit of the Holy Spirit and all He brings to our

lives. Again, this is not primarily for our own personal benefit. It is to the praise of God's glory!

To the praise of his glory—Paul repeats this phrase frequently in these verses, and we can understand the phrase in various ways.

We can take it as the praise we direct toward God and His glory.

We praise God's glory, in other words. We could also take it in

the sense of the praise that belongs to His glory. His glory is

such that it will engender or bring about praise, as when Jesus

mentioned how the stones would cry out if the children kept

silent (Luke 19:40). Or, we could take it as the praise that is His

glory—praise is the glory of God. This is fitting for believers in

a world given over to refusing to praise God.

**Explore:**

**Believers Pray for Themselves, and Others, to Have Spiritual**

**Insight to Know God More Fully and Deeply (Ephesians**

**1:15-23)**

In verse 15, Paul turned to his specific prayer for the believers in Ephesus (verses 15-16). His prayer contained thanksgiving, as well as requests for the Ephesians' spiritual growth. Let us look at a brief list of what he prayed for:

- That they would be given a spirit of wisdom and revelation (verse 17): That God would help them know Him better by giving them wisdom and understanding through His Spirit.
- That their hearts would be enlightened (spiritual sight) so they would know the hope of certain victory and glory to which they had been called (verse 18a), the great value God places on those whom He has redeemed (verse 18b), and the unlimited greatness of God's power that works on our behalf (verse 19).

This power raised Christ from the dead and re- turned Him to Heaven (verse 20). Christ is above all things—every nation, empire, political or economic theory—in all of human history past, present, and future (verse 21). Christ is over all and is the head of His body, the Church (verses 22-23).

Jesus, the all-powerful Messiah, suffered mercilessly at the hands of sinners, but rose from the dead, and will reign supreme. His body, the Church, often suffers in similar ways, but God's promised inheritance is as sure as Christ's resurrection.

**Explore:**

Paul writes several of his letters from prison. Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon all seem to have been written in these circumstances. We know from the book of Acts that Paul is in prison in Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:27) and, later, under house arrest in Rome. The most popular theory is

that Paul writes these letters from Rome, while he is waiting to be tried before Emperor Nero. This is in the years between ad 60 and 62.

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all those who came to see him. Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 28:30–31).

Andrew Knowles, *The Bible Guide*, 1st Augsburg books ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 614.

### **Explore:**

We should also note that the Letter to the Ephesians is compellingly ecumenical and catholic in the primary sense of these words. The designation “in Ephesus” is not in the earliest manuscripts, and we conclude that it was a circular letter meant



for all the churches in Asia Minor. Thus, its ecumenical message is for the Church everywhere and in every age: namely, that Christ reconciles all races and cultures by bringing them to himself and making them one with him and with one another. It is a message of unity, a message for the Church, and a message for a fragmented, war-torn world.

The structure of the book is typically Pauline: first Paul states the doctrine (chapters 1–3), then he states the duty (chapters 4–6). The duty section ends with a description of spiritual battle, so some like to divide it in two. Thus the book can be given an easy-to-remember division such as:

The wealth (1–3), walk (4–5), warfare (6:10f)

Or,

sit (1–3), walk (4–5), stand (6:10f)

The opening verses of Ephesians are a “Celebration of Blessing.” The mood is exuberant joy. Paul buoyantly begins a

song (modeled on the Hebrew berakhah or blessing song) celebrating God's work in bringing us salvation. In quick order Paul celebrates himself, the saints, their God, and their blessings.

R. Kent Hughes, *Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1990), 16–17.

**Explore:**

**KEY TRUTHS:**

1. Believers Enjoy Spiritual Blessings That Include Adoption Into God's Family, Forgiveness of Sins, and an Eternal Inheritance.

2. Believers Pray for Themselves, and Others, to Have Spiritual Insight to Know God More Fully and Deeply.

## **HOW IT FITS: Where This Lesson Fits in the Story of the**

**Bible:** Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians while under house arrest in Rome around AD 61 or 62. In this section of the letter, Paul wrote about the great blessings believers enjoy in Christ and about his prayers for the Ephesian believers.

### **Explore:**

Christianity is about more than going to church and living a good moral life. Being a Christian is about having a vibrant personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Every Sunday School teacher or Bible study leader should want to see each of his or her learners enter into this relationship—their eternal destiny depends on it. As you work toward this goal, keep the following in mind:

Following Christ is about more than a mere decision; it is about a lifelong relationship. Jesus called us to make disciples, not mere decision-makers. Aim for long-term faith, not momentary

emotion.

Salvation is a matter of grace, not works. Our works do not save us (Ephesians 2:8-9), nor do they keep us (Galatians 3:2-6).

Good works are a product of salvation, not a prerequisite to it.

Don't confuse sanctification with salvation. Holiness follows salvation; it doesn't precede it. Don't try to impose "Christian" expectations on men and women who don't know Christ.

- Keep it simple. Being born again is not complicated. Here's a simple way to explain it:

- Acknowledge your sinfulness and your need for a Savior (Romans 3:10, 23).

- Trust in Christ's sacrifice for your sins and in His resurrection (Romans 10:9-10).

Surrender your life to God's transforming power (Romans 12:1-2).

Most of all, remember that your job is to tell the truth in a way others can understand, answer their questions, and give them an opportunity to respond. If you do that faithfully, some will respond and join the band of Christ-followers. When they do, Heaven will rejoice!

### **Question 1 of 5**

What practical ways can you honor a Sabbath resting day without becoming legalistic about it? Are there attitudes,

focuses, or activities that you need to work on changing to better honor the Sabbath resting day?

### **Question 2 of 5**

Discuss how inheritance can be a great blessing, but also how it can cause conflict within families.

### **Question 3 of 5**

What does it mean that we have been adopted into God's family through faith in Christ?

### **Question 4 of 5**

What kind of inheritance do we have because of being part of God's family?

### **Question 5 of 5**

How should we live in response to what is waiting for us when we are with Christ forever?