

## Welcome to Ephesians:

It is such a joy to be sharing in this wonderful book together! This isn't the longest or fullest of Paul's writings, but it offers a breathtaking view of the entire landscape of Christian living. We get a bird's eye view of God, the world, the Church, Jesus, the means of salvation, Christian behavior, marriage, the family, and spiritual warfare. It's truly a breathtaking book when studied.

One of the challenges with taking a book so rich in content is that I cannot cover everything in a 40min message. This is where community groups become vital in the process of "digging deeper." The questions that will accompany my sermons should act as a guide or reference to fostering deeper conversation and greater insights in relation to my message. However, be attentive and open to other topics and areas of discussion that may arise (which may not have been covered in the message). May God bless you and encourage you and your group as you dive into God's word together!

Feel no pressure to answer every question, like on a test. Remember *transformation*, not *information* is always the goal.

### Ephesians 1:1-14 Study questions:

All of us at some point in time have asked the question, "Who Am I?" It was no different for the early church. The early church lived surrounded by a society that gave them every opportunity to be everything other than who God says they are, and that continues to this day. Deep down, we all have a yearning, and want to know who we really are; so we naturally begin to define ourselves based on a job or lack of work, on great achievements or personal failures, on marital status, or family ties. And when that doesn't cut it, we look to gifts and talents, personality tests, social media and more to tell us who we are. At the end of the day, these descriptors never fully grasp the deepest truths about ourselves. In other words, as much as those things may be true about us, they do not accurately define our real identities.

Paul writes this letter to remind believers, then and now, of who they are in Christ. This is our true identity. Our identity based on what Christ says, should inform and shape every aspect of their lives- past, present, and future. Paul writes to the church at Ephesus to show how Jesus' work on the cross should permeate their everyday lives, changing how they serve and love one another despite their differences. He reminds them of who they are: loved (1:4), chosen (1:4,11), adopted (1:5), redeemed and forgiven (1:7), lavished with wisdom and understanding (1:8) included, marked and sealed (1:13), through what God has done for them. Discovering and embracing this profound grace, truth, and hope helps us live more fully as people who are radically loved by God. THIS IS WHO WE ARE!

Icebreaker: If someone asked you to define or describe yourself in 30 seconds or less, what would you say?

1. What stands out to you in Ephesians 1:1-14? (*There is no pressure to answer difficult questions that come up from reading the passage right now. [i.e.*

*Predestination, election, free-will etc...]* Simply take time as a group to observe the text together.)

2. Ephesians 1:3 is the theme of the book. It describes the believer's wealth in Christ. (Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.) What feelings does that evoke in relation to how you are living life versus how you could be living life?
3. What is society's view of how we should identify or define ourselves?
4. What does this text reveal about our identity in Christ?
5. How do you feel knowing that as believers, we are: Favored v.3. We are chosen v.4. We are adopted vv.5-6. We are redeemed v.7-8. We are enlightened. vv.9-10. We are wealthy vv.11-12. We are sealed v.13-14?
6. What are some barriers in your life that keep you from believing what Jesus has said about you?
7. What are some common patterns that take place when we forget our identity in Christ?
8. What might look different in your life if you were living out of your true identity in Christ?

Digging deeper/Personal reflection: Considering this passage, what does it mean to "bring glory to God" through this passage?