

Ephesians – Week 2 – Predestinated – Bible Study Helps

Title: Predestination: The Believer's Destiny in Christ

Sermon Summary: This sermon provides an in-depth exploration of Ephesians chapter 1, focusing on the biblical concept of predestination and God's eternal plan established before the foundation of the world. It emphasizes that God, being omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, knew the entire story of human history before creation began. The sermon clarifies that predestination refers not to God arbitrarily selecting individuals for salvation, but rather to the predetermined destiny and blessings awaiting all who choose to trust in Jesus Christ. Before the world was created, God planned that Jesus would be the chosen Redeemer, and all believers placed "in Christ" would receive adoption, forgiveness, redemption, the Holy Spirit, and eternal inheritance. The message stresses the importance of proper biblical interpretation through comparing Scripture with Scripture, maintaining context, and allowing the Holy Spirit to illuminate truth. Ultimately, salvation is available to all through free will choice, and God receives all the glory for this magnificent plan that spans from eternity past to eternity future.

Key Points:

- God is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omnipresent (all-present), inhabiting eternity outside of time
- God sees the beginning, middle, and end of history simultaneously, knowing all things in advance
- Before the foundation of the world, God established an eternal plan of redemption
- Jesus Christ was chosen, appointed, and ordained as the Lamb of God before creation began
- Predestination refers to the destiny of believers, not the arbitrary selection of who will believe
- All who trust Jesus Christ are placed "in Him" and receive all spiritual blessings
- Believers are predestinated unto adoption as children of God with full inheritance rights
- The plan includes forgiveness, redemption, acceptance, the Holy Spirit, and eternal inheritance
- God gives humanity free will to choose, making moral responsibility and judgment possible
- Salvation is available to all people—"whosoever" will believe can be saved
- The Godhead's roles: Father planned it, Son achieved it, Holy Spirit sealed it
- Proper Bible study requires understanding context, comparing Scripture with Scripture, and being willing to change beliefs when they contradict Scripture

Scripture Reference:

- Ephesians 1:1-14 (primary focus)

Ephesians – Week 2 – Predestinated – Bible Study Helps

- Psalm 147:4-5 (God's infinite understanding)
- Isaiah 46:9-11 (God declaring the end from the beginning)
- Isaiah 57:15 (God inhabiting eternity)
- Psalm 90:1-2 (God's eternal nature)
- Matthew 13:35 (secrets kept from the foundation of the world)
- Matthew 25:34 (kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world)
- Luke 11:49-50 (blood of prophets shed from foundation of the world)
- John 17:24 (Father's love before the foundation of the world)
- 1 Peter 1:18-20 (Christ foreordained before the foundation of the world)
- Revelation 13:8 (Lamb slain from the foundation of the world)
- Revelation 17:8 (names written in book of life from foundation of the world)
- Acts 2:22-23 (Jesus delivered by God's determinate counsel and foreknowledge)
- Romans 11:2 (God foreknew His people Israel)
- John 3:16 (God's love for the world—whosoever believes)
- 1 Timothy 2:4 (God will have all to be saved)
- 2 Peter 3:9 (not willing that any should perish)

Stories:

- People who trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Saviour enter into God's eternal plan
- Reference to growing up in a Mormon church and needing to align beliefs with what the Bible actually teaches
- Illustration of an architect creating detailed blueprints before construction begins, comparing this to God's eternal plan established before creation
- Illustration of reading a book one page at a time versus God seeing the entire book (beginning, middle, and end) simultaneously
- Reference to the church at Ephesus from the book of Acts through Revelation, noting how they were "fully purposed" but later left their first love
- Comparison of pagan gods that people carry versus the living God who carries us (from Isaiah 46)

Ephesians – Week 2 – Predestinated – Bible Study Helps

Discipleship Questions

How does understanding God as all-knowing and inhabiting eternity change the way you view your daily choices and struggles?

If God sees the beginning, middle, and end of history all at once, how does this affect your understanding of prayer and God's response to your needs?

What does it mean that the church was chosen 'in Christ' before the foundation of the world, and how does this differ from the false teaching that individuals are selected to salvation or damnation?

How does the concept that Jesus was foreordained as the Lamb slain before creation impact your appreciation of the cross?

In what ways does the doctrine of adoption into God's family give you confidence about your eternal security and identity?

How should the truth that God predetermined the destiny of believers, not who would believe, influence the way we share the gospel?

What does it reveal about God's character that He gave humanity free will knowing they would sin and require redemption?

How can we guard against leaving our first love like the Ephesian church did, especially when we grow in doctrinal knowledge?

If all spiritual blessings are already ours in Christ, why do believers often live as though they are still striving to earn God's favor?

What practical steps can you take to align your beliefs with what Scripture actually says rather than what you have been taught by others?

Small Group Guide: Predestinated

Ephesians 1:1-14

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by asking God to illuminate His Word and help everyone understand the profound truths about His eternal plan.

Ice Breaker (5-10 minutes)

- What's something you've carefully planned in advance that turned out exactly as you hoped?
 - How does it feel when a plan comes together perfectly?
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Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. God is Omniscient and Eternal

- God knows all things—past, present, and future simultaneously
- He inhabits eternity and exists outside of time
- Before creation began, God already knew the entire story of human history

2. God's Eternal Plan Was Established Before Creation

- Jesus Christ was chosen as the Lamb of God before the foundation of the world
- The cross was not a "Plan B" response to sin—it was always God's plan
- God predetermined what believers would become, not who would believe

3. Predestination Refers to Our Destiny, Not Our Selection

- Predestination describes what happens to those who trust Christ
 - It means believers are destined for: adoption, forgiveness, redemption, inheritance, and acceptance
 - God offers salvation to "whosoever will"—the choice is ours
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Discussion Questions

Ephesians – Week 2 – Predestinated – Bible Study Helps

Understanding God's Nature (15 minutes)

1. **Read Psalm 90:1-2 and Isaiah 46:9-10.** How does understanding that God is all-knowing and eternal change the way you view your current circumstances?
2. "God sees the entire timeline of history at once." How is this different from how we typically think about God? What difference does this make?
3. Why is it important that God takes counsel only with Himself (Ephesians 1:11)? How does this bring you comfort or challenge you?

Exploring "Before the Foundation of the World" (20 minutes)

4. **Review the ten times "foundation of the world" references in Scripture** (as listed in the sermon). What patterns do you notice? What does this reveal about God's planning?
5. **Read 1 Peter 1:18-20.** Jesus was "foreordained before the foundation of the world." What does this tell us about how seriously God takes our salvation?
6. The cross was not a response to a surprise. Why do you think people sometimes view it that way? How does knowing it was planned from the beginning affect your appreciation of what Christ did?

Understanding Predestination (20 minutes)

7. **Read Ephesians 1:4-5 carefully.** According to the passage, who is "chosen"? (Note: "us in Him" - believers in Christ)
8. The sermon distinguished between:
 - o God choosing WHO would believe (an error not taught in this passage)
 - o God choosing WHAT believers would become (adoption, holiness, etc.)

Why is this distinction important?

9. **Read John 3:16, 1 Timothy 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9, and Romans 10:13.** How do these "whosoever will" passages help us understand God's heart and the role of human choice?

Personal Application (15 minutes)

10. **Read Ephesians 1:3-14 again as a group.** Make a list of all the spiritual blessings believers have "in Christ." Which of these blessings means the most to you personally right now? Why?
 11. The sermon mentioned the "attitude factor"—being ready to change what you've believed when it contradicts Scripture. Has this sermon challenged any previous understanding you had? How so?
 12. Knowing that God planned your salvation before the world began, how should this affect:
 - o Your security in Christ?
 - o Your daily walk with God?
 - o Your urgency in sharing the gospel?
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to practice this week:

1. **Meditation Exercise:** Each day this week, read Ephesians 1:3-14 and thank God for one specific spiritual blessing mentioned in the passage. Journal about what that blessing means to you.
 2. **Share Your Story:** Salvation is available to "whosoever will." Identify one person in your life who needs to hear the gospel and pray daily for an opportunity to share with them.
 3. **Study Deeper:** Use the "comparison factor" from the sermon. Pick one phrase from Ephesians 1 (like "in Christ" or "according to His will") and search for it throughout Scripture. Write down what you learn.
 4. **Worship Response:** Ephesians 1 repeatedly says things happen "to the praise of His glory." Spend time this week worshipping God specifically for His eternal plan and perfect foreknowledge.
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Memory Verse

Ephesians 1:4-5 *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."*

Prayer Requests and Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

- Share prayer requests related to today's discussion
 - Pray for group members who may be struggling with assurance of salvation
 - Pray for unsaved loved ones, that they would choose Christ
 - Thank God for His eternal plan and the security we have in Christ
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Leader Notes

Key Points to Emphasize:

- Context is crucial—Ephesians 1 is written to believers about their blessings in Christ
- Predestination describes our destiny (what we become), not arbitrary selection

Ephesians – Week 2 – Predestinated – Bible Study Helps

- God's foreknowledge doesn't negate human responsibility and choice
- The entire passage points to God's glory, not our merit

Potential Challenges:

- Some group members may have been taught that predestination means God chooses who will be saved and who won't be. Gently redirect to what the text actually says and use the clear "whosoever will" passages.
- This is deep theology—be patient and use the "comparing Scripture with Scripture" method
- Keep the focus on the wonder of God's plan rather than getting lost in debate

Resources for Further Study:

- Encourage group members to listen to the "How to Study the Bible" series mentioned in the sermon
- Suggest studying all the "in Christ" passages in Ephesians
- Recommend tracing the phrase "before the foundation of the world" through all ten occurrences

Next Week's Preparation

Read Ephesians 1:5-6 in advance and consider: What does it mean to be adopted into God's family? What rights and privileges come with this adoption?

5-Day Devotional: God's Eternal Plan

Day 1: Before the Foundation of the World

Reading: Ephesians 1:3-6

Devotional: Before God spoke creation into existence, He already had you in mind. The architect of the universe designed a redemption plan knowing every choice you would make. This isn't about losing your freedom—it's about God's incredible foreknowledge and love. He saw the entire timeline of history at once and chose Jesus as the answer to humanity's greatest problem. When you trusted Christ, you stepped into an eternal plan prepared before time began. Today, let this truth settle deep: your salvation wasn't an afterthought or emergency response. The Church was chosen in Christ before the mountains were formed, destined for adoption, acceptance, and eternal glory.

Day 2: The Chosen One

Reading: 1 Peter 1:18-20; Isaiah 42:1-9

Devotional: Jesus Christ was foreordained before the foundation of the world—the Lamb slain before history began. God knew humanity would need a Savior, so He appointed His Son as the hero of redemption's story. The prophets spoke of this Chosen One, the Messiah who would bring light to darkness and freedom to captives. When Jesus walked the earth, the Father declared, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Every prophecy, every promise pointed to Him. Your salvation rests not on your worthiness but on His perfect sacrifice. Today, worship the Chosen One who was selected in eternity to rescue you in time. Let gratitude fill your heart for the Hero who never fails.

Day 3: Predestined for Adoption

Reading: Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:14-17

Devotional: God didn't just plan to forgive sinners—He predestined for those who trusted Christ to be adopted into His family. In Roman culture, adoption granted full legal rights, permanent family status, and complete inheritance privileges. This is what God offers every believer. Before creation, He determined that those who trust Jesus would become sons and daughters with full access to His presence, His promises, and His power. You're not a second-class citizen in God's kingdom; you're an heir with Christ. The Holy Spirit confirms this reality, calling you to live worthy of your family name. Today, embrace your identity as God's adopted child. Let this truth transform how you pray, how you face challenges, and how you view your future. You belong to the King.

Day 4: Sealed by the Holy Spirit

Reading: Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

Devotional: The moment you believed, God sealed you with His Holy Spirit—the guarantee of your inheritance. The Father planned redemption, the Son achieved it through the cross, and the Spirit secures it in your life. This divine seal is God's promise that what He started, He will finish. You're not holding onto God by your strength; He's holding you by His. The Holy Spirit is the down payment, the earnest, assuring you that complete redemption is coming. When doubts arise or circumstances overwhelm, remember: you are sealed until the day of redemption. Today, thank God for the Trinity's involvement in your salvation. Walk confidently knowing the Spirit within you is proof of God's eternal commitment to you.

Day 5: Choose This Day

Reading: Joshua 24:14-15; Romans 10:9-13

Devotional: God's eternal plan includes your free will. He gives every person the choice to accept or reject His offer of salvation. The Bible declares "whosoever" can be saved—an invitation extended to all humanity. God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. If you've trusted Christ, recognize the weight of your decision and live accordingly. Share this good news with others who need to hear. If you haven't made this choice, today is your opportunity. Don't presume on tomorrow. The cross was planned before creation, history is unfolding exactly as God ordained, and we're living at the end of the church age. Choose Jesus Christ today. Call upon His name. Enter the eternal plan prepared specifically for those who believe.

Reflection Question for the Week: How does understanding God's plan for redemption before creation change the way you view your daily struggles and your eternal security?