

DON'T WASTE YOUR LIFE



A study in Ephesians

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DON'T WASTE THE GREETING

Ephesians 1:1-2

MAIN POINT

Christ gives his church its deepest identity. So Paul doesn't begin with our actions, but God's. Acknowledging his apostleship and our sainthood is received, not merited.

TEXT

1. How does Paul describe his calling in verse 1? What does the phrase "by the will of God" tell us about the source of his authority and how should that affect how we read his letters, like Ephesians?

(Leader help: Paul affirms his authority is from God alone. This means that Ephesians is not opinion, but a message whose author is ultimately God.)

2. What two words does Paul use to identify the Christians in Ephesus? Why are those words significant? What do they mean for the Christian?

(Leader help: "Saints" describes people God has set apart as his own. "Faithful" is not a metric, but a descriptive word of what naturally proceeds from faith.)

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3. Read Acts 19:17-20. What did following Christ cost some of the believers in Ephesus? How does that background add weight to Paul calling them saints and faithful?

(Leader help: Ephesian Christians not only publicly confessed Christ, but they gave up their books of magic. This no doubt had cultural, identity, and even financial impact.)

APPLICATION

1. What labels do you find people around you seem to identify most with? What labels do people use to express their value and worth?
2. How should being “in Christ” shape how we react to failure or success?
3. How can we be aware, and recognize, when secondary identities like careers, family, politics, or achievements have begun to compete with our identity in Christ? What would that look like and what should be our response?

PRAYER

Praise God that our ultimate value is given to us by Him. That He calls us saints and faithful through being in Christ.



Pray that God would help us to live our lives from a place of being “in Christ” rather than trying to prove ourselves through some other identity.

Confess the labels or identities that have competed with simply belonging to Christ.

BLESSED BEFORE YOU BEGAN

Ephesians 1:3-6

MAIN POINT

The Father has chosen to bless his children with every spiritual blessing from before the foundation of the world and predestined them for adoption through Jesus Christ, so that their holiness and praise all rest on his gracious will.

TEXT

1. In verse 3, who is the source of every spiritual blessing, where are these blessings found, and how many has God given his people?

(Leader help: God the Father is the source of every spiritual blessing, and every spiritual blessing is given "in Christ." Paul describes these blessings as belonging to the heavenly places. The verse calls believers to praise because God has already acted generously toward them.)

2. According to verse 4, when did God choose his people, and what purpose does Paul give for that choice?

(Leader help: God's choice took place before the foundation of the world, before anyone could earn or achieve it. He chose his people in Christ to be holy

and blameless before him.)

3. Read Galatians 4:4-7 and John 1:12-13. What does adoption give to those who are in Christ? How does this help us understand the adoption described in Ephesians 1:5?

(Leader help: Adoption makes believers children of God and co-heirs with Christ. Ephesians makes it clear that adoption and election are a loving act of God the Father for our God and His glory.)

APPLICATION

1. What do people commonly point to as evidence that their life is blessed? How does this contrast with what we receive in Christ?
2. Do you find yourself resting in the completed work of Christ or wrestling with your own performance for assurance that you've been adopted?
3. God's choice has sometimes become a source of pride for some people and fear for others. How do the purposes named in this passage (holiness, adoption, and the praise of grace) correct both responses?

PRAYER

Praise the Father for choosing his people in Christ, adopting them through Jesus, and giving every spiritual blessing needed for life with him. Be specific about the blessings you're thankful for and even the ones you may neglect.

Pray that God would give you true assurance of your salvation and form the holy life for which he chose you.

Confess the ways you have tried to earn God's favor, manufacture your own worth, or use grace as an excuse to resist holiness.



REDEEMED IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:7-10

MAIN POINT

Through Christ's blood, God gives believers redemption and forgiveness according to the riches of his grace. God's purpose is to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under Christ.

TEXT

1. According to verse 7, what do believers possess in Christ, what did it cost, and what does it accomplish?

(Leader help: The cost of redemption was the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus secured our release through his blood. In that, believers possess forgiveness of sins, not as something we could earn, but as something we receive.)

2. What is the mystery of God's will in verses 9-10? What does the phrase "all things in heaven and things on earth" reveal about Christ's role in God's eternal plan?

(Leader help: The mystery is God's previously hidden purpose, now revealed in Christ. At the fullness of



time, God will unite all things in him. Christ is therefore the center of God's plan for creation and history, not only the answer to personal sin.)

3. Read Colossians 1:15-20. How does this passage help explain what it means for all things to be brought together in Christ?

(Leader help: Colossians presents Christ as the one through whom, and for whom, all things were created, the head of the church, and the one through whom God reconciles all things by the blood of his cross. This gives a rich description that everything will find its proper unity and head in Christ.)

APPLICATION

1. Where do people look for relief from guilt, shame, or for a fresh start apart from Christ? What is the result of looking to those things?
2. If God's purpose is to bring all things together under Christ, what areas of life are Christians most tempted to keep outside his rule? Can we separate receiving Christ's forgiveness from submitting to his lordship? Why or why not?
3. What role should Christians play in seeking the good of our communities and shaping the culture around us? Is there a line between

faithful Christian influence and attempting to bring all things under Christ through our own efforts?

PRAYER

Praise God for giving his Son to redeem his people and praise God for lavishing the riches of Christ upon us.

Pray that God would bring your priorities, relationships, plans, and desires in submission to Christ.

Confess the ways you have reduced forgiveness to relief from guilt while resisting Christ's authority over parts of your life.



SEALED FOR THE INHERITANCE

Ephesians 1:11-14

MAIN POINT

Paul tells us that salvation is a triune act of God. The plan of salvation was not a secondary thought, but an intentional and purposeful one. God not only initiates this plan, but he accomplishes and secures it for His people.

TEXT

1. What does verse 11 say about God's purpose and his ability to accomplish it? How does this give confidence concerning the inheritance believers have in Christ?
2. Compare "we who were the first to hope in Christ" in verse 12 with "you also" in verse 13. What shared experience brings these believers into one people of praise?

(Leader help: Paul implies that while Jewish believers were the first to receive and believe the gospel, non-Jewish believers are also brought into the people of God through the same faith. Emphasizing one people of God, all saved by grace through faith.)



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3. Read 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. What do the images of a seal and a guarantee communicate about the Holy Spirit's work in believers?

(*Leader help:* A seal marks ownership and confirms authenticity. A guarantee, deposit, or down payment is the first portion that assures the rest will follow. The Spirit's presence marks believers as God's people and assures them that God will complete the redemption he promised.)

APPLICATION

1. What do people most often depend on to feel secure about the future?
2. How should the Holy Spirit's seal and guarantee affect the way a Christian responds to uncertainty, fear, or a lack of control?
3. If believers are sealed by the Spirit, does assurance make *how* we live our lives less important? How do we avoid both careless presumption and the anxious belief that our future finally depends on maintaining ourselves?

PRAYER

Praise the Father for his unchanging purpose, the Son for the inheritance found in him, and the Holy Spirit for sealing God's people until final redemption.

Pray that the Spirit would strengthen your assurance and help you live faithfully while you wait for the fullness of what God has promised.

Confess the ways you have tried to secure your future through control, achievement, possessions, or human approval instead of trusting God's promise.

