

September 10 - Ephesians 1:1-14

Opening

What is one low (negative thing) that happened to you this past week? What is one high (positive thing)? Write them down. If you're meeting with a group, take turns sharing them with one another.

Where have you seen the Holy Spirit at work in your life over the past week?

Name a "spiritual blessing" that you have been blessed with.

Prepare

Spend 1 minute in silence (time yourself!) to center yourself and prepare to hear God's Word.

Read

Read Ephesians 1:1-14 twice. If you are in a group, have two people read it, one after the other, with a brief silence in between. As you read and/or listen, look for a word or a phrase that catches your eye or moves your heart. Circle it or jot it down. Linger over it and give it your attention. If you are in a group, take turns sharing your word or phrase and what it means to you.

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus. I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. 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. Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 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. So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. 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. 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. God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. 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. 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.

Reflect

Why might it give God pleasure to love, choose, and adopt you?

How has God showered God's kindness on you? God's wisdom? God's understanding?

How does it feel to hear that God "identified you as his own?"

Pray

Spend time in prayer for yourself and others. If you are meeting in a group, share prayer requests and pray for one another.

Practice

God did this so we would praise and glorify him...

Each day this week, set aside time to praise and glorify God. Here are some ideas to try:

Listen to praise and worship music.

Read a psalm of praise (try Psalms 145-150).

Let "Alleluia" be the first word you say in the morning, and the last word you say at night.

List all the "spiritual blessings" you can think of, and say - Thank you!

Closing blessing

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!