

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Discover Your Spiritual Blessings

GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE

GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE

Great Chapters of the Bible is a video-based small group series created by the teaching pastors of Saddleback Church.

Every chapter of the Bible is great because God wrote it all. But there are certain chapters that speak to our hearts and minds in an especially deep way. So rather than skim over the surface of an entire book, each volume in this series goes deep into just one chapter to mine the wealth that awaits us in these great passages from God's Word.



Tom Holladay

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE is all about our identity in Christ and the spiritual blessings that are ours because of Jesus Christ. As Pastor Tom Holladay helps us discover the meaning and application of these truths, we know you will agree that this truly is a great chapter of the Bible!

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Discover Your Spiritual Blessings

Session 1: Chosen!

Session 2: Adopted, Redeemed, and Forgiven!

Session 3: Inherited, Included, and Guaranteed!

Session 4: Hope, Riches, and Power!

TAUGHT by TOM HOLLADAY



saddleback church

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TAUGHT by TOM HOLLADAY

A four-session, video-based study for small groups

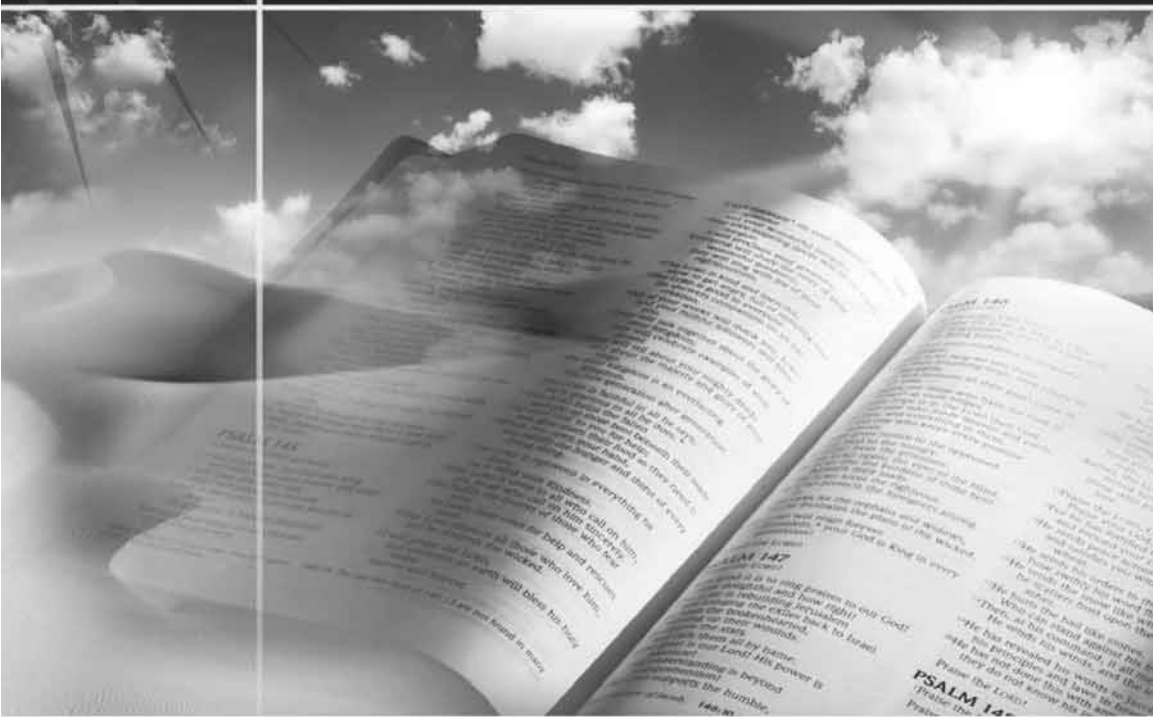
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GREAT CHAPTERS OF THE BIBLE

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

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Great Chapters of the Bible
Ephesians Chapter One—Discover Your Spiritual Blessings
Small Group Study Guide
Edition 1.0

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Understanding Your Study Guide 7

How to Use this Video Curriculum 11

Session 1:

Chosen! (Ephesians 1:1–4a) 13

Session 2:

Adopted, Redeemed, and Forgiven!
(Ephesians 1:4b–10) 19

Session 3:

Inherited, Included, and Guaranteed!
(Ephesians 1:11–14) 27

Session 4:

Hope, Riches, and Power!
(Ephesians 1:15–23) 35

Small Group Resources

Helps for Hosts 45

Frequently Asked Questions 49

Circles of Life 51

Group Guidelines 52

Small Group Prayer and Praise Report 54

Small Group Calendar 56

Answer Key 58

Key Verses 59





UNDERSTANDING YOUR **STUDY GUIDE**

Here is a brief explanation of the features of this study guide.

LOOKING AHEAD/CATCHING UP: You will open each meeting with an opportunity for everyone to check in with each other about how you are doing with the weekly assignments. Accountability is a key to success in this study!

KEY VERSE: Each week you will find a key verse or Scripture passage for your group to read together. If someone in the group has a different translation, ask them to read it aloud so the group can get a bigger picture of the meaning of the passage.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

VIDEO LESSON: There is a video lesson for the group to watch together each week. Fill in the blanks in the lesson outlines as you watch the video, and be sure to refer back to these outlines during your discussion time.

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS: Each video segment is complemented by several questions for group discussion. Please don't feel pressured to discuss every single question. There is no reason to rush through the answers. Give everyone ample opportunity to share their thoughts. If you don't get through all of the discussion questions, that's okay.

LIVING ON PURPOSE: In his book, *The Purpose Driven® Life*, Rick Warren identifies God's five purposes for our lives. They are worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. We will focus on one of these purposes in each lesson, and discuss how they relate to the subject of the study. This section is very important, so please be sure to leave time for it.

PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE: This is where the rubber meets the road. We don't want to be just hearers of the Word. We also need to be doers of the Word (JAMES 1:22). These assignments are application exercises that will help you put into practice the truths you have discussed in the lesson.

PRAYER DIRECTION: At the end of each session you will find suggestions for your group prayer time. Praying together is one of the greatest privileges of small group life. Please don't take it for granted.

A Tip for the Host

The study guide material is meant to be your servant, not your master. The point is not to race through the sessions; the point is to take time to let God work in your lives. Nor is it necessary to “go around the circle” before you move on to the next question. Give people the freedom to speak, but don’t insist on it. Your group will enjoy deeper, more open sharing and discussion if people don’t feel pressured to speak up.



HOW TO USE THIS VIDEO CURRICULUM

Follow these simple steps for a successful small group meeting:

- Open your group meeting by using the **Looking Ahead** or **Catching Up** sections of your study guide.
- Watch the video lesson together and follow along in the outlines in this study guide. Each video lesson is about fifteen minutes long.
- Complete the rest of the discussion materials for each session. Be sure to review the **Living on Purpose** and **Putting It into Practice** sections and commit to fulfilling any assignments before your next session.
- Close your time together by following the **Prayer Direction** suggestions.



SESSION 1: CHOSEN! **EPHESIANS 1:1–4a**

Looking Ahead

1. What are you hoping to learn from this study?
2. What do you think of when you hear the word “saint”?

Key Verse

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.
(EPHESIANS 1:3 NIV)

Watch the video lesson now and take notes in the outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.



EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:1-4a

CHOSEN!

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
(EPHESIANS 1:1-2 NIV)

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are a _____ .

Grace is God's _____
in your life.

God's peace gives you _____ .

*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. (EPHESIANS 1:3 NIV)*

Seven Blessings from God

Blessing #1

God chose us to be _____ and
_____.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (EPHESIANS 1:4A NIV)

- Your salvation is not an _____. It is a part of God's _____.
- Holy means _____ and _____.
- Blameless means a _____ fit to offer God.

God sees you right now, not in light of where you are or what you did today or last week or what you are going to do tomorrow. God sees you right now in light of where you are headed.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:1-4a

Discovery Questions

1. You are a saint! How does that truth strike you?
2. How does God's idea of riches differ from man's idea of riches?
3. God sees you "in Christ" right now. What kind of assurance does that give your heart?
4. Read Ephesians 1:4a again. What does it mean to be chosen of God? Is this confusing or comforting to you?

Living on Purpose: WORSHIP

Worship is much more than singing. Romans 12:1 (NIV) says, *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”* According to this verse, worship is how you live your life—as a *“living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.”* Sound familiar? It’s the same point Paul is making in Ephesians 1:4a when he says God has chosen you in Christ *“to be holy (separate and distinct) and blameless (a sacrifice fit to offer God) in his sight.”* Talk about how your choice to *“offer yourself”* and God’s choice to make you *“holy and blameless”* go hand in hand. Which choice comes first?

Putting It into Practice

The Bible says in Matthew 7:24–27 and James 1:22–25 that it’s not enough just to hear the Word or to talk about it, we must put it into practice—in our relationships, businesses, homes, finances, and the day-to-day moral choices we make. What choices or decisions are you facing right now that could be influenced by the truth that God has chosen you in Christ to be holy and blameless? How will the lessons you have learned today apply to your life tomorrow?



EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:1-4a

Prayer Direction

If your group has more than eight members, break into subgroups of three or four for your prayer time. This will give each of you more opportunity to share and pray together.

Pray for each other's requests.

SESSION 2: ADOPTED, REDEEMED, AND FORGIVEN! **EPHESIANS 1:4b–10**

Catching Up

In our last session we learned that God chose you *“to be holy and blameless in his sight.”* How did that truth impact you this week?

Key Verse

In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ . . . (EPHESIANS 1:4b–5 NIV)

Watch the video lesson now and take notes in the outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.



ADOPTED, REDEEMED, AND FORGIVEN!

Seven Blessings from God

Blessing #1

God chose us to be holy and blameless.

Blessing #2

God has _____
into his family.

^{4b}In love ⁵he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. (EPHESIANS 1:4–6 NIV)

Every one of us is created by God, but we’re not automatically a part of God’s family. We are adopted into God’s family.

And so we should not be like cringing, fearful slaves, but we should behave like God’s very own children, adopted into the bosom of his family, and calling to him, “Father, Father.”
(ROMANS 8:15 LB)

Adoption shouts the truth, _____ !

Session 2: Adopted, Redeemed, and Forgiven!

Ephesians 1:4b-10

It is God's pleasure to adopt you. It makes God happy. What is the reason God adopted you? It is *"to the praise of his glorious grace."*

Blessing #3

We are _____ and
_____.

⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

(EPHESIANS 1:7-8 NIV)

Redemption

A ransom paid to deliver someone who is incapable of freeing himself

To loose from something

To purchase something to be set free



Forgiveness

Religious meaning:

To carry away

Legal meaning:

To cancel a debt

He has taken our sins away from us as far as the east is from the west.

(PSALM 103:12 NCV)

This forgiveness of sin, this canceling of the debt, this freeing of the slave, came with a very great price. The cost is the blood of Jesus Christ who died for us on the cross.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:4b–10

Forgiveness in Jesus Christ is not a begrudging blessing that God has given to you. It is lavished upon you. The question is, have you received it?

A Prayer of Commitment

*Jesus Christ,
I receive the gift of your forgiveness and of your new life,
and the blessings that you want to give to me.
I want to live the life you've given me
and not the kind of life that I've been living.
I want to live for you, Jesus Christ.
In your name, Amen.*

Blessing #4

God has shown us the _____ of his will.

⁹And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. (EPHESIANS 1:9–10 NIV)

The mystery, or secret, Paul is talking about here is:

- the culminating event in all of human history
- the unifying event in all of human history
- the sanctifying event in all of human history

The mystery of God's will is Jesus Christ.

Session 2: Adopted, Redeemed, and Forgiven!

Ephesians 1:4b-10

Because Jesus Christ is at the center of all _____ and the center of all _____, my identity only makes sense when he's at the center of _____.

Discovery Questions

- 1a. Imagine how life would be if you had no family, no home, no sense of identity or belonging, no history to look back on, no future to look forward to. Then you were chosen and adopted by the kindest, most generous and loving man in the world—and not just adopted, but made an heir of his measureless estate. How would you respond?

- b. We learned in this session that God has adopted us through Jesus Christ. With that in mind, how can you live your life *“to the praise of his glorious grace”*?

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:4b-10

2. Adopted, redeemed, and forgiven. What do those three words mean to you now?

3. As a group, think of three word pictures to describe “lavish.” How do these pictures help you understand “*the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us*”?

4. In this session, there was a special emphasis on women’s identity in Christ. In our next session, there will be an emphasis for men. So here’s a question for the women in your group: How does the identity that others might try to impose on you differ from your identity in Christ? How does your identity in Christ free you to be the person God has made you to be?

Session 2: Adopted, Redeemed, and Forgiven!

Ephesians 1:4b-10

Living on Purpose: EVANGELISM

Who do you know that needs to hear the good news of adoption, redemption, and forgiveness? What difference would it make in their life? Share their name with your group, and then during your prayer time ask God to open a door of opportunity for you to talk to this person about Jesus Christ. Between now and your next group meeting send this person an e-mail or invite them out for coffee and share with them your story of what adoption, redemption, and forgiveness has meant to you. It's really quite simple. Just tell them what your life was like before you knew Jesus Christ and what difference it has made to know you are adopted, redeemed, and forgiven by God.

Putting It into Practice

Pastor Tom said, "Because Jesus Christ is at the center of all history and the center of all eternity, my identity only makes sense when he's at the center of my life." Think of one spiritual habit you can develop that will help you keep Christ at the center of your life on a daily basis (e.g., prayer, Bible reading, journaling, fasting, tithing, evangelism, serving, etc.). What next step will you take to strengthen that habit in your life? How can your group members help keep you accountable to this commitment?

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:4b-10

Prayer Direction

Ask if anyone in your group prayed the prayer with Pastor Tom to open their life to Jesus Christ? If so, take a minute to rejoice with that person and then pray for him or her.

Be sure to pray for the people you discussed in the **Living on Purpose** section of this study.

Before praying for your group's requests, take a few moments to offer prayers of thanks and praise for God's gifts of adoption, redemption, and forgiveness. Then pray for each other's needs.

SESSION 3: INHERITED, INCLUDED, AND GUARANTEED! EPHESIANS 1:11–14

Catching Up

We're at the halfway point of our study on Ephesians 1. Let's recap what we've learned so far.

1. You are a saint; God chose you to be holy and blameless; your salvation is part of God's eternal plan; God has adopted you into his family; you are redeemed and forgiven; and your identity only makes sense when Jesus Christ is at the center of your life. Does anybody have any thoughts, questions, or confusion about this before we move on?

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:11-14

2. In your last session, you were encouraged to ask God to give you an opportunity to tell somebody the good news of adoption, redemption, and forgiveness. Would anyone like to share a progress report?

Key Verse

You were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance . . .

(EPHESIANS 1:13-14 NIV)



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in the outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.

Inherited, Included, and Guaranteed!

Seven Blessings from God

Blessing #1

God chose us to be holy and blameless.

Blessing #2

God has adopted me into his family.

Blessing #3

We are redeemed and forgiven.

Blessing #4

God has shown us the mystery of his will.

Blessing #5

I am chosen for an _____.

"In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. (EPHESIANS 1:11-12 NIV)

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:11-14

The Greek word for “chosen” in verse 11 is *eklerothemen*. It means, “chosen possession; chosen as an inheritance.”

You are God’s chosen possession, and as a chosen possession you have an inheritance waiting in heaven. But there is more to it than that—you are the inheritance!

When you give God your heart, you are recognizing that you are chosen as an inheritance to live out who God has made you to be for all eternity. That’s part of God’s blessing.

Blessing #6

I am _____.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. (EPHESIANS 1:13 NIV)

You are in God’s “Who’s Who”:

- You are his who are _____.
- You are his who are _____.
- You are his who are _____.

Blessing #7

I have the _____ of the Holy Spirit.

¹³Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory. (EPHESIANS 1:13-14 NIV)

Session 3: Inherited, Included, and Guaranteed!

Ephesians 1:11-14

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is a _____ who marks us.

The seal of the Holy Spirit implies: _____

The Holy Spirit is a _____ who guarantees our inheritance.

In the New Testament, God's glory is seen in _____ .

- You are blessed *with* God's _____ .
- You are blessed *by* God's _____ .
- You are blessed *for* God's _____ .

Discovery Questions

1. You are chosen to be “*God’s own possession.*” How does that cause you to see yourself differently?
2. You are included in Christ and a part of God’s “Who’s Who.” What kind of freedom does that bring into your life?
3. In our last session, we brought a special emphasis for the women in your group. In this session, it’s the men’s turn. Guys, what does it mean to be God’s man, and how does it impact your identity, loyalties, responsibilities, and priorities?
4. How does the reality of the Spirit’s ownership and protection impact your confidence in Christ and your relationships with others?

Living on Purpose: MINISTRY

Verses 11–12 tell us that we were chosen *“in order that we . . . might be for the praise of his glory.”* Are you getting this? God wants your life to bring praise and glory to him.

How can you put that powerful truth to work in your life today, both individually and as a group? Read the following Scripture verses:

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.
(MATTHEW 5:16 NIV)

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God . . . (1 PETER 2:12 NIV)

What do these two verses have in common? Think of one way your group can be *“for the praise of his glory”* this week. Who can you serve and what can you do in Jesus’ name? Take a few minutes to plan a group service project. What will you do? When will you do it? Who will coordinate the project?

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:11-14

Putting It into Practice

Take a moment to give glory to God in your group by recognizing what he has done in your lives. You might say to each other, “I see God’s glory in your life by the way that you . . .”

Prayer Direction

Go around the room and each of you pray this prayer of affirmation for the person on your right, “Father, thank you that you have blessed _____ *with* your gifts, *by* your grace, and *for* your glory.” Then pray for God’s blessing on them.

SESSION 4: HOPE, RICHES, AND POWER!

EPHESIANS 1:15–23

Catching Up

1. Do you have an example of a time when something funny happened because you could not see well?
2. In your last session, your group was encouraged to think of a way you can bring praise and glory to God through an act of service. Take a few minutes to give an update on your group service project.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:15-23

Key Verse

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. (EPHESIANS 1:17 NIV)



Watch the video lesson now and take notes in the outline. Refer back to the outline during your group discussion.

Hope, Riches, and Power!

¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe.
(EPHESIANS 1:15-19 NIV)

The eyes of your heart set the direction of your life.

Three things Paul prays we will see:

1. The _____ of his calling

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you . . .
(EPHESIANS 1:18 NIV)

- You are called to salvation in his Son.
- You are called to close fellowship with Jesus Christ.
- You are called to lay your worries and burdens at his feet.
- You are called to live out the gifts and abilities he's put into your life.
- You are called to live an abundant and purposeful life here on earth.
- You are called to spend eternity with him in heaven.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

Ephesians 1:15-23

We also have joy with our troubles, because we know that these troubles produce patience. And patience produces character, and character produces hope. (ROMANS 5:3-4 NCV)

Problems remind me that this world is not all there is. I can't rely on myself. I need to rely on God.

2. The _____ of his glorious inheritance

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know . . . the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints . . . (EPHESIANS 1:18 NIV)

You are incredibly valuable to God! God put you in this world to bring glory to himself.

3. The _____ that is available to us

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know . . . his incomparably great power for us who believe. (EPHESIANS 1:18-19 NIV)

Four Power Words

dunamis = explosive

energeia = energy

kratos = mighty

ischus = power

¹⁹That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

(EPHESIANS 1:19-23 NIV)

Three Sources of God's Power

1. The _____ of Christ

¹⁹That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead . . .

(EPHESIANS 1:19-20 NIV)

2. The _____ of Christ

²⁰. . . and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet . . .

(EPHESIANS 1:20-22 NIV)

3. The _____ of Christ

²². . . and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. (EPHESIANS 1:22-23 NIV)

It is in our fellowship with one another as the church of Christ that we sense and see the power of God in our lives.

1. Look again at the list of things to which God has called you in point 1 of the message outline. Which of these truths is the most challenging for you to fully embrace and apply in your life?

3. “You are incredibly valuable to God! God put you in this world to bring glory to himself.” How would you explain that to an unbeliever?

Living on Purpose: FELLOWSHIP

As we learned in this session, it is in fellowship with one another that we sense and see the power of God in our lives. Fellowship strengthens our faith and commitment to God and to each other. Take a few minutes to plan an afternoon or evening of fellowship with your group. This should not be another Bible study. It's simply a time to get together and enjoy each other's friendship.

Putting It into Practice

The eyes of your heart set the direction of your life. How can you keep the eyes of your heart focused on Jesus Christ? How can your group help you to do that?

Prayer Direction

Where do you need to see God's "*incomparably great power*" in your life right now—in your home, your work, your friendships, your health, or your finances? Share your prayer requests with your group and then pray for each other. Be sure to pray that your "heart vision" will improve.



Diving Deeper

We encourage you to continue your study of Ephesians by visiting **www.DriveTimeDevotions.com**. You will find free audio podcast devotions from Pastor Tom Holladay that will take you through the entire book of Ephesians in about ten minutes a day, five days a week, studying one chapter each week. You can listen while you're getting ready in the morning, driving to work, or out for your morning exercise.

You will also find a free discussion guide that your group can use to continue your study of Ephesians. Just have your group members listen to *DriveTime Devotions* each day, and then talk about it together in your weekly meetings. It's simple. It's powerful. And it's absolutely free.

SMALLGROUPRESOURCES



HELPS FOR HOSTS

TOP TEN IDEAS FOR NEW HOSTS

CONGRATULATIONS! As the host of your small group, you have responded to the call to help shepherd Jesus' flock. Few other tasks in the family of God surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to facilitate your group, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind.

Remember you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and he knew you would be asked to facilitate your group. Even though you may not feel ready, this is common for all good hosts. God promises, *"I will never leave you; I will never abandon you"* (Hebrews 13:5 TEV). Whether you are facilitating for one evening, several weeks, or a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.

1. **DON'T TRY TO DO IT ALONE.** Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy team. If you can enlist a co-host to help you shepherd the group, you will find your experience much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is ask people to help. You'll be surprised at the response.
2. **BE FRIENDLY AND BE YOURSELF.** God wants to use your unique gifts and temperament. Be sure to greet people at the door with a big smile . . . this can set the mood for the whole gathering. Remember, they are taking as big a step to show up at your house as you are to host a small group! Don't try to do things exactly like another host; do them in a way that fits you. Admit when you don't have an answer and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it and you'll sleep better at night.

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

3. **PREPARE FOR YOUR MEETING AHEAD OF TIME.** Review the session and write down your responses to each question. Pay special attention to the **Putting It Into Practice** exercises that ask group members to do something other than engage in discussion. These exercises will help your group live what the Bible teaches, not just talk about it.
4. **PRAY FOR YOUR GROUP MEMBERS BY NAME.** Before you begin your session, take a few moments and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the **Small Group Prayer and Praise Report** at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of each person in your group. Expect God to lead you to whomever he wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead.
5. **WHEN YOU ASK A QUESTION, BE PATIENT.** Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question. If silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "great answer." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who aren't ready to say, pray, or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time. If someone in your group is a wallflower who sits silently through every session, consider talking to them privately and encouraging them to participate. Let them know how important they are to you—that they are loved and appreciated, and that the group would value their input. Remember, still water often runs deep.
6. **PROVIDE TRANSITIONS BETWEEN QUESTIONS.** Ask if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.

7. **BREAK INTO SMALLER GROUPS OCCASIONALLY.** With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning, and ultimately get more out of their small group experience. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member.
8. **SMALL CIRCLES ARE ALSO HELPFUL DURING PRAYER TIME.** People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests from their subgroups. The other great aspect of subgrouping is that it fosters leadership development. As you ask people in the group to facilitate discussion or to lead a prayer circle, it gives them a small leadership step that can build their confidence.
9. **ROTATE FACILITATORS OCCASIONALLY.** You may be perfectly capable of hosting each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to host the group.
10. **ONE FINAL CHALLENGE (FOR NEW OR FIRST-TIME HOSTS).** Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the six passages listed below. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help prepare you with a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

MATTHEW 9:36–38 (NIV)

³⁶*When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

³⁷*Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

JOHN 10:14–15 (NIV)

¹⁴*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—
¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down
my life for the sheep.*

1 PETER 5:2–4 (NIV)

²*Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as
overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God
wants you to be; ³not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording
it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And
when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory
that will never fade away.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:1–5 (NIV)

¹*If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ,
if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any
tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being
like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.
³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility
consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not
only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Your
attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ.*

HEBREWS 10:23–25 (NIV)

²³*Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who
promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one
another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵Let us not give up meeting
together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one
another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

1 THESSALONIANS 2:7–8, 11–12 (NIV)

⁷... *but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little
children. ⁸We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with
you not only the Gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had
become so dear to us. . . . ¹¹For you know that we dealt with each of you
as a father deals with his own children, ¹²encouraging, comforting and
urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom
and glory.*

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long will this group meet?

This study is four sessions long. We encourage your group to add a fifth session for a celebration. In your final session, each group member may decide if he or she desires to continue on for another study. At that time you may also want to do some informal evaluation, discuss your group guidelines, and decide which study you want to do next. We recommend you visit our Website at **www.saddlebackresources.com** for more video-based small group studies.

Who is the host?

The host is the person who coordinates and facilitates your group meetings. In addition to a host, we encourage you to select one or more group members to lead your group discussions. Several other responsibilities can be rotated, including refreshments, prayer requests, worship, or keeping up with those who miss a meeting. Shared ownership in the group helps everybody grow.

Where do we find new group members?

Recruiting new members can be a challenge for groups, especially new groups with just a few people, or existing groups that lose a few people along the way. We encourage you to use the **Circles of Life** diagram on page 51 of this study guide to brainstorm a list of people from your workplace, church, school, neighborhood, family, and so on. Then pray for the people on each member's list. Allow each member to invite several people from their list. Some groups fear that newcomers will interrupt the intimacy that members have built over time. However, groups that welcome newcomers generally gain strength with the infusion of new blood. Remember, the next person you add just might become a friend for eternity. Logistically, groups find different ways to add members. Some

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

groups remain permanently open, while others choose to open periodically, such as at the beginning or end of a study. If your group becomes too large for easy, face-to-face conversations, you can subgroup, forming a second discussion group in another room.

How do we handle the childcare needs in our group?

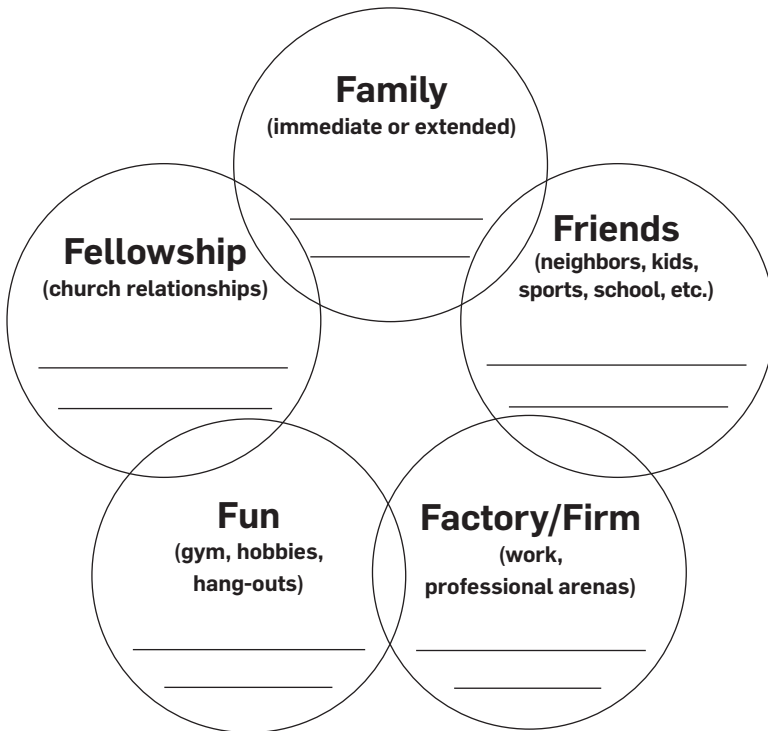
Childcare needs must be handled very carefully. This is a sensitive issue. We suggest you seek creative solutions as a group. One common solution is to have the adults meet in the living room and share the cost of a baby sitter (or two) who can be with the kids in another part of the house. Another popular option is to have one home for the kids and a second home (close by) for the adults. If desired, the adults could rotate the responsibility of providing a lesson for the kids. This last option is great with school-age kids and can be a huge blessing to families.

CIRCLES OF LIFE

SMALL GROUP CONNECTIONS

Discover Who You Can Connect in Community

Use this chart to help carry out one of the values in the **Group Guidelines**, to “Welcome Newcomers.”



Follow this simple three-step process:

1. List one to two people in each circle.
2. Prayerfully select one person or couple from your list and tell your group about them.
3. Give them a call and invite them to your next meeting. Over fifty percent of those invited to a small group say, “Yes!”

GROUP GUIDELINES

It’s a good idea for every group to put words to their shared values, expectations, and commitments. Such guidelines will help you avoid unspoken agendas and unmet expectations. We recommend you discuss your guidelines during Session 1 in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience. Feel free to modify anything that does not work for your group.

We agree to the following values:

CLEAR PURPOSE	To grow healthy spiritual lives by building a healthy small group community
GROUP ATTENDANCE	To give priority to the group meeting (call if I am absent or late)
SAFE ENVIRONMENT	To create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved (no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes)
BE CONFIDENTIAL	To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group
CONFLICT RESOLUTION	To avoid gossip and to immediately resolve any concerns by following the principles of Matthew 18:15–17
SPIRITUAL HEALTH	To give group members permission to speak into my life and help me live a healthy, balanced spiritual life that is pleasing to God

LIMIT OUR FREEDOM

To limit our freedom by not serving or consuming alcohol during small group meetings or events so as to avoid causing a weaker brother or sister to stumble (1 Corinthians 8:1–13; Romans 14:19–21)

WELCOME NEWCOMERS

To invite friends who might benefit from this study and warmly welcome newcomers

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

To get to know the other members of the group and pray for them regularly

OTHER _____

We have also discussed and agree on the following items:

CHILD CARE _____

STARTING TIME _____

ENDING TIME _____

If you haven't already done so, take a few minutes to fill out the **Small Group Calendar** on page 56.

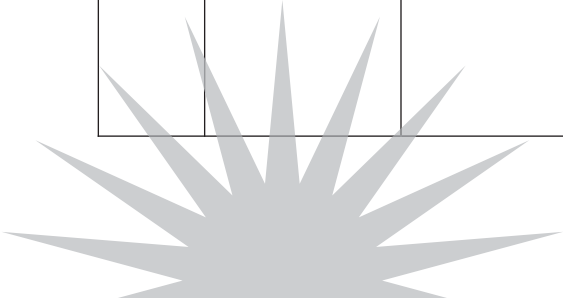
SMALL GROUP PRAYER AND PRAISE REPORT

This is a place where you can write each other’s requests for prayer. You can also make a note when God answers a prayer. Pray for each other’s requests. If you’re new to group prayer, it’s okay to pray silently or to pray by using just one sentence:

“God, please help _____ to _____.”

DATE	PERSON	PRAYER REQUEST	PRAISE REPORT

DATE	PERSON	PRAYER REQUEST	PRAISE REPORT



SMALL GROUP CALENDAR

Healthy groups share responsibilities and group ownership. It might take some time for this to develop. Shared ownership ensures that responsibility for the group doesn't fall to one person. Use the calendar to keep track of social events, mission projects, birthdays, or days off. Complete this calendar at your first or second meeting. Planning ahead will increase attendance and shared ownership.

DATE	LESSON	LOCATION	FACILITATOR	SNACK OR MEAL
	Session 1			
	Session 2			
	Session 3			
	Session 4			
	Celebration			

SMALL GROUP RESOURCES

Foundations: 11 Core Truths to Build Your Life On

Taught by Tom Holladay and Kay Warren

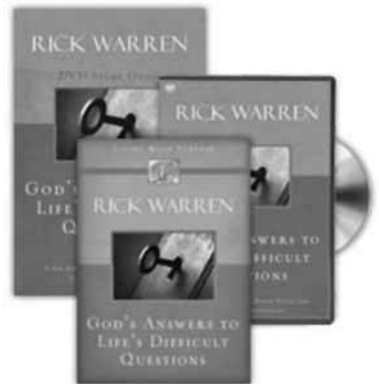
This award-winning study explores essential doctrines of the Christian faith while providing a theological basis for living out God's purpose for your life. Each of the 11 studies is offered with a DVD and study guide, covering the following topics: the Bible, God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, Creation, Salvation, Sanctification, God and Evil, the Afterlife, the Church, and the Second Coming.



God's Answers to Life's Difficult Questions

Taught by Rick Warren

Pastor Rick Warren offers simple, straightforward answers from Scripture to six commonly asked questions: How can I cope with stress? How can I rebound from failure? How can I be confident in a crisis? How can I live above average? How can I overcome loneliness? How can I ever change?



To Order Product or for More Information go to:
www.saddlebackresources.com

EPHESIANS CHAPTER ONE

ANSWER KEY

Session 1

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, you are a SAINT.

Grace is God's UNDESERVED GIFT in your life.

God's peace gives you FREEDOM.

Blessing #1: God chose us to be HOLY and BLAMELESS.

Your salvation is not an AFTERTHOUGHT. It is a part of God's ETERNAL THOUGHTS.

Holy means SEPARATE and DISTINCT.

Blameless means a SACRIFICE fit to offer God.

Session 2

Blessing #2: God has ADOPTED ME into his family.

Adoption shouts the truth, I AM WANTED!

Blessing #3: We are REDEEMED and FORGIVEN.

Blessing #4: God has shown us the MYSTERY of his will.

Because Jesus Christ is at the center of all HISTORY and the center of all ETERNITY, my identity only makes sense when he's at the center of MY LIFE.

Session 3

Blessing #5: I am chosen for an INHERITANCE.

Blessing #6: I am INCLUDED IN CHRIST.

You are his who are LOVED.

You are his who are CHOSEN.

You are his who are INCLUDED.

Blessing #7: I have the GUARANTEE of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is a SEAL who marks us.

The seal of the Holy Spirit implies: OWNERSHIP PROTECTION

The Holy Spirit is a DEPOSIT who guarantees our inheritance.

In the New Testament, God's glory is seen in YOU.

You are blessed with God's GIFTS.

You are blessed by God's GRACE.

You are blessed for God's GLORY.

Session 4

1. The HOPE of his calling

2. The RICHES of his glorious inheritance

3. The POWER that is available to us

The RESURRECTION of Christ

The RULE of Christ

The CHURCH of Christ

KEY VERSES

Session 1

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. (EPHESIANS 1:3 NIV)

Session 2

In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ . . . (EPHESIANS 1:4–5 NIV)

Session 3

You were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance . . . (EPHESIANS 1:13–14 NIV)

Session 4

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. (EPHESIANS 1:17 NIV)

