BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

What God Is Doing Ephesians 1:1-14

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

- 1. <u>The Gathering Time Leader</u> will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
- **2.** The Bible Study Leader will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
- 3. <u>The Worship Time Leader</u> has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the <u>Worship Time</u> that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Bible Study Leader:

If you have youth in your group, provide a computer for them to use, if possible.

Worship Time Leader:

Music Sources:

Open the Eyes of my Heart, Lord, The Worship Hymnal #66; CCLI #2298355 He is Lord, The Worship Hymnal #277; CCLI #5178348 Here I Am to Worship, The Worship Hymnal #130; CCLI 33266032

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

What God Is Doing

Focal Text:

Ephesians 1:1-14

Background Text:

Ephesians 1:1-23

Main Idea:

God deserves to be praised for how he has acted in salvation on our behalf.

Questions to Explore:

What does God's salvation look like? How should we respond to him for his salvation?

Teaching Aim:

To help believers understand the richness of God's salvation.

Gathering together:

Sing Open the Eyes of my Heart, Lord, The Worship Hymnal #66; CCLI #2298355

First thoughts:

In Ephesians 1: 17-19a, Paul says to the believers who read his letter *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. 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, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

We are beginning a series of studies in the book of Ephesians entitled God's Plan and Our Response. Today's lesson is What God Is Doing.

As we begin this study we want to have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that we may know him better. It is the Holy Spirit who works in our lives to enable us to understand his teachings. We ask that the Holy Spirit will "open the eyes of our heart"

so that we know more clearly and with greater certainty what God is doing in the world and in our individual lives. We long to have hope and power as we experience the riches of the inheritance of the saints – our salvation and our life in Him.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Sing again Open the Eyes of my Heart, Lord.

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the "Teacher Preparation" for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the "Bible Study Plan" for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

What God Is Doing

Focal Text:

Ephesians 1:1-14

Background Text:

Ephesians 1:1-23

Main Idea:

God deserves to be praised for how he has acted in salvation on our behalf.

Questions to Explore:

What does God's salvation look like? How should we respond to him for his salvation?

Teaching Aim:

To help believers understand the richness of God's salvation.

Introduction to your personal study:

My niece was not born into our family but in fact is from a third world country. My sister and her husband found her in an orphanage through an adoption agency. They looked through hundreds of files and specifically chose this precious young girl who was almost six years old at the time, so old that very few families would consider choosing her. But someone was willing to spend thousands of dollars and fly thousands of miles to pick up this little girl who became their daughter. She became a legal member of the family, an heir to the family estate, and is loved and accepted as much as her three other siblings. She came into the family through deliberate choice, not by birth. She was adopted because she was *specifically wanted*.

If you are God's child, it is not because you were born into the family, but it is because he adopted you. Specifically, he adopted you "through Jesus Christ." In this text, the apostle Paul piled description upon description of the spiritual blessings God has done for you "in Christ." In fact, the phrase "in Christ" is the key to understanding all of this.

That phrase or its equivalent occurs some 12 times. In other words, *if you are a believer in Christ, all of this is true of you.* It shows how important you are to God.

Why would God do this? "The gospel of your salvation" displays his ultimate love, grace, and mercy. And all of this is "to the praise of his glory." God brings salvation into a broken and sinful world to demonstrate his loving nature, his matchless wisdom, and his saving power. That is a God who is worthy of being praised!

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians was a letter addressed to one church but meant to be sent to various churches around the province of Asia. As such, it does not address any particular error or problems in the Ephesian church, but it was written to instruct Christians in the churches of God's purpose for them regarding their salvation. Thus, Ephesians is wonderful instruction for all Christians regarding the nature of salvation, the community of faith called "the church," and how Christians should live and act towards one another.

It helps believers understand God's wonderful work of salvation in Christ Jesus, teaches them the importance of being united "in Christ," and describes what living in Christ looks like. As such, Ephesians has been described as both "a telescope and a microscope." As a telescope, it looks at God's plan and activity throughout the ages, both "in the heavenly places" and on earth. As a microscope, it helps each of us see our place in God's eternal plan.

An overall description of the opening passage to the letter would be a "doxology," a statement of praise to God, indicated by the repeated use of the phrase, "to the praise of his glorious grace" (v. 6) or "to the praise of his glory" (vv. 12, 14). God is to be praised because of "the gospel of your salvation" that he has displayed in Christ. Throughout the letter Paul invites the readers to praise God for the redemption he planned before the foundation of the world. Worshiping God has the power to transform a person's life.

Therefore, in light of Paul's call to worship the God of salvation, what does God's salvation look like? How should we respond to him for his work of salvation?

Focusing on the Meaning:

"Praise be to God" (vv. 1-3)

Paul introduced himself as "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God" (v. 1). An "apostle" literally means "sent one." It is the term the New Testament uses of Christian missionaries or messengers of the churches (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:6; Acts 14:14; 2 Corinthians 8:23). Here, however, Paul used the term in its narrower sense, as someone who had received his commission into service directly from Christ (e.g. Paul and the Twelve). Paul's apostleship was "by the will of God," not as a result of his own desire or choosing (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1).

The letter went to "the saints in Ephesus" (v. 1). The term "saints" literally means "holy people," people who are "set apart" for God's service. They were "the faithful in Christ Jesus," having placed their whole-hearted trust in Jesus as their Savior and Lord. This term describes all Christians, not some select few whose lives are memorialized in stained glass. These saints were living people, declared holy when they accepted Christ as their Savior, not hoping to be declared such after their death. Christians are not declared holy because of the kind of life they have lived, but because their sins have been forgiven and wiped away by the blood of Christ who now stands in their place. People who have truly placed their faith in Christ seek to live lives that are faithful in him, demonstrating their faith by their obedience to him and their love for each other (cf. 1:15; 1 John 4:7-11).

Paul continued his greeting to these saints with "grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 2). This is far more than a mere formality. He wished for them God's "grace" which are his blessings that none of us could ever deserve, as well as his "peace," which literally means "wholeness with nothing left out." These things can only be found in a relationship with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul praised God with a "doxology," a blessing, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 3), which begins one extended sentence in the original Greek text from verse 3 to 14. God's blessings come on believers in two locations, "in the heavenly realms" and "in Christ." "The heavenly realms" is Paul's way of describing the spiritual location where believers live in this age – the place where believers are already raised into fellowship with Christ, but where we also experience spiritual warfare (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). In other words, the physical world is not the only reality we experience, for we also exist on a higher plane. We enjoy many "blessings" here as we wait for our final salvation when we will experience no more spiritual conflicts. Since God acted in Christ to redeem the world, believers are also united with the crucified and risen Jesus. Believers are located "in Christ," providing "every spiritual blessing" because of this vital connection.

"He chose us in him" (vv. 4-6)

Paul began listing the blessings by highlighting the fact that "he chose us" (v. 4). It is important to note specifically how Paul stated this concept of "predestination". First he chose "in him," that is, God chose Christ to be the redeemer before the world was even created, for Christ is "the Chosen One." Second, "he chose *us*" as a community of

the redeemed located in Christ, not as individuals. Nowhere in Paul's teaching does he suggest that God chooses individuals, because he always speaks of a group that God has chosen. Because God chose Christ, those who become united with him become the chosen. God predestined a *means* for salvation (i.e. 'in Christ'), not individuals for salvation. Third, God's plan was to create a community that is "holy and blameless" before him. This is not something that people do in order be accepted by him, but it is because of his saving work in our lives. Fourth, out of God's love he adopted people into his family "through Jesus Christ" (v. 5), a total act of his love and grace. All of this deserves "the praise of his glorious grace" (v. 6). God chooses people to reveal his character as a loving and saving God.

"Redemption through his blood" (vv. 7-8)

"Deliverance/redemption" refers to releasing something from bondage by paying a price. It is a market-place term for purchasing back a piece of property that was sold because of indebtedness, like a slave being bought out of slavery. God has delivered us from bondage to sin through the price of the blood of His precious Son. Elsewhere Paul said, "You are not your own, for you were bought with a price" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and that price was the precious blood of His own Son.

God in His grace and mercy paid the price so that people might find "forgiveness of sins." No longer do people have to live in sin and be held by its power. God has paid the price and broken its power, and people are freed to live a new life.

"To bring all things together" (vv. 9-12)

God has also enlightened us by revealing "to us the mystery of His will" (v. 9). The modern usage of the term "mystery" refers to something that is unknown, but in biblical usage it refers to God's plan that was hidden for so long, but he has now clearly revealed it to us (3:3-9; 6:19). What is that plan? – "to bring all things in heaven and on earth under one head, even Christ" (v. 10). Everything will be brought under the authority of Christ. Jesus, the One that people rejected, betrayed, and crucified, is now the exalted Lord. One day every knee will bow to him and confess him as such (Philippians 2:8-9). In Jesus the entire universe holds together (Colossians 1:16-17). "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15). Everyone who places their hope in this saving Christ is a testimony to God's wisdom and ultimate goodness "to the praise of his glory" (v. 12).

"The promised Holy Spirit" (vv. 13-14)

Paul concluded his doxology with the role the Holy Spirit plays in the spiritual blessings. He is the "seal," the mark that confirms or authenticates genuine salvation. In the ancient world letters and documents were sealed to document ownership. Packages and tombs (Matthew 27:66) were sealed as a measure to protect it from being tampered

with. As such, the presence of the Spirit in believers' lives guarantees ownership and protects them until the day of judgment.

The Spirit is also "the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance," the first instalment on our salvation, and the guarantee of a future inheritance. Children, whether by birth or by adoption, became heirs or inheritors, of the family estate. God places his Spirit in each of his children as a down payment of a future inheritance. This provides all of the spiritual power that any of his children may require.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Help participants understand salvation as a Biblical teaching and examine their own salvation experience. Help those who have not had that experience to find Christ as Saviour.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

What God Is Doing

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the <u>Focal Text</u> in their Bibles. Also, share with them the <u>Main Idea</u> to be learned from the Scriptures, and the <u>Questions to be</u> <u>Explored</u> by the group.

Focal Text: Ephesians 1:1-14

Background Text: Ephesians 1:1-23

Main Idea: God is to be praised for how he has acted in salvation on our behalf.

Questions to Explore: What does God's salvation look like? How should we respond

to him for his salvation?

Teaching Aim: To help believers understand the richness of God's salvation.

Connect with Life:

As the group gathers, ask: <u>Does anyone in the group knows someone who is "adopted" into a family?</u> . Ask them briefly to describe how that happened.

Add: When someone is adopted, who went to all the effort and expense to make that happen? When someone is legally adopted, is there any legal distinction between an adopted child and one born into a family? Is an adopted child left out of the family inheritance?

Explain: People who believe the gospel of salvation become 'adopted' into God's family, gain privileges of family membership, and become heirs to a future inheritance. Note that this is all from God's love that he pours out on undeserving sinners.

Seek an answer to: <u>"What is the rightful response that recipients of such grace should offer to God in return?"</u> [praise, thanks, worship]

Give a brief overview of the book of Ephesians from the Teacher Preparation notes.

Explain: <u>Today's passage is one extended "doxology," a call to praise for what God has</u> done for us in salvation. Therefore, what does God's salvation look like?

Guide the Study:

1. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing (vv. 1-3).

Ask for a volunteer to read verses 1-4.

Call for answers to the following questions:

What does Paul call himself in verse 1? [an apostle of Jesus Christ] Be ready to explain from the teacher notes the meaning of the term "apostle."

How did Paul become an apostle (v. 1)? [by the will of God]

To whom did Paul address the letter (v. 1)? [the saints in Ephesus] Be ready to explain from the teacher notes the biblical meaning of the term "saint."

What kind of lives should living "saints" live (v. 1)? [faithful in Christ Jesus]

Looking at verse 3, with what has God blessed us? [with every spiritual blessing] Be ready to explain from the Teacher Preparation notes the meaning of "in the heavenly realms" and "in Christ Jesus." Emphasize that the blessings are found as we are united with Christ ("in Christ").

2. God has adopted us into his family through Jesus Christ (vv. 4-6).

Have someone read verses 4-6.

Challenge the group to a brief discussion: What is the difference between being born into a family and being adopted into one? [to be specifically chosen]

Add: According to these verses, how do people come into God's family? [by adoption, by God's choice]

Invite an answer: According to verse 4, how did God choose us? [in him]

Encourage an answer: Who was chosen before the creation of the world to bring redemption to the world? [Jesus]

Point out that those who become united with Christ become the chosen, because Christ is the chosen one, "*the One he loves*" (v. 6).

Note Be cautious not to let the discussion degenerate into unhelpful areas such as some being chosen and others not being chosen. If the group raises the issue, be ready to explain that Paul never speaks of individuals being chosen, but he always speaks of a community of the chosen ("he chose <u>us"</u>). The "One that he loves" the One that he chose to bring redemption to the world is Christ (v. 5). God 'predestined' that all those who are 'in Christ' are chosen because they are united with the chosen One. He predestined a means for salvation (i.e. 'in Christ'), not individuals for salvation.

Ask: According to verse 4, why did God choose to create a community united in Christ? [to be holy and blameless in his sight]

Question the group: <u>Can people accomplish holiness and blamelessness by their own</u> efforts?

Continue with these important questions:

How, then can people become holy and blameless? [by God working through them]

According to verse 5, how do people become adopted into his family? [through Jesus Christ]

What does this demonstrate about God's character? (refer to v. 6) [his love and grace]

What does he deserve from us for what he has done on our behalf? [praise]

3. God has forgiven undeserving sinners (vv. 7-8).

Have someone read verses 7-8.

Explain: The term "redemption" in verse 7 means "releasing something from bondage by paying a price," like a slave or a piece of property.

Ask, "According to verse 7, what was the price God paid for our redemption?" [the blood of Jesus]

Again, put these questions before the group:

What did such redemption provide for us (v. 7)? [forgiveness of sins]

What do these verses reveal about God's character? [grace, wisdom, understanding]

<u>Is such grace something that we deserve?</u>

Point out: <u>People who have been redeemed and forgiven no longer have to live in sin and be held by its power.</u> They are now freed to live a new life.

4. God has enlightened us with the mystery of his will (vv. 9-12).

Have someone read verses 9-12.

Ask: What has God made known to us (v. 9)? [the mystery of his will]

Explain that the term "mystery" refers to God's plan that was hidden for so long, but it has now been clearly revealed to us.

Inquire: What is God's plan that we find in v. 10? [to bring all things under one head, Christ]

5. God has given us his Holy Spirit (vv. 13-14).

Have someone read verses 13-14.

Question the group: What does God do for people who believe the gospel of salvation (v. 13)? [he 'seals' them with the Holy Spirit]

Explain that a 'seal' is a mark that demonstrates that something is genuine, such as letters and documents.

Now raise the question: <u>If God places his 'seal' upon us, then who does it mean that we belong to?</u>

Share: The presence of the Holy Spirit in someone's life is a mark that someone indeed belongs to God.

Ask: According to verse 14, what else does the Holy Spirit provide? [a 'deposit' guaranteeing an inheritance]

Three more good questions for the group:

Who rightfully receives an 'inheritance'? [children of the family]

As a 'deposit' does this mean that this is all that one will receive?

When will one receive the full inheritance that God has in store for us?

Summary

Explain to the group: One of the ways to determine what is an **important** point the biblical writer tries to communicate is to see what the writer repeats throughout a passage. In this passage several concepts are repeated several times.

Involve the church in this activity: Keep it brief!

Ask them: <u>In these 14 verses, how many times does Paul mention 'in him,' 'in Christ,' or the equivalent?</u> [10-14 times depending on the Bible version]

In these verses, how many times does Paul mention 'love' or 'grace'? [4-6 depending upon the Bible version]

How many times does Paul mention the terms 'bless' or 'praise'? [6 times]

State that this highlights three main truths about 'the gospel of your salvation':

- (1) Salvation is found only 'in Christ';
- (2) Salvation is totally an act of God's love and grace;
- (3) God deserves our praise for what he has done for us.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the <u>Youth!!! Take Ten</u> page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

In light of what we have studied today in this passage:

- 1. What does God want me to believe?
- 2. What does God want me to do?
- 3. Is there a promise here I need to claim?
- 4. Is there an example here I need to follow?

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

What God Is Doing Ephesians 1:1-14

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Ephesians 1:13-14 reads And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory.

Why would Paul use the symbol of the seal (marking emblem) to describe the role of the Holy Spirit in our salvation experience?

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seal_(emblem)

From the teacher preparation materials:

Paul concluded his doxology with the role the Holy Spirit plays in the spiritual blessings. He is the "seal," the mark that confirms or authenticates genuine salvation. In the ancient world letters and documents were sealed to document ownership. Packages and tombs (Matthew 27:66) were sealed as a measure to protect it from being tampered with. As such, the presence of the Spirit in believers' lives guarantees ownership and protects them until the day of judgment.

Copy this section for the Worship Time leader.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

What God Is Doing Ephesians 1:1-14

Beginning the Service:

Sing **He is Lord**, *The Worship Hymnal* #277; CCLI #5178348 **Here I Am to Worship**, *The Worship Hymnal* #130; CCLI 33266032

Offering:

Praying for the World:

Like most of the indigenous peoples of the majestic North Caucasus Mountains, the Circassians are a Muslim people caught in a cycle of dark violence and bitterness. Through two centuries of war and cultural genocide, many have been driven from their ancient homelands. Currently, nearly 800,000 remain in the Caucasus, while another 3 million to 5 million still live in tightly knit village communities throughout Turkey and the Middle East. There are fewer than 100 Christian believers and no indigenous churches. Cultural pride and tragic abuse at the hands of military powers have hardened these people to outside influence, particularly to a Gospel witness. Pray that the barriers of mistrust that isolate the Circassian people from the Gospel may be crushed. (International Mission Board, Loving the Lost of the World through Prayer, 8th edition.)

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

What God Is Doing

The Ephesians passage we have examined gives great insight to God's work in the world. Other New Testament passages affirm these teachings.

Philippians 2:8-11 speaks to the reality that God is bringing people to salvation. His death on the cross made the way for each person to relate personally to him and to the Father. Eventually, every knee will bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus as Lord. God is bringing people to salvation.

Colossians 1:17-18 tells of the supremacy of Christ in that he was present in the creation process and that all things are subject to him and are held together by him. As we deal with ongoing natural disasters and man-made war and human pain, we must continually remind ourselves of this truth. Henry W. Longfellow wrote the words which are sung in the carol *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*. "Then pealed the bells more loud and deep: "God is not dead nor doth He sleep; the wrong shall fail, the right prevail, With peace on earth, good will to men".

For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the first born from among the dead so that in everything he might have the supremacy. Colossians 1: 17-18

The supremacy of Christ is here indicated in that he created the world and holds everything together. We sometimes alienate people by demanding that they believe the Creation story exactly as we believe it. It is more important that we believe that God is Creator and that Christ was a part of that creative process.

Another truth about God at work in the word is seen in Revelation 11:15 when John envisions the seventh angel sounding his trumpet.

The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven which said: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever".

The ultimate destiny of the world is that it will belong to the Lord and his Christ and Christ will reign forever and ever.

God is bringing people to salvation; God is Creator and Sustainer of the world; Christ God will ultimately reign forever and ever.

Call to Commitment:

We could list other realities about the work of God in the world. Those who place their hope in Christ are recipients of God's amazing grace. Every recipient of God's amazing grace provides praise for the glory of God. As we have considered the ways of God – his working in the past, the present, and the future, we can only be humbly thankful that his redemptive power reached to our hearts.

Concluding the Service:

Sing Open the Eyes of my Heart, Lord once more.