

## Jan 12/25 – Leader’s Guide

### Ephesians 1:1-14 “In Christ”

The letter to the Ephesians was likely a circular letter sent around to the churches of Asia minor. In a sense then we could say that this letter is to every church at every time in every place inviting us to live into the fullness of what it is to be the Church, to be a kingdom people.

#### **Read Ephesians 1:1-14**

1. What are the most common phrases Paul uses in the opening of his letter? What does this tell us about what is central to Paul’s vision for the church?

*Blessed – part of the worship vocabulary of the scriptures – as such these words captured an embodied posture. To bless had to do with our knees and hands. We come to God on our knees open our hands and offer him our very lives. As we do we meet a God who in Jesus blesses us – comes to us on his knees, opens his hands and offers us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places – meaning the power, life, and resources of the kingdom are available to us now in Him.*

*In Christ – This phrase is used by Paul 36x in the book, 11 x in the first 14. United to Christ by faith everything that is his is ours... his past our past, his present our present, his future our future, his access to God as Father, our access to God as Father etc...*

*To the praise of His Glory – we are given in Christ all these spiritual blessing so that we might live to the praise of His Glory – reflect his goodness and character and bring life to all.*

2. Vs. 3-14 is one long sentence in Greek – 202 words without a pause or punctuation – what state is Paul in as he writes this that he is seeking to bring his readers into?

*Its striking as Paul is writing from prison – his future unknown, his present bleak, stale bread for food, chained between Roman guards, rats running over his feet – he is IN prison, but has become arrested by the reality of his being IN Christ.*

*In prison Paul is bringing his true state in Christ to bear to shape his current circumstances. Many of our troubles today as people, as a church, come about when our circumstances are more real to us than our being IN Christ. Paul is wanting to catch his readers up in the glory, the joy, the wonder of being IN Christ, that they would overflow into the most natural response – that is – worship - that they would live to the praise of His glory.*

3. (vs. 3-14) Name as many of the blessings that come to us “in Christ”. What do each mean? Which one most stands out to you and why? Which one would you like to apprehend more fully and why?

*Blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places – God comes to us in Jesus on his knees opens his hands and offers us gifts – every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places – the power, life, resources of his future kingdom available to us now.*

*Chosen in Him to be Holy and blameless, predestined for adoption as sons. In Christ we are predestined to a certain future, a certain purpose. A purpose we are set aside for (Holy – which means set aside for a purpose), which we offer ourselves wholly to (blameless – a word meaning an offering wholly given without blemish). That purpose is to be sons – living in step with the father’s business – an heir of his glorious future.*

*Redemption – the price has been paid to rescue us from slavery – slavery to sin, to death, to the demands of the law, to false worship*

*Forgiveness – restored to right relationship with God as Father, restored to his service, in which there is perfect freedom.*

*Makes known the mystery of his will – to unite all things in Jesus, to recapitulate all things in Jesus – Jesus is coming again to make everything new – that all things would pulsate with his goodness, his justice, his love, his goodness.*

*Seal of the Spirit – we are marked as Christ’s own – his treasured possession. The Holy Spirit is also the guarantee of our inheritance – all of what we experience by the work of the Holy Spirit now is but a foretaste, a promise of what is to come.*

*The rest of the question is personal reflection in nature, but perhaps keep track of which one people desire to apprehend more deeply for that is where week 2 of the series will take us.*

4. From the text what do you think God’s primary purpose is for his people? What role should the church have in the world? (See verses 5-6; 12, 14)

*That we would live to the praise of His Glory – that the church would so reflect the goodness and nature of God that God would be known.*

*Harvie Conn had a great analogy for this. He calls the church a model home. On a tract of earth’s land redeemed by the blood of Christ, Jesus the Kingdom developer had begun to build new housing. As an example of what will be he has erected a model home, a sample of what will one day fill the entire urban landscape. He invites the world in to take a look around. The church is to be the occupant of that model home living out the values, the lifestyle, the patterns of the kingdom. In sum the church is meant to be the demonstration community of Jesus’ future reign.*

5. What is God's ultimate goal? (vs. 10) (See also Philippians 2:9-11, and Colossians 1:19-20)

*To Unite Heaven and Earth in Jesus.*

*In his book on Ephesians Darrell Johnson puts it beautifully - God is going to recapitulate all things - put the head back on all things. Apart from Jesus we are running around with our heads off. All over the world right now people are asking – what has gone wrong – what is wrong with us? The biblical answer is that we are running around with our heads off. We have capitulated to forces beneath our dignity. We have sought comfort in things that now hold us in bondage.*

*This is the mystery of his will – God is going to unite all things in Jesus – make everything new – that all would pulsate with his love – his goodness – his grace..*

6. In the bible the word hope (vs. 12) means to have certainty about something. Paul is saying we can have certainty about the inheritance we have – the future we have because of Jesus' work. Paul tells us that we can be certain that God will unite all things in Jesus resulting in new creation. Think through the implications of that together – how will it impact our lives here and now to know for certain what our ultimate future is in Christ?

*If we are to be God's demonstration community of Jesus future rule, our certainty in it will shape us to live in anticipation of it in everything we do and say and pray.*

*This reflection question to finish your time together will help to bring you to a place where you are in step where Paul wants to take us in the coming weeks.*