



**OASIS: WHERE IS HISTORY HEADED?  
DONE IN SYNC WITH  
THE “EN CHRISTO” SERMON JOURNEY**  
The Passage – Ephesians 1:1-14

***Preface:*** Welcome to our second LC Bible study in our new sermon series “En Christo.” These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. These italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading.

***Leader Notes:*** Ephesians 1 is a theologically rich yet complicated passage. Take your time in this study and limit the number of questions in favor of creating a robust and helpful discussion while keeping the big idea in mind.

**Study’s BIG Idea:** God has lovingly and intentionally called all of humanity to love and worship Him in Christ who has brought all things in unity under Him.

***Opening Question/Transition:*** At some point, we each ask the big questions like “How will I be remembered?” When we survey our time period, we wonder how will future generations look at our time period. Every individual asks, “What am I here for?” and the question that every generation asks, “Where are we headed?”

These are among the big questions but first let’s ask each other, how did last week go and what do you have going in this one?

It does seem fitting to ask one another, how do we as individuals and we as a generation want to be remembered?

Paul opens the letter of Ephesians with a good bit of grandeur. These are not needless words, however. Rather, the apostle is proclaiming to humanity a great and loving God who has chosen all people to love and worship Him in Christ.

**Ephesians 1:1-14 (NIV 2011)**

<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,  
To God’s holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup> he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup> he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup> to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

<sup>11</sup> 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, <sup>12</sup> in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

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O – Theologically speaking, election means that God “chooses people.” He does so based on His character, plan and action and this work is based on God's grace. Needless to say, this is a dense and often debated subject. Let's begin by listing our observations of the “when,” “how,” “why,” and “whom” of election that we find in verses 3-14.

*(Included would be When – “chosen before the creation of the world.” How – “in love,” “he predestined us to be adopted ...” Why – “in accordance with his pleasure ...” Whom – count the number of times humanity is described. “Us” is used 6 times from 3-10. “We” is used three times. And when we include the number of times “you” is used (3 times), we see that Paul wants it to be clear what he means when he writes “of those who are God's possession” in verse 14).*

I – The meaning of the term “predestined” in verse 5 has been debated throughout the Church for centuries. The Greek word is *proorizo* and its meaning has included “mark out beforehand, to determine before, foreordain, foreknow.” Is Paul saying that God knew beforehand who would accept Christ or is Paul saying that God orchestrated who would be in Christ?

In summary, critics of foreknowledge do not feel that this term goes far enough while critics of foreordination are concerned that God goes too far. In one, God may appear too distant, in the other too controlling. While our LCs are not a time of debate, how can we help each other to see that God is both sovereign and a respecter of free will while still experiencing the love Paul describes?

*(We should also bear in mind the failure of human language and understanding the depth, power and action of God. We should leave these verses humbled and grateful for what God has done for the world in Christ.)*

I – Usually when election is debated, it is discussed in terms of “individual salvation.” However the Biblical texts often emphasize election as a corporate term. We can see in all the plural forms in these verses that Paul is focusing on the collective, not simply the individual. What does the doctrine of election do for a community that is called to share the message of Jesus?

*(When understood collectively, the message is inclusive and invitational for all.)*

A – In verse 8, Paul describes that God's grace has been “lavished” on us. If we are called to follow and emulate, how can we “lavish” God's grace in our worship to Him and in our interaction with others? How can such an attitude shape us individually?

O – In Ephesus, there was an enormous place of worship called the Temple of Artemis. It was one of the ancient wonders of the world and people would offer sacrifices and prayers to this goddess for hunting, fertility, successful business interactions, and healing. Worshippers of Artemis believed that they needed to catch her attention and prove their loyalty to her. Contrast this with what Paul is describing here in vv. 3-14.

*(In some ways, it is completely reversed. Paul is proclaiming a God who not only already knows of each of us, but called us before the “foundations of the world.” We not only already have his attention; He pursues ours.)*

I – “Foundations of the world” does not merely mean “just prior to the creation of the earth” (as “world” is more of a metaphysical term as opposed to a materialistic one). Theologians tell us that this knowledge is “rooted in the depths of God’s nature.” In this way, God is thoroughly relational, and our existence is beyond being merely informational. What ideas should this communicate to us about God’s character?

A – The point we are striving for is that God does not see humanity in the same manner as the Census Bureau filling data, physical space, and the consumption of resources. As understanding how God sees us becomes clearer, how does this help us understand why God hopes and asks so much from us (to worship Him sacrificially and whole-heartedly)?

O – What does v. 10 “to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ” mean to you?

I – We learn from Ephesians that Christ is the focal point, the bringer of restoration and wholeness to all things. How should this shape our understanding of current and future events?

A – Christ being the focal point of all things is quite the claim. Some outside the Christian faith might even accuse it of being outlandish. As Christians sharing the hope of Christ, how do we invite others to experience these truths?

O – What can we observe about the understanding of the Holy Spirit from v. 13?

I – Among our key observations is that the Holy Spirit is described as a “deposit.” The Greek word here is *arrabon* and indicates “a down payment that guaranteed complete payment.” (see also 2 Cor. 1:22 and Rom. 8:23). What can Paul mean by this?  
*(The Holy Spirit is God’s first installment on our salvation and the guarantee that the full future inheritance is promised and will be fulfilled.)*

A – As followers “sealed” in Christ, how does this change our individual and collective future?

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**Key: O – Observation. I - Interpretation. A – Application**

- a. **Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single night.** Take some time and select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your LIFE Community group. Certain questions work better for certain groups. You are encouraged to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best.
- b. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- e. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- f. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.