



**OASIS: WHAT IS GOD LIKE?
DONE IN SYNC WITH
THE “EN CHRISTO” SERMON JOURNEY**
The Passage – Ephesians 1:1-14

Preface: Welcome to our first 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: For most LC’s, this is your first study of the year. Take some time and create a “culture of care”: Inquire about the summer, the start of the fall, needs, praises, etc. Also note that the next Oasis study will be on the same text Eph. 1:1-14. There is plenty of content here, so allow time for Care and Growth as we create community this year.

Study’s BIG idea: Because of the saving work of Jesus, we respond to God by giving our worship as Paul does in the introduction of Ephesians.

Opening Question: What do you think of when you hear the question, “What is God like?”

Ephesians 1:1-14 (NIV 2011)

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To God’s holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

¹¹ 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 put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ 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, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

O – What common words/phrases do you observe throughout these fourteen verses?

I – Verses 3-14 are actually a long doxology of worship and a blessing to the intended audience. Normally doxologies are surrounded with context or conclude a section like in 3:14-21. Why do you think Paul opens with one?

(3 reasons can be suggested. One, he is excited to proclaim the God of salvation to his readers and chooses the strong God-centered opening. Two, different from other epistles, he is writing to a broader range of churches in the area of Ephesus. There is no local context for him to address as in other epistles. Therefore, he jumps right in. Three, he believes he is writing religious wisdom literature and desires to be widely-read and compelling.)

A – For the sake of mirroring the text, open this time with a doxology to God for the blessings of your life.

O – What would you say is the “thesis” of this section (1-14)? Hint – it’s verse 4.
(We are blessed and chosen by God to live blameless before him.)

I – The term “blameless” is quite intimidating and feels unattainable in our present, fallen state of humanity. Why do you think Paul writes this and why do you believe God calls for this?

A – As Christians, we know that God finds us “blameless in Christ.” How should that inform our daily decisions, attitudes, behaviors, etc.?

A – Because we cannot be blameless in the morally perfect sense, how do we as Christ-followers respond?

O – Verse 3 contains the phrase “every spiritual blessing in Christ.” The theologian Gordon Fee makes a great point that the word “spiritual” does not mean “spiritual in the other-worldly sense” but rather “all that God’s Spirit brings to life.” What do you observe the difference to be?

I – Let’s examine the word “heavenly.” It’s not really about heaven in the clouds sense. “Heavenly realms” is more about the fact that we find ourselves in God’s world, *so God’s way is now*. Discuss how seeing “heaven” in this way allows us to see something different in the text. *(John Stott explains it this way – “It’s like saying, this world is not the only reality – a larger reality exists where Christ is exalted in the Lord.”)*

A – How does seeing heaven as a concept of “now and later,” “here and there” might change how we think about our current reality and our eternal future? Furthermore, what does this say about God?

(He’s concerned about us, our reality, right now.)

O – This doxology is dedicated to God but it’s also about whom?
(“Us” – “blessed us” v. 3, “predestined us” – v. 5 – “made known to us” v. 9)

I – Because we are chosen by God for adoption and are forgiven through grace in Christ, what does this imply about how God must feel towards humanity?

(He loves his creation more than humanity gives Him credit for. He invites the world to enter into a fellowship with Him, at His cost, yet will not impose, force, or manipulate His will on anyone. This is the mystery of divine justice and unconditional love.)

A – How is such a message shared with a cynical world?

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.