

Sermon-Based Small Group Bible Study

Union with Christ: The Fringe Is the Center (Ephesians 1:1–14)

Open

Select one of these “ice breakers” to get the conversation going toward the study.

- In school what was your favorite extracurricular team or group? Why did you enjoy it?
- What is the most famous thing you witnessed in person? What was the experience like?
- What is something you really like or enjoy that is not very popular with people at large? What do you think makes it different for you?

Dig

After reading Ephesians 1:1–14 together, discuss these questions.

1. From this text, what words or phrases seem to address God’s plan or purpose for the world? What seems to be the focus of these terms?
2. From this text, what words or phrases name God’s gifts for his people? What do these gifts tell you about God? About humanity?
3. Again looking through this text, find words or phrases that refer to things that have already happened or are already happening. Then do the same for things yet to happen (you may have some of the same things on both lists). What connection do you see between the present and the future in this text?
4. Paul refers to God’s work for his people as “riches . . . lavished on us” (verses 7–8). Many of the terms in the text sound like “riches,” but some might not. Which ones might seem odd as “riches”? What insights into the Christian life does that contrast provide?
5. Looking at the text again, what terms seem to you to describe well the identity or nature of a follower of Jesus?

Summary: Even though Christians may not look like it, together they are the focus of everything God has done, everything that is his eternal purpose for our world. All of this is by God’s initiative and power, so we are unworthy but grateful recipients. And we are not left as we are, because God’s gifts work in us to transform us to reflect the gracious nature of the God to whom we belong.

Reflect

Use any of these prompts to encourage group members to apply the text to their own experiences.

- What parts of the Christian life do you find especially challenging right now? Does this text give you a different perspective on them? If so, describe the difference.
- Among all the gifts from God he names, Paul says “in him we have redemption through his blood” (verse 7), referring to Jesus’ death. In what ways for you has the Christian life been a blend of God’s gifts and following Jesus on the way to the cross?
- The Holy Spirit is a guarantee of our eternal inheritance. In what ways do you find life in the Spirit to be like a taste of eternity? In what ways is life still a reminder that there’s more to come?

Pray

Invite the group to pray together using any of these suggestions.

- What needs have you heard from others in the group that we can pray about?
- Which of God's gifts is especially important to you right now? Let's give thanks for those.
- There are countless things in the world that don't reflect the coming eternal reign of God. Which ones burden you?