

THE CHURCH: A PEOPLE CALLED BY GOD

UNITED · EPHESIANS 1:3-14 · JANUARY 9, 2022 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

*"We, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory."
(Ephesians 1:12)*

What is the Church?

3 Characteristics of the Church (Ephesians 1:3-14)

1. The Church is Chosen by God the Father (1:3-6)
 - Blessed with every spiritual blessing (1:3)
 - Called and chosen by God (1:4, 11)
 - Adopted by the Father through Jesus Christ (1:5)
2. The Church is Redeemed in Jesus Christ (1:7-13)
 - Redeemed and forgiven through the blood of Christ and lavish grace of God (1:7-8)
 - Given insight into the mystery of God's will (1:9-10)
 - Received the message of truth, the gospel of salvation (1:13)
3. The Church is Sealed with the Holy Spirit (1:13-14)
 - Marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit (1:13-14)
 - Living to the praise of God's glory (1:6, 12, 14)

Living as the Church

Responding to God the Father's call
Savoring God's goodness in Jesus Christ
Living for God's praise by the power of the Holy Spirit

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When you hear the word "church" what comes to mind? What would you say has shaped your understanding of "church" most?
2. This week we begin a new series, "United", where we will explore the essential nature of the church of Jesus Christ. Today we will focus on the church as a people called by God from Ephesians 1:3-14. Begin your study in prayer by asking God to speak to you through the Scripture. Then, whether you're on your own or with others, read Ephesians 1:3-14 aloud.

3. In Ephesians 1:3, Paul sets the tone and theme of the verses to come. Notice how many times the word "bless" or "blessed" appears (note that "Praise be to God" is the same word; literally, "Blessed be God.") Why does Paul say God deserves praise? What do you think it means to be blessed "in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing"?
4. Verses 4-14 begin to outline the spiritual blessings that God has blessed us with. Slowly read through the verses and identify what those blessings are. As you identify them, answer these questions:
 - What is this blessing?
 - What does this tell me about who God is and what God does?
 - What does this tell me about the life of the church and the individual believer?
5. Throughout this passage, Paul several times mentions the idea of being chosen by God (vss 4, 5, 11). What do you think it means to be chosen?
6. Why do you think this is important for our understanding of what it means to be the church and to live as the church?
7. This passage begins (vs 3), is centered (vss 6, 12), and concludes (vs 14) with praise to God. Why do you think all these spiritual blessings speak of the church existing "to the praise of his glory" (1:14)?
8. How do you think we can practically live to the praise of God's glory as the church today?
9. What is one thing God is speaking to you through this study? If you're on your own, write that down, pray over it, and share it with someone this week. If you are with a small group, share your answers with one another before closing in prayer.

DIG DEEPER:

This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- Memorize Ephesians 1:3-14 in its entirety or a verse from it. You may also want to memorize Ephesians 4:4-6.
- Journal about Ephesians 1:3-14, perhaps thanking God for each of the spiritual blessings outlined in this passage or dwelling upon one or two specifics that stand out to you.
- Reach out to someone to share with them what God is teaching you about the church and the spiritual blessings found in Jesus Christ.
- Watch the Bible Project overview video on the book of Ephesians:
bibleproject.com/explore/video/ephesians/