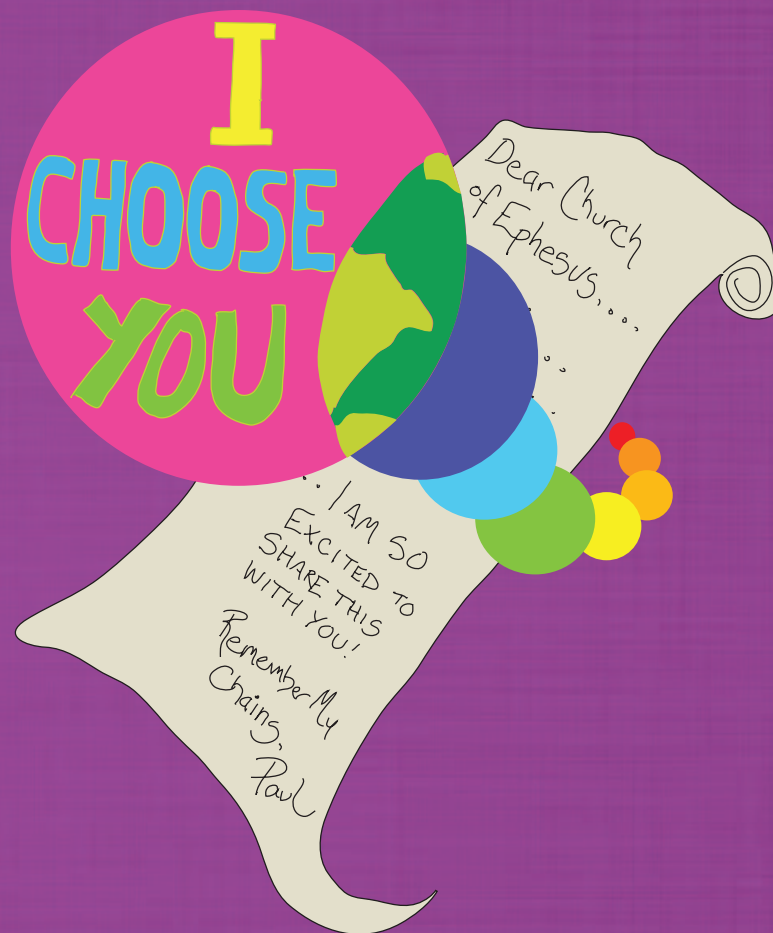


LESSON 63

Chosen before the World Began

EPHESIANS 1:1-23



BIBLE TRUTH

GOD'S SALVATION WAS PLANNED BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN

LESSON SNAPSHOT

1. OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

2. BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Ephesians 1:1–23 from the Scriptures or read story 141, “Chosen before the World Began,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

3. OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

God’s Predetermined Plan

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ photocopies of a maze—one for each student

4. TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Select one of the object lessons to use to cover the teaching points.

5. OBJECT LESSON 2 15 MIN

List the Blessings

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
- ✓ Bibles for the class

6. SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

7. ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Chosen in Him

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

8. CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

9. BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Searching out the Trinity

SUPPLIES

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
- ✓ Bibles for the class

TOTAL 85 MIN

PREPARING TO TEACH

TEACHING POINTS

Our salvation in Christ was always God’s plan—Following Paul’s greeting, the first substantial paragraph in Ephesians (Ephesians 1:3–10) is actually one continuous praise celebrating the accomplishment of God’s redemption through Christ. We learn some mind-bending truths in Paul’s praise of God. We learn that God knew us before we were born. We learn that he chose us in Christ before we were born (Ephesians 1:4). God chose us to be adopted through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:5). This plan of redemption was all according to God’s pleasure and will. God was not surprised by the fall of Adam and Eve; he knew they would sin. God always planned for mankind’s redemption through Jesus.

The idea that God chose us to be adopted before the world was created is hard for us to understand. How does that work with our responsibility to repent and believe (Ephesians 1:13)? Rather than try to pit God’s sovereignty against man’s responsibility we should resolve that they are both true. To be saved, all men must choose to believe in God’s saving plan. And yet, in the mystery of God, before we were born or able to do any choosing, God chose us. God did not choose us based on our works or on his anticipation that we would choose him. God chose us according to his love (Ephesians 1:4–5). That is, God firmly decided, according to his delight in us as his children, that he would save us sinners by the work of Christ!

Christ’s sacrifice was always God’s plan—God didn’t scramble to come up with a plan after Adam and Eve sinned. He wasn’t wondering what he would do next. God never said, “Oh, no! Adam and Eve disobeyed. Now what am I going to do?” Even before the fall of Adam and Eve, God’s plan to restore fallen mankind was to sacrifice his Son (Ephesians 1:9). Each of God’s children was chosen in Christ as part of God’s plan (Ephesians 1:4). God chose the exact time for Jesus’ birth and arranged for it to be foretold by the prophets and even symbolized through the sacrificial system he instituted in ancient Israel.

God’s plan of salvation evokes thanksgiving and prayer—Paul’s opening declaration of the saving grace of God in Christ is one big praise! Every time we hear that someone has believed in Jesus Christ, we should rejoice in the same way Paul rejoiced over the salvation of the Ephesians. Paul’s prayer (Ephesians 1:16–23) also helps us know what we can pray for in our own lives. We should ask God to help us know him better through the Spirit, that our hearts might be enlightened to see our great inheritance and that we might know the great power made available to all believers (Ephesians 1:19).

A LITTLE BIT MORE***Predestination***

It is difficult for us to understand how God chose some, but not all, prior to creation. People will sometimes ask, “Do you believe in predestination?” as if it were a teaching made up by man. The Bible clearly teaches that prior to creation, God not only knew what would happen, but predetermined what would happen. At the same time, the Bible teaches that all men are responsible for their sin and must repent. Someone may say, “I chose to follow God.” That is exactly true. But it is also true that God chose that person first, before the world even began. Ultimately God’s choice of us prevails over our choice of God. Jesus said it this way, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit” (John 15:16).

Where Is the Gospel? _____

How does today’s Bible story fit into God’s greater plan of redemption?

We, who were chosen in Christ before the world began (Ephesians 1:4), were included in Christ when we heard the gospel and believed (Ephesians 1:13). Though we are chosen, we are yet sinners until the appointed time where we hear and believe. The gospel is the message of salvation; but more, it is the power of our salvation. We hear it and believe. At the moment of salvation, God places his Spirit in us as a deposit and a guarantee of our full redemption, which will be experienced when sin will be removed and our sinful bodies will be changed into glorified bodies.

In Ephesians 1:7 we read, “In [Christ] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.” This is the heart of the gospel. Christ’s shed blood on the cross is the foundation of the forgiveness of sins for all those who “heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him” (Ephesians 1:13).

Paul’s introduction to Ephesians is a repetition of the basic facts of the good news. To this he adds that God’s plan for us individually was known in the mind of God even before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4).

THE LESSON

OPENING REVIEW 5 MIN

Use last week’s lesson outline to review with the children what they learned.

BIBLE STORY 10 MIN

Read Ephesians 1:1–23 from the Scriptures or read story 141, “Chosen before the World Began,” from *The Gospel Story Bible*.

OBJECT LESSON 1 10 MIN

God’s Predetermined Plan

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ photocopies of a maze—one for each student

Use this object lesson to illustrate how God’s plan directs our lives toward Christ even though we freely make choices as we go.

Pass out the copies of the maze prior to teaching and then come back to it as an illustration of God’s predetermined plan. The maze only has one correct path to the finish. The children will freely negotiate the maze and reach the end. You knew exactly where they would end up even before they began to do the maze. You even knew the exact way they would go to get to the finish point.

Our lives are like that to God. He knows and has planned all things. Even though we freely make choices about what we will do, the Lord is behind the scenes determining our steps (Proverbs 16:9).

In the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul clearly teaches us that God chose those who would place their faith in Christ before the foundation of the world was laid.

Many folks have spent a lot of hours objecting to God’s sovereign plan rather than rejoicing in it. When we learn of the gospel we should cry out to God to save us. We know that God does not save everyone and that some will be judged for their rebellion against God. We should

not be surprised that God does not rescue everyone; we should be surprised that God rescues anyone at all, least of all ourselves.

TEACHING/DISCUSSION 10 MIN

Using the teaching points, teach through the lesson for today.

OBJECT LESON 2 15 MIN

List the Blessings

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
- ✓ Bibles for the class

Read through Ephesians 1:1–23 and invite the children to list the blessings we have been given by God the Father through Christ. Talk about each one.

He chose us. Everyone is in rebellion against God, but God chose to rescue some from eternal death.

God blesses all those he saves by taking away their sins so they are blameless. He does this through the sacrifice of his Son.

God adopts as his children all those he saves.

We have been redeemed. We are purchased out of slavery from sin.

We are lavished with his grace.

We are given the Holy Spirit as a deposit and guarantee.

SWORD BIBLE MEMORY 5 MIN

Take time during the class to review the SWORD Bible Memory verses with the class. Provide the opportunity for each child to recite the verses to an adult worker.

ACTIVITY TIME 10 MIN

Chosen in Him

SUPPLIES:

- ✓ paper
- ✓ crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Have the students draw a large cross outline. Tell them to write their name over and over inside the outline of the cross to fill it up completely. Then write the words, “For he chose us in him before the foundation of the world,” with colored markers across the top or bottom of the paper.

CLOSING PRAYER 5 MIN

Pick several children to pray prayers based on the day’s Scripture passages.

BONUS OBJECT LESSON 15 MIN

Searching out the Trinity

SUPPLIES

- ✓ whiteboard and dry-erase marker
- ✓ Bibles for the class

Paul refers to all three persons of the Trinity in Ephesians 1. Take time to list the way Paul includes references to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Read through this chapter aloud as a class. Then draw out the class to tell you where they see the three persons of the Godhead in this passage and list answers on the whiteboard. Use the following outline to discuss the role of each person in the Trinity.

Father—The subject of the blessings in Ephesians 1:3–10 is the Father.
The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.
He chose us in him before the foundation of the world.
He predestined us.
He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose.

Son—The Son is the means by which the Father blesses us.
Christ is the Son of the Father.
Our blessings are in Christ.
We were chosen in him (Christ).
We were adopted through Jesus Christ.
We receive his grace freely in the Beloved (Christ).
We have redemption through his blood.
We were included in Christ.

Holy Spirit—The Holy Spirit is our deposit and guarantee.
Having believed we are marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.
He is the guarantee of our inheritance.