Cornerstone
Our New Identity
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Key Scripture:

Ephesians 1:1–14 (NLT)
This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus.
I am writing to God's holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.
2 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.
3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. 4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. 6 So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. 7 He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. 8 He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.
9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious will regarding Christ—which is to fulfill his own good plan. 10 And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. 11 Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan. 12 God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. 13 And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

TALK IT OVER

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- How do you normally introduce yourself to others (e.g., by your career or hobbies)? Is that your identity? If not, what is your identity? What do you want it to be?

Start sharing. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- **Read Ephesians 1:1.** How does Paul identify himself? What title does he give the Ephesians? Do you see yourself as a saint? Why or why not?
- **Read Ephesians 1:2-3.** What does it mean to be united in Christ? What are the implications of that relationship?
- **Read Ephesians 1:4-5**. How does it make you feel to know that God adopted you as His child before the world began?
- How do you make sense of the fact that God chose you, but **John 3:16** says that you chose God?
- **Read Ephesians 1:6-8**. What does it mean to be in bondage to the power of sin? What does it mean that Jesus purchased our freedom from that bondage? We still sin on a daily basis, so what did Jesus do for us?
- **Read Ephesians 1:9-14.** What is God's plan for everything in heaven and on earth? How are you a part of that plan?
- How does the Holy Spirit serve as a deposit or guarantee of God's future promises?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- At least once each day, reflect on your identity in Christ and how that is a part of God's good plan.

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- **Ephesians 1:16-20.** 16 I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, 17 asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. 18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. 19 I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power 20 that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.

Question: "What does it mean that in Him we have redemption (Ephesians 1:7)?"

Answer: In Ephesians 1 we learn about our incredible spiritual riches in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) and how God works to provide these riches for us—including our redemption: “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us” (Ephesians 1:7–8).

In Ephesians 1 Paul encourages believers at Ephesus by explaining their new identity in Christ. God gave us that new identity, and we learn in the following chapter that we receive God’s grace by faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9). This new identity in Christ is characterized by our having every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

Notably, all three Persons of the Trinity played a role in giving us these blessings. God the Father chose us to be in Christ to be holy and blameless before Him (Ephesians 1:4). He also predetermined or predestined that we would be adopted as sons through the work of Christ (Ephesians 1:5). God the Son also worked so that we could have a new identity. In Him we have redemption and forgiveness through His shed blood (Ephesians 1:7). God the Holy Spirit seals believers as God’s guarantee or pledge that we do indeed have eternal life (Ephesians 1:13–14).

This new identity in Christ is made possible by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and it is accomplished by the work of Christ on the cross. In Him we have redemption, which Paul identifies as the forgiveness of our sins according to God’s rich grace given to us. The term *redemption* is translated from the Greek *apolutrosin*, which means “the act of fully setting free.” Paul explains the need for that redemption in the following chapter.

In Ephesians 2, we learn that we need redemption because we were dead in our trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). We were physically alive, but we were in bondage to sin and walked enslaved to the world, the devil, and our own flesh (Ephesians 2:2–3). Ultimately, we were deserving of God’s wrath. We owed a debt we could never repay on our own. We were enemies of God (Romans 5:10), as Paul explains elsewhere. But in Christ we have redemption (Ephesians 1:7). He died on the cross to set us free. By God’s grace through our believing in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8–9) we are set free from the bondage of sin (Romans 8:2) and from the wrath and judgment of God (Romans 5:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:9).

Paul writes to make sure that believers understand that in Christ we have redemption—in Him we are fully set free. Furthermore, God has accomplished this for His own glory (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). We know that, if God has staked His own glory on our having redemption in Him, that God has made certain that we are fully set free. Jesus explained that the one who believes in Him has eternal life (John 6:47). Peter identifies at least eleven ways we can be certain that the redemption we have in Christ has been accomplished (1 Peter 1:3–5). Paul affirms to the Colossians that in Him we have redemption, which is the forgiveness of our sins (Colossians 1:14). And if there is any doubt in our minds as to the security of our redemption in Christ, Paul reminds us that we are sealed for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

Though we are still surrounded by the consequences of sin—even in our own bodies—one day we will experience every aspect of being free from sin. In Him we have redemption. In Him we have been fully set free.

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