

In Stride

Walking Worthy of God's Rich Grace



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STRONG

curriculum

A world weak on truth needs a strong, trustworthy message. STRONG Curriculum builds stronger churches by teaching all Scripture to produce spiritually mature believers who measure up to the stature of Christ.

A Plan You Can Trust

The Bible has the answers to what students need most. No other book or philosophy contains God's power to save and transform lives. Because of this, we've made it our unwavering commitment to build Strong Students upon the sure foundation of God's Word. With this curriculum, your church can develop teens who will be strong defenders of the faith.

The Strong Students scope and sequence is designed around the seven teaching aims Jesus modeled in His ministry. Since these are Jesus' aims, teachers can be confident in the aims' effectiveness and purpose. Every lesson in the Strong Students scope and sequence addresses at least one of Jesus' teaching aims.


Every lesson also focuses on students' needs. We understand the challenge of teaching the Bible to today's teens because of four barriers culture has pushed on them:


- Struggles with identity
- Subjective view of truth
- Hope in a social utopia
- Belief that a career and wealth guarantee happiness


Strong Students takes care of the tough part for you by striking at the foundation of these barriers and providing a Biblical response to each one. With Strong Students, you can concentrate on communicating to your teens and helping them grow into strong believers in Christ without worrying whether you are effectively addressing the philosophies competing for their minds.


Look for the **BuildUP** icons in the table of contents and on the first page of each lesson.


JESUS' TEACHING AIMS


 **BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.** Jesus taught His students to trust in Him alone for salvation and to share the gospel with others. This aim is obviously fundamental to all the rest


 **UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL ETHICS.** Jesus instructed His students to live according to moral values. These values provided them with the tools to make wise decisions.

 **INTERNALIZE GODLINESS.** Jesus taught His followers to be godly on the inside. He warned them not to become like the Pharisees, with a mere outward appearance of godliness.

 **LEARN DOCTRINE.** Jesus knew the importance of teaching His students the truth and identified doctrine as one of the means for spiritual growth. Wishy-washy doctrine leads to faulty practice.

 **DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS.** Jesus taught His followers to meet life's challenges in a way that honored and glorified God. He gave them the skills to navigate those challenges successfully.

 **UPLIFT OTHERS.** Jesus' life was all about others. Leading by example, He taught His followers to be all about others too.

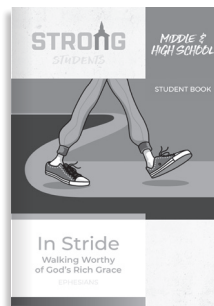
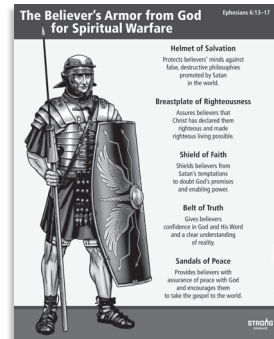
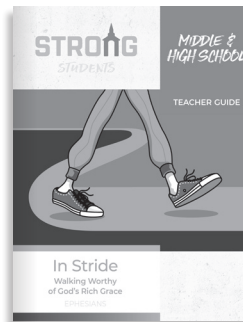
 **PREPARE TO SERVE.** Jesus prepared His followers to serve in the context of local churches that were established soon after His ascension. He emphasized sacrifice and dedication.

STRONG[®] curriculum

Kit Contents

- Teacher Guide
- Student Book
Order one book for each student
- Resource CD with online download code
Includes worksheets, Home Connection Tool, and additional teacher resources
- DVD
- Verse Poster
- Posters

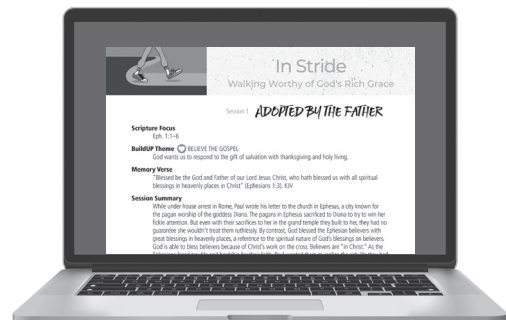
In this quarter's Strong Students for Middle and High Schoolers, the students will learn that tuning in to the Bible is worth it because it is God's inspired Word. They will also understand the basic steps of Bible study and how to put them into practice. This course will equip them to study Bible passages on their own.



Ordering Information

All materials are available from Regular Baptist Press.

- Web: www.StrongCurriculum.com
- E-mail: orders@rbpstore.org
- Toll-free orders in the United States: 1-800-727-4440
- Fax: 1-847-843-3757
- Canada: Contact your distributor.



The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

How to Teach **STRONG STUDENTS** Lessons

Leading a Student to Christ

STRONG STUDENTS has been designed to help you clearly present God's Word to your students. Each lesson will guide students through the Bible, encouraging them to interact with the material and apply it to their lives.

Familiarize yourself with the resources included in the kit so that you can maximize your effectiveness in the classroom. The key resources you need are Student Books, the PowerPoint (CD), and the Home Connection Tool (CD).

Encourage students to use their Student Books during each lesson so they can follow the PowerPoint presentation by taking notes. The words to fill in the blanks are either part of the outline or highlighted in orange in the sentences in the PowerPoint.

Some of the PowerPoint presentations contain additional slides that obviously tie into the teacher guide lessons. Make sure you review the PowerPoint presentations before teaching.

The student books include a daily devotional. Encourage your students to complete them either before or after coming to class.

The Home Connection Tool gives the parents of your students an idea of what you are teaching in class. Consider emailing those to each family represented in your class. You can find them on the CD or online using the download code.

Before Each Lesson

- Read the Scripture Focus passage several times.
- Do the Time with God section of the Student Book to know what your students are studying.
- Memorize the key verses.
- Prepare the materials you will need for each activity.
- Work through the Bible Study section and carefully plan the lesson.
- Plan how you will apply the Bible lesson to your students' lives. Make sure what you say is clear and shows students how they can use the lesson.
- Pray for yourself, your students, and your lesson.

AS A TEACHER, your most important concern is the personal salvation of your students. Find out whether your students know Jesus Christ as their Savior in a way that doesn't introduce doubt in their minds. An easy and gentle way to find this out is to give your students several minutes to write out an answer to a question like, How can a person get to Heaven? Collect their answers and read them during the following week. If any of your students seem confused about salvation, you can present the gospel to them and provide the opportunity for them to receive Christ. If possible, deal with students individually.

The Plan of Salvation

- Everyone is a sinner. No one can live up to God's perfect standard (Romans 3:23).
- Sin's penalty is death (Romans 6:23).
- God loves us and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sin. Christ died in our place (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
- When a person places his trust in Jesus' payment for sins, Christ becomes his Savior. His sins are forgiven, and he receives God's gift of eternal life (John 1:12; 5:24).
- Everlasting life begins the moment we trust in Jesus (John 3:36).
- After that, nothing we ever do will take us out of God's hand; we are secure (John 10:27–29).
- The experience of the new birth (being born into God's family) is not based on a feeling, but on confidence in God's Word (1 John 5:11, 12).

Encourage students to pray, but explain that prayer does not save a person. Prayer is how we communicate our inward thoughts to God. Ask new believers to explain what they have done and what has happened to them.

Discipleship

Encourage new believers to read the Bible, and explain the importance of prayer. Also explain 1 John 1:9 to them so they can deal with sin in their new Christian life. Make it a priority to follow up with new believers.

Knowing Middle School Students

Description of Physical, Social, and Emotional Development

- I MAY feel developmentally out of step with my peers—behind or ahead in physical changes—as I enter and experience puberty.
- MAY be sensitive about my weight and body shape and worry about whether I am normal.
- I AM developing my own sense of identity.
- I AM more interested in and influenced by my peer group than by the adults in my life.
- I MAY be moody, depressed, or anxious about academic or social issues in my life.
- I AM very focused on myself and may feel both high expectations and lack of confidence.
- I AM better able to express feelings through talking, but I tend to respond dramatically, feeling that no one else has ever experienced the same feelings and emotions.
- I DO NOT always exhibit the emotional maturity that matches my more adult-like appearance. I have trouble thinking before acting; sometimes I seem silly and unfocused on the task at hand.

Effective Responses

- Provide emotional and spiritual support and encourage students to develop a strong sense of self as a valuable person, created by God.
- Accept students as they are and avoid comparing to others. Resist stereotyping. Not every tall boy is a basketball player.
- Generate an atmosphere of acceptance and love for all, demonstrating interest and care for each student.
- Create an atmosphere of mutual respect so youth feel they are part of a community.
- Help build genuine relationships by honestly sharing mistakes and life experiences.
- Help students talk through the ramifications of their choices without asking, “How could you? What were you thinking?”

- Avoid arguments by remaining calm and not engaging in banter over an issue.
- Be patient with the tendency of some youth toward constant personal grooming.

Cognitive (Learning) Development

- I MAY be hesitant to try new things for fear of embarrassing myself in front of my peer group.
- I AM developing new thinking skills and am able to think about multiple options and possibilities.
- I CAN think more deeply and significantly about abstract ideas such as faith.
- I AM developing a stronger sense of right and wrong.
- I MAY be ready to take significant steps in areas of faith and Christian growth.

Effective Instructional Methods

- Create an open and stress-free environment where youth can learn and share concerns in a confidence-building atmosphere.
- Provide background information, a purpose to the lesson, and understanding of the text.
- Combine love, high energy, enthusiasm, and seriousness with engaging ways to present the lesson. Use personal stories that illustrate Biblical principles to keep students engaged in learning.
- Provide honest answers to questions.
- Stimulate thinking in areas of salvation and Christian growth.
- Help Christians work through issues of assurance of salvation and to begin studying the Bible for daily decision making.
- Encourage students to articulate Biblical principles of right and wrong that they are learning from God’s Word.
- Invite volunteers to look up and read aloud Bible passages. But don’t put students on the spot or ask them to do things that make them feel foolish.

SESSION 1

ADOPTED BY THE FATHER

Scripture Focus

Eph. 1:1–6

BuildUP Theme



BELIEVE THE GOSPEL

God wants us to respond to the gift of salvation with thanksgiving and holy living.

Measurable Response

The students will better understand God's gift of salvation and will praise Him for it.

Memory Verse

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

Teacher Preparation

- God's redemption of humanity is hard to grasp, even for mature believers who have studied the Bible. Yet our understanding can continue to grow as we study God's Word even deeper. Paul's letter to the Ephesians reveals the nature of salvation and its blessings for believers.
- Read Acts 19:24–41 and 20:17–38. The Ephesian church had forgotten the rich spiritual blessings they had received as adopted children of God. They had become distracted by the wealthy, pagan society in which they lived. Paul wrote to strengthen their understanding of salvation. Their deeper understanding would cause them to celebrate their blessings in Christ and live holy lives out of gratitude to God for His great love.
- This study will challenge your students to understand and apply weightier truths concerning salvation and life in Christ. Also, you'll have a good opportunity to review the plan of salvation for any unsaved students as well as for those who need help in conveying the gospel to the lost.

Cultural Barrier

The world has become obsessed with creating new categories into which people can slot themselves in hopes of finding a sense of identity and value. Many of those news slots are simply new spins on age-old sins. Teens can be greatly influenced by these criteria as they struggle with their identity and with the definitions of sin and holiness. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul focused on the identity of all believers "in Christ." As students understand life in Christ, they will see Him as crucial to their identity. They will live holy lives and will be secure in who they are. They will walk "in stride" with Christ.

Session Starters

Option 1—Adoption Survey

Gather

- Resources 49-R1 through 49-R3.

Steps

1. Give each student one of the animal adoption surveys (resource 49-R1 through 49-R3). Students fill out the survey. The questions on the survey are as follows:

- Circle the number (1-10) that best reflects how motivated you would be to adopt the (animal)?
- What risks or rewards are influencing your motivation to adopt the (animal)?
- What would you be willing to give up to adopt the (animal)?

2. Students share their survey answers.

3. Discuss the students' answers.

ASK: Whose interest did you have in mind when you were recording your answers? Your own? The interest of the pet?

When adopting pets, we usually consider how we will benefit from the adoption. We choose pets we think will make our lives better. We are interested in how lovable or cool the pet seems.

ASK: What experiences do you have with adopting pets? What can you share from those experiences?

4. Transition to the Bible lesson.

The apostle Paul used the practice of adoption to describe our special relationship with God. As believers, we are adopted by God into His family. But God didn't choose to adopt us based on our loveliness; God adopted us based on His love and grace. This session will help us understand more about being adopted by God. We will learn whose interests He had at heart. We will also learn we ought to be incredibly grateful, for He paid a high price for us.

Option 2—Selection Responses

Steps

1. Discuss being selected to be a part of a group.


Adoption Survey—Inland Taipan Snake

1. Circle the number that best reflects how motivated you would be to adopt the world's deadliest snake?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all most

2. What risks or rewards are influencing your motivation to adopt the snake?

3. What, if anything, would you be willing to give up to adopt the snake?



Source: iStockphoto.com
Photo: iStockphoto.com

49-R1

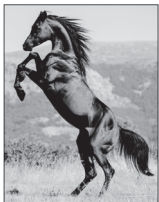
Adoption Survey—Arabian Horse

1. Circle the number that best reflects how motivated you would be to adopt the horse?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all most

2. What risks or rewards are influencing your motivation to adopt the horse?

3. What, if anything, would you be willing to give up to adopt the horse?



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49-R2


Adoption Survey—West Highland White Terrier

1. Circle the number that best reflects how motivated you would be to adopt the puppy?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
not at all most

2. What risks or rewards are influencing your motivation to adopt the puppy?

3. What, if anything, would you be willing to give up to adopt the puppy?



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49-R3

ASK: For what (e.g., sports team, musical cast, club) have you been chosen?

ASK: What did you do to be worthy of being selected?

ASK: How did you respond to being selected?

2. Transition to the Bible lesson.

God expects us to respond to our salvation with gratitude, especially when we realize we did nothing to earn or merit salvation. God moved in our hearts to draw us to Him. For that we should be forever grateful. Paul called on the Ephesians to praise God's saving grace. We will examine his instructions in this session.

Bible Study

Gather

- Resources 49-R4 through 49-R8.
- Video 1 ("The Worship of Diana") from the DVD.
- Walk Worthy poster.
- Whiteboard and marker.

I. Ephesians' Setting and Purpose

A. Paul's history with Ephesus (Acts 18:18–21; 19; 20:17–38)

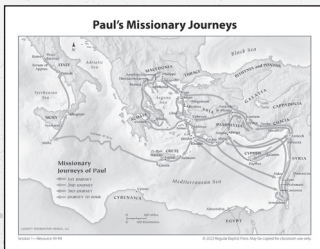
DISPLAY: Resource 49-R4. Point out Ephesus, Miletus, and Rome.

Ephesus was an important and wealthy port city in the Roman province of Asia. Paul had visited the city briefly when he was returning home from his second journey (Acts 18:18–21). During his third missionary journey, Paul returned to Ephesus and spent three years establishing a church there (20:31). As a result of Paul's ministry, many Ephesians trusted in Christ and abandoned their pagan practices (19:18–20).

As Paul circled back on his third missionary journey, he traveled to Miletus to meet the elders of the Ephesian church before traveling on to Rome (Acts 20:17–38). The meeting was the elders' last with Paul, but Paul's care for them continued. Paul wrote his epistle to the Ephesians during his first imprisonment in Rome (AD 60-63) (Eph. 1:1; 3:1). Paul lived under house arrest and awaited trial before Emperor Nero. Despite the possibility of a death sentence, Paul stayed focused on ministry and wrote to teach and encourage the Ephesian believers.

B. Ephesus' obsession with Diana (Acts 19)

The Ephesian believers were saved out of a thoroughly pagan culture.



49-R4

Ephesus was known for its worship of the goddess Diana (Artemis). The Ephesians believed Diana gave and protected physical life. They lived as if they owed their lives to her. In their minds, they lived “in Diana.”

VIDEO: Show video 1 (“Diana of the Ephesians”) from the DVD.

The Ephesian silversmiths found a lucrative trade in making and selling miniature silver images of Diana. People bought the images to gain favor with her and to ensure her blessings on their lives. When the gospel began to spread in Asia, belief in Diana waned. Consequently, the silversmiths lost money and feared the worship of Diana might cease altogether. Paul’s disruption of their business incited an angry mob. They stormed into the city’s theater, dragging with them two of Paul’s missionary companions (Acts 19:23–29).

DISPLAY: Resource 49-R5. The theater in Ephesus boasted a seating capacity of twenty-five thousand.

When the town clerk addressed the mob, he successfully quelled the riot by appealing to their sense of pride. He reminded them of the “fact” that the image of Diana fell from the sky so that Ephesus could be her temple guardian (Acts 19:35–40). Of course, their story about Diana was just a myth and their pride was misplaced.

DISPLAY: Resource 49-R6. Diana is most often depicted as a huntress with a bow and arrows.

The Ephesians built a magnificent temple to Diana around 700 BC. It was destroyed and rebuilt twice with the last version being the most magnificent.

DISPLAY: Resource 49-R7. The picture is a 1:25 scale model of the temple of Diana in Ephesus.

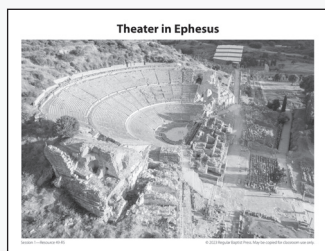
Eventually the last temple to Diana was destroyed too. Diana proved to be false. There are no magnificent temples to her today and few people seriously worship her.

DISPLAY: Resource 49-R8. The final temple to Diana in Ephesus now consists of stacks of broken remains.

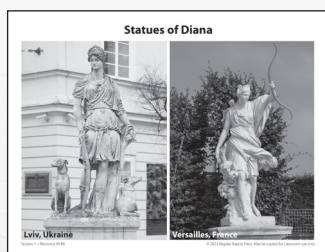
The gospel, by contrast, has continued to spread, moving beyond ancient Asia Minor to reach countless people around the world.

C. Paul’s emphasis on life “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3)

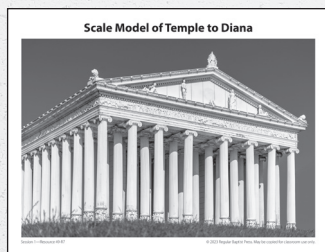
The typical Ephesian found identity in Diana and took pride in living in a free city. Being “in Diana” and in Ephesus affected every aspect of the Ephesians’ lives. Throughout his letter, Paul directed the Jewish and Gentile believers in Ephesus to consider their unity and identity “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). In chapters 1–3, the apostle laid out the rich



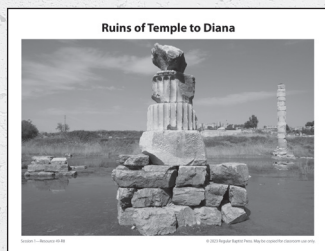
49-R5



49-R6



49-R7



49-R8

spiritual blessings they had received—their wealth in Christ. In chapters 4—6, Paul explained a life based on these spiritual riches—their walk in Christ. His doctrinal and practical teachings will help us learn why and how we can live in Christ, walking worthy of God’s rich grace.



DISPLAY: Walk Worthy poster. Point out that Ephesians 1—3 describes God’s rich grace on believers while chapters 4—6 tell us how to walk (live) in light of those blessings. You will use this poster to track both God’s rich blessings and our responses.

II. Paul’s Personal Greeting (Eph. 1:1, 2)

READ: Ephesians 1:1, 2.

To be an apostle, a man had to see the resurrected Christ and receive a specific call from God. When Paul met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, God called him to be an apostle. Paul joyfully accepted his role and recognized the authority God granted him with the position.

Paul called the Ephesian believers “saints,” meaning people set apart for God. Paul wished the saints a twofold blessing of “grace” and “peace” (1:2). Grace means God’s unmerited favor, and peace means the presence of calm, confidence, and contentment even during trying circumstances.

“Grace” was a common greeting among Greeks. “Peace” was a common greeting among Jews. Paul combined the greetings to emphasize that both saved Gentiles and saved Jews were one in Christ Jesus. Being a “saint” in Christ supersedes all our physical or cultural differences. Nothing about our physical makeup or cultural background will ever be as important as being together “in Christ.”

ASK: How should we treat those to whom God offers His grace and peace? *As valuable and as equals.*

III. The Father’s Spiritual Blessings (Eph. 1:3–5)

A. Spiritual riches (1:3)

READ: Ephesians 1:3.

Paul blessed God for bestowing believers with the many spiritual blessings that come from being “in Christ.” The blessings flow from God through Christ to us, and they operate “in heavenly places,” meaning they are of a spiritual nature rather than physical. Paul enjoyed rich blessings in Christ even as he sat in jail with very few earthly goods.

By contrast, the Ephesians filled the temple to Diana with tremendous wealth and priceless works of art to gain Diana’s attention and thereby earn her favor. Based on their Diana myths, they believed Diana would treat them ruthlessly if they didn’t lavish her with gifts and praise.

They sacrificed a lot of earthly wealth to appease Diana and gain her blessings. Of course, their sacrifice was in vain, for Diana never actually existed outside their imaginations.

As believers in Christ, we serve God because of the tremendous blessings God has already given us. Those blessings come to us because Jesus suffered under the weight of our sin as He hung on the cross. God sacrificed His Son so He might give us spiritual blessings.

So God gave gifts while Diana demanded gifts. Consequently, the Ephesian believers rejoiced in God's great grace while their pagan counterparts feared Diana's fickle, ruthless nature. What a blessing for the Ephesian believers to be delivered from the uncertainty of paganism to the certainty of Christ.

ASK: Paul recognized God as "blessed" for giving believers spiritual blessings. How might we recognize God as "blessed"?
By praising God; by telling others about our spiritual blessings; by gratefully living for God; by serving others with God's sacrificial love for us.

B. Salvation (1:4)

READ: Ephesians 1:4.

Election is God's act of choosing people to be saved. Jesus announced that no one could come to Him without first being drawn to Him by the Father (John 6:44). Furthermore, God the Holy Spirit convicts people of their sin and their need for righteousness (John 16:8).

Election is not a harsh act in which God simply secured the salvation of some and the perdition of the rest; it is, rather, a kind and loving act designed to prevent the ruin of all humanity. If God had not chosen some, then no one would be saved. Left to ourselves, we would continue down the path to eternal judgment. Yet each elect person must trust in Jesus to be saved (Acts 16:30, 31). That means no one could know whether he or she is elect until after he or she trusts in Christ as Savior. Everyone, then, has a real choice whether to trust in Jesus as Savior.

Furthermore, God commands believers to take the gospel to all nations so some might believe and become disciples of Christ (Matt. 28:19, 20). The doctrine of election, then, should never be used as an excuse not to witness. In fact, the doctrine of election should encourage us to witness, for God works through personal evangelism to draw unbelievers to Himself (Rom. 10:8–17).

ASK: How does the doctrine of election affect your appreciation for salvation?

God chose people in Christ “before the foundation of the world.” Before God spoke the world into existence, He planned for us and determined that we would know Him and share the glories of Heaven with Him. God fixed His plan before the beginning of time, making it His plan from eternity past. By His grace, He saves all who trust in His Son as Savior.

God also chose believers to be holy and without blame (Eph. 1:4). That means God plans for us to become sinless. Obviously, we can’t reach sinless perfection in this life. We won’t be free from sin’s presence in our lives until we die and enter Heaven or until Christ raptures us out of this world (1 John 3:2). In the meantime, our goal should be to grow in Christlikeness through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the power of God’s Word. Every aspect of our lives should be transformed as we strive toward Christlikeness.

ACTIVITY: Draw the outline of a person on the board. Students name aspects of life that should be affected by being chosen by God. Examples include our speech, thoughts, motives, desires, actions, relationships, entertainment choices, finances, and goals. Around the outline of the person, write the students’ responses or draw symbols to represent the responses.

The world continues to appeal to our sinful nature with false promises, but a worldly, unholy lifestyle will never bring the blessings we receive from holy living.

C. Adoption (1:5, 6)

READ: Ephesians 1:5.

To predestinate means to determine something beforehand. It means to make plans about the future. Before God created the world, He planned for the adoption of believers and then made plans to bless them as His children.

God’s love motivated His decision to adopt and make plans for His children. The words “in love” at the end of verse 4 should probably be placed at the beginning of verse 5. God’s love is the foundation for His adoptive work in our lives. God wanted to adopt us even when we were lost in our sins and had nothing of merit or value to offer Him.

ASK: How is our adoption by God like an earthly adoption? *God chose to adopt us so that we could become His children. We did nothing to deserve it. He loves us and treats us as His own.*

God planned that we should enjoy the blessings of salvation now and in eternity. He determined to adopt us so we can enjoy His benevolent care and the privilege of being called His children (1 John 3:1). He treats us as His own. We become His heirs, inheriting all the His blessings.

God acted to predestine us to adoption by the good pleasure of His will. So we cannot boast that He saved us because of any special qualities in us or because we earned it in any way. He saved us when we were helpless, lost, unworthy, and unprofitable (Rom. 3:10–23; 5:6–8; Eph. 2:1–3). The gospel invites all sinners to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved (Acts 16:31), and all are accountable for their response to the gospel. Those who believe on Christ receive salvation, whereas those who reject Christ live under God’s wrath (John 3:36).

READ: Ephesians 1:6.

God adopted us so He might be praised for His glorious grace. Our salvation and accompanying status as God’s children clearly demonstrate the gloriousness of God’s grace, the undeserved favor He shows to us. By grace, God reached out to us, plucked us out of our misery and helplessness, and adopted us into His family.

God graciously accepted us in Christ, “the beloved.” Praising God’s grace isn’t just a good idea or a nice response; it is the primary reason God saved us. God expects us to live to the praise of his glorious grace. We will learn more about living to praise God’s glorious grace in the next session.

ASK: How might we live to the praise of God’s grace? *By sharing the gospel; by testifying of God’s enabling grace; by thanking God for His grace; by depending on God’s grace every day.*

Memory Builder

Gather

- Whiteboard and marker.

Steps

1. Review the meaning of Ephesians 1:3.

Paul praised God the Father for sacrificing His Son, His greatest treasure. Through Christ, God can offer us eternal life and spiritual blessings. The pagan worshipers of Diana knew no such blessings. They made great sacrifices to the ruthless Diana in hopes of winning her fickle affection and thereby improving and extending their lives. Their attempts were obviously in vain. Diana existed only in their imaginations.

2. Draw a line down the middle of the whiteboard, creating two columns. Label column 1 “Earthly Wealth” and column 2 “Spiritual Wealth.” As students call out examples for each list, record

the items. Alternate from one list to the other or fill in each list separately. Examples of earthly wealth might include money, cars, houses, swimming pools, or jewelry. Spiritual wealth examples might include salvation, love, forgiveness, comfort, peace, and joy. Challenge students to think of at least ten examples for each list.

3. Discuss the lists.

ASK: How are these two types of wealth different? *Earthly wealth is temporary and of the world; spiritual wealth has a heavenly origin and is eternal.*

ASK: According to Ephesians 1:3, how do we receive spiritual wealth or blessings? *From God the Father, through Christ.*

ASK: When is it difficult for you to focus on spiritual blessings rather than on earthly wealth?

4. Direct students to sit or stand in a circle. Assign one word or phrase from the verse to each student. Students say their words or phrases in order around the circle several times. Challenge students to keep their assigned phrases but to change their positions in the circle and try saying their parts in order again. Recite the whole verse together several times.

Session Application

Gather

- Paper and colored pens or pencils.

Steps

1. Review the lesson.

While under house arrest in Rome, Paul wrote his letter to the church in Ephesus, a city known for the pagan worship of the goddess Diana. Paul wanted the Ephesian believers to realize the rich life they had “in Christ” in contrast to the pagans’ empty life “in Diana.” He wrote to remind the believers that God chose to adopt them as His own. By His love and grace, God the Father planned salvation even before He created the earth. Those in Christ have rich spiritual blessings from the Father and are called to respond to His grace by living holy lives in the world.

2. Instruct students to write “HOLY LIFE” vertically on their papers to form an acrostic. Students can work in pairs or small groups to complete their acrostics by filling them in with words or phrases that describe holy living.

ASK: How does living a holy life praise God? *Our holy and blameless living shows God our gratitude for our salvation. Living to please Him shows how much we love and honor Him.*

Think of one area in your life in which you need to seek God's help for holier living. Underneath your acrostic, write one aspect God might be leading you to change in that area.

3. Lead the students in a prayer of thanksgiving for God's great gift of salvation. Have students follow with thanksgiving to God for certain blessings of salvation or simply for their own salvation.

Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity reviews key truths from the Bible study.