

Ephesians 1.1 - 14
Good Questions Have Groups Talking
www.joshhunt.com

Ephesians 1.1 - 14

ACCOUNTABILITY

What three fellowships do we have scheduled for the next three months? Who will invite every member? Who will help invite every prospect? Who will help plan the party?

OPEN

Let's each share your name and one thing you are grateful for.

DIG

- 1. Verse 1. Paul introduces himself as a man on a mission. He seemed to understand very clearly his purpose in this world. How do we become people like that? How do we come to understand clearly what God has called us to do?**

Do you struggle with God's call upon your life? You can find great comfort in the presence of other Christians. For example, this is a story that could happen in any Christian church when God's people fulfill their call.

"Unemployed!" In the eyes of many, Bobby became just another impersonal statistic to join the ranks of the unemployed. At one moment, he had a secure position in his company; but the next moment saw him with his pink slip in hand—the victim of an unforgiving economy. For many people like Bobby, they would have to go it alone. But this was not Bobby's testimony.

Bobby found himself surrounded by people in his church who understood God's call upon their lives. Because God had called them, they were to live like saints and be faithful to His call as they became a vessel of God's grace and peace.

They were sensitive to Bobby's struggles and reached out to him in practical ways. Several of them committed to pray for him on a regular basis. Others in the church began to network with the business world in seeking the right career job for Bobby. Still, there were others who used their spiritual gift of encouragement to minister to Bobby when he needed another boost.

Like a light bulb that brightens a dark room, Bobby began to see for himself that God had a special call upon his life. God had not called him to trust in a career. Instead, God had called him to trust in the One who provides everything—including careers. — Practical Illustrations – Volume 9: Galatians-Colossians.

2. What benefits do we enjoy when we know our purpose and live according to our purpose?

Knowing your purpose gives meaning to your life. We were made to have meaning. This is why people try dubious methods, like astrology or psychics, to discover it. When life has meaning, you can bear almost anything; without it, nothing is bearable.

A young man in his twenties wrote, "I feel like a failure because I'm struggling to become something, and I don't even know what it is. All I know how to do is to get by. Someday, if I discover my purpose, I'll feel I'm beginning to live."

Without God, life has no purpose, and without purpose, life has no meaning. Without meaning, life has no significance or hope. In the Bible, many different people expressed this hopelessness. Isaiah complained, "I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing." Job said, "My life drags by — day after hopeless day" and "I give up; I am tired of living. Leave me alone. My life makes no sense." The greatest tragedy is not death, but life without purpose.

Hope is as essential to your life as air and water. You need hope to cope. Dr. Bernie Siegel found he could predict which of his cancer patients would go into remission by asking, "Do you want to live to be one hundred?" Those with a deep sense of life purpose answered yes and were the ones most likely to survive. Hope comes from having a purpose. — *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Rick Warren)

3. Would you like Christian living better if it didn't have the serving part? Would you like church better if you were not asked to volunteer to do this or that all the time?

Some years ago a new staff member of our church asked me how I had the gall to ask people who are already busy at work or in the home to get involved as volunteers at church. "I mean, don't you feel a little guilty doing this?" he asked. "Isn't it hard to heap such a burden on people?" He had a point.

But I knew of a bigger point: "During the next few months you're going to meet people who stand at drill presses, ten hours a day, five or six days a week. When they go home at night, few of them sense the pleasure, meaning, and purpose of life they've heard advertised in commercials for beer or computer systems. They're godly, conscientious people, and they feel thankful for their jobs. But they don't find satisfaction for their souls at the drill press.

"And you're going to meet fine, hardworking people in real estate who show thirty homes a week. If they're lucky, one buyer will make an offer, but they're not lucky every week. Many are extroverts who love showing property and helping families find the right home, but even then they probably don't arrive home at night filled with deep inner joy because of their latest showing.

"You'll meet insurance salespeople who have been selling policies for twenty years. While they feel grateful that the insurance business puts food on their table and sends their kids to college, the thought of selling one more policy likely doesn't float their emotional boat.

“You’re going to meet car dealers and stockbrokers and bricklayers and police officers and plumbers who, despite their commitment to their careers and jobs, are honest enough to admit that their secular vocation does not offer enough meaning to satisfy the deeper needs that stir in their souls.

“Some of them love their jobs; they feel stimulated and energized by their work. Some of them even leave their workplace each day knowing that they have honored God by their work and their love for people. But few of them would say: This is what life is all about.”

I looked directly into the eyes of my young friend. “You and I get to invite these people to be used by God in ways they never imagined. We have the opportunity to empower them to develop gifts they didn’t know they had. We can cheer them on as they courageously assume new levels of Kingdom responsibility that fill their hearts to overflowing. And we get to see the look on their faces when they realize God has used them to touch another human being.

“No,” I said, “I never really feel guilty inviting people to become volunteers in our church. Never.”
— The Volunteer Revolution: Unleashing the Power of Everybody (Bill Hybels)

4. Apostle is a word we hear in church, but not much outside of church. What exactly does it mean?

Paul calls himself an apostle. Just what is an apostle? The word might be translated "a messenger," "a sent one," "one sent on a mission," and so there is a certain sense in which every missionary is an apostle. But there is a higher sense in which the word "apostle" refers to those who were specially commissioned by our Lord Jesus Christ to go forth in the world and carry the truth through which the Church was instituted. Paul was not among those who knew the Lord on earth, but he was ordained an apostle to the nations by His personal appointment when the risen Christ appeared to him that day on the Damascus turnpike. — H. A. Ironside Commentary – Ephesians.

5. What is a saint?

A little boy attended a church that had beautiful stained-glass windows. He was told that the windows contained pictures of Saint Matthew, Saint Mark, Saint Luke, Saint John, Saint Paul, and other saints. One day he was asked, "What is a saint?" He replied, "A saint is a person whom the light shines through."

The word saint has come far from its original New Testament meaning. When we think of a "saint," we think of some stylized human figure depicted in stained glass, or of a person long dead who has been officially declared as an ecclesiastical relic. However, one of the clearest definitions is "A saint is a dead sinner, revised and edited." —Illustrations for Biblical Preaching.

6. Verse 3. How has God blessed us? What do you love about being a Christian?

Ask this question often.

7. How long is the sentence that begins in verse 3?

The sentence begun by “Blessed (be)” rolls on like a snowball tumbling down a hill, picking up volume as it descends. Its 202 words, and the many modifiers which they form, arranged like shingles on a roof or like steps on a stairway, are like prancing steeds pouring forward with impetuous speed. Says John Calvin, “The lofty terms in which he [Paul] extols the grace of God toward the Ephesians, are intended to rouse their hearts to gratitude, to set them all on flame, to fill them even to overflowing with this disposition.” Paul’s “heart aflame” is bent on setting other hearts aflame also, with sincere, humble, overflowing praise to “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Cf. Rom. 15:6; II Cor. 1:3; 11:31. Since Jesus was and is not only God but also man, and since he himself addressed the first Person of the Trinity as “my God” (Matt. 27:46), it is evident that the full title “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is justified. As to the term “Father,” it is evident that if the title “God of our Lord Jesus Christ” places emphasis on Christ’s human nature, that of “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” calls attention to the Son’s divine nature, for not nativistic but trinitarian sonship is referred to in this thoroughly trinitarian epistle, in which the Beloved, by whatever name he is called, is constantly placed on a par with, and mentioned in one breath with, the Father and the Spirit (2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6; 5:18-20). Christ is the Son of God by eternal generation. See also N.T.C. on the Gospel according to John, Vol. I, pp. 86-88. Now, calling the first person of the Holy Trinity “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” has a very practical purpose, as the apostle shows plainly in II Cor. 1:3. In his capacity as Father of our Lord Jesus Christ he is “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.” Via Christ every spiritual blessing flows down to us from the Father. And if Christ is “the Son of God’s love” (Col. 1:13), then God must be the Father of love, the loving Father. Note also that beautiful word of appropriating faith, namely, our: “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” How close this draws Christ to the believers’ hearts, and not only Christ but the Father also. Truly, Christ and the Father are one! — Baker New Testament Commentary — Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

8. Verse 4. What does it mean that “he chose us”?

The Bible speaks of three kinds of election. One is God’s theocratic election of Israel. “You are a holy people to the Lord your God,” Moses told Israel in the desert of Sinai; “the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth” (Deut. 7:6).

That election had no bearing on personal salvation. “They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel,” Paul explains; “neither are they all children because they are Abraham’s descendants” (Rom. 9:6-7). Racial descent from Abraham as father of the Hebrew people did not mean spiritual descent from him as father of the faithful (Rom. 4:11).

A second kind of election is vocational. The Lord called out the tribe of Levi to be His priests, but Levites were not thereby guaranteed salvation. Jesus called twelve men to be apostles but only eleven of them to salvation. After Paul came to Christ because of God’s election to salvation, God then chose him in another way to be His special apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; Rom. 1:5).

The third kind of election is salvational, the kind of which Paul is speaking in our present text. “No one can come to Me,” Jesus said, “unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44). *Helkuō* (draws) carries the idea of an irresistible force and was used in ancient Greek literature of a desperately hungry man being drawn to food and of demonic forces being drawn to animals when they were not able to possess men. — MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Ephesians.

9. What did the word election mean before it was a theological word?

To elect means to pick or choose out of (for oneself). Although the passage itself does not indicate in so many words the mass of objects or individuals out of which the Father chose some, this larger group is, nevertheless, clearly indicated by the purpose clause, “in order that we should be holy and faultless before him.” Accordingly, the larger mass of individuals out of which the Father chose some are here viewed as unholy and vile. This interpretation suits the context. It supplies one of the reasons (see Synthesis at end of chapter for more reasons) why the soul of the apostle is filled with such rapture that he says, “Blessed (be) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who... elected us.” He means: us, thoroughly unworthy in his sight! He does not try to explain how it was possible for God to do this. He fully realizes that when men are confronted with this manifestation of amazing grace their only proper response is adoration, not explanation. — Baker New Testament Commentary – Exposition of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

10. What is great about being chosen? Were you ever chosen as a kid? Were you ever not chosen? How did that feel? How does it feel to think about that fact that God picked you?

Rather than thinking about the controversy of election vss. free will, I’d invite you to just bask in the blessing of the fact that God selected us.

11. Verse 7. One of the blessings Paul mentions is redemption, or deliverance. Again, what did this verse mean before it was a Bible word?

There is deliverance. The word used is *apolutrosis* (<G629>). It comes from the verb *lutroun* (<G3083>), which means to ransom. It is the word used for ransoming a man who is a prisoner of war or a slave; for freeing a man from the penalty of death; for God’s deliverance of the children of Israel from their slavery in Egypt; for God’s continual rescuing of his people in the time of their trouble. In every case the conception is the delivering of a man from a situation from which he was powerless to liberate himself or from a penalty which he himself could never have paid.

So, then, first of all Paul says that God delivered men from a situation from which they could never have delivered themselves. That is precisely what Christianity did do for men. When Christianity came into this world men were haunted by the sense of their own powerlessness. They knew the wrongness of the life which they were living; and also that they were powerless to do anything about it.

Seneca is full of this kind of feeling of helpless frustration. Men, he said, were overwhelmingly conscious of their inefficiency in necessary things. He said of himself that he was a *homo non*

tolerabilis, a man not to be tolerated. Men, he said with a kind of despair, love their vices and hate them at the same time. What men need, he cried, is a hand let down to lift them up. The highest thinkers in the pagan world knew that they were in the grip of something from which they were helpless to deliver themselves. They needed liberation.

It was just that liberation which Jesus Christ brought. It is still true that he can liberate men from helpless slavery to the things which attract and disgust them at one and the same time. To put it at its simplest, Jesus can still make bad men good. — Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT).

12. He also mentions forgiveness. Do you think forgiveness means as much to us as it did to the ancient world?

There is forgiveness. The ancient world was haunted by the sense of sin. It might well be said that the whole Old Testament is an expansion of the saying, "The soul that sins shall die" (Eze 18:4). Men were conscious of their own guilt and stood in terror of their god or gods. It is sometimes said that the Greeks had no sense of sin. Nothing could be further from the truth. "Men," said Hesiod, "delight their souls in cherishing that which is their bane." All the plays of Aeschylus are founded on one text—"The doer shall suffer." Once a man had done an evil thing Nemesis was on his heels; and punishment followed sin as certainly as night followed day. As Shakespeare had it in Richard the Third,

"My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,

And every tongue brings in a several tale,

And every tale condemns me for a villain."

If there was one thing which men knew it was the sense of sin and the dread of God. Jesus changed all that. He taught men, not of the hate, but of the love of God. Because Jesus came into the world, men, even in their sin, discovered God's love. — Barclay's Daily Study Bible (NT).

13. What kind of measuring device did God use to scoop out grace for us—a big one or a small one? How does your translation have it? Verse 8.

Ephesians 1:8 (NIV) that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

Ephesians 1:8 (GW) He poured out his kindness by giving us every kind of wisdom and insight

Ephesians 1:8 (TLB) and he has showered down upon us the richness of his grace—for how well he understands us and knows what is best for us at all times.

Ephesians 1:8 (MSG) He thought of everything, provided for everything we could possibly need,

Ephesians 1:8 (TEV) which he gave to us in such large measure! In all his wisdom and insight

Ephesians 1:8 (NKJV) which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

14. Have you ever felt like you have been so bad that God couldn't forgive you? What are you to do in such a case?

Did you ever think you were beyond God's forgiveness? Russell Ford has befriended hundreds of men who believed that lie. Yet God's grace showed them otherwise. When I read his story this summer I was struck with the beauty of Christ's forgiveness and the miracle of God's awesome grace.

Russell Ford has watched many of his friends die. It's an integral part of his most unusual ministry. Ford is a chaplain for Death Row inmates in Boydton, Virginia. He knows he can't save men's lives. But he can lead them to the One who saves souls. Ford works with men who have committed gruesome murders. Some of them refuse to accept Christ's forgiveness. But thankfully, some do. He has helped several brutal murderers become repentant pilgrims. Men like Alton Waye. He was convicted for killing a sixty-one year old woman. Even other death row inmates found Waye to be particularly mean. As with others, Russell Ford taught this man the gospel. Months passed and yet Waye didn't seem to change. Then days before his 1989 execution, this murderer's demeanor had suddenly reversed. Ford walked Waye's cell and found him singing spirituals. He had decided to accept the pardon from Jesus. The night before he was executed Alton Waye, the murderer, confessed his faith in Jesus and was baptized. Twelve members of the death squad witnessed God's miracle of redemption. After the baptism, they all joined hands, singing "Amazing Grace" and reciting the Lord's prayer. http://www.heartlight.org/articles/200007/20000711_forgiveness.html

15. What are the benefits to us of accepting forgiveness when it is hard for us to accept it? Anyone have a story about how you received God's forgiveness—felt God's forgiveness when it was hard?

I have a memory with which I struggled for a long time. Regret mingled with guilt, and any time the memory came to mind, I was spiritually paralyzed, even though I had not fallen into that particular sin in many years. I felt like David when he cried, "My guilt has overwhelmed me like a burden too heavy to bear" (Ps. 38:4).

"Oh, God, I'm so sorry!" I'd cry time after time.

Then in one of those wonderful moments of God-granted insight, I realized I had no need to ask forgiveness for that particular sin. It had been forgiven years ago, and I had forsaken it. Every time I cried anew for release from guilt, I was denying the effectiveness of Christ's death. How dare I demean forgiveness bought at so great a price!

This insight was the first step in claiming what was already mine as a child of God.

What freedom there is when we accept God's forgiveness as sufficient, when we act on what we say we believe. – Discipleship Journal.

16. Verse 10. What did it mean that the times reached their fulfillment?

First and foremost was the pax Romana. The spread of Christianity would have been inconceivable had Jesus been born half a century earlier. As it was, the new faith entered the world at a time of peace unparalleled in history. The whole known world was for the first time under the effective control of one power - Rome. —Evangelism In The Early Church by Michael Green

17. Other than the pax Romana—the peace of Rome, what else was it in the ancient world that helped the gospel to spread?

Roads. It is difficult for us to imagine a world without good roads. Never in the ancient world had there been such a fine system of roads. Good roads were integral to moving an army and keeping the peace. We found an inscription in Hierapolis in Asia Minor who had been to Rome no fewer than 72 times. A road system like this made the gospel spread much more effectively. See Evangelism in the Early Church by Michael Green.

18. Verse 12. What is our purpose?

To make God look good. We are to be a living example of what God can do in a life. We are to be a living example of a life that is a little more joyful and a little more at peace and a little more loving. A life that smiles more and hugs more and cries less. There is a world that will want that life if only they can see a living example.

19. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit from verse 13?

Earnest is a fascinating word! In Paul's day, it meant "the down payment to guarantee the final purchase of some commodity or piece of property." Even today you will hear a real estate agent talk about earnest money. The Holy Spirit is God's first installment to guarantee to His children that He will finish His work and eventually bring them to glory. The "redemption of the purchased possession" refers to the redemption of the body at the return of Christ (Rom. 8:18-23; 1 John 3:1-3). "Redemption" is experienced in three stages:

We have been redeemed through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:7).

We are being redeemed as the Spirit works in our lives to make us more like Christ (Rom. 8:1-4).

We shall be redeemed when Christ returns and we become like Him.

But the word translated earnest also means "engagement ring." In Greece today you would find this word being used that way. But, after all, isn't an engagement ring an assurance—a guarantee—that the promises made will be kept? Our relationship to God through Christ is not simply a commercial one, but also a personal experience of love. He is the Bridegroom and His church is the bride. We know that He will come and claim His bride because He has given us His promise and His Spirit as the "engagement ring." What greater assurance could we want? — The Bible Exposition Commentary – New Testament, Volume 2.

20. What does it mean to be marked with a seal?

To be marked. . . with a seal indicates authority, authenticity, and security. It is a validation of ownership. God seals, or marks, his children with the Holy Spirit, indicating that we are his, that we are authentic spiritual children, not fakes or impostors, and that we are under his protection. — Holman New Testament Commentary – Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians & Colossians.

21. Verse 14. Is this saying that heaven will be more of the same—that it will be like living with God here on earth except more so?

Oh! what enlightenment, what joys, what consolation, what delight of heart is experienced by that man who has learned to feed on Jesus, and on Jesus alone. Yet the realization which we have of Christ's preciousness is, in this life, imperfect at the best. As an old writer says, "'Tis but a taste!" We have tasted "that the Lord is gracious," but we do not yet know how good and gracious He is, although what we know of His sweetness makes us long for more. We have enjoyed the firstfruits of the Spirit, and they have set us hungering and thirsting for the fulness of the heavenly vintage. We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption. Here we are like Israel in the wilderness, who had but one cluster from Eshcol, there we shall be in the vineyard. Here we see the manna falling small, like coriander seed, but there shall we eat the bread of heaven and the old corn of the kingdom. We are but beginners now in spiritual education; for although we have learned the first letters of the alphabet, we cannot read words yet, much less can we put sentences together; but as one says, "He that has been in heaven but five minutes, knows more than the general assembly of divines on earth." We have many ungratified desires at present, but soon every wish shall be satisfied; and all our powers shall find the sweetest employment in that eternal world of joy. O Christian, antedate heaven for a few years. Within a very little time thou shalt be rid of all thy trials and thy troubles. Thine eyes now suffused with tears shall weep no longer. Thou shalt gaze in ineffable rapture upon the splendour of Him who sits upon the throne. Nay, more, upon His throne shalt thou sit. The triumph of His glory shall be shared by thee; His crown, His joy, His paradise, these shall be thine, and thou shalt be co-heir with Him who is the heir of all things. — Morning and Evening.

22. What do you want to take with you from today's study?

23. How can we support one another in prayer this week?