

date: **8/6/17**

Bible Passage: Acts 19; Ephesians 1
(Paul in Ephesus)

God Calls Us His Own

REMEMBER VERSE

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

Inspire

Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives

My husband and I had been married for a few years when we started talking about starting a family. But the more we talked about it, the more loudly we felt God telling us something we hadn't expected: Our child was already alive, out there somewhere in the world, waiting for a mom and a dad. We began pursuing adoption.

Knowing our child wasn't home yet created a longing and an ache in my heart. I hadn't met my child, but the love I felt was deeper than I ever thought possible. I desperately wanted my child home with us.

In the midst of this journey, God's love became more real to me than ever. If I could feel this kind of love for a child I hadn't met yet, then God must feel a love for me that I could never imagine. He must want me with Him so badly that He would do anything, and stop at nothing, to seek me out and claim me as His own. Wow!

I cannot wait for the day when I get to look at my beautiful child in the face and say, "We love you so much that we sought you out. You are our child." I'm pretty sure God has been saying the same thing to me for longer than I know. My identity comes from being His beloved, desired, pursued child. God calls me His own!

Laura Weber
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Equip

Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage

Much of the content of Paul's letter to the Ephesians focuses on the believer's identity in Christ. In chapter 1,



Paul encourages them to rejoice in their identity; in chapter 2, he asks them to remember where they came from (what they have been saved from); in chapters 3 through 5, he exhorts them to live as “children of light” (5:8) and to live up to the calling they have received. In chapter 6, he asks them to remember that the enemy will try to break them down, destroy the unity of the body of Christ, and make them stray from the glorious calling they have received in Christ.

Why did Paul spend so much time discussing the idea of identity in his letter to the Ephesians? Ephesus was the third most populated city in the Roman Empire, on a bustling trade route. It was wealthy, important, and cosmopolitan. Because of this, the Ephesians’ identity in Christ might have warred against the lure of money, prestige, or power.

In addition, because of the Roman fascination with Greek culture, Ephesus was Hellenized (turned Greek) under Roman rule. Temples dedicated to Greek gods were built, and much of Greek culture and philosophy were incorporated into Ephesian life. The Ephesian people were surrounded by the lifestyle and culture of pagan worship.

For these possible reasons, God inspired Paul to write this impassioned and beautiful letter. God gave Paul the words to speak the truth about who we are in Christ: “dearly loved children ... [chosen] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 5:1; 1:4). These words resonate with us today. It is still astounding that through Christ we’re able to “live as children of light” (5:8).

Support

Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word

The first chapter of Ephesians is essentially one unbroken thought—an overflow of powerful emotion. It is Paul’s impassioned declaration, full of faith and joy at the free, lavish gift he received in Christ.

Read through Ephesians 1. Then read it again and pray “that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance” (Ephesians 1:18). Pray God will give you a similar overwhelming sense of joy at the knowledge of the salvation that you have in Christ.

In the same way that Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus, pray for your kids. Pray God will fill them up with a sense of joy from the glorious gift of Himself that He freely offers. Pray they will be overwhelmed with joy because they know they have been chosen to be His own.

SMALL GROUP SECTION

EXPLORE// 10 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children engage in fun, creative activities designed to pique their curiosity about the day’s portion of The Big God Story.



Uniquely Me

SUPPLIES

- Identity cards (see Resources)
- Fingerprint Facts (see Resources)
- Scissors
- Washable ink pad
- Hand wipes
- Magnifying glasses (1 for every 2 children, regular or mini)

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the Identity cards front to back—one card for each child—and cut the cards apart. Also print a few copies of the Fingerprint Facts and place them on the work tables along with the supplies.

RELATE

Isn't it amazing that God made everything in the universe and still knows each one of us personally? And He designed each one of us to be different—to be unique. He's such a creative God!

We can find a great example of this in our fingerprints. No two people have the same fingerprints. Not even twins! Our fingerprints are completely unique. Today let's investigate our fingerprints as we think about how God made each one of us, loves us, and calls us His beloved children. We belong to Him!

Point out the Identity cards and supplies, and invite each child to press a finger into the ink pad and then press it onto a card (in the box) to create a fingerprint. Invite the kids to use the magnifying glasses to examine their fingerprints as well as the other kids' fingerprints. How are the fingerprints the same? How are they different? As the kids work, they can talk about some of the Fingerprint Facts.

When the kids have finished investigating their fingerprints, they can sign their names and turn over the cards to read the identity statement. Have the kids take their Identity cards with them to large group time.

LARGE GROUP
SECTION

DISCOVER// 30 min.

Host/Worship Leader/Storyteller

Children participate in discovering God's Word through Bible verse memorization, interactive storytelling techniques, and worship as response.

Traditions and Remember Verse

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse image (see Resources)
- Mementos for your church Traditions (rocks, marbles, gum balls, etc.)

RELATE

Give the children mementos (such as rocks, marbles, or blocks) for accomplishments such as memorizing the



Remember Verse or bringing their Bibles. Have them put the objects into a clear container or add them to a structure, and celebrate when it's complete.

This week's Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12

Connect

Question

What is a nickname your family calls you?

The Big God Story

Bible Passage: Acts 19; Ephesians 1

Storytelling Technique: Images, Props, and Reading in Unison
God Calls Us His Own

SUPPLIES

- [Timeline image](#) (see Resources)
- Printable images: [Ancient World Map](#), [Ephesus](#), [Postcard](#) (see Resources)
- Projectable images: [Ancient World Map](#), [Ephesus](#), [Postcard](#), [Identity Statement](#) (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Poster board (3 sheets)
- Glue
- Easels (3)
- Props: envelope (any size), framed picture (the bigger the better)

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the three printable images and glue each image onto a sheet of poster board. (Optional: Enlarge the images as much as you want.) Set up the easels around your storytelling space and place a poster board on each one.

SET UP

Ahead of time, ask a volunteer—either a leader or a child—to help you today. Give the volunteer the envelope, and tell him to bring you the envelope onstage when you cue him. Place the framed picture onstage.

RELATE

Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. **God sent the apostle Paul all over the place to tell people about Jesus. Paul was one of the first missionaries. What missionaries do you know of, and where do they serve?** Invite a couple of kids to share. **Some of the places Paul visited include** (walk to Ancient World Map image on poster board, *cue Ancient World Map image*, and point out the following places) **Antioch, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens. As he spoke to people about the good news of Jesus, many started to believe in the one true God. Many lives were changed. The people began to gather to worship God together. As a result, many**



new churches began in cities throughout the land.

Paul stayed with the new believers for a time. He taught them about Jesus, His love, and the very best way to live in response to God. But shortly after Paul left the new believers in Ephesus, the people began to have a hard time.

Ephesus was a beautiful and wealthy city. Walk to the Ephesus image on poster board and *cue Ephesus image*. The people in this city focused on beauty, sports, art, and success in business. The Ephesian people also worshipped lots of false gods. Statues and images of these false gods were everywhere.

Because the new believers in Ephesus lived in a city with so many false gods, they were tempted to go back to their old ways of thinking. So God told Paul to write a letter to the people to remind them of their new identity in Jesus. Have the volunteer deliver the envelope to you. Walk to the Postcard image on poster board and *cue the Postcard image*. **In Paul's letter, he encouraged the Ephesians to rejoice because they had discovered the most amazing thing in the universe: salvation through Jesus. Paul also encouraged them to stay strong in their identity in Christ.**

Wait a second ... what's an identity, anyway? Let me show you an example. Hold up the framed picture. **What do you see?** Ask one or two children to share their thoughts. **That's really interesting. You described the picture, but you didn't describe the frame. Why?** Invite responses. **Great thoughts. What's really important is the picture, not the frame.**

If we pretended that we're a framed picture, the frame would be how we look to others and what we do—the things on the outside. But the beautiful picture of who we are is on the inside. And the most important thing about who we are on the inside is not just about loving others and being a good friend. The most important thing is what God says about who we are.

Invite children to turn in their Bibles to Ephesians 1:4 and follow along. **The Bible says God “chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he [adopted us] through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will ... In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (verses 4–5, 7). We have been chosen, redeemed, and adopted into God's family as His children! God has done all this because He loves us very much. He calls you His own.**

Let's read Ephesians 2:10 together. Invite children to find the verse. **“For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Handiwork—that's the work of God the Creator. We're the handiwork, the creation, of God, made by His hands and breath. We're His masterpiece—we're created by the Master!**

Take a look at this handiwork. Walk past the poster board images and *cue projectable images*. Stop at each image and ask the kids some questions about what they observe in each one. **Graphic designers and artists made each one of these with special care. Well, God made each one of you with special care. He knew how you would look, walk, talk, think, feel, and more. God is the Master Artist, and you're His masterpiece! He calls you His own.**

Read Ephesians 2:10 again. **We are God's children, created to do good works that He planned for us long ago. He made you—everything about you—for His special plan! That's exciting. And no one and nothing can change who you are as a child of God. No one can take away the place you have with Him.**



In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, God used Paul to encourage the people about their identity in Him. The most important thing about you is what God says is true. Read Ephesians 1:3–14.

Tech: Cue Identity Statement image. Let's read this together and put our names at the very beginning. Let's remember what is true about who we are. When we get to the last line, I want you to shout it out! Lead kids in saying the identity statement. Then have them say it with you a second time, this time standing up and with more "oomph." Encourage kids to really take ownership of the words and what they mean.

God tells us to rejoice because we have been chosen by Him—the God of all creation. We've been adopted by God into His family and are His! Your identity isn't in what you do or don't do. It's not in your soccer skills, good grades, or ability to sing well. You're God's perfect masterpiece. You're His child. Share a personal story of a time you came to know and appreciate your identity as God's child.

SMALL GROUP SECTION

RESPOND// 15 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond through creative activities and games.

Reflect: God Calls Us His Own

Encourage kids to look up the following verses in their Bibles.

Questions for Younger Kids

- **Why was Paul in Ephesus?**
- **What are some things that describe you on the outside?** (for example, hair color, best subject in school, or hobbies)
- **What are some words that describe the way God sees us?** Ephesians 1:4–5
- **How does it make you feel to know God chose you to be His child?**

Questions for Older Kids

- **Why was Paul in Ephesus?**
- **What does the world tell us to place our identity in?** (for example, appearance, social status, money)
- **How does it make you feel to know that God "chose [you] in Him before the creation of the world?"** Ephesians 1:4
- **What are some words that describe our new identity in Christ?** Ephesians 1:1–14
- **What things, if any, make it hard to remember your identity as God's child?**
- **How does knowing you belong to God affect your daily life?**

BLESS// 5 min.

Small Group Leaders

Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another.

A blessing may be prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Encourage the kids to hold their hands in front of them, palms up. Then open a Bible and read Ephesians 3:16–19:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

May you know, through Jesus, that you’ve been chosen to be God’s own and that He loves you just as you are.

