



THE WORLD GOD IS MAKING | WHAT IS THE POINT OF CHURCH? (1)

September 13, 2026

Ephesians 1:1-10

PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Discussion Questions

- Introduce yourselves: name, occupation, how long you've lived in New York, where you're from, etc.
- Think of three people who have had the most significant influence on your life, whether for good or for ill, across any stage of life. Share **one** name and a **brief** story of how that person shaped you.

WORSHIP

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Psalm 96

Oh sing to the LORD a new song;

Sing to the LORD, all the earth!

Sing to the LORD, bless his name;

Tell of his salvation from day to day.

Declare his glory among the nations,

His marvelous works among all the peoples!

For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;

He is to be feared above all gods.

SCRIPTURE READING

Ephesians 1:1-10

¹Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him.

BIBLE STUDY **Commetary**

We are starting the ministry year with a new sermon series based in Ephesians called *The World God Is Making*. Unlike in some of his other epistles, in Ephesians Paul is not addressing a particular problem within a specific church. After all, it has been argued by many commentators that the letter to the Ephesians may have first been a circular letter — an epistle that would make its way to several churches rather than addressing the issues of a single congregation. This fits the purpose of this letter, which is to lay out: a) God's cosmic plan to unite all things in Christ, and b) the church's role within that larger mission. Paul opens his letter by identifying himself as an apostle "by the will of God." He is not a self-appointed teacher but one commissioned by grace alone, with no merit of his own in the matter. He addresses his letter to "the saints... faithful in Christ Jesus," language that mirrors Israel's identity in the Old Testament as God's holy people and applies it to this new community of the church.

The sweeping account of God's plan for the church unfolds in verses 3-10 through a single, cascading sentence in the original Greek. God has blessed us "in Christ" with "every spiritual blessing" — spiritual not because they concern the soul alone, but because they are the gift of the Spirit, given on the grounds of what Christ has accomplished for his people. Paul then traces this blessing backward and forward in time: election before the foundation of the world, predestination to adoption, redemption through Christ's blood, and forgiveness of sins. None of this is grounded in anything foreseen or contributed by us but only "according to the purpose of his will," to the praise of his grace (verses 5-6). We are accepted by God only in and through Christ, and because there is no remission without redemption, the guilt and stain of sin could be removed by nothing less than Christ's blood. Taken together, these verses mean that God's people are a body that he determined to save before any of them existed to be consulted about it.

The passage climaxes in verse 10, where we see that God's purpose is to "unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and on earth." All the lines of divine revelation converge in Christ, all things are gathered up in him, and even the peace between heaven and earth is made through him. The church is not one more voluntary association of individually saved people who happen to like each other. It is the present installment of a cosmic reconciliation that will eventually take in everything. This means, in part, that an individual's rescue, as incredible as it is, was never the whole point of the plan, but it was one piece folded into something much larger. God gives the world a preview of what that reconciled world will look like by giving his church, a body where people divided by class, background, and interests are joined to one another. It is, as the theologian N. T. Wright puts it, "a small working model of the new creation." A church, and therefore a Community Group, doesn't exist primarily so that our own needs get met; it exists because God is gathering up "all things" in Christ. CGs, then, are one of the concrete places where that already-existing, cosmic-scale unity gets lived out among a handful of people on a weekly basis. A Community Group is one of the places where the mission of the church visibly happens.

1. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Not only does every passage point to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- How might we suffer from a diminished vision of the church?
- How does this passage challenge us to expand our understanding of the church?
- How does Paul describe God's cosmic plan in verse 10? How might Central or our CG look different if we take this description to heart?

2. Looking at our Hearts

- If honest, where have you caught yourself treating church or CG as a place to have your own needs or self-interests met rather than as a body to which you belong?
- Can you think of a time where you have caught a glimpse of people loving one another well within the church, even if they came from different backgrounds or didn't have shared interests?
- What is one thing you're hoping for out of this group? What would it look like, one year from now, for this CG to have been a worthy investment of your time?

3. Looking at our World

- What would it require for the church to be the kind of body that is noticed by the world? In other words, how could it be a working model of the new creation?
- Think of three people in your life who do not yet know Christ as Lord and Savior. Write their names below. You will share these names with the group, and in the next few weeks, the group will carry these names in prayer.

PRAYING FOR FAITH

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PRAYER **Pray for each other:** Share any prayer requests you have.

- Each person pray for someone in the group, thanking God for bringing them into this group, and asking God to work in their life. Close by praying together for the names written in each of the boxes above.
- Hold onto your "Praying for Faith" names. The group will return to them for the next few weeks.