

SESSION 1 (Joint): YOU'RE A MAN IN A PLAN (Ephesians 1 v 1-14)

BIG IDEA:

Christian men are part of God's eternal plan, saved by the cross, given God's Spirit, and headed for eternity under Jesus' loving rule.

GUIDANCE FOR QUESTIONS:

1. This helps you both think about who you are—what it is that defines you. It's worth referring back to it when you get to Question 11 towards the end of the session.
2. From Paul, to the "saints" or "faithful" in Ephesus ie: the church there. You might like to look at the jargon buster for "saint" and then ask: what is Paul reminding Christians straight away about how they will live?
3. "In Christ". Do encourage your partner to read out loud unless he struggles with reading, in which case you should read out loud for him. Don't be tempted to ask him to read silently; if he struggles with a word, he'll just skip that sentence (we all do it!).
4. At this stage we get to the timeline (which is also in the book, p10-11) for the teenager to fill in). Write on different pieces of card: "Creation", "Cross", "Now" and "The end—Jesus returns". Put them on the floor in that order and explain that this is a timeline (timelines are much used in school history lessons, so the teenager should be familiar with the concept). Make an arrow and put it underneath to show the direction of time. Explain that we're going to look at a few verses in a bit more detail and work out what God's plan is.
Firstly, v 4—God chose us IN CHRIST even before the world was made. Get the teenager to write on a card "Chosen by God" (or something like that) and put it down under the timeline, before the "Creation" card.
This is amazing, because before God even made the world, let alone us, He had already chosen to bring particular people to eternal life with Him, as His children. Let your minds be blown away by that!
5. God paid the price, which was His own Son's blood—His death—in order to set us free, and to forgive our sins. Notice that forgiveness is won not by us doing anything, but by what God has done for us through Jesus' death.
There's no need at the moment to think too much about why people need redeeming – that comes in the next couple of studies.
The teenager can write on a card "Redeemed/bought back by God" and put it under "Cross".
6. The Holy Spirit.

Write down “Given Holy Spirit by God” and put it underneath the timeline, shortly before “Now” (assuming that your teenager is a Christian—otherwise, use this as an opportunity to talk about how you became a Christian yourself).

7. A slightly tricky question—make sure you’ve read and understood the text above the question about what a “deposit” is. The Spirit is given to someone as soon as they believe the gospel, and is a guarantee that they’ll one day be given the inheritance of eternal life with God. It’s great to have God living in us now—but that’s just a little taste of how amazing eternal life is going to be!

On the timeline, write “Enjoy inheritance of eternal life/place in God’s perfect world” (or however the teenager expresses it) and put it underneath “Jesus returns”.

Note: In verse 7, Paul talked about having been redeemed, set free, at the cross ie: in our past. In verse 14, he looks forward to being redeemed when we reach our inheritance. If this confuses one (or both!) of you, Paul is looking at the cross where we were set free, and our future inheritance as the place where we’ll fully enjoy the freedom that Jesus’ death brings us.

8. Christ. He will be “head” of everything, having judged sin and rebellion against Him, recreated the world perfectly, and given those He has redeemed their wonderful inheritance.

On the timeline, write “Jesus rules everything” and put it under “Jesus returns”.

9. This is to reinforce the timeline you’ve drawn up. If you want, you can clear away the timeline you’ve created and see how much of it you both remember as you write it in your booklets! Alternatively, if you haven’t created your timeline as you’ve gone along, you can just write it in from what you’ve seen in Q4-8.

10. “The praise of his glory”. God brings people into His eternal plan so that they can praise Him for who He is and what He’s done.

Since God—Father, Son and Spirit—is totally perfect, it’s right that He receives praise. And since the members of the Trinity are perfectly loving towards each other, they each work to bring each other the praise they deserve. So God’s plan is to bring Himself praise.

11. Make sure you stick to what you’ve got on your timelines, so that the answers are coming from the passage. Refer back to Question 1, and you might like to ask your teenager what Paul is showing us should be what is the most important things about us, if we’re Christians. (It’s likely your answers to Q1 are a bit different to the answer to Q11!)

12. Excited, privileged, grateful, and so on. There are no “right answers” here!

13. It might be worth spending some time writing your answers down separately, and then compare them. If you can see your partner is struggling, you could ask: What have we seen that God has done for Christians? Where are Christians headed? Is it good to be part of God's plan? Why, or why not? How should Christians feel about being a Christian? Is this how you feel about it? Why / why not? (or, if they're not a Christian—is this how you feel about the idea of being and living as a Christian?)

PRAYER TIME:

Encourage the teenager to write down a one-sentence prayer, from the passage; do it yourself too. Then pray those prayers together out loud, if he's happy to.

To finish, point out the memory verse and encourage the teenager to see if he can memorise it before the next week (unless your teenager has never read the Bible before, in which case don't push him too much!). And remind him about the "solo" session, which you'll both do on your own before the next "joint" session.

Do remember to praise the teenager and encourage him. This is a pretty tricky passage (it gets easier!) and he'll have done well to get through it!