



WOODLAND HEIGHTS

CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Identity: Who Do You Say I Am?

Part #1 – I Am Chosen: No Longer Defined by My Past

Small Group Discussion Guide on Ephesians 1:3-14

Woodland Heights Christian Church Core Value Connection

This sermon aligns with the core value of **Biblical Authority** at Woodland Heights Christian Church. We believe that it is critical to live life by the authority of the inerrant and infallible Word of God. It is our guide for life and provides the framework needed to live a life filled with hope, peace, joy, and the victory of Christ. (2 Timothy 3:16)

The sermon launches the Identity series and aligns most closely with the core value of Biblical Authority at Woodland Heights Christian Church. As this message explores what it means to be chosen, forgiven, and made new in Christ, it calls believers to walk as disciples who know who they are in Christ and to help others discover that same transforming grace. As you walk through this guide, ask the Lord to move you from simply knowing the phrase “I Am Chosen” to embracing it as the foundation of how you think, feel, and live as His disciple.

Section 1 – ENCOUNTER

Observing God's Word

Imagine a heart weighed down by yesterday – decisions you wish you could unmake, words you wish you could unsay, patterns that seem welded to your name – wondering quietly, Is this all I'll ever be? Then picture the voice of Jesus cutting through that inner courtroom, not to rehearse your record but to rewrite it, declaring you forgiven, adopted, and chosen in Him. Suddenly, the labels that once defined you – failure, disappointment, outsider – begin to lose their power as your identity anchors not in what you have done but in what Christ has done for you. Scripture reminds us that God's choosing love is stronger than our past, and that His grace invites us to live as new creations, no longer chained to old names.

Start your study by anchoring yourself in Scripture. Read Ephesians 1:3–14 as a group, family, or individual, letting God's Word sink in. Picture the contrast – once dead, now alive in Christ; once not a people, now God's people; once defined by darkness, now called into His marvelous light.

Core Questions

- What do you notice about the words and phrases Scripture uses to describe who you were before Christ and who you are now in Him (chosen, adopted, redeemed)?
- Why is it important to see identity language anchored in what God has done (He chose, He redeemed, He called) rather than what you have achieved?
- What main lessons do you learn about the heart and character of God from these passages as He deals with your past, your present, and your future?

Section 2 – EXPLORE

As we explore these identity-shaping passages, we discover that being chosen in Christ is not a sentimental slogan; it is a spiritual reality grounded in God's eternal purpose, Christ's finished work, and the Spirit's ongoing transformation. The sermon unpacks how God graciously reaches into broken stories, redeems our failures, and gives us a new name so that we can live as His people rather than prisoners of our past. This message launches the Identity series by asking each of us a foundational question: Will I allow my past, my feelings, and culture's labels to define me, or will I take Jesus at His word when He says, "This is who you are in Me"?

Use the truths below to guide your discussion and connect the sermons insights to your life.

Truth 1 – Chosen in Christ Before Your Past Even Began (Ephesians 1:3-6)

Paul declares that God "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world" and "predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ," showing that God's decision to love and adopt you was not based on your performance but on His gracious purpose. Before you ever succeeded or failed, before you wandered or returned, God had already set His sight on you in Christ, planning a redemption that would cover your worst moments and call you into a new family. The sermon emphasizes that when you feel disqualified by your past, you must remember that God's choice came first; your failures are real, but they are not final when they are brought to the cross.

- How does knowing that God chose you "before the foundation of the world" challenge the way you interpret the painful or shame-filled chapters of your story?
- When you think about adoption language in Ephesians 1, what images or emotions come to mind, and how does this picture help you see yourself less as a spiritual orphan and more as a beloved child?
- In moments of regret, are you more likely to replay your past or rehearse God's promises? What practical steps can help you shift from self-condemnation to embracing God's choosing grace?

Truth 2 – In Christ You Are a New Creation, Not a Renovated Failure (Ephesians 1:7-10)

Scripture declares, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come," (2 Corinthians 5:17) reminding us that salvation is not cosmetic improvement but spiritual rebirth. The sermon highlights that being a new creation means your core identity has changed; while memories and consequences may remain, sin no longer has the right to name you or rule you. You are no longer defined by your worst sin, deepest wound, or brokenness, but by Christ's righteousness credited to you and His Spirit working within you to reshape desires, habits, and hope.

- What "old" identities—labels you or others have used—do you still tend to carry around in your thoughts and conversations, even though Scripture says they have passed away?
- How have you seen evidence of "new creation" life in yourself or others (changed desires, healed relationships, new courage, freedom from patterns that once held you)?

Truth 3 – You Are Set Apart to Declare His Praise, Not Your Shame (Ephesians 1:11-14)

Peter reminds believers in 1 Peter 2:9-10 that they are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession," called out of darkness into God's marvelous light so

that they may proclaim His excellencies. Once they were “not a people” and “had not received mercy,” but now they are God’s people who have received mercy, moving them from the margins of rejection into the center of God’s family and mission. The sermon explains that identity and purpose are intertwined: God does not simply free you from your past; He sets you apart to carry His light into the world turning former wounds into platforms for worship and witness.

- How might God use parts of your past that you once hid – failures, addictions, broken relationships – as redeemed testimony to point others to His mercy?
- Peter connects identity (“you are”) with mission (“that you may proclaim”). How does embracing your chosen identity move you from silence and self-protection to courageous worship and witness in everyday life?

Section 3 – EMBRACE

Applying God’s Word

Go deeper into the Word of God by applying what you’ve learned to your life today. Reflect on these action steps and discuss how you can live out the truths from “I Am Chosen: No Longer Defined by My Past.”

Name and Nail Your Old Labels

Identify two or three labels from your past that still whisper over your life – words like “failure,” “unworthy,” “angry,” “forgotten,” or others. Write each one down on a piece of paper, then beside it write a truth from Scripture that replaces it (for example, “failure” → “new creation in Christ”; “unwanted” → “adopted and chosen in Him”). Take time in prayer to confess where you have allowed old labels to define you, now turn these over completely to the Lord.

Turn Your Past into a Platform for Ministry

Ask the Lord to show you one person who may be wrestling with the very struggles that once defined you – shame, regret, addiction, brokenness, or fear. Commit to one intentional step of encouragement this week: share a brief part of your story, invite them to church or the Identity series, offer to pray with them, or simply remind them that in Christ they are not stuck in who they used to be. Remember, God often uses the most healed parts of our past to open doors for others to discover that they too can say, “I am chosen, no longer defined by my past.”

Memorize and Reflect

Memorize a key Identity verse for this week, such as 2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” Throughout the week, repeat this verse when old memories surface, when accusations echo in your mind, or when you face temptation to return to former patterns.

Closing Challenge and Prayer

Friends, the God who chose you before the foundation of the world, who sent His Son to bear your sin, and who raised Him to give you new life has not finished writing your story. In Christ you are no longer chained to who you were; you are called to live as who you are – chosen, forgiven, and set apart for His glory. As a group, close by praying for one another:

- Thank God for His choosing love and the new identity He gives in Christ.
- Ask Him to break the power of shame, fear, or labels that do not come from Him.