

  
GOSPEL  
PROJECT

# SAVED

Life in the Face of Death

Ed Stetzer  
Trevin Wax

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PROJECT**

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## ABOUT THE GOSPEL PROJECT

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Some people see the Bible as a collection of stories with morals for life application. But it's so much more. Sure, the Bible has some stories in it, but it's also full of poetry, history, codes of law and civilization, songs, prophecy, letters—even a love letter. When you tie it all together, something remarkable happens. A story is revealed. One story. The story of redemption through Jesus. This is *The Gospel Project*.

When we begin to see the Bible as the story of redemption through Jesus Christ, God's plan to rescue the world from sin and death, our perspective changes. We no longer look primarily for what the Bible says about us but instead see what it tells us about God and what He has done. After all, it's the gospel that saves us, and when we encounter Jesus in the pages of Scripture, the gospel works on us, transforming us into His image. *We become God's gospel project.*

## ABOUT THE WRITERS

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**Trevin Wax** is managing editor for *The Gospel Project* and the author of *Clear Winter Nights*, *Gospel-Centered Teaching*, and *Counterfeit Gospels*. He has served in pastoral roles in the United States and Romania. He and his wife, Corina, reside in Middle Tennessee with their three children.



**Ed Stetzer** is the president of LifeWay Research Division, a prolific author, and well-known conference and seminar leader. He is the author of “The Exchange,” a blog with *Christianity Today*. In addition to being the executive editor of *The Gospel Project*, he is the lead pastor of Grace Church in Hendersonville, TN, a congregation he planted in 2011.

**Barry Cram** adapted this material for use with small groups.

## HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

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Welcome to *The Gospel Project*, a gospel-centered small-group study that dives deep into the things of God, lifts up Jesus, focuses on the grand story of Scripture, and drives participants to be on mission. This small-group Bible study provides opportunities to study the Bible and to encounter the living Christ. *The Gospel Project* provides you with tools and resources to purposefully study God's Word and to grow in the faith and knowledge of God's Son. And what's more, you can do so in the company of others, encouraging and building up one another. Here are some things to remember that will help you maximize the usefulness of this resource:

**GATHER A GROUP.** We grow in the faith best in community with other believers, as we love, encourage, correct, and challenge one another. The life of a disciple of Christ was never meant to be lived alone, in isolation.

**PRAY.** Pray regularly for your group members.

**PREPARE.** This resource includes the Bible study content, three devotionals, and discussion questions for each session. Work through the session and devotionals in preparation for each group session. Take notes and record your own questions. Also consider the follow-up questions so you are ready to participate in and add to the discussion, bringing up your own notes and questions where appropriate.

**RESOURCE YOURSELF.** Make good use of the additional resources available on the Web at [www.gospelproject.com/additionalresources](http://www.gospelproject.com/additionalresources) and search for this specific title. Download a podcast. Read a blog post. Be intentional about learning from others in the faith. For tips on how to better lead groups or additional ideas for leading this Bible study, visit: [www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject](http://www.ministrygrid.com/web/thegospelproject).

**GROUP TIME.** Gather together with your group to discuss the session and devotional content. Work through the follow-up questions and your own questions. Discuss the material and the implications for the lives of believers and the mission to which we have been called.

**OVERFLOW.** Remember ... *The Gospel Project* is not just a Bible study. *We* are the project. The gospel is working on us. Don't let your preparation time be simply about the content. Let the truths of God's Word soak in as you study. Let God work on your heart first, and then pray that He will change the hearts of the other people in your group.

GOSPEL  
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Session 1

# Because We Are Chosen

The ultimate final cause of our election is that the immense goodness of God and the righteousness of Christ offered to everyone should be everywhere magnified and exalted, not because God has any need of our praise but because by our praise many come to the salvation and blessedness that he offers to all.<sup>1</sup>

**MARTIN BUCER**

## INDIVIDUAL STUDY

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Even if you know absolutely nothing about football, you could watch a little league game and pick up on the fundamentals. You'd get the gist, right? There are two teams and one ball. Each team gets a few chances to advance the football and score a touchdown. And then they take turns. Oh, and they tackle each other, too. Simple, sweet, and very enjoyable—especially if your son or grandson is playing on the team!

But if you were to be invited to a college football game, you would get more than just the fundamentals. You would gain an entire experience! The massive stadium, the thousands of fans, the history behind the rivalry—this is where your perspective would change a great deal. You would be forced to see the bigger picture.

**Describe a time in your life when you gained a bigger vision of something important. In what ways did that change your attitude, emotions, and behavior?**

Sometimes we cling to a very small and simple version of Christianity: “If I just ask for forgiveness and I’m a good person, I go to heaven when I die.” For some, that is the entire story. It’s short and sweet. But we need to gain a bigger picture—a bigger vision—of how God is working His plan in Christ for our good and for His glory. When we understand this truth, our experience with God expands. It changes everything.

Those who are in Christ have been chosen by God. Far from leading to pride or never-ending debates, the doctrine of election is a spiritual blessing in Christ. It humbles us, assures us, and leads us to give all glory and praise to our missional God. When we understand the Bible’s teaching on election, we’re able to see the big picture of salvation from God’s perspective. God is at work in Christ, working out our salvation for His glory and the furthering of His mission.

Throughout the week engage these daily study sections on your own. Each of these examines what it means to be chosen by God. There are three daily readings to prepare you before your group meets for this session. Interact with the Scriptures, and be ready to interact with your small group.

## 1

# Election Means God Chose Us

<sup>3</sup> Praise the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens. <sup>4</sup> For He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to be adopted through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to His favor and will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of His glorious grace that He favored us with in the Beloved.

EPHESIANS 1:3-6

In verse 4 we find what's called the *doctrine of election*—God elects (or chooses) us in Christ. This doctrine can easily make people nervous for many reasons. But it doesn't have to. Think of it this way. Remember when we were kids, and there was a going to be a game played with two teams? The two best players were captains, and they would pick their teammates—one by one. At some point, everyone was picked—even the worst players.

Well, that's what this passage teaches us—except there are no “worst” players. We're all sinners, but God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world “to be holy and blameless in His sight” (v.4). God picked us, and Scripture is clear that God did so not because of us but in spite of us (see 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

**How does it feel to be picked for something? How do you respond to this biblical truth that God picked you in Christ to be holy and blameless?**

We can try to figure out why God would choose us, but to a certain degree, this will always seem mysterious. So mysterious, in fact, that good biblical Christians offer different explanations.

Review these views of election:

***Conditional Election.*** Some people say election is based on God's foreknowledge of one's faith; in other words, election is conditional depending on a person's choice. Since God is omniscient (all-knowing), He knows all things before they happen, even from eternity past. Therefore, His choice to number someone among the elect is because He knew that person would respond to the gospel in faith and persevere in holy living.

***Unconditional Election.*** Others say God chooses the elect unconditionally, or apart from any consideration of a person's actions, whether good or bad. God, being omniscient, simply chooses some to come to faith in Christ and be saved, without regard to merit or works. This displays His sovereignty, but we can't know why He might choose one person over another.

***Corporate Election.*** Still others understand God's election to mean He chose a class of people—all those who would trust in Christ for salvation, or all those who are "in Christ" (v.3). In this perspective, individuals themselves are not the elect but a group is chosen by God. This believing community has been chosen to receive the promises and spiritual blessings that come through Jesus. It's argued that corporate election in the New Testament corresponds to the corporate election of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament.

If we're honest, we'll recognize how undeserving we are no matter which one of these views we lean toward. There is no cause for boasting. For His electing purpose, we should thank God: "But we must always thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God has chosen you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thess. 2:13).

How does God's choosing you in Christ before the foundation of the world encourage you to live a holy and blameless life in God's sight?