TRUTHS TO APPLY (continued)

—3} God's PLANS & PURPOSES are_____ to:

—4} In God's PLANS/PURPOSES, He initiated the PROCESS of

—DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (or some additional ideas to consider):

Our sermon is based on **Ephesians 1:1–14.**

—Please read through this passage & observe the many references to God's **plans & purposes**. What personal insights do you find and how does this influence your view of God?

—These verses clearly emphasize the idea that God chose people to become His faithful followers. This is a biblical truth (teaching) that is difficult for many to accept or understand. Some Christians say that we should avoid doctrines such as election, because they are so controversial. What thoughts do you have about this?

—Why is it beneficial for us to acknowledge that God has the absolute authority to do whatever He desires?

—For a broader understanding of God's authority and His plans & purposes, please read the following passages:
—Isaiah 14:26–27
—Isaiah 46:9–11
—Acts 2:22–24
—1 Peter 1:18–20

How does what you've observed in these passages impact your view of God and His authority?

—Why is it helpful for us to understand that God designed and developed a plan for man to be redeemed and rescued from sin before the foundation (creation) of the world?

—Why is it important for us to recognize and attempt to understand that God initiated the plan of salvation? Based on what you observe in Ephesians 1:3–14, what role did each of the Persons in the Trinity have in the plan of salvation?

—Many churches/people try to use guilt to control, motivate, and manipulate people. Is this a biblical approach? Why is grace a better motivator?

—Here are some additional comments/truths about this study. After reading them, you might want to discuss what you've learned in this study with someone else.

Both Ephesians & Romans give considerable attention God's plan to save sinners. Both written by Paul, they approach this subject from a very different perspective. Romans 9-11 explains God's plan and addresses how the failure of the Jews to believe in Jesus as their Messiah opened the door to Gentile evangelism. At some point in time, the times of the Gentiles will end, and at this time God will turn once again to the nation Israel, to restore all Israel to faith and obedience, and they will begin recognize Jesus as their Messiah. In Romans it seems that at any point in time God blesses either the Jews, or the Gentiles, but not both simultaneously.

Ephesians approaches the plan of God for saving sinful men from a very different perspective. If, in Romans, Paul defends the salvation of the Gentiles prophetically and historically, in Ephesians Paul defines the plan of salvation as a mystery, something unknown and unknowable in times past, but now revealed to men through the apostles and prophets, and in particular through Paul. In Ephesians Paul claims to unveil truth concerning God's plan of salvation which no man had ever grasped before. In Ephesians we venture into uncharted waters, which take us beyond any previous explanation of the plan of God for saving sinners.

The Doctrine of God's SOVEREIGN SELECTION is highlighted in both Romans and Ephesians, but we should recognize that the Bible never explains the PRECISE PROCESS of how God chose anyone.