

12.4 Valuable Gem

the big idea: Spiritual Blessings in Christ Jesus



Shonda sat on her bed with her mom, trying to hold back tears.

“Nobody asked me to the Winter Formal,” Shonda said, sniffing. “Everybody else is going, but nobody wants to go with me.”

“Oh, baby girl,” Shonda’s mom said, wrapping her arms around her daughter. “I want you to remember something, okay?”

Shonda nodded and laid her head on her mom’s shoulder.

“You are very special,” Shonda’s mom said, smiling. “You are blessed to be a child of God.”

“I don’t feel special,” Shonda said. “I feel unwanted, like something is wrong with me.”

“Even though some silly boy didn’t pick

you to take to the dance, you need to remember that God picked you before you were even born. He knew you and loved you from the very beginning, and He has prepared a special place for you to spend with Him for all eternity. He loved you so much that He sacrificed His Son for you.”

“I’ve never really looked at it that way before,” Shonda said.

“You are a precious gem, Shonda. And gems are not easy to find unless you have a trained eye. Most boys look for the wrong qualities in a girl, but you are incredibly important to God and to your family.”

Shonda smiled and hugged her mom.

from your Bible

Ephesians 1:3–14, NIV—Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ **he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—** ⁶ **to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has**

freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding,⁹ he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything

in conformity with the purpose of his will,¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Scripture discussion

Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesian church while he was in prison. Paul wrote this letter in order to explain what a blessing it was to be adopted in Christ. God chose us before the foundation of the world! We are favored, not because of our works, but because of His grace. We have hope in our relationship with Christ and His return again. God has sealed

our salvation by the power of the Holy Spirit, and eternity with Him is our inheritance. That's amazing! In today's story, Shonda wasn't feeling very loved. In fact, she felt rejected because she wasn't asked to the Winter Formal. The world's rejection can hurt and cause us to lose perspective. Our value is not in the acceptance of man, but our value is found in the redemptive work of Jesus' death and resurrection. What an incredible blessing!

make it real



check it

1. Why was Shonda upset?
2. How did Shonda's mom encourage her?
3. How can you relate to Shonda's situation?



think it

1. How has God blessed us? (Ephesians 1:3)
2. When did God choose us? (v. 4)
3. What happens when we believe in Christ? (vv. 13–14)



do it

We often forget that it is our duty to display the love of Christ to those who are orphaned. Research local adoption agencies or group homes. Contact an administrator to donate items or write an encouraging note. Remember to spend this quarter praying for those children.



keep it

"He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves" (Ephesians 1:5–6, NIV).

12.11 Same Team

the big idea: One in Jesus Christ



Alexander was the team's starting point guard and the school's all-time leading scorer. There were tryouts every year, but Alexander wasn't worried.

But then Alexander heard some of his friends talking about a new student—a transfer named Marcus who also played point guard. Word spread throughout the school that Marcus was also an excellent point guard, and he was bigger and more rugged than Alexander.

On the day of tryouts, Alexander was nervous. His spot in the starting lineup was being threatened, and he needed to defend it. Both Alexander and Marcus battled and pushed themselves during the week of tryouts, and both players successfully made the team. But there was only one starting spot for point guard.

After an intense practice, Alexander confronted Marcus in the locker room. "You might as well give it up, man. That starting spot is mine."

Marcus crossed his arms and replied, "Is that a fact? I don't know who lied to you, but the only spot where you'll be starting—and staying—is on the bench."

Alexander shoved Marcus against the lockers, and Marcus pushed back. Coach Thompson intervened and pulled the two boys apart.

"You two need to leave your egos at the door and quit fighting," Coach Thompson said. "We are a team. You are both members of a team. Start acting like it, or you'll be finished before the season even starts."

from your Bible

Ephesians 2:11–22, NIV—Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹²remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of

the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and in one body

to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people

and also members of his household,²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.²¹ **In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.**²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Scripture discussion

In today's Scripture passage, Paul discusses how Jews and Gentiles were now united through the blood and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The Gentiles were considered separated from the Old Covenant. In contrast, the Jews recognized their status and put their hope in their physical distinctions as well as their hope in the Law. Paul humbled both groups, and their need for a savior was revealed. Christ was the means for salvation for both the Jew and the Gentile. They were now one in the Spirit

and one in the Lord. They were to have peace amongst each other and love one another because they were all part of the family of Christ.

Alexander and Marcus faced a similar situation in today's story. They both came from two different basketball teams but then found themselves competing on the same team together. This tense situation created conflict between the two boys. They forgot that they were supposed to work together to achieve the same goals. Their selfishness and lack of love toward one another not only affected them, but the entire team.

make it real



check it

1. What made Alexander nervous about basketball tryouts?
2. Why did Alexander and Marcus get into a fight?
3. What type of warning did Coach Thompson give the boys?
4. Have you ever experienced a similar situation? If so, how did you handle it?



think it

1. What has now changed for the Gentiles? (Ephesians 2:11–13)
2. Which two groups did Christ make into one? (v. 14)
3. To whom did Christ proclaim peace? (v. 17)



do it

Sometimes, it is difficult to work with people who are different from us. Think about your relationships with others. Is there anyone with whom you are currently fighting? Is there someone you have to work with but don't really enjoy being around? This week, make an effort to include someone who isn't often included, or try to work out your differences with someone you've been arguing with. Spend some time in prayer for that person.



keep it

"In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21, NIV).