

DISCUSSION GUIDE

ICEBREAKER: As a child, what was your idea of fun?

OVERVIEW: The doctrine of election is considered by most to be a third-order doctrine. First order doctrines are those that must be affirmed in order to be a Christian. Second-order doctrines are those that must be affirmed in order to be a member of a particular church. Third-order doctrines are those that Christians in the same church can disagree on. But this does not mean that third-order doctrines are unimportant. Every doctrine matters, because belief determines behavior. In Sunday's sermon Pastor Andy argued in favor conditional election, and explained why the Calvinist doctrine of unconditional election is illogical, unbiblical, and dishonoring to God's reputation. In this discussion we will go deeper in our understanding of the two views of election.

1. **Read 1 Peter 1:1-2.** What insight, principle, or observation from this weekend's message did you find to be the most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling? Explain. (Or what was your key takeaway from Sunday's message?)
2. What is the difference between conditional election and unconditional election?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of unconditional election?
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of conditional election?
5. Read John 3:16. Those who believe in unconditional election agree that God loves everyone. At the same time, they believe that God elected some while not electing others, and this had nothing to do with them. In other words, He loves the non-elect, but He never intended to save them, and He never gave them a chance to be saved. But how is it loving if God is able to save the non-elect, but He chooses not to; He never intended to save them, and He does not give them the opportunity to be saved?

6. Read 2 Peter 3:9 and 1 Timothy 2:3-4. Those who believe in unconditional election affirm that God wants to save everyone. At the same time, they believe that God did not choose to save everyone. In other words, God wants to save the non-elect, but He never intended to save them, and He does not give them the opportunity to be saved. But how is it possible that God desires to save the non-elect if He is able to, yet chooses not to – He never intended to save them, and He never gives them to the opportunity to be saved?
7. Read John 3:16 and Romans 10:13. The invitation to believe in Jesus for salvation is clearly extended to everyone. At the same time, those who believe in unconditional election believe that God never intended to save the non-elect, and He never actually gives them the chance to be saved. But why is the invitation to believe for salvation extended to the non-elect if God does not intend to save them, and if God does not give actually give them the chance to be saved?
8. Do you think the debate over conditional and unconditional election matters? Why or why not?
9. The five points of Calvinism are (TULIP) Total Depravity; Unconditional Election; Limited Atonement; Irresistible Grace; and Perseverance of the Saints. The five points of Arminianism are (FACTS) Freed by Grace to Believe; Atonement for All; Conditional Election; Total Depravity; and Security in Christ. What system of theology do you most align with and why? (For a quick explanation and comparison of these two views visit www.EvangelicalArminians.org.)

The Last Word: "This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."
1 Timothy 2:3-4 (CSB)