

Small Group Study Guide

Ephesians 3: The Mystery Revealed and Prayer for Strength

KEY SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 3:1-21 (Focus verses: 3:6, 3:16-19, 3:20-21)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Part 1: Paul's Perspective on Imprisonment (vv. 1-7)

1. Paul called himself a "prisoner of Christ Jesus" rather than a prisoner of Rome. What does this perspective shift teach us about viewing our difficult circumstances?
2. How did God use Paul's imprisonment for purposes Paul couldn't have accomplished otherwise (Caesar's household, writing epistles, etc.)? Can you think of a "prison" in your life that God might want to use for His glory?
3. What does it mean to be a "bondservant of Christ"? How does viewing ourselves this way take pressure off us?
4. Paul describes himself as "the least of all the saints" yet says God's grace in him "was not in vain." How do we balance humility about our past with confidence in God's grace for our future?

Part 2: The Mystery Revealed (vv. 6-13)

5. The "mystery" Paul reveals is that Jews and Gentiles are now one body in Christ. Why was this such a shocking revelation, especially for someone like Paul who was a Pharisee?

6. According to verses 10-12, we are actually teaching angels through our lived-out faith. How does this change your perspective on your daily walk with Christ?
7. The sermon suggests angels might wonder why we don't take full advantage of what God has provided. What spiritual resources or blessings do you think you're currently underutilizing?

Part 3: Prayer for Spiritual Strength (vv. 14-21)

8. Paul prays that we would be "strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" (v. 16). What is the "inner man" and how does it get strengthened?
9. The sermon used the analogy of a garden that needs constant weeding. What "weeds" commonly grow in your heart that need to be pulled out regularly?
10. Verse 17 says "that Christ may dwell in your hearts." The sermon explains this means Christ being "at home" in our hearts. What makes Christ uncomfortable in a believer's heart? What makes Him comfortable?
11. Paul prays we would comprehend the "width and length and depth and height" of Christ's love (v. 18). Why is Jesus' love incomprehensible to the casual believer? How do we experience it more fully?

KEY TAKEAWAYS

✓ **Perspective Changes Everything** - Like Paul, we can view our trials as opportunities for God's purposes rather than merely as problems.

✓ **The Mystery is Revealed** - God's plan to unite all believers—Jew and Gentile—in one body through Christ is now fully known and available to us.

✓ **Angels Are Watching** - Our lived-out faith teaches heavenly beings about God's grace and should inspire us to take full advantage of what God provides.

✓ **Inner Transformation Requires Intentionality** - We must actively "weed the garden" of our hearts through confession, Bible study, and obedience to the Holy Spirit.

✓ **God Can Do Exceedingly Abundantly** - God's power working in us can accomplish far more than we can imagine (v. 20).

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

This Week's Challenge:

Choose **ONE** of the following to practice this week:

1. **Perspective Shift:** Identify one difficult situation in your life and write down how God might use it for His glory. Pray daily asking God to help you see it as a "prisoner of Christ" rather than a victim of circumstances.
2. **Garden Maintenance:** Set aside 15 minutes daily to "weed your heart." Confess specific sins, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas that need cleaning, and intentionally remove thoughts/habits that don't belong.
3. **Love in Action:** Based on John 13:35 (mentioned at the end), identify someone you struggle to love and take one practical step to show Christ's love to them this week.
4. **Prayer Practice:** Pray the prayer from Ephesians 3:14-21 over yourself and your family every day this week. Journal what God reveals to you about His love.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR JOURNALING

- Where in my life am I living like a "prisoner of circumstances" rather than a "prisoner of Christ"?
- What would it look like for Christ to be fully "at home" in my heart?
- Am I a "casual believer" or am I actively seeking the fullness of God?
- What step of faith is God calling me to take based on what I've learned?