



THE CAMPUS CHURCH
LOVE AND SERVE GOD AND PEOPLE

Small Group Discussion Resource

One – Studies in Ephesians

The Mystery, Ephesians 3:1-13

Before you get going, share a few of your favourite riddles. See if you can stump one another!

Share one of your favourite mystery moves and explain why you like it.

Now, pray for understanding as you study God's word.

1. Read the passage together and share the lines that catch your attention.

For this reason, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles - ² Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. ⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. ¹³ I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

2. The riddles from Ephesians chapter 3 could be stated this way:

What is now known that was once unknown?

What was two but is now one?

What is weak but also very strong?

How would you answer these riddles?

3. How does chapter 3:1-13 fit in with the content of chapter 2?
4. Paul is the person who is revealing the mystery (3:1-4). Where is Paul while writing this and what are his circumstances?
5. Read and reflect upon this section from 2 Corinthians 11. Why are we so surprised when troubles come our way?

I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. ²⁴ Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, ²⁶ I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger

from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. ²⁷ I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. ²⁸ Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

6. Review the details of this mystery in 3:5-6. If you had to summarize this mystery in a short sentence, how would you say it? In Christ all become heirs, members and sharers. Why is this so profound?
7. Why does it seem that many Christians in our culture have a low value on the church? Right now, calculate how many weeks a year you connect somehow with the church. How would you respond to someone who says – *I am into Jesus but not the church.*
8. One has to admire Paul’s humility in his involvement with the church. It is interesting to see Paul’s progression as he has more and more insight into the grace of God. In Philippians 3:5 Paul, gives a bit of a resume, outlining his background. There he refers to himself as a “Hebrews of Hebrews”. In 1 Corinthians 15:9 he refers to himself as “the least of all the apostles”. Five years later, here in Ephesians 3:8 he refers to himself as the least of all the Lord’s people”. Near the end of his life, in 1 Timothy 1:15, Paul refers to himself as the “foremost of all sinners”. In the message paraphrase Paul’s words in 1 Timothy are written this way - *Here’s a word you can take to heart and depend on: Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. I’m proof—Public Sinner Number One—of someone who could never have made it apart from sheer mercy. And now he shows me off—evidence of his endless patience—to those who are right on the edge of trusting him forever.*
Why is it so hard to be humble, especially as we age? Why is humility so important?
9. Reflect on this quote from C.H Spurgeon: *The apostle Paul felt it a great privilege to be allowed to preach the gospel. He did not look upon his calling as a drudgery, but he entered upon it with intense delight. Yet while Paul was thus thankful for his office, his success in it greatly humbled him. The fuller a vessel becomes, the deeper it sinks in the water.*
10. Review God’s intent with this mystery 3:10-13
¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. ¹³ I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.
Discuss a few things that stand out in this passage about the purpose of the mystery.
Awareness. Freedom. Confidence, Courage. How does understanding this mystery help in these areas?
11. If you feel courageous, after reflecting on the application of this passage, share with the group the applications you want to pay attention to the most. How will you go about applying these Biblical ideas?
 - ☐ Do I see my hardships as something designed by God in order to somehow advance his Kingdom?
 - ☐ Am I managing my life and ministry, such that I am helping others understand the mysteries of Christ?
 - ☐ Are there aspects of this mystery I need more Biblical clarity on?
 - ☐ Do I understand the high value and collective nature of the church?
 - ☐ Am I growing in my understanding of grace resulting in a posture of humility?
 - ☐ Is understanding this mystery causing me to grow in awareness, confidence, freedom and courage?
12. Pray about these things with each other.