



## LEADER'S GUIDE 5

### EPHESIANS 3:1-13

## THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL REVEALED THROUGH PAUL

As you start this study, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what God has said through Paul.

### DAY 1

Read Ephesians 3:1-13 three times.

1. In verse 1 “For this reason” are connecting words indicating that what Paul is now going to write is based on what he has, particularly in chapter 2, said about the Jews and Gentiles. Read Ephesians chapter 2 to refresh your memory.

*Point: Paul was in prison because he aroused the hostility of the Jews by advocating the equality of the Gentiles in the church. (Noted from the Oxford Study Bible)*

2. Paul calls himself “the prisoner of Christ Jesus” If you recall from the Historical Background material, Paul was in prison in Rome. He was actually in house arrest. Read Acts 28:16, 17, 23 and 30-31. Write what you learn about house arrest.

*Allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard, able to gather people at his house, was in the rented house for 2 years allowed to have visitors, able to preach in his house.*

TO DIG DEEPER: Paul is in prison “for the sake of you Gentiles”. The story of how this imprisonment started in Jerusalem and how it ended in Rome is recorded in Acts 21:17-Acts 28:16. Read these passages. How many stops did Paul have on the way to Rome from Jerusalem? Who were the people involved in the process? Why was he taken to Rome and not tried in Jerusalem?

*As recorded by Luke, Paul's journey to Rome in Acts is a harrowing account filled with prophesy, miracle, and the grace of God. There were at least 12 stops from Caesarea on this incredible journey.*

*People involved included Jews from Asia Minor (21:27), the Commander of the Roman troops (21:31-32), the Priests and Sanhedrin (22:30). The Lord (23:11), son of Paul's sister (23:16-18), Governor Felix (23:24-35), High Priest and elders and a lawyer (24:1), Festus (25:1), King Agrippa (25:13), a Centurion and Julius (27:1), Publius, chief official of Malta (28:7), some brothers (28:14), some brothers from Rome (28:15).*

*Paul was taken to Rome, because as a Roman citizen he appealed to Caesar to hear his case. (25:8-12)*

*What Paul accomplished by being in Rome under house arrest for two years gave entry to the early Christian church. The NIV Life Application Study Bible provides excellent maps of this amazing journey through the western portion of the Mediterranean Sea.*

## DAY 2

1. In verse 2 Paul refers to his ministry to the Ephesians. See also Colossians 1:25 and Galatians 2:7. Who gave Paul this ministry?

*God commissioned him.*

What was the ministry?

*To present the word of God to the Gentiles*

2. In verses 3-6 Paul again talks about the “mystery of Christ”. To whom was the mystery made known? (verses 3 & 5)

*To Paul*

How was it made known? (verses 3 & 5)

*By revelation, by the Spirit to God's apostles and prophets*

To whom was it not made known? (verse 5)

*To men in other generations*

Why was it not made known? (verse 9)

*Kept hidden in God*

What is the mystery? (verse 6)

*Through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs and sharers together with the Jews in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

3. Read Romans 16:25-26 – define “mystery” as Paul uses it.

*The gospel, proclamation of Jesus Christ to all nations to believe and obey God. In the Greek language, a mystery is something that, while it is beyond human reason to figure it out, once revealed by God is open and plain to all, not something mysterious but something unknown until revealed to the initiated (Romans 16:25-26) – that Jews and Gentiles would be equal heirs in the one body of Christ. This was unknown in Old Testament prophecy. (from the Commentary on Ephesians by Charles Ryrie).*

*Paul's ministry was an evangelical tour de force to the Gentiles. The references to the “mystery of Christ” are excellent. Paul does not leave this “mystery” unsolved. Give some thought in your group to how well prepared the Apostle*

*Paul was for sharing the “mystery” with future Gentile Christians. His knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, his linguistic versatility, and his writing skills are just a few of his amazing gifts.*

4. See Isaiah 49:6 – what did the Old Testament prophets foretell?

*Israel to be restored, bring and bring salvation to the Gentiles and to the ends of the earth.*

Now read Ephesians 3:6 – what new information is added to what the prophets foretold?

*The promise is in Christ Jesus.*

*It was prophesied in the Old Testament that Gentiles would turn to the God of Israel. But was unexpected they would be in unity and equal footing in the church with Jews who believe. (From the NIV Study Bible Footnote)*

Note: in verse 6 the word “together” is used 3 times indicating the significance of this new revelation.

### DAY 3

1. In verses 7 & \* Paul shares his view of his ministry. Who gave Paul this gift of grace? (verse 7)

*God*

How was it given? (verse 7)

*Through God's power*

*Without God's work in his life he would never be able to do God's work. (from the New Living Translation comments.)*

2. What does Paul think of himself according to verse 7?

*He is a servant of the gospel*

According to verse 8?

*Less than the least of all God's people*

What kind of person does Paul seem to you from these verse?

*(Some thoughts may include humble, dedicated servant)*

*God could not have chosen a more capable evangelist than Paul. In verse 8 he resists the temptation to boast and acknowledges the gift of God's grace. What an incredible example for us and a contrast to our fame-seeking society.*

3. In verses 8 &9, what two things was Paul to do with this gift of grace?

*To preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable or boundless riches of Christ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery.*

*Some of the boundless riches: redemption, forgiveness of sins, knowledge of his will, an inheritance, power, resurrection with Christ, grace, kindness, enthronement with Christ, citizenship in God's Kingdom, membership in God's family. All are mentioned in Ephesians 1-3.*

TO DIG DEEPER: The word "administration" is used in verses 2 and 9 in the NIV translation. If you have other Bible translations i.e. Revised Standard Version, King James Version, American Standard Version , etc., look up verses 2 and 9. What word is used in place of "administration"? Explain how this helps you understand the verses better.

*King James Version – dispensation of grace (verse 2), fellowship (verse 9)*

*Revised Standard Version – commission (verse 2), the plan (verse 9)*

*American Standard Version – stewardship (verse 2), administration (verse 9)*

*New Living Translation – special responsibility (verse 2), the plan (verse 9).*

*Several translations help us understand the phrase 'administration' in the NIV and the New American Standard translations.*

#### DAY 4

1. In verse 9 it says that in the past this “mystery” was kept hidden by God. What does verses 10 & 11 say is God’s intent now?

*Make known God's wisdom. Now is in contrast to ages past.*

Through what will He do this?

*Through the church.*

To whom will He make this known? Where are they?

*To the rulers and authorities in heavenly realms*

In accordance with what?

*His eternal purpose*

How was this to be accomplished?

*In Christ*

*Angels and spiritual hostile forces are the best candidates for the phrase “ruler and authorities in the heavenly realms”. Take a look back to Luke 2:8-14. The angel announces to the shepherds, “He is Christ the Lord!”*

2. The “rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” are also noted in Ephesians 1:20-21; 2:2; and 6:12. See also 1 Peter 1:12 and Job 1-2:6. What affect does the Christian individually and collectively as the church have on these beings?

*The beings are described as angels and Satan in these verses. Christians reveal God’s wisdom and His purpose of salvation. We are witnesses to them!*

*The church is also observed by these spiritual powers – to the degree it is spiritually united it portrays to them the wisdom of God. (from Warren Wiersbe)*

#### DAY 5

1. Read verse 12. In whom may we approach God? How may we approach God?

*In Christ Jesus with freedom and confidence.*

2. Look up these cross references for verse 12: Hebrews 4:16; 10:19, 35; 1 John 2:28, 3:21 and 4:17. Write down by each verse what it says about how we can or even who can approach God?

*Hebrews 4:16 – with confidence, us Hebrews 10:19 – confidence, brothers*

*Hebrews 10:35 – confidence 1John 2:28 – confident, unashamed, us*

*1John3:21 – confidence, we 1John 4:17 – confidence, we*

*Ephesians 3:12 affirms the Christian Reformed premise that, “we may approach God with freedom and confidence.” The list of references given in Lesson 5 explain the access we have as Christians to approach God boldly. Through Christ we are members of God’s household. Prayers need not be delegated to another person who has more education, higher status, or more “fame”. In the “Nike” paraphrase, “Just Do It”. The priesthood of all believers is a key doctrine in our faith.*

3. One of the tenants of our faith statement at CCPC is that we believe in the priesthood of all believers. Based on the verses you just read, explain what you understand this to mean. How does this make a difference in your prayer life?

## DAY 6

In verse 13 Paul asks the readers of Ephesians not to be discouraged that he is suffering because he preached the gospel to them. The result was that they believed in Christ. As seen in previous verses it was his mission, his calling and he was willing to face whatever the consequence.

### APPLICATION

Today, what Paul did is called Evangelism. Some people are called to a full time ministry of Evangelism. They preach the gospel everywhere. We, too, are called to “evangelize” – share the gospel or good news everywhere we are. See Matthew 28:18-20. What are some negative connotations of “evangelism”? What are some positive connotations of “evangelism”? How can you share the gospel with others? What hinders you from sharing the “good news”?

*Jesus last words in Matthew 28:18-20 are known as the “Great Commission”. It is a command to each of us as Christians. Paul puts it quite succinctly in Romans 1:16 – “I am not ashamed of the gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” Evangelism is not complicated. It is not being ashamed to share the Good News. Live what you believe. Be prepared to say what you believe. See verse 7 again – God gave Paul the ability and courage to share the gospel effectively – He will give ability and courage to us too! Romans 10:13-14 says “How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” You may not be a preacher, but you still can share with others what God has done for you! It is up to them if they want to believe.*