

God's Eternal Purpose– Ephesians 3



MEMORY VERSE: I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge- that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Ephesians 3:17b-20 (NIV)

DAY 1 EPHESIANS 3:1-6—The Mystery Revealed

1. Chapter 3 begins with, “for this reason.” How does this passage flow from the main ideas from chapter 2?
2. Compare Paul’s description of himself in 3:1 to 1:1. What do the combined descriptions tell you about God’s plan for Paul’s life?
3. Using a dictionary and the NIV and/or NLT, how would you define “stewardship” in the context of this passage?
4. What do you learn about the “mystery” or “secret plan” from these verses?
1-3

4-5
5. What is the mystery that is now revealed? v.6

DAY 2 EPHESIANS 3:7-10— God’s Plan for Paul

6. How did Paul become a minister of this gospel? v.7
7. Why did Paul find it ironic that he was given this ministry? v. 8

LEARN THE TRUTH

God had an eternal plan before He even created the world, and you are part of it! As you learn about the unfolding of His plan, listen to His voice, trust Him, and ask Him to help you see your place in His body, the church. Even the worst sinner is invited, no matter how they have failed in the past.

8. Originally Paul, named Saul, was a zealous Jew and a Pharisee who hated the followers of Christ. Jot down the highlights of his conversion to Christianity. Acts 9:1-19 (stay in in Acts 9)
9. Describe God's immediate **plan** for the ministry He entrusted to Paul. vv. 8b-9 and Acts 9:15,16
10. Describe God's ultimate **purpose** for the ministry He entrusted to Paul. v. 10
11. Who are the "rulers and authorities in the heavenly places?" Ephesians 6:12

DAY 3 EPHESIANS 3:10-13 — God's Plan for His Church

12. What is your understanding of the "church" from Ephesians so far and 1 Corinthians 1:1-2?
13. Could people be saved from sin before Christ came to earth? If so, how? Hebrews 11
14. What do you think "the manifold wisdom of God" is?
15. In what ways do you think the church makes God's manifold wisdom known?
16. "Because of Christ and our faith in Him, we can now come fearlessly into God's presence, assured of His glad welcome." (3:12 New Living Translation) Is this a reality in your life? Why or why not?
17. How can you explain Paul's reasoning behind his statement in verse 13?

DAY 4 EPHESIANS 3:14-19 — Prayer for Spiritual Empowering

18. Paul wrote, "For this reason I bow my knees..." What is the "reason" for his prayer?
19. What traits of God does Paul count on in his prayer? vv.14-16a

20. What does Paul ask God to do for His people, and why is each request so needed?

v. 16

v. 17

v. 18

v. 19

DAY 5 EPHESIANS 3:20-21 – God’s Mysterious, Yet Revealed, Ways

21. Of what can we be certain about God? vv. 20-21

22. God’s character and plan are certain, but does anything about Him still seem mysterious to you?

23. The words, “mystery” or “secret,” are used 4 times in this chapter. What reasons can you think of about why God waited so long to reveal His eternal plan for Jews and Gentiles? Romans 4:13

24. Is there anything in your life that seems like a mystery- you know God is in control, but don’t see His bigger picture or understand His timing?

25. What helps you trust God during times of mystery or uncertainty?

LOVE THE TRUTH

God’s ways can seem mysterious. When you don’t understand Scripture or what God appears to be doing, or not doing, remember His character. He is all good, all loving and all powerful. He cares more about your life and what happens here than you do! Shift your focus from the problem to the Provider.

Ephesians 3

God's Eternal Purpose

Paul was under house arrest when he wrote to his beloved Ephesians, yet he had only praise for the Lord and no self-pity. This is because he truly understood the wonderful grace of God, and felt such gratitude that God extended His grace to his undeserving self. Paul wrote, "Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life." 1 Timothy 1:15-16 NIV Paul certainly was not the "worst of sinners," but humbly acknowledged his past sin, while not letting it define him.

Because Paul grasped the enormity of his salvation through Christ, he was honored to serve God and was undaunted by his imprisonment. He recognized that he had a high calling from God and saw himself as a steward of God's grace. God revealed to him what had previously been a mystery, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs with the Jews, that they were part of God's family, with the same inheritance as the Jews. This concept was simply unheard of before Christ. It meant that salvation was available to the whole world! Perhaps God waited until the time of Christ to reveal His eternal plan because, by that time, any truth-seeking person had to realize they were without hope on their own. The "chosen" status of the Jews was not enough to save them because they were sinners deserving of death, just like the Gentiles. The whole world needs a Savior.

The word, "mystery," does not mean something cannot be known or understood, but that it is currently unknown or hidden until the right time for it to be revealed. There are pagan religions or practices that emphasize a "special knowledge" given only to a select few, but our Father wants to be known by everyone.

When God revealed truth to His people, they wrote it down and passed it on so all could hear and believe. All believers are one in Christ, and a part of His body, the church. God reveals Himself and His will through His Word, the Bible and through the church.

Every believer and the church as a whole needs what Paul prayed. While his prayer in chapter 1 focused on the initial understanding of the power of God for salvation, his prayer in this chapter was for believers to have the depth of faith and the power needed to stand firm in the midst of persecution, which was sure to come.

WALK IN TRUTH



Paul realized that his soul was not forfeited because of his horrific sins. He could have wallowed in guilt and disqualified himself because of his past, but instead he rejoiced in salvation through Christ, and trusted God to use him to His glory. If you think you are disqualified because of your past, you are wrong. Accept the gift of grace through faith in Jesus Christ and let God work in and through you.

If you are stumped as to what God is doing in your life, ask Him for what you really need-- strength with power through His Spirit in your inner being-- Christ dwelling in your heart through faith-- bring rooted and grounded in love-- the strength to comprehend just how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love really is. We will not fully grasp how great God's love and power are until heaven, but we can know now that He is able to do more in our lives than we ever imagined possible when we trust in Him.

Notes