

A CRASH COURSE IN THE CHURCH

EPHESIANS: A CRASH COURSE IN BASIC CHRISTIANITY | EPHESIANS 3:1-13 | JUNE 29/30, 2019 | PASTOR RUTH CARVER

His [God's] 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, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Ephesians 3:10-11)

The Mystery of the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1-9)

Paul interrupts himself as he prepares to pray for his audience. (Ephesians 3:1)

God gave Paul a revelation of the mystery about the Gentiles. (Ephesians 3:2-6)

God gave Paul a commission for the ministry to the Gentiles. (Ephesians 3:7-9)

The Church: Ramifications of the Mystery (Ephesians 3:10-13)

The Church has been formed. (Ephesians 3:10)

The Church instructs the good and bad angels. (Ephesians 3:10-11)

All Christians have access to God. (Ephesians 3:12)

Paul is suffering for the glory of the Church. (Ephesians 3:13)

Paul resumes his prayer for his audience. (Ephesians 3:14)

How to Love the Church Better – 3 Challenges

Appreciate the manifold richness we can gain from Christians not like us.

Be willing to sacrifice for the glory of others in the church.

Commit yourself to a particular local church.

STUDY GUIDE:

1. Paul refused to let his circumstances define him, so in Ephesians 3:1, he calls himself “*a prisoner of Christ Jesus*” even though he is technically a prisoner of the emperor Nero. Are there ways you can allow Christ, rather than your difficult circumstances, to define you?
2. Paul says the mystery of Jews and Gentiles equal together in Christ was revealed to “*holy apostles and prophets*” – plural. Can you think of others besides Paul to whom God revealed this amazing mystery? See Acts 10, Acts 15:1-20 and Revelation 7:9-10.
3. Why did God keep this mystery hidden for so long? Clue in Ephesians 1:9-10.
4. What is another mystery Paul talks about in Ephesians 5?
5. Discuss this controversial statement by Cyprian of Carthage in the 3rd century: You cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother.
6. Bill Gates once said that he wasn't the greatest philanthropist in the world because he hadn't really sacrificed. He said, “The most amazing philanthropists are people who are actually making a significant sacrifice.” How does this relate to what Paul says in Eph. 3:13?
7. The 2010 census showed that there were 695 churches in Milwaukee County, divided into 68 denominations. Do you think the fact that there are denominations is depressing or evidence of the manifold richness of the universal church?
8. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said this about the privilege of going to church: “What is an unspeakable gift of God for the lonely individual is easily disregarded and trodden under foot by those who have the gift every day.” Have there been times in your life when you have taken the privilege of going to church for granted?
9. Reflect on how rich the words “*Christ Jesus our Lord*” are from Eph. 3:11. “Christ” means “Messiah”, so he is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. “Jesus” is the name for the man from Nazareth, so He was a historical person. “Our” reminds us that He is personal to us. “Lord” means that He is the ultimate ruler – the King of kings and Lord of lords. Spend some time thinking about each of these four words.

TAKE IT FURTHER:

- Ephesians 3:12 tells us we can approach God the Father in freedom and confidence because of Jesus. Practice doing so this week by praying the prayer Jesus taught his disciples to pray to God the Father, pausing after each phrase and elaborating on it in a personal way:

*Our Father in heaven,
Help us to honor your name.
Come and set up your kingdom,
So that everyone on earth will obey you,
As you are obeyed in heaven.
Give us our food for today.
Forgive us for doing wrong, as we forgive others.
Keep us from being tempted and protect us from evil. (Matthew 6:9-13, CEV)*