

Calvary Chapel of El Cajon Women's Bible Studies

Ephesians 3:1-13

Lesson 5

God revealed a secret to Paul. It was not a secret to be kept, but a secret to be *dispensed* throughout the world – especially to the Gentiles, the beneficiaries of the good news contained in the secret. The secret? The Gentiles and Jews, as believers have now been united as one body, the church. Old news to you? Probably. Yet, good news, great news. May you find yourself rejoicing in the secret, even though you have known it for a long time.

DAY ONE: Read Ephesians 3:1-13

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Observation Worksheets and another Bible translation or paraphrase. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they were about?
 - a. Ephesians 3:1-13 has been divided into 2 sections. List below the subject(s) covered in each section.

Verses 1-7

Verses 8-13

How would you title this section? Record your title on the **Chapter & Paragraph Division Titles Chart** provided with your Observation Worksheet.

2. At the right-hand side of the same chart are columns labeled **Key Word** and **Symbol**. They have been provided for you to record the key words and the symbol you have chosen to represent each one. Record the key words listed below and their symbols on the chart.

God, Jesus, Spirit, and grace

New to this lesson: *mystery*

Term of conclusion: *for this reason, Therefore*

Now, using the symbols you have chosen, mark each of the key words each time they are used in Ephesians 3:1-13. Remember, as you mark the words *God* and *Jesus*, to mark any personal pronouns that refer to Them. You do not need to mark every word that refers them – only those that you feel are significant.

3. Using your marked references to Jesus, make a list of what Ephesians 3:1-13 reveals about Him. Record the verses reference next to each one.

a. Summarize, in your own words, what these verses teach about Jesus.

DAY TWO: Read Ephesians 3:1-5

1. Before his conversion to Christianity, Paul had an impressive resume'. He referred to himself as a Hebrew of Hebrews, concerning the law, a Pharisee. That is like saying, "I was among the most religious of the religious". In contrast, how does Paul identify himself in Ephesians 3:1?

a. Whose *prisoner* did gladly refer himself to be?

b. At the time of this writing, Paul was a prisoner in Rome. Why do you think he described himself as a *prisoner of Jesus Christ*?

c. Paul said he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ *because of my preaching to you Gentiles* (NLT). He began this verse with the term of conclusion, *For this reason*, giving us the hint that we should look to the verses immediately preceding this conclusion for the *reason* he *preached to the Gentiles*. What was it?

2. What had these Gentiles heard? verse 2

a. *Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you*, (Ephesians 3:2 NIV). The sentence continues in verses 3 and 4. What had they heard that would indicate a supernatural calling on Paul's life?

Note: a *mystery*, as Paul refers to, is a spiritual truth once hidden, but now revealed.

b. To what *mystery* is Paul referring? See Romans 11:25 and Colossians 1:26,27.

3. What does Ephesians 3:5 tell us about this *mystery*?

- a. Peter was among those who did not understand this *mystery*, God's plan to save the Gentiles. What does Peter say about this in Acts 10:28 that reveals to us that he now understands this *mystery*?
- b. By Whom was the *mystery revealed*?
 - 1.) What do the following verses tell us about the *Holy Spirit*?

John 14:26

John 16:13
 - a.) Explain, as you would to a new believer, how you have experienced this in your life.

DAY THREE: Read Ephesians 3:6-8a

1. In Ephesians 3:6, Paul takes the guess work out of the *mystery*. What does he say it is?
 - a. What do the following verses say to deepen our understanding of this *mystery*?

Galatians 3:14

Galatians 3:26-28
2. What two privileges do believing Gentiles now have? See Ephesians 3:6
 - a. What are the requirements of an *heir* according to Galatians 3:29.
 - 1.) What understanding does Romans 4:13-14 add to this?
3. If you were one of the Gentile believers in Ephesus, how do you think you would have responded to Paul's explanation of *the mystery of Christ*?
 - a. The Christian Jews struggled with this newly revealed mystery. Can you think of a time that, as a Christian, your thinking was wrong and someone had to correct it? If so, briefly share that experience.
4. In Ephesians 3:7 Paul declares his calling as a *minister*. How does Paul view this calling? (As a *gift* or burden?)
 - a. In what way is any kind of ministry a *gift of the grace of God*?

- 1.) If someone loses the joy of their ministry, what do you think they should do?
- b. Using 1 Corinthians 15:10, record Paul's response to his calling.
 - c. Paul took God's calling on his life very seriously. He labored fervently. Colossians 1:29 tells us that he even *strived*. Yet, Paul had a source of strength beyond his own. What does Colossians 1:29 teach us about this?
5. So far, in chapter 3, Paul has described himself as a *prisoner of Jesus Christ* and a *minister*. What phrase does he use to describe himself in verse 8?
 - a. Read 1 Corinthians 15:9 and 1 Timothy 1:15. Summarize what Paul is saying about himself.
 - 1.) How do you think someone who thought of himself this way could be used by God?

DAY FOUR: Read Ephesians 3:8b-10

1. Paul was given grace to *preach among the Gentiles*. What specifically does verse 8 say he was to *preach*?

Challenge: Define the word *unsearchable* as it is used in this verse.

2. Verse 9 continues Paul's commission. What does this verse say Paul was to *make all see*?
 - a. The word *fellowship* may be better understood as *administration* or *distribution*. The revealing of this *mystery* was a primary part of Paul's ministry. Paul's general ministry was to preach the gospel. Yet, he was also given a specific ministry to share the mystery that the gospel was available to all, whether Gentile or Jew. Why was it so important that Paul fulfill the specific calling on his life?

1.) How does this speak to you about fulfilling your specific calling?

3. *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* (Ephesians 3:10 NIV). What was God's intention?

Challenge: Define the word *manifold* as it is used in this verse to describe God's *wisdom*.

- a. What does He plan to use to make this message *known*?
 - 1.) This plan has been revealed to *principalities and powers in the heavenly places* for over 2,000 years now. Assuming these *principalities and powers* are good angels, what do you think this plan of God's tells them about Him?
 - a.) What does 1 Peter 1:12 say about the *angels*?

DAY FIVE: Read Ephesians 3:11-13

1. What phrase from verse 11 discloses that this *mystery* was not an afterthought?
 - a. What does God say about His plans in Isaiah 14:24?
 - b. What affect does knowing the surety of God's plans have on your life?
2. In Whom was this plan accomplished? verse 11
 - a. Because of Jesus, what does verse 12 say that we have?
 - b. Using Paul's words in verse 12, describe this *access* that we have.
 - 1.) Now describe in your own words the *boldness* and *confident access* we have to God.
 - 2.) According to Hebrews 4:15,16 what can we find *at the throne of grace*?
3. *Therefore* (Ephesians 3:13) what does Paul ask the Gentile believers *not* to do?
 - a. Describe Paul's ministry attitude using the following verses:

Acts 14:22

2 Corinthians 1:6

Galatians 6:9

Hebrews 12:3,4

 - 1.) What can we learn from this?

4. Paul's concern that others not be overly concerned about him is not exclusive to the Ephesians. What did he write to the Philippians in Philippians 1:12?
 - a. Paul began this section (verse 1) telling the Gentiles that he was a *prisoner of Christ Jesus* for them. He ended this section (verse 13) telling them that his *tribulations were for them, which is their glory*. In light of what Paul wrote in Philippians 1:12, what was Paul's overriding concern?
 - b. Reflect on your own concerns about ministry. How does this speak to you?

DAY SIX: Review Ephesians 3:1-13

1. Paul was a *dispenser* of God's grace. What are some of the things about God's grace that are most meaningful to you?
 - a. To be a dispenser, we must have something to *dispense*. If you were a vending machine, what would you be stocked with?
2. The *mystery* revealed to the Gentiles is now old news to us. Describe how you might have felt, if you were alive 2,000 years ago and, hearing the gospel for the first time, were told that it wasn't available for you.
 - a. What would you say to a Jew at that time, after the *mystery* had been revealed to you?
3. Share something from Paul's example that challenged you.

*for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—
I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—
a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.*

- 1 Timothy 2:7