

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide

WHY THE CHURCH!

Ephesians 3:1-13 (SB 04.24.2022)

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

Paul had the opportunity to tell others about the riches that we have through Christ. He also shared the mystery of the church and the fact that we are all one in Christ. Here we see that Paul emphasized two things as he preached. First, he emphasized the fact that people must be saved from the penalty of sin. Then when people become Christians, Paul emphasized the fact that we are all one in Christ. We are His body and His body is called the church. It was the purpose of God to establish the church from before the creation of the world. The church encompasses all ethnic groups of people and cultures, Jews and Gentiles alike. Christ has broken down all that separates us through His sacrificial death on the Cross. Let's get into our study...

1. What spoke to you from Pastor John Spencer's sermon?
2. How would you contrast the Tower of Babel with Pentecost?
3. Have you ever felt closer to a "believing" stranger than an unbelieving relative? How?

Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 3:1-2

Christians certainly recognize God's grace and power as necessary for salvation. We may even ask God to show His grace and power by praying for something miraculous, such as relief from a medical crisis. Yet we may not look at everyday ministry to others as evidence of God's grace and expressions of His power. This study in Ephesians 3 looks at Paul's account of his ministry, especially as that ministry stands as an example of serving God. Paul's example demonstrates that whenever we accept opportunities to serve God, He extends the grace and power we need to do whatever He asks.

1. Why would Paul have felt a responsibility to take the message of God's grace to the Gentiles?
2. What was likely Paul's attitude about being in prison?

The Gentiles were the focus of Paul's ministry. As his readers very well knew, Paul was now a prisoner because of this ministry. Notice that the apostle considered himself detained because of Christ Jesus, although from an earthly perspective, he was the prisoner of Rome. Paul looked at reality from a heavenly perspective.

3. How often do you remember that part of the reason you were saved is so that you can be steward of God's grace reaching to others? How does this affect your attitude toward service?
4. How has God used a negative experience (job loss, strained relationship, or sickness) as evidence of His grace in your life? What about as opportunities to serve?
5. What might prevent believers from recognizing God's grace in their lives?

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 3:3-6

1. What, in your own words, was the mystery Paul was talking about here?

BREAKTHROUGH! in 2022

The big mystery was that God was extending His grace not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. These two groups were being brought together, in Christ, into a new entity of the church.

2. What one word would you use to define this mystery Paul shares? Why?
3. What is your personal responsibility since you know about this mystery, too?

Paul's mystery revealed speaks primarily to the unity of believers. He calls Christians to acknowledge that God has revealed that His eternal plan includes Gentiles as equal partners with Jews in Christ. It's important to continually ask the Lord to help us receive this revelation and then use it as a springboard for opportunities to serve Him.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 3:7-13

1. Why do you think God gave His grace and power to Paul?

As he had done also in 3:2, the apostle declared that God's grace toward him was an undeserved gift. Only the working of His power could change a self-sufficient sinner into a steward of God. Paul humbly summarized his entire ministry with the word "servant." This term can also be translated "minister" or "deacon" and referred to a person who tended to the needs of others.

2. Is service in the church our gift to God or God's gift to us?
3. How can we have the right attitude and ability to serve God?
4. What part does evangelism have in our service? What happens when we serve without faithfully sharing the good news of Jesus?
5. How can our acts of service and sharing, carried out as grace opportunities rather than guilt obligations, lead others to rejoice?

We can rejoice no matter what happens because we know God's plan is unfolding exactly as He intended. Through His grace and power, He's allowing us to play a part in that eternal plan through service. Whatever happens to help others take part in God's eternal plan is a matter for rejoicing.

Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

1. What are some specific ways God has revealed His grace in your own life?
2. What opportunities has God given you that you need to view as gifts of God's grace rather than obligations?
3. What attitudes are necessary for us to regard these as opportunities rather than obligations? How has this week's study helped you see that all serving and sharing is an opportunity of grace, not an obligation of guilt? What will you do differently as a result?

PRAYER - Thank God for His grace given to us, even in the most unexpected way. Pray that we would view every chance to serve or share as an opportunity rather than an obligation. Pray that God would continually give us humble attitudes as we seek to serve Him.

"Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." (Acts 2:9-11)