

“Manifold Wisdom”

Immeasurably More #3 • Ephesians 3

INTRODUCTION

In chapter 3 of the book of Ephesians Paul explains how God uses the church to reveal the mystery of His plan of salvation. We can liken this to a play in which God, the creator, unfolds His manifold wisdom through His “cast”, the church, to the audience of angels. Using this analogy we see the unfolding drama of redemption for all people, through Jesus Christ for the glory of God.

Ice Breaker (Optional):

What was the last stage production you attended?

Study Questions (45 MIN)

God Who Created All Things (The Creator)

Q1. Read Ephesians 3:6-10; John 1:1-3; Revelation 4:11

God, in his incredible, manifold wisdom, has designed a plan of salvation for us. The intricacy of this plan is a reflection of the creativity and wisdom of the Creator of all things and we will never fully comprehend it. What part of this plan did Paul refer to in Eph 3:6 as the “mystery” which had been hidden for ages? How does John 1:3 clarify the extent of God’s creativity? What does Rev 4:11 tell us makes God worthy of glory, honor and power?

The Manifold Wisdom of God (The Script)

Q2. Read Ephesians 3:3-5, 10

To whom did God reveal the mystery of His redemptive plan in Eph 3:3, 6, and 10? As the angels look down upon the church, that is the body of believers, they see the “manifold wisdom of God.” How do you think the church displays God’s wisdom? As you reflect on the way God has progressively revealed himself to you, what would you say He has most recently been showing you?

The Message of the Church (The Cast)

Q3. Read Galatians 3:26-29; Acts 15:7; Galatians 4:4-7

Through His grace and in His wisdom, God made a way for both the Jews and the Gentiles to be included in His family. How is it we all are now included as God’s children (Galatians 3:26-29)? In referring to the “church!” Paul presents the image of a single, unified body of believers. Unfortunately that has not always been what we have observed among the present-day church. Verse 28 lists some of the dividing lines among the Ephesians. What would you say are the issues that create division among believers today?

¹ekklēsia- the whole company of the redeemed

The believer is called an “heir through God” and is likened to a son. (Galatians 4:4-7). In many instances of scripture the Apostles and other believers are

referred to as bond-servants² of God. In what respects do you see yourself as a “bond-servant”, and as a “son” to God? Which role do you find yourself in more?

² *doulos- one who gives himself up to another’s will*

Angelic Beings (The Audience)

Q4. Read Ephesians 3:10; Revelation 14:19, Hebrews 1:14, Isaiah 14:1; Ephesians 6:11-12

Paul refers to the rulers and authorities in heavenly realms –angelic beings (Eph 3:10). Angels aren’t chubby babies with wings, but can be blade wielding spiritual combatants for good or evil (demons), or ministering spirits sent by God. Even Satan himself is a fallen angel. What does Ephesians 6:11-12 tell us about our interaction with these evil spirits in heavenly places? With this in mind, why do you think it important that God uses us, His church, to demonstrate His wisdom in heavenly realms?

Wrap-Up

God, in His infinite grace, has prepared a plan of salvation. This plan, which incorporates both Jews and Gentiles into the family of God, is a display of His manifold wisdom. It is through faith in Jesus, who was sent to set us free, that God has chosen to reveal His plan to us and through us, His church. God’s creation of one unified body, called to share in Christ’s inheritance gives testimony (even in the heavenly realms) of his wisdom and power over all things. And because of Jesus, we can approach the throne of God in freedom and confidence.

Memory Verse

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.
Ephesians 3:20-21 NIV

Prayer (20 MIN)

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: _____

Pray for your group members’ needs: (see back for more notes) _____

Challenge: Read Ephesians 3:14-21. Note each concern voiced by Paul for the Ephesians, and ask yourself, “Is this true in my life? Have I embraced all that God has for me in this area? What shall I do in response?”

Q1

Ephesians 3:6-10 ESV - 6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

John 1:1-3 ESV - 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Revelation 4:11 ESV - 11 "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created."

Q2

Ephesians 3:3-5, 10 ESV - 3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. ... 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Q3

Galatians 3:26-29 ESV - 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Acts 15:7-9 ESV - 7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, 9 and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.

Galatians 4:4-7 ESV - 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Q4

Ephesians 3:10 NIV - 10 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,

Revelation 14:19 ESV - 19 So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. Hebrews 1:14 ESV - 14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent out to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

Isaiah 14:12 NKJV - 12 "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! [How] you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!

Ephesians 6:11-12 ESV - 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Challenge

Ephesians 3:14-21 NIV - 14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Prayer Notes cont.
