

Mystery and Suffering

Pastor Paul Springer | Ephesians 3:1-13

February 4, 2018 | Winter Cycle: Week 4 of 10

Personal Connection (25 minutes)

Icebreaker

Did you go to a high school where each day of Homecoming week had a special theme? Perhaps students wore costumes to celebrate the festivities. Were you more comfortable blending in, or did you enjoy standing out amongst the crowd?

Ups and Downs

Last week we discussed how our church has been gifted with a wide variety of people from different backgrounds, with differing views, experiences, resources, and gifts.

Q. Has the Lord helped you to see these differences more as a gift and less like a barrier?

Praying for each other

Pray for the group, particularly for strength and endurance to proclaim the Gospel, especially during hard times.

Sharing Christ

Q. How is your walk with Christ going? Has he revealed important truths to you lately, truths that inspire you to share his goodness with others?

Review Last Sunday's *What Now?*

Last week we discussed how sin not only separates us from each other, but from God. It is through Christ that the barriers of sin are torn down, restoring our relationship with God and with each other.

Digging Deeper (30 minutes)

This Week's Key Concept:

Sometimes suffering for the Gospel will come — even in unexpected ways, but DO NOT BE DETERRED!

Q. Have you ever faced negative consequences for openly sharing or living out your faith amongst unbelievers? If yes, did it affect your confidence in expressing your faith in Christ?

Hebrews 10:35-36 (ESV) ³⁵Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.

Read Ephesians 3:1-13

The Apostle Paul states that he is in prison because of his commitment to share the gospel with the Gentiles.

In Ephesians 3:2-6, the Apostle Paul clarifies God's specially revealed plan to him: the history-changing message that God extends salvation to the Gentiles (all non-Jewish people).

Q. Have you ever felt like you grasp God's plan, only to discover it is much greater than you could comprehend or beyond the scope of your imagining?

God's plan was not revealed to previous generations, not because God wanted to keep something from his people, but because he would reveal it to everyone in his perfect timing!

In Ephesians 3:7-9, the Apostle Paul states that he was privileged to serve, privileged to share, and chosen to explain.

Q. What spiritual gifts do you think Paul had?

Q. What is the value in discovering your spiritual gifts? **Note: *Spiritual gifts are given by God when a person asks Jesus Christ to be the leader and master of his or her life. The purpose of the gifts is to build up the church so that it can fulfill its mission.***

Q. What spiritual gifts do you have, and how do they help you in your current ministry? **Note: *If you don't know what your spiritual gifts are, or if it has been a long time since you last explored them, consider taking the Explorer's Class, starting February 11th. This class is designed both for those exploring Christianity and for Christians at all stages in their spiritual development.***

Review Ephesians 3:8b-11 (TLB)

I was the one chosen for this special joy of telling the Gentiles the Glad News of the endless treasures available to them in Christ; and to explain to everyone that God is the Savior of the Gentiles too, just as he who made all things had secretly planned from the very beginning. And his reason? To show to all the rulers in heaven how perfectly wise he is when all of his family—Jews and Gentiles alike—are seen to be joined together in his Church in just the way he had always planned it through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Q. As you look at our church, how are we doing? Are we displaying his amazing wisdom through our words and actions?

We are called serve the Lord in a way that points glory directly back to him. Not only did Christ choose to die sacrificially for us, but he shapes us in his image, helping us share the gospel with others so they may experience God's glory too!

Impact Questions

Q. Obedience isn't measured in the time wasted, but is measured in the now. Are you willing to allow God to use you? Take heart and be brave; God is with you!

Joshua 1:9 (NLT) This is my command — be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

When the Apostle Paul became a servant of the gospel, God gave him the ability to share the gospel of Christ effectively. Although you may not have the same gifts that the Apostle Paul did, God will give you opportunities to tell others about Christ. And with the opportunities he will provide the ability, courage, and power. Make yourself available to God as his servant whenever an opportunity presents itself. As you focus on the other person and their needs, God will communicate your caring attitude. Pray that your words will be natural, loving, and compelling.

What now? (15 minutes)

Pray to the Lord for bravery; bravery to continue being a witness to Christ's saving grace, even if it costs you dearly.

Closing Prayer (15 minutes)

Please share your prayer requests and praises, so that your LIFE Group may lift you up in prayer. Please pray that we would be a church that doesn't blend in with the world; that even if times get hard, God would use us for his glory!