

Discovery Group - Ephesians

According to His Eternal Purpose

Accountability

Share how your obedience commitment from last week went, and who you shared with.

Bible: Ephesians 2-3

Read *passage* aloud & someone retell in their own words

- What do we learn from this passage about God?
- What do we learn from this passage about people?

Read the *article* on the next page. According to Ephesians,

- What is the purpose of church in God's plan? How is this purpose achieved? If *each* church is a local expression of *the* Church, what is the role of the local church?
- How is the purpose of individuals in God's family linked to the role of the local church in God's plan? What does this say about your priorities?
- Why is the prayer at the end of chapter 3 placed here in this letter? How might a fresh revelation of God's love be the key for all of this? How do we receive it?

Commit

What is Jesus calling you to do in *obedience* this week?

Who can you *share* this with? Who can you reach out to in order to make disciples?

Abide:

- * Pray Ephesians 3:14-21 over yourself and others each day this week.
- * Read Ephesians 4:1-16.

According to His Eternal Purpose

Paul concluded the powerful prayer of Ephesians 1 with an introduction to the Church (1:23). It is (a) the body of Jesus; and (b) the fullness of Jesus. We together are the visible expression on earth of who Jesus is.

First, though, we get this description of who we *were*: Dead in our sins. Deserving of wrath. Separate from Christ. Excluded from God's people. Without hope and without God. The Good News is that God acted in Jesus - because of His deep love for us. All is grace upon grace, and our role is to have faith. In Christ, we who were dead are now alive. We who were excluded now belong to Christ and to the community of His people - His household; His family. This household is what He calls Church. Here, Jesus has created a new humanity without the distinctions that at one time were so important. Jew and Gentile are now simply God's family, all blended into one beautiful new people.

The mystery of the Church has come to light - that Jew and Gentile are both invited into the very family of God as one new people through Christ. This is all God's work, and is part of His eternal plan. Paul has been given two tasks in relation to this - to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles (that they might be included) and to reveal the 'administration of the mystery.' The word *administration* in Greek comes from two words put together: *house* and *management*. The meaning of the word, then, is household or family management. Part of Paul's commission was to show how God's family (church) is to operate. He was called to reveal how the church is to be what it has been formed to be. The mystery is Jew and Gentile coming together as one. The administration of the mystery is how that new household is to function.

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, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Church was created by God to reveal His wisdom to the entire cosmos - to spiritual forces and powers. In the words of chapter 1, it is to be the 'fullness' of Christ in the world. The Church - and the churches - exist to reveal God to the world. This is an integral part of God's plan of redemption. How that is to happen is the subject of chapters 4-6. In the meantime, Paul closes this section with a prayer that God's people would have a deeper revelation of Christ's love for them.