

**BIBLE STUDY  
QUESTIONS**



**Ephesians 3: 1 - 13**

## **Begin by reading Acts 26: 1 - 23**

In this passage Paul talks about how he first came to know Jesus as his Lord, and why that encounter has shaped the rest of his life.

- **What was Saul's opinion of Jesus and Jesus' followers? Why was he so convinced of his own view?**
- **What was it that made Saul change his mind about Jesus? Did he have much choice about this?**
- **If Saul had not met Jesus on the Damascus road, do you think he could have worked it out on his own?**
- **Although the circumstances of Saul's conversion are unique to him, what similarities are there to our own experience of Jesus?**

## **Now look at Ephesians 3 verse 1**

Paul makes it clear to King Agrippa that he is in prison because he has been preaching the message of Jew and Gentiles as fellow heirs of God's promises. There have been some Jews who have vehemently and violently opposed him.

- **How remarkable is it then, that Paul calls himself in verse 1 a prisoner of Christ. What do you think he means by this?**
- **Given his conversion, in what different ways does Paul show that he really is captive to the Gospel?**

## **Now look at Ephesians 3 verses 2 to 6**

Paul uses the word mystery 3 times – in verses 3, 4 and 6. The Greek understanding of this word is different from the English, meaning something akin to “an open secret.” Even if before it was kept secret, now it can be known. Talked about and shared with others.

- **Can you think of places in the Old Testament where there are hints that God's promises and blessings are for all the nations?**
- **Why was it so hard for many to accept that this revelation was truly from God?**
- **Paul also draws our attention to the importance of Apostolic witness. This was something that was crucial when the New Testament scriptures were being gathered together into the Bibles we have today. Yet more and more we see people struggling with the idea of Scripture as divine revelation. Why is that? How should Christians respond to it?**

## DOES GOD NEED THE CHURCH?

The argument goes like this: “Why should we bother with the church? Too often those in senior leadership make compromises to try and keep people happy. Many of the people who fill the pews week by week are hypocrites as they are no better than anybody else. They’d be far better off selling off their churches and giving money to the poor. At least that would achieve something.” There are of course plenty more such statements, but they point in the same direction.

There are many answers to the above objections. Some people will hold out the model of church as a sanctuary, a place of safety for those who are broken, alone or in need. The church stands against a culture that says you must succeed and be self-sufficient.

Others would hold it up as a place of learning. It is where people can come to hear God speak to them through his Word, where they are shaped by His Spirit to be more and more like Jesus. They are encouraged, uplifted, challenged and strengthened in their walk with God.

For others it would be a place to send children and young people, so that they can learn right from wrong and develop a personal moral compass that they carry with them for the rest of their lives.

For some it would simply be because it is what we have always done. We’ve always been to church – it’s a part of our lives, and particularly in times of trouble or turmoil or at significant moments in our lives, it is the place to gather with friends and family.

Do you think that some of the above answers are better than others? Can you see what they all have in common?

### **Take a look at Ephesians 3:10.**

So many times when we think about church, we think in terms of why it is good for me. What are my reasons for belonging to the church. Yet this one verse challenges us to think about it from an entirely different mind-set. God needs the church. He needs the unity that we have read about so that the church is a visual aid to the heavenly realms. When you next wonder about whether we should gather together, remind yourself that Angels look on in wonder when you do. Wow, what a calling!

The Bodleian library in Oxford has every book published in English, receiving over 1000 titles a day. Anyone can enter and wander around, but you won't see any of the tiles from its 176kms of shelving. However, become a member and you've truly arrived, as you can call up any map or book published since 1602. Membership privileges!

- **Why was it so important for the gentile believers to hear not just that they were welcome, but that they were also heirs?**
- **How in practice should it work out today for church members to be members together of the same body?**

### **Look again at verses 7 to 13**

In verse 8, Paul talks about his own calling to make the Gospel known to all nations, telling them about what Jesus has done.

- **Although the foundational nature of Paul's ministry cannot be repeated, the need for all peoples to know of Jesus, and to be made in to one new humanity is the continuing responsibility of the church. How best should we go about doing this?**
- **Do you think churches should wait for special people like Paul to come along, or do we have a collective responsibility to make Jesus known afresh in each generation?**
- **In what ways do we make Jesus known in our own church, in lockdown and in normal times? What else should we be doing?**

As important as it is to be making Jesus known, that work will be ineffective unless the "new humanity" is a reality within the local church. This is our witness – as a gospel shaped community which demonstrates the wisdom of God.

- **What is God's eternal purpose, that we read in this passage?**
- **What is God's intention for the church?**
- **How could we do church differently to better make known God's wisdom to Tervuren and the communities we are part of?**

Paul ends this section by again returning to his imprisonment and suffering. Yet he does not see it as a barrier to the growth of the church, instead he sees it as bringing glory to it. There are many people over human history who have given their lives for good causes. Yet Paul's life is given for God's cause.

- **Are you willing to suffer for the sake of making Jesus known?**