

Ephesians—Series Overview

God's Glory in His Church

The book of Ephesians was written to show the glory of Christ at work in winning and perfecting the Church as His bride. It exhorts Christians to walk in the newness of life He has won for us according to the Father's kind intention in adopting us. It shows us who we are—the dead raised to life and made fellow citizens with all the saints. Based on who we already are, it invites us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling.

APPLYING GOD'S WORD

Please ask the Holy Spirit to guide you:

What does it mean to be part of God's family?

How do each of us rate in the family "pecking order"? Why do you think so?

What does it mean to be "in Christ"?

What difference does it make?

Repent of any presumption you may have. Specifically confess any ways you may have mistreated others in the family.

Pray for God's people.

Ezra-Nehemiah—Series Overview

A Community Restored for Worship

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah was written to encourage God's people returning after exile to believe the covenant promises and restore the temple in Jerusalem. God's people were being restored in the place of promise as a worshipping community. The restoration of purpose was far greater than their real estate. The place always has to do with what God promised would happen there.

Sermon Notes and Daily Devotional
First Congregational Church of Woodstock

Pastor Doug Warren
October 14th, 2018

Morning Service

Ephesians 3: 1-6

God's Mysterious Plan Revealed

1. Paul Was a Steward of God's Mystery in Salvation (1-3).
2. God Has Now Fully Revealed His Plan (4-5).
3. God's Family Has No Favorites (6).

For Centuries God's Mystery of Salvation has been veiled but is now revealed in Christ. The Good News is that Jews and Gentiles have been joined together in Christ as part of the same family—heirs together, members together, sharers of His promises together. Let us trust Him together who is our great Savior and faithful God.

Evening Service

Ezra 8: 1-36

Signed, Sealed, Delivered

1. God's Strong Hand Was With Them in the Journey.
2. His Protection Was Particular in Question.
3. Jesus Protects His People.

The journey of the returnees to Jerusalem demonstrated God's protective care for His people, but they still had many questions about the suffering they had endured. We find in the cross the explanation for the suffering of God's people. We need to trust Him together for our protection even as we face great difficulties and trials.

Taking Gathered Worship Home

How do family dynamics work in God's family? The mystery of God in this regard was not known for centuries but has now been revealed through Christ. The Gospel shows us that Jewish and Gentile believers are brought in Christ into one glorious family. We are equals in this family, not step-children!

Please use the devotional material below each day this week to meet with Jesus. Ask the Lord to teach us His ways that we may walk in them to accomplish His purposes.

Sunday AM

READ today's passage: **Ephesians 3:1-6**. How significant is it that we've been adopted? What about your family makes this difficult to understand? How does that connect with the sermon? The songs? The prayers? PRAY for God to convince us that nothing compares to the promise we have in Christ. Ask Him to empower us in this life.

Sunday PM

READ today's passage: **Ezra 8:1-36**. DISCUSS what did God do for His people on the journey? PRAISE God for His loving care for us. Be specific. REPENT of ways we take His protection for granted.

Monday

READ **Ephesians 3:1-6; Gal 3:26-29**. DISCUSS what is so startling about this revelation? How did He accomplish this? Based on this, how should we treat newcomers? Rejoice for God has adopted us into His family. PRAY for your neighbors, peers, friends & family asking God to save them. EXTEND His grace to others today. Lovingly and thoughtfully express to them in word and deed the grace Christ has lavished upon you. INVITE folks to the installation service!

Tuesday

READ **Romans 3:1-20**. DISCUSS Who stands condemned Jew or Gentile? Why? Why is it important to understand this? MEDITATE on this reality—Christ is the only way into God's family! PRAY, "Father God, thank You for making us Yours. Jesus, we praise Your name and renew our love for You. Holy Spirit, enable us to

keep this pledge and so honor the Father and Son by Your work through us."

Wednesday

READ **Ephesians 3:1-6**. DISCUSS, What is Paul's role in the mystery of God? How has God revealed Himself to us? Rejoice if you have been adopted through Christ's sacrifice. PRAY, "Lord, thank You for adopting me. Help me to live as befits Your children." INVITE folks to the installation service this Sunday!

Thursday

READ **Ephesians 3:1-6; Romans 8:9-11**. DISCUSS, What does it mean for Christ to dwell in us? Who experiences this? How? REJOICE in Christ's coming and freeing us from sin and death. PRAY, "Heavenly Father, thank You for all Your promises. Thank You for the fulfillment of all of them in Christ. Help us to see them more clearly and to believe in You rather than ourselves or the lies of this world. Strengthen our faith and allow us to know Your faithfulness. Show us how Christ has come to empower us to repent from our sin and turn to You. Reveal the depths of Your love for us. Strip away any other comfort that distracts us from loving You above all else we pray."

Friday

READ **Ephesians 1:3-4; 3:1-6**. DISCUSS, How does a fuller understanding of who God truly is help us to understand the fullness of what he gives us in the gospel? Rejoice for Christ has died 'once for all' obtaining for us eternal life! PRAY for your neighbors who are deceived and unable to even see their own sin for what it really is. Pray for their repentance. Ask God to use you to bring them into His kingdom to His honor and praise.

Saturday

READ **Ephesians 3:1-6**. DISCUSS, What have you been learning from this passage this week? READ tomorrow's sermon passage **Psalms 23:1-6**. PREPARE today for the gathered worship service tomorrow. REMEMBER it's the installation service. INVITE neighbors and coworkers to come and celebrate with you! PRAY for God's glory to be more and more manifested in this area. Ask Him to use us to extend His grace as we celebrate it together.