



# St Mary's Woodford Home Group Study Notes Ephesians 3:1 – 4:16

## Introduction

These notes are meant to be your servant and not your master. The aim of your group meeting should be to understand God better, and to get to know one another better, through your study of the text and discussion.

## Background

This chunk of the letter has three sections:

- 3:1-12 Paul speaks of his own calling by God to take the good news to the gentiles, and reveal the secret/mystery of the inclusion of the gentiles in God's plan: they with the Jews will be co-heirs of the inheritance of eternal life, co-members of the body of Christ; and co-sharers in the hope of Christ.
- 3:13-21 Paul prays for his readers to have greater understanding of what God has done and is doing, and to experience his power.
- 4:1-16 Paul tells them about their calling as a church (each time the word 'you' is used, it is the form for addressing many people). The quote from Psalm 68 used here seems to describe a celebratory parade, in which a king returns victorious from battle.

## Starter activity

Have different people read each of the three sections out loud.

Ask each person to reflect on what this passage reveals about task and nature of God's church. Then compare and discuss your answers.

## Issues and questions

The starter activity may naturally lead you into discussing any of the following issues. Don't worry if you don't tackle them all, but be sure to cover those marked with \*.

- a) Mystery. Paul writes about God's mystery, kept secret for generations, about the inclusion of the gentiles. Do you think that God has other mysteries to reveal to us?
- b) Paul's vocation. In 3:2 Paul speaks of his being commissioned to go to the gentiles, and in 3:7 of being a servant of the Gospel. Why does he call himself 'the least of the saints' in 3:8?
- c) The church's vocation. In 3:10 he says that it is the task of the church to make God's wisdom known to all. How can that be done?
- d) \* The church's unity. Paul tells them in 4:3 to make every effort to maintain their unity. What things divide us in church? How can we make 'every effort' to bridge our divisions?
- e) \* Our vocations: 4:7 suggests that we are each given a gift. Five of the possible gifts are listed in 4:11. This list of gifts differs from the Paul's other lists of gifts - see also Romans 12:6-8, 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Peter is much less detailed: see 1 Peter 4:11-12. Is there a difference between 'a gift of the Spirit' and a gift that anyone (even a non-Christian) might have? What is the point of having these gifts? How can we discover our gifts?
- f) \* Body. Paul uses the human body as an image to describe the unity and diversity of the church. His vision is that every member will make their contribution. What other images could he have used?
- g) Power. Power is mentioned in 3:7, 3:16, 3:18, 3:20. When is power good, when is it bad?
- h) Fulfilment. The Rolling Stones sang, "I can't get no satisfaction". What is true satisfaction in life?

## For prayer and reflection

Either pray silently for one another, that each will discover and use their own gifts; or be bold and try the following exercise...

Give each person several slips of paper, and ask them to write on each slip the name of another member of the group, and a particular gift or strength that they discern in that person. Collect in the slips, and read out what is written about each group member in turn. (The leader may need to exercise some discretion in doing this.) Then thank God.