



MIND
session page

The Mystery of Ministry

Ephesians 3:1-12 | Session 10.01

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).
- Find web links for underlined items on this session's webpage at faithelement.net.

Context

Begin by asking:

- When have you experienced a "calling" from God?
- How did you know it was from God?
- Some people believe that a calling from God must be difficult and life-draining. Jesus did tell us, after all, to "take up our cross." Frederick Buechner has famously written that your calling is "where your greatest joy meets the world's greatest need." What do you think?

Content

Read [Ephesians 3:1-12](#), and watch the Bible Background Video before asking:

- What is the “reason” Paul begins with in 3:1?
- Paul calls himself a “prisoner of Christ” (3:1), but he is literally a prisoner as he’s writing. How does this fact add weight to what Paul’s about to say?
- What has Paul been put in charge of, according to verses 2-3, and what is he to do with it?
- Given that he has been through things like beatings, prison, and shipwrecks as he followed his calling, why do you think Paul speaks of the call as if it is a privilege, rather than a burden?
- It’s clear from Paul’s description that he did not seek this – God played the active role in pursuing and calling Paul. Why does this matter in Paul’s argument?
- By downplaying his own role, what is Paul saying about God’s power and the importance of the message?
- What is the “mystery” Paul speaks of in verses 4-6 and 9-10?
- Why do you think he refers to this information as a “mystery,” and why do you think God chose to keep this plan hidden for so long?

Closure

Continue by asking:

- Since God calls each of us to follow and to serve, what is our calling as people who have chosen to follow Jesus?
- What specific calling(s) do you feel you have received?
- What gifts has God given to you, and what does God call you to do with them?
- When have you encountered times when someone wasn’t ready to hear the News that sounded so good to you?
- How might Paul’s example encourage us to carry on in our calling, even when it’s difficult?

Close with prayer.

Writer: Jon Parks



CURRENT

session page

The Mystery of Ministry

Ephesians 3:1-12 | Session 10.01

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Thoroughly review all the referenced resources for this session in advance.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media).
- Find web links for underlined items on this session's webpage at faithelement.net.

Context

Review together a list of the best mysteries of 2017, such as [this one](#) or [this one](#) and ask:

- Which of these novels have you read and what did you think of it when you read it?
- If all you had to go on was the descriptions given here, to which of these books might you most or least be drawn and why?
- What makes for a good mystery?
- At what points do you think faith might be a mystery, and how does feeling like that affect your faith?

Content

Read [Ephesians 3:1-12](#), and watch the Bible Background Video for this session.

Ask:

- What are some of the more “mysterious ways” through which you’ve seen God working over the years, and how have you been affected by such things?
- What do you make of the assertion that Paul was a prisoner for the sake of the gentiles?
- If God’s grace has always existed, why was it kept a mystery until Paul came along?
- What difference does it make that Paul talks about “eternal purpose” in verse 11, rather than “eternal plan?”
- To what do you feel most strongly called as a result of your faith, and how did you come to know this?

Closure

Share [this article about the Rohingya](#) and remind the group of some of its key points:

- The Rohingya are a persecuted minority who no country will take in.
- The Pope was under quite a bit of pressure to not even say the word “Rohingya” on his trip, yet went beyond that to even meet with them.
- Being recognized as people is seen as a great victory for the Rohingya.
- The Pope publicly stated "The presence of God today is also called Rohingya"

Ask:

- What have you heard of these people before now?
- How do you feel about this story and why?
- What do you make of the Pope’s statement that "The presence of God today is also called Rohingya?"
- Of what other persecuted people groups are you aware, and why are they being persecuted?

- While today's scripture reveals a "mystery" that God might not prefer one group of people to another, why do you think we still do that?
- Since Christians are, supposedly, party to the mystery of "inclusion" before God, how might we better practice it this year?

Close with a prayer.



MYSTIC
session page

The Mystery of Ministry

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Before the Session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Provide pens and paper for the group.
- Print on handouts this version of [Ephesians 3:6](#): "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus."
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Encourage your group to listen to the Faithelement podcast ahead of the next session (Share the link via email or social media)
- Find web links for underlined items on this session's webpage at faithelement.net.

Context

Read aloud [Ephesians 3:1-12](#) then share the Bible Background Video.

This reflection looks at the mystery of God's grace through the lens of current events.

Reflection

Give each person a handout, a pen and a piece of paper. Encourage the group to reflect on the focal verse, developing a paraphrase of what they hear Paul saying to the Jews and Gentiles who were two disparate groups.

Show each of the following Youtube videos twice, while encouraging the group to note the feelings and thoughts that surface as they watch:

- "TRENDING: 10 Conflicts That World Must End For A Peaceful 2017"
- "World Humanitarian Day: UN pays tribute to people helping people around the globe"

After a few minutes of time for individuals to silently list the feelings and thoughts that were evoked by the videos, invite everyone to look at their notes and consider where God's voice or call might be heard on their pages.

Invite the group to a time of personal prayer, using the following prompts (with a pause between each):

- Share your thoughts and feelings with God.
- What, if anything, do you hear God saying to you? Spend a few moments listening for God.
- What, if anything, do you want to say to God in response?
- What invitation might you sense in God's part of the conversation with you?
- If you sense any invitation, what is your response?
- Spend a few moments just resting in God's presence.

Invite volunteers to share their reflections with the group, then close with prayer.

Writer: Joy Yee



MEDIA
session page

The Mystery of Ministry

Ephesians 3:1-12 | Session 10.01

Before the Session

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- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
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Context

Play the [Food for thought movie clip](#) (you may not need the entire movie clip depending on how you wish to lead the discussion) and ask:

- What causes us to be attracted to mysteries and the solving of those mysteries?
- How might one best demonstrate the deductive powers of a great detective?
- How frightened or impressed are the leaders in that movie clip and why?
- What are some mysteries you desire to be solved?

Content

Read [Ephesians 3:1-12](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask questions like:

- Why is Paul in prison?
- What did it have to do with the concept of God's grace and Paul's proclamation of it?
- What mystery now being revealed is Paul talking about and why is it being revealed now?
- What were the original hearers supposed to do with this mystery of grace?
- Why does Paul claim to be called by God and what did he do to earn this calling?
- If we are called by the same grace of God that Paul experienced, what is our call?
- Why does Paul feel his sufferings were worth it?

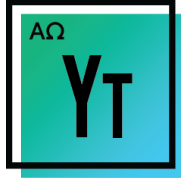
Closure

Play [God's mysterious ways](#) and ask:

- What are some divine mysteries we cannot solve as finite beings?
- How should we handle such mysteries?
- What do you think of the statement "I'm mysterious. Live with it!"?
- What does mystery add to our experience of faith?
- If we serve a God that is so powerful and full of grace, how can we continue this year to live with that grace?

Close in prayer.

Writer: Jon Self



YOUTH
session page

The Mystery of Ministry

Ephesians 3:1-12 | Session 10.01

Before the Session

Facilitator: In advance of the session

- Review today's scripture text and the session activities to help better facilitate the discussion.
- Have the Bible Background Video ready to view.
- Provide paper and pens for everyone (See Closure).
- Listen to the FaithElement podcast for this session.
- Use the social media prompts on this session's webpage to help youth begin engaging the session ahead of their gathering.
- Find web links for underlined items on this session's webpage at faithelement.net.

Intro

Play the [Phineas and Ferb video](#) and ask:

- How frustrated do you think Candace would be about the mysterious force?
- What makes her come across as crazy?
- What are the greatest mysteries you can think of?

Context

Play a game of Wink Murder Mystery by having the group sit in a circle. You will need to have a method to identify secretly one of the participants as the "winker/murderer," such as giving everyone a card with one card being the identifier, or having everyone close their eyes and walking around the circle and tapping someone to identify them as the "winker." Begin the game by having everyone look at each other across the circle. When the winker is ready, they should wink at someone, who must act out a dramatic death, then move on to someone else and repeat the process.

Encourage people to be as entertaining as they wish with their acting. If someone sees the murderer wink at someone who is not themselves, they may accuse the murderer of the crime, and if they correctly identifies the murderer, they win the game. Anyone who is winked at cannot identify the murderer. After several rounds of the game, regroup and ask:

- How did you feel playing this game?
- What made it difficult or easy?
- How do you feel about a good mystery and what makes it "good"?
- What is it about a mystery that draws some people to it?
- In what ways is God mysterious?
- Do you think God would prefer to be known or to be mysterious and why?
- When has God done something that you could not explain or understand?

Content

Read [Ephesians 3:1-12](#), then watch the Bible Background Video.

Ask your group:

- What mystery is Paul talking about in this passage?
- Why would God want to make this mystery known to Paul?
- When have you personally experienced this mystery?
- Why did Paul choose to follow Christ?
- What makes Paul feel that this calling was chosen for him rather than chosen by him?

Closure

Share "[The Top 27 Sports Fails:...](#)" (Note: Unbleeped profanity at 2:20) and ask:

- Which of these did you find the most or least funny and why?
- What is something you are really good at or really bad at?
- How might God use your gifts and talents to serve God?
- Given the way God has created you, if God were to call you into some form of ministry, what might God call you into?
- If God were calling you to serve, how would you know to listen?
- How do you generally understand God's voice in your life when you hear it?

Close this session in prayer.

Writer: Don Breeden



MIX
session page

The Mystery of Ministry

Ephesians 3:1-12 | Session 10.01

Before the Session

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Context (From the Mind Session Page)

Begin by asking:

- When have you experienced a "calling" from God?
- How did you know it was from God?
- Some people believe that a calling from God must be difficult and life-draining. Jesus did tell us, after all, to "take up our cross." Frederick Buechner has famously written that your calling is "where your greatest joy meets the world's greatest need." What do you think?

Content (From the Current Session Page)

R Read [Ephesians 3:1-12](#), and watch the Bible Background Video for this session.

Ask:

- What are some of the more “mysterious ways” through which you’ve seen God working over the years, and how have you been affected by such things?
- What do you make of the assertion that Paul was a prisoner for the sake of the gentiles?
- If God’s grace has always existed, why was it kept a mystery until Paul came along?
- What difference does it make that Paul talks about “eternal purpose” in verse 11, rather than “eternal plan?”
- To what do you feel most strongly called as a result of your faith, and how did you come to know this?

Closure (from the Media Session page)

Play [God’s mysterious ways](#) and ask:

- What are some divine mysteries we cannot solve as finite beings?
- How should we handle such mysteries?
- What do you think of the statement “I’m mysterious. Live with it!”?
- What does mystery add to our experience of faith?
- If we serve a God that is so powerful and full of grace, how can we continue this year to live with that grace?

Close in prayer.