

COMMUNITY GROUP GUIDE

Church in the City ⑤

INTRODUCTION | The Mission Community

Our passage today deals with three concepts: Paul's self-understanding, the mystery of Christ's Gospel, and the mission of the church. First, let's look at our own self-image and identity. Who are you? Second, let's reassess the life-giving mystery of Christ, i.e., the drama of the Gospel. What is your vision? Finally, God shows His wisdom through the church, and our passage emphasises the role that has been entrusted the church and us as Christians. What do you want to do with your life?

SCRIPTURE | Ephesian 3:1-13

1 For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles— 2 assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. 4 When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. 6 This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 7 Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. 8 To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, 12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. 13 So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

QUESTIONS |

- 1: (Verse 1–2, 7–9) How does Paul introduce himself? What is emphasised about his self-understanding and identity?
- 2: Let's think on Paul's circumstances in his imprisonment. What is the secret to his ability to live in hope and with purpose? When you encounter difficulties in life, how does your identity in Christ influence your ability to cope? (Ref. Philippians 1:12–14; 3:10–12.)
- 3: (Verse 5–6) What is the mystery of Christ? Express in your own words how you would explain this to another person.
- 4: Put another way, the mystery of Christ can be said to be the historical drama of God, made clear in the Scriptures. This is the story of salvation which continues to be played out even today, and we exist as characters in this drama. Thinking on this drama of God, in what ways are you encouraged or changed in your daily lives?
- 5: (Verse 10–13) In what way is the mystery of Christ realised?
- 6: How can we contribute to the mystery of Christ through the church? Let's think practically and share and pray for each other.

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REFERENCES |

Philippians 1:12-14; 3:10-12

1:12 I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

3:10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

PRAYER |

- Let us give thanks and praise to God for the mystery of Christ, the drama of God's salvation for us, which continues even today through our lives and in the world. Reflecting on this story of salvation, let us pray that the Holy Spirit would lead and show us ways in which we can be used for God's glory.
- By the grace of God, let us give thanks as we again reflect on who we are in light of today's passage. If there is anything in our life that is not fitting with the Gospel, let us pray about our struggles and repent.

UPCOMING EVENTS | This Week & Next Week

Lunchtime Meetings (6@Akasaka, 7@Kasumigaseki, 8@Otemachi)

Ishinomaki Volunteering (9-11)

Sunday Worship (11) Church in the City ⑥(13:00 & 15:30@KDDI Hall)

Gospel Choir (12)

Lunchtime Meetings (13@Kudanshita, 14@Marunouchi, 15@Otemachi)

Obento Project (17)

Sunday Worship (18) Church in the City ⑦(13:00 & 15:30@KDDI Hall)