

WITNESS – Reaching out to others **(Aim for 20 – 30 minutes)**

Heavenly Father we take upon ourselves the mantle of authority that Jesus delegates to us and in His name we speak to every household in Hungerford and say to you:-

1 Relationships

We bless you in the Name of the Lord. We bless your marriages that they may be strong and whole. We bless the relationship between each marriage partner that it may be loving, forgiving, merciful and strong. We bless every intergenerational relationship within each household that there may be peace and love and understanding flowing between each one. In Jesus' name we bless every network of wholesome and supportive friendship.

2 Health

We bless your health that you may be strong and well. In Jesus' name we resist any sickness or disease which seeks to invade this parish and to every person in the parish we say, be well, be strong, be healthy. To any who are sick right now we say we bless you in Jesus' name with a speedy recovery.

3 Wealth

We bless your wealth that you may have plenty to replace poverty. We bless you to have enough to live and enough to give. We bless the work of your hands that whatever you turn your hand to which is wholesome may be profitable. We bless every wholesome enterprise that is conducted by you that it may prosper and be successful. We bless the local businesses that they may be successful and profitable.

4 Education

We bless the local schools that they may be secure, safe places for teachers and pupils alike. We bless the children's capacity to learn and develop relationships and we bless their simple trust in Jesus that their trust may grow and become enriched.

5 Church

We speak to the Church and we say we bless you in the Name of the Lord that the Holy Spirit and the Word of God may flow out from you in power. We bless the hearts of all who live in the parish that they may be quickened to hear and respond to the Voice of the Living God. We bless all who live and work here, that the overspill of the blessings of the presence of the kingdom of God may fall upon you. **Amen**

Prisoner and Preacher

Ephesians 3:1–21

5

Purpose:

To look at the purpose of the church and its role in fulfilling God's plan.

WELCOME (Aim for 10 minutes)

Think of two or three adjectives which summarize your attitude and experience of the church. Explain.

WORSHIP – Meeting the Lord **(Aim for 10 – 15 minutes)**

What has been the best thing that has happened since our last meeting?

OR

When have you felt closest to God since our last meeting?

Pray your “thank you” to God

WORD (Aim for 40—45 minutes)

What do you think of when you hear the word *church*? A building on the corner? A stuffy group of religious hypocrites? A vibrant fellowship? Paul's special ministry enables him to enlarge our conception of the church. In this passage he clarifies and exalts its place in God's plan.

1. Read Ephesians 3:1–21. What gifts of God's grace does Paul say he has received (vv. 2–3, 8)?

2. Explain the meaning of the mystery revealed to Paul (vv. 2–6).

How is it connected with the ministry given to him (vv. 7–13)?

3. What purpose does God have for the church (vv. 10–11)?

4. How does this mesh with God's overall purpose in Christ described in 1:9–10?

5. Paul now turns from instruction to prayer. What was the reason for Paul's prayer for his readers (vv. 1, 14)?

6. Three times in verses 14–21 Paul mentions “love” and “power.” What do we learn about power and love in these verses?

7. Verses 10–11 state that the church is to make known God's wisdom. How is Paul's prayer directed toward fulfilling that purpose?

8. How is God's wisdom being made known through your local body of believers?

9. To what extent has his prayer been answered in your life or in the life of your church?

10. How does the benediction of 3:20–21 tie together the main themes that have run through the first three chapters of Ephesians?

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