



WEEK 3 || *EPHESIANS 3*

## UNITED WE STAND

Unity is a noble ideal. In fact, the Apostle Paul was so committed to unity he was prepared to go to jail for it. His idea that Jesus has taken away all the barriers for non-Jews, so they can now join the original people of God as equals—it keeps landing him in tight situations. Even a prison cell! (He calls himself a “prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles.” You can read the background to this in Acts 21).

- Look ahead at Ephesians 3:13. How might the Ephesian Christians feel about Paul being in jail?
- Are you ever tempted to take a step back when you see a fellow Christian being ridiculed or criticised?

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## A MESSAGE WORTH SUFFERING FOR

In 3:1 Paul starts expanding on the great news of the first two chapters (“For this reason...”) but then gets side-tracked. Perhaps he’s worried they feel that he’s been discredited now he’s a convicted criminal. So he takes a moment to let them know why the gospel message is worth even serving time for.

### Read Ephesians 3:1-13.

1. Write down what each of these sets of verses have to say about the message Paul is so fanatical about.

v2-3

v4-5

v6

v7-9

v10

v11

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## A MESSAGE FOR US

2. How should the points above make us excited about Paul’s message?
3. Reread verse 10. Does this change your perspective on ‘church’? How?

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## THE PRAYER OF RESPONSE

### Read Ephesians 3:14-21.

Having digressed to explain why the Gospel is worth suffering for, Paul picks up his thread from chapters 1 and 2.

4. How would you describe his mood in this section? (See for example, verse 14; and then look for other emotional words).
  
5. When do you get emotional about God's truth?
  
6. What do the Father, the Son and the Spirit each do in Paul's prayer?
  
7. What is the goal of God's actions (v 17)?
  
8. What is the 'unknowable' thing Paul wants them to know (v17b-19)?
  
9. What happens when we start to grasp its sheer size (v19)? What exactly does this mean?

God's intention is that all kinds of people are brought together in love within his remarkable church. This church, built together as a temple for God's Spirit, is to tower in the universe as a picture of what God's love is all about (v20-21)! And who are YOU? You're a member of it! That's a self-definition more profound than any other. Right at the core of your being, when you've trusted Jesus you can confidently say "I'm a full member of the people of God." With that though, comes the obligation to live in unity, and to work towards that unity in every possible way. We'll see more of that next time.



10. The divisions that apply in normal life don't apply in church. That's God's announcement to the evil powers of the universe that he's won! How have you seen evidence of this in our church?

11. How do our personal positions in the following areas put our unity at risk?

- POLITICS
- SCIENCE
- RACE
- GENDER
- SOCIAL STANDING
- EDUCATION

12. How can we avoid division on these or other issues? What empowers us (v20)?

The unity we have in Jesus **despite** differing on so many other, less important, things displays the power of God to the whole universe. That's why Paul's so committed to it. And that's why it actually matters here, in our church, today.



**For an example of what this unity can look like in practice, watch Latechurch member Lewis and 9am member Rikki share their friendship in Jesus at**

**[mpc.org.au/whoareyou](https://mpc.org.au/whoareyou)**