
a *Grace Notes* course

Ephesians

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Grace Notes

Lesson 8

Ephesians 3:1-10

Mystery

The Gospel

Shepherds of the Flock

The Importance of Bible Teaching

Grace Notes

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Ephesians

Lesson 8: Ephesians 3:1-10

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Instructions for Completing the Lessons

Begin each study session with prayer. It is the Holy Spirit who makes spiritual things discernable to Christians, so it is essential to be in fellowship with the Lord during Bible study.

Read the whole book of Ephesians often. It is a short book, and reading it many times will help you understand the story much better.

Instructions

1. Read the introduction to the study of Ephesians
 2. Study the Ephesians passage for this lesson, by reading the verses and studying the notes. Be sure to read any other Bible passages that are called out in the notes.
 3. **Review** all of the notes in the Ephesians lesson.
 4. Go to the Quiz page and follow the instructions to complete all the questions on the quiz. The quiz is "open book". You may refer to all the notes and to the Bible when you take the test. But you should not get help from another person.
 5. When you have completed the Quiz, be sure to *SAVE* your file. If your quiz file is lost, and that can happen at *Grace Notes* as well, you will want to be able to reproduce your work.
 6. To send the Quiz back to *Grace Notes*, follow the instructions on the Quiz page.
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Ephesians 3:1

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

Notice that this thought is interrupted by verses 2 to 13. That is, verse 14 is a continuation of verse 1, with verses 2 to 13 in parentheses.

Paul is saying that because of the previous statements, he has cause to bow his knees in prayer for the Gentiles. We will deal with those verses when we come to them, but it is good to notice again the actual substance of Paul's prayer for his Christian friends.

So he begins this section with the intention of praying, but he pauses to write about two other subjects: the "mystery", and the "ministry".

Paul always prays that Christians will grow in Christ. He seldom prays for the details of life. He understands, and certainly the Holy Spirit understands, that the most important feature of the Christian life is to be occupied with Christ and to absorb the doctrines of the Word of God, under the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit.

In this verse, Paul refers to his status as a prisoner - he wrote this epistle when he was incarcerated in Rome.

Ephesians 3:2

If you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you:

"**If you have heard**" - this is one of the most important phrases in the Christian life. A believer must hear the Word of God in order to perform any function in the Christian life, including worship and service to Christ.

Worship is the ability to hear and think about God's Word while under the control of the Holy Spirit.

"God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

When you stop concentrating on the Word, you stop worshipping. Worship demands concentration, learning, understanding. Your ability to worship depends on what you understand about God, about Christ, and about

the Holy Spirit. It depends on how well you understand God's plan for your life and how you are to function as a believer.

Worship includes singing, giving, praising, teaching, and other activities. Worship can be accomplished privately, alone with oneself, or with a group of other Christians. But it all depends on the content!

"of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me toward you."

God gave to Paul the knowledge of His grace so that Paul could communicate it to people. Paul is saying, "If you have heard and understood the basic features of the grace of God that I have communicated to you before, you will be able to understand which I am about to describe."

Ephesians 3:3

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery: (as I wrote before in a few words,

"by revelation he made known unto me" - the Lord communicated His thinking directly to Paul. The first instance was during his desert experience shortly after his conversion. The second was during his writing of the inspired epistles, during which the Holy Spirit was involved in communicating the "mind of Christ" so that Paul could communicate divine viewpoint accurately.

"the mystery"

The word "mystery" in the New Testament refers to the doctrine which is specific for the Church Age. It is called "the mystery" because these things were never revealed in Old Testament scriptures.

Paul states in Rom 16:25-26, Col 1:25-26 and in this passage that this mystery is now revealed. Especially in this passage, he points out that there is no excuse for ignorance.

If the Ephesians appreciated the way that special knowledge of the plan of God had been given to him, and the particular work of communication that God had entrusted to him (see Eph. 3:7-12), they would agree that "by revelation" God had made known to Paul "the mystery".

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"As I wrote afore in few words."

Or, "I have already written a brief account of this." He refers to what he had already written earlier in the letter, namely that the Gentiles and the Jews were to be included in one Body and in the household of God.

Some expositors suggest that this phrase refers to another non-inspired epistle which Paul wrote to the Ephesians, a document which has been lost. I am inclined to the conclusion in the previous paragraph, however.

Ephesians 3:4

By which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ.

"By which, when you read, you may understand"

Christians must have the ability to understand. And understanding comes from "reading", that is through edification, the building up of the Christian life "line upon line; precept upon precept". This is the only way a believer can become occupied with Christ, be spiritually self-sustaining, and can have the productivity associated with Christian maturity.

The Holy Spirit indwells a Christian for the purpose of teaching, among other things. "And I will send another Comforter, and He shall teach you all things", Christ said.

A newborn Christian, a "babe" in Christ, has minimum ability to understand principles of Bible doctrine. If the novice Christian does not receive a lot of Bible truth from some source, preferably face-to-face with a strong pastor-teacher, he will not grow in his understanding. He will be spiritual malnourished; and he will exhibit all of the symptoms of lack of feeding, though he have been a Christian for many years.

Nothing is more sad than to see a grownup with the mind of a child. Yet we understand that many people are challenged this way through no fault of their own. How much more distressing to see in an older Christian, one who has been saved many years, who does not have the "mind of Christ", but the mind of a babe.

A Christian can have a life of purpose, inner peace, a relaxed mental attitude, great inner happiness (joy), and can be very stable, but it only comes through the Word of God - "understanding".

Hebrews 5:12-14

"For when for the time you ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food.

"For everyone that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

"But solid food belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

A brief synopsis of 2 Timothy 2:1,2:

"You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Paul speaks to Timothy as his spiritual "son". Timothy was in Paul's traveling seminary for several years, and he was now a pastor himself, but a man who still needs instruction.

The phrase "be strong" is in the passive voice in Greek, indicating that Timothy is to "receive strength". No Christian has inner strength to perform in the Christian life. Spiritual strength come only from God. We are weak in all the areas of doctrine and teaching, especially when it comes to Grace.

Note in 2:2 that Timothy is being given specific instructions as to how to disciple people in the congregation.

He is not advised to set up action groups, to create social situations, to promote sharing and fellowship.

He is told to TEACH. He is to teach the same doctrines that he has learned from Paul, from his mother and grandmother, from others. Whatever other activities might occur in his church,

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TEACHING has the top priority and cannot be interrupted.

Timothy is commanded to COMMIT Bible teaching to other men, to "deposit" the Word in the entire congregation. Some of the people in his congregation will take the bit in the teeth and move out into their own teaching ministries. Some of these faithful people will have wonderfully productive lives of their own, based on the good teaching that Timothy has provided.

And note that Timothy's teaching must be such that his students, in turn, will be able to teach themselves. This implies a much more intensive level of teaching that simply giving out the facts and hoping that people catch on. He must TRAIN people to be teachers.

"my knowledge in the mystery of Christ"

(See the discussion in Verse 3 regarding "mystery")

Ephesians 3:5

Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

"in other ages"

This is another reference to the fact that many features of the Christian life, known as "mystery" doctrines, were not made known to people prior to the beginning of the New Testament church.

But now, God is making additional revelation available through the communicators of the inspired Scriptures.

Ephesians 3:6

That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

Topic: THE GOSPEL

Ephesians 3:7

Of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

"Of which I was made" - aorist passive indicative of (ginomai)

Paul became something that he was not before, namely, a "minister".

"a minister" - (diakonos), "minister; server; deacon"

The word (diakonos) is transliterated in the English into "deacon". However, the apostle Paul did not become a church deacon. He became one who "ministers", and the type and extent of his ministry is explained in the succeeding verses, in words such as "to make all men see". Paul lived and worked in the "service" of Christ.

The word "minister" is used several ways in Scripture.

- Those in authority in a national entity are ministers, such as judges. Romans 13:4.
- Every believer is a minister: 2 Cor. 3:6; 4:1; 6:4
- The pastor of a local church is a minister: Eph. 6:21; Col. 1:23; 4:7

The context of the word determines which of the above is intended.

How a Person Becomes a Pastor

A pastor receives a spiritual gift of pastor-teacher by which he is divinely enabled to perform the pastoral function (Eph. 4:11,12). No human merit is involved; Christians receive their spiritual gifts at salvation, in most cases long before they have even heard of spiritual gifts, let alone determined which they have.

This eliminates many other reasons people give for going into the ministry, such as: "I'm a preacher because my mother prayed"; "...because I was a missionary"; "...because I felt led..."

Spiritual gifts of all kinds are strictly Grace provisions. No one earns or deserves the calling.

A pastor must himself be spiritually self-sustaining. This means that several years of Bible study are necessary, leading to the knowledge of the plan of God, the exercise of that plan, and personal spiritual productivity. At that point there will be a recognition of a gift, followed by a spiritual decision.

This period of preparation is common to all Christians. All Christians are in full time Christian

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service and are expected to use their spiritual gifts intelligently.

Once a man has decided to become a pastor, he must enter into a period of intense specialized preparation. This may take anywhere from four to ten years. He will study biblical languages, theology, exegesis and hermeneutics, history, biblical psychology, and many other subjects.

The individual then enters into his life's work of service to others, which is terminated only at death or at the 2nd Coming of Christ.

General passages which deal with the ministry are:

Col. 1:23-29; 1 Tim. 1:12-14; 2:24-26; 3:1-9; 2 Tim 2 (all); Titus 1:6-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4

In general, it is the responsibility of a minister to teach Bible truth so that Christians can become edified, stable, and self-sustaining, and spiritually productive.

In all of the above passages of the New Testament, and in many others, the teaching ministry is seen to be by far the most important activity in a local church, and the most important responsibility of those who teach. That is, whatever other activities the minister is involved in, his teaching must have utmost priority in his time and effort.

How much teaching is enough teaching in a local church? Well, there is almost no limit to what hungry sheep can consume! I am acquainted with pastors who spend 60 hours or more per week preparing and teaching, holding four to six, or more, classes per week for their congregations. In churches like this, the pastors are not a public relations men, politicians, back slappers, or promoters. They are "feeders" of the flock. They are "ministers" in the true sense of the word in this verse.

A pastor is a shepherd. A good shepherd puts the needs of the sheep first, and has an abiding sense of obligation toward them. One who does not know how to care for sheep, or who neglects sheep, is not a good shepherd.

A good shepherd leads sheep to good pasture and water. A person who does not provide food and water for sheep is not a good shepherd.

A good shepherd protects the sheep and sets up defenses against those who would harm the sheep. An individual who deliberately harms or frightens sheep is not a good shepherd.

I urge you to study carefully the following topic.

Topic: SHEPHERDS OF THE FLOCK OF GOD

"according to the gift of grace"

There is no merit involved in Paul's becoming a minister. He has done nothing to earn or deserve any special treatment from the Lord. In fact, he knows that he is "chief of sinners".

If a minister is successful, it is because of who and what God is, not who and what he is.

"given unto me by the effectual working of His power."

The operating power for the ministry comes from the very omnipotence of God Himself!

This verse takes the ministry out of the scope of the pastor's personality. He may be scintillating and charismatic; or he may be an awful dullard. He may or may not be smooth, suave, a social butterfly, smiling, likeable. He is a shepherd-teacher in the hand of God.

Ephesians 3:8

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Verses 8 to 10 deal with the function of Paul's ministry.

Verse 8 involves teaching to the Gentiles, new believers who are not versed in either in Old Testament scriptures or the New Testament "mysteries".

Verse 9 teaches about the new era that is now opening up in Jesus Christ.

Verse 10 refers to the teaching of truth to angels.

"Unto me, who am the least of all saints, is this grace given"

Paul refers to his gift of teaching. He emphasizes that he is the product of God's grace, and he fully understands that, of all people, he is one of the

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least worthy to receive anything good from the Father.

1 Cor. 15:10, "But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace, which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

A believer's happiness, stability, function, and productivity all depend on grace. The Christian ministry does not require efficiency experts, public relations, super organizers, or some kind of super church machinery to operate effectively.

The word "given" shows that the ability to minister is not earned, it is not won - it is received!

"that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ"

Paul regards this as the highest possible calling.

Only one life,

'Twill soon be past.

Only what's done

for Christ will last.

1 Tim. 1:11-16

"According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

"And I thank Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has enabled me, in that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.

"Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.

"And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.

"Nevertheless, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."

Ephesians 3:9

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ.

There are some difficulties with the text in this verse. The word "fellowship" in some Greek manuscripts comes from the word (koinonia), "fellowship". However, the weight of textual evidence seems to show that (oikonomia), "dispensation", is used here. And because the context of this verse is certainly referring to historical ideas, we have here the meaning of God's "plan" or "purpose". Therefore, Paul is expressing the fact that his work is to show God's purpose in Christ, including particularly an explanation of the "mystery", the doctrines which have been "hidden" until this time.

The Word of God counterbalances all interpretations of history. The Bible not only contains historical facts, but it also gives, by means of doctrine, the correct interpretation of history. That is, the divine plan moves through history unhindered, in spite of human activity, even in spite of Satan's efforts to upset the plan of God.

A person who does not understand the Bible categorically is a dupe for any political, philosophical, or historical stupidity that comes along. The novice Christian is a child, "carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14).

The responsibility of the pastor (teacher) is to teach all points of doctrine and to use the Bible to interpret history, to show how mankind operations, and to provide insight into the realm of Satanic influence.

Ephesians 3:10

To the intent that now, unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.

Compare this passage with Ephesians 4:11-16. Note that here the church (we believers) is

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expected to somehow make the wisdom of God known to heavenly "principalities and powers", which is a reference to demons and leadership among the fallen angels.

"principalities" is the Greek word (archon), referring to one of the highest rulers.

This word first shows up in the Attic Greek (Athens) in the days of the Athenian democracy. The Archon was the president or preeminent decision maker in Athens. The number two man was called (bassilius archon), or "king-ruler". The third man was called (polymark), a military ruler. The following six leaders in Athens were the (thesmoteitai) or "legislators". Even though there was democracy, there was no anarchy in Athens because these leaders kept things under control.

The Satanic organization has a number of supreme rulers; how many is not known.

"powers" ... from (eksousias), "commissioned officers"; therefore, a secondary group of demon rulers.

Satan has a special force of high ranking demons to make attacks against prominent officials and heads of nations.

In Daniel 10:13f, the term "prince of Persia" refers to a fallen angel, a demon, who was busy attacking the ruler of Persia. Gabriel was delayed in bringing a message to Daniel because he was in conflict with this kosmokrator demon. The archangel Michael came to help and released Gabriel to come to Daniel.

In Dan. 10:20, the "prince of Grecia" is mentioned, referring to the demon in charge of mounting attacks against the ruler of Greece who was Alexander the Great at that time.

The principle is that Satan will vigorously attack any nation which protects the divine institutions, allows personal freedom to its citizens, and protects the nation against immorality. In nations like that there is evangelism and missionary activity, so demon activity will be stepped up with respect to those countries.

In addition, all Christian believers are placed under direct attack in the world system, with particularly heavy attacks against those who are advancing in the Christian way of life.

And it is in this battle arena of spiritual conflict that a Christian is supposed to function and succeed! No wonder Paul is so careful to teach continually about the power of God and the grace of God being the key to a believer's function.

The Church, the Body of Christ, teaches God's wisdom, His plan, His perfection, by being His exhibit to heavenly beings of the work of Jesus Christ in lowly humans.

And the "minister", the pastor, the teacher, the shepherd, has the all-important function of communicating the information to Christians.

Topic: BIBLE TEACHING, IMPORTANCE OF

Mystery

The word "mystery" in the New Testament refers to the doctrine which is specific for the Church Age. It is called "the mystery" because there things were never revealed in Old Testament times.

Paul states in Rom 16:25-26, Col. 1:25-26 and Eph 3:3-6 that this mystery is now revealed. Especially in the Ephesians 3 passage, he points out that there is no excuse for ignorance. Ignorance of what the Bible says is the greatest occupational hazard for a Christian believer.

Ignorance of the plan of God causes a believer to make wrong assessments in life, to establish wrong priorities, to make wrong decisions, and fail to solve problems correctly. The many New Testament commands to "grow in knowledge", to "grow in Christ", to "be edified", to "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, are pleas by the holy apostles to us Christians to overcome our ignorance with knowledge of Bible doctrine.

The content of the mystery doctrine was first prophesied by our Lord Jesus Christ during His life on earth, in John 14:20 and Acts 1:5-8.

None of the following mystery doctrines were known to the Old Testament writers of Scripture:

- The baptism of the Holy Spirit with its results
- The Union of a Christian with Jesus Christ (Positional Truth)
- The new spiritual organization called the family of God

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- The unique plan of God with its precisely correct procedures
- The equal privilege and equal opportunity of every Christian to execute God's plan
- Our portfolio of assets, "all blessings in heavenly places in Christ"
- The unique commissioning of Christians as priests and ambassadors
- The indwelling in each Christian of each member of the Trinity

The main job of pastors, teachers, elders is to communicate mystery doctrines. Communicating Bible truth is the primary focus of the command to elders in 1 Peter 5:2 to "Feed the flock of God which is among you..."

1 Cor 4:1, "Let a person regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God."

1 Cor 2:7, "But we communicate God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden assets which God predestined before the ages to our glory."

1 Tim 3:9, "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience."

So it is the pastor's job to uphold the mystery, to inculcate, to repeat and teach the mystery.

Etymology and Historical Context

The Greek word (**musterion**) means "mystery". This noun had originally been used in reference to the secrets of ancient mystery cults. Paul used it in technical, theological sense to indicate that the Church Age doctrine was totally unknown in Old Testament times. This noun is generally in the plural, referring to a number of doctrines not known in the Old Testament.

This noun was originally used of the ancient fraternities during the 7th through 4th centuries throughout ancient Greece which employed secret doctrines and secret ceremonies. Only those who were initiated into the fraternity knew the mystery doctrine or their secrets.

Some of the famous mystery cults included Elusis adopted by Athens. Isis, the cult of Egypt, spread to Corinth and included as one of its initiates the famous doctor Opulais. The mystery sorority of Dionysus for women only included dancing,

drinking, drugs, ecstasies, madness, lesbianism, ritual shouting, and human sacrifice. The mystery cult of Mythis was for men only; the male worshippers of Sybille castrated themselves in the frenzy of the rites.

The Orphic mystery cults centered around the singer Orpheus; it was adopted as a mystery system called Orphic theology. It emphasized purification, and the means whereby the soul might escape the body and ascend into the realm of the blessed. A tremendous amount of human sacrifice was related to these cults.

The mystery cults of the ancient world were based on Greek, Egyptian, and Roman mythology. Most of these mystery fraternities were related to the gods or goddesses of the underworld like Dimetre, Dionysus, Sybille, Adonis, Isis. They are related to the growth of crops: they die in the winter, come back in the spring. Thus, human sacrifices were offered in the winter so that in the spring everything would come back.

Every Hellenistic fraternity had secret doctrines and cultic rites in which the destinies of the gods were portrayed, and those initiated were supposed to share the fate of these gods.

Therefore, a vocabulary was developed in the Attic Greek.

The Greek word (**muew**) means to be initiated into the mysteries of the fraternity. This initiation involved teaching someone the secrets and doctrines of the fraternity which were never to be revealed to outsiders. So to be initiated meant to learn so as to pass the test, so that you know what your fraternity stood for.

The Greek word (**muste**) referred to those who were initiated, to those who persevered until they actually learned all the fraternity doctrine.

The word (**mustikos**) was used for the secret rites of the doctrines that had to be learned. So all the doctrines were called (mustikos).

The word (**musterion**) came down into the Koine and is the word used in the New Testament. (**musterion**) refers to the content of the doctrine, the actual principles and points that had to be learned.

(**musterion**) was used to describe the false doctrines of these ancient Greek fraternities. But the apostle Paul took this noun away from the Greek fraternities and gnostic cosmology and gave it, under the ministry of the Holy Spirit, a Biblical definition which stands in the Word of God forever. It now becomes a part of our vocabulary.

While most of the attic Greek words remained in the realm of demonism, false doctrine, cults, promiscuity, human sacrifice, yet our noun (**musterion**) is a Biblical word used twenty-three times in the New Testament. Paul uses it twenty-one times.

Jesus Christ used the noun for the first time when He first presented Church Age doctrine to the disciples in Mt 13:11 and Mk 4:10-11. A parable is a story about some common event designed to teach something. The disciples were trying to understand why our Lord taught in the form of parables. Our Lord answered in Mt 13:11, "To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them [unbelievers] it has not been given."

Col. 1:26-27; Rom 16:25-26

The Gospel

The word "gospel" is translated from the Greek *εὐαγγέλιος* (**euaggelos**), which means "good news." Bad news, therefore, such as doctrines pertaining to evil or to personal sins, do not properly belong under the category of the gospel.

The Gospel includes all of the doctrines pertaining to salvation, including: Redemption, Expiation, Reconciliation, Propitiation, Imputation, Justification, Positional Truth, and Sanctification. It also includes the doctrines pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ, including: the Hypostatic Union, Impeccability, the Deity of Christ, etc.

There are six uses of the term "gospel" in the New Testament:

- The gospel of Christ; Rom. 1:16,17, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..." This is an emphasis on the Person of the gospel.
- "My gospel", Rom. 2:16. This means that the gospel belongs to every believer.

- "Our gospel", 2 Cor. 4:3,4. This verse speaks of the believer's possession of the gospel and the importance of communicating it as God gives opportunity in witnessing.
- "The gospel of peace", Eph. 6:15. This emphasizes the doctrine of Reconciliation in the gospel.
- "The everlasting gospel", Rev. 14:6. This emphasizes the proximity of eternity for unbelievers during the Tribulation.
- "The gospel of the kingdom", Matt. 24:14. This emphasizes the fulfillment of the unconditional covenant to the born-again of Israel.

The fundamentals of the gospel are given in 1 Cor. 15:1-4.

- Christ died as a substitute for our sins (His spiritual death - "It is finished!")
- Christ died physically, and was buried
- Christ rose from the dead

The enemy of the gospel is Satan (as the ruler of this world, 2 Cor. 4:3,4).

The believer's attitude toward the gospel is expressed in these verses:

Rom. 1:16

Rom. 1:20

1 Cor. 1:17

1 Cor. 9:1

Shepherds of the Flock

Introduction

1 Peter 5:1,2 **"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: FEED THE FLOCK of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind:"**

Deuteronomy 8:3, **"And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee**

know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

We live by God's Word, that which proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus".

And it is our shepherds who have the duty to provide us with this nourishment, lest we waste away in spiritual malnutrition!

My aim in this article is to provide a thorough introduction to the Bible concept of shepherding, from Jehovah and the Lord Jesus Christ as Shepherd, to the Christian believer who feeds and cares for the "sheep of His pasture."

Pastors and elders are shepherds. The Greek word (**poimeinos**), used a single time in the New Testament in Ephesians 4:11, is translated "pastor". On other occasions, such as in 1 Peter 5:2, the verb form (**poimeinw**) is translated "to feed". So pastors and elders are "feeders", and Christians are the "flock" which are to be fed.

I intend in this article to develop a full description of what a Christian spiritual shepherd is, including a shepherd's qualifications and duties. This description will be derived from a study of what the whole Bible says about shepherds, by examining the following:

- Jehovah as Shepherd
- The Lord Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd
- King David as shepherd of his people. He was both a shepherd-boy and the shepherd of the kingdom of Israel
- Pastors and elders, including all those who "feed the flock of God"

I think that the Bible passages I cite in this study will demonstrate that there are well laid out Bible standards for the function of shepherd, and that when one is known a true shepherd of the sheep, certain objective criteria have been met.

Titus was given the task of choosing shepherds (elders) for the local congregations on the island of Crete. When choosing a shepherd, it's important to have a good idea of what God intends a shepherd to be.

To illustrate:

- A good shepherd puts the needs of the sheep first, and has an abiding sense of obligation toward them. One who does not know how to care for sheep, or who neglects sheep, is not a good shepherd.
- A good shepherd leads sheep to good pasture and water. A person who does not provide food and water for sheep is not a good shepherd.
- A good shepherd protects the sheep and sets up defenses against those who would harm the sheep. An individual who deliberately harms or frightens sheep is not a good shepherd.

Jehovah as Shepherd

There is a chain of command in Christian affairs. In a chain of command, such as in a military organization, when one level of command fails to function properly, the responsibility is taken over by the next higher level of command.

God the Father, Jehovah, is always watching His sheep; and He is always ready to take over when the sheep are not being well handled by their appointed shepherds..

READ Jeremiah 10:19-22

[I will show scripture passages to illustrate these ideas, but it's up to you to examine the whole context of the discussion in any passage I cite. Be aware that the verses I indicate are only pointers to a broader portion of the Bible that needs to be reviewed in context.]

Suggestion: read the whole book of Jeremiah from the standpoint of shepherds, good and bad, and their duties toward their "sheep." But especially read:

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Jeremiah 50:4-19

Psalm 23

Isaiah 44:24-28

Even a heathen king, Cyrus, was named shepherd, to fulfill a specific function, to contribute to the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

READ Ezekiel 34.

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From C. F. Keil, Commentary on Ezekiel

The shepherds of Israel, namely, the political and religious leaders, have been feeding themselves and neglecting the flock. The flock has been scattered and has become a prey to wild beasts. The Lord will remove the bad shepherds from their office.

The Lord will take charge of His own flock, gather it together from where it is scattered, and feed and tend it on good pasture in the land of Israel. He will sift the flock by getting rid of the "fat" and "violent" ones.

He will appoint His servant David shepherd over His flock, make a covenant of peace with His people, and bless the land with fruitfulness, so that Israel may dwell there in security, and no more suffer by internal strife and famine or be carried off by their enemies.

This chapter (Eze. 34) is a repetition and expansion of the prophecy of Jeremiah 23:1-8. Both prophecies deal with the salvation of Israel and the fact that the sheep will be gathered and tended by the Lord and His servant David.

Rev. 7:17, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Rev. 12:6, "And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand, two hundred, and threescore days."

The Lord Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd

Jesus Christ is presented as the "Good Shepherd" in that He lays down His life for His sheep. This refers to Christ's saving work on the cross, the atonement.

In Hebrews 13:20,21, He is called the "great shepherd," a title that refers to divine blessing to advanced believers.

In 1 Peter 5:4, the title "Chief Shepherd" is the title for Christ as we face Him after death.

The Lord Jesus provides for His sheep in many ways.

- The believer, like a sheep, is helpless and has no sense of direction; a sheep must be guided by a shepherd. We need Bible truth as our guide in life.
- A sheep cannot clean itself; this a reminder of our Lord's provision of cleansing, as shown in 1 John 1:9.
- A sheep is helpless when injured. So, when we are injured by the various problems in life, only the Lord can provide the necessary therapy.
- A sheep is defenseless; he depends on the shepherd for protection. The Lord provide the armor of God for protection.
- A sheep can't find food or water for itself. A sheep must depend on the shepherd to lead it to water.
- A sheep is easily frightened or panicked. The shepherd calms the sheep with songs in the night; i.e. Bible truth in the soul.
- When the sheep produces wool, it belong to the owner of the flock. It does not belong to the sheep.

Every Christian is supposed to be "like Christ." Pastors and elders, in particular, must have the qualities of good shepherd that the Lord Jesus embodies.

An elder must have the "mind of Christ." This means that, as he grows into his job as elder, he will become more like Christ in his thinking and shepherding. If he does not, he will be a bad shepherd.

Matthew 9:35-38

Matthew 25:31-34

Luke 15:4-7

John 10:1-18

John 21:15-17

Keep in mind as we study - the sheep belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. All through the scriptures that we are studying, the flocks belong to God. They do not belong to the human shepherd. By illustration, David was the shepherd for sheep that belonged to his father, Jesse.

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In Heb. 13:20, Christ is called "the great Shepherd of the sheep."

1 Peter 2:21-25, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls."

Matthew 18:10-24

Psalm 78:51-54, "He smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham: But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased."

Psalm 79:13, "So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks forever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations."

Isaiah 40:10,11, "Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

If an elder has the mind of Christ, he will have the attitude of Christ toward his flock and toward his job as shepherd. This is the attitude and motivation to look for in anyone who aspires to the office of pastor or elder.

David as the Shepherd of Israel

1 Chronicles 17:3-9

1 Chronicles 21:16,17

In this passage, David takes the responsibility for the poor handling of his human flock when he numbered the people.

Spiritual Qualifications for an Elder (Shepherd)

The most important function in a church - and the most important activity that a Christian can engage in - is the study and teaching of the Word of God. Bible truth is the theoretical and practical support for every other feature of Christian life, including worship, prayer, evangelism, missionary service, discipling, and fellowship. Without a solid foundation in Bible principle and doctrine, a Christian can spend his life flailing around trying to serve the Lord while never understanding the basic plan of God for his life and ministry.

In a local church, someone has to teach, to organize things, to arrange for the activities of the organization, no matter how small. If no hierarchy is imposed on a community of people, leaders will emerge anyway, either chosen by the group to take charge, or, by default, to move into a leadership void.

In the Bible, Christian leaders are not chosen politically, or by seniority, or by submitting a résumé. An "eldership" is a battlefield commission; a person tested and proved in battle is seen to be the natural choice for a position as a bishop or elder.

The most highly decorated American soldier of World War II, Audie Murphy, received a battlefield commission to 2nd Lieutenant, after he had proved himself in battle. His leaders had seen in him the qualities of leadership and proven ability that made him eligible for that honor. (He was prevented by his physical disability from wounds from attending the U. S. Military Academy after the war.)

In the Epistle to Titus, the task given to Titus was to observe which individuals were qualified to be appointed, according to the criteria Paul outlined.

Chief among these qualifications was that the elder was to "hold to the faithful word as he had been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine to refute and to convince the gainsayers."

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An elder is primarily a teacher of the Word of God. If he does not teach his flock what the Bible says, his sheep will perish of malnourishment!

The qualifications of elders (pastors, bishops, overseers, presbyters, deacons) are given in such passages as 1 Peter 5, Titus 1 and 2, 1 Timothy, and Acts 7.

Think about Titus's job of selecting elders on Crete.

He had to observe men in the communities on Crete and decide whom to appoint as elder. Maybe he interviewed likely candidates. Maybe he asked other believers to describe the qualities they say in various people.

It's possible to fake many things in the Christian life. A person can smile, talk the language of the church he attends, refrain from certain taboos, and generally fool most of the people most of the time. After all, we don't go around questioning people to their face about the genuineness of their profession or claims. If a person claims to love the Lord and be devoted to Christian service, how can you tell if the claim is genuine?

Well, there are two things in which it is extremely difficult to fool an experienced person like Titus. First, it is hard to give the appearance of having a great love for the Word of God. And second, it is hard to fool a discerning Christian into believing that one has the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Love for the Word of God

When a person genuinely loves the Lord, a love for the Word of God naturally accompanies that love. That person will give evidence every day of immersion in the Bible. After all, the Bible is the communication of the Lord Jesus, the One loved. A desire to know the Word, to meditate in it, and to talk about it, will be just as natural as a young person's total captivation with romance.

In fact, this characteristic can be used to discern the true merits of any candidate for Christian office. A person can attend church, engage in worship and Christian service, and use Christian vocabulary. But there may be some ulterior motive in this.

A young man who is interested in a young woman can readily adapt himself to her surroundings and seem to be something that he is not. People are chameleons when trying to impress others. But it is very difficult over a period of time for a person to establish a reputation as one who is absorbed by the Word of God, unless the Bible is the center of attention and devotion.

A Christian who is motivated by a desire for recognition, a lust for power, or an ambition to have a religious career, can adopt almost any appearance or conform to any program or set of standards. One of the most difficult things to fake, however, is an occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.

The Fruit of the Holy Spirit

The other thing that is hard to cover up is a lack of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. But how can you tell when a person is filled with the Holy Spirit?

The people in Acts 7 were expected to do just that when they selected the first seven deacons. They were expected to select men to handle this job, based on just this one qualification. If you had been in that church, how would you have known whom to vote for?

Would you believe that a man is Spirit-filled because he tells you he is, or because he says he has had a spiritual experience? Would you be impressed by a person who is sweet, smiles, and uses spiritual vocabulary? The outward appearance is easy to counterfeit. When one person exhibits some genuine spiritual power or ability, it's quite natural that others will envy that and want to fake it, or buy it (Simon the Sorcerer)!

But Titus was looking for some very objective evidence of genuine Christian character in the men he was considering for positions of responsibility on Crete.

LOVE - The first fruit of the Holy Spirit mentioned in Galatians 5 is Love.

Titus 1:8 states that an elder is to be "a lover of hospitality": (**philozenos**); he is to have a love for strangers. This word carries the connotation of hospitality, of doing something for someone who

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does not earn or deserve the good treatment, because there has been no previous acquaintance. This word reflects a Grace attitude toward people who have not yet earned one's consideration.

This is a word of impersonal love - the type of attitude that is free of arrogance, envy, hatred, or even disdain for other people, even if there is sharp disagreement about doctrine or practice. This is the type of love that permits a Christian to love even his enemies or people that he doesn't like.

There is no envy, self-righteousness, or sinful judging accompanying this love. There will be no hatred, maligning, or malicious gossip involved in this love.

This is the type of love that is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. It does not come from emotion, although it may cause emotion. This is the "professional" love of the mature Christian believer, analogous to the Love of God, the quality of which does not depend on the behavior or character of the one being loved, but on the character of the one who loves.

JOY - Joy is the happiness which God provides, a happiness that does not depend on people, circumstances, or things to maintain it. Joy is the relaxed mental attitude that comes from casting one's cares on Christ, knowing that He cares for us. A person who does not possess spiritual joy will chase after the world's attractions and provisions because there is no satisfaction in the things of the Lord.

PEACE - Peace is the result of exercising Faith-Rest. Faith-Rest is the process of trusting God the Father to keep his promises, to make provision for every contingency and trial, and then enjoying the tranquillity that abiding in Christ provides. A person without godly peace will fret and stew, try to solve problems in flesh, and will generally exhibit the same anxieties as the unbeliever in the same position.

PATIENCE - the long view; the quality that results from having eternity's value in view, of being occupied with Christ, of living in the Word of God, and of knowing what God's plan is and how it is working out in the life. The impatient person wants things now and will avidly pursue

"things", not being willing to wait for the Lord to provide or promote.

The Elder's Professional Qualifications

An elder must be an accomplished instructor of the Word of God. There are many other duties of elders, especially of those who are overseers, such as priests, pastors, bishops; but the underlying basic responsibility is that of teaching - feeding the flock.

To the spiritual character and personal integrity described above must be added the training and growth in "knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" that allows the elder, as the chief among edified believers, to serve as an effective shepherd.

A local church needs at least one person who teaches the Bible with sufficient quality, and in sufficient quantity, to provide nourishing spiritual food for the congregation. The teacher needs to have a thorough knowledge of the Word and the ability to correlate the facts and doctrines of scripture and make application of those principles to Christian living.

A Christian needs to know what the Bible says and what it means. A Christian is supposed to live "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." There is no substitute in any believers' life for a thorough overall knowledge of the facts, the doctrines, and the spiritual principles of the Word. A pastor must be willing and able to spend the hours studying and teaching that are required.

If there is no shepherd to teach these things, the people will be hungry.

The Importance of Bible Teaching

A Christian's desire for the Truth, the Word of God, must be avid. A believer must give the highest priority in his life to learning Bible facts and principles. There are many examples in the Bible of the great effort made by people of God to obtain truth.

John 14:6 "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

Matt. 6:28-34

Psalm 119:72 "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."

Psalm 119:127, 162.

Prov. 23:23 "Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction and understanding."

Psalm 86:11 "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth; unite my heart to fear thy name."

EXAMPLES OF EAGERNESS FOR TRUTH

Temple worshippers in the time of Christ: LUKE 21:37,38

Samaritans: JOHN 4:39-42

Cornelius: ACTS 10:30-33

Bereans: ACTS 17:10-13

COL. 1:9-13, 21-23; 2:1-8

EPH. 1:17-23; 3:14-19; 4:11-16

Reasons Why Bible Teaching is Important

The Bible is the only source of knowledge of how to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no such thing as "love at first sight" in spiritual things. The believer must get to know Christ very well, and this requires the daily intake of knowledge about Christ through the Word of God, which is "the mind of Christ."

I Cor. 2:16 "For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Phil. 3:10 "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his suffering, being made conformable unto his death."

John 14:23 "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loves me not keeps not my sayings; and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me."

Daily Bible study leads to occupation with the Lord Jesus Christ, a daily walk with the Savior.

Heb. 12:2,3 "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,

despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds."

Bible doctrine, learned under the faith principle of applied teaching, produces confidence during the believer's lifetime.

2 Cor. 5:6-8 "Therefore, we are always confident, knowing that, while we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, and not by sight). We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

See also JOB 5:24-27

The Bible is the only source of God's viewpoint.

Isaiah 55:7-9 "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the Lord, and He will have compassion on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Bible doctrine is the basis for orientation to God's plan during the believer's lifetime.

Isaiah 26:3,4 "The one who is steadfast of mind thou wilt keep in perfect peace, because he trusts in thee. Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting rock."

Bible knowledge produces sanity and stability of mind. It is very important to get the Word of God into the mind before the times of pressure come. It is not too likely that an unstable person will respond to the Word of God. God's deals with the pressures of life using "preventive maintenance".

James 1:8 "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

Bible doctrine is the basis for divine guidance.

Romans 12:1,2 "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God,

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which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Without the Word of God, the believer's mind will be corrupted by Satan and will become a repository of world-viewpoint and false teaching.

2 Cor. 11:3 "But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ."

Eph. 4:17-25

Ephesians Lesson 8 Quiz

Instructions

The following questions relate to your study of this lesson.

To answer a question, type your response in the space provided after the word "Answer:". A question may be True/False, multiple choice, fill in the blank, or short answer type.

The last question requires you to write one or two paragraphs in "essay" form. Use the space provided; it will expand to accommodate your response.

You have choices about sending the quiz back to Grace Notes.

- If you received an email file containing the quiz, you can use the REPLY feature of your e-mail application to open the quiz. Enter your answers in the reply message. Then SEND the message to Grace Notes.
- You can enter your answers on these pages, then send the whole file back to Grace Notes as a file attachment. This is handy, but these lessons will average 100K to 200K in size. As an alternative,
- After you answer the questions here, copy and paste the whole list of questions into a new MS Word document; then, send the new file to Grace Notes as an attachment. The new file will, of course, be much smaller than this main file.
- Finally, you can print the Quiz pages on your printer and send your response back to Grace Notes in the regular mail. If you do this, send the mail to:

Grace Notes

% Warren Doud

1705 Aggie Lane

Austin, Texas 78757 USA

Whichever transmission method you use, when Grace Notes receives your completed Quiz, the next lesson will be sent to you, by the same means you received this one. EXCEPT: when you have sent in the FINAL QUIZ, we will send your certificate to you, by regular mail.

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Questions on Ephesians Lesson 8

1. Why did Paul state that he was a "prisoner of Jesus Christ?"

Answer:

2. Worship demands _____, _____, and _____.

Answer:

3. It is necessary to be in a congregation of believers in a church in order to engage in worship.

[True/False]

Answer:

4. What is a "mystery" doctrine?

Answer:

5. What will happen to a Christian who does not receive continuous feeding of Bible truth:

Answer:

6. What group of people were made "fellow heirs; of the same body; partakers of His promise in Christ...?"

Answer:

7. How did the Apostle Paul receive the gift of ministry?

Answer:

8. What is the most important duty of a pastor?

Answer:

9. A believer's happiness, stability, function, and productivity depend on _____.

Answer:

10. In what verse of Ephesians is Jesus Christ said to be the Creator?

Answer:

11. What are the results in a Christian's life of ignorance of the plan of God?

Answer:

12. Name two of the mystery doctrines, things which were not known to the Old Testament believers.

Answer:

13. The word "gospel" means _____.

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Answer:

14. What doctrine is emphasized by the term "the gospel of peace?"

Answer:

15. What is the chief duty of a Christian shepherd?

Answer:

16. For a Christian to become more like Christ in his thinking, and in shepherding, he must have _____.

Answer:

17. In 1 Chronicles, _____ was known as the Shepherd of Israel.

Answer:

18. There are two characteristics of the Christian life about which it is difficult to fool an experienced believer; they are _____ and _____.

Answer:

19. Christian peace is the result of exercising _____.

Answer:

20. In one or two paragraphs, describe an elder's professional qualifications.

Answer:

End of Quiz