

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

EPHESIANS 3:10-12

HEART OF THE MATTER - A WORD FROM KEN

It's a question we often ask. It comes to mind when we are taken off guard, thrown off balance. Someone has interrupted our day. Someone barges into the room. A stranger initiates a phone call. Someone makes an unsettling point. An intruder bursts into the office.

Something mysterious motivates the disruption that is not immediately apparent. We want to get to the bottom of it. We want to uncover the real purpose. We want to know what is driving the behavior. We want the big idea.

Sometimes the real issue is disguised, maybe even hidden. It annoys us when there is a lack of candor. A salesman throws out the bait – “would you like to earn more money?” We inquire, “What’s the pitch?” (Of course we would like to make more money... who wouldn’t?) But our question is avoided entirely. “Would you like to earn more money?” comes the repeat. “Tell me what it is and I’ll decide if I will talk to you,” we demand. More avoidance. We are put off. Why? Because the big idea remains under cover.

We business minded Americans are always on the hunt for the real agenda. We want to know the bottom line. We’ll peel back the layers, probe, and read between the lines until we find out. If not, we’ll hang up and move on. Why the letter? Why the phone call? Why the visit? We train our administrative assistants to ask “what is it regarding?” What do they want?

So, we naturally ask the same set of questions about the text before us. Why did Paul write his letter to the church at Ephesus? What prompted him to pick up the pen? What drove the narrative? What is his central purpose? What is Paul’s big idea?

In summation, the letter is a sweeping overview of God’s plan for the ages. This is **the heart of the matter**. He takes us back before time and reveals something of the mind of the infinite God; an intentional God who made deliberate choices. God had a plan and we humans who have been redeemed by the incomparable work of his eternal Son, caught in this one moment in time, are the centerpiece of that plan. Brought from death to life, from darkness to light, we are heirs of all God’s blessing and astonishingly, he views us as his inheritance. It is a plan so high and broad and deep, it is nearly incomprehensible. But it is knowable; and Paul prays that no matter how much we know, or how long we’ve known it, that we will continue to deepen our understanding of the all-powerful God of love and grace.

Paul turns to the practical application of these powerful realities. Our strength is seen in humility and gentleness. It permeates our daily life, we would say, 24/7. In our marriages. Between parents and their children. In the

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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workplace. In society at large. But it is a battle. That’s why God provided all the armor we need to stand firm, and prevail.

Here’s Paul’s big idea: “His (God’s) intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known...”

And *that* is a very big idea.

BACKGROUND – We conclude our series in the powerful book of Ephesians with a summation. We’ll look at the major themes Paul explores to make his case. We’ll identify the “big idea,” the primary purpose for writing and the central proposition around which he builds the structure of the entire letter. We’ll reflect. We’ll commit. We’ll let transformation happen.

Review Ephesians 3:10-12

Think it over...

1. In preparation for your discussion, read Acts 19 as a background study. Paul plants a church in Ephesus. Share your reactions – how does Luke’s account help you understand Paul’s letter?
2. In your own words, list several of the major themes Paul addresses in his letter.
3. Write down a single sentence summary of the book and share it with your group.
4. If the big idea is contained in Ephesians 3:10-12, what is it?
5. How do the themes you’ve identified support the big idea?

Bring it home...

1. If Paul had been the founding pastor of RCC, how might his letter apply directly to us at this stage in our life together as a church?
2. What are the practical applications of the themes you identified (*Think it over... #2 above*)?
3. How would your single sentence summary (*#3 above*) become a living reality if you would whole-heartedly embrace the big idea contained in that summary?
4. How does Paul’s assertion (Ephesians 3:10) color your view of God’s plan for RCC (and the church at large)?
5. What are the three top challenges to your ongoing spiritual development from Ephesians?

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