

# EPHESIANS 3:14-21

## Immeasurable Love and Unthinkable Power

### Memory Verse

"So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Ephesians 3:17-19

### Real-life Problems

Growing up, we are often told "you'll understand when you get older." It's true that there is a level a maturity that comes with age. Learning Calculus as a teenager might be hard, but learning it as a six-year-old would be impossible. As we mature, not only does our ability to understand grow, but our ability to appreciate grows as well. Yet, too often we treat our faith differently. We assume that as soon as we come to faith, we should understand all things about God and we get frustrated when we do not. Yet, just as an infant grows in knowledge with age, so do we grow in our knowledge of God as we grow in our faith.

### The Good News

In Christ, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, God grants us the gift to continually grow in our knowledge and experience of His love.

## I. Introduction

### OPENING QUESTIONS

**Idea #1:** Has there ever been a time where you felt like someone talked down to you because you were young?

**Idea #2:** If you could ask for one gift for your birthday, without the limits of money or time, what would you ask for?

### PRAY

Open your time together in prayer.

### REHEARSING THE GOSPEL

#### What does gospel mean?

Good news

#### What's the good news?

Jesus died for my sins

#### Why did He die for your sins?

So that I can have abundant life in relationship with Him now and forever

#### What is grace?

God's love for undeserving sinners

## REVIEW

### 1) What were the two reasons Paul wrote this letter?

1) To remind the church of the power of the gospel 2) To encourage believers to live in light of their new identity as the church

### 2) Who was the original audience of this letter?

The church, or followers of Jesus Christ, in Ephesus

### 3) Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

Paul was in prison for his work in spreading the gospel.

## *What's going on?*

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### REMIND

In Jesus, God has revealed the mystery of the gospel. By Jesus, the church has been given the ministry of the gospel. Through Jesus, we can draw near to God in boldness.

### TODAY WE'LL LEARN

- 1) The love of Christ is beyond measure.
- 2) The power of God is beyond imagination.

## *Read*

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Read **Ephesians 3:14-21** aloud in your group.

## *II. Questions for Discussion*

### A. WHAT?

**1) This passage begins with the phrase "for this reason" in verse 14. Looking back at the verses before, what is the reason that causes Paul to bow his knees?**

In verse 13, Paul pleads with the Ephesian believers "not to lose heart" over his sufferings. Paul knew that God had given him the ministry of both proclamation of the gospel and suffering for the saints. Paul did not see his sufferings as accidental, but as part of God's plan to strengthen the faith of the gentiles. However, Paul knew that his suffering might cause the Ephesians to doubt God instead. So it is his deep desire for them to know and see God's power in all things that causes him to pray on his knees for them.

**2) Looking at verses 16-19, what are the four requests Paul prays for the Ephesians?**

- 1) God would grant them strength through His Spirit in their inner being.
- 2) Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith.
- 3) They would have strength to understand and know the breadth, length, height and depth of the love of Christ.
- 4) They would be filled with all the fullness of God.

**3) In the previous passage, Paul emphasized the importance of the church/family of God. Where do you see this idea continued in this prayer?**

1) Verse 15 says, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." 2) Verse 18 says, "may have the strength to comprehend WITH all the saints ..." 3) Verse 21 says, "to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus ..."

**4) In verse 16, Paul asks God to strengthen the Ephesians according to what? In your own words, how would you explain to a friend what this verse means?**

Paul asks God to strengthen them, "according to the riches of His glory." Answers on the explanation will vary.

**5) According to verses 17-19, in what are the Ephesians "rooted" and "grounded?" What is it that Paul wants them to comprehend and know?**

They are rooted and ground in love.

He wants them to comprehend and know the breadth, length, height and depth of that love.

### B. SO WHAT?

**1) Why do you think it matters for Paul to mention verse 15 in his prayer??**

Verse 15 helps to remind us of the rule and Lordship of God. God is not just the God of the Jews, or even the believing gentiles. God is the Father of all living things. He is actually the creator of every family on earth. Paul is starting His prayer in a humble recognition of who our God truly is.

## Surviving the Storm

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Watch this link with your students: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eNEHUMNJQ0>

In 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit and destroyed a majority of the city of New Orleans.

Hurricane Katrina hit land as a Category 5 storm, which is the highest ranking for hurricane winds. It devastated most everything in its path.

This is why people were amazed to see the hundreds of oak trees that survived the storm. Many asked how they could have withstood the high winds. One of the reasons was the trees' roots.

Not only do plants receive their nutrients from their roots, but for trees, their roots actually help them to withstand many storms they face.

In the same way, this is the importance of being rooted and grounded in Christ's love. The love of Christ not only gives life to the believer, but is their strength in the midst of life's storms.

### **2) What is the imagery that Paul uses in verse 17? (Note: Look for the action words.) What do you think the tenses of these three words tell us about our relationship to Christ?**

Dwell, rooted, and grounded.

Dwell is a present, continual tense which shows us that the dwelling of Christ in our hearts is a continual, ongoing reality. Through faith, we have daily communion with Christ.

Rooted and grounded are both past tense. This reminds us that, while our communion with Christ is ongoing, our union with Him is complete. Through faith, Christ sealed our union to Him in love. We have been rooted and planted in His love. It is immovable. While we will grow in that love, we will never be taken from it.

### **3) Look back at verses 18-19. Why do you think Paul would want the Ephesians to comprehend/know a love that he then says "surpasses knowledge?"**

Paul is identifying a key reality here. Paul is addressing the difference between maturing in Christ and experiencing Christ. He is holding both as equally important in the growth of a believer. One should seek to mature in their knowledge of God by growing in understanding. However, Paul is also expressing that the love of Christ can never be fully grasped by knowledge only, but must be experienced by the believer as they are filled with the Spirit. The fullness of God is given in both revelation from God and communion with God.

### **4) What do you think Paul means in verse 20 when he says God is able to "do far more abundantly than all we ask or think?" How might that reality have affected the way Paul is praying?**

Paul is reminding the Ephesians of God's ultimate rule. If God has done all Paul mentioned in Ephesians 2, then He is clearly able to do more than we could ever imagine. Paul understands the value of praying and asking God for specific requests. Yet, in this verse we can see that Paul also knows that his requests are limited by human reason. He ends the prayer by recognizing that he has not even scratched the surface of what God can do and he asks God to do what he knows only God can do.

### C. NOW WHAT?

#### 1) What are some ways you could actively seek to grow in your understanding of that love?

Get the ball rolling with broad examples of what communion with Christ might look like in every day life, i.e. meditation on God's Word, prayer, worship, study of God's Word, fellowship with other believers, etc. However, do not stop there. Ask students to give practical examples of how they might be able to better implement these things in their own lives. Answers will vary.

#### 2) How might our lives look different if Paul's prayer were answered among our group?

This is a chance to give a foreshadow of the next chapter of Ephesians. After this prayer, Paul goes on to describe what unity in the church and a new life in Christ looks like. Yet, just as with the rest of Paul's letter, the emphasis is not on the individual transformation—while that will occur—but on the corporate implications of the gospel. This is a prayer that would lead toward maturity as a body of believers. As our individual communion with the Lord grows, our corporate communion grows. So to have Paul's prayer answered in our group would ultimately lead us to a deeper fellowship with one another as we are united through the love of Christ.

#### 3) What are some things in our lives that keep us from experiencing the love of Christ or believing in the power of God?

While answers will vary depending on the person, this is an opportunity to look for connections among the group. Some of the things might be feelings, such as fear, anxiety, or comfort. Other things might be tangibles, such as social media, family, or money. As students name these things, look for common themes and talk through how your group can work together to remove these distractions.

### *Main takeaway*

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The love of Christ is beyond measure and the power of God is beyond imagination.

## *III. Closing*

### REMEMBERING THE GOOD NEWS

In Christ, God has given us everything we need for life and godliness. And through the power of the Holy Spirit, God grants us the gift to continually grow in our knowledge and experience of the His love.

### CLOSE IN PRAYER

God, we want to echo the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians. Lord, according to the riches of Your glory, grant us strength through Your Spirit within us. Through Christ, give us minds to comprehend and hearts to know the love of Christ. Father, we acknowledge that You can do far more than we could ever ask or think. By Your power, grant us to be Your witnesses to the world and to one another. In Jesus' name. Amen.

## *Supporting Resources*

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### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- 1) In what ways has this passage challenged or encouraged how you pray for others?
- 2) How might our prayers change as we grow in our understanding of the authority and power of God?
- 3) Now consider the four prayer requests Paul has for the Ephesians. Spend some time praying these requests over you and your group.

### QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

- 1) What did this passage teach you about prayer that you may not have considered before?
- 2) Why do you think it would be important for us to grow in our knowledge of Christ's love?
- 3) In what ways were you encouraged by what you learned about God's power in this passage?