

Praying to Experience Christ's Love

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What grabs your focus?

When you walk into a room and see the fireplace first, or a piece of art that draws you in, or if you're me it's my wife walking into a sushi restaurant for the first time.

What draws your focus first acts as the focal point, or the focus in any given moment is incredibly important because it is which everything else is dependent.

Once the focus is discovered the rest of the pieces either fall into place or disarray.

We find ourselves flustered and frustrated.

What is true in art and design, is also true in prayer and life.

When we place our focus upon the wrong thing we lack the true gifts God can give.

In our sermon series *Praying with Paul* (Sermon Slide) to place our foundation of prayer in the Bible as we learn how Paul's prayers focuses our prayers.

On May 4th, we will be sharing a Prayer Guide which provides an intentional framework to learn from Paul about prayer in practice.

In Eph 3:14-21 Paul shares his 2nd prayer of the book of Ephesians where he calls us to find our focus in Christ's Love.

When we focus on Christ's Love, we find that all our other places make sense.

Open your Bible to Ephesians 3:14-21, where we will read together. Keep your bibles open as we will unpack this chapter.

Reading Eph 3:14-21 NIV

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. (NIV)

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, (NIV)

¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, (NIV)

¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, (NIV)

19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (NIV)

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, (NIV)

21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (NIV)

Today we will unpack through Ephesians that Paul gives us four words to focus our prayer lives so that we may experience Christ's Love.

Four Words to Inform our Prayer

- 1) Strength
- 2) Dwell
- 3) Grasp
- 4) Fill

In Eph 3:14 **14 For this reason I kneel before the Father (NIV)**

Pastor Steve mentioned a few weeks ago that “For this reason” when we see this phrase we know Paul is speaking of something previous.

In this case the prior message, is what Pastor Jeremy preached upon last week Praying to Know God Better in Ephesians 1.

Paul speaks about our status and people before God reconciled across division, and how his suffering isn't discouragement but a place of God being glorified,

Which is why he says.

I kneel before the Father (NIV)

A common thing that sneaks into our prayers, is we accidentally misplace our focus on the object in which we want, instead of the source who provides.

We say “Dear God” but what we could mean is “Dear provider to my true focus which is I want a new car, or better health, or blessed food”

Many Christian traditions have used kneeling and different postures to show what is the right way to pray

Maybe you come from a tradition where things like kneeling or standing or lifting your hands or head coverings or different places where we have an image of what is proper form to pray.

I grew up in a Mennonite Brethren Church and a lot of it was heads bowed hands folded as the proper way to pray.

In the 1st century church, the Jewish and Gentile traditions would usually stand to pray.

The Bible emphasizes many physical approaches to prayer, not landing on one as “The” way to posture.

Paul wants us to notice something—he chooses to kneel as a sign of reverence, humility, and submission.

It had nothing to do with the action of his body but rather the posture of his heart.

Paul wants to right his heart and attitude to be focused on God as God, not only the provider.

This is further emphasized as we move into verse 15, which says,

"from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name." NIV

The early church engaged in much discussion about the meaning of this verse, and many commentators throughout history have done the same.

We come from many different backgrounds—some of us have traditional families, blended, chosen, adopted, scattered, broken, or disarray families.

But what Paul is emphasizing is that our ultimate identity and meaning are derived from God.

It is towards sovereignty in which we kneel and bring our humility.

Paul begins showing us our first word in v.16

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, (NIV)

I recognize that the inner being may not be normal everyday language I don't know of anyone asking how's your inner being?

But in the biblical context what an inner being is your spiritual self

Our inner being was the place of life itself.

It was our whole self, the place in which God interacts with us. In it he sustains both our spiritual and physical self.

The glorious riches and which is being referenced here are according to what God is bringing

Imagine for a second that I'm a billionaire, one of the good ones, and I give you \$100.

I have given you out of my riches. Sure, it's nice but it is not a measure of my wealth.

But if I give you \$10,000,000, I have given to you according to my riches the first is a portion of what I have but the second is proportion to my glorious riches.

We are to pray out of His Glorious Riches, the proportion of what God can provide.

The key word is Strength.

Four Words to Inform our Prayer

1) Strength

Spiritual strength allows us to grow in our spiritual selves we become more spiritually minded in the ways of doing all that we do to serve God in wherever we find ourselves.

The Strength to grow and be within God's power.

The power to follow God with our whole lives.

This given strength we find our inward self-growing every day

Our spiritual muscles grow, as we rely on God to grow us by asking for his power.

and brings us now into our second word is where we move into verse 17

¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, (NIV)

I want you to notice something quickly in verse 15 it said the Father in verse 16 it's at the Spirit and in verse 17 now it says Christ

The triune God working together to strengthen and enable his church.

Four Words to Inform our Prayer

1) Strength

2) Dwell

I love this word "dwell" because it makes me think of someone moving from room to room, saying, "This is mine. This is my space."

That is exactly what Christ is doing when we invite Him in—when we call to Him and say we want to dwell with Christ.

We are inviting Him in through faith. Faith gets a lot of different interpretations, and people attach various meanings to it.

But at its core, faith is recognition to rely—it is resting in the fact that we are depending on God, asking Him to come in, and leaning upon Him.

When Christ is dwelling in our hearts, He is calling us to an attitude of faith—of dependence on Him.

And yet, I know I have corners of my heart where I don't want Him to dwell.

I have places I want to keep to myself. I want to say, "No, this is mine, and that is Yours."

Even if those places are full of shame, sin, or brokenness, I sometimes want to hold onto them.

But Christ calls us to fully dwell in Him, which means surrendering those hidden corners.

Paul uses two powerful words to describe what happens: "rooted" and "established."

When we are in Christ—when we allow Him to dwell in our hearts through faith—He becomes rooted in us, like a tree whose roots spread deep.

At the same time, He establishes Himself as our foundation, like a rock upon which our faith is built.

He is the solid ground on which we stand.

¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, (NIV)

We may have this power of God in rooting and foundation, but not alone. Together with all God's people.

Four Words to Inform our Prayer

- 1) Strength
- 2) Dwell
- 3) Grasp

I once did a robot building class, where a group of us were zoomed in on focused of building a robot car that followed a track. Each of us were trying to grasp the mechanical parts and at the same time understand how the whole thing works.

We were trying to grasp both the concept and the function of the robot

We are called to do the same, but instead of a toy car, it is Christ's Love.

To see both mentally and experientially Christ's Love.

But I want you to notice something before we get there look at what he says

Together with all the Lord's holy people NIV

Grasping Christ love is not about our individual experiences, it takes place in the community.

To truly grasp, to be in this strength and dwell with God, is not something we do in isolation.

Jesus dwells in our hearts, so that we may dwell alongside believers.

As Christ finds the corners of our shame and turns them into healing.

We help and are helped by each other to heal together.

I'd like to invite you to an opportunity to come together on May 24th a Prayer and ReEnvisioning Gathering

To truly grab hold of and grasp onto the embrace of Christ.

On that day we want to capture a piece of what Paul is talking about

to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, NIV

People can get stuck in trying to measure this, whether we measure this through images of the Scriptures, or our personal experience.

We start asking wrongly sometimes,

How long will God love me when I mess up?

How deep does God truly know and love me when I see what's inside me?

But this measurement is **not about the thoroughness in which we understand** our sense of God's love it's about the **Vastness of his love**

This love is too large to measure.

Intimacy means, Into Me You See

Jesus sees into Me and He Loves Me Still

His Love was enough to carry a cross to his death, to have a body broken, and be buried into death.

His Love is enough to leave the throne of God to be killed by the enemies of God.

Once we begin to understand that we find our first step.

The truth for us as believers is that we never have to worry about running out of the love of Christ because the measurements is beyond infinite

And to emphasize upon this Paul moves us to verse 19 where he says

19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge (NIV)

This love surpasses knowledge, it is a mystery beyond measure

And all that we can say is that we know that this love far surpasses our knowledge of love

I think the hardest thing for us as people to embrace will be the embracing this unconditional form of love

This love without measures this love without condition and this love which goes beyond any reason or rational or understanding or measurements

This is our prayer life this is our spiritual life this is our entire life is to know the love of God is unknowable but yet we embrace it, and we live in it every day

And this brings us to our final Word

that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (NIV)

Four Words to Inform our Prayer

- 1) Strength
- 2) Dwell
- 3) Grasp
- 4) Fill

We are to be filled with the fullness of God

Paul had moved on from talking about measurement type language to what should it be measured against in our maturity.

To measure accurately you need a proper standard in which to measure with.

The Measuring standard is God himself.

It is tragic when Christians use the wrong measurement in examine our spiritual life

We like to measure ourselves by the weakest Christians or people we dislike, compared to them our maturity is fine.

The measure is Christ, and we cannot boast in anything nor should we

Our prayer life is to ask to be filled with God, to live and love like God does

To be filled is to say that it is not our capacity, but it is his capacity to fill us

To emphasize upon this Paul moves into the benediction or the ending of his prayer

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, (NIV)

There's something very powerful in just these 3 words "**Now to Him**" NIV

To him God himself who we are completely dependent upon

We can do nothing without Christ love given freely

We can do nothing without the Spirit giving the strength

We can do nothing until we kneel in our hearts and come in humility before the Father

We are utterly dependent upon God to himself

God himself is able to do more than we ever amass in how we ask or imagine

The boldest prayer or the greatest human imagination are not enough to capture how much power God can bring to any given circumstance

He is able above all abundantly, above all exceedingly, above all exclusively!

The beauty of what he is teaching us to do with our prayer life is to ask anyway to be strengthened, dwell, grasp, and filled with God Himself.

Prayer isn't about our health and wealth it's about his power and his glory

21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (NIV)

Life in Christ is not done in solitude it is done in community and relationship

Our prayer for groups, gatherings, services, or any places where we gather as believers is to be a place where we come together,

Where we grab hold of Christ's love, and we see that love so powerfully in experience or it's watching others experience Christ's love by being in fellowship.

It's about him and it's a glory given to God. utterly from generation forever and ever without end

Christ chooses to dwell not in stone churches but in living hearts

The Biblical experience of prayer is to come before God asking him to strengthen us, to dwell with us, to grasp onto Him and to fill us up and so that we experience how much Christ loves us.

