



Brought Near **TO BE** Built Up

STRENGTHENED WITH POWER

Gather

AS YOU BEGIN, PRAY TOGETHER.

ICEBREAKER QUESTION.

What's the most amazing thing you've ever seen? The aurora borealis, the Grand Canyon, the birth of a baby, or something else? Describe the experience.

READ GOD'S HOLY WORD.

Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 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, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 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, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Scripture Reflection

A SHORT SUMMARY OF KEY IDEAS FROM THE PASSAGE.

Paul kneels – and what he asks for is nothing less than Pentecost made personal and communal. He prays that we would be strengthened with power through the Spirit in our inner being, that Christ would dwell in us not as a guest but as Lord. This is not a request for improved conditions but for indwelling presence. The same Spirit poured out at Pentecost now presses resurrection life into the depths of the heart.

Opening the Word

WE RETURN TO THE SCRIPTURES AS GOD'S LIVING WORD TO US TODAY.

- Does anything stand out or surprise you from the passage?
- In the first century, people prayed standing. What does it suggest about the Apostle Paul's attitude and prayer that he was on his knees praying (v.14)?
- Paul's first prayer is that the Father would strengthen us with His power. This is the same power that Paul has praised throughout Ephesians. What else has Paul told us that this same power has done? (hint: 1:19; 2:5-6; 3:7, 20; cf. 6:10)
- Sadly, the Holy Spirit is a "familiar stranger" to many Christians. Despite the church being born due to the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, many churches today do not regularly invite the active work of the Spirit. What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Jesus? What does the Spirit do in believers? (Consider the relationship between the phrases "his Spirit in your inner being" and "that Christ may dwell in your hearts" in vv.16-17.)
- Greek has two words for "to dwell": *paroikō*, meaning to inhabit as a stranger, and the word Paul uses here, *katoikeō*, meaning to settle down permanently. How does this word picture help you feel the weight of this prayer?
- Paul's second prayer in vv.18-19 builds on the first: that we "may have power ... to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge." What is the paradox here? And yet, God is able to do "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (v.20)!
- What does Paul mean "that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (v.19; cf. Matt. 5:48, Col. 1:19)? Does that sound unbelievable?

Quotation

PAUSE TO REFLECT ON THIS THOUGHT.

“The Holy Spirit’s main ministry is to glorify Christ. He does not draw attention to himself; he points to Jesus. It is as if he is a floodlight, hidden from view himself, in order that the building he illuminates may be seen in all its beauty.”

John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*

Responding to the Word

WHAT IS THE SPIRIT SAYING TO US THROUGH THE WORD?

- Paul is confident to pray such an audacious prayer because he knows to whom he prays: the Father, from whom all families derive their name because He is the essence of a perfect father (vv.14-15; cf. Matt. 7:11). Are you confident when you pray? If so, are you confident because you pray the right words or length of prayer? Or because of good works? Or is it something else?
- In v.16, Paul prays expectantly because God answers prayers according to His glorious riches (a theme we’ve seen in 1:7, 18; 2:4, 7; 3:8). Do we pray according to what we think possible or according to God’s infinite riches and power?
- Our ability to know God grows as we are rooted and established in love (v.17; cf. John 15:9-17, 1 John). Do you think of knowing God as exclusively intellectual? How does experiencing God’s love and becoming people of love help us to know God more deeply? How do you feel invited to respond?
- The love of Christ is so “wide and long and high and deep” that we can never fully grasp it (v.18)! What are ways you can meditate on Jesus’ love each day?
- Paul prays that we would have power “together with all the Lord’s holy people” (v.18). He recognizes that in order to know the whole love of God, we have to do so alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ. How does living in community help you to know more of God’s love? What could this look like for you?
- Look at how Paul marvels at what God can do in v.20: not just what we *ask*, or *think*, or *all* we ask and think, or *more than* all that, but *immeasurably* more! And now that power is in us. In light of this, how “big” would you say your prayers are? What would it look like to pray in light of God’s bigness?

Invitations & Challenges

HERE ARE A FEW WAYS THE SPIRIT MIGHT BE INVITING OR CHALLENGING US TO RESPOND THIS COMING WEEK.

- One of the biggest surprises about this passage is that Paul is writing to Christians. He's not inviting skeptics to ask Jesus into their hearts (a misapplication of this passage and Rev. 3:20), but rather addressing people who he already repeatedly affirmed are "in Christ." So why pray this prayer? Paul must believe it's possible for a Christian to be in Christ and yet not experience the fullness of that relationship in their inner being. What is one way this week you can ask the Spirit to give you power to grasp God's love?
- On the first Pentecost Sunday, the crowds were "cut to the heart" by the message of God's love for them in Jesus. If this news – that God loves you and, through Jesus' cross and resurrection, offers you forgiveness and adoption into God's family – has stirred you for the first time, then hear Peter's invitation: "Repent and be baptized ... And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Friend, ask our Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and He will be yours!
- Practice of Jesus: Paul's prayer is that the Ephesians would know in their inner being the fullness of God's love. One core way Christians experience the love of Jesus is by meditating on the gospel. Christian meditation is, essentially, working out the meaning of Scripture and working this truth "in" to one's hearts. This week, put aside time each day to meditate on a Scripture passage. Begin by asking the Spirit to help you understand the meaning. Then, incline your heart to rejoice in this truth. Invite the Spirit to make this real to your heart. Glorify God and enjoy Him by grasping the vastness of Jesus' love!

Pray

Heavenly Father, we kneel before You now, in awe of the glorious riches available to us in Christ. Strengthen us with Your power through the Holy Spirit so that Christ's permanent presence in us would make us into people of love. As you root and establish us in Your love, Holy Spirit, help us to meditate on the wonder of the gospel. We want to know the width and length and height and depth of the love of Christ. In short, we want to be filled to overflowing with You. Father, would You be glorified as we, the Church, reflect your manifold wisdom, and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever! Amen.

Songs

THIS WEEK, TAKE SOME TIME AS A GROUP OR ON YOUR OWN TO DWELL ON THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL THROUGH SINGING OR LISTENING.

[Give Me Jesus](#) – Upperroom

[All Hail King Jesus](#) – Jeremy Riddle

[Come, O Spirit, Dwell Among Us](#) – Janie Alford

(the digital guide has YouTube links)

Daily Scripture Meditation

THEMATIC READINGS TO AID IN REFLECTING ON THE TRUTHS DISCUSSED TODAY WITH THE LORD THROUGHOUT THE WEEK.

Mon, May 25 | Genesis 2

Tue, May 26 | Numbers 11

Wed, May 27 | 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Thu, May 28 | Joel 2:28-32

Fri, May 29 | Acts 2

Sat, May 30 | 1 Corinthians 12

SERIES PLAYLIST

USE THIS LINK TO AID IN YOUR WORSHIP THROUGHOUT THE SERIES.

[Spotify Playlist](#) (also on the Small Group Guides page on the fpchouston.org website)

Going Deeper

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXPLORE THE TEXT AND IDEAS FROM TODAY.

[The Familiar Stranger by Tyler Staton](#) – A six-part introduction to the person and work of the Holy Spirit on RightNow Media.

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God by Timothy Keller – A gospel-centered introduction to what prayer is and how we can learn to do it.