

Ephesians

Transformed by Grace, Empowered by Peace

Study 11

Prayer for Spiritual Transformation

Ephesians 3:14-21

Ephesians 3:14-21 (NIV)

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 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, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

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

1) a) Fill in the blanks. According to the video lecture slides, fill in the following:

Source of Spiritual Transformation	Pathway to Spiritual Transformation
God's (His) authority	Christ to dwell in us
God's (His) Ability and Willingness	Experience his love
God's (His) Means - Spirit	His fullness

b) Discussion question. What is the difference between Paul's (Christian's) prayer and a Japanese amulet prayer?

c) Objective question. Choose the most appropriate answer. What does it mean to have Christ dwelling in our hearts?

A It means that Christ may be the controlling factor in all our decisions, attitudes, emotions and conduct.

B. It means that there is a mini Jesus camping physically in our heart.

“Thus there is a difference between having an opinion, that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgement that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness.”

Jonathan Edwards.

d) Reflection question. Rate from 0-10 how much you have grasped how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ for you and for the people around us.

0 = “I know it, but I don’t feel it.”

10 = “I feel it in my bones.”

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

e) Reflection question. Rate from 0-10, when it comes to attending Sunday service, serving the church, reaching out with the gospel or any church activities, rate your desires:

0 = Low desire “I have to do it...”

10 = Very high desire “I WANT to do it!”

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

f) Reflection question. Are you willing to pray this prayer everyday: “Lord, please increase my desire and trust for you to live through me?” until a change happens?

g) Discussion question. What’s the difference between seeing others through the lens of love/gospel vs lens of non-believers?

h) Reflection question. Take turns to read the other translations of Ephesians 3:14-21 below, if there is someone who can read the Chinese version then great, if no one can, then skip it. Reflect on what exactly Paul is praying for? What goal does Paul want to achieve in his prayer?

Other Translations of Ephesians 3:14-21

New Living Translation (NLT)

“When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.”

Today's Malay Version Bible with Deuterocanon © The Bible Society of Malaysia, 1996.

“Itulah sebabnya aku bertelut di hadapan Bapa. Dialah yang menyebabkan setiap kaum di dunia dan di syurga menerima sifatnya yang khas. Aku berdoa kepada Allah supaya daripada berkat-Nya yang berlimpah-limpah di syurga, Dia menguatkan batin kamu dengan Roh-Nya. Semoga Kristus tinggal di dalam hati kamu, kerana kamu percaya kepada-Nya. Aku berdoa supaya semua perbuatan kamu berakarkan dan berdasarkan kasih. Dengan demikian kamu bersama-sama umat Allah, dapat sungguh-sungguh memahami betapa luas dan panjangnya serta betapa tinggi dan dalamnya kasih Kristus, yang dengan akal manusia tidak dapat difahami sedalam-dalamnya. Semoga kamu mengenal kasih Kristus, sehingga kamu memperolehi sifat Allah.

Dengan kuasa Allah yang bekerja dalam diri kita, Allah dapat melakukan perkara yang jauh lebih banyak daripada yang kita minta atau fikirkan. Hendaklah Allah dimuliakan selama-lamanya di kalangan jemaah, melalui Kristus Yesus! Terpujilah Allah! Amin.”

Chinese New Version (Simplified)

“因此，我在父面前屈膝，（天上地上所有的家族都是由他命名的）求他按着他荣耀的丰盛，借着他的灵，用大能使你们内在的人刚强起来，使基督借着你们的信，住在你们心里，使你们既然在爱中扎根建基，就能和众圣徒一同领悟基督的爱是多么的长阔高深，并且知道他的爱是超过人所能理解的，使你们被充满，得着神的一切丰盛。

愿荣耀归给神，就是归给那能照着运行在我们里面的大能，充充足足地成就一切，超过我们所求所想的。愿荣耀在教会中和基督耶稣里归给他，直到万代，永世无穷。阿们。”

Takeaway

In Ephesians 3:14-21, apostle Paul tells the Ephesian church that he is praying for them to be strengthened by God through the Spirit, and that Christ will dwell in their hearts. He prayed they will be “rooted and established in love”, to be able to grasp God’s infinite love for us and to be filled with the fullness of God so that we can bring glory to Him. End the study by modeling this prayer! Use Ephesians 3:14-21 as a model to pray for your group.

Case Study

Case 1 – Prayer, an excerpt from the book

Where Prayer Becomes Real: How Honesty with God Transforms Your Soul

By Kyle Strobel

God is inviting us to a deeper life of prayer. Like marriage, prayer is not something we can “master” by learning the right techniques, the right words to say, or the right tone to take. We may need to learn these things, for the sake of being with our spouse well, but they won’t fix anything. Like marriage, prayer is growth within a union of love where we experience, at times, conflict or harmony between what we want and what they want. In marriage, we are called not to simple “fixes” but to a journey of love that will grow and develop as we enter more deeply in love and union. This, too, is the journey of prayer.

The problem was that we knew we were supposed to pray and would hear sermons, read books, and listen to others talk about prayer in a way we wished to experience it, and then guilt would drive us to once again wrestle with prayer. Prayer was something we knew we should do, and we did it as an act of obedience, but we failed to be honest about how difficult it was. Why? Because it didn’t seem to work like we wanted it to or expected it should. This made it difficult to face the fundamental fissure in our faith: prayer sounded good as an ideal but felt bad and confusing in reality.

You can pray, “Lord, look at how much I long for money and security in this world. Father, when I snapped at my wife today, what was driving that in me? Why do I long to be in control and have life on my terms? Lord, be with me in my anger, lust, and envy. Know me in these sins, Lord, and help me bring them to you.”

Prayer is not a place to be good, it is a place to be honest.

Prayer is not a place to perform, it is a place to be present.

Prayer is not a place to be right, it is a place to be known.

Prayer is not a place to prove your worth, it is a place to receive worth and offer yourself in truth....

If prayer becomes a place where the focus is on “doing it right,” then you won’t actually “do it” at all. If our prayer becomes a time when we perform, then we will judge it based on how well we stayed awake, how focused our mind was, or if we got through our list of things to pray for. If prayer becomes a place to pray about what we think God wants us to and not what is on our hearts, then we simply won’t do it. It won’t be real. Perhaps the deeper reality is that the heart knows when we don’t pray the truth, and we get bored by our cleaned-up fantasy.

1) a) Reflection question. Are there anything from reading the excerpt above that you can relate to?

b) Reflection question. Go around in a circle and rate how honest you are in your prayer life?

0- Very formal and calculated

10- Very raw and honest

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

c) Discussion question. Share some tips on learning how to approach God honestly.