

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE

A Study of Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians and the Ephesians

MEDITATE: *Ephesians 3:14-21*

Quiet your heart before the Lord. This does not necessarily mean that your environment needs to be silent, although this can be helpful. Set aside a time free from distractions to focus on the passage as you read and meditate on it.

These instructions may help you develop a method for meditating on our passage each week. You may want to incorporate all or some of these ideas, whatever is helpful.

- ❖ Read the passage, slowly and prayerfully asking the Lord to speak to you from his word. Take several minutes to mull over the passage.
- ❖ Read the passage aloud and again take several minutes to give careful thought to it.
- ❖ Listen to the passage being read aloud. You may want to have someone else read it to you, or use a Bible program such as biblegateway.com or YouVersion, a free Bible app.
- ❖ Read the passage in other translations.

Finally, consider the following questions:

What words or phrases stand out to me? Why?

What questions does the passage raise that I want to know more about?

MEDITATE

How high and how wide
How deep and how long
How sweet and how strong is Your love
How lavish Your grace
How faithful Your ways
How great is Your love, O Lord

from How High and How Wide
Music and words by Mark Altrogge.
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DIG IN: *Read Ephesians 3:14-21.*

1. Paul began chapter 3 "For this reason..." and then interrupted himself. Now in verse 14 Paul returns to the thought he started in verse 1. Look back at Ephesians 2:11-22. What compels Paul to fall to his knees in prayer to the Father?

Kneeling in Prayer

"As happened with the prophets of old who could not stand before the revelation of the glory of God, Paul's knees buckle in prayer. Commentators remind us that the Jewish custom was normally to stand for prayer, and that kneeling was reserved for moments of greatest emotion and homage as when Solomon knelt at the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 6:13). Seeing this new temple built of living stones of earthly beings evoking praise from heavenly beings, Paul kneels toward the Father. The apostle cannot stand before this grand expression of the great grace of the King of heaven toward all the nations of earth."¹

2. Even though Paul is overcome with emotion and humbled, he prays boldly to “the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name” (v. 15). What special significance would this name for God hold for the Gentile readers of this letter? (Eph. 1:4-5; 2:12,19-20; 3:6; 📖* Rom. 8:14-16)
3. What does Paul pray for in verse 16?

What is the goal of that prayer? (v. 17a)

4. What do you think are some implications of having Christ dwell in our hearts through faith (v. 17a)?
5. Paul continues his prayer in verses 17b-18. He asks that the Ephesians have power to grasp the extent of Christ’s love. What does he say will help them to do that? (v. 17b)
6. In last week’s passage, Paul talked about a mystery in which Jews and Gentiles are now heirs, members, and sharers together (3:6). In this week’s passage, how else does Paul want them to be united? (vv. 18-19)
7. What comes to mind when you think about...
... the width of the love of Christ?

... the length of the love of Christ?

...the depth of the love of Christ?

8. Paul goes on to pray that the Ephesians would “know this love that surpasses knowledge” (v. 19). The idea of knowing in this verse has to do with personal experience. What are some ways you have personally experienced Jesus’ love for you?

9. The climax of Paul's prayer is to ask for the Ephesians to "be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (v. 19).

a. In general, what does it mean to be full versus empty?

b. Reread this week's passage. What would it look like for the church to be truly filled to the measure of all the fullness of God?

10. Paul ends his prayer with an expression of praise to God. How does he characterize God in these verses? (vv. 20-21)

PAUSE TO WORSHIP

Re-read Ephesians 3:14-21. Take time to interact with the Lord about the passage.

“Once we’ve meditated to focus, understand, and remember, we will normally find our hearts inclined to worship. So, we pause to lift our gaze to the excellencies of Christ, to bend our eyes off of the world, to express thanksgiving and adoration when we pray. Meditation leads to delight when the Holy Spirit inclines our hearts to see and savor how glorious God is.”²

- ❖ How do I respond to the beauty I see in God’s will, work, and ways in this passage?

- ❖ In what ways do I see Jesus more clearly through this passage?

- ❖ Is there a song or hymn that comes to mind that helps express my response to the passage?

REFLECT & PRAY

- ❖ How can I take what I’m learning from this passage and make it my own? Is there something specific to believe, do, not do, be grateful for, etc.?

- ❖ How does this passage help me see myself and others differently?

- ❖ Pray the passage: Use the passage as a basis to talk to God about the things you are learning, seeing, and longing for as well as ways the passage speaks to your current life experiences.

*📖 Indicates passages for further study

¹ Chapell, Bryan, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2001), 152.

² <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-steps-to-meditating-on-your-bible/>