

Study Guide for the Week of May 25th

Passage: Ephesians 3:14-21

Prayer Guide:

This prayer guide is meant to help you facilitate a guided prayer time based on the discussion of the Word. You can be flexible in how this is used but we do want to pray in response to God's Word and collectively as a church for certain request. Remember, in communal prayer we are not a bunch of individuals having individual conversations with God and only taking turns doing so. We are having a communal conversation with God. Help remind people to "share the time" by being mindful of the length of prayers while also reminding them to pray as many times as they would like.

Facilitate through the following prayer topics:

- Since this week's passage is a prayer, use the passage to pray through specific things (example: that God would grant us to be strengthened with power in our inner beings through His Spirit, that will would be rooted in love, etc)

Collective prayer request this week: (this will feature a request for our church, city, or world that our whole church will be praying over. Encourage everyone to write this down somewhere or make a note and continue to pray for it each day)

- Pray for our mission partners around the world to be strengthened and able to endure, giving them opportunities to share the gospel and make disciples

Context and Main Aim of the passage:

Main Aim: In this passage, we get an amazing inside look into the way Paul prays for believers. When so many Christians struggle to pray, we should take note when God's Word sheds light on the specifics of the prayers of people like Paul. In summary, Paul is praying that the Ephesian believers would have the following experience:

Strengthened with power...
Christ may dwell in your hearts...
Rooted and grounded in love...
Ability to comprehend...
To know the love of Christ...
To be filled with the fullness of God...

The primary focus is that it is God's spiritual indwelling that gives believers what they need for power (to do things) and knowledge (to understand) resulting in the manifest presence (fullness) of God.

In 20-21, Paul ends with the main point. His heart is centered on God. He wants the Ephesians to know God with the utmost knowledge and be filled with the fullness of God. It only seems appropriate that he would end with exalting God as the receiver, subject and fulfiller of the prayer.

Context: Paul transitions to this prayer with, "For this reason..." Look back at the previous verses. Why is Paul offering this prayer? Two things stand out: 1. Paul is suffering. 2. Paul

knows that through Christ we have a bold and confident access to God in prayer. Paul fears the Ephesians may “lose heart” over his suffering, so he reminds them of God’s power, and of their access to that power. He then gives them this picture of his prayer on their behalf.

Potential Difficulties: How can you know something that “surpasses knowledge”? In the Greek the word order might be paraphrased, “To know with the utmost knowledge, the love of Christ, that you may be filled with the utmost filling of God.” Paul is relating knowledge and fullness. To know God in a true way is to be filled with God.

Supplemental Passages:

Other prayers of Paul - Phillipians 1:9-11, Colossians 1:9-12, 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.

Discussion Questions to Consider: each week use this set of questions (feel free to add to, re-order or take-away as needed) as a guide to discovering the truth of the passage and the application for our personal lives and missional family

1. What stood out to you as we read this passage? Were there any lightbulb or “Aha!” moments?
2. What does this passage tell us about who God is or what He has done?
3. Is there an example to follow, a sin to avoid, or a command to obey?
4. How does this passage reveal our need for the person and work of Jesus?
5. What would our lives look like if we believed and submitted to these truths, avoided these sins, followed these examples, or obeyed these commands? What would our missional family look like?
6. What in this passage helped you to see more of Jesus and the gospel? Or what moved you to love/appreciate him more?
7. What actions and beliefs do you need to turn from based on the truths from this passage?
8. What is something you sense the Spirit is leading you to do in obedience to this passage?