



THE WORLD GOD IS MAKING | LOVE BEYOND KNOWING (4)

October 4, 2026

Ephesians 3:14-21

PURPOSE

To discover and experience Jesus Christ in our midst
To cultivate mutually encouraging relationships
To participate in God's mission to the world

WORSHIP

PLEASE OPEN IN PRAYER

RESPONSIVE PRAYER — Psalm 147

Praise the LORD!

For it is good to sing praises to our God;

For it is pleasant, and a song of praise is fitting.

He heals the brokenhearted

And binds up their wounds.

He determines the number of the stars;

He gives to all of them their names.

Great is our LORD, and abundant in power;

His understanding is beyond measure.

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 3:14-21

READING

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

BIBLE STUDY

Commentary

We are continuing our sermon series through Ephesians called *The World God Is Making*, and this week our Community Groups are reflecting in particular on what it means to participate in God's mission to the world, which is the final aim of Central's vision for CGs. The phrase "for this reason" in verse 14 actually started back in 3:1. There Paul started to tell his Gentile readers the content of his prayers for them, only to break off to explain his ministry to them and their place in the mystery God had revealed to him. Specifically he explains that Gentiles are now fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of

the same promise in Christ that was given to Jewish believers (3:6), and that through the church God's wisdom is being made known even in the heavenly places (3:10). Only then does Paul return to his prayer. His intercession flows out of his ministry — in fact it is part of what it means to serve them (Colossians 1:9; 4:12). The content of the prayer itself repeats some of the main themes from the passage we looked at last week (1:15-19).

The prayer itself has a trinitarian shape. Paul asks that his readers be strengthened with power through the Spirit in the inner being (verse 16; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16), that Christ would dwell in their hearts through faith (verse 17; cf. John 14:23), and that they would be filled with all the fullness of God (verse 19; cf. Colossians 2:9-10). The pastor John Stott likened it to a staircase, each request climbing higher than the one before: strength, then love, then knowledge, then fullness. And in a letter so concerned with the unity of the church, we should be sure to understand that Paul is not asking for these things to be a private experience reserved for a few believers in Ephesus. He prays that they would comprehend these things “with all the saints.” Even the knowledge of God is something Christians come to together. At the center of the prayer is the love of Christ. Paul closely links the four dimensions of verse 18 with knowing his love: the breadth of this love extends to all nations and ranks, its length runs from everlasting to everlasting, its depth reaches those sunk in sin and misery, and its height raises them to glory. That love, Paul says, surpasses knowledge. What this means is that we can know it truly (but never in its totality) because it is not learned so much as it is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). And those who know it are filled with the fullness of God.

The passage ends in a doxology, and it is here that the missional thread of chapter 3 comes together. As one theologian has put it, God does not so much have a mission for his church as he has a church for his mission, and that mission is nothing less than to reconcile all things to himself in Christ (Colossians 1:19-20). That is why Paul's prayer for a people rooted and grounded in love is itself a missional prayer. Jesus said the world would know his disciples by their love for one another (John 13:35); therefore, a Community Group where the love of Christ is actually known and shared is a witness to a watching world. The same doxology gives us confidence to pray for those who do not yet know Christ, since the God we ask is able to do far more than we would think to ask.

1. Looking at the Bible

- Verses 14-19 contain a prayer. Take a moment with your group to list all the requests Paul makes in this passage.
- What does Paul say about God in verses 20-21?

2. Looking at Jesus

At Central we believe that all of Scripture points to Jesus. In other words, Jesus is the theological center of the Bible. Not only does every passage point to Jesus, but the grand narrative of the Bible also finds its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus.

- Why would Paul ask “that Christ may dwell in your hearts” when he is praying for Christians (verse 17)?

- Paul says we comprehend the dimensions of Christ's love "with all the saints" (verse 18). Why would he emphasize that?
- Is it possible to know Jesus independently, without being in community with other Christians?

3. Looking at our Hearts

- Why do you think that, with the fullness of God freely available to us, people instead often try to fill themselves up with the fleeting things of the world?
- What do you honestly expect God to do for the people on your "Praying for Faith" list? What does this passage say that God is able to do?

4. Looking at our World

- Paul gives God glory "in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations" (verse 21). Who handed the faith on to you? Who are you handing it on to?
- How does this prayer demonstrate the centrality of the church in God's plan for the world?

PRAYER

- Kneel together, as Paul did in verse 14. Pray verses 16-19 aloud for one another and for Central.
- In groups of three or four, share your "Praying for Faith" names, then pray for one another's lists.