

In Christ: Unclaimed
Ephesians 3
Small Group Discussion Guide

Opening Question (get everyone involved in discussion):

- If you learned tomorrow that you had won \$500 million, name one charitable cause toward which you would give money and one item you would spend money on for yourself.
- Today we're thinking about the fact that many of us haven't yet "claimed" all the boundless riches that Jesus has secured for us.

Read Ephesians 3:14-21 and then discuss the following.

- What, ultimately, is Paul pleading with God to give to his readers (including us)?
 - Answer: That we might have the power to *know* the love of Christ, which surpass knowledge
- Assuming that most of Paul's readers know *about* the love of Christ, what is implied in the verb "know" here? What is the difference between knowing something factually and knowing it experientially?
- On Sunday, Pastor Josh said, "When you live with the factual knowledge, but you're not really experiencing it in the core of your being, it's like living hand-to-mouth when you could be cashing in on \$500 million. Paul would probably say that spiritually, that's how most of us are living."
 - Have there been any specific breakthrough moments in your life, when you've gone from just knowing the love of Christ factually, to knowing it experientially?
 - Would you say that you are currently living in the experiential richness of the love of Christ, or that you're barely scraping by?
- In Paul's prayer, Pastor Josh identified four essential keys to experiencing the love of Christ. They are listed below, with a few questions for discussion.

1. Prayer

- In what way is prayer an implied component of this experience, based on vv. 14-19?
- Based on v. 16, why can we be sure that God will answer affirmatively when we ask for this experiential knowledge of his love?
- Would you say that your prayer life is more like a one-sided monologue or a two-sided conversation?

2. The filling of the Holy Spirit

- According to v. 16, it is the indwelling Holy Spirit who gives us the power to know the love of Christ. Discuss FF Bruce's description of this fact: "The ministry of the Spirit is devoted to making the presence and power of the risen Christ real to those whom he indwells."
 - Do you feel that you've had this experience of the Holy Spirit making the presence, power, and love of Jesus real to you?
- Have someone in your group read Galatians 4:6, and have someone else read Romans 5:5. According to these verses, how does the Holy Spirit enable us to experience the love of God?
- All believers in Jesus have the Holy Spirit in them, as we saw two weeks ago. But we are encouraged to continually *be filled* with the Holy Spirit (e.g., Eph. 5:18). How can we become more and more open to the fullness of the Holy Spirit?

3. Be deeply involved in the community of faith

- When Paul prays that we “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...” (v. 18), the implication is that our experience of Christ’s love will be more complete in the context of Christian community.
- By being part of this small group, you are already showing your openness to this essential aspect. In what ways has this group enabled you to experience God’s love more richly? Are there ways that this group could be more helpful to you, in experiencing that love?

4. Grasp that love personally

- The word “grasp” in v. 18 has the connotation of taking hold of something, or wrestling someone to the ground. What does it mean to wrestle the love of Jesus into your heart?
- If any of you have done this—wrestled the love of Jesus into your heart such that it changes the way you deal with a specific issue—share about your experience.
- Think about some common struggles that people have, such as worry, envy, need for approval, insecurity, etc. If you are struggling with any of these things, wrestle together as a group to see how the love of Christ might be applied to them.
- Pastor Josh said that the most important aspect of this grasping the love of Christ is to think about it through the lenses of the gospel—what Jesus accomplished for you on the cross. How does the cross shed light on the meaning of “how long, and wide, and high, and deep is the love of Christ?”

Closing thoughts/prayer:

- Is there one of these four components that has been largely absent from your life? How can you begin to incorporate it into your experience of God’s love?
- In vv. 20-21, the contemplation of the love of Christ moves Paul to an outburst of praise. Spend some of your prayer time praising God for the ways you have experienced his love.
- What other needs exist in your group? Spend some time praying for them.