



Ephesians 3:14-21 :: “Thriving Families for Generations” [3.24.24]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

Subject: Thriving Families for Generations

Object: Build Up Families by the Love of God

Thesis: The family of God, which consists of all believers, should seek to intentionally build up all generations with the power of God’s love through the gospel.

1) Power for Generations [14-19]

a. The Father of Love [14-15]

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,”

Paul the apostle begins this section in the humblest position any person will ever find themselves in; on his knees before God in prayer. He’s doing this not because he finds himself in a crisis but because his desire for the church to be empowered by God’s love is totally contingent on God doing a miracle and not on the efforts of His people. He calls God the Father “from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named”, referring to all those throughout history who either anticipated the coming Messiah before Jesus’ ministry or trusted in Christ after His life, death and resurrection. Here we see that “family” goes beyond human reproduction and survival; it’s God’s idea and His design. The ultimate fulfillment of the concept of “family” is His eternal family, the Church. This is a family that consists entirely of Christ and those who have been adopted into the family by grace through faith in His life, death, and resurrection. That’s why we are called to love and serve families.

b. The Power of Love [16-19]

“that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

If we want to love and serve families like Christ, we have to receive the same power He did and that He offers to us through faith: the Holy Spirit. God the Holy Spirit accomplishes this by allowing us to better understand Christ's love; Paul literally prays that we would "know the unknowable love of God". This knowledge of God's love causes us to be filled with His fullness, meaning we lack nothing that we need and are given an abundance of hope and joy. This knowledge of God's love is not simply head knowledge that can be gained through Bible study or listening to sermons (as important as they are!) but through actually interacting with our Heavenly Father through prayer, contemplation, and yes, listening to and hearing His Word. We seek God the same way we were saved by Him, through faith, and Hebrews 11:6 says that faith requires that you believe God exists, and that He rewards those who seek Him; you have to believe that He is not only your Father, but a good one who rewards His children when they seek Him.

So what is the purpose of being built up and building up families with the love of Christ? If it's all about salvation through faith in the gospel, what is the point of growth? The purpose of this power is glory.

2) Glory for Generations [20-21]

a. The Power Within [20]

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,"

God is the only one with the power to cause His family to thrive for generations. This power resides within us through the Spirit by faith in Christ; that same miraculous power that God utilized to create everything see and don't see is the same power that makes us more like Christ for His glory. Even more glorious than the creation of mountains or nature is the transformation of the human heart; rebuilding a sinful being into a Christlike child of God through the powerful process of sanctification.

Anyone who has adopted a child knows that adoption (like salvation) is only the beginning of the process of bringing a child into your family; the joy and glory of adoption becomes full when the child has been fully assimilated into the culture of the family.

Similarly, the process of becoming more like Christ, sanctification, requires us making margin in our lives so that we can be with our heavenly Father, just as we need to make margin to spend time with others. I understand that "making margin" may sound like white noise, but the effectiveness and purposeful of everything we do, including building up families with the love of Christ, flows from this reception of God's love.

This is the purpose of the transformative power of God; to bring Him glory and honor forever, from now until He returns to set things right once and for all

b. The Purpose of Power [21]

"to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

All of our efforts to edify all generations of God's family is for His glory and fame. If we really understand His love, we will want to glorify Him so everyone will want to experience His love.

Eternal life is so much more than the absence of pain, suffering, and death; it will be the be the experience of enjoying Him and beholding His glory forever. God's glory is not at all like some megalomaniac's pursuit of fame, but the account of His goodness and faithfulness.

The church, according to Paul, is the primary vehicle for this glory going out and bringing others to reconciliation. The purpose of God's power is not just so that we can "get through life", but for bringing others to life by making Him famous through our love and conduct which has been transformed by Christ.

Once you understand the love of God, you'll want to spread that love by building up families, both the earthly ones and the heavenly one. Understanding God's love is a miraculous work of the Spirit through faith in Christ; it takes humility to believe in God to receive the power of His love. This same power made all creation and the beings that fill it, but even more glorious is the transformation of a human heart. Today, let's humbly believe in Christ for this power, so that we may build others up as we have been recreated, reborn, and rebuilt by the love of God through Christ.

Study Guide Questions:

- 1) When you think of "family", what comes to mind? Who comes to mind?
- 2) In many ways, everyone is a product of their family or lack thereof; how can the church of Jesus Christ fill the gap of imperfect families?
- 3) How are you making margin in your life to commune with God through prayer, contemplation, and the Word? If you aren't, how would you like to start?
- 4) How is God's glory the ultimate and most effective motivation for anything we do?

Digging Deeper:

- 1) Here is a Bible Project video on Ephesians: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y71r-T98E2Q>
- 2) Here is a Bible Project video on God's unconditional love, known as "agape": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slyevQ1LW7A>
- 3) Here is Pastor David Guzik's commentary on this passage: https://www.blueletterbible.org/comm/guzik_david/study-guide/ephesians/ephesians-3.cfm?a=1100014

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationships with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a discipling idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

Pray and ask God to help you connect via audio, video, or text with a neighbor you haven't seen in person for too long.

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

1. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.