SESSION 6

RESIDENCE

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.
15 I pray that he may grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with power in your inner being through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love,
16 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God’s love,
17 and to know Christ’s love that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
18 Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us—
19 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

EXPLORING KEY WORDS

A All of humanity share God as their Creator and bear His image (Gen. 1:26-28).
B Paul’s prayer to strengthen the believers in Ephesus demonstrated the work of the three Persons of the Trinity in our lives.
C “Glorious, unlimited resources” (NLT, TLB)
D As Paul told the Corinthians, “we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). Our spiritual health is vital, and that strengthening comes from God.
E “Make his home” (GNT, NLT); Christ is not just a visitor in the lives of Christians but should both live and rule as the Lord of their lives.
F Christ’s love feeds our souls and anchors us in life’s troubles.
G We aren’t meant to live the Christian life in isolation but in community (Heb. 10:24-25).
H “Fullness of life and power that comes from God” (NLT); experiencing God’s presence and power in our lives
I “More than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dream” (The Message)
J The same God who is abundantly powerful is also at work in our lives, equipping us for service and fruitfulness for His glory.
K All we do should be done for God’s glory.
L Paul wasn’t speaking of a building but was referring to God’s people who make up the church.
1. PETITIONED (Eph. 3:14-15)
- Paul resumed his thought from Ephesians 3:1, declaring his humble prayer for his readers.
- He made his request to the Father, the One from whom all other families receive their name.

2. INDWELLED (Eph. 3:16-19)
- Paul revealed the contents of his prayer for his readers: that they would possess inner spiritual strength, deeper faith, abundant love, and God’s fullness.
- All of Paul’s requests point to Christ indwelling His followers.
- Emphasize that the three requests are manifestations of Christ’s indwelling the believer.

3. HONORED (Eph. 3:20-21)
- Paul ended his prayer with a doxology, declaring God’s majesty and the demonstration of that majesty in the church and in Christ.
- The church will bring glory to God.

SUMMARY STATEMENTS
God offers believers strength by Christ dwelling in us.
- Believers can strengthen others by praying for their spiritual growth.
- Believers are changed from the inside out by the indwelling Christ.
- Believers should honor God for demonstrating His majesty.
FOCUS ATTENTION

What reveals people’s priorities?

• Credit card statements, calendars, interactions, and interruptions all provide a glimpse into what’s important to people.
• Prayers reveal priorities. The content, frequency, and intensity of prayers indicate what matters most to us.
• We learn a great deal about Paul’s priorities, and consequently God’s priorities, from his prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

EPHESIANS 3:14-15

What compelled Paul to pray at this point in his letter?

• Paul returned to his original thought from Ephesians 3:1. He wanted God’s revealed mystery of reconciliation in the gospel to be proclaimed to unbelievers and realized in believers.
• Standing was the normal Jewish prayer posture. Kneeling indicated exceptional intensity. Paul felt strongly about what he was asking.

What’s significant about how Paul described God?

• Since God created all people for Himself, any person from any race can be part of God’s family. No one people group can exclusively claim God as theirs alone.
• Paul’s prayer wasn’t based on his own desires but on his knowledge of God’s purposes. He was praying according to God’s will.
• We must not arrogantly pray like entitled members of some exclusive club we paid to enter. We must humbly pray as broken people who have been graciously given places in God’s family.

EPHESIANS 3:16-19

What priorities do Paul’s prayer requests reveal?

• Paul desired that God’s Spirit permeate believers’ entire beings with power.
• One of Paul’s main priorities was that believers be transformed from the inside-out. This happens when Jesus resides and reigns within us.
• Paul wanted Jesus to indwell believers so that we’re empowered to comprehend, experience, and live out the magnitude of His incomprehensible love.

Why did Paul put such priority on believers comprehending God’s love?

• Knowing Christ’s deep love provides the fruitfulness and stability of a well-rooted tree and solidly-built house.
• We can’t know love in isolation. We can only comprehend it “with all the saints” (v. 18).
• We begin to grasp the immensity of Christ’s love when we accept the challenge of loving others in the church. When believers share their stories of God’s love, all gain a deeper appreciation of the vast dimensions of that love.
• Paul’s requests build on one another. When Christ resides and reigns in believers’ lives, we know and express God’s love. This results in experiencing the fullness of His presence and power in our lives and churches.

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

What made Paul confident that God would answer his prayers?

• Paul was certain that God uses His inexhaustible resources to answer His children’s earnest prayers for His will to be done.
• God’s love and power are not limited by human imagination. We can never out-dream what God desires to do for and through His people.

What was Paul’s highest priority?

• Paul concluded his prayer—actually the entire first half of Ephesians—with a doxology, which means “glory.”
• God receiving the glory and praise He deserves should be the end goal of every single thing believers do, say, and pray.

SUMMARIZE & CHALLENGE

What valuable lessons can we learn and apply about our prayers and priorities from Paul’s prayer for believers?

• The top priority in our lives and prayers should be honoring God rather than indulging ourselves.
• When Jesus resides and reigns in believers, we glorify God in our lives and in His church. We need to make it a priority to pray for spiritual transformation for ourselves and others.
• Boldly ask God to do far more in our lives, families, and churches than we can begin to imagine.
• Scripture is a powerful way to pray according to God’s will. Regularly pray Ephesians 3:14-21 for yourself and others.

Personal Challenge: Evaluate your prayers and priorities. Is your focus on helping yourself or honoring God? What can you do in your prayers to focus more on God’s glory? What priorities might you need to rearrange so Jesus resides and reigns in your inner being?
AN AIR MATTRESS ON THE FLOOR OR A PHOTO OF A HOUSE

Ask group members if they’ve ever stayed in an Airbnb®. If they’re unfamiliar with it, explain that Airbnb is an online marketplace where hosts list, and guests book, entire homes or just a bedroom in the host’s house. The name refers to air mattresses the company’s founders rented out in their apartment to make extra cash. Ask: How would hosting a stranger in your home be different than welcoming a loved one in to live with you? Explain that when Paul prayed “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph. 3:17), he was praying that Jesus that Jesus would permanently make His home in us.

Ask: How do we make others feel at home? Highlight that welcoming Jesus to dwell in our lives doesn’t mean we clean ourselves up for Jesus, but instead invite Him to clean out every corner of our entire being. We don’t confine Jesus’ presence to a few rooms but give Him access to work on every aspect of our lives until there’s no place we’re uncomfortable for Jesus to be and see. Above all, we make sure we’re not nonchalantly offering the Lord the equivalent of an air mattress in our hearts when He should be sitting on a throne.

Ask: What happens when Jesus is an honored permanent resident in our lives? The result of Jesus taking up residence in our lives, seated on a throne rather than sleeping on an air mattress, is that He fills us with inner strength, deeper faith, incomprehensible love, and full satisfaction in Him—and God receives all the glory. Ask: What can we do to make Jesus more at home in our lives?

AMEN

Since many of us were children, we were taught to end our prayers with the word, amen. You’ve likely also experienced the spontaneous amen during a riveting sermon or following the baptism of a new believer. While this is a churchy word that’s said all of the time, why do we say it, and where does it come from?

We first come across the term in Numbers 5:22 and then several times in Deuteronomy (Deut. 27:15-26) and then throughout the Old Testament. According to the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, amen is a transliteration of a Hebrew word signifying something as certain, sure and valid, truthful and faithful. It is sometimes translated “so be it.” In the Old Testament it is used to show the acceptance of the validity of a curse or an oath (Num. 5:22; Deut. 27:15-26; Jer. 11:5), to indicate acceptance of a good message (Jer. 28:6), and to join in a doxology in a worship setting to affirm what has been said or prayed (1 Chron. 16:36; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 106:48). “Amen” may confirm what already is, or it may indicate a hope for something desired. In Jewish prayer, “amen” comes at the end as an affirmative response to a statement or wish made by others, and is so used in the New Testament epistles (Rom. 1:25; 11:36; 15:33; 1 Cor. 16:24; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20).

In the New Testament, amen occurs often. We see Jesus say it often in the Gospels. As the Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary continues,

In the Gospels, Jesus used “amen” to affirm the truth of His own statements. English translations often use “verily,” “truly,” “I tell you the truth” to translate Jesus’ amen. He never said it at the end of a statement but always at the beginning: “Amen, I say to you” (Matt. 5:18; 16:28; Mark 8:12; 11:23; Luke 4:24; 21:32; John 1:51; 5:19). In John’s Gospel, Jesus said “Amen, amen.” That Jesus prefaced His own words with “amen” is especially important, for He affirmed that the kingdom of God is bound up with His own person and emphasized the authority of what He said.

Later in the New Testament, Paul (Rom. 15:33), Peter (1 Pet. 4:11; 5:11), and Jude (1:25) used the word. In their writings, amen is used as a way to affirm the truth of a statement, which is how it’s used in Ephesians 3:21.