

February 24/25, 2001

The Truth About Our Life in Christ
A Study in the Book of Ephesians
Steps to Spiritual Fulfillment
Ephesians 3:14-21
Study Questions

Opening Discussion

1. Share with one another your various spiritual journeys. Has it been all you thought it would be? Why or why not? Spiritually speaking, what made the “good times” good and the “bad times” bad?
2. If you as a group could sit down with a new believer and discuss three things he/she needs to know to succeed on this spiritual journey, what would those three things be?
3. What would be three pitfalls for this new believer to avoid?

Bible Study

1. Read Ephesians 3:1-21 to get the flow of the text.
2. Ephesians 1-3 has been filled with references to the Trinity. Go through these chapters and list all the references to the Father, Son (Christ) and Holy Spirit. Why is this important?
3. Paul’s prayer in 3:14-19 is one long sentence in the original Greek. He offers four “that” clauses which helps us organize the text. Identify each of the four “that” clauses in those verses.

We are calling those four clauses four “steps” to spiritual fulfillment. The reason for this is because they are not four individual points, but rather steps that lead from one to the other. You cannot go to step three or four until you’ve addressed step one and two. Keep this in mind as you discuss each step.

4. Step one is found in verse 16 identified by the first “that” clause. What is it? Define this step in your own words.

Paul seems to be saying that what His Spirit uses to strengthen our inner man is according to the glorious riches that belong to us in Christ. In other words, the doctrine of chapters 1-3 provides the first step which strengthens us.

The word “strengthen” means to fortify or invigorate. Understanding and believing these truths about our life in Christ is the first step towards spiritual fulfillment.

Take time to list all the “riches in Christ” we’ve studied in chapters 1-3.

Could this text be understood without having studied the previous chapters? What does this tell us about the danger of jumping into the middle of a book to study a text apart from the context? Doesn’t the writer assume you’ve read the preceding material?

5. The second step is found in verse 17 identified by the second “that” clause. Put this step in your own words.

The word “dwell” is key here. It’s in the continuous present tense, which means an ongoing way of life. The word “dwell” means to be at home, to take up residence. It is contrasted with the idea of being an alien and stranger (2:19).

Since Romans 8:9 states that every believer has the indwelling Holy Spirit of Christ, Paul is not talking about whether Christ is present or not. Rather he’s talking about whether Christ is “at home” there or treated as a stranger. Discuss the difference between staying at a motel and being at home.

The second step seems to be moving Christ from motel status to home status. What does this mean in daily life?

6. The third step is found in verses 17-19 identified by the third “that” clause. Put this step in your own words.

To “comprehend” the love of Christ means to grasp it. Why is this something we do “with all the saints”? Can this be done apart from the saints? Why or why not?

The term “know” in verse 19 means to know intimately or to experience the love of Christ.

7. The final step is in verse 19 identified by the fourth “that” clause. Put this fourth step in your own words.

Paul is not saying that you can hold all the fullness of God. Only Jesus could do that (see Col. 1:19). He is saying that our capacity can be filled with the fullness of God.

When most people think of the Christian life, what they want are steps 3 and 4. However, steps 1 and 2 are often neglected. Why is this?

8. In what way is Paul’s doxology in verses 20,21 an appropriate conclusion to chapters 1-3?

Application

1. List three practical things you can do to make sure step one is a priority in your life.
2. List three practical, measurable ways to identify if step two is present in your life.
3. Rewrite verses 20, 21 in your own words. Close your time by reading aloud what you wrote as a prayer to God in response to Ephesians 1-3.