



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond

V24 N2 January 9, 2022

A NEW DAY "Power Breakfast" Ephesians 3:14-21

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Personal God

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life..

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains – where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth."

Psalms 121:1-2



What does Paul ask God for believers?

The 30 Core Competencies were originally developed to define mission accomplishment. It's one thing to have a mission focused on discipleship or personal transformation, namely, conformity to the image of God's Son (Ro 8:29); it's quite another to have a working description of what a transformed disciple looks like in order to assess mission accomplishment. According to our initial assumptions, a growing comprehension of ten essential beliefs coupled with a growing engagement in ten essential practices would be used by the Spirit of God to development ten essential virtues in every believer. Since these virtues mirror the fruit of the Spirit as outlined by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control," they might serve as key indicators of spiritual maturity.

Given these assumptions, the 30 Core Competencies were intended to function as a biblical and practical theology of spiritual formation, which could then be used to probe texts, asking what each one taught about the various Competencies. As with biblical theology in general, texts have one interpretation – e.g., the meaning intended by the Bible's divine author, shared by the human author, and conveyed through the human author's words – but texts having one sense convey truth about more than one subject. Put differently, texts convey truth about more than one Core Competency. It's up to the preacher or teacher, or the reader for that matter, to decide which competency or competencies to focus on. This is easily illustrated. Take Ephesians 3:14-21 for example:

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 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, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

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

Its relationship to a number of different Core Competencies is obvious. For example, it touches on the *Central Practice: Prayer* by providing us with an example of how Paul prayed, and we might also pray. It conveys truth about the *Central Belief: Personal God*, namely, a divine person who is involved in and cares about our lives – one who answers Paul's prayer and ours, one with "glorious riches," who strengthens (v. 16), enables (v. 18), and fills (v. 19) "the Lord's holy people," and one "who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us" (v. 20). It conveys truth about the *Central Belief: Jesus Christ*, namely, God's Son and our Savior – who dwells in us, whose love for us surpasses knowledge and yet, is to be known or experienced by us. It conveys truth about the *Central Belief: Holy Spirit*, namely, the divine person who convicts, calls, converts, and changes us to be like Jesus – who dwells in us also and spiritually transforms us from the inside out.

If you read closely, you will see that Ephesians 3:14-21 not only conveys truth about these Core Competencies, but it also conveys truth about: the *Central Belief: Identity in Christ*, "I am significant because of my position as a child of God;" the *Central Practice: Worship*, "I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me;" and the *Central Virtue: Love*, "I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others," to mention but three others.

That said, when it comes to *The Scrolls* Bible studies, we generally focus on one Core Competency, the one thought to be central to the message of the passage.



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 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, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

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

Read in another Translation

14 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, 15 the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. 16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. 17 Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. 18 And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. 19 May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. 21 Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen. (NLT)

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Bracket "For this reason" in v. 14.
- Circle "kneel" in v. 14.
- Circle "family" in v. 15.
- Box "that" indicating *content/purpose* in vv. 16, 17, 19.
- Bracket "his glorious riches" in v. 16.
- Bracket "through his Spirit" v. 16.
- Box "so that" indicating *result* in v. 17.
- Circle "dwell" in v. 17.
- Bracket "rooted and established" in v. 17.
- Underline "wide," "long," "high," and "deep" in v. 18.
- Bracket "the love of Christ" in v. 18.
- Circle "know" in v. 19.
- Underline "fullness of God" in v. 19

What one word would you use to describe the TONE of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What word or idea stands out to you in this passage?

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the THEME of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. Verse 14 opens, “For this reason” (cf. v. 1). For what reason? (Hint: read 2:11-22.)
 2. Every family “in heaven and on earth” derives its name from God “the Father.” How so?
 3. To what does “his glorious riches” refer?
 4. Paul prays that his readers “be strengthened.” For what *purpose*, that is, to what end?
 5. Describe the role of the Holy Spirit in answering Paul’s first prayer request for his readers.
 6. He also prays that his readers “have power,” expressed as a twofold ability to do what?
 7. Explain how we can “know” Christ’s love that “*surpasses* knowledge.”
 8. Paul’s readers are to have this power “together with all the Lord’s holy people.” What do you infer from that?
 9. Finally, he prays that his readers increase in the “fullness of God.” Is this a “fullness” that God possesses or a fullness that God gives? Explain.
 10. **Discussion:** Talk about what it is about God that prompts Paul’s doxology in verse 21.
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Commentary On The Text

Ephesians 3:14-21 is a grammatically dense, difficult passage to interpret. In the first place it's *long* — seven verses long! Paul's letter contains eight such long sentences (cf. 1:3-4, 15-23; 2:1-7; 3:1-13, 14-19; 4:1-7, 11-16; 6:14-20). In the second place, Paul's long sentence is *complex*, containing numerous subordinate clauses strung together logically (e.g., "that," "so that"), numerous phrases modifying surrounding elements (e.g., beginning with "from," "out of," "through," "in," "of"), and obscure terms (e.g., "every family," "glorious riches," "inner being," "fullness"). All of this leads translators to divide the verses into various numbers of sentences for clarity sake (the NIV has divided it into two sentences by dividing it in the middle of verse 17) and to translate the obscure expressions differently. It leads, too, to the question of whether Paul is praying for one thing or for three things, or perhaps more. One commentator writes: "While we could understand the three 'that' (*hina*) clauses as parallel [vv. 16, 18, 19], so that Paul prays for three things (the Spirit's power, Christ's indwelling, and fullness), more likely Paul prayed for only one thing, the empowering of the Spirit. All else in the prayer explains the meaning and result of that empowering" (Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*, 178). If so, Paul's *petition*, namely, that God the Father "strengthen" the Ephesians through "his Spirit" in their "inner being" is stated in 3:16-17a. The *purpose* behind the petition, namely, that the Ephesians comprehend Christ's love and be filled unto God's fullness is stated in 3:17b-19. Paul closes with a *doxology* in 3:20-21.

The apostle introduces his prayer in verses 14-15 by explaining that it is in response (cf. "For this reason") to the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ described in 2:11-22. In a nutshell, Gentiles "are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (2:19-20) — and so Paul prays.

Verses 16-19 unfold logically following this pattern: *request* (v. 16); *result* (v. 17); *purpose* (v. 18); *result* (v. 19a); and *purpose* (v. 19b) (See Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 476). In verse 16, Paul requests God to "strengthen" the Ephesian Christians "with power." God is to do this in accordance with "his glorious riches" — he has the ability to do so — and he is to do this "through his

Spirit" — he has the means to do so. As a *result* (cf. "so that"), Christ may dwell in their hearts. But doesn't Christ already dwell in the readers' hearts? One commentator explains: "'Dwell' (*katoikēsai*) refers not to the beginning of Christ's indwelling at the moment of salvation. Instead it denotes the desire that Christ may, literally, 'be at home in,' that is, at the very center of or deeply rooted in, believers' lives. They are to let Christ become the dominating factor in their attitudes and conduct" (Hoehner, "Ephesians," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 631). The *purpose* behind Paul's desire to see Christ dwell in his readers' hearts follows in verse 18, namely, that the Ephesians may be able to wrap their minds around the immensity of Christ's love for them. The *result* follows in verse 19a. Having been "rooted and established in love," love being the soil in which they have been planted and the foundation upon which their lives have been built, "together with all the Lord's holy people," they are to plumb the depths of the Savior's love. Put differently, they are to grow in their comprehension of the breadth, length, height and depth of his infinite love. Note what one commentator says: "While the text is about individuals knowing, it is not about individualistic knowing. At every turn Christianity is a corporate religion, and only as people comprehend together can they experience what God has for them" (Snodgrass, 181). Finally in verse 19b, Paul ends on the *purpose* for knowing Christ's love, namely, that the Ephesian Christians might be "filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." As believers grow in their comprehension of Christ's love, the Holy Spirit transforms them into the likeness of God's Son (Ro 8:29). "We shall become like Christ, which is God's purpose and promise, for Christ is himself the fullness of God" (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, TBST, 139).

Paul closes his prayer with a *doxology* (vv. 19-20). He praises God "who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us." No human being nor any angel would have or could have imagined that Jews and Gentiles could be united to one another in the one body of Christ. But God's purpose "was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility" (2:15b-16), and he accomplished it through Christ Jesus. Glory to God!

Word Studies/Notes

v. 14 *For this reason* See 2:11-22. “**For this reason** is an expression that is repeated from verse 1 when Paul was about to pray. He then broke off before finishing the sentence in order to elaborate on the mystery, the body of Christ, and on his ministry of dispensing the mystery” (Harold W. Hoehner, “Ephesians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 631). “‘For this reason’ (v. 14) points back to the salvation and privileges described in chapter 2” (Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*, 177).

v. 14 *kneel* “Bowing the knee is a sign not only of prayer but also of reverence . . . Often Jews prayed standing (Matt. 6:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11, 13), so the bowing is an extra act of regard for God” (Darrell L. Bock, *Ephesians*, TNTC, 106). “It may also show heightened feeling and intent” (Snodgrass, 178).

v. 15 *every family* Cf. “his whole family” (NIV©1984). “Paul made a word play from the word ‘father’ (v. 14, Gr. *pater*). A father is the head of the typical family (Gr. *patria*). God is not only the Father of ‘the family’ in which Gentile and Jewish believers are one (i.e., the church)—He is the prototypical father. He is the ultimate Father over all families that have a father. Every human family exists as a ‘family’ with a father, because of God’s relationships as a ‘Father’” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Ephesians,” 2021 ed., 77-78, planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/ephesians.pdf). “It may be, then, that Paul is saying not only that the whole Christian family is named from the Father, but that the very notion of fatherhood is derived from the Fatherhood of God. In this case, the true relation between human fatherhood and the divine fatherhood is . . . one of derivation (God’s fatherhood being the archetypal reality, ‘the source of all conceivable fatherhood’)” (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, TBST, 134; see also Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 474-76).

v. 16 *his glorious riches* Lit., “according to the riches of his glory” (ESV); cf. “from his glorious unlimited resources” (NLT); “according to the wealth of his essential being” (Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 477-78).

v. 16 *through his Spirit* “In this prayer, Paul requested one thing: that God would strengthen his readers ‘in the inner man.’ He asked that God would provide this ‘power’ (Gr. *dynamis*) ‘according to’ His vast resources (‘riches’; cf. 1:18). The power comes to us ‘through’ the indwelling Holy ‘Spirit’ (cf. Phil. 1:19), who strengthens our ‘inner man,’ namely, our innermost being (i.e., not just our muscles but our entire person)” (Constable, 316).

v. 17 *dwell* “So that” indicates *result*, i.e., the result of being strengthened.

v. 17 *rooted and established* “To express how fundamental Paul longs for their love to be, he joins two metaphors (one botanical, the other architectural), both of which emphasize depth as opposed to superficiality . . . Thus Paul likens them first to a well-rooted tree, and then to a well-built house. In both cases the unseen cause of their stability will be the same: love. Love is to be the soil in which their life is to be rooted; love is to be the foundation on which their life is built” (Stott, 136).

v. 18 *wide, long, high, deep* “These measurements most likely describe . . . the immensity of the thing to be comprehended” (Hoehner, “Ephesians,” 631). “Yet it seems to me legitimate to say that the love of Christ is ‘broad’ enough to encompass all mankind (especially Jews and Gentiles, the theme of these chapters), ‘long’ enough to last for eternity, ‘deep’ enough to reach the most degraded sinner, and ‘high’ enough to exalt him to heaven” (Stott, 137).

v. 18 *the love of Christ* The Gk. text does not have these words (cf. ESV, NET, NKJV). “Most commentators supply as an object ‘the love of Christ,’ though some suggest other options such as ‘the wisdom of God,’ ‘the fullness,’ or ‘God’s purpose.’ But since verse 19 is essentially an explanation of verse 18, the goal is more likely that they will comprehend Christ’s love” (Snodgrass, 181-82). This may be too specific. “It is the vastness of God’s programme in all of its depth—the boundless vastness of salvation, pictured in many dimensions, and the things tied to it—that is being praised here” (Bock, 110).

v. 19 *know* “Paul desired that his readers would apprehend ‘the love of Christ’ fully. Yet he acknowledged that full comprehension of that love is impossible, because it is greater than mortals can conceive” (Constable, 79). “To speak of knowing something that ‘surpasses knowledge’ is to be deliberately paradoxical; but however much one comes to know of the love of Christ, there is always more to know: it is inexhaustible” (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT, 329).

v. 19 *fullness of God* “In the present context to be filled up to God’s fullness is to know the love of Christ. The fullness of the Godhead is only in Christ, and only through him is a believer made complete (Col 2:9-10). Though in Christ this divine fullness ideally belongs to a believer, Paul prayed that it might be experientially realized in each one (cf. Eph 4:13). Experiencing God’s moral excellence, perfection, and power would result in love between Jewish and Gentile believers” (Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, 490-91).



APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THE TEXT

God strengthen your people, so that Christ may be at home in our hearts — *in order that* we can grasp and *as a result* know the immeasurable depth of Christ's love, *in order that* we may be filled with your fullness.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



FAMILY TALK

When you're traveling on an airplane, one of the safety precautions the flight attendant always shares is, in the event of a loss of oxygen on the plane, put your mask on before focusing on your child's mask. While this may seem counterintuitive, you'll be in no position to help your child if you run out of oxygen yourself. The same is true in your spiritual walk. You can't disciple your child if you aren't seeking the Lord yourself. Think of it like this – God is a three-source power strip (God, Jesus, Holy Spirit, get it?) and you're a lamp. You've got to plug in to your power source in order to work properly. If you're not connected to power, your lightbulb won't turn on and you won't be able to shed any light on your child. So, the calendar flipped, and resolutions are being tossed around. What are you going to do to connect with God this year? Any goal requires intentionality and effort; you need accountability and a plan. Maybe you need to get connected in a community or home group this year or consider gathering a group of friends to read the Bible in a year. Now, what's your plan to pass this on and truly disciple your kids? Again, this requires intentionality, effort, accountability and a plan. Biblical principles don't transfer by osmosis. You must teach, train and talk about things of God in your home in order to disciple your kids. You are the best "discipler" of your child, the one God picked to share His Word. You can do this!

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Ephesians 3:14-21.

1. From this passage, where does power come from?
2. How does this power help those who believe in Jesus?
3. What is God able to do for His people? How?

What Do You Think?

God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit all have different roles in this passage. What are they?

What Do You Do?

Can you imagine spending a day without power? Spend one family evening unplugged. Eat dinner by candlelight and play board games. Talk about different sources of power with your family.

CORE COMPETENCY: Personal God

I believe God cares about everything in my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 31:3

"Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me."

KidPIX COUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- _____ I completed my Bible Study
- _____ I memorized this week's verse
- _____ I brought my Bible to church
- _____ I brought a friend



CHILD'S NAME _____

GRADE PARENT SIGNATURE _____

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)
I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)
I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)
I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)
I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)
I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)
I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)
I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)
I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)
I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)
I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)
I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)
I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)
I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)
I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)
I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)
I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)
I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)
I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)
I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)
I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)
I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)
I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)
I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)
I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)
I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)
I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)
I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)
I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)
I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)
I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than forty years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for 12 years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Central Bible Church in 1998. He and his wife Ruth have one son, Zach.

Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have four children: Elijah, Levi, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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**CENTRAL
BIBLE CHURCH**

8001 Anderson Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76120
817-274-1315
wearecentral.org