

# BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



## FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

*What God Wants for You*  
Ephesians 3:14-21

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

## Leaders' Responsibilities:

**Important:** Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

## Prior to this Coming Session:

### **Gathering Time Leader:**

### **Bible Study Leader:**

### **Worship Time Leader:**

Make copies of the verses given at the end of the worship time. If possible, make bookmarkers so that participants will be reminded of the verses.

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An interesting activity for children and even for youth would be to have them make or decorate pre-made bookmarks which have the verses to be memorized written on them. Encourage the children to memorize the verses.

### **Music Sources:**

**Come Into His Presence**, *The Worship Hymnal* #584; CCLI #18819

**Rejoice in the Lord Always**, *The Worship Hymnal* #586;

**The Greatest Thing**, *The Worship Hymnal* #527; CCLI#11500

# 1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

**Gathering Time:** (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

## ***What God Wants for You***

**Focal Text:**

Ephesians 3:14-21

**Background Text:**

Ephesians 3:1-21

**Main Idea:**

God empowers his people to understand his love and be filled with his transforming presence.

**Questions to Explore:**

What is God's desire for our Christian life?

**Teaching Aim**

That believers would:

- truly grasp how much God loves them.
- be filled with his transforming presence.
- bring glory to God through their lives.

**Gathering together:**

Sing the following or others of your choice:

**Come Into His Presence**, *The Worship Hymnal* #584; CCLI #18819

**Rejoice in the Lord Always**, *The Worship Hymnal* #586; CCLI#15692

**First thoughts:**

The question to explore today is "What is God's desire for our Christian life?" As we consider this question it causes us to frame our thoughts in terms of God's wanting wonderful things for us. Far too often throughout Christian history people have viewed God as only placing limits on what we could do. Today's lesson can help us understand the glorious hopes God has for us.

Think of someone you love very much. What do you want for their life?. You will probably include such things as happiness, good relationships, fulfillment in meaningful work, good health, contentment. God wants those things for us because He loves us. But however much our human mind can imagine, God has much more for us. Let us eagerly examine what Paul says God desires for us.

### **Closing the Gathering Time:**

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

# 2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

**Note to the Bible Study Leader:** Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

## Teacher Preparation

### *What God Wants for You*

#### **Focal Text:**

Ephesians 3:14-21

#### **Background Text:**

Ephesians 3:1-21

#### **Main Idea:**

God empowers his people to understand his love and be filled with his transforming presence.

#### **Questions to Explore:**

What is God’s desire for our Christian life?

#### **Teaching Aim**

That believers would:

- truly grasp how much God loves them.
- be filled with his transforming presence.
- bring glory to God through their lives.

#### **Introduction to your personal study:**

Far too many Christians practice an anaemic faith that settles for far too much of self and far too little of God. God has far more on his heart for his people than they could ever dream. In fact, we could never dream as big as what God wants to accomplish. Paul will pray in his prayer for the Ephesian Christians that they be “filled to the measure of all the fullness of God” (v. 19). How much room is left for self and selfish motives if we are “filled” with God? How many decisions are we going to claim to make under our own wisdom and power if we are “filled” with him? In essence, to be truly saved, we need to be saved from self and be filled with him instead. What God wants for you is more than you could ever ask or imagine (v. 20).

## Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

In the previous passage (2:13-3:13) Paul described how God’s purpose was to draw different kinds of people together into “one new man,” the church. This one body would be composed of both Jews and Gentiles. The Old Testament clearly taught that Gentiles were included in God’s plan and eventually could become a part of God’s chosen people. Old Testament foreigners who became a vital part of the covenant people (such as Rahab [Joshua 2] and Ruth [Ruth 1]) demonstrated that truth.

But what the Old Testament had not taught, however, was that when Jesus came, the Gentiles who believed on Jesus *didn’t have to become Jews* to become a part of God’s family. In Ephesians 3:1-7, Paul described this new concept as a “mystery,” something unknown that God had not revealed until now. Any who believe on Jesus are included in God’s family, are “fellow heirs” of the kingdom with Jews who believed, “fellow members” of the body, and “fellow partakers” of the promise found in Jesus. God’s purpose is that everybody has a place in His family. Sin builds walls to keep people out, but Christ tears them down to let people in (2:13-16). Sin makes distinctions to keep people separate, but Christ takes different people and makes them into a family (2:17-19). Sin withholds the good news so only certain ones are privileged, but Christ sends His people out so that everyone can hear (3:8-13).

In light of these profound truths, Paul prayed for these new Christians as a new body. Paul wanted them *to be* strengthened by God’s Spirit so that they may know intimately Christ’s presence and love in their midst. He prayed that they would come to know His love “the love that is beyond knowing” and be filled up with God himself, so that there is no longer any room for self. Such a great and loving God certainly deserves to be praised forever.

## Focusing on the Meaning:

### ***“Strengthened with power through his Spirit” (vv. 14-17a)***

This section resumes Paul’s thought of 3:1, interrupted in verses 2-13. In verses 14-21 he describes his prayer to God on their behalf. Verses 14-19 are actually one long sentence, punctuated with commas, descriptive phrases, and subordinate clauses. He begins with ***“for this reason,”*** pointing back to God’s salvation and its tremendous privileges described in chapter 2. In light of what God has done for these Christians, Paul offers his prayer to ***“the Father”*** of all. Because all things will eventually be brought together under Christ (1:10), then God must be the Father of every family in the universe.

The main focus of Paul's prayer is that the believers would be **"strengthened with power through his Spirit"** (v. 16). It is only by the Spirit's power that they could truly understand Christ's presence (v. 17) and love (vv. 18-19). Once these Christians truly know the indwelling presence of Christ and his immeasurable love, then everything else will fall into its rightful place. The Spirit of God is God's power at work in that person's life. In this case, Paul prayed that the Spirit would control their **"inner being"** (v. 16), and that their lives would reflect the Spirit's control, displaying Christ dwelling in their hearts (v. 17). This is two ways of saying the same thing – by the Spirit's work Christ takes up residence in a person's heart **"through faith."** It is only by the power of God's Spirit that one can truly and intimately know Christ's presence in one's life.

### ***"To know the love of Christ" (vv. 17b-19a)***

Paul continues his prayer by moving from Christ's indwelling presence to his matchless love. He used a garden image that they would be **"rooted and established in love,"** that their lives would be firmly planted in God's love from which they are nourished and find their strength for living. Being planted in such love, they would then be able to perceive, **"to grasp"** the immensity of God's love. God's love gives us the capacity to understand his love. Christ's presence in people's lives causes them to know they are planted firmly in his love. When people know without a shadow of a doubt how much they are loved it transforms their lives (cf. Romans 5:5).

Paul mentions four dimensions of the love of Christ that believers need to comprehend, **"how wide and long and high and deep"** (v. 18). In fact, he prayed that we might know the unknowable, comprehend the incomprehensible, obtain the unobtainable, **"to know the love that surpasses knowledge"** (v. 19), literally that they would "know the love that is beyond knowing." The human mind cannot fully comprehend how much God loves us through Christ Jesus. However, we should never be satisfied with an appreciation of his love that is less than the love he has bestowed on us. Only with his help and with the power of his Spirit can we even begin to grasp the dimensions of such love. This should be our life-long endeavour.

### ***"Filled with all the fullness of God" (v. 19b)***

When Paul looked at this church he wanted to see Jesus, with all the power that only God could have, with all the love for each other that can only be explained by God having done it, with the constant knowledge of Christ's love for them that will never end, and with **"all the fullness of God"** himself (v. 19), demonstrating his living and active presence among them. Paul wanted the people to get out of the driver's seat of their lives and let Jesus take control. He wanted them to quit trying to live under their own strength and live by the power of his Spirit. He wanted them to quit trying to love others under their own resources, but be so consumed and overwhelmed with the love of Christ, that all they could do was love Christ back, love his people more, and love the sinners that he loves and gave his life for. Paul prayed that they would quit being full of themselves and their own puny self-importance, and be filled up with Christ instead.



***“To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus” (vv. 20-21)***

Paul finished his prayer with a doxology, an expression of praise to God, calling for God to be glorified. In verse 19 Paul described the love of Christ as beyond understanding and in verse 20 he described the activity of God as beyond anything we could ever dream. God is ***“able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.”*** God’s thoughts and ways are way beyond ours (Isaiah 55:8-9); therefore, what he has designed and what he can accomplish through his people has not even entered our limited comprehension. But God never expects anything he does not first provide the power to accomplish, because he gives ***“the power that is at work within us,”*** the power of his Spirit. His power is the key (Colossians 1:29). Our personal resources are so limited, our finances, our strength, our wisdom, even our love for each other. We could never accomplish what God wants to accomplish through us under our own strength. The call of this doxology is for glory to be given to God ***“in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations”*** (v. 21). God wants to be glorified in the church – through his people that are known by his name, through his body of which Christ is the head, through the community of faith, the fellowship of the Spirit. God wants to receive glory through what he can do through people who had no resources to save themselves but have been brought by his saving power into a new life and into a loving community.

**Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:**

Your goal as the study leader should focus on the clearly stated “Teaching Aim”:

What God wants from each of you is:

- to truly grasp how much God loves you.
- to be filled with his transforming presence.
- to bring glory to God through your lives.

**For Personal Reflection:**

**What have I learned from this study?**

**What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?**

**What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?**

## **Bible Study Plan** (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

### ***What God Wants for You***

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

**Begin by helping the group locate the *Focal Text* in their Bibles. Also, share with them the *Main Idea* to be learned from the Scriptures, and the *Questions to be Explored* by the group.**

#### **Focal Text:**

Ephesians 3:14-21

#### **Background Text:**

Ephesians 3:1-21

#### **Main Idea:**

God empowers his people to understand his love and be filled with his transforming presence.

#### **Questions to Explore:**

What is God's desire for our Christian life?

#### **Teaching Aim**

That believers would:

- truly grasp how much God loves them.
- be filled with his transforming presence.
- bring glory to God through their lives.

#### **Connect with Life:**

As the group gathers, ask: Can anyone describe an event they experienced that took time to comprehend fully what happened (e.g. a tragedy, a major life decision, a move to a new location, a job change?)

In today's passage Paul prayed that the Ephesian Christians would be able to know the unknowable, to comprehend something that is beyond comprehension. Only through the power of God's Spirit can we truly comprehend the immensity of God's love on our

behalf. We could spend the rest of our lifetimes, if not all eternity, pondering the full implications of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus.

State: “God empowers his people to understand his love and be filled with his transforming presence. So, what would God’s desire be for our Christian life?”

## **Guide the Study:**

Give a brief overview of the background based upon the teacher notes. Explain that verses 14-19 are one extended sentence in the original text. In verse 14, Paul picks up on the thoughts of chapter 2 that he interrupted in 3:1.

### **1. God wants you to be strengthened with the power of his Spirit (vv. 14-17a).**

Have someone read verses 14-17a.

Ask: “How does Paul describe God in verses 14-15?”

Pose this question: According to verse 16, where does God pray that we would find power?” [through his Spirit]

Explain that the Spirit of God is God’s power at work in that person’s life.

Question the group:

“If we are strengthened by his Spirit in our ‘inner being,’ then who would truly be in control of our lives?” [his Spirit]

“Whose presence would be displayed in our life (v. 17a)?” [Christ’s]

“How is this accomplished (v. 17a)?” [through faith]

### **2. God wants you to be consumed with the greatness of Christ’s love (vv. 17b-19a).**

Have someone read verses 17b-19a.

Ask, “What kind of image do the terms ‘rooted’ and ‘grounded’ picture?” [a gardening image]

“According to verse 17, where should our lives be rooted and established?” [in his love]

“What would the soil of God’s love provide for our lives?” [strength, life, nourishment, stability]

“According to verse 18, what will the power of God’s Spirit enable us to comprehend?”  
[the immensity of the love of Christ]

“Will we be able to comprehend his love fully (v. 19)?” [no, it ‘surpasses knowledge’]

Explain: The human mind cannot fully comprehend how much God loves us through Christ Jesus. However, we should never be satisfied with an appreciation of his love that is less than the love he has bestowed on us. Only with his help and with the power of his Spirit can we even begin to grasp the dimensions of such love. This should be our life-long endeavour.

### **3. God wants you to be filled with God himself (v. 19b).**

Have the group look at the final phase of verse 19.

Ask, “What was Paul’s final prayer for the church here?” [to be filled with all the fullness of God]

“If they were filled with God, whose presence would they demonstrate by their actions?”

Who would be in control of their lives? Whose strength and power would they display?

Whose love would they exhibit to others?”

Ask, “If our group was ‘filled with all the fullness of God,’ what difference would we see in our present lives?”

### **4. God wants you bring glory to him (vv. 20-21).**

Have someone read verses 20-21.

Ask, “According to verse 20, what is God able to do through us?” [more than we could ever ask or imagine]

“If this is the case, how much might we limit God in how we pray and what we ask for?”

Have someone look up and read aloud Isaiah 55:8-9.

Encourage an answer for this question: Where should we place our trust and where should we seek the guidance for our lives.

Encourage answers for the following:

“According to verse 20, how does God do his work through us?” [according to his power at work within us]

“Does God ask anything of us that he does not first give the power to do?”

“According to verse 21, who deserves all the glory?” [him]

“Where does God seek to be glorified?” [in the church and in Christ Jesus]

“How long does God deserve to be glorified?” [throughout all generations, forever and ever]

### **Encourage Application:**

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

In light of what we have studied today in God's word:

- 1. What would God have me believe?**
- 2. What would God have me do?**
- 3. Is there a promise here I need to claim?**
- 4. Is there an example here I need to avoid?**

**Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time.** Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

# Youth!!! Take Ten

## Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

### ***What God Wants for You*** **Ephesians 3:14-21**

**A youth will lead the following activity and comments.** No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

#### **What God Wants—What You Want**

The teaching aim for today is that believers would:

- 1. Truly grasp how much God loves them.**
- 2. Be filled with his transforming presence.**
- 3. Bring glory to God through their lives.**

OK. Now discuss among yourselves how teens can bring glory to God through their lives.

How important is it that the first two concepts – grasping how much God loves them and being filled with his transforming presence – are essential to being able to bring glory to God through their lives.

# 3

Copy this section for the Worship Time leader.

## Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)

### ***What God Wants for You*** Ephesians 3:14-21

#### **Beginning the Service:**

The Greatest Thing, *The Worship Hymnal* #527; CCLI#11500

#### **Offering:**

#### **Praying for the World:**

Most of Tel Aviv's (the ancient biblical city of Joppa) population of 400,000 is made up of Muslim Arabs, "Christian" Arabs and Jews. Christian believers comprise only 1 percent of the people. The city has beautiful beaches and modern malls as well as a very glitzy night life. But there is a dark side to the city. People escaping persecution in third-world countries often wind up on the streets where drugs, prostitution, and human trafficking are all on the rise. Whether prosperous or on the streets, there are many desperate people in Tel Aviv. Pray that many may open their hearts to a richer and more abundant life in Jesus the Messiah.

#### **Sharing Guide:**

**This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.**

### **His Mighty Power**

The concept of power is in the news every day of the world. We hear of military power, political power, electrical power and the power of nature to name a few of the aspects of power which hold our attention. Recent news stories have focused on men who had

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power abusing that power by taking advantage of women or children in sexual ways. Even in a culture with broad acceptance of sexual freedom, this misuse of power is abhorrent.

Today's Scripture spoke of a mighty power which is seldom in the news and which is seldom understood and valued by the people to whom it is available.

Paul wanted the new Christians *to be* strengthened by God's Spirit so that they might know intimately Christ's presence and love in their midst. He prayed that they would come to know His love "***the love that is beyond knowing***" and be filled up with God himself.

***I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being (Ephesians 3:16)***. Paul wrote to the early churches indicating that his prayer was that they would be strengthened with power. That power would come from the Holy Spirit and it would be experienced in the "inner being".

In the world of reason of which we have been a part for many years, the concept of the "inner being" may leave us with feelings of discomfort. Even postmodern thinkers who are less oriented to reason and more concerned with relationships may not know how to acknowledge the 'inner being' of self.

Parker J. Palmer, a well-known educator in the United States, writes about the inner self or soul in his book *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life*. (Palmer, Parker J. *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (2004) San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass). Palmer says "But we live in a culture that discourages us from paying attention to the soul or true self- and when we fail to pay attention, we end up living soulless lives" (pp. 34-35). He feels two views hinder our understanding. One is "secularism" which holds that we arrive in the world not as unique individuals but as malleable raw material that receives the imprint of the gender, class, and race into which we happen to be born. In this view there is no place for soul – a core of created selfhood. The other influence, surprisingly, is "moralism" which regards all concern for self as "selfish".

We may counter secularism as a philosophy with our understanding of God's creative grace in our lives as described by the psalmist ***For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful I know that full well.*** Psalm 139 13-14. We feel awe as we contemplate these words. You created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb; I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

We have more difficulty with finding a balance between a concern for self which is "selfish" and a need to attend to the "inner being" to which Ephesians Chapter 3 refers. Selfishness is certainly a part of our lives. The need to die to this selfishness is real. Christ said ***and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy***



**of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”** Matthew 10:38-39.

However, it may be that as we have tried to die to self we have substituted activity (often very positive activity) for attention to the inner being. Palmer is concerned that “our inner life cannot illuminate the work we do in the world” (p. 44)

The entire chapter 13 of John speaks of abiding in the vine. This abiding is a dependence on the Spirit in every aspect of our life. **He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.** John 15:5.

In Galatians Paul will speak of the fruit of the Spirit **But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control** Galatians 5:22-23. Although these are expressed in outward acts, they are attitudes of the inner being. They are gifts of the Spirit to us and they are given as we wait quietly before him.

The book of Ephesians is filled with practical admonitions for living the Christian life. But Paul returns again and again to the role of the Holy Spirit. **Be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ** Ephesians 5:19-20. This indicates an inner life spilling out in worship which blesses others.

Another example of Paul’s desire for the early Christians is found in Ephesians 6:10 **Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.**

That verse was the theme for a youth camp held a number of years ago during which many youth and their leaders were “powerfully” impacted to be strong and to realize that strength came from the Holy Spirit. That camp and others which followed led many young people into lives of service. For many years, the youth of that camp, now adults, have donated hours out of their busy lives to teach other young people to be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Power and the “inner life” do not always seem to go together. Yet the strong inner life which produces **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control** is directly related to the work of the Holy Spirit in our life. It is through his power that “self” which is focused only on one’s own concerns becomes strong enough to care about others.

Listen again to the beautiful verse found in Ephesians 3:16 **I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.**

### **Call to Commitment:**

Say together prayerfully and meaningfully.

***Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Ephesians 6:10***

***I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being. Ephesians 3:16***

### **Concluding the Service:**

Allow a few minutes of time for participants to begin to memorize these verses. Encourage memorization to continue throughout the week.

Make copies for participants. If possible, make bookmarkers with the scripture written on it as reminders of the verses.

***Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Ephesians 6:10***

***I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being. Ephesians 3:16***

***Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Ephesians 6:10***

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