



Meeting Notes: Ephesians 3: Understanding the Love of Christ  
(January 18, 2017)

These notes capture our January 18, 2017 meeting. We opened our meeting in prayer and then began our evening. Topic notes may not be in the order discussed during group, and they are not intended to cover everything. They are intended as highlights to capture the essence of our evening. General notes follow each discussion topic. Documents used or created during this meeting are attached.

**Current Vision:** “2017 – The Year of Learning how to Walk: Putting on our Shoes of the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace”

**Scripture Reference:** Ephesians 2:10 – “For we are of God’s making, created in union with the Messiah Yeshua for a life of good actions already prepared by God for us to do” (CJB).

**Our approach to our study:** Since Ephesians is a letter, we are approaching it as a form of communication, which means, there’s a **messenger** (the apostle Paul), a **message** (what we’re seeking to discover), and an **audience** (the believers in Ephesus). Thus, we are looking at “What did the apostle Paul say?” and not “What does it mean to me?” This approach helps us put Scripture back into its proper context.

**Discussion Topic: Understanding the Love of Christ.** The goal was to take a closer look at the width, length, depth, and height of the Messiah’s love contained in Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 3:15-20 (CJB).

- **Examining the verses (Ephesians 3:16-20).** To keep the text about comprehending Messiah’s love in the context it was shared, we used the white board to examine the entire prayer. We looked at both the CJB and NKJV. Unless otherwise noted, verses are from the CJB.
  - **Treasures of His glory (v16):** First, we looked at the words *treasure* and *glory*. The original word translated *treasure* relates to “*wealth (as fullness)*,” and *glory* relates to “*honour praise worship*.”<sup>1</sup> Next, we substituted the definitions into the original verse: “I pray that from the [*wealth (as fullness)*] of his [*honour praise worship*] he will empower you with inner strength.” Here are some of our conclusions:
    - When the Spirit of God empowers us with inner strength (wealth/fullness), we have **no lack**.
    - When we lack **trust**, God’s inner strength is not available to us.
    - There’s a difference in **walking by faith** (having confidence that

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<sup>1</sup> Strong’s Concordance for iPad

comes from His Spirit) and **walking by sight** (having confidence in our knowledge based on what we see or what we believe).

- **Takeaway.** Our level of trust directly impacts our ability to receive inner strength from the Spirit of God, which affects whether we walk by faith or by sight.
- **Messiah lives in our heart through trusting (v17).** Since Messiah (Christ) is the Word made flesh, this verse reminded us of the parable of the sower and the seed, which teaches about the condition of our heart when we hear the Word. Here are some of our nuggets:
  - **The soils summarized (Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8):**
    - **Wayside.** When we lack understanding, the devil steals the Word from our heart.
    - **Rocky.** When we lack roots, we fall during times of temptation.
    - **Thorny.** The cares, riches, and pleasures of life choke out the Word.
    - **Good.** We persevere to produce mature fruit.
  - **Being rooted and founded (v17) or grounded (NKJV).**
    - **Rooted.** Part of the definition for *rooted* is “to render firm.” It is when the soil of our heart is rocky that we don’t develop roots for the seeds of the Word. In this state, we tend to look at life in terms of “How does this impact me,” instead of “What might God be doing in the situation,” or “How can I glorify God in the circumstances?” Consequently, we likened being rooted to knowing the Father has our best interest in mind, no matter what! **Takeaway.** Whether or not we’re rooted will impact our perspective on our circumstances.
    - **Founded (Grounded).** Regardless of which word used, we concluded, to be grounded, we have to have roots AND our foundation has to be love.
  - **Other nuggets from v17.**
    - **Past experiences affect how our heart responds to our circumstances.** We looked at a specific challenge in our lives to examine how in one circumstance our heart can be like the wayside, but in another it can be good ground. We

discovered how the Lord's faithfulness in one experience might not necessarily translate to another, especially if we lack the understanding we need. For instance, in our example, we have trouble trusting the Lord with our finances, but because He's healed us before, we were able to trust Him when we needed healing again. **Takeaway.** Trusting Christ in one set of circumstances does not necessarily mean we will trust Him in all circumstances!

- **How to overcome our lack of trust**
  - Know and understand He will do what His Word promises.
  - Don't freak out when we are tested – believe!
  - Continue to trust Him no matter what we see!
- **Trusting.** We can either live where life has to be our way and about us OR we can die to self and live for Him, seeking to glorify Him and advance His Kingdom. Or, as Jesus said, "Not my will, but thy will be done!"
- **Comprehend with all the saints (v18 NKJV).** One definition for the original word translated *comprehend* is "to take eagerly;" therefore, comprehension requires action on our part! And, within the context of this passage, what we're trying to eagerly possess is how much Christ loves us! This led to us taking a more in-depth look at each of the words the apostle Paul used: width, length, depth, and height.
  - **Characteristics of Christ's love:**
    - **Width (also known as breadth)** goes from side-to-side, which suggests great extent.
    - **Length** goes from end-to-end. The original word from which *length* was translated comes from another word that means "great."
    - **Depth** goes from the top or surface to the bottom, which suggests something being "profound," or a more commonly used phrase is, "That's deep!"
    - **Height** goes from the base to the top or from the head to the foot. The very definition includes elevation and to be exalted.
  - **The volume of Christ's love.** Since length, width, and height are

all used to calculate volume, these words created the image of how much space something takes up. This led us to ask ourselves, “How much space in my heart does Christ’s love take up?” Here are few nuggets from that discussion:

- **With ALL.** Deuteronomy 6:5 teaches we are to love the LORD with ALL our heart, ALL our soul, and ALL our strength AND Proverbs 3:5-6 teaches we are to trust in the LORD with ALL our heart. (NKJV). Jesus even reiterated the command to love the LORD our God with ALL our heart, ALL soul, and ALL our mind in Matthew 22:37. Thus, our conclusion from Scripture is Christ’s love for us is ALL encompassing. **Takeaway.** Christ love engulfs us and it has no end!
- **Heart and mind.** We discussed how when our heart takes over, sometimes we just don’t stop to think. Instead, we respond from whatever wound is driving us. However, the apostle Paul prayed for us to “know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that [we] may be filled with all the fullness of God (v20 NKJV). Therefore, when we went back to Proverbs 3:5-8 where we are told to not lean on our own understanding, we noticed a connection between the heart and the mind. **Takeaway.** Will we walk by sight (what we see and think in our mind) or will we walk by faith (the seeds of the Word we believe in our heart to be true)?
- **Experience or faith.** We asked ourselves, “What can I lack if I am filled with ALL of His fullness?” Since there truly are no words that can explain Christ’s love for us, we can only find ourselves lacking when we place faith in our experience over faith in His love. Since faith and love seem so connected, we also asked ourselves, “How much space does my faith fill in my heart?” For, we truly cannot judge His love for us through our heart. Instead, we have to envision His love for us through our faith in Jesus on the Cross! Then, we can understand what we go through on behalf of others. **Takeaway.** When our faith is in Jesus and what He did, our faith is in the Cross of Christ and not in our circumstances!
- **Other tidbits from the night.**
  - **Free will.** A continual stumbling block is the concept of free will as it relates to others. Someone else’s free will can make it difficult for us to trust the Lord, because we are hoping for--expecting even--a certain outcome that will be in our favor. However, if the Lord controlled everyone else’s free will, He would also have to control ours, which we would not like, because it takes away our option to love Him. **Takeaway.** Each of us has to be free to love the Lord or

not according to our own free will.

- **Take up my cross.** We noted life would be a lot easier if we would have faith the Lord is going to take care of something rather than for Him to have to put us through the experience! Talking about how experience impacts us led to my reading, *Take Up My Cross* (see attached). I had everyone close their eyes so they could allow their imagination to help them experience the words. Even though we have read this during small group before, tonight was the night for those present to hear it.

**Next Meeting:** We will discuss Grace and the Holy Spirit.

**Closing:** We closed our meeting in with a time of worship and need-specific prayer for the challenges that were lifted up, for the group overall, and as the Holy Spirit led.

*If you have questions, comments, or concerns about information contained in this document, or would like to be added to or removed from the email distribution for the meeting notes, please email us at [wow2@wow2women.com](mailto:wow2@wow2women.com) or complete a Contact Form on our site, [www.wow2women.com](http://www.wow2women.com).*



## **ATTACHMENT: TAKE UP MY CROSS<sup>2</sup>**

You are faced with a decision. You are having a Cross experience. Your body is the stake; the choice you must make is the Cross. God's will is on the right side of the Cross; your will is on the left side of the Cross. The fire that tries man's soul burns beneath you. Your spirit reaches with one hand and grabs God's will. Your soul reaches with the other hand and grabs your will. As you hang above the fire, you find yourself having a hard time holding onto both ends. Your muscles begin to burn from the pain. The suffering begins. You are not willing to let go with either hand, so the pain intensifies. How do you make it stop? You release the grip of one hand.

You choose to hold onto your will. God's will is still there attached to the Cross. Wait. What else do you see? There is a slide that goes down into the flames. You get on and travel to the bottom. The fire begins to consume you. Your flesh begins to burn. The pain increases. You can stand it no longer. You must escape this suffering. You search and search, but there is no way out. You look up. You see a rope. You grab hold and climb back onto the Cross seeking some relief from your circumstances. You continue to do this, time and time again, thinking, sooner or later you will find the path out. It never happens. Each time, your strength fades. One day, you decide you must make a different choice.

You are back on the Cross. You let go of your will to choose God's will. Your will falls to the ground and is consumed in the flames. You realize you had to sacrifice it to

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<sup>2</sup> This document is also located at <http://nebula.wsimg.com/5f9f4dc9a9824b0f7ba3d2d2f283db3d?AccessKeyId=C8B198CB1549CA3931D1&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>. To retrieve, please copy and paste the link into our web browser.

God in exchange for His will. All of a sudden a ladder appears before you. You place your hands and feet on the ladder. You climb higher and higher, further and further away from the flames. When you reach the top, you find rest with the Lord. He tells you to look down. He shows you others on their Cross. He has you watch as they go from the Cross to the flames and back again. As you watch, your heart begins to burn with compassion. You hurt for them, because you understand what they are going through. You cry out to the Lord, "Help them, Jesus! They are suffering so. It hurts. I know. I was there. Please, Jesus. Help them." He looks to you and tells you, "That is what I commissioned you to do." "I understand now, Lord."

So, what does it mean to take up our Cross and follow Christ? It means understanding the purpose of our Cross experience is to get rid of what is in us that hinders our relationship with God. That is our sacrifice. But, the experience does not end there. It is not just for us. It is also for others. Jesus did not go to the Cross for Himself. He went so we could be reconciled to our heavenly Father. We should not go to our Cross for ourselves. Our purpose should be reconciliation! That is our gift - helping others to reconcile their relationship with Jesus. Ultimately, it cannot be about what we can get, but about what we can give. And, we cannot give a gift worthy of our Father until we have taken up our Cross to follow Christ.

What choice will you make today?

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This was originally the heart of an essay done for a class while attending Bible College. It was turned into a personal experience for Women of Worship, Women of Witness Bible Study in our April 24, 2013 Meeting.