

WEEK 6

MADE ALIVE

The Book of Ephesians



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WEEK 6
FEBRUARY 12, 2024



CHURCH IN THE SQUARE

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EVERY DAY ...

... A **PASSAGE** TO READ,

... SOME **COMMENTS** TO CONSIDER,

... THREE **QUESTIONS** TO ASK,

... A **PRAYER** TO PRAY.



WEEK 6

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DAY 1

EVERY FAMILY'S FATHER

First read Ephesians 3:14-15.

God's central identity is all about relationship. Before he was Creator or Savior, God was Father (see John 17:24). The Trinity is the eternal community--whole and harmonious within himself. Among other things, the Father shares his power with the Son and Spirit.

Paul highlights this power of divine fatherhood in two ways. First, he changes his posture (see v.14). While it was most common for Jews to pray while standing, kneeling "signified great reverence and submission ... marking a humble approach" (*O'Brien, 255*). Secondly, Paul marvels at the reality that "**every family in heaven and earth is named**" through the Father. Every angelic being (heaven) finds their origin in God and every mortal being (earth) owes their existence to him. God is Father of all (see Ephesians 4:6).

God's fatherhood should humble us. But, if we're honest, too often we're tempted to resist his paternal authority. We interpret his love as a license to misbehave. But a good father "**disciples those he loves**" because he loves them (*Hebrews 12:6*). Fatherly love doesn't negate fatherly authority. Instead, the Father's love teaches us the joy of submission and obedience. And so while Jesus shared the love of the Father from eternity past, he was still obedient to the Father, to the point of death on a cross (see John 17:24 and *Philippians 2:8*).



DAY 1
EVERY FAMILY'S
FATHER

1. What does it mean to relate to God as Father?
2. Does his fatherhood bring you comfort, confusion, or discomfort?
3. How does Jesus show us a righteous response to God's love and authority?

Heavenly Father ...

Despite the good or bad examples of fatherhood I've experienced, help me to learn to trust your love and power.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 2

OUR INNER WORLD

First read Ephesians 3:16.

Author Gordon MacDonald emphasizes the importance of cultivating a healthy interior life. When “the inner garden is under cultivation and God's Spirit is present,” he writes, “harvests are regular events” (*Ordering Your Private World*). Paul calls this region of the soul our **“inner being”** (v.16b). It's here that God's Spirit nurtures the growth of what's popularly known as the fruit of the Spirit—**“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control”** (Galatians 5:22-23). Our inner being is strengthened through God's character.

Our attention is easily captured by the material world. We spend a lot of time and money on what we can taste, touch, see, hear, and smell. This isn't necessarily wrong. God made us physical beings who are free to enjoy his physical creation (see Genesis 1:28-31). However, because of sin, our affection and attachment to the physical world have been exaggerated—we ask more of the material world than it can provide. Remember, our first parents couldn't resist the urge to taste and touch the one thing in the Garden God said was off limits (see Genesis 3:6). They thought eating a particular piece of fruit would make them **“like God”** (Genesis 3:5).

We do the same thing. Instead of a piece of fruit, we ask money, sex, and power to make us superhuman. To resolve this tension religious people tend to reject the material world. Modern people reject the spiritual world. However, as followers of Jesus, we're called to steward creation by being strengthened in our inner being.

The power to strike this balance comes through Christ. He makes strong **“through the riches of his glory ... through the power of the Spirit”** (v.16a). That's because the purely spiritual Son of God became physical so that our visible and invisible lives would be made one.



DAY 2

OUR INNER WORLD

1. How does God strengthen our inner being?
2. What things are you asking to make you “like God”?
3. How does Jesus undo the power of sin and make us strong in our inner being?

Heavenly Father ...

*Forgive me for asking _____ and
_____ for protection, power, and peace.
Strength my soul today. Help me to trust that you
take perfect care of me.*

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 3

ROOTED IN LOVE

First read Ephesians 3:17-19.

Love is the shaping force in a believer's life. ***“All the fullness of God”*** shows up in our lives when we are ***“rooted and grounded in love”*** (v.17,19). Some are convinced following rules makes God love us. We think our obedience changes God. Others of us believe discipline transforms us. But rules modify behavior. Rules can't change us nor do they change God. You see, it's not God's law, but his love that “surpasses knowledge” because his love comes before our obedience (v.19). In fact, his love compels and empowers us to obey (see 2 Corinthians 5:14).

In the story of Harry Potter, author J.K. Rowling captures the beauty of transformative love. Dumbledore explains to Harry, “Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realize that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign...to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection forever.” Sacrificial love changes us.

Christ died to save us. And his love leaves a mark. Specifically in the form of obedience. Jesus put it this way, ***“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you”*** (John 15:13-14). When we're rooted in God's love, we blossom into obedience.



DAY 3
ROOTED IN
LOVE

1. How has God loved you?
2. How has God's love transformed you?
3. What does it look like to give yourself in love for God and others?

Heavenly Father ...

Thank you for loving me. In the good, bad, and all the in-between ... your constant affection washes away my shame, shapes my view of myself and others, and gives me courage to obey.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 4

COMPREHENDING LOVE

First read Ephesians 3:17-19.

Christians **“have strength to comprehend”** God’s love (v.18). However, God’s love **“surpasses knowledge”** (v.19). It’s too wide. It’s too long. It’s too high. It’s too deep. Our minds aren’t equipped to conceive of the grandeur of his affection. *So, what should we do with that? How can we know the unknowable?* Well, this is a theme throughout the Bible.

God is unknowable. We may search for him, but God is never found through research, effort, or desire. We might look for him but he's an empty city, a locked garden, closed to our minds and imaginations (see Song of Song 3:1-5, 4:12). King David wrote about this all the time. He sang, **“Great is the Lord ... his greatness is unsearchable”** (Psalm 145:3). He wrote, **“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it”** (Psalm 139:6). God is everything we're not. He’s infinite. We’re finite. He’s flawless. We’re flawed. He’s whole. We’re fractured. He is unknowable. Unless ... he makes himself known. Unless he dwells in our hearts through faith (v.17a).

You see, God can’t be known unless he reveals himself; unless he gives himself to us. And that’s precisely what he’s done through Christ, **“he has made him known”** (John 1:18). This is the only way the unknowable God is known—gracious self-disclosure.



DAY 4
COMPREHENDING
LOVE

1. What does it mean that God is unknowable?
2. How does God's unsearchable nature cause you frustration and doubt? How does it bring you peace or draw you to worship?
3. How does Jesus' make God known?

Heavenly Father ...

You are high and holy. You are glorious and eternal. There is no one like you. Yet, your Son became like us so we could know you. May this profound truth lead me to worship you in all things today.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



DAY 5

SUPERABUNDANTLY

First read Ephesians 3:20-21.

Paul's been praying. His knees are bowed and he asks the Father to strengthen his readers' **"inner being"** and ground them in love (v.14,16,17). Having petitioned God, he now praises him through what's called a *doxology*. A doxology is a verbal expression (*logia*) of glory or worship (*doxa*). This simple pairing is instructive to us. Prayer is the way we make our requests known to God. But it's also about worship. "Praise and adoration are the necessary preconditions" of all our prayers (*Prayer*, 190). What we know about God informs what we ask of him.

You see, Paul feels confident God will strengthen and group his people because God is **"able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think"** (v.20). The apostle's request comes out of his worship. Literally, Paul says God can *outdo superabundantly*, anything we could conceive. No problem is too big. No sin is too damaging. No fear is too overwhelming. No pain is too deep. God can superabundantly take care of us **"according to his power at work within us"** (v.20b).

Knowing a God like that changes our prayers. He empowers us to pray with boldness and to always pray as a form of worship.



DAY 5
SUPERABUNDANTLY

1. How does God's superabundant power lead you to praise today?
2. What often causes you to doubt God's ability?
3. How do your doubts impact your prayers? How does worship transform your prayers?

Heavenly Father ...

*You are _____ and _____
there is nothing you can't do, there is no one too far,
there is one like you.*

In Jesus' Name, Amen.



FAMILY GUIDE

CONVERSATIONS STARTERS

DAY 1

Ephesians 3:14-15

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

God is our Father.

What does it mean that God is our Father? How is he like a Father to us?

DAY 2

Ephesians 3:16

that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

The Father makes us strong.

How does the Father make us strong? How does the Father make us more like his Son, Jesus?

DAY 3

Ephesians 3:17

so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

The Father loves us.

How does the Father love us? What do you think it means to be “rooted” (like a tree) in the Father’s love?

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To receive updates about this reading guide and discover more gospel resources to help you enjoy the truth and beauty of Jesus, please visit churchinthesquare.com.





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