

Growing Deeper in the Love of Christ Ephesians 3:16-20

Introduction:

1. Do you remember when you were a kid and you had what other people called “puppy love?” This meant that it was a surface love that wasn't rooted and grounded in true love. It was quick to change; here today, gone tomorrow; a passing affection.
2. There are many believers who have a puppy love mentality in their relationship with Christ.
 - Do you ever feel distant from Christ?
 - Do you ever find yourself questioning His love for you?
 - Do you struggle loving other people or accepting love from others?
 - Do you find serving God to be a chore at times (like mowing the grass or doing the dishes)?
3. The key to all of these issues is growing deeper in the love of Christ.
4. **Ephesians 3:16-20** is an awesome passage. It is Paul's prayer for these saints at Ephesus.
5. He wanted them to possess, not just a puppy love understanding of Christ's love, but a true, biblical, divine, deep understanding of the true love of Christ.
6. Do you desire to grow deeper in the love of Christ? If so, there are three decisions you must make, based on **Ephesians 3:16-20**.

I am determined to grow and change. vs. 16

1. Paul's prayer is that these believers would be “*strengthened with might.*”
 - The word “*strengthened*” means, “increase in vigor, empower.”
 - The phrase “*with might*” literally means, “miraculous power.”
2. Paul was praying for some divine, supernatural growth to take place in the inner spirits of these believers.
3. When spiritual growth takes place in a believer's life, how is it evidenced? Look at the next chapter and Paul will show you.
 - We no longer lie, but tell the truth. 4:25
 - We no longer hold angry grudges. 4:26
 - We no longer allow Satan to control us. 4:27
 - We no longer steal, but work hard and desire to be givers. 4:28
 - We speak in a way that ministers grace to others. 4:29
 - Our heart attitudes manifest grace. 4:31-32
4. Do you know what spiritual growth looks like in the believer? CHANGE!
5. This growth comes by God's Holy Spirit working in the inner man (the spirit) of the believer. Christ's Spirit and our spirit become one at salvation. **1 Corinthians 6:17**
 - Today, in America, you have TV preachers and denominations that are consumed with outward miracles, signs and wonders. They desperately want to pretend that they are living in Israel's kingdom program.
 - But, as you listen to them, you can readily see that their understanding of God's Word is rudimentary and that they are very shallow in their Christian walk.
6. True miraculous growth takes place in our inner man. Instead of feeding your flesh, you are feeding your spirit with God's Word. 4:22-24

7. If you desire to grow deeper in the love of Christ, you must be committed to growing and changing. This only happens as you take in and digest God's Word. **Hebrews 5:12-14**
8. There are no shortcuts. Growth is a process that happens as you make daily choices to feed your spirit instead of your flesh. **Ephesians 4:12-15**

I will trust Christ in every area of my life. vs. 17

1. Paul prayed, "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."
2. Does this seem odd to you? They were already believers and had been placed in Christ. They had already trusted Christ and been saved.
 - The heart is the seat of your thoughts, emotions, desires, and will.
 - This word "dwell" means "to settle down and be at home."
3. Paul was praying that these believers would allow Christ to have total control of their hearts (thoughts, desires, emotions, will). He wanted Christ to not only dwell in their inner man (spirit), but also feel at home and be in control of their hearts.
 - In other words, by faith, they would depend on Christ each and every moment. They would trust Him in every area of their hearts. Christ would rule and reign over every little crevice of their hearts.
4. As long as you hold parts of your heart back from Christ, you will never know His love in a personal and intimate way. Love relationships are built on trust. Every believer has a preliminary awareness of Christ's love, but God wants you to grow in that love.
 - **Illustration:** Married couple - when one or both of them holds back parts of their lives, it hinders their love from growing.
5. As you give Christ every area of your heart, you become rooted and grounded in love. That love relationship begins to flourish. vs. 17; cf. **Colossians 2:7**
6. As you grow in your relationship with Christ, you become rooted and grounded in love because Christ is love.

I will accept Christ's unconditional love for me. vs. 18-19

1. Paul desperately wanted these believers to know, understand, and perceive something.
 - Verse 18 - "*may be able to comprehend*"
 - Verse 19 - "*And to know...*" This means, "to perceive, to understand."
2. What did Paul want them to know and understand? The love of Christ!
3. In verse 18, Paul uses the terms, "breadth, length, depth, and height." Paul is trying to convey the immeasurable, unconditional, love of Christ for His children. **Romans 8:35, 37-39**
 - Nothing from heaven or hell, east or west, north or south, can change Christ's love for us. His love is higher than the heavens, deeper than hell, wider than the ocean, longer than the earth. It is boundless and endless.
4. Many people have a hard time accepting this unconditional love. Why?
 - Past sins and failures
 - Feelings of unworthiness
 - They have never experienced true unconditional love before. It sounds too good to be true.

5. So, how do you grow in the knowledge of this love?
 - It won't happen academically (vs. 19) through carnal, fleshly knowledge. You won't figure it out like a math formula.
 - It must be spiritually revealed through God's Word. You read God's Word and you accept it by faith. Read Paul's letters and notice every time you see the words "in Christ."

In Conclusion:

1. When you make these decisions, what is the result? Verse 19 says that you are "*filled with all the fullness of God.*"
 - This word "filled" and "fullness" carry the idea of replete and running over (leave your water hose on).
 - God's love begins running over in your life.
2. When you realize you don't have to work to earn or deserve Christ's love, it will set you free and energize you to love God and love others like never before.
3. Christ will begin doing things **through you** that you could have never imagined. vs. 20
 - There is no way God's love can be shared **through** you until you understand God's love **for** you.
 - As you grow deeper in Christ's love, you begin to share that love with others. It happens very naturally.

Our Church Motto

Growing deeper in the love of Christ that we may share that love with others.