

## “Being the Church: Life-Changing Knowledge”

### Ephesians 3:14-21

#### Connect:

What does God want from us? Although there are many possible responses supported by scripture in both Old and New Testaments, one of the most notable from the Old Testament can be found in sixth chapter of the book of Micah.

[6] “With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? [7] Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” [8] He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:6–8, ESV)

Put simply, God is not nearly as interested in big, show-stopping, grandiose spectacles of devotion and sacrifice (like bringing hordes of sacrificial animals, backing up tanker trucks filled with Salt River quantities of ceremonial oil or giving our children permanently Samuel-style to the service of God), as he is in godly living, treating others kindly and having a humble personal relationship with him.

From the New Testament Pastor Jay brought us to 1 Corinthians 13 for another perspective on this question.

[1] If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. [2] And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. [3] If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1–3, ESV)

So what if we can communicate in dozens of languages, can tell the future and accurately predict world events (when exactly will COVID-19 not be a thing anymore?) or could move Mount Humphreys into the middle of Saguaro Lake (I don’t think Governor Ducey is going to be happy about that one!). What is far more important in God’s eyes is loving people around us – even the ones “on the other side of the lake” (see sermon notes from 05/30/2021 in case you missed that aside).

#### Prepare:

Read Ephesians 3:14–19.

[14] For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, [15] from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, [16] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be

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strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, [17] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:14–19, ESV)

Pastor Jay pointed out that these verses are stuffed with “that’s.”

1. **that** ... he may strengthen you with his Spirit
2. **that** Christ may dwell in your hearts
3. **that** you may be filled with the fullness of God

What do these three things mean practically?

1. Being strengthened with the power of the Spirit has to do with the vitality of life – like Ezekiel wrote about in Ezekiel 37:1-14 (I can’t help thinking here of the Army of the Dead from the Lord of the Rings Return of the King, waiting for the heir of Isildur to call them to action).

[1] The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. [2] And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. [3] And he said to me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” And I answered, “O Lord GOD, you know.” [4] Then he said to me, “Prophesy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. [5] Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. [6] And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”

[7] So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. [8] And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. [9] Then he said to me, “Prophesy to the breath; prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.” [10] So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army.

[11] Then he said to me, “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off.’ [12] Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. [13] And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. [14] And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own

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land. Then you shall know that I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the LORD.” (Ezekiel 37:1–14, ESV)

2. Christ dwelling in our hearts is a reprise of the theme of our being “in Christ” which Paul has emphasized throughout this whole letter.

God’s vision for each of us is to be in deep personal communion with him – which is for him and for us. It’s all about relationship.

3. Number three is about being filled with the fullness of God. What in the world does that mean? This is a tough one, truthfully straining our human brains to begin to understand it. For one thing, as Pastor Jay pointed out, it has to do with all those blessings he blessed with (Ephesians 1:3): these include all that Jesus has won for us, salvation, new life, reconciliation, eternal life, new creation and all the many things those entail.

## Study and Discuss:

Paul prays in Ephesians 3:18-19 that we...

[18] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:18-19; ESV)

How are we supposed to know something that surpasses knowledge? Pastor Jay mentioned that Paul is being somewhat hyperbolic here.

Even small children can grasp the wonder of God’s love, perhaps as encapsulated in the Sunday School song “Jesus Loves Me” (Anna B. Warner, 1860). The Spanish version is terrific too!

Jesus loves me! This I know,  
For the Bible tells me so;  
Little ones to Him belong;  
They are weak, but He is strong.

Cristo me ama, bien lo sé,  
Su Palabra me hace ver,  
Que los niños son de aquel,  
Quien es nuestro amigo fiel.

### *Refrain:*

Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
Yes, Jesus loves me!  
The Bible tells me so.

### *Coro:*

Cristo me ama,  
Cristo me ama,  
Cristo me ama,  
La Biblia dice así.

Where does the Bible tell us so? How about John 3:16? Jay reminded us that this one of the first Bible verses people (and often little people) hear in the church.

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[16] “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16, ESV)

As well mature in our faith we come to understand more and more the depths of what God’s love means. But even when we have been at it for years or even decades, we come to understand what Paul meant in I Corinthians 8.

[2] If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. [3] But if anyone loves God, he is known by God. (1 Corinthians 8:2–3, ESV)

In academic circles, it is all about what you know, how many papers you’ve published, the prestigious academic organizations to which you belong, the number of impressive degrees after your name. In the kingdom of God, it is all about who knows you – and if we love God, we are known by him! And what a great thing is that!

Pastor Jay talked in the sermon about the depth of God’s love for us. Just to name a few examples:

God loved us when he created us.  
God loved us when he became like us.  
God loved us when he gave his son for us.  
God loved us when he went to the cross for us.  
God loved us when he made us new creations in Christ.  
God loved us when brought us into his family.  
God loved us when he promised he would return for us.  
God loved us when he gave us his church.  
God loved us when he gave us his Spirit.

We can know these things as spiritual facts or truths, but how do they change us, make us different people?

### Response:

From the passage we are looking at here in Ephesians 3, Pastor Jay share with us different kinds of knowledge which surpass simply knowing facts in our heads.

1. **Worship knowledge (v. 14).** We are to have a worshipful response to all God has done for us.
2. **Relational knowledge (vv. 14-15).** Think of this like knowledge that you can only gain by being in relationship with someone you know and who knows you well.
3. **Equipping knowledge (v. 16).** This is knowledge which the Holy Spirit uses to help us live out our lives both in the church and in the community. We are about to delve into this topic in greater detail in the next section of Ephesians.

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4. **Experiential knowledge (v. 18).** This is a reflection of what we have gone through in life while in relationship with God. It is a track record of the good times and the tough times and how he is with us every step of the way.
5. **Communal knowledge (v. 18).** As we are part of the local church we share in the lives of others at NBC. We laugh together, cry together and share triumphs as well as tragedies together.

### Pray:

Paul ends this chapter with a prayer that we can pray after him, sort of like a “Lord’s Prayer of Ephesians.”

“[20] Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20–21, ESV)