**1. Motivate**

When have you really enjoyed being a part of a group?

* a sports team
* marching band, concert band
* church choir
* work crew
* friends on a fishing or hunting trip
* people you meet on a cruise ship
* a prayer group
* a Sunday school class (Small Group, Bible Study Group, Connect Group, …)
* family reunion, school reunion

**2. Transition**

Our relationships are strengthened when we do fun things together as a group.

* Our own lives are enriched when we pray as a group.
* More important, the Church is strengthened as we pray.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Pray for Christ’s Power and Presence

Listen for Paul’s prayer request.

Ephesians 3:14-17a (NIV) For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

What indicates the earnestness and urgency of his prayer?

* says he kneels before the Father
* doesn’t just stand or sit (Jewish men normally stood when praying)
* serious about his prayer

To whom is God the Father?

* Jesus the Son
* all believers
* those in heaven, those on the earth

According to the passage, what was Paul’s request?

* God would give or provide from His glorious riches
* God would strengthen the church
* The Holy Spirit would give power to the believers
* God’s Spirit dwelling in their inner being would empower them

When have you experienced something that was obviously an answer to prayer?

* God supplied a job opening
* protection in a dangerous situation
* God’s wisdom to make the right choice
* God’s financial supply
* God brought the right person along at the right time to give the right advice
* a specific healing

What is the source and the means by which the believers could be strengthened?

* power of the Spirit of God
* God’s Spirit in your inner being
* Christ dwells in your hearts through faith

Why might these early Christian believers need God’s strength in church life?

* to build up, expand the church in a culture of idolatry
* to rid their lives of heathen practices
* to withstand persecution from Jewish opposition,
* to live a holy life in the midst of sinful influences

Why do *we* need God’s strength at work in our lives and churches?

* still need to expand the church, the body of believers in the midst of a sinful world
* to make us more like Jesus
* to overcome our own sinful weaknesses
* to face opposition of our culture against Christians
* to give us boldness in our witness

What does it look like to be empowered by God’s Spirit, strengthened with His Spirit?

* Fruit of the Spirit demonstrated in our lives
* exercising Spiritual Gifts
* boldness in witnessing
* faithfulness in service
* trusting God when things get tough

Note the resource Paul mentions from which God will provide strength … *out of his glorious riches*. Consider that we should keep that in mind as we pray for one another and for our own concerns.

* don’t pray that you’ll just get by … pray for glorious victory
* don’t pray only that your kids/grandkids just keep out of trouble, pray that they will be spiritual giants and influence other people for Christ
* don’t pray only that our church merely keeps out of the red financially, pray that we have exceeding abundant with which to do God’s work
* don’t pray only for numerical church growth, pray for revival … a powerful moving of God in your midst.

3.2 Pray to Know God’s Love

Listen for references to love.

Ephesians 3:17b-19 (NIV) And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God..

Paul speaks of being “rooted and grounded in love.” What do you think he had in mind?

* we experience God’s love at work in our lives
* that becomes the motivation and source of our strength
* we sink our spiritual and emotional “roots” down into God’s Truth
* we base our motivations, our attitudes on the reality of Who God is and what He wants to do in our lives

What does Paul want his readers to comprehend?

* the full dimensions of God’s love
* the width, length, height, and depth of His love
* note the *four* dimensions he declares … more than just our 3D universe
* actually, God’s love *surpasses* our comprehension

What does it mean to “know” the love of Christ?

* more than just factual or intellectual knowledge
* includes personal experience
* includes faith in, dependence on, trust in His love
* is a growing understanding of how much God loves us
* Paul implies we may never *fully* understand God’s love … but we can experience more and more and more

What facets of God’s love are the most amazing to you? How does knowing you are loved by God give you confidence and assurance?

* He loves me despite my failures
* His love never fails
* I cannot do anything to cause God to love me *more …* or *less*
* Jesus’ love which motivated Him to die on the Cross for me
* it is Truth I can base my life on, it is Reality I can depend on
* I am assured of a place in Heaven

How is it possible to “be filled to the measure of all fullness of God”? God is infinite. What is Paul trying to communicate here?

* If God’s Spirit dwells within the believer, we have all of God there is to have
* God’s Spirit does not parcel out portions of Himself
* the issue is not that I have more of God, it is that God should have more of me
* to be filled is to be totally *controlled*
* According to Ephes. 5:18 (NIV) Do not get *drunk* on (*controlled by*) wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with (*controlled by*) the Spirit.
* the verb tense implies an ongoing filling, “be being filled”, continual surrender

3.3 Pray God is Glorified

Listen for extent of God’s power.

Ephesians 3:20-21 (NIV) Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

What does Paul affirm about the ability of God to respond to our requests or even our thoughts?

* God can and wants to accomplish even more than what we are trusting Him for
* He has the resources to meet all our needs and more
* we probably don’t trust Him for big enough things we want/need to see happen
* we tend to limit God by our lack of faith

How does Paul describe God’s abilities in this passage?

* able to do immeasurable
* able (willing) to do more than we ask
* able to do more than we can imagine
* displays His power within us
* admire
* point out good in
* act so others see that good

“Glory” describes God’s splendor. To glorify is to …

What words or phrases does Paul use to *glorify* God, to describe His splendor?

* to Him be glory
* glorify Him in the church
* glorify Him throughout all generations
* glorify Him forever (throughout eternity)

Why do you think praising/glorifying God should be such an important part of our prayers? What are some reasons that God deserves our praise?

* God’s power at work in our lives
* His love for us
* His ability to guide and direct the flow of history to accomplish His purposes
* Jesus’ redemptive death
* His day by day presence in our lives
* His attributes … omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, righteousness/justice, love, holiness
* His beautiful creation

How might ending your prayer time with a doxology like Paul’s here, build your faith?

* remind you of God’s power, authority, and love
* help culminate your quiet time with a note of praise and thanksgiving
* much more meaningful and significant than just “in Jesus Name, Amen” which we sometimes automatically add to the end of our prayers
* we are declaring our praise and trust

Use the last page as a handout so your learners can take home the application points of this week’s lesson.

Application

Confess.

* Realign your prayer life in a more God-centered, others-focused direction.
* Confess to God the ways you’ve prayed in self-centered ways.

Pray.

* If you’re not in a regular discipline of prayer, begin now.
* Keep a journal of your prayer requests to ensure you are also praying for the spiritual and physical needs of others.

Pray together.

* The best way to grow in praying together in Christ’s church is by praying together in Christ’s church!
* Commit to a regular time to meet and pray with one or two other believers from your Bible study group.

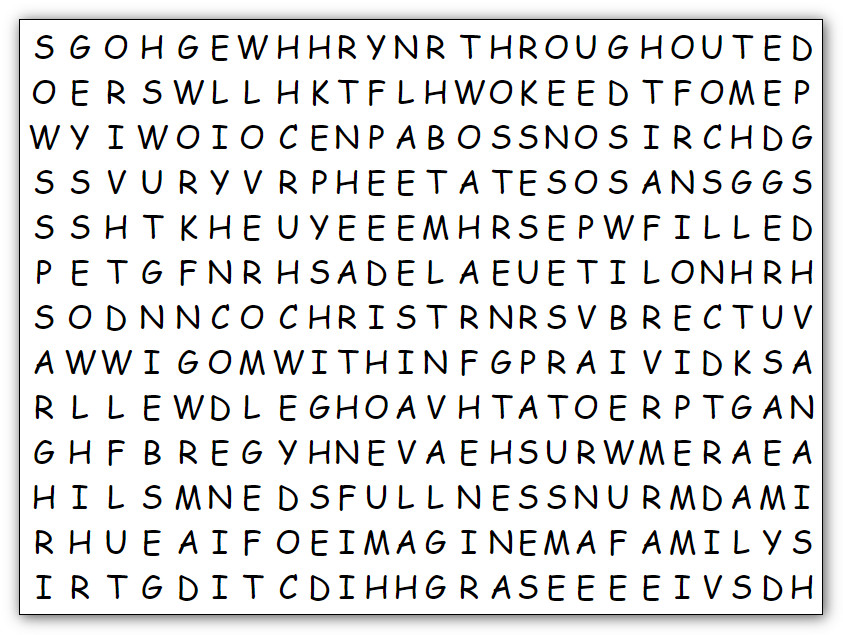
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Well, HUMPH! This collection of letters is a *mess !* Someone needs to find the words … that’s *your* job. Be aware that the words will go up, down, left, right, and diagonally. If you get them all, it’s worth TWO book reports. Humph … I ~~bet~~ venture to say you can’t do it. If not, go to <https://tinyurl.com/y4bu29vp> There’s other instructive activities, also.   
You probably need them!



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