

Welcome to New Harvest and our series leading up to Easter. This is the second message of eight, with our goal being spiritual growth. You've probably heard the idea of a 3G network. This refers to advanced services, providing a wider range of network capacity and improved quality. In other words, it is better than 2G. But you have probably heard advertisements about a 4G network. CLEAR boasts of expanding the cellular wireless standards with increased speed and range. 4G is simply better than 3G according to the advertisement. That made me think about 3D technology. I attended a movie with my family during the holidays entitled "The Christmas Carol," which was 3D. But did you know that there is 4D? It refers to the 4th dimension. Obviously that's better. I think you will get where I am coming from when we read our New Testament Scripture for today — **Ephesians 3:14-19**.

*** Admitting your need for help ***
(First Step)

*** Believe that I matter to Christ ***
(Second Step)

The paragraph that we are looking at in the Bible is progressive in grammar and points to progression in growth. In the STEPS tradition the second step is always progressive. It is a process of faith. It is the faith step.

1D — I pray . . . The script of our paragraph in Ephesians 3 is a progression. "For this reason, I kneel before the Father." (verse 14) Literally the word is "bend my knees." This is obviously the posture of a first step. It represents admitting your need. We look up to God in prayer. We realize that we need help. This refers back to last week's theme and again emphasizes how important the first principle is to spiritual growth. "Blessed are those who realize their need." (Matthew 5:3 NLT)

2D — I pray to Christ. In other words, you believe Christ. This is the first purpose statement using the words "so that"; it essentially is saying, "I pray to Christ by faith SO THAT he might dwell in me." Verse 17 reads, ". . . so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." It means that Christ would take up residency in your heart. 90% of Americans believe in God and many think of him as a "higher power." But when verse 16 refers to your inner being, it is pointing to your heart or your soul. Faith in Christ is establishing a relationship with him in your heart.

3D — I pray to Christ who loves me. The progression continues with verses 17-19, "And I pray THAT you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge." Faith in Christ is a love relationship that can fill in the holes in your soul. The love of Christ is the kind of coverage you need. The main statement to emphasize is "Rooted and established in love." (verse 17) Are you sure that God loves you? To be anchored in his love is to be convinced in your heart that the Father truly loves you. This all hinges upon your view of God. If you doubt God's love, your faith will be shallow and your life in Christ will be tossed about. Nothing will be secure until you know the unchanging truth of God's love for you.

4D — I pray to Christ who fills me with his love. This really is the fourth dimension. Our prayer ends with these words, ". . . THAT you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." It's like a sphere turning around, showing every angle of your soul. It's as if your soul is like a home. There are rooms and closets and levels, all meant for Christ to fill. There is nothing that satisfies like the love of Christ. The phrase says it clearly, "this love that surpasses knowledge" (verse 19) **Job 11:8-9** talk about the mystery of knowledge and the significance of wisdom. In contrast, Solomon defines love in **Song of Songs 8:6-7**. Our prayer points to how much more significant love is to our growth and maturity than even knowledge. Knowledge is important, but the Bible says that knowledge puffs up but love builds up. Our prayer, in Ephesians 3, is asking God to saturate your soul with his love.

Application: What are some of the things that you use to fill the holes in your soul? I will present a list of possibilities and you can add to it: _____ In our world we are tempted to place these things in the position of God. A Christ-follower can lean into these just like anyone else. These will block God from filling your soul and satisfying your need. By faith, pray our prayer, asking God to fill you with his fullness as you believe and receive the affection and never-ending love of God. This will bring a security that is real and a satisfaction that is life-giving.

Reflective Questions:

1. How would you define love? How do you know that God loves you? Why is his love so important?
2. Do you understand the progression that is presented in Ephesians 3:14-19? What does it mean to you? What truth stands out to you in this prayer?
3. Why is it important to emphasize the truth that faith in Christ is about the heart? What does it mean to have him dwell in your heart? How does that differ from the idea that people in our world say they believe in God?
4. What are you tempted to put in the place of God to try to find security and satisfaction? Why doesn't it work? How does his love truly satisfy?

Reading Schedule for February 15-21, 2010

We are going to read some significant stories in the history of the Israelites. The Ten Commandments are very significant to the Jewish people, as well as the followers of Christ. You have probably heard of the golden calf, the sending of the spies into the Promised Land and the rebellion of the people. This is a strategic moment in the history of God's people. Would they have faith to believe God for his promise? Would they be courageous and strong so that they might enter the Promised Land? I think you know the answer. You will read about it this week.

February 15: **Exodus 20:1-22** – "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." (vv. 2 & 3) This is the beginning of what we know as the Ten Commandments. At the foot of Mount Sinai God showed his people the true function and beauty of his law. The commandments were designed to lead Israel to a life of practical holiness. They needed these guidelines. This was meant to help them live with each other in a loving and respectful manner. By Jesus' time lawkeeping became an end in itself, not the means to fulfill God's ultimate law of love. What do the Ten Commandments mean to you? How might they be helpful? How might they lead away from a genuine love for God and others? Why does the letter of the law not give one the strength to live a righteous life of love?

February 16: **Exodus 32:1-29** – You can see that we are going to skip a few chapters as we look at the highlights of key passages in the history of God's people. "So all the people took off their earrings and brought them to Aaron. He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, 'These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'" (vv. 3 & 4) This has to be one of the low points in the life of God's people. This is a grievous moment to the heart of God. He had commanded them that they should not make an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or the earth below as an object of worship. (20:4) They had just been a part of God's powerful deliverance from Egypt and have learned of his desire and commands for them, and they disobey without excuse. "The next day Moses said to the people, 'You have committed a great sin. But now I will go up to the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin.' (verse 30) What do you learn from this story? What did the people do? Why is this so grievous to God?

February 17: **Exodus 40:1-38** – This is the last chapter in the Book of Exodus. The tabernacle was to be God's home on earth. "Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle." (vv. 34 & 35) The tabernacle was the central place of worship. We read that God filled the tabernacle here with his presence. The essence of worship is entering into the presence of God and recognizing his glory, and worshiping him for he is worthy. God no longer needs a physical building because Jesus rose from the dead and sent his Spirit to live in our hearts. We are God's temple as his church. How do you want to worship God? How is he worthy? How will that help you worship God?

February 18: **Numbers 12:1-16** – We skip forward to a conflict within the leadership of the Hebrews. "Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth." (verse 3) The story obviously points to how Aaron and Miriam disobeyed God by opposing Moses. We learn something about Moses that is essential to godliness. "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6) How is Moses humble? How have you seen that in his life? Why is humility so important? What are some of God's promises for those who are humble?

February 19: **Numbers 13:1-14:4** – "And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, 'The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size.'" (verse 32) Caleb tried to direct the people to have faith in God. The negative opinion of ten men caused a great rebellion amongst the people. The opinion of people can be divisive when it is expressed with a lack of faith. Be careful what you say because it can influence the actions of others who trust in you. What stands out to you in this story? What is so discouraging about it? How are you tempted to look at your circumstances and respond with a lack of faith. The Bible says we live by faith, not by sight, but in this story they lived by sight. How?

February 20: **Numbers 14:5-45** – "So the men Moses had sent to explore the land, who returned and made the whole community grumble against him by spreading a bad report about it – these men responsible for spreading the bad report about the land were struck down and died of a plague before the LORD." (vv. 36 & 37) The judgment seems rather harsh, doesn't it? In Proverbs 6 it lists six things that God hates. A seventh that is detestable to him – a man who stirs up dissension among his brothers. The discouraging report affected so many lives, all the people of God would die in the desert, so that it wouldn't be until the next generation that the people would enter the Promised Land. What does this story teach you and me? How might you apply it to your life?

February 21: **Numbers 21:4-9** – "The LORD said to Moses, 'Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.'" (verse 8) When the bronze snake was hung on the pole, the Israelites did not know the fuller meaning Jesus Christ would bring to this event. (See John 3:14 & 15) Jesus explained that just as the Israelites were healed of their sickness by looking up at the snake on the pole, all believers today could be saved from the sickness of sin by looking to Jesus who died on the cross. How do you understand this even through the eyes of the Gospel? How do you appreciate the Gospel in your life? What does it mean to be saved from sin?