



Getting Started

Dwelling Series Motivation

What does your relationship with God look like now? What words would you use to describe it? Do you ever wonder if there is something beyond where you are with God now?

Do you ever feel guilty about not spending time with God? Maybe you do spend time with God, but it isn't what you would call quality time.

Maybe you have spent a lot of time in Bible study, but don't feel you have a deep heart connection with God.



Have any of the thoughts above ever gone through your head?

If you identify with these thoughts, you are not alone. Many people, regardless of how long they have been following Jesus, think this way at times. They are actually great things to think about ... and act upon!

Dwelling Purpose

The purpose of Dwelling is to help you to deepen your heart relationship with God in Christ. It starts with your personal devotional times. The idea is that rich and meaningful times alone with God will become a foundation for an ongoing close daily walk with God. Each session will focus on a different "tool" we can use in developing our relationship with God in our times alone with Him.

Anchoring Scripture

There is a key scripture from Paul's letter to the Ephesian church that forms the basis of Dwelling.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that **Christ may dwell** in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- Ephesians 3:14-19

Christ Dwells

Paul's prayer is that through a work of God, the Ephesian church would be strengthened in their core so that Christ may dwell there in their hearts. How amazing that Christ, the holy, righteous Son of God, would dwell - that is live - in us.

Christ initially came into our hearts when we first believed. This verse is about Him remaining; not just appearing now and then to visit, but permanently and continuously dwelling or living there. Settling in, so to speak.



What does it really mean that Christ dwells in our hearts? What does that look like from the inside?

When we dwell or live with someone like a family member, we share life with them. In a healthy

relationship, we spend time together, talk with one another and demonstrate love to each other. The longer we dwell together and the more we put into sharing life, the closer we become to each other. On the other hand, if we don't acknowledge, talk with, or even given much thought to those we live with, the relationship can be distant.

Of course Christ is different to the family members we dwell with. He is God. But maybe how we relate to family we dwell with can be a starting point to understand relating to Christ as He dwells in us. How can we spend time with Him in different ways, talk with Him, listen to Him and demonstrate love to Him?

If God will strengthen us, as Paul says, so that Christ dwells in our hearts, what is our response to that? How can we practically relate to Christ in meaningful ways as he dwells in our hearts? We will see some examples of this in later sessions.

Through Faith

The words “through faith” are also in this anchoring scripture. Why? How do we exercise faith in the context of this passage?

When we have faith in something, our actions reflect our belief in the reliability of the “thing”.



Are there actions we can take that reflect our belief that Christ is dwelling in our hearts? If he is dwelling in our hearts, what can we do in faith to build relationship with him? Let's take some time to think about this and discuss it if you're with others.

These are some of the questions we will address in other sessions of this series.

Knowing Christ's Love

Paul goes on to pray that we would have power to **grasp** the entirety of Christ's love, and to **know** that love that surpasses understanding. How can you *know* something that surpasses knowledge itself? It sounds impossible. However, the Bible uses the word *know* in other places to represent intimate relational knowledge, that is, knowing someone very deeply. In particular, the Bible uses this for the intimate marriage relationship. So it seems knowing the love of Christ is less about **knowing of** his love and more about **experiencing** his love.

Didn't the Ephesian church already know/experience Christ's love? If they did, why would Paul pray for them to have power to know the love of Christ? They were followers of Jesus as we can see early on in the "To" part of this letter.

To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus
- Ephesians 1:1

But it seems that we can be followers of Jesus, saved, and not fully grasp, and as Paul says *know*, Christ's love. Paul is praying that the faithful in Christ Jesus, those that are saved and follow Him, would have power to experientially know the fullness of Christ's love.

Filled Up

Finally, Paul prays that we would be filled up to the top with God Himself. What would that look like? If everything that is in us is God himself, there's no room for anything else. That sounds pretty good, especially if there are things in our lives that we would like to change or get rid of. It puts a whole new twist on holy living. Instead of focusing on getting things out of our lives that aren't good for us and turn God off, we can focus on having God 100% filling us so that there's no room for anything else.



What do you think about all of this? Do you agree or disagree that we can have salvation through Jesus, yet not experience the full extent of Christ's love?

Dwelling, Love and Intimacy

From what we've seen so far from Ephesians 3:14-19, God can strengthen our hearts so Christ can live there. With Christ living in our hearts, we experience the full extent of his love and are filled up with God himself. That experiencing his love and being filled with him implies some sort of closeness or intimacy with God. Let's look at some other parts of the Bible that speak of this love and intimacy with God.

God commands our love

We should seek intimacy with God firstly because God commands us to love Him. The first commandment says:

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might,
- Deuteronomy 6:5

Intimacy with Jesus is the abundant life in Christ that is promised to us for today and eternity

One of the amazing blessings of seeking intimacy with Christ is the sense of purpose, satisfaction and completeness that comes from knowing God our creator. God is so full of blessing that as we seek to be close with Him, he comes close to us. That closeness of God brings completeness to our lives.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

- James 4:8

We see more evidence of the abundant life he brings in John.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly

- John 10:10

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

- John 1:4

Intimacy with the Father

While we can have intimacy with Christ, through him we also gain access to intimacy with God our Father. Jesus had intimacy with the Father, and is the way to intimacy with the Father.

"I and the Father are one."

- John 10:30

"...no one comes to the Father but through Me."

- John 14:6

Intimacy with Jesus is a necessary foundation for sustained kingdom work

While many people desire to serve God through kingdom work, we need to be careful that we're working out of the strength and power of Christ in us and hearing the Holy Spirit as we go.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

- John 15:5

Jesus himself was always in communion with his Father.

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

- John 5:19

In that same Ephesians 3 chapter, but earlier in verses 10 and 11, we can see a purpose for this strengthening, dwelling, grasping and filling.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Ephesians 3:10,11

While it is certainly an amazing blessing to have Christ dwelling in us, that blessing for ourselves is not the only purpose. If we start with the externals, the behaviours and actions, we will short circuit the power of his Spirit working in us. Jesus is the Alpha, the beginning, so we must start with him for effective kingdom work to flow from us.

The disciples had intimacy with Jesus: Road to Emmaus

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scripture to us?"

- Luke 24:32

Think of that - "our hearts burning". It's not a bad thing, but a good heating of our hearts that

happens when something impassions us. The risen Christ's words and his presence with the disciples impacted their hearts because they had developed an intimacy with Jesus. They loved him and knew his love for them.

Taking Stock

The goal of Dwelling is to develop habits and an environment where we can experience increased intimacy with Christ through his dwelling in us; to move from "I should spend time with God" to "I want to / get to spend time with God".



Let's ask ourselves the following questions:

Where am I now in my intimacy with God?

What actually happens when I spend time with God?

What is my sense of Christ dwelling in me?

To what extent am I grasping his love?

Take some time to jot down your thoughts about this so you can revisit it later in the series.

Where To From Here?

The remaining sessions will introduce practical ways in which we can "draw near to God" in our personal devotional times and wait for Him to draw near to us...