

YES, NO & MAYBE

1. Most of the people in this room just pretend to love everybody.
2. Hope is not an expression of absolute expectation.
3. The establishment of religious organizations has made the world a more loving place.
4. I possess the same power that God used to raise Jesus from the dead.
5. Jesus is incomplete without us.

Part I: SEATED

DIG DEEPER

« Do you agree or disagree with this statement made by Jonathan Swift? Why?
“We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.”

➤ READ Ephesians 1:15-23 (NIV)

15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. 18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength 20 he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

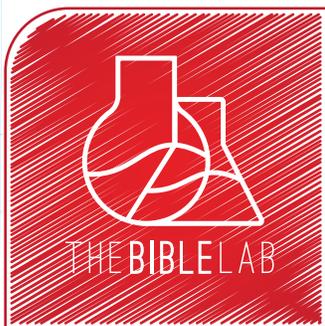
» A Community of Love

- (Vs. 15) Our surface Christianity arms us with what we think are proper prejudices and a rationale for criticizing those who fall short, keeping them at arm’s length. Not so with the Ephesians! That is why the word for “love” here is *agape* – a thoughtful, volitional, purposeful love that wills to love even the unlovely – the very love of God himself.

«Do we thrill at hearing of the faith and love of others? Do we rejoice in others’ spiritual attainments? Especially revealing, do we praise God when this is happening in places we are not present? Other churches? Other organizations? Why, or why not?

- (Vs. 17) **Know Him Better** - Paul wants his beloved Ephesians, who are so full of faith and love, to go deeper and deeper in their knowledge of Christ. The regular Greek word for personal knowing is *gnosis*, but here the word is intensified with the preposition *epi*. Paul is asking for an *epignosis* – a “real, deep, full knowledge” – a “thorough knowledge”⁶ (cf. Romans 3:20 and 1 Corinthians 13:12).

« What might “the hope” be that Paul wants them to have a deep thorough knowledge of?



DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

« (Vs. 18) **The riches of his glorious inheritance** - We typically think of the spiritual inheritance as something *WE* receive from God, but here it says that we (his holy people) are *HIS* inheritance. What does that tell you about God?

• (Vs. 19,20) **incomparably great power for us** - Paul states that God has offered us the very same incomparable power that he used to raise Jesus from the grave. The stupendous power Paul is describing can be glimpsed in the nuances of the synonyms he used: 1) "Power." *Dunamis* is the word we get dynamite from and is used over 100 times in the New Testament. It indicates raw power or strength. 2) "Working." *Energeia*, from which we derive our word energy, means "inworking" and suggests the inward propulsion of power. 3) "Mighty" (*kratos*) means "ability to conquer," as when Caesar conquered Cleopatra. Autocrat comes from this word. 4) "Strength" (*ischus*) refers to physical force.

« What do you think it says about God that he would share power to this degree? Do we live in the full realization of this power?

• (Vs. 22,23) **Christ is the head, we are the body** - The theologian, Calvin, said, "*This is the highest honor of the church that, unless He is united to us, the Son of God reckons Himself in some measure imperfect. What an encouragement it is for us to hear, that not until He has us as one with Himself is He complete in all His parts, or does He wish to be regarded as whole!*"

« What does this make you think about God's character?



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MY PRAYER...

1. Do I love even those who are in competition with me?
2. How am I realizing the incomparably great power of God in my life?
3. What new aspect of God's character does He want me to know?

