

# DEVOTION 1

## ON YOUR KNEES

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### Ephesians 3:14-21

<sup>14</sup>For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>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, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup>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, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

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Ephesians 3:20 says: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.” These 5 daily devotions explore this statement by Paul and the prayer that precedes it. This passage suggests a pathway towards the impossible. If you are praying for God to work beyond your wildest dreams, these devotions will be a guide and encouragement.

I once saw God raise a young girl from our community from the dead. She had smashed her head in a bicycle accident and the doctors had declared her brain dead. Her life support was going to be turned off. When we heard about the accident, our church prayed desperately for a miracle at a special prayer meeting, and on the following day, she sat up in her hospital bed and spoke. Her parents were deeply appreciative of the miracle and the church's contribution but weren't interested in following Jesus. I must admit I was disappointed with their response, but I had seen what God could do. It was beyond my wildest dreams.

Over the next five days, we will be studying a prayer that Paul prayed for the Ephesians. Each day we will examine a small section of the prayer, but I would like you to read the whole passage every day (it's only 8 verses). Today's focus is on verses 14-15.

Paul was convinced that when God really got hold of people he could do “immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine” (3:20). So he didn't hold back in this prayer. I'm hoping that Paul's prayer will inspire you and assist you to enjoy a work of God in you and through you that is way beyond your wildest dreams.

It's important to note that Paul had been in prison for years when he prayed this prayer. He wasn't in the middle of a revival or experiencing great miracles or seeing a huge number of converts. He was stuck in chains. Yet he knew that God was not chained. He knew what God wanted to do in and through his people, so he prayed in faith. You may not be seeing God do much through your life at the moment. That must not stop you from praying along with Paul. This is a prayer that can be prayed in every circumstance.

It's helpful to know that Paul knelt as he prayed (3:14). As a kid, I used to kneel at my bedside to pray, but I must admit that I don't kneel to pray much these days. Neither did Paul. The normal prayer posture for Jewish men was standing with arms raised. This is how we sometimes pray as we talk to God in our worship songs. But this prayer called for a different posture. Paul was earnest and determined. He was on his knees

humbly crying out for God's mercy and love to flow through the Ephesians. His posture indicated the seriousness and desperation of his prayer.

But Paul was not trying to force a reluctant God's hand by his humble posture. By no means. He was praying to the Father (3:14) who cares deeply for the children who bear his image. He was echoing what the Father loves to do: completely fill his kids and pour out his love on them.

This is a magnificent prayer. As you study it more deeply, may Paul's passion and confidence infect your own prayer life and grow your expectation of what Jesus wants to do in and through you. May you experience the grace of your Father who works in ways that are beyond your wildest dreams. If you are serious about this, perhaps a good place to start would be on your knees praying this passage through once again.

#### **QB PRAYER POINTS**

1. Praise God for signs of his power already at work. Baptisms are increasing in our churches and many churches are finding new people coming to church services looking for God.
2. Pray for your church – that God will increase your hope and vision and that there will be a growing sense of expectation that God will move in power. Pray with faith.
3. Pray for Queensland – that God will make us desperate for truth and reality and that God will awaken our hearts to his presence and power. Pray particularly for anyone you know that needs Jesus.

# DEVOTION 2

## FROM HOUSE TO HOME

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### Ephesians 3:14-21

<sup>14</sup>For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>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, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup>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, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

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Today we will focus on verses 16-17a, but please read the whole passage again.

Paul is praying for something to happen in the “inner being” or the “heart” of the Ephesians. For Westerners, the word “heart” epitomises the centre of our emotions. It's where we feel. But for the Hebrews, the concept of “heart” was much broader. It was the centre of everything. Your heart controlled your thinking, your decisions, your opinions, your motivations, and your morality, as well as your feelings. Your heart drove your life. It represented the very core of your being.

When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes and positions himself in your heart. He enters the centre of your life and influences everything. This is what Paul says in 1 Cor. 6:19: a Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. So Paul here is praying that the Spirit will do his work in the Ephesians' hearts so that Christ will be able to live there.

Now, this is confusing. Is Paul saying that the Spirit lives in our hearts, but we have to pray that Christ will live there too? Does the Spirit prepare the way for Jesus? That doesn't make sense. The members of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, have different roles, but they work together. When we become Christians, Jesus comes into our lives along with the Holy Spirit. That's why we sometimes describe the process of becoming a Christian as “asking Jesus into your heart.” Jesus is living in the heart of every Christian. So why is Paul praying for “Christ to dwell in your hearts”?

To understand this part of Paul's prayer, we need to explore the meaning of the Greek word translated as “dwell” (3:17). When I moved to Bracken Ridge to pastor a new church, the church rented a house for our young family to live in. It was a nice place and was ours in a way, but we couldn't do everything we wanted with the house because it was owned by someone else. After 12 months of living there, we took the opportunity to buy the house. Immediately it became our home. It was ours. If we wanted to take out walls, we did so without a second thought. This house was now ours completely. This is what “dwell” signifies. When Jesus dwells in our hearts (3:17), he is not a temporary tenant there, but he is the owner of the whole place. He has settled down there and he does what he chooses.

The reality is that our hearts are often crowded places with lots of tenants. Jesus lives at the centre of our lives, but so too do our fears, our curses, our idols, our passions, our pain, our habits, etc. When it comes to

our behaviour or choices, many residents are clamouring to have their say at the centre of our lives, and Jesus' voice can be ignored.

Paul is praying that the Spirit will work powerfully so that we have the strength to evict the other tenants. This way Jesus can have the whole place. The house of our life becomes his home. He can do whatever he wants in us and through us. Wouldn't that be great in your life? Free to please Jesus. Not fighting constantly with all those powerful influences that oppose our following Jesus. Of course, that seems impossible for us, but it is what Paul prayed for, so we should be praying the same way.

There appears to be a progression in Paul's prayer. Jesus fully dwelling in our hearts is the first crucial step towards experiencing a work of God in and through our lives that is beyond our wildest dreams. Turning our hearts from Jesus' house to his home is where it starts.

You could make Paul's prayer your prayer today (perhaps you could kneel again): "I pray that out of my Father's glorious riches he may strengthen me with power through his Spirit in my inner being, so that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith." Of course, for such a significant transformation, you will need to keep praying this prayer.

### **QB PRAYER POINTS**

1. Praise God for his deep desire to live in us and with us. Thank him for his grace in calling you to become his child and filling you with his Spirit.
2. Pray for your church – that there will be a growing desire for Jesus to govern and direct the lives of your church family. Pray for your leaders – that they will live godly lives and follow the direction of Jesus.
3. Pray for Queensland - that as our culture moves away from biblical guidelines, there will be a growing desire in Christians to follow and obey Jesus and be God's grace-filled presence in their community. Pray particularly for RI teachers and Christian schools influencing younger generations with God's truth..

# DEVOTION 3

## IMMENSE LOVE

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### Ephesians 3:14-21

<sup>14</sup>For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>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, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup>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, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

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Today we will focus on verses 17b-18, but please read the whole passage again.

I used to go to the office every day, but now I mainly work from home. This has changed my relationship with my home. It used to be the place that I visited mainly to sleep and eat and relax. Now my home is the centre of everything I do. As well as relaxing, I also develop resources at home. I have online meetings at home. I respond to emails at home. I listen to podcasts at home. My home has become the place where I live most of my life. I “dwell” there.

As we saw yesterday, this is what Paul was praying for the Ephesians. He prayed, “That Jesus would dwell in their hearts.” That Jesus would live unrestricted and uninhibited at the centre of their lives – guiding, purifying, empowering, enriching, refreshing, challenging. That through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ would be free to do whatever he wanted in their lives.

In our passage today, Paul moves on to the second part of this powerful prayer. He prays that the Ephesians will grasp the love of Christ.

Most Christians know that Jesus loves them. As Paul points out in this passage, that's the way that Christian faith starts. We have been rooted and founded in love. He uses both a botanical term (“rooted”) and an architectural term (“founded”) to make sure we understand that the roots or foundations of God's love run deep in our lives. Our faith stands firm and strong on the love of Jesus.

Love lies at the heart of the gospel. God loves us so much that he sent Jesus his only Son to this world to show us himself and to set us free. Jesus loves us so much that he was willing to give his life for ours so that we can live in eternal relationship with God. The good news that drew us to Jesus is saturated in love. We are deeply loved by God.

But according to Paul, that is just the start. There is so much more of Christ's love to grasp. Eugene Peterson calls it “the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love.” He paraphrases Paul's prayer in this evocative call: “Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights!” As Peterson makes clear, Paul is calling for a deeper appreciation and experience of Jesus' love.

It's hard to describe in words the immensity of Christ's love, but here are a few aspects of his love that you may like to focus on as you seek to grasp it better. *It is eternal.* Nothing can separate us from his love. There are no time limits, no barriers, no conditions that can restrict God's love. *It is intimate.* God is your Dad and Jesus is your brother. You are loved as a close family member. *It is global.* God's love touches everyone and everything. There is not one person or one part of creation that is not drenched in God's love. His love is huge, immense, vast, massive, and immeasurable.

Why is it so difficult for us to grasp the magnificent and profound love of God? Why did Paul have to pray for this? Maybe it's because we live in a broken world in which God's love is not always obvious to us. Maybe it's because we've never experienced such love from the people close to us. Maybe it's because we struggle to love ourselves and therefore can't believe that God could love us so much. Whatever the reasons, our lack of understanding of God's love is a barrier that needs to be broken down if we are to see God do the impossible.

Take some time to meditate on and soak in God's love. Pray that you will grasp the immensity of his love both for you and for all his creation. Let Jesus saturate you with his love. Reading Scriptures like Romans 8:31-39 or Psalm 139 may help.

### **QB PRAYER POINTS**

1. Praise God for his immense love for you and for his world.
2. Pray for your church – that your church family will both deeply grasp God's love for them and show this love in the way they interact and serve each other.
3. Pray for Queensland - that the community will see God's love through our lives and that Queenslanders will become aware that they are deeply loved by God. Pray for your “neighbours” – those you live and work with.

# DEVOTION 4

## EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE

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### Ephesians 3:14-21

<sup>14</sup>For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>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, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup>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, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

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Today we will focus on verse 19, but please read the whole passage again.

Presently, I have eight grandchildren between the ages of 2 and 11. Fortunately, they live close by, so I get to play a small part in their lives. I am not a great babysitter. I can't change nappies and according to my wife, I'm irresponsible with children, although I see it more as adventurous. I also give them way too many sweets. But I certainly know how to play. They know that I like them, but they have no idea how much I love them. They don't know that I love cuddling them and putting them to sleep. That I even enjoy playing repetitive games or watching Bluey because I'm doing it with them. That I really look forward to their visits. That I pray for them regularly. I think they know that I enjoy spending time with them, but they don't know the depth of my love.

That's like us and God. It's hard for us to understand that God loves us immensely. As we found yesterday, it really is important that we grasp God's love. That's what Paul says: "Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights!" God's love is magnificent and the more we understand this, the more secure and free and confident we become as his children.

But in today's verse, Paul goes further. He is not only praying that the Ephesians will "grasp" the immensity of God's love (3:18), but that they will also "know" it (3:19). The word "know" refers to more than understanding. It indicates personal involvement. God's love certainly needs to be comprehended, but it also needs to be personally experienced. It needs to be felt.

My grandkids may not always understand the depth of my love, but sometimes they know it because they experience it. I can tell by their response. Eyes shining as they look at me. Whispers of "I love you grandpa" in my ear. They feel deeply loved, and naturally, in return, they love back in their own way. Of course, it melts my heart. My love has broken through into their world.

There are parallels here. We will never fully know the immensity of God's love for us while we are on earth. That's why Paul says that it "surpasses knowledge" (3:19). But we do get experiences of it. Like the proud and unemotional Scotsman crying his eyes out in my office as he experienced Jesus' love and saving grace for the first time. Like the young adult girl who had been deeply damaged by her lifestyle experiencing

forgiveness and purity and freedom at her baptism. Like the elderly guy who accepted Jesus after a rebellious life calling out hallelujah whenever I mentioned Jesus in a sermon.

God's love is something we have to experience, not just understand. As we do, our hearts are softened, our joy flourishes, our passion intensifies, our love for others expands, our trust in Jesus grows, our hope strengthens, and our peace multiplies. I hope that you've experienced this in your own life. If not, it's time. According to Paul, as we really "know" God love, we get "filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." That's an incredible outcome.

Sometimes God's love catches us unawares. We are isolated and lonely, and suddenly we sense God's loving presence. We have failed badly, and surprisingly we are bathed in the grace of Jesus. We are walking in the bush and unexpectedly we are surrounded by God's beauty. But usually, our deepest experiences (real "knowledge") of God's love come as we wait on him, confess our sin, meditate on Scripture, worship with God's family, and serve others.

Take time to personally pray with Paul (maybe on your knees), "May I know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that I may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

### **QB PRAYER POINTS**

1. Praise God for the evidence you see of his incredible love for you. Wait in his presence and meditate on the wonder of his love.
2. Pray for your church – that the love of God will not only be understood but also experienced by the church family. Pray that God will saturate your lives and relationships with his love.
3. Pray for Queensland – especially for the many in your community that are lonely or broken or depressed. Pray that God's love will break through. If you are aware of people in this situation, pray for them specifically.



# DEVOTION 5

## BEYOND YOUR WILDEST DREAMS

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### Ephesians 3:14-21

<sup>14</sup>For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>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, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup>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, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

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Today we will focus on verses 20-21, but please read the whole passage again.

Paul has finished his prayer for the Ephesians. He has prayed that they would be strengthened by the Spirit so that Jesus could be at home at the centre of their lives. He has prayed that they would grasp and experience the immense love of Jesus. As God answered these prayers, Paul knew that the Ephesians would be filled completely full of God. That's some prayer! That's some expectation!

As they heard this prayer of Paul, I can imagine the Ephesians saying, "Tell Paul he's dreaming." Maybe you feel the same way. This kind of incredible prayer will never really be answered. We're just too weak, too broken, too flawed, and too worldly. Oh God in his grace continues to work in us and through us, but it doesn't seem possible that Jesus could be in complete charge of our whole life or that we could grasp and experience God's immense love. Even if we imagine this could happen to some special Christians, we can't see it happening to us. This kind of answer to prayer is beyond our wildest dreams. It seems that it is a bold but totally unrealistic prayer. It's in the same category as praying for world peace – highly desirable but realistically unachievable in a broken world.

Paul knew that this could be the response to his prayer, so he added a final statement. This is one of the most quoted statements in the New Testament. "God can do immeasurably more than you could ever ask for or could even try to imagine" (3:20-21). In other words, he is saying that what God can do is beyond your wildest dreams. When we hear this verse, we often think of the really big stuff God does like bringing a Christian revival to China. Well God is doing these things, but it's not what Paul is talking about here. The mind-blowing actions of God that Paul is referring to are actually in us and through us (3:20) – they are "according to his power that is at work within us."

Can God transform our lives to produce a deeper desire for Jesus and a fresh appreciation and experience of his love so that we are filled full of God? Paul's response is, "Of course he can." God can do way more than that. What God can do in you and through you is beyond your wildest dreams. So stop doubting and making excuses, and start dreaming and praying and believing.

At this stage of his life, Paul had been in ministry and leadership for a long time. He was disappointed by things that were happening in many of the churches he had planted. He had seen followers of Jesus fall away

from their faith. He had suffered the frustrations of prison for years. But Paul was expectant. He had not lost his faith in what God could do, and he was ramming this home. Don't let your circumstances, frustrations and disappointments cloud your vision of what God can do in and through you. God does do miracles. God does transform lives.

I've seen this in our family. When we found out during my wife's pregnancy that our third child was to be a third boy, Deb was initially disappointed. She is a girly girl. She longed for a little daughter who would wear frilly dresses and bows in her hair, and who would become her friend. But God encouraged her with a word of prophecy that our baby boy would be a powerful spiritual blessing to many. Well as our boy grew up, this seemed highly unlikely. He was a good kid, but he just didn't seem to have a spiritual bone in his body. He particularly disliked church and worship. His life revolved around sport. We prayed that he would follow Jesus but had given up on the "powerful spiritual blessing" prophecy. Then in early high school, he went to a Christian camp and came back transformed by Jesus. The change was immediate and incredible. The sports jock became a passionate worshipper with a huge heart for God and a powerful spiritual impact on others. 20 years later, he is still the same and God is greatly using him. God in his grace did more than we could imagine.

Transformation can happen to you. May God do the impossible in you by filling you with his presence. The good thing is that you don't have to make this happen. Such miracles are not a product of your discipline and willpower. The supernatural is God's work. All you can do is ask for a work of God in and through you that will be beyond your wildest dreams.

Pray Paul's prayer once again believing that God can do immeasurably more than anything you are asking for. Pray it for your church as well.

#### **QB PRAYER POINTS**

1. Praise God for powerful things that you have seen him do. These could be recent or in the distant past. It doesn't matter. Take time to celebrate his power.
2. Pray for your church – that God will do miracles in the lives of your church family. That there will be a growing prayer, passion and expectation for the supernatural work of God.
3. Pray for Queensland – that God will do the impossible and work in revival power, renewing hearts and transforming lives. Pray for anyone that you would love to see come alive spiritually.