

DEVOTION 4

EXPERIENCING GOD'S LOVE

Ephesians 3:14-21

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

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

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.