

2 0 2 4 W E E K O F P R A Y E R

IMMEASURABLY

More



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What does it look like for God to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine within and among us?

This year, join us in prayer through this 2024 Week of Prayer resource, “Immeasurably More.” For seven days, we invite you to engage in the unhurried practice of lectio divina, sitting with the sacred words from Ephesians 4:14–21, and discovering the imago Dei in the reflections offered by those in our Covenant family.

One of the ways we have seen God do immeasurably more than we imagined has been among our high school students throughout the generations. Since 1956, the Covenant has gathered students together to help them grow in awareness of God and create meaningful connections and the opportunity to become mission friends. And with the Unite conference (formerly known as CHIC) coming up this summer, I believe God will do it again.

In this year’s prayer resource, you will hear from Tim Anderson, who has been active in youth ministry since 2010. I’m grateful for his reflections as a ministry leader who is half-Native American and half-Swedish American as he highlights how the Holy Spirit is moving among our students. We will also hear from other Covenanters in our proverbial village, including a Bible scholar, a mother and daughter, and a spiritual director, all of whom help us expand our imagination around who God is and how he is moving among us.

For God’s glory and neighbor’s good,



JANE CHAO POMEROY
DIRECTOR OF MINISTRY SERVICES FOR MAKE AND DEEPEN DISCIPLES
THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH

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.

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

EPHESIANS 3:14–21, NRSV

HOW TO PRACTICE LECTIO DIVINA WITH THIS RESOURCE

1. Find a moment with as little distractions as you're able and take a couple of deep, slow breaths.
2. Matching the pace of your breath, read Ephesians 3:14–21.
3. Pause and listen for a word, phrase, or idea that jumps out at you or touches your heart.
4. Read that day's reflection in this resource.
5. Pause again and listen.
6. Read Ephesians 3:14–21 again.
7. Taking the word, feeling, or idea you noticed, turn it into prayer as a response to God.
8. Close by sitting in silence, being attentive to God's presence.

Day 1: Grounded

BY TIM ANDERSON

**“AND THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH, AS YOU ARE BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE.”
EPHESIANS 3:17, NRSV**

As a youth pastor I’ve met a fair share of people who don’t like the word “grounded.” “Tim, I want to come to youth group, but I’m grounded so I have to ask my parents.” Similarly, when a plane is grounded it’s not going anywhere.

But when it comes to our maturity, our perspectives, or our leadership, being grounded carries healthy and positive connotations. Webster defines this use of “grounded” as “well balanced and sensible.” Well-balanced—that is exactly how I hope to live my life in Christ. Paul references this kind of respectable living in 1 Thessalonians 4:10-12. People who don’t know Jesus should be able to admire and respect the way those who ground themselves in Christ’s love live.

Through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts as followers of Jesus, we find ourselves loving in supernatural ways: grace in times of tension and conflict, humility in seasons of success, perseverance in suffering. Christ’s example doesn’t just guide us; it corrects us too.

The Spirit will convict us to apologize, change course, and refocus on the way of Jesus when we stray. We are called to point to the Savior—we ourselves are not the final agents of salvation in Scripture. While we are transformed in the Spirit to be like Jesus, we never outdo or “graduate” him.

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So we will be both an example of what Jesus is like to those around us and an example of how to humbly come back to Jesus to the world around us. As we are faithful, we will find our grounding in the love of Christ.

I invite you to do a simple examination of your soul today: Where is your conscience guiding you to change course? Is it in a relationship with a friend or family member, or perhaps a classmate or coworker? It could even be something you're holding back from God, an area that for whatever reason you just aren't ready to surrender. What is one small step you can take to respond faithfully to God in this area today?



TIM ANDERSON IS THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR OF YOUTH AND WORSHIP AT CREEKSIDE COVENANT CHURCH IN REDMOND, WASHINGTON. HE ENJOYS SPENDING TIME WITH HIS WIFE AND TWO DAUGHTERS, GOLFING, AND DEFENDING MICHAEL JORDAN IN BASKETBALL DEBATES. AS A PASTOR, HE FINDS GREAT JOY IN SEEING YOUNG PEOPLE BUILD A FOUNDATION OF FAITH IN CHRIST WHILE FINDING THEIR OWN PLACE IN THE CHURCH.

Day 2: Where Hope Lies

BY TIANA COLEMAN

Life has been hard. Unlike the apostle Paul's, my difficulties haven't consisted of chains and being persecuted for the gospel's sake. My life has been hard because our fifteen-year-old autistic son is really struggling. Daily life with him is increasingly unmanageable, and as his parents we have come to the realization that we are unable to care for him at home. My heart is heavy, and I find myself wondering when we will get to what I think is the good stuff—the “immeasurably more than we ask or imagine.”

Instead, the asking and imagining is focused on parenting while exhausted, getting through a work day, and questioning what comes next for our son.

My life has always been full of irony, and it's often in those moments that I learn a lot. Being asked to reflect on these verses was no accident. As I have reread this passage, it has led me to a deeper awareness of where hope lies.

Paul writes, “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” (vv. 16-17). Even at the very core of who I am, God is with me and providing for me. Verses 17b-19 speak of the abundance of God's love for us. This amazing love is beyond anything we truly understand. Yet it is this love that is so available to me, my husband, and my children even on the darkest of days.

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Being enveloped by this love reminds me that we are not alone as we walk in heartbreaking circumstances. Being upheld by this love invites hope into the imprisoned place where Paul was, into my home where our family is struggling, and wherever you may be on your journey. Being surrounded by this love and being completely filled by God makes it possible to believe that even with all the uncertainty in life, God is “able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.”



TIANA COLEMAN IS THE ASSOCIATE PASTOR AT MISSIO DEI UPTOWN IN CHICAGO AND A STUDENT AT NORTH PARK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN THE SCHOOL OF RESTORATIVE ARTS PROGRAM. TIANA AND DAVE ARE THE PARENTS OF TWO TEENAGERS. BAKING IS HER LOVE LANGUAGE. TIANA IS ALSO DEEPLY COMMITTED TO JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION.

Day 3: Wisdom & Intelligence

BY TIM ANDERSON

“I PRAY THAT YOU MAY HAVE THE POWER TO COMPREHEND,
WITH ALL THE SAINTS, WHAT IS THE BREADTH AND LENGTH
AND HEIGHT AND DEPTH, AND TO KNOW THE LOVE OF CHRIST
THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE, SO THAT YOU MAY BE FILLED
WITH ALL THE FULLNESS OF GOD.”
EPHESIANS 3:18–19, NRSV

“**M**ind-blowing,” “incredible,” “insane!” Advertising and youth culture use a lot of exclamations—life is so exciting when you’re young. But in reality, something phenomenal is happening in our time. Our youth are experiencing an age of unprecedented access to information of every kind. Yes, artificial intelligence is no longer science fiction.

As information overload surely brings more options, more intelligence, and more awareness, does it also bring more wisdom? As our world and our youth are more saturated with knowledge, do they grow in their ability to discern and understand the times and circumstances around them?

Paul prays that the Ephesians would be redirected in their focus—that they would not only know facts about God but that they would comprehend the significance of Christ’s love so they might experience the fullness of God.

The understanding that God is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent gives us a glimpse into the unlimited power of God. It also points to God’s transcendence: At a certain point, not far outside of our ability to understand, we simply lose our ability to grasp the infinite qualities of a holy God.

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Within that mystery it's a profound gift not only to be able to connect with God but to live with God abiding in our hearts through the Spirit. Discipleship becomes a journey of comprehending step-by-step the profound goodness and love of God.

While this age has an overwhelming amount of information to process, especially for our young people, God's love is an education in and of itself. Pointing the next generation to this mystery is not only a worthy calling; it is essential in the life of the Church.

In the midst of this challenge our story becomes the "101 level," the introductory course for those outside the church and new, or young, believers. Even if we are considered "unwise" to the world, we have knowledge of a spiritual matter to impart if we have the Spirit of God in our hearts. You have a story. Share it!

Day 4: Trust

BY HEATHER NOVAK WITH NATALIE NOVAK

Natalie Joy was in second grade when Covid closed schools. Learning happened in small group gatherings or from our home. By fourth grade, the “normal” routine of classroom learning and homework returned, but the social aspect was different. Natalie didn’t fit in anymore.

She was bullied. Sometimes because she was smart, sometimes because she failed a test. She was bullied for not having a phone or social media access. Every day kids found a way to make her doubt herself and lose her joy.

Fifth grade was worse. The bullying continued. Nightmares and self-doubt plagued her. Her best friend abandoned her. At the end of fifth grade Natalie lay on her bed crying into a pillow, yelling at God, “Why do I have to endure so much loss? I don’t know if I can even trust you.”

As her mom, I walked with Natalie through this tough place. Loss and struggle is hard for adults, but I think it’s harder for kids. Through the years, I have come to know that Christ is strengthening me through his power. I know that we are being prayed for by others. I may not understand it, but I trust that he loves me. Kids don’t always have that insight.

When I asked Natalie to reflect on fourth and fifth grades and how God is moving within her, she said, “I was not focused on God before. But all the losses and bullies made me lean closer to him. It helped me understand a bit of who he is and what he is doing. This time of struggle has given me confidence in

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God and in myself. I know I am to impact others and stand up for them. And I need to lean on him more than my friends.”

I have watched these promises from God work their way into Natalie’s life. The challenges persist. But Natalie knows God is her strength and that he has a plan for her life. She wants others to know that God loves them so much. Even if she doesn’t understand the depth of that love, she wants to pass it on. She knows God created her to love others and that, through her, he can do immeasurably more!



NATALIE IS THE YOUNGEST OF THREE KIDS. SHE IS IN SIXTH GRADE AND LOVES TO SPREAD JOY TO THOSE AROUND HER. SHE IS PASSIONATE ABOUT HORSES, ANIMALS, AND PEOPLE WHO HURT.

HEATHER TEACHES COOKING AND NUTRITION CLASSES. SHE FOCUSES ON HER FAMILY AND FRIENDS, SERVING OTHERS, AND PRAYING. NATURE, SWIMMING, AND SLOWLY MOVING THROUGH LIFE BRING HER PLEASURE.

HEATHER AND NATALIE NOVAK ATTEND FAITH COVENANT CHURCH IN BURNSVILLE, MINNESOTA.

Day 5: Beyond Our Very Words— How God Answers Prayers

BY MAX LEE

We often miss the fact that Ephesians 3:14-21 is only two sentences in the original Greek text. Our English Bibles break up the sentences into smaller parts to make for easier reading, but something does get lost in translation when we divide the passage unevenly this way. The first sentence (vv. 14-19) is a single prayer for the church, and the second (vv. 20-21) is a doxology of praise to the God who empowers his people.

The Apostle Paul begins his prayer literally on his knees. And he stays there. Paul says, “I remain on bended knee before the Father” (v. 14; all translations are mine). Prayer requires perseverance, much like the persistent widow before an unrighteous judge (Luke 18:1-8), and so Paul offers this petition with a sense of urgency. He prays that God’s family be grounded in (literally “build its foundation upon”) the love of Christ (v. 17). God’s people should know this love so intimately and powerfully (v. 18) that it swallows up all our worries, our sufferings, our anger, our tears, and anything else we bring before the Lord (v. 19) until the fullness of God himself dwells within us and renews our inner selves. We become strengthened in our faith. In other words, God’s love—much like his grace—is sufficient for us (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:9).

As we begin our day in prayer, let us take up a posture of humility before the Lord. Whether on our knees or standing with our head facing the heavens and hands raised in worship, let us cry out to our heavenly Father and say, “Lord, I surrender. I surrender my demands, my hurts, my desires and needs. Instead, I hang onto you! You’re all I need. You are sufficient. You

are more than enough.” Will you begin your prayer trusting in the goodness of God?

Let us end our prayer with a doxology of praise. Let us worship God not just for his goodness but for his power. Our prayers need not be perfectly articulated. We don’t have to worry about getting our petitions just right in fear of leaving something out. Let us confidently pray, “Lord, you know me. You understand my petition. If I asked for too little, then answer my prayers beyond my very words, even beyond my imagination!” God will do all things according to his good and perfect will for us (Romans 12:2). He is able! Praise God!

**An English Translation of Ephesians 3:14-21
as Two Sentences**

The Prayer (vv. 14-19)

And so, I remain on bended knee before the Father, from whom every family in the heavens and on the earth is named:

so that he may grant to us by his power according to the wealth of his glory (this petition):

that you may be made mighty in your innermost person through his Spirit

that Christ dwell in your hearts through faith
as you become rooted and grounded
in love.

that you have strength enough with all the saints to grasp

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what is the breadth and length and
height and depth (of this love)

to know intimately the love of Christ which
exceeds beyond (any kind of) knowing (or any
experience)

in order that you may be filled with all the fullness of
God.

The Doxology (vv. 20-21)

To the One who has the power to do exceedingly beyond anything we ask or imagine according to the power which works within us,

To him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for every generation, forever and ever, Amen!



MAX LEE IS THE PAUL W. BRANDEL PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL STUDIES AT NORTH PARK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN CHICAGO, ILLINOIS. ORDAINED AS A BAPTIST MINISTER, HE HAS SERVED IN PASTORAL MINISTRY FOR OVER 25 YEARS AND CONTINUES TO PREACH AND TEACH FOR SEVERAL LOCAL CONGREGATIONS IN THE WIDER CHICAGO AREA.

Day 6: Beloved

BY IZABELA CORMIER

The first time I had the power “to comprehend... [the] breadth, and length, and depth, and height... [of] the love of Christ” (vv. 18-19, KJV) was at age 30, a few days after giving birth to my daughter.

I would have said that I had experienced God’s immense love much earlier and several times over my life before that. Perhaps sometimes we are only made aware of deficits in retrospect, after experiencing an abundance like never before. Such was the simple moment in my living room when my stone heart was softened.

I was sporting my casual, new mom outfit: a messy bun, nursing top, and too-big sweatpants. The couch cushion on my left supported a tray of snacks and a large glass of water. To my right was a tall window, curtains drawn.

Glancing out the window, both during daytime and at night, became a new spiritual practice for me during those early weeks of motherhood. At night, the moon would guide my prayerful thoughts. The subdued light would keep me company as I awoke every two hours to a hungry newborn—a reminder of a God who never sleeps but is always with me.

One particular morning, I was glancing out the living room window at a perfectly cornflower-blue sky, with opaque, white, streaking clouds adding dimension. The beauty transported me into a prayerful state.

On top of me was this tiny creature, so new to this atmosphere. We had already been sitting for long hours together, just snuggling. Time didn't matter. As I glanced from her to the window and sky beyond, tears snuck past my defenses. I became overwhelmed with emotion, too intense to even name. It was a feeling and a knowing all at once. I was utterly and silently at peace. A state of tranquility that I had never known became my new reality.

Suddenly I realized that I was talking.

You are so loved.

You are the most amazing thing.

You are just right.

I love you. I love you more than everything. You don't even have to do anything, just simply be.

You, resting here with me, is enough. I don't even know who you will become! But I know I love you and I always will.

As I inhaled that fresh baby scent, I continued to relish that moment. After a little while, I reviewed the words that I had spoken to my daughter. Then I felt that familiar Holy Spirit nudge, as if my Creator was saying to me, Go ahead and say those words again. But this time, imagine it is me saying them to you.

I recognize that I have trouble receiving compliments or believing that I deserve any good word spoken over me. In the

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past, extending the grace and compassion of God to others felt easy—but applying it to myself was almost impossible. Gratefully, this time was different. I did what the Spirit prompted me to do. I said the words out loud and heard them as if God were saying them to me. AND I RECEIVED THEM!

No amount of effort on my part could have made me understand the greatness and fullness of the love of God. It was pure grace. But now, two and a half years later, my innermost being is still settled in that state of deep peace and anchored in knowing “the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.”

I invite you to think of someone you love dearly. Imagine yourself unashamedly telling them about your love for them. What words would you use? What sensations do you experience? What emotions arise? Linger in that space for a moment. Now imagine that God is expressing God’s love for you. What might your Creator lovingly say to you?



IZABELA CORMIER COMPLETED HER TRAINING THROUGH THE WEBORG CENTER FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AT NORTH PARK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, AND SHE IS AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF COVENANT SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS. THROUGH HER MINISTRY, PORCH SWING SOUL CARE, IZABELA OFFERS VIRTUAL SOUL CARE RESOURCES, SPECIALIZED LISTENING GROUPS, WORKSHOPS/ RETREATS, AND INDIVIDUAL SPIRITUAL DIRECTION SESSIONS. SHE ATTENDS CANAL STREET CHURCH, A COVENANT CONGREGATION IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA.

Day 7: Timeless

BY TIM ANDERSON

“TO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH AND IN CHRIST JESUS TO ALL GENERATIONS, FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.”
EPHESIANS 3:21, NRSV

The Holy Spirit guided Paul with two simple tools to change the world: prayer and writing.

Through prayer Paul grew in his faith and comprehension of God. Through prayer he edified and lifted up Christ's Church. Through prayer he interceded on behalf of leaders and communities of faith. Through prayer Paul persevered through shipwreck, persecution, imprisonment, and illness.

Through inspired writing, Paul instructed many churches that he both helped start and train up in the gospel. He wrote to his friends, and he wrote in response to his opponents who were spreading false teaching. If all he had done was instruct those immediately around him, that would have been fruitful and meaningful work.

But Paul's writing has been instructing churches for millennia. It wasn't his prowess or intellect, his rhetoric or rationale that propelled his writing through history. It was through the power of the Spirit that reminded Jesus's disciples of his teaching through the centuries through Paul's letters. This was a part of Christ's promise to his friends at the end of the Gospel of John. He would not leave them alone but sent them an Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who would remind them of everything he taught.

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The “immeasurably more” in this sense is that the Holy Spirit worked through human means of communication—the writing of letters and compilation of writing—to convey the gospel throughout history.

Paul likely never had a true inclination of the spread and impact of his writings.

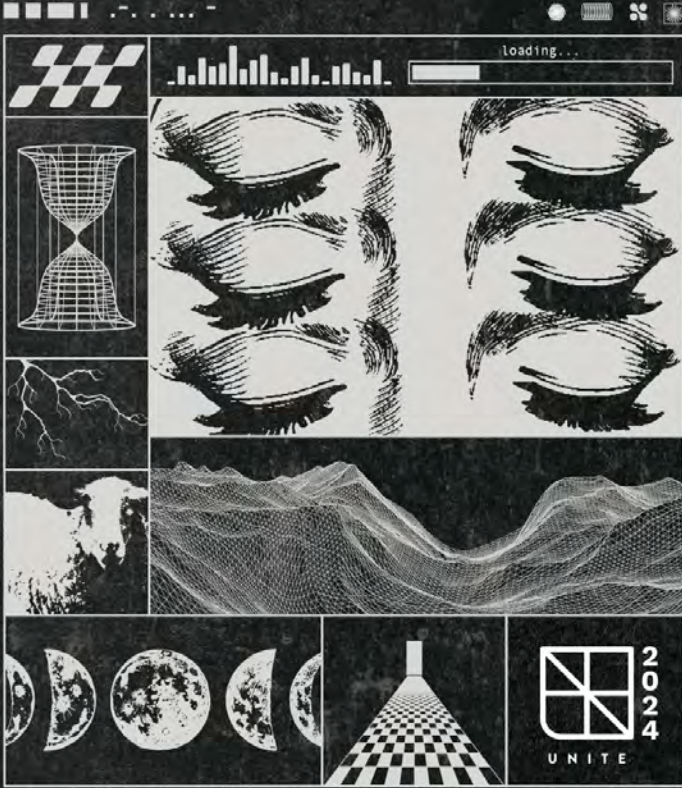
Read that again: Paul never witnessed the true impact of his own work. He was faithful to the work to which he was called, and the Lord exponentially multiplied the reach of his efforts.

When God promises to bless Israel’s faithfulness for thousands of generations in Deuteronomy 7, he is ultimately demonstrating through the writing of Paul how one act of faithfulness can stretch across 2,000 years of history.

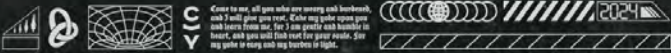
Your faithfulness to your family, to your friends, to the Church—this is faithfulness that is not simply an act of obedience but a generational gift. This is the treasure you store up for others around you and will ultimately be your greatest legacy as you walk through your time here on earth following Christ. What will your legacy be?

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