

Immeasurably More Devotions



“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.” – Eph. 3:20-21

DAY 1: No Limits . . . and More

April 2

“I pray that you . . . may have power . . . to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ . . .” (Ephesians 3:18)

“How wide and long and high and deep.” When you read that phrase it may prompt you to go to the tool box and get the tape measure. After all, if you want to know how long or wide something is you measure it. Is it 26 inches or 26 1/8 or 26 3/4? What is the exact measurement? After all, the old adage is “measure twice, cut once.”

But there are some things that are . . . well, immeasurable. There are some things that no tape measure is long enough for. There are some things that you can't get your arms around. They are beyond measure. If that is the case, then what Paul is praying for in the verse above is nearly impossible. How can you grasp how wide, long, high, and deep something is if it is beyond measure?

Clearly the point Paul is making is to simply emphasize the greatness, the vastness of God's love. In a world where we often put conditions and limits on love, there are no conditions or limits on God's love.

Human reason may suggest loving someone up to a point, but God's love goes way beyond that. Therefore, you are loved “immeasurably” by God. And because of His immeasurable love, God wants you to grasp (as much as is humanly possible) how wide and long and high and deep is His love for you.

Knowing (or at least attempting to know) the immeasurable love God has for you is the place to begin as you consider a capital campaign for your church and how you may be a part of it.

It is easy to put limits on what you think you can do (or give). But the place to begin is to realize that in loving you, in saving you, in forgiving you; God has no limits.

So as you begin this process, pray about how wide and long and high and deep your response might be to Him whose love for you is immeasurably more than anything you can ask or imagine.

“. . . and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:19)

The foundational verse for this capital campaign process developed by Capital Funding Services is Ephesians 3:20-21. However, leading up to those verses the apostle Paul offers a prayer. In that prayer, he prays that you would “. . . *know this love that surpasses knowledge . . .*” (3:19). Well, to “know” something that “surpasses knowledge” is an oxymoron. How can you know something that is beyond knowing?

Actually, Paul isn’t suggesting a knowledge here that is merely “information” or head knowledge. Rather, to know the love of Christ is much deeper than that. It is a knowledge that is rooted and grounded in God’s love for you. Therefore, knowledge isn’t enough. Love is equally, if not more, important.

As you work with the capital campaign at your church you may have “knowledge” of why this campaign is taking place. You may have knowledge as to the needs that exist in this ministry. You may be well informed as to the case statement and reasons for this funding effort. Likewise, you obviously have knowledge of your personal financial situation and the degree to which you can personally support and contribute to this effort. Knowledge is essential. Knowledge is helpful.

But sometimes knowledge is not enough. What about love?

Do you love this ministry? Do you love what more this ministry will be able to do? Do you love the fact that lives are touched and people are blessed as a result of what takes place in this ministry? Do you love that God loves you and God loves the people who are (and will be) touched by this ministry? Do you love that God has blessed you with resources that He can use to bless those He loves through this ministry?

Knowledge is good. Knowledge is helpful. But sometimes knowledge is not enough. What about love, God’s love, that is immeasurably more than anything you can ever “know.”

DAY 3: Imagining . . . and More

April 4

“No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him – these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:9-10)

When you think of “imagining,” you may think of “dreaming” or “envisioning.” You explore the possibilities. You see the potential.

The capital campaign that you are involved in began in the “imagination” of a leader or a group of leaders. Someone, somewhere said to someone else, “What if we did . . . ?” With those words, a dream was shared. Plans were discussed. Prayers were spoken. *“For the sake of God’s mission, as a way to expand our ministry efforts here, what if . . . ?”* Here a dream was born. A vision was cast.

But the apostle Paul makes it clear that such a dream given to man begins with God. “No eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

That’s what is exciting about a capital campaign experience. This opportunity to expand ministry was born in the heart of God and given to His people. That’s why we believe that a capital campaign is a spiritual experience. Maybe “no eye has seen, nor ear has heard, nor heart has imagined,” but God’s Spirit has seen and heard and imagined. And now God’s Spirit is at work in and through you in this process so you can begin to see what God sees.

And what God sees is what you want to begin to “imagine.” To “imagine” or “envision” what can happen in this ministry and in the lives of the people involved begins by asking for God’s direction. You are encouraged to pray for God’s direction throughout this campaign. Pray for God’s direction on this ministry. Pray for God’s direction on the ministry expansion you are considering. Pray for God’s direction as each person begins the spiritual journey of considering their own gift toward this campaign.

So often as the campaign itself unfolds, people pray and process what all is going on until they finally begin to “see” it all for themselves. What God is doing may even lead to an “aha” moment.

Maybe no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has imagined; but God has. So after “imagining” the work of God’s Spirit, may you begin to “see” how God can do “immeasurably more” through you and your ministry.

DAY 4: Informing . . . and More

April 5

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures . . .”
(1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

“They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, ‘It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.’” (Luke 24:32-34)

There is no other information more worthy to tell others than the message of the resurrection. In the first verse above, the apostle Paul passes on the message of the resurrection as that which is of “first importance.” But what is noteworthy here is not only the information Paul shares – the resurrection – but the very fact that **he passed it on**. Paul knew that there is no way for people to receive this “good news” unless he (or someone else) informs others.

Paul goes on to say that after the resurrection Jesus appeared first to Peter, then to the Twelve, then to 500 others, then to James, then to all the apostles and then finally to Paul himself. As Paul describes the various appearances of Christ, more and more people became aware of the Lord’s resurrection. As Christ appeared to more and more people the word spread and as the word spread, more and more people could declare their faith in the risen Christ.

But it’s not just what is communicated that is important, it is also how the information is communicated. In reading the verses from Luke, after the Emmaus disciples witnessed the resurrected Jesus, you can’t help but detect joy and excitement in their voice as they spoke about Christ to others. *“It is true! The Lord has risen,”* they said. The disciples embodied the sense of hope and promise that the resurrection offers.

A capital campaign is an opportunity to inform others about what is happening in your ministry. It’s an opportunity to spread the word, to tell the story, to embody the enthusiasm of how God is at work to further advance your ministry efforts.

Maybe ask yourself, “How can I effectively and enthusiastically share the story of what God is doing here?”

DAY 5: Inspiring . . . and More

April 6

“And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty well up in rich generosity.” (2 Corinthians 8:1-2)

There is always the opportunity to put a certain “spin” on why people do what they do. Maybe all too often we tend to question motives. Do people do what they do in order to draw attention to themselves or to encourage and inspire others? Good question.

In the above Scripture, the apostle Paul begins to address the Corinthian church by making a comparison to the actions of the Macedonian church. In an effort to collect some financial resources to assist the hard pressed Jerusalem Christians, Paul says that the Macedonian Christians responded with “rich generosity.”

But now in talking about the Macedonians “rich generosity” was Paul bragging about them? Hardly. After all, what was so unique about the Macedonians is that their “rich generosity” flowed out of their “extreme poverty.” Paul mentions the Macedonians to the Corinthians in order to inspire them and encourage them to take similar action.

Inspiring and encouraging others. This is such an essential part of any capital campaign process. People don’t have to know what others might be doing. However, on those occasions when someone might share their spiritual journey that has lead them to a particular commitment or pledge to a campaign, it is always intended to inspire and encourage others.

How might the actions and faith of others encourage you?

How might you encourage others through your actions and faith?

As you encourage others and as they encourage you, God can use such encouragement to bring about immeasurably more than you or anyone else can do on your own.

DAY 6: The Fullness of God . . . and More April 7

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6:38)

When something is full, it is full. There is no room for more.

Years ago I gave a children’s message in church where I had a glass jar filled with ping pong balls. There were enough balls in the jar to fill it to the top. I also had another glass jar filled half way with rice. I asked the children if they thought that I could fit all the ping pong balls in the jar with the rice. They quickly concluded that I couldn’t. They were right. There wouldn’t be enough room for all the ping pong balls in the jar of rice.

But then I took the jar partially filled with rice and poured the rice into the glass jar with the ping pong balls. The rice filled in the open spaces around the balls. Consequently, both the rice and the ping pong balls fit in the jar together. There was enough room for both.

Sometimes you can’t imagine how you can fit one more thing into something that is already full. Sometimes our lives seem so busy that we can’t imagine adding on one more responsibility. There aren’t enough hours in the day.

Likewise, perhaps there are times when you can’t imagine responding to one more financial request. Your financial resources may be maxed out as it is. But then someone comes along and invites you to participate in this worthy effort. And it is a worthy effort. Can you do it? Even if your immediate answer is “No” or “I’m not sure,” how about rereading Luke 6:38? You see, this is a prime example of how God is able to do “immeasurably more” than anything we can.

If this ministry you are a part of is indeed a worthy effort, and if the word of God challenges you to “. . . *give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over . . .*.” then the fullness of God in your life and the fullness of God from your life will be God’s doing. God can always do more than you can do. And thank God that He does.

Pray today for what God might want to do in this capital campaign to display His fullness to you and through you.

DAY 7: Healing . . . and More

April 8

“Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . He said to the paralytic, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.’” (Mark 2:9-11)

When the paralytic’s friends brought him to Jesus, they came hoping Jesus would heal their friend. In fact, they were so sure that Jesus could heal him that when they realized they could not get their paralyzed friend into the house where Jesus was, they dismantled the roof and lowered him down. These men believed without a doubt that Jesus could heal their friend and they were not going to leave until He did.

But what happened after they lowered their paralyzed friend down from the roof top was something these four friends did not expect. *“When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven.’”* Forgiveness? They didn’t come seeking forgiveness, they came seeking healing!

Jesus knew why they came. Jesus knew the man couldn’t walk. Jesus knew He could heal the man. But Jesus also knew the deeper need the man had. It’s not that there was specific sin in the man’s life that caused him to be paralyzed, but paralyzed or not, because of the man’s sins he needed God’s forgiveness.

It’s the same for us all. It’s why Jesus came here. It’s why John the Baptist said of Jesus, *“Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).

The paralyzed man received healing but he also received immeasurably more – forgiveness.

When Jesus said to him, *“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home,”* the man took up his mat and walked. The man was healed. He was able to walk. He was healed *and* forgiven. Praise God! It was more than he imagined. It was more than his friends asked for. It was “immeasurably more.”

As you work on this campaign process in your ministry, pray that the Lord will provide immeasurably more through this effort. Not just more than enough money to build your building or expand your ministry. But how about also lives transformed, hope renewed, faith inspired, and more.

As God reveals results that are immeasurably more, may you respond as the people who witnessed the paralyzed man who was healed: *“This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’”* Praise be to God!

“Jesus said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.’” (John 4:10)

It was the heat of the day . . . high noon. No one went to the well to draw water at noon, it was too hot. No one is there that time of the day, but that is why she went then. She didn't want to see anyone. She was tired of all the gossip and half truths that others spoke about her. Yes, she had made some poor choices in her life. Choices she wasn't necessarily proud of but she couldn't undo them. Did people really have to keep reminding her of her mistakes again and again?

But just when she thought she would be there alone, it turns out she isn't alone. A man shows up. A Jewish man. He asks for a drink. A drink, really? She's a Samaritan. He's a Jew. Jews don't associate with Samaritans.

But this man does.

However Jesus wasn't there that day to simply satisfy His thirst. He was actually there to satisfy her thirst. But to do it, He had more to offer than a cup of cold water; much more!

Jesus knew all about her life. He knew about her past. He knew about her present.

But regardless of all that, Jesus had something He wanted to offer her – Himself. And when Jesus offers Himself, He offers forgiveness for what has gone wrong, freedom from what isn't going right, and a fresh beginning to start over again. *“The water I give you will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life”* (John 4:14). Indeed, the Samaritan woman received much more that day than a cup of cold water.

How about you? Perhaps there may be much more that the Lord wants to give to you than you have received in your life so far.

Maybe there is more that the Lord wants to do in your capital campaign than what your church has planned.

Maybe there is much more the Lord wants you to give toward this campaign than what you have considered so far.

After all, there really is no limit to what flows from the “living water” God offers.

DAY 9: Saying “Thanks” . . . and More

April 10

“One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked Him – and he was a Samaritan.” (Luke 17:15-16)

In those days, leprosy was a dreaded disease. It still is today. Not only is it dreaded because of what it does to a person’s skin – the pain, the discomfort, the unsightliness of it – but because it often necessitates isolation. A leprous person (at least in those days) was not to be in contact with others. They were to keep their distance. And not only were they to keep their distance, but when anyone came within a reasonable radius they were to announce that they were “unclean.”

How dreaded.

One day Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. As He approached a certain village, He encountered ten men with leprosy. In keeping with tradition, they kept their distance. But from a distance, they didn’t call out “Unclean, Unclean;” instead they called out, *“Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”* (Luke 17:13). These men apparently knew that if they had any hope for healing, it was with Jesus.

Without hesitation, Jesus ordered them to be clean. He didn’t use those exact words, but by the fact that He sent them off to the priest implies their healing. So they went. And they were cleansed. We can only assume that from there they went off and celebrated their healing.

But one of the ten returned to offer thanks.

For the one who returned to thank Jesus, we know he actually received more than the others. Yes, they all received the same cleansing and healing. But for the man who returned and fell at Jesus’ feet thanking Him, the circle was complete.

A request for a gift that is given is always to be followed by a “thank you.” And when that “thank you” happens there is a greater, fuller embracing of the gift. When a “thank you” is expressed you actually experience “immeasurably more” from the gift. When Jesus said to the man, *“Raise and go; your faith has made you well”* (Luke 17:19). Jesus acknowledged that the man’s “thanks” was an expression of his faith.

How about you? Have you received any gifts lately? What kind of gifts have you received from God in your life? Maybe too many to count. But go ahead and try. Because when you recognize the gifts God gives you in your life and thank Him for them, it’s not only an expression of your faith, it’s an immeasurably more experience of the gift received.

How can you express your “thanks” for the many gifts you have received in your life? Maybe consider a gift to your ministry’s capital campaign as a display of your faith and an expression of your thanks?

“‘Weren’t there three men that we tied up and threw into the fire?’ They replied, ‘Certainly, O king.’ He said, ‘Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, unbound and unharmed, and the fourth looks like a son of the gods.’” (Daniel 3:24-25)

Daniel, along with his three friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were men of principle. Although their faith was tested several times, they did not waver; even when they were challenged to either worship King Nebuchadnezzar or be thrown into a blazing hot fire. Against the threat of a fiery death, these men would not denounce their faith in the one true God.

There has been many a Sunday School lesson on this story about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego as well as songs that children have learned about these three men. It’s a powerful story about God’s protection. Some might say it’s a “nice” story about three men in a fiery furnace. A powerful story, yes. A nice story, not at all.

Let’s make no mistake, Nebuchadnezzar was a mean man. He was furious with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He threatened them with death. But not just death, burning them to death. When they insisted on worshipping God and not him, he had the furnace *“heated seven times hotter than usual”* (Daniel 3:19). The flames were so hot that the men who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fire were killed in the process.

But much to Nebuchadnezzar’s surprise, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego did not die. The very clothes they were wearing were not even singed by the flames. Their lives were spared. How? Because there was someone in the flames with them, protecting them – God Himself.

While these three men believed in God, this kind of protection may have been much more, immeasurably more, than what they were expecting. It was certainly way more than King Nebuchadnezzar expected. This may have been the very image the prophet Isaiah had in mind when he wrote, *“When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze”* (Isaiah 43:2b).

What kind of flames or trials are you facing in your life?

When you consider the capital campaign that you have been asked to be a part of, what kind of challenge does that place before you? How easy is it to think that you have to “go it alone.” But the lesson Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego learned is about God’s presence, power, and protection in the face of a great challenge. In obedience to God, walk into the challenge of this campaign and trust that God will be there. Trust that God will be there to reveal to you immeasurably more than anything you could ever ask or imagine.

“So the king asked me, ‘Why does your face look so sad?’ . . . I said to the king . . . ‘Why should my face not look sad when the city where my fathers are buried lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?’” (Nehemiah 2:2-3)

Nehemiah was a “cupbearer” to the king. It was his responsibility to protect the king against poisoning. As such, it would seem that Nehemiah was nothing more than a household servant. But he was actually more than that. Nehemiah was a high-ranking official in the Persian government. He was a trusted and influential advisor to the king. He had significant status among ruling officials in his day.

The book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament opens with Nehemiah receiving the disturbing news about the present conditions in Jerusalem. Despite the work of Ezra who assisted with the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the city was left unsecured. The walls protecting the city were in shambles. The city and her people were exposed and easy prey to enemies. Nehemiah was overcome with grief by all this.

One night the king inquired why Nehemiah appeared so sad. Nehemiah told him what he had learned about Jerusalem. When the king asked what Nehemiah wanted to do about this, Nehemiah was so bold as to request a leave of absence to go and assist the rebuilding of the city’s walls. The king was gracious in responding to his request and gave him the time off to do this.

But that’s not all the king gave Nehemiah. Nehemiah asked for “letters” from the king that would provide safe passage as he traveled the 1,000 miles to Jerusalem. The king provided the letters to secure his safe travel.

Nehemiah asked for a letter that would make available some of the king’s timber to be used in the rebuilding of the wall. The king provided the letter to grant permission for the timber also.

But then in addition to what Nehemiah asked of the king, *“The king had also sent army officers and cavalry with me”* (Nehemiah 2:9b).

Nehemiah began his conversation with the king by simply asking for some time off. But the king graciously gave him more than that . . . much more.

When you go to God in prayer on behalf of something that is on your heart, in His own way and in His own time, the Lord answers that prayer. But how many times have you noticed that in addition to that answer, you received more than you asked for?

How about in your capital campaign? As you pray about the Lord’s blessing on this process, do you see how He is answering those prayers maybe in ways far greater than you asked?

While praying about the kind of gift you will offer to this effort, are you open to the Lord leading you to make a gift greater than you’ve been considering?

Maybe this is one of those times when the Lord is ready to give you more . . . much more than you ask.

DAY 12: Riches . . . and More

April 13

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Often times people aspire to achieve riches. They work hard. They invest wisely. They save prudently. All so that they may bask in the comfort of their richness.

Rarely, if ever, do you see someone start at a point of wealth and methodically, purposefully divest themselves of such wealth – to the point of poverty – in order for someone else to benefit from their wealth. That would be the great reversal.

But that’s what Jesus did.

Jesus left the mansions of heaven – the glorious splendor of being in the eternal presence of the Father and the Spirit, being in the presence of the cherubim and elders that surround the throne of God. He set it all aside . . . for awhile. He set it aside in order to come to earth. He was born a man. He lived among humanity. He touched people’s wounds. He walked their paths. He healed their hurts. He even died your death. He exchanged His holiness for your sinfulness. *“Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4-5).*

In doing all of that, Jesus divested Himself of His “riches” . . . so that you could become rich.

And so, rich you are.

The world tends to measure richness in terms of financial and/or material accumulation. And while you have received various measures of such worldly wealth, there is yet a greater richness you have received – forgiveness, salvation, a promised inheritance in heaven. And yet, one day, as a result of God’s grace and mercy in Christ, you will find yourselves in the very real presence of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit – eternally. You will encounter six winged seraphs and look upon the holy of holies in all their splendor.

To live life today with faith in the promise that one day all the “glorious riches” (Ephesians 3:16) of God will be yours, is a richness that surpasses anything imaginable this side of heaven.

As you consider the material wealth at your disposal today, and as you reflect on the spiritual wealth you have now and for all eternity, there is no comparison. You are indeed richly blessed!

As your church considers the capital campaign before you and as you pray about your opportunity to offer your generosity towards it, consider all of your riches – material and spiritual. As you pray about that, keep in mind that *“. . . yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).*

Oh how rich you truly are!

“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.” (Romans 1:16)

Power. So often we think of “power” as something that belongs to someone or something else. The electrical lines have power in them that you dare not touch. A category 5 hurricane with winds of 150 mph or more has power that you cannot control. A train traveling down the tracks or a plane taxiing down the runway towards lift off are too powerful to stop on your own.

But what about the power within you? The apostle Paul prays in Ephesians 3:16 that “. . . *He (God) may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being . . .*” Here God prays that **His** power would be at work in you. Is that possible?

According to Romans 1:16 it is. Here Paul recognizes that the very gospel itself is “power.” In fact, the word that Paul uses here for power in Greek is the word that gives us the English word “dynamite.” Paul realizes that the power of the gospel explodes the grip of sin on your life and in exchange gives you the richness of God’s love. That is the kind of power at work **in you** because of the gospel that is brought to you.

Just imagine what “that” kind of power can accomplish: sins forgiven, lives transformed, peace restored, hope renewed. That’s powerful!

As you find yourself involved in this capital campaign, you may find yourself wondering (worrying) about whether your church will be able to meet its goals. You may be wondering (worrying) about whether there is really anything you can contribute to this effort. But as you reflect on these concerns, remember the power that is at work within you – God’s power.

God’s power; where God became man in Jesus.

God’s power; where Christ came from heaven to earth, from earth to the cross, from the cross to the grave, and from the grave back to heaven.

God’s power; where Christ took your sin and exchanged it for His righteousness.

God’s power; where there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

God’s power; where, because of Christ, you are a new creation.

As you reflect on God’s power **within** you, look for how God’s power can be displayed **through** you as part of this capital campaign effort. As you do that, watch for God to be at work in ways that are immeasurably more than you could have ever imagined.

“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When He finished, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’” (Luke 11:1)

Have you ever looked hungrily at another table in a restaurant and asked the waiter about what they were eating? Have you ever seen a physically fit person exercising and wish you could look like that? Have you ever spoken to someone who seemed to have a glow of calm, even in the middle of difficult times, and wondered how they found tranquility during their storm?

The common dynamic in each of the examples above is the desire to receive something you see someone else receiving – maybe not even necessarily in a jealous way, but in a hopeful way.

Perhaps that was the sentiment of the disciple who observes Jesus praying one day. There was something about what the disciple observed that led him to desire the same. Maybe it was the words Jesus was speaking or the sincerity in His voice or the passion with which He prayed. Whatever it was, the disciple was desirous of the same. *“Lord, teach us (teach me) to pray.”*

But very likely, underneath that question is something more than having the right words with which to pray or the right posture in praying. Underneath the question may simply be the desire to be as in tune with your heavenly Father as Jesus is.

The beauty of prayer is not simply being able to speak the right words, but to have such a relationship with Him to whom you pray that you comfortably speak those words. The beauty of prayer is being in such a relationship with God that there is comfort and faith and peace in the praying all because of the one to whom you are praying. No wonder then that the way Jesus responded to the disciples request about teaching him to pray was by saying, “Father, hallowed be your name . . .” It begins with the relationship. Woven into the disciple’s question was likely a desire to have more than the right words to speak, but the right relationship with Him to whom you speak.

As you go to God in prayer for this campaign, ask not only that all would go well with this effort or about what kind of commitment you might make toward the campaign. But as you go to God in prayer for this campaign, celebrate the relationship you have with Him to whom you pray. It is because of the relationship you have with Him, and He with you, that you will experience immeasurably more than you could ever ask.

Yes Lord, I’d like some of that! So Lord, teach us to pray!

DAY 15: Dreaming . . . and More

April 16

“Then (Joseph) had another dream, and told it to his brothers: ‘Listen,’ he said, ‘I had another dream and this time the sun and moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me.’” (Genesis 37:9)

Is it any wonder Joseph's brothers despised him?

He was their father's favorite; he was spoiled; and he was more than happy to report his dreams in which they were subordinate to him.

And everything Joseph dreamed would happen, did. Just not in the way he imagined.

It was quite a journey for Joseph – from his father's fields, to the bottom of an abandoned well, to being traded for a slave, to band of gypsies to Potiphar's house, to prison, to second in command in all of Egypt. What a journey!

And along the way, God was preparing Joseph for more than he had ever imagined.

Beaten, sold, falsely accused, imprisoned and forgotten. Joseph was finally the man God could use.

And when the brothers bowed before Joseph, just as Joseph had dreamed, he was able to say, “You meant it for evil. God meant it for good.”

Not only had Joseph become a ruler – he was immeasurably more the man than he could have imagined being. He was filled with grace; grace that would lead him to forgive those who treated him so shamelessly.

God works in us, and then he works through us, and brings about immeasurably more than we could ever have done ourselves.

What might God want to bring about through this capital campaign for your church that is more, immeasurably more, than anything you have yet dreamed?

“Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him.’ Then the one inside answers, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can’t get up and give you anything.’ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man’s boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.” (Luke 11:5-8)

“Do you have any idea what time it is?” This might be the first question you ask after you answer the phone only to discover a friend has just woken you up from a deep sleep at night.

But what if that same friend came knocking at your door in the middle of the night? That sense of urgency would certainly raise alarm. After all, it must be an emergency for a friend to be out and about that late – not to mention interrupting your night’s sleep.

“You want to borrow what?”

However, that might be your reaction when you discover the only “emergency” your friend is facing is the need to borrow a loaf of bread and some cold cuts to make sandwiches for guests who have just arrived. “You’ve got to be kidding me!” would likely be your response as you stomp to the kitchen, or worse, slam the door in their face for waking you up with such a ridiculous request.

And yet the purpose for Jesus telling this story is to provide clear instruction, a bold invitation for you to be that shameless in your approach to God. Here Jesus gives you a big lesson in being audacious, brazen, unabashedly bold in coming to Him with your prayers.

You see, Jesus doesn’t just give you an invitation to pray. It’s not a mere suggestion that you gently come to Him as you have need. No, quite the contrary. It’s an invitation to be as bold and forthright as a friend knocking on your door in the middle of the night for you to help him feed some unexpected guests.

Bold. Bold prayers.

So boldly pray for the people who will be blessed and touched as a result of what your ministry is doing which prompted a capital campaign and an expansion of ministry.

Boldly pray about the lives that will be changed and faith that will grow through this effort.

Boldly pray about the gift you will be giving to this campaign.

As you boldly pray about all of that (and more), be assured that God will not be grumbling and mumbling because you are waking Him up in the middle of the night (since God never sleeps). Instead, be assured that God will be pleased, yes **pleased**, that you asked! And while you are asking, He just may respond with immeasurably more than you ask.

“So he (Samuel) asked Jesse, ‘Are these all the sons you have?’ ‘There is still the youngest,’ Jesse answered, ‘but he is tending the sheep.’ Samuel said, ‘Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.’” (1 Samuel 16:11)

The greatest king in the history of Israel, the man with a heart after God, was an afterthought in his father’s mind.

Samuel had told Jesse to bring his sons before Samuel, because one of them was to be anointed king. They seemed to be kingly, especially the oldest, Abinadab. At least that’s what Samuel thought. But God said no. Seven sons passed by Samuel, and seven times God said no.

So Samuel was perplexed. God had told Samuel that he was to anoint one of Jesse’s sons as the next king. Samuel had asked Jesse to gather his sons. And God said no to each of them. So, either God had changed His mind or Samuel had misinterpreted or – there was another son somewhere.

Of course, that’s what it was. Jesse never dreamed his youngest son would be anointed king. That was meant for one of his older sons. Not only was David relegated to tending sheep, David was a runt. He didn’t seem to possess, at least outwardly, what it takes to be a king.

And yet, David was the one anointed. David was the one who killed the bear and the lion and the giant. David was the one who soothed Saul’s heart with his harp. David was the one who defeated a giant with a stone and a slingshot. David was the one who danced before the Lord when the Ark was brought into Jerusalem. David was the one who extended surprising grace to Mephibosheth. David was the one before whom the enemies of Israel fell.

Certainly Jesse loved all his sons. He just never imagined what God had in mind for David. God’s plans are always immeasurably more than ours.

As you consider your role, and yes even your gift, to the capital campaign you may think that what you can offer may be the “least” in comparison to others. However, don’t discount what God can do with the “least of these” in accomplishing His purposes.

“When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward Him, He said to Philip, ‘Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?’ . . . Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, spoke up, ‘Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?’ . . . Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, He said to his disciples, ‘Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.’ So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten.” (John 6:5,8,11-13)

Twelve baskets of leftovers. One basket for every disciple there who said it couldn't be done.

All left over from the original five loaves of bread and two fish. A miracle that takes place because Jesus decided to give thanks for what He had at His disposal and trust His Father would do the rest.

Giving thanks is far more than appreciating whatever gift the Giver has provided: it's crediting God with the outcome that is about to be experienced. It's an expression of trust that since God gave, God will accomplish divine things through that gift, and we will be the recipients.

Often times we, like Philip, react to the need and opportunities around us in a way that limits our expectations of what God can do. We trust statistics, probabilities, the laws of nature, past experience, and “natural” human responses more than we trust the One who declared of Himself, *“Is there anything too hard for the Lord?”* (Genesis 18:14)

Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward Him. They came wanting to receive. But they never expected to receive as much as they did. They received enough that was sufficient to meet their needs. But then they received more, immeasurably more, than they needed.

How about what you expect the Lord to provide for your ministry, for your capital campaign efforts? It's not just about the dollars collected (the five loaves of bread and two fish). But it is also about all the extras (the twelve baskets) that happen as a result of putting all of this in the Lord's hands.

“And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him (the judge) with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’ For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually wear me out with her coming!’” (Luke 18:3-5)

Begging, yes even demanding a response; that seems to be the kind of posture that the widow was using in coming to the judge.

It was not disrespectful. It was not an expression of entitlement on her part. It was being persistent, and yet the word “persistent” probably doesn’t do her approach justice. Her approach was audacious, shameless, brazen, immodest, unabashed. She simply wasn’t willing to give up.

Jesus uses this parable of the persistent widow to teach us about being persistent in prayer. In doing so, He is teaching us about going to God with a confidence, conviction and a certainty that He WILL answer. There is no need to give up. There certainly wasn’t any giving up as far as the widow was concerned.

But why would Jesus want us to be so persistent? Perhaps because there is actually more that the Lord has in store for us than we could ever even ask. In the parable of the persistent widow, what is so remarkable is that her persistence changed the heart of an unjust judge. After all, Jesus tells us that this judge “. . . *neither feared God nor cared about men.*”

So not only did the widow receive what she wanted (justice), but in the process her persistence changed the heart of the judge. How remarkable! This was more than she asked for; more than the planned or predictable or plausible results she was after.

And maybe God has the same in store for you. Don’t give up. Don’t give up in coming to Him.

What bold request would you like to make of God for something in your life?

What bold request would you like to make of God regarding the capital campaign for your church?

Whatever it is, may you go to God audaciously, shamelessly, brazenly, immodestly, unabashedly, and yes even persistently looking to receive immeasurably more than you ask.

DAY 20: Bread and Wine . . . and More April 21

“Jesus took bread . . . ‘This is My body’ . . . then He took the cup . . . ‘This is My blood of the covenant’ . . .” (Mark 14:22-24)

They are such ordinary things, are they not? Especially in Jesus’ day – bread and wine. They were the staples of life – the foundational level in the Israelite food pyramid.

And while the bread that Jesus broke and the cup that He lifted were part of the Passover remembrance, He imbued them with immeasurably more than anyone could have imagined. And the disciples who were present perhaps struggled to fully understand what He meant – bread and wine, **and body and blood.**

Of course, there are those within Christendom who think bread and wine are only bread and wine. They only symbolize body and blood. And in their understanding, we only remember what God did in the Exodus, and what Jesus offered on the cross.

Our theology is a bit different.

We proclaim, as we profess the Scriptures proclaim, that Jesus’ body and blood is ‘in, with, and under’ the bread and wine.

We don’t profess to understand how it happens. We don’t claim that Jesus’ body could be examined under a microscope.

We believe it is a mystery. It is, by virtue of the Word of God itself, immeasurably more than bread and wine. It’s the body and blood of the Savior, given and shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins and the strength of our faith.

Bread, wine, body, blood – here we end up with more than we begin.

A capital campaign may not be a means of grace in our church (as the Lord’s Supper is), but it is a means by which ministry can be advanced and expanded. Through such a campaign we have opportunity to see God turn gifts received into ministry empowered. In doing so, we end up with more than we began – immeasurably more.

“The Lord had said to Abram . . . I will make of you a great nation . . .” (Genesis 12:1.2)

You know how the story goes.

Abram’s name was changed to Abraham, which means father of many nations.

In some ways, it could have been embarrassing to Abraham. Every time he met someone new, which may not have been often, he would say, “Hi, I’m Father of Many Nations.” And the one to whom he was introducing himself probably responded, “Wow. How many children do you have?” And Abraham would have to say, “Well, one.”

Such a great promise was given to Abram. He would be the father of a great nation. He would own land. And his descendants would be as innumerable as the stars.

And when he died, he had one son (Isaac), and owned a small plot of land around an oak tree.

Anyone who looked at Abraham’s life and heard about the promise by which he lived would probably have laughed.

Many nations? He had one son.

Land? An oak tree.

A blessing to the nations? A seeming blip upon the radar of history.

And yet we know the rest of the story. God blessed Abraham immeasurably more than what it appeared.

And isn’t that the way God works in our lives? From the outside, we don’t look like we’re all that special. We don’t appear to be the kind of people through whom the Kingdom is moved forward. And yet we are. Because God does immeasurably more through us, no matter how few trees we may own.

Sometimes it may seem like a capital campaign for your church doesn’t appear all that special. Asking for money? How can the Kingdom move forward by doing that? And yet, when God reveals a vision for ministry, when God leads His children (children of Abraham) to respond with sacrificial gifts, when the potential for gospel impact is expanded the results, here too, are immeasurable.

“On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. There were many lamps in the upstairs room where we were meeting. Seated in a window was a young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep as Paul talked on and on. When he was sound asleep, he fell to the ground from the third story and was picked up dead. Paul went down, threw himself on the young man and put his arms around him. ‘Don’t be alarmed,’ he said. ‘He’s alive!’ Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left. The people took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.” (Acts 20:7-12)

People sleeping during church is not at all unusual. An innocent little nap during the sermon that turns fatal . . . now that’s unheard of.

But then, what about the dead coming back to life? Impossible, right?

Unless your name is Eutychus.

It wasn’t that Paul was a bad preacher; he just wasn’t that eloquent (see how he describes his style in 2 Corinthians 11:5-6). Maybe Eutychus had a hard week, or he was up late at night, or the service went longer than usual. Whatever the reason, he fell asleep. Usually that wouldn’t be all that much of a problem but he had chosen a rather unusual seat – a window ledge on the second floor. A good place to catch the night air, bad place for a nap.

Try to imagine the screams when Eutychus lost his balance and landed outside with a thud . . . the bedlam of worshippers rushing down the steps and out the door to find him on the ground. As he was being checked for breathing and a heartbeat, prayers went up from those who knew and loved him. Nevertheless, he was dead.

But into that moment of death and dismay came the power of the risen Christ. Prompted by the Spirit, Paul threw his arms around Eutychus and declared to the crowd that he was alive. Imagine the joy of that moment. When Eutychus returned to life; that was a result that was immeasurably more than anyone would have ever expected.

Sometimes we need a wake-up call in life . . . and hopefully it comes without falling out the window. Sometimes we simply lose consciousness of what God is saying and doing in our lives and we grow weary.

Perhaps that is one of the side benefits of a capital campaign. It can be a time for a wakeup call. It can be an opportunity to renew the mission focus going on in your ministry. A capital campaign, a building project, a renewed vision can be a time when you might experience God breathing new life into the faith and actions of His people. And yes, such an effort calls for sacrificial giving, but not (usually) to the degree that Eutychus experienced when he fell out the window.

During this capital campaign, why not pray the Lord might *gently* give you a wakeup call.

“‘Agreed,’ she replied. ‘Let it be as you say.’ So she sent them away and they departed. And she tied the scarlet cord in the window.” (Joshua 2:21)

Ever wonder how certain people made it into the record of God’s redemption story? Take Rahab, for instance. A woman of the night?

How did the spies that Joshua sent to Jericho end up hiding out at her house?

How did Rahab, of all people, together with her family end up having their lives spared while the rest of the city was destroyed?

And how did Rahab, a woman of ill repute, end up in the genealogical history of Jesus? “. . . *Salmon the father of Boaz, whose mother was Rahab*” (Matthew 1:5).

Why her? Well maybe it just goes to show that God is able to do more in people’s lives than we might ever imagine.

Perhaps the real question should not be how did God work through the life of a person like Rahab, but rather how is it that God works through people’s lives (like mine) today? Maybe your life isn’t as “bad” as someone like Rahab considering her vocation. But no matter who we are, we have sin and guilt and shame. No matter how we are, we haven’t always loved God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength nor loved our neighbor as ourselves. No matter who we are, we have sinned against God by thought, word, and deed. Maybe there are times when we wonder if God can ever do anything of value and significance in us.

But He can, and He does! The prophet Jeremiah tells us, *“Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!”* (Lamentations 3:22-23).

The mercy of God, the grace of God, the forgiveness of God are all examples of how God does more – immeasurably more – in our lives than we could ever expect. And thanks be to God that He does!

So if God takes care of the greatest need we could ever have – forgiveness and eternal salvation – then there should be no question that He can take care of everything else as well. With that in mind, there is no limit to what God can do through this capital campaign for your church. And also, there is no limit whose lives He can work in and work through in this process.

DAY 24: Amazing Things . . . and More April 25

“Joshua told the people, ‘Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you.’” (Joshua 3:5)

The Israelites were camped on the eastern banks of the Jordan River when God gave them the command to “consecrate themselves.”

To consecrate something is to “set it apart,” to be reserved for a special purpose. Since these words were spoken to the Israelites the night before they were to cross the Jordan River, the Israelites were to do nothing that would bring dishonor to God before crossing over. They were to surrender themselves to the Lord.

Yes, it’s true that the Lord wants our obedience and devotion. But perhaps the focus of this verse is not the fact that the Israelites were to consecrate themselves to the Lord, but rather that the Lord was going to do “amazing things” among them. And amazing things He did.

The people were about to cross the Jordan River. The river was at flood stage at this time. Nevertheless, as soon as the priests who carried the ark set foot in the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan stopped flowing. The ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all the people of Israel passed through on dry ground.

It’s hardly what the people of Israel would have expected. After all, when they saw the river at flood stage they expected that their crossing would be a wet one. But instead, Joshua reveals that all Israel passed by “*on dry ground.*” Amazing!

As you participate in this capital campaign effort, what kind of amazing things is the Lord revealing to you and your ministry? What kind of barriers (a river at flood stage) are you facing? What kind of issues seem like the odds are against you?

Whatever the challenges may be, it is because the Lord works in ways that are immeasurably more (a dried up river *during* flood stage) than we expect. In doing so we see Him do “amazing things.” Just ask the people of Israel whose feet were dry when they passed through the Jordan River.

DAY 25: Leaving Something Behind . . . and More April 26

“A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.” (Mark 14:51-52)

At one point, Jesus invited three men to leave everything behind and follow Him (Luke 9). They refused. They were unwilling to let go of things in their lives and become disciples. They held on to whatever was valuable, at the expense of discipleship.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus was being arrested, a young man left everything behind, not to follow Jesus, but to flee.

It's an interesting little anecdote, set in the midst of the high drama of betrayal. None of the other Gospels report the incident – just the Gospel of Mark.

Who was he? And why was he there? Well, we don't know. We're left to speculate, using our believing and Scripturally informed imaginations.

There are those who say the young man was actually Mark, the writer of the Gospel, making a cameo appearance.

But maybe there's something more.

The only other time Mark mentions a young man, wearing a garment, is in the empty tomb (Mark 16:5).

At Jesus' betrayal, a young man leaves the scene in shame. In the empty tomb, a young man is present to announce the empty tomb Jesus left behind.

They are not the same person – one was a human being and the other an angel. But the literary connection is interesting.

From naked to robed in triumph. The collective story reveals an immeasurably more gift to us.

As your church engages in this capital campaign, maybe there are some things to leave behind – fears, doubts, previous opportunities missed – and let the empty tomb, the triumph of Christ, be what your focus is in all you do.

“. . . they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break . . . When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man.’ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken.” (Luke 5:6-9)

Sometimes, we think God exists to make our lives go better, as if there were some kind of earthly reward for following Jesus. Actually, that’s what the proponents of a ‘prosperity gospel’ proclaim. If we are obedient to God’s laws, and follow His counsel, our lives will benefit.

Interesting, isn’t it, that Peter experienced more prosperity than he had ever before. He was a professional fisherman, and he had never had such a catch of fish. And he knew Jesus was the reason.

But instead of insisting that Jesus continue to bless him, his response was the opposite. “Go away from me. You’re holy! I’m in your presence and that’s too high a price to pay for this prosperity. I’d rather sweat to pull in a few fish than be confronted with who You are.”

But Jesus didn’t go away. He invited Peter to follow Him. And Peter did. Immediately. Leaving everything behind.

Peter knew it wasn’t about the fish. He knew it wasn’t about prosperity. He knew it wasn’t about making life easier.

He knew it was about Jesus. And so he followed.

Prosperity? It wasn’t because of Peter. It never is. It was because of Jesus. It was because of Jesus that Peter received immeasurably more than a boatload of fish.

In your ministry’s capital campaign, it may be easy to think it’s all about the campaign. It may be easy to think it’s all about the money pledged (prosperity). But it’s not. It’s not about buildings to be built. It’s not even about dollars raised.

It’s about Jesus. It always is!

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”
(Matthew 7:7-8)

Grammar lessons usually take you back to a boring English class with lessons on syntax and exercises in diagramming sentences.

But regardless of such school day memories, take a quick look at a grammar lesson on the three little words – ask, seek, and knock.

All three of these words have the identical grammatical format. They are all present tense, which means that Jesus is saying that this action is in process – with no end in sight. It’s ongoing. In other words, Jesus is implying here: **keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking!** It is to be a way of life not a passing fad.

Additionally, each verb is also in the identical active voice. This grammatical emphasis here is on YOU. YOU are the one to keep doing it. YOU are the one to continue to be engaged in the process. YOU are to keep on asking. YOU are to keep on seeking. YOU are to keep on knocking. No one but YOU can do this for YOU.

Furthermore, all three words – ask, seek, knock – are in the imperative mood. This means it’s not an option. It’s not up for committee vote. It is non-negotiable. And the reason this action of asking and seeking and knocking is to be an absolute action is because of the one who invites you to do it – Jesus.

Now, all of that may be more (immeasurably more?) of a grammar lesson than you may have wanted, but here’s the point: Jesus wants you, right now and always, to pray. It’s an invitation. But not a one-time invitation, it’s an ongoing invitation specifically intended for you.

So, what is going on in your life for which you can be asking, seeking, and knocking?

And what about the ministry of your church for which you are doing a capital campaign? God’s invitation is there for you to ask, seek, and knock because He has immeasurably more that He wants to reveal through this ministry. How about accepting that invitation?

“Then he (the rich man) said, ‘. . . I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and goods.’ And I’ll say to myself, ‘You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.’” (Luke 12:18-19)

It was the kind of plan any financial planner would applaud. Save. Put resources away. A foolproof approach to retirement.

And so the rich man expanded his portfolio. He set about the business of accumulating. He began to execute his foolproof plan. He was prepared.

But you know what happened?

God called the rich man, “Fool.”

Within the economy of the world, the man’s plan was foolproof. Within the economy of God, the man was a fool.

We have a tendency to rely on what we can measure. If the bank account is growing, we feel good. If it’s shrinking, we become anxious. If there is money left at the end of the month, we breathe easier. If there is month left at the end of the money, we hyperventilate.

For us, it’s about what we can see, and count, and compute, and quantify.

Therefore the church, like any “business,” wants to exercise wise financial management and plan for the future. To that end you are in the midst of a capital campaign to secure the necessary capital before expanding ministry. And while that approach may make good financial sense, don’t lose sight on what this is ultimately about – things that are eternal. That’s exactly what the rich man forgot about.

The rich man’s plan called for saving a measurable amount for himself.

God’s plan is offering more than we can measure . . . immeasurably more.

Any question which plan is more brilliant?

As you proceed with your capital campaign efforts, don’t lose the perspective of being “rich toward God” which is what ministry is all about.

“When Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, came to David, he bowed down to pay him honor. David said, ‘Mephibosheth!’ ‘At your service,’ he replied. ‘Don’t be afraid,’ David said to him, ‘for I will surely show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan. I will restore to you all the land that belonged to your grandfather Saul, and you will always eat at my table.’

Mephibosheth bowed down and said, ‘What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?’” (2 Samuel 9:6-8)

Years ago there was a popular sitcom by the name of “Cheers.” Each week as the show began the opening theme song boasted that here was a place (a bar named “Cheers”) “where everyone knows your name.”

Who wouldn’t love a place where everyone knows your name? A place where you are always welcomed.

We know all too well that there are people who more often than not feel like they have no place where they belong, no place where everyone knows their name. That’s why this story of what happened in the life of a man named Mephibosheth is so inspiring.

Mephibosheth was the son of Jonathan, King David’s best friend. Even more so, Mephibosheth was the grandson of King Saul. As far as his family line was concerned, you might consider Mephibosheth to be a young man of great privilege and special honor. Here was a man in which everyone knew his name alright, at least his family’s name, until his comfortable world crumbled at the age of five when his grandfather and father were killed in battle.

But if this family loss was not enough, Mephibosheth became crippled right after that. In the turmoil of battle, Mephibosheth’s nurse scooped him up and fled. While doing so, she dropped him. The result was that he was crippled from that time on. With his father and grandfather gone Mephibosheth, in the eyes of many, became a handicapped “nobody.” In fact he considered himself nothing more than a “dead dog.” Until, that is, King David showed him kindness by giving him a place to sit at his table. Forever after that, Mephibosheth was welcomed at King David’s table where indeed, everyone would know his name. Here Mephibosheth received more, immeasurably more, than he ever expected.

Can you imagine for a moment the number of people who go through life feeling as if nobody knows them, feeling as if they have no place at the table. And yet, isn’t that what ministry is all about? Whatever the ministry focus may be for your capital campaign, whatever the case statement may articulate it is for the purpose that more people would know and trust and believe that they are loved and accepted by the King; King Jesus that is.

DAY 30: A Bowl of Soup . . . and More

May 1

“Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and some lentil stew. He ate and drank, and then got up and left. So Esau despised his birthright.” (Genesis 25:34)

Isn't it amazing what we give up in order to satisfy our appetites?

Something looks good to us. We have to have it, whether it's a piece of cake, or the corner office, or the tricked out car, or the good-looking person across the street. And we trade what we say we value most for things that don't last.

That's what Esau did. He was firstborn. He had the birthright and all that went with it. He was the one who would get double the inheritance. He was the one who would become the patriarch. He was the one who would receive the prestige and honor of being head of the family.

But he was hungry. So hungry he said he'd give anything for something to eat.

Enter Jacob, with a bowl of soup. "Anything?" asked Jacob. "Anything!" said Esau. And the deal was struck. Esau gobbled the meal up, smacked his lips, his stomach was full and he was feeling satisfied . . . for a couple hours, that is. All at the expense of his birthright.

Are there things in your life you're trading for a bowl of soup? Your reputation? Your family? Your character?

Your birthright is as the child of God. Yours is the Kingdom! Yours is eternity. Yours is love. Yours is now.

All of which is immeasurably more than a bowl of soup.

One of the benefits of a renewed vision focus and a capital campaign is to reestablish ministry priorities. It's too easy to "sell ourselves out" for so many other things that demand our time and attention in ministry. However, the mission of your church's mission is your "birthright." Don't sell it out.

DAY 31: One Request . . . and More

May 2

“At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from Him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, ‘Who touched My clothes?’ . . . Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at this feet, and, trembling with fear, told Him the whole truth.” (Mark 5:30,33)

Slip in and slip out.

That was her plan. She knew that if she just touched the hem of His garment, she would be healed, despite 12 years of illness.

And she did it. The crowd around Jesus was pushing and shoving, moving along down the path toward Jarius’ house, where Jesus was heading to heal a sick girl. But in the crowd was an unnamed woman. It’s not likely that she pushed and shoved her way in toward Jesus. Rather, it’s more likely that she quietly yet determinedly worked her way through the crowd until she could ever so slightly touch the hem of His garment and slip away.

And apparently she got what she came for. She could feel it immediately. Her illness was healed.

But she didn’t get far before Jesus called attention to her. How could He have known? It’s not as if you can even feel someone touch your clothes.

Nevertheless, Jesus stopped and demanded to know who had touched Him. Despite Peter’s insistence it could have been any number of people, Jesus persisted. Someone had touched Him. And He wasn’t moving until He knew who it was.

Coming forward was risky. She had been unclean. In fact, she had touched countless people in the process. She had been opportunistic, putting others in harm’s way only to get what she wanted. Certainly Jesus, and others, wouldn’t look favorably on this.

But she took the risk. And in doing so this woman received immeasurably more than what she came for. Jesus said, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

She came for healing. He gave her more.

How easy it is to think that all we are coming for with a capital campaign effort is enough money to complete this project. But a specific dollar amount is never the ultimate goal. How will lives be changed through expanded ministry? How is God challenging you in faith as you consider your sacrificial gift? How is this ministry gaining greater clarity and vision as a result of this effort? No matter what the goal might be, God can do more.

DAY 32: Asking for and Giving Gifts . . . and More May 3

“Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?”
(Luke 11:11-13)

Some concepts are just too big for most of us to grasp. They have to be broken down to understand.

Take for example, the national debt. According to the website on the day of this writing, the national debt was \$17,236,316,959,263. All I really know is that’s a whole lot of money! I don’t know how to fathom or conceptualize a number that big.

However, if you go to www.brillig.com here is a website that breaks this national debt number down into pieces by calculating that for each person in this country, our individual share of \$17,236,316,959,263 (and counting) is about \$54,329. Now, knowing that information probably won’t motivate you to mail in a check to anyone in Washington DC to cover your portion, but at least now (maybe) we can begin to process that kind of HUGE number.

We have a similar problem in trying to conceptualize the size of God’s love. The problem? It’s too big! If you can’t get your head around something as numerically massive as \$17 trillion, how can you ever absorb the immensity of God’s love?

So Jesus breaks it down into loving acts done by loving dads. *“If you know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask?”* Now while we may not be able to fully comprehend the giftedness of God’s Spirit which we receive from our heavenly Father, we can begin to fathom the love of a father giving gifts to His children. I’ve done that. You have probably done that. And God does that.

And yet there is so much more that God wants to give. He just wants you to ask.

This capital campaign may be a good time to ask for God to bless and grow and expand the ministry in your church. This capital campaign may be a good time to ask for the gospel of Jesus to be shared with more and more people. After all, *“. . . how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask?”*

So since God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask . . . then ask.

DAY 33: A Giant Defeated . . . and More

May 4

“Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.” (1 Samuel 17:49)

A bully. That’s what Goliath was. Goliath was an Old Testament bully and most people were afraid of him.

But not David. And yet David is described as one of the least likely candidates to go to battle against Goliath. David’s brothers thought he was out of his mind thinking he could defeat the giant. And when David stepped forward prepared to battle against Goliath, Goliath was offended that the Israelites would present such an opponent. *“Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” (1 Samuel 17:43).*

Nevertheless, against all odds David fought Goliath . . . and won. We can say that it was David’s stone and slingshot that killed Goliath, but we know that it was actually God’s power and presence. In fact, that is what David depended upon. When David met Goliath, he said: *“You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defiled.” (1 Samuel 17:45)*

A bully defeated. Hooray!

But that’s not all that happened that day. When David defeated the giant the men of Israel and Judah were able to pursue the Philistines, defeat them, and plunder their camp. But that’s not all that happened that day.

Before the battle David was told that the king will give great wealth to the man who kills the giant. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and exempt his father’s family from taxes in Israel. But that’s not all.

This event helped to establish David’s authority in the eyes of others.

Overall, the implications of David’s defeat of Goliath were . . . immeasurable.

Isn’t much the same true as a result of a capital campaign? Your ministry may be attempting to raise a certain dollar amount in order to facilitate the construction of a new building or an expansion of a ministry endeavor. But raising that dollar amount isn’t actually the primary goal. Raising the dollar amount is really only the beginning, just as defeating Goliath was only the beginning.

As you work towards meeting the goals of the capital campaign, pray for the Lord to show you all the other immeasurable blessings and outcomes that will flow from this effort as well.

DAY 34: Last Laugh . . . and More

May 5

“He took her by the hand and said to her, ‘Talithi kuom!’ which means, ‘Little girl, I say to you, get up!’” (Mark 5:41)

Jesus and His disciples were on the way to the home of Jairus, who had asked Jesus to heal his daughter. As they were going, the word came. It was too late. The little girl had died.

But Jesus continued on to Jairus’ house.

As they drew near, they could hear the loud cacophonous sound of grieving. There was wailing and moaning and beseeching and lamenting, all pouring from the home of Jairus. His daughter had died. There is no greater grief for a parent to bear.

But then Jesus entered the home and told the mourners to stop their wailing. The girl wasn’t really dead. She was sleeping.

Mourning turned to laughter. Wailing turned to derision. They laughed at Him, as they filed out the door.

Into the little girls room went Jesus, her parents, Peter, James, and John.

We can imagine the stillness of the room.

Jesus took the little girls hand and said, “Talitha kuom.” “Arise.”

And she did. She got off her deathbed.

Now Jairus, who had asked Jesus to heal his daughter, received immeasurably more. A healing is one thing. Such things happen, on occasion. But a resurrection? Jairus went from despairing to rejoicing. Jairus received not merely healing for his daughter, but witnessing the dead brought to life.

Sometimes we ask for a healing, and what Jesus wants to give is immeasurably more – new life.

As you examine what all God is doing through this capital campaign, don’t just look at the dollar amount raised. Rather, focus on the renewed life for this ministry because of this effort. What new opportunities is God revealing? What new lives will be touched? What new blessings will He display? It’s always immeasurably more than we ask or imagine.

“Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie – the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, He asked him, ‘Do you want to get well?’ ‘Sir,’ the invalid replied, ‘I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.’ At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.” (John 5:1-8)

The person who got into the pool first received healing. That’s the way it worked. The odds were in your favor if you had friends or family ready to assist you. If you were alone and immobile . . . not so much.

The crowd waited for that stirring in the pool which heralded the healing power of God available for the first person to hit the water. The man approached by Jesus had probably waited too long for the odds to ever be in his favor, and might have given up hope of ever being healed.

Jesus changed the odds.

But not because Jesus picked up the man and helped him into the stirring pool, but rather by simply declaring him healed. It was a healing that was immeasurably more than the man ever expected.

Do you realize that the reason your church is involved in this capital campaign is because there are people who are waiting and wanting some kind of healing transformation in their life? For whatever reason, you haven’t connected with them yet. But now through a re-visioning of your ministry there just may be opportunity to connect with some of them in a new and powerful way.

Here Jesus may change the odds, through your ministry, in the lives of more and more people in immeasurably more ways than before.

DAY 36: Giving . . . and More

May 7

(King David prayed) “But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. We are foreigners and strangers in your sight, as were all our ancestors. Our days on earth are like a shadow, without hope. Lord our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a temple for your Holy Name comes from your hand, and all of it belongs to you. I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.” (1 Chronicles 29:14-17)

Just because God had denied King David the honor of building the temple didn't mean David couldn't run a capital campaign.

And that's precisely what David did. David's son Solomon was to be the one to build the temple. But David prepared the way with a capital campaign.

It's humbling to read the list of what David contributed to the effort – gold, silver, bronze, precious stones, and more. We believe that David gave joyfully and sacrificially. But the source of David's joy was not just in what he gave, but in what he witnessed from others.

As David presented his gifts for the building of the temple he also observed, “All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you.” David's joy was not only in what he gave, but by seeing the involvement and the gifts of others as well.

God takes great joy in observing the same.

One of the joys of a capital campaign is seeing the collective gifts and sacrifice of God's people for this ministry effort. There is joy in your own personal giving, but there is also joy in the combined participation of others. Don't miss the opportunity to thank God for not only what He has prompted you to give, but what God is doing in the lives of others as well.

DAY 37: This Time . . . and More

May 8

“ . . . If you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father’s family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14)

There is no one, ever, in the history of God’s universe, like you.

No one has ever had your collage of experiences, spiritual gifts, talents, abilities, challenges, foibles, sins to fight, and reality to engage. No one else is like you.

With that in mind, then it can be said of you too what was said of Esther: that you are who you are and you are where you are in life right now, “. . . for such a time as this.”

“If you remain silent,” Mordecai said to Queen Esther, there may never be another opportunity, another chance as you have right now. Yes, there is no one else just like you and no other time just like now. And that also means that there is no one else who can do *exactly* what you can do right now.

Too often, as we deal with the cares and needs and struggles (and joys) of life, we remain silent. We don’t open our mouths. We don’t offer a prayer. We don’t take a step. We don’t put forth the effort. Perhaps we are waiting for someone else to do it.

But it’s not the responsibility of someone else. God has called you (and me) to such a time as this.

How easy it is to wait for someone else to do their part. What about their prayers? What about them taking a leadership role? What about their sacrificial gift?

But the point that we hear in today’s verse is not what about someone else doing their part, but rather what about you? Because you are uniquely who you are, only you can do what God has called you to do. Because you are uniquely who you are, only you are called to live out such a time as this.

Consider your gift to this capital campaign as a gift that only *you* can give.

“I am the Lord’s servant,’ Mary answered. ‘May it be to me as you have said.’” (Luke 1:38)

Mary’s reply to Gabriel’s life-altering announcement might have been in Luther’s mind the day he wrote his explanation to the petition in the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy will be done.” He assures us that the will of God will be done, “. . . *but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.*”

Mary accepted God’s will for her life. You might say that Mary was willing to do immeasurably more than most of us would ever expect. But she responded, “May it be to me as you have said.”

Mary could have resisted. She could have doubted (like Zechariah) or protested (like Moses) or thought God’s plans to use her were impossible (like Sarah). But instead, Mary accepted. Not because it made sense, not because it fit into her plan for her life, not because she clearly knew what the future would hold. No, it was actually in spite of all the above. Instead, Mary accepted God’s will as an act of faith – faith not in herself, but faith in God.

How easy (or difficult) is it for you to say those words? “Lord, may it be to me as You have said.” How life would change if our response to God was inspired by such faith.

How about the capital campaign that you are a part of right now? Is the Lord speaking to you? Is the Lord prompting you to offer a response that may seem almost as unreasonable (and yet there is really no comparison) as what God was asking of Mary? Is it possible for the Lord to be calling you to offer a sacrificial gift that simply requires a response of faith and obedience?

Why not pray about this faith challenge and see if the Lord prompts a Mary kind of response from you: “May it be to me as you have said.”

DAY 39: Seeing Jesus . . . and More

May 10

“Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. ‘Sir,’ they said, ‘we would like to see Jesus.’ Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.” (John 12:20-22)

As we review the events of the Passover festival, perhaps we can say that there were three kinds of people in the crowd that day. There were those who lined the streets waving palm branches as Jesus passed by in a triumphal parade. They shouted their praises to Jesus, *“Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”* (John 12:13)

But also in that crowd were skeptics and critics, Pharisees we call them. They weren't the least bit impressed by Jesus. In fact, they were annoyed by Him. *“Look how the whole world has gone after him!”* (John 12:19) they said with disgust.

However, there was a third group who were there in the crowd that day. These were people who were at the Passover festival who didn't really know Jesus. Oh maybe somehow they heard about him. Maybe someone they knew bumped into Him or heard Him speak or were even healed by Him at some point. Somehow or other these people knew “about” Jesus but they didn't really know Him. They were curious. Seekers, you might say.

So one of them tapped Philip (one of the disciples) on the shoulder and said, *“Sir, we would like to see Jesus.”* Philip told Andrew. Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

Sometimes people are so forward and direct that they simply ask for what they want. How wonderful it would be if ministry was as easy as waiting for people to stop by our church asking us to introduce them to Jesus. But it usually doesn't happen that easily, does it? In fact, it often takes more effort than that.

How important it is to keep the perspective that what your church is all about is introducing people to Jesus. And once people come to “see Him” (as the man requested), Jesus offers more than a passing glance. He offers His life. He offers forgiveness of sins, hope for this life, and the gift of eternal life through faith in Him.

When the man asked, *“Sir, we would like to see Jesus,”* Jesus had so much more – immeasurably more – to give him.

“Sir, we would like to see Jesus.” To show people Jesus is why you are doing what you are doing even through this capital campaign. It's really all about seeing Jesus, and nothing more.

“Peter said to Jesus, ‘Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)” (Mark 9:5-6)

Being speechless is not usually one of the characteristics we think of when it comes to the apostle Peter. He often speaks without really thinking about what he is saying. This situation is no different. In fact, Mark tells us that he really didn’t know what to say here. So why did he say anything?

The circumstances would leave most of us speechless. Peter, James, and John are together on a high mountain alone with Jesus. Suddenly the appearance of Jesus changes – His clothes and countenance are beaming bright. Moses and Elijah miraculously make an appearance. Talk about a spectacular moment!

Their stay up on that mountain was not intended to be a permanent one, so no need for three shelters. Instead, what the disciples witnessed was to be a moment of inspiration that would provide days of encouragement. This experience was one to behold, not one to control.

Sometimes we can miss the wonder of God because we want to be in control.

In this final devotional of this series, you are encouraged to not miss the wonder of God that may very well be happening in your capital campaign. At this point the committees have all been busy with their work. Newsletters have been (or are still being) sent out. Leadership and impact gifts have probably been made. Sermons have been preached and Bible studies have been led. Testimonies have been shared. Commitment cards are being distributed and plans are being finalized for a celebration event. There has been a lot of activity that has gone into this campaign. But in the face of all that activity, don’t miss the wonder of God.

Don’t miss the wonder of God as the Spirit of God works in the hearts of people to respond. Don’t miss the wonder of God as people are motivated by mission. Don’t miss the wonder of God as the people of God offer their thanks to God for the blessings of God. Don’t miss the wonder of God as God reveals Himself in Word and worship, in song and Sacrament, in mission and ministry, and yes even in sacrificial giving and capital campaigns.

Don’t miss the wonder of God because it’s God’s very nature to display immeasurably more than anything we could ever ask or imagine.

“It is good for us to be here.” Maybe *that* is all that needs to be said. Thanks be to God!