

There's something so simple about a game of hide and seek. Little kids love it. No batteries, game boards, and especially no adult supervision required. What is required is time. While you count to ten everyone finds the good hiding spots. Ready or not, here I come. My nieces loved to play hide and seek. I usually knew where they were hiding. Some little piece of their clothes would be visible. Or you could see the top of their head. Or I just knew where the easiest places for a three year old to hide were. But they loved it because I would always pretend I didn't have any clue where they were.

I suppose we feel from time to time that God is playing hide and seek with us. We don't love it though because he's really good at hiding and we're limited in seeking. Invisibility comes in handy when trying to hide. Being human makes us come up short when trying to seek. Plus we don't always take the time. It seems that while we were counting before seeking God, we grew bored, tired, or just gave up. So God stays hidden to us and we don't bother going to find him.

But God does want us to find him. And it's not a game. This is the most important thing that we can do in our world. Yet keep the timeline in check. Remember he first came seeking us. Now he desires that we continue to seek him to find the excitement of discovering him in his fullness...

Love takes time to seek God

At the time of Paul things were changing in the church in a big way. For centuries the only true church with the only true God was the Jewish nation. To be saved you needed to be a Jew. But things were changing and it didn't come easy for people. Gentiles, non-Jews, were amazed to find out they had a place with God. Jews were shocked at the same thing. It was Paul's assignment and privilege to tell the world there was no longer division. From now on Jews and Gentiles were members of one family, God's family.

This was reason for Paul to get down on his knees. **"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name."** Paul knew this new information was hard. So he prayed to his Father for the people. He prayed for strength. He prayed for knowledge. He prayed for fullness. Paul prayed that God would strengthen the new person in the Ephesians, in order that they would come to know the greatness of Christ's love and so gain a deeper realization of the fullness that is theirs as members of God's family. It really was a prayer for unseen things.

Our biggest problem isn't the unseen things that are changing. It's change in the things that we can see. Whether it is praying for physical health that is failing or for the job you have or hope to have, or for peace in the world which seems so elusive. Maybe you're spending your time thinking about the politics of the United States; how presidents and congresses might or might not be ruining it? Or you're spending time praying about getting more members so we can get more money for the church. These seem important and they are. But there's something more important to spend your time praying for. Listen to what Paul prayed.

It's not about you; it's about what you are in Christ. **"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."** That's what's most important to spend time on. Strength coming from the storehouses of God himself in heaven. Grace that's not limited but rather limitless. Christ living in you. Not temporarily, not some passing thing. Christ takes up residence in you by faith. He moves in and makes himself at home, in you. It happens through the gospel in his Word and sacraments. Spend your time with those concentrating on Christ living in you and his love for you and you'll be strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

Without question time is precious. Nothing frustrates me more than when I finish something and still feel like I wasted time. Like walking out of a crummy movie or finishing a lousy book. Don't look at your devotional and prayer life that way, make the time. But isn't it just more of the same thing? Isn't God pleased when I work hard at my job, or in the yard, or if I reward myself for working hard by taking some time off for relaxing? All can be pleasing to God. But not at the expense of time getting to know him. Time to discover God and the joy of letting him speak to you through the Word the forgiveness of sins. Spending time to know God and build trust to know he'll always care for the details of life. Time so that God feels like an old friend whose open loving arms make you feel safe, provided for, and assured of eternal life.

If someone wanted to know how big Lake Hefner was you'd probably show them a map. To know more you could look it up and find that Lake Hefner is 2500 acres with a maximum depth of 94 feet. But how much is that really? Can you wrap your mind around that size? How many gallons of milk would it take to fill? How many boats would it take to stretch across it? How many people stacked would it take to reach the bottom?

Same questions arise for how big God is. Does he take up this whole church building? Is he small enough to sit in the pew next to you? How far to get to the depth of what God is willing to do? The truth is no amount of measuring, geometry, or fancy tools can fathom God. He's beyond our laying hold of, he's beyond our grasp. Yet Paul is praying for just that, that the Ephesians would understand something impossible to understand...except in Christ's love.

Take note of what Paul writes, **“I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power...”** Like a tree throws roots down deep in the soil to draw water out even during droughts so too you when rooted in Christ. Sink your roots down deep into Christ’s love and you’re ready to grow. You draw strength from Christ even when others are experiencing drought. And like a foundation wall that doesn’t move to keep the whole building secure so too your foundation in Christ’s love won’t be moved by anything in this world. Build a foundation on Christ’s love and you’re on solid ground. Christ’s love is what we want to learn more about. This is love that Paul says we need to take time to see how it extends into every direction.

Then read how Paul continues, **“...to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge...”** Amazingly it isn’t that Christ’s love isn’t knowable at all. It’s that when we think we’ve got it figured out, there’s more that goes beyond that. Lutheran theologian John Schaller, who spent endless time in study of God’s Word and Christ’s love, had this to say about his life’s work. *“Among all the sciences with which mankind occupies itself, theology is that study which by its nature can actually satisfy a person the least.”* One could say the more we study the more we discover, though the more we study the more we realize our study will never be complete.

But don’t think that means we should never start. Let it begin as a discipline. Just like exercise needs discipline before it becomes habit, so your study of Scriptures might need to be a discipline at first. You’ll need to make time with God. If you don’t, it will easily get lost in your day. Start with five minutes in the morning, the evening, or lunch time at your desk. Pull out the Bible, have a devotion emailed to you each day, or find a quiet moment to pray. Challenge yourself to every day for a month. Soon you’ll find stopping just won’t feel right. What starts as a discipline turns into a love.

Think of your worst problem. Imagine the solution you’ve been waiting for to lift the burden. How do you react when the problem is gone? You’ve imagined the worst, and looked for the power to take it away. Though you fear it may never go away your conclusion is you can’t accomplish it on your own. But there’s power working in you, Christ’s power, Christ’s love. Take time to get to know God, your Father, through Christ’s love. God can do more than even you could ask for. So take time to say your prayer. Then hear Paul’s conclusion to his. **“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.”**