

MORE THAN WE CAN IMAGINE

Sermon by Bill Johnston

November 19, 2017

Ephesians 3:14-21

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

1. GOD _____ FAITHFUL (in the _____)

Psalm 36:5, Psalm 143:1, Lamentations 3:22-23

2. GOD ____ FAITHFUL (in the _____)

1 Corinthians 1:9, Philippians 1:6, Psalm 37:4-5

3. GOD _____ FAITHFUL (in the _____)

Deuteronomy 7:9, Psalm 119:90, 2 Timothy 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, Hebrews 10:23 (NASB)

GOD GIVES US POWER

1. FOR AN _____

Ephesians 3:16, Ephesians 3:17a (NASB), 2 Thessalonians 1:3

2. TO KNOW THE _____

Ephesians 3:17-19a

3. FOR AN _____

Ephesians 3:20

- God's Distinct _____ - "Now all glory to God..."
- God's Complete _____ - "who is able..."
- God's Ultimate _____ - "through His mighty power..."
- God's Inner _____ - "at work within us..."
- God's Great _____ - "to accomplish infinitely more..."
- God's Surprising _____ - "than we might ask or think."

Isaiah 64:1-4, 1 Corinthians 2:9



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Can you draw a connected path through all 9 dots using only 4 lines? (ie. connect the dots using 4 straight lines without lifting your pencil)

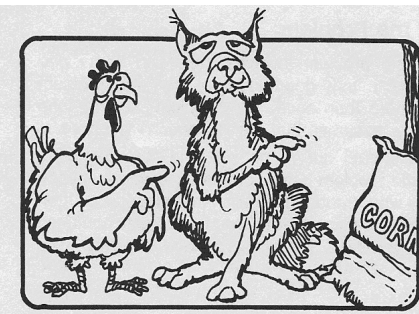


In the 1700s the following problem was used to keep students busy for a morning:

Find the sum of the numbers 1 to 100.
(ie. $1+2+3+4+5+ \dots +95+96+97+98+99+100$)

The future famous mathematician Carl Friedrich Gauss solved it in 2 minutes. Can you figure out how?

A woman wants to take her fox, chicken, and bag of corn across the river in her canoe. The canoe can hold only one thing in addition to the woman. If left alone, the fox would eat the chicken, or the chicken would eat the corn. How can the woman take everything across the river safely?



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Ephesians 3:14-21 When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

1. GOD HAS BEEN FAITHFUL (in the past)

Psalms 36:5 Your unfailing love, O Lord, is as vast as the heavens; your faithfulness reaches beyond the clouds.

Psalms 143:1 Hear my prayer, O Lord; listen to my plea! Answer me because you are faithful and righteous.

Lamentations 3:22-23 The faithful love of the Lord never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning.

2. GOD IS FAITHFUL (in the present)

1 Corinthians 1:9 God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Philippians 1:6 And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Psalms 37:4-5 Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.

3. GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL (in the future)

Deuteronomy 7:9 Understand, therefore, that the Lord your God is indeed God. He is the faithful God who keeps his covenant for a thousand generations and lavishes his unfailing love on those who love him and obey his commands.

Psalms 119:90 Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created.

2 Timothy 2:13 If we are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny who he is.

1 Thessalonians 5:24 God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.

Hebrews 10:23 (NASB) Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

GOD GIVES US POWER

1. FOR AN EXPANDED FAITH

Ephesians 3:16 I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.

Ephesians 3:17a (NASB) ... so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith ...

2 Thessalonians 1:3 Dear brothers and sisters, we can't help but thank God for you, because your faith is flourishing and your love for one another is growing.

2. TO KNOW THE LOVE OF JESUS

Ephesians 3:17-19a ... Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully.

3. FOR AN ENLARGED WORK

Ephesians 3:20 Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

- **God's Distinct Honour** – "Now all glory to God..."
- **God's Complete Ability** – "who is able..."
- **God's Ultimate Power** – "through His mighty power..."
- **God's Inner Work** – "at work within us..."
- **God's Great Results** – "to accomplish infinitely more..."
- **God's Surprising Answers** – "than we might ask or think."

Isaiah 64:1-4 Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down!

How the mountains would quake in your presence!

As fire causes wood to burn

and water to boil,

your coming would make the nations tremble.

Then your enemies would learn the reason for your fame!

When you came down long ago,

you did awesome deeds beyond our highest expectations.

And oh, how the mountains quaked!

For since the world began,

no ear has heard

and no eye has seen a God like you,

who works for those who wait for him!

1 Corinthians 2:9 "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him."

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Icebreaker/Introduction

The 'Thinking Outside the Box' activity flows out of something Bill said at the beginning of the message about thinking outside the box, especially in relation to church. You may want to point out that these puzzles are challenging and are meant to get people thinking in a different way. It may be a good idea to not belabor the solving of these problems, but to tell or show them the trick after a few minutes (answers are given on the Scriptures page – page 2). The more important part of this icebreaker is to ask participants to think outside the box about the future of Westheights Church. We were asked a question in the church survey we filled out recently to dream about our future. There has been a blog post about reaching out to the 'spiritual but not religious' people in society.

What are some dreams or visions people have for our church?

Ask if there was anything from this week's message that stood out – either a point that was made which really resonated with them, or perhaps a question or difficulty that came up for them.

Read [Ephesians 3:14-21](#). What stands out to you in this passage?

This message is on the 'faithfulness of God'. What does that phrase mean to you? How do you explain God's faithfulness (ie. in what ways is He faithful?) [eg. that He always loves us, is always with us, fulfills His promises] Do you feel that there is a tendency to think that God being faithful means that we will be delivered from challenges?

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD

1. GOD HAS BEEN FAITHFUL (in the past)

Focuses on [Psalm 36:5](#), [Psalm 143:1](#), [Lamentations 3:22-23](#)

How has God been faithful to you?

Discuss Bill's statement that "if we don't view God this way [that is, as faithful] then we will have a difficult time navigating the challenges in life."

2. GOD IS FAITHFUL (in the present)

Focuses on [1 Corinthians 1:9](#), [Philippians 1:6](#), [Psalm 37:4-5](#)

In what ways is God showing His faithfulness to Westheights during this time of transition?

How is God being faithful to you personally at the present time?

3. GOD WILL BE FAITHFUL (in the future)

Focuses on [Deuteronomy 7:9](#), [Psalm 119:90](#), [2 Timothy 2:13](#), [1 Thessalonians 5:24](#), [Hebrews 10:23 \(NASB\)](#)

Bill suggested we get up each morning remembering that God's mercy is new/fresh. What practices do you have that help you to focus on the Lord in your day?

Read [1 Thessalonians 5:24](#) and then read verse 23 as well to discover the context for 'God will make this happen'.

GOD GIVES US POWER

1. FOR AN EXPANDED FAITH

Focuses on [Ephesians 3:16](#), [Ephesians 3:17a \(NASB\)](#), [2 Thessalonians 1:3](#)

Discuss Bill's statement that "God's faithfulness to accomplish His purposes stimulates the growth of our faith".

Just as God's faithfulness in the past can encourage us to walk into the future with faith so too problems in our past can cause us to face the future with fear. Do you know of situations (for yourself or others) where past difficulties have negatively impacted someone's ability to be hopeful about the future?

2. TO KNOW THE LOVE OF JESUS

Focuses on [Ephesians 3:17-19a](#)

How has your understanding of God's love deepened over time?

Bill said that love has to be the motivation for all we do (as a church). Give an example of a time that love motivated you to take action about something or for someone.

3. FOR AN ENLARGED WORK

Focuses on [Ephesians 3:20](#)

- God's Distinct Honour
- God's Inner Work
- God's Complete Ability
- God's Great Results
- God's Ultimate Power
- God's Surprising Answers

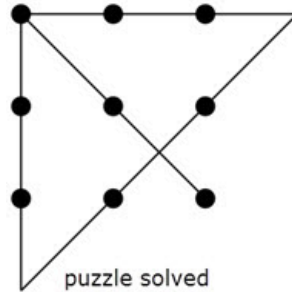
How has God surprised you?

How challenging do you find it to have faith in things that are unlikely or not probable? Is this reflected in your prayer life?

Read [1 Corinthians 2:9](#). Are you able to agree that 'the best is yet to come'? What do you look forward to?

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

(solutions)



The trick is to actually think outside the (presumed) box that we put around the 9 dots.

$$1+2+3+4+5+ \dots +95+96+97+98+99+100$$

The trick is to notice that $1+99=100$, $2+98=100$, $3+97=100$, etc. That is done 49 times, plus the lone 100, plus the 50 that will be left in the middle ($49+51=100$). So the total is $50 \times 100 + 50 = 5050$

Canoe Solve This

The trick is to realize that the woman can take something back (the chicken actually) with her on a return trip. She starts by taking the chicken over. Then goes back to get either the corn or the fox. When she drops that off she puts the chicken in the canoe for the return trip and then leaves it on the original shore while taking the last thing over.