

# HIS LOVE REVEALS

## Ephesians 3

**VOW : “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints . . . to know this love that surpasses knowledge.”**

**Ephesians  
3:17–19**

### Day 1: God's Love Revealed through Suffering

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 Read Ephesians 3:1

*The streets of New York are crowded with people, but Alex Hitchens (a.k.a. Hitch) knows them. Not their names, but their hearts desires. He knows because he studies people. Actually, he studies relationships. And his research has given him some basic principles about this mysterious thing called love.*



## Movie Mania

To better understand this study of Ephesians 3, watch *Hitch* and consider the following questions:


- What function does Alex Hitchens (a.k.a Hitch) serve in the relationship between Albert Brennaman and Allegra Cole?
- Does Hitch believe in the product he is selling? Does he believe in great love, and does he allow himself to experience it?

### Basic Principle:

No one ever wakes up and says, “Gee, I hope the God of the universe just completely ignores me today.”

Now, they may say, “I’m not really into God” or “I’m not ready for a spiritual commitment right now.” Or my personal favorite: “I’m really into my religion, and I don’t have time for a relationship with God.”

The Jews of the first century used that line a lot. But Paul wasn’t a date doctor for the Jews. He was God’s date doctor for the Gentiles. Whenever the Gentiles found out about God’s interest in them, their pat answer was probably, “Gee, I didn’t know God was even interested in me.” Oh, he was interested alright. He was definitely interested. In fact, he still is interested. And Paul’s life is proof of that.


 Read Acts 9:15–16 and write what Christ told Ananias about Paul. (Pay close attention to the lovely prophecy given in verse 16.)

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Paul should have known then that life would be rough, but I bet he had no idea what was in store for him.

 Catch a glimpse of Paul’s “sufferings” in 2 Corinthians 11:23–27. If these things had happened to you, what would you consider to be the worst, most painful trial?

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I don’t know if Paul had a “worst” physical trial. I’m sure that after a while, the pain just all seemed to blend together—although I’m certain he could have lived without the stoning. That experience really put him between a rock and a hard place, if you know what I mean.

But I wonder if the physical pain paled in comparison to the constant rejection he received. Rejection and injustice, those seemed to be the hallmarks of his ministerial career.

 Read Ephesians 3:1.

 How does Paul describe himself in this passage?

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 For whose sake does he suffer?

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Paul was a missionary to the Gentiles. Therefore he had the difficult task of informing the Gentiles of Christ's intent to make them a part of his body and thereby, make them his bride. This heavenly assignment garnered Paul a great deal of reproach from his fellow Jews.

At one time, Paul lived under the favor of the Jewish society in which he was born. But when he wrote Ephesians, he did so as a prisoner in Rome, confined to house arrest because of accusations from the Jews that he had transgressed the Law and defiled the temple.

 Read Acts 21:17–29. According to the Jews' accusations in verse 28, what was the reason for Paul's imprisonment?

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The four men referred to in this passage were Jews who had taken a Nazarite Vow that rendered them “set apart” for the Lord for a specified season. By aligning himself with these men, Paul was hoping that the Jews would see he followed the Law of Moses and was indeed not instructing Jews to forsake the Jewish faith.

In Week 2, we studied the *soreg*, or barrier wall, that divided the Gentile's Court from the outer perimeter of the Temple. The *soreg* denied Gentiles entrance into the Temple, and it was this barrier wall that was crossed by Paul and his four Jewish companions. But

because Paul was suspected by the Jews of being a Gentile sympathizer, these men were mistaken for Gentiles, thus giving the angry Jews reason to accuse Paul of bringing Gentiles into the temple.

It was this occurrence that rendered Paul a prisoner at the time he wrote this letter to the Ephesians. In fact, at this point in time, he had been a prisoner for close to three years, and was still awaiting a final verdict from the Emperor of Rome.

 Write Paul's words to the Gentiles in Ephesians 3:13.

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The Gentile Ephesians, hearing of Paul's sufferings on their behalf may have been tempted to lose heart and succumb to discouragement over Paul's plight. But Paul wanted them to view his sufferings as evidence of God's great love for them.

Paul wanted the Gentiles in Ephesus to know of his trials. He wanted them to know of his imprisonment on their behalf. Not because he wanted them to feel guilty, but because he wanted them to grasp the depth of God's love for them.

 Read Isaiah 43:4. What does God promise to do for those he loves?

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Paul knew he was loved by God. In fact, his life was rooted and grounded in God's love. But there was a whole world of Gentiles who were ignorant of God's love for them. So Paul was given the high and holy calling of revealing his love to them. He didn't just

reveal God's love through words. He revealed it through his sufferings. He revealed it through his life. And in the end, he revealed it through his death.

The Gentiles were precious and honored in God's sight, he loved them dearly, and they needed to know the full extent of God's love.



As a Gentile, how do you see God's love for you reflected in the life and sufferings of Paul?

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**Prayer**—*Lord, when I hear of Paul's sufferings, I often put myself in his shoes, and wonder what I would have done in his situation. But that's not what you're asking of me is it? Today, in these verses, you're asking me to put myself in the Gentiles' shoes—to feel what they felt. For when I do that, your great love becomes evident to me. You didn't let anything stop you, did you Lord? Your love letter to me was delivered through the hands of suffering saints who had grasped your great love for them and felt duty-bound to pass that love on to others. Thank you Father for making me a recipient of that love. I receive it, Lord. I receive it!*

## Day 2: God's Love Revealed in Spite of Rejection

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 Read Ephesians 3:2–6

### Basic Principle:

No one ever wakes up and says, “Gee, I’ve been rejected before, I think I’d like to experience that pain all over again.”

Now they may say, “I’ve been rejected before and it stinks!” Or “I’ve been rejected, and I’ve just learned to live with it.” Or my personal favorite, “I’ve been rejected before, and I’ve made sure it will never happen again.”

I’ve been a proponent of the latter statement. Although it took me a few heartaches before I was willing to make that disclaimer. My first rejection occurred at the hands of my first boyfriend in the 7th grade. He dumped me for my best friend, whose name was Harmony. How ironic is that?

My second and perhaps most painful rejection came in college. It occurred when this guy I was crazy about dumped me for his ex-girlfriend, and then decided to marry her four months later—on my birthday. If that’s not insult to injury, I don’t know what is!


*Cressida Baylor—the name still invoked a sharp pain in Hitch’s heart. When he first met her he was just a foolish college boy, naïve to the ways of women. But Cressida had given him his first education. Why had he let his guard down? Why had he loved her so freely? And why had he, the great Date Doctor of New York City, ever allowed her the opportunity to teach him the pain of rejection.*

 Have you ever felt the sting of rejection? If so, in what way has that rejection affected your life?

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 Read Ephesians 3:2–6.

 In verse 3, Paul states there was something made known to him. What was it?

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 Was this “mystery” revealed to men in other generations?

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 Ephesians 3:6 reveals the “mystery” Paul has uncovered. What is that mystery?

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In Ephesians 3:2–6, Paul is stating that he has been given the understanding of one of God’s mysteries. He’s been entrusted with a secret that the Old Testament prophecies only alluded to. And now, God has made his plan known to Paul. His divine plan is that the Gentiles will now be united with Israel (the Jews) and will share in a relationship with the Lord.

You see, God spent the majority of the Old Testament period setting Israel apart from the other nations in order that the Messiah might come from Israel. But when Christ came, God’s plan was to unite the Jews and Gentiles and then to join them both to God through Jesus Christ.

It's a wonderful plan, but consider the repercussions this plan had on the Gentiles, who for thousands of years had been rejected by God's people. How must they have felt during those years of estrangement? Always on the outside looking in, wondering what it must feel like to be listed among God's chosen few.


 Do you suppose they suffered from rejection?

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 And if so, why do you suppose God allowed them to experience rejection?

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 Read John 4:7-9. Why was the Samaritan woman surprised that Jesus asked her for a drink?

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The Samaritans were shunned by the Jews because they were originally Jews who had intermarried with Gentiles, thus creating Gentile descendents. It was because of this, the first century Jews considered the Samaritans unclean.

 Read John 4:28. After her discourse with Jesus, what did the Samaritan woman do?

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 Read John 4:39–42. How did these Gentiles respond to Christ in these verses?

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Rejection teaches us conditional love. In the movie, *Hitch*, Alex Hitchens learns conditional love from Cressida. I learned conditional love from my first boyfriend and later in life, that lesson was validated by my college boyfriend. If we live long enough, we'll experience rejection because we're surrounded by humans. And human love is conditional. Human love grants or withholds affection based upon physical appearance, financial status, race, religion, or any other reason that comes to mind. But God's love is always unconditional.

The Samaritans were well versed in conditional love, because they'd suffered from rejection for hundreds of years. But their rejection had created within them a hunger for unconditional love. So they were receptive to the Savior when he came to Samaria.

You see, in those days, Samaria was located in the middle of Israel. Jews living in the northern region of Israel (Galilee) would journey south to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. But the Jews absolutely refused to pass through Samaria. In fact, they would journey many miles out of the way, just to avoid Samaria and any inter-

action with the Samaritans. So when Christ traveled through Samaria and actually spoke to the Samaritans, ministering to them and to their needs, the Samaritans immediately recognized his love, his *unconditional* love. This was the unconditional love and acceptance they'd been longing for for generations.

Earlier, I asked why you thought God allowed the Gentiles to experience rejection. And while I can't be certain of his reasons, all I know is that the Samaritans' rejection taught them conditional love. And their understanding of conditional love made them yearn for true love. It made them long for unconditional love, God's love.

When we experience rejection we can do one of two things. We can build up walls of emotional apathy that keep our hearts locked and guarded so that we'll not be vulnerable to rejection again. Or we can be like the Samaritans and allow our rejection to create in us a longing for unconditional love – the kind of love that only Christ can provide.



My friend, what have you done with your rejection? Have you allowed it to imprison your heart, or have you allowed it to fuel your longing for unconditional love?

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For many years my heart remained locked and guarded. But as I grew in Christ and traded the conditional love of humans for God's

unconditional love, the ice around my heart slowly began to thaw. I now understand that rejection has purpose. It teaches us to hunger for unconditional love, and it also teaches us the amazing power of God's love. For it is his love that reaches past our emotional walls and breathes new life into our dormant hearts.

**Prayer**—*Lord, rejection is painful. It hurts and though I'd like to avoid it at all costs, I'm certain I'll experience it again before my life on earth is complete. So when that happens and conditional love rears its ugly head, give me the strength to take that rejection and give it to you. Give me the faith to believe that though others reject me, "the Lord will receive me." (Psalm 27:10) And let me trust in your unconditional love for me.*

## Day 3: God's Love Revealed without Guile

 Read Ephesians 3:7–13

*"With no guile and no game, there's no girl."*

Hitch<sup>1</sup>

*The bar is crowded, but Hitch spots her. She is enjoying her position as the lone female in a crowd of attentive men. She is most definitely beautiful. And the mob of males surrounding her gives evidence of the fact that Hitch is not her sole admirer. Their presence makes his approach a little difficult, but he has a plan. He is a master at this, able to run game in any situation.*

*Approaching her with a confident air, Hitch feigns indifference as he pulls a \$20 from his pocket. He shoulders his way past her besotted posse and slips the money in her hand. Her eyes focus on the money, but when she*


1. Kevin Bisch, "Albert" Hitch. DVD. Directed by Andy Tennant. (Culver City, CA: Columbia Pictures, 2005.)

*looks up, his back is all she sees. His request for two Coronas with lime wedges propels her to action.*

*In frustration, she leaves her admirers in pursuit of Hitch. With money in hand, she waves him down to explain she doesn't work there. It is then that he knows he has her. So with guile in his eyes and a smile on his face Hitch lets her know he is aware of her position, or lack thereof. He was just trying to get her alone, and now he's accomplished his task.*

### **Basic Principle:**


*A guy has to have game when he's going after the girl. He's gotta give her enough to let her know he's interested, but he can't give her too much. Too much too soon isn't game, it's just being gullible. But a little guile and a little game will eventually get you the girl.*

 According to Ephesians 3:7, how did Paul become a servant of the gospel?

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 In Ephesians 3:8–9, Paul cites two reasons why God has granted him grace. What two reasons does he give?

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 Refer back to Ephesians 3:6, what is the mystery Paul is called to make plain?

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In Day 1, we learned how God's love is revealed through Paul's suffering. In Day 2, we discovered how God's love is revealed in spite of rejection. And now, in Day 3, I just want us to embrace the fact that God's love is so plainly revealed.

Consider the Gentiles in Ephesus. God wasn't running game with them, he wasn't being coy or playing hard to get. God was forthright in his pursuit of them. God had opened up his heart to them. He'd given them Paul as a messenger of his love and kindness. He'd offered them a place in his kingdom alongside his chosen people. He'd given them his Son and he'd provided them the opportunity to reflect his wisdom and glory.

 According to Ephesians 3:10–11, what was God's intent?

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Understand that God's plan for humanity is unfolding upon two stages. The first and most apparent is the physical, earthly stage where we sit as audience. And the second is the spiritual stage, where God's actions are viewed by a host of angelic and demonic spectators. Both audiences were created by God, and both have been given the option to receive or reject his love (see Jude 1:6a and 2 Peter 2:4).\

According to Revelation 12:4, one-third of the angels rejected God's love and followed Satan in his rebellion against the creator. Since 2 Peter 2:4 says, "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell" we can conclude that redemption through Jesus Christ is not available to these fallen angels as it is to mankind.


 Read John 8:44, How does Jesus describe Satan in this passage?

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Since the Garden of Eden, Satan's been deceiving us with his lies, intent upon enticing us away from the Lord's love. His deception promises us power and pleasure, but beneath his guile is destruction.

 **With this in mind, reread Ephesians 3:10–11. Why do you suppose it was so important for God to make his revelation known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms?**

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I think it's important because God's not using guile in his pursuit of us. He's had a plan since the beginning of time. Though that plan has unfolded progressively, he's not being deceitful in his dealings with us. He is aggressively and unashamedly pursuing humanity with his love. And by including the Gentiles in his overall plan, he has allowed anyone, from any race, and any walk of life, the opportunity to enter into a love relationship with him.

This is what God wanted the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms to recognize. He wanted them to see his boundless love for every individual. And he wanted them to see that love communicated without guile, deceit or game. Perhaps he wanted them to know that despite their evil efforts, game and guile don't get the Gentile. Game and guile don't get God's people, because his love draws us in a way that no devious deception ever could.



## Movie Trivia Question

- Consider Albert and Allegra's relationship. In the end, did game and guile get Allegra Cole?



## Day 4: God's Love Revealed So We Might Receive It

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 Read Ephesians 3:14–19

### Basic Principle:

*No one knows how great love happens. It just does. “One moment, you’re enjoying your life. And the next, you’re wondering how you ever lived without them.” – Hitch<sup>2</sup>*

Exactly, how does great love happen? Hitch may have been unaware of the process, but the apostle Paul certainly knew the formula. And he reveals it to us in his prayer for the Ephesians. So let’s study today’s verses to see the process by which great love is produced!

 Read Ephesians 3:14–17 and answer the following questions:

 Who is Paul praying to?

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 What does Paul ask God to do in verse 16?

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2. Bisch, “Start.” *Hitch*. DVD.

 According to that same verse, what member of the trinity will God use to strengthen us with power?

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 The first portion of verse 17 gives us the reason for Paul's request. What is the reason?

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Paul manages to pack all three members of the trinity into his rather potent prayer. In verses 16 and 17, he asks God to grant **permission** for the saints to receive power. Next, Paul acknowledges that the Holy Spirit will be the **process** by which that power is administered. Then finally in verse 17, Paul reveals the purpose for his request. The whole reason he asks the Father for power is so the **presence** of Christ might dwell in the hearts of God's people.

God the Father grants the **permission**, while the Holy Spirit enables the **process** by which the **presence** of Christ might dwell in our hearts. Sounds like a lot of "p" words, but that's only the beginning. Because the most significant word in Paul's prayer is the word "power."

 Read Ephesians 3:16–19 and notice Paul's two requests for power.

 According to verses 16–17, why was power needed?

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☞ According to verses 18–19, why was power needed?

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I must admit, I read these verses and wonder, “Why such a need for power?” Why can’t Christ just dwell in my heart? I’ve already asked him to, why can’t he just do it? And why do I need power to know the full extent of Christ’s love for me? Power. It seems an odd escort for love.

*Hitch is a master at creating opportunities for others to fall in love. His advice helps guys understand that even beautiful women often fail to know their hearts’ desire until it is standing right before their eyes. So Hitch feels it his noble duty to help women see. And throughout his career, he’s done a rather remarkable job of it.*

*Yet though his expertise with women has given him quite a high volume of clientele, his experiences with the opposite sex have come at a cost. And he is still paying restitution. For beneath his confident façade lays a heart held captive by past hurts and failed relationships. And he doesn’t have the power to break free.*

The word “power” in verses 16 and 18 is translated from the Greek word *dunamis* meaning, “ability or strength.”<sup>3</sup> It’s a word used quite frequently by the writers of the New Testament, and it’s often associated with the Holy Spirit. The two are often used in tandem because the Holy Spirit enables the process by which power is administered to God’s people.

3. Thayer and Smith. “Greek Lexicon entry for Dunamis.” *The New Testament Greek Lexicon*. (The Lockman Foundation, 1998). <<http://www.studylight.org/lex/grk/view.cgi?number=1411>>.

☞ After having read Paul's prayer for the Ephesians in chapter 3, why do you suppose the Christians in Ephesus would have needed power to assist them in their love relationship with Christ?

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In Day 2 we examined the pain associated with conditional love and rejection. Then in Day 3, we considered the enemy's tendency to *deceive* God's people, attracting us with his guile. So with conditional love, rejection and guile factored into our understanding of love, it's no wonder we, as Christians, need God's supernatural power and ability to receive Christ's love.

If you'll notice, everything about Paul's prayer places us as recipients. Paul's not praying we produce love or orchestrate a relationship with Christ. He's not asking God to make us better Christians so we might love Christ more fully. He's merely asking that we receive—that we receive Christ's love for us.

In verse 16, Paul asks that we be given power so we might receive Christ into our hearts, allowing our Savior to take up residence there. Then in verses 18–19, he requests that we receive knowledge and understanding of Christ's great love for us.

I have three daughters, and every night as I tuck them into bed, I pray over them. I used to pray, "Lord, give them a heart that loves you." And while I still pray that prayer, I've found the need to add an additional clause to that request. So now, as my eight year old lays in her daybed and my four and six year olds snuggle together in their double bed, I touch each of them praying that God would give them hearts that love him, and hearts that receive his love in return.

I pray this because I've discovered that in my own life, much of



A few years ago, I spoke on this very topic. And at the conclusion of my message, I sang the lyrics to a song I wrote. (By the way, I'm a horrible singer, and the fact I sang the song *acappella* made the whole experience less than enjoyable for my audience. I have, unfortunately, never been asked to speak at that church again. So now I limit my solos to the shower!) Anyway, here's the song, I pray it's received better in print than it was in person.

### I Am Loved By You

"I am loved by you. No one else can love me quite like you do. Despite the trials and the heartaches of life, you prove, I am loved by you.

Your love is a well that will never run dry. It reaches the depths of my soul. So give me the power to open my heart and receive your gift to me.

For I am loved by you. No one else can love me quite like you do. Despite the trials and the heartaches of life, you prove, I am loved by you."

So how does great love happen? Well, according to Paul, it takes all three members of the godhead and a supernatural power to pull it off. But in the end, it happens, and we are the richer for it. Great love—first a great God gives it, and then we as gracious saints supernaturally receive it.

**Prayer**—*Oh God, please give me the power to receive your love. For only your power will free my heart from my fear of rejection. And only your supernatural strength will release me from the temptation to earn your love. So grant me your power, I pray, for once I am free, then can I truly receive your unconditional love for me.*

## Day 5: God's Love Revealed so He Might Receive Glory

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### Read Ephesians 3:20–21

*The steps to Sara's apartment have never seemed so steep, but here he is: climbing after her and planning to make a fool of himself once he reaches the apex. Momentarily, he gives her door a cheerful knock while he smiles and waves at the peephole. He knows she sees him because she thrusts the door open and leans against it to bar his entrance. Her lips are drawn in a tight, thin line and the glare she gives him conveys her displeasure.*

*Smiling, Hitch tries to warm her frigid greeting with nervous laughter, but she refuses to thaw. Between her icy presence and his fear of rejection, Hitch finds himself completely befuddled. Words that had once so effortlessly flowed from his lips with wit and charm, are now jumbled and disoriented. He doesn't know what to say or how to say it. It has been years since he's made himself this vulnerable in love and now he's forgotten the art of groveling.*

*Though Sara's aura radiates impatience and annoyance, still he tries, fumbling for the right words to say. But his attempts to win her back come to an abrupt halt when she opens the door further, revealing the presence of a tall, attractive, male stranger. She introduces the brute, but Hitch doesn't catch the name. He is too busy considering the repercussions this guys' presence has on his chances at love.*

*The stranger makes his way out of the apartment with Sara's bags in hand. Following in his wake, Sara steps through the portal, locking the door behind her. Turning, she faces Hitch and reminds him of his past suggestion that they both go their separate ways, for surely if they do, everything will work out just fine.*

*Her final words spoken, she turns and begins her descent to the corridor. And as she does so, the steady rhythm of Hitch's heart echoes her footfall.*

*He has to stop her. So standing at the top of the landing he calls to her, "What if fine isn't good enough? What if I want extraordinary?"<sup>4</sup>*

### Basic Principle:

Fine isn't good enough. When it comes to love, only the extraordinary, only the immeasurable, only the unimaginable will do.

 Read Ephesians 3:20.

 What is God able to do?

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 How is he able to do it?

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In Day 4, we learned we need God's power in order to fully receive Christ's love for us. Once we've received God's power and Christ's love, then we're faced with a new challenge. The challenge is beginning a new life with a perfect God dwelling in our often fickle hearts while we walk the streets of a sinful world. With this challenge before us, a love relationship with Christ seems a difficult one to sustain. It would be doomed from the outset, if not for God's power working within us.

4. Bisch, "The Leap." *Hitch*. DVD.

Thankfully, the same power that gives us the ability to receive Christ's love also gives us the ability to sustain a relationship with almighty God. God has granted us that power through the Holy Spirit. And when that power is exercised in our lives, he's able to join with it and make our relationship with Christ extraordinary, immeasurable, and unimaginable.

But what is an unimaginable relationship with Christ? What does it entail? And what does it look like? Let's end our week together discovering what happens when we refuse to settle for a mere "fine" relationship with the divine. So join me in my pursuit of an extraordinary relationship with Christ and allow God's power within us to produce the unimaginable.

 Write the first sentence of 1 John 4:16.

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Before we can truly allow God's power to do extraordinary things through us, we must first apply the lesson we learned in Day 4. We must receive God's unconditional love. We must know it, believe it, and rely on it.

I was browsing through scripture the other day during my quiet time and I found this wonderful verse. It's about God's unfailing love. The New International Version reads, "The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love." (Psalm 147:11)

I want the Lord to delight in me. I want him to know that I fear him. But more than that, I want him to know that I believe he loves me. I receive that love, and I'm putting all my hope and all my trust in it.



Why do you suppose it's so important that we, as the Bride of Christ, put our faith in his unfailing love?

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 Read David's words in Psalm 13.

 How did David feel about God at the outset of this Psalm?

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 He had a change of heart in verse 5. According to this verse, in what does David trust?

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The Hebrew word translated “trust” in this verse is *batach*, and it means “to be secure” or “to feel safe.”<sup>5</sup> David was so safe and secure in God’s love for him, that even amid all his trials and frustrations with God, he still knew God loved him. He still trusted in God’s

5. Brown, Driver, Briggs and Gesenius. “Hebrew Lexicon entry for Batach.” *The Old Testament Hebrew Lexicon*. (The Lockman Foundation, 1998). <<http://www.studylight.org/lex/heb/view.cgi?number=982>>.

unfailing love for him. That, my friend is an extraordinary, unimaginable relationship!

When we fully grasp the depth of our Savior's love for us, when we accept that love and feel safe and secure within it, then our trials here on earth seem only temporary and completely irrelevant in light of our eternal relationship with God. Sure, sometimes God's distant behavior is maddening, at least for me it is. And I'm sure that if I were to interview our Lord, he'd say similar things about my behavior. But that is the essence of relationship. Sometimes it's fraught with misunderstandings and miscommunications. Sometimes it's filled with delight and other times, disappointment. (I know I've certainly experienced disappointments in my relationship with the Lord.)

But through it all, one thing remains—his unfailing love. And it's in that love we must place our trust, find our security, and discover our safety. For when we do, God does an amazing thing.

 **Read Ephesians 3:21. Paul ends his prayer with this verse. But what does he pray God will receive through the church and through Christ Jesus?**

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When we embark upon a relationship with Christ, he extends his love to us. God's Holy Spirit within us gives us the power to receive that love. Then God takes our relationship with his son and does immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. Through it all, God receives the glory.

Because God garners praise and glory from our relationship with Christ, it's important that we don't settle for mediocrity. For us, fine isn't good enough. When it comes to our love relationship with

Christ, only the extraordinary, only the immeasurable, only the unimaginable will do. So believe and receive and in the process, allow God his glory.

**Prayer**—*God, thanks for giving me permission to receive Christ's love for me. I receive all kinds of things from the enemy: guilt, condemnation, remorse. So often I feel unworthy of such love lavished upon me by your precious son. But today, I choose to receive that love, to feel secure in it and to put my trust in it. And Lord, as I grow in my relationship with Christ, may our love, reflect your glory.*