

Nate Young  
Spiritual Sight

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Series: The Church and the Home  
Ephesians 1:15-23

My name is Nate, and I am one of the directional elders here at the church. I've been so for something like four years now. Half of you guys are probably like, "Elder? I expected somebody a little bit older. This guy looks like a baby." To that I would say you should have seen me four years ago. I really was a baby four years ago. Furthermore, you should have seen this church four years ago. I mean, our church was a baby four years ago.

In any event, I've been an elder for four years, and the three years prior to that, the first three years of this church, I was actually the full-time worship leader here. Well, not "full-time" in the sense that it was my job. I had a Monday-Friday job, but I did it every weekend...*that* kind of full-time.

You know, God is working at the speed of light around here, in the moment, all the time, doing amazing things. We don't always tell the stories about how we all got to be in this room. We all have a story about why we're in this room, and *I* have a story about why I'm in this room. I just want to let you guys in on that.

Eight years ago, my wife and I were at The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, the church that planted Two Cities Church. We already knew we were moving to Winston for work, and we heard The Summit was planting a church in Winston-Salem. We thought, "Oh, that's convenient." So, we reached out and met the church planter, this guy named Kyle Mercer, and we liked him a lot. He told us about his church plant.

Anyway, we ended up deciding, "Hey, look. We're going to move to town. We'll visit some churches, and you guys launch. We'll visit yours, and we'll make a decision." He was like, "Okay. Fair enough." So we did that. We moved to town. Kyle texted me, and he was like, "Hey, have you guys landed anywhere yet? We're launching in a couple of months." We were like, "No, we haven't landed at a church yet." He was like, "Why

don't you come get lunch with me and my executive pastor, this guy named Dave Vogel."

Guys, this lunch is implanted in my memory. I'm sitting outside at a table at Mooney's Mediterranean on Fourth Street (rest in peace), and these two guys, Kyle and Dave, walk up. They're larger than life. It's my first time meeting Dave. They're as warm as can be. We're chitchatting, getting to know each other. It's super comfortable. Then Kyle... I've never seen anything like it. He throws it into gear.

He's like, "Okay. So, we are launching this church in a few weeks, and we don't have a worship leader yet." Oh, I don't think I mentioned this. At The Summit, on a very fill-in basis, I was leading worship sometimes, and Kyle knew about that. He's like, "We don't have a worship leader yet, and I think it's you." I'm like, "All right. Well, I'm flattered. I had no idea you were thinking this." You know, I'm hitting the brake pedal a little bit. "Let me think and pray about it." You know, the classic stuff.

He's like, "No, no. You don't need to do those things. I've thought and prayed about it. It's you." I'm like, "Okay. Again, I'm flattered. Thank you. Um, in this moment, I feel open to it, but I'm not sure I feel particularly called." Then he says this. It's so intense, but he literally says this: "I'm the pastor of this church." As warm as can be, but the content is intense. "I'm the pastor of this church. I'm calling you to be the worship leader at this church."

Maybe that's what the call looks like. I don't know. I'm like, "What the heck. It's a church plant. I can play my guitar and sing some songs." I had no idea what I was getting myself into. Fast-forward three years. I had led worship at this church plant for... It was over 300 times. We launched with two services. We were doing four by the time he, mercifully, hired Donovan.

In any event, just to think about that lunch that day, and then the trajectory of the next seven years that the Lord would take my family and me on, and then to be able to stand up here today and preach to you guys, it's honestly overwhelming to think about. So let me do that. Let me preach to you, if you would be so kind. We're still in Ephesians 1. We'll be in verse 15, following up on what Kyle said last week was the deepest text he ever preached in the middle of Ephesians 1.

I'm not really sure Paul is coming up for air here at the end of Ephesians 1. He kind of explodes into this prayer that we have today. So, today, we have two sentences, the first of which is 168 words, and the second of which starts with an *and*. It's like, if Paul were in your high school English class, he'd probably get a bad grade on sentence structure. Also probably a bad grade for offensive content. But the joke is on the English teacher, because he's one of the best-known authors in the world.

In any case, let's look at it. Here we go. Verse 15. Let's read this. ***"For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints..."*** We're going to have to go bit by bit. This is a big run-on sentence here. Let's pause there.

So, Paul is in Rome, and he has this church plant in Ephesus. He can't watch the sermons online or call up the pastor, but somehow he gets a report that the church is doing well. The nature of the report is that they are known for their faith in Jesus and their love because of Jesus, and he's encouraged.

He's encouraged because faith and love are two of the classic markers of true Christians. You can't fake faith and love. It's something God does in you. The Ephesian church is known for their faith in Jesus and their love because of him, and that gets me thinking. "Okay. The Ephesian church was known for faith and love. What are churches today known for?" Well, all kinds of things. Right?

You have *cool church*. *Cool church* is, you know, everyone onstage dresses super cool...good haircuts, nice shoes, or whatever, and it's a great aesthetic. Is that stuff bad? No, that stuff is fine but kind of weird if that's the number-one thing your church is known for, known for being cool.

You have *correct church*. *Correct church* is known for everything it stands for and stands against, all the way down to the secondary and tertiary issues it has white-papered and argued about and there are classes on. Is that stuff bad? No. Honestly, the Bible is the center of correct church, which is a good thing, but if the number-one thing your church is known for is where it stands on the tertiary stuff, it's kind of weird.

You have *cornucopia church*. (I'm trying to alliterate, guys. Okay?) What is that? It is the church that's known for all of the programs, all of the age and stage programs and the church softball leagues and all this stuff. Is that stuff bad? No, that stuff is great. It can be great, but, again, it's kind of weird if that's the number-one thing the church is known for.

It's like going to a new pizza restaurant. You go to this new pizza restaurant. You love it. You have a great time, and you're telling all of your friends, "Hey, guys, you've got to check out this new restaurant. It's amazing. I've never seen anything like it. All of the waiters wear the coolest shoes. And the tables there are, like, the flattest tables I've ever seen. No wobbly tables. You don't have to stick a napkin under one of the legs. You know how you have to do that sometimes? No, no, super flat."

It's like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. Okay, okay. How's the pizza?" Right? The main thing in a pizza restaurant is the pizza. What's the main thing at church? Jesus. I mean, he

bought her with his blood. I hope she's known for more than cool shoes. Okay. Churches out there are known for all kinds of stuff. Let's take it down a level.

What about us? What's Two Cities known for? What are *we* known for? I don't know. I hope it's faith and love. Maybe it's momentum. Maybe it's being big, getting bigger, new building downtown. That stuff is fine. We're excited about that stuff. We're about as excited about that stuff as flat tables, because that stuff is the trellis. Life is not in the trellis. Life is in the vine. His name is Jesus Christ. That's where the life comes from.

Guys, honestly, we try so hard to keep the main thing the main thing, to help us see it. We have to keep looking at it. It's Jesus. We have to keep looking at it or else start looking at other things. We say things like, "We want to be a conversion community. We want Two Cities to feel like a place where life change happens."

Explicitly, what we mean by that is we want Two Cities to be a place where people go from not really knowing about Jesus to learning about him to falling in love with him and wrapping their whole lives around him. That's what we want. It's kind of hard to measure though, right? I get why the attention goes to these other things. It's easy to measure budgets or attendance on Easter. It's easy to measure *that* stuff.

But if you want a metric (and I kind of do), I don't know of a better one than a baptism. Why? Because faith and love. Let's think about this. For somebody to even be getting up here, somebody had to love them and share the gospel with them. That's love. And what are they doing when they get up here? "I believe." That's faith. "I believe in Jesus. I want to follow him." So it's a faith and love metric.

Okay. How are we doing? Well, guys, this year (it's April), we've baptized over 60 people at this church, and I'm pumped up about it. Last year, over 100. I'm pumped up about it. We haven't kept perfect records from the beginning, but since 2019 we have had 423 people baptized at our church. I'm pumped up about it. I say it's a metric. It's people. They're real people. It's not just a number. Like, it's some of you.

My favorite thing isn't walking in here and seeing it overflowing with people, kind of like it is today. Honestly, sometimes it gives me a little bit of anxiety. My favorite thing is looking right over there and seeing 5 or 10, or the more the merrier, in "Jesus in my place" tee shirts, walking up here, having a brother, sister, mom, dad, son, or daughter (that stuff messes me up, honestly) baptize someone they love. If we're going to be known for something, let's be known for that.

Let's take it down one more level. What are *you* known for? I think we're doing a good job. I actually do. I think Two Cities is doing a good job, but are we known for faith and love *because* of you or in *spite* of you? Let me ask it a different way. If everybody

in this church did exactly what you did last year, would there be more or less faith and love?

If everybody in this church did exactly what you did last year, do we have an abundance of volunteers in all of our ministry areas or are we dying in our kids' ministry because everyone wants to drop off their kids, but no one wants to watch them? If everybody did exactly what you did last year, are there thousands of classmates, coworkers, neighbors, and friends hearing about Jesus, or, if we took what you did and multiplied it times everybody, is it zero people?

Look. I'm not trying to beat us up; I'm trying to build us up. The funny thing about this question... For half of you it's an encouragement. For half of you, if everybody did what you did, this church would be on steroids. It would be amazing. It would be incredible.

But for something like half of you (that's the nature of an average, right?) it's a challenge to you. Look. I'm not here to beat you up; I'm here to build you up. Here's the point: *What's your next step?* Great Community Group question this week. "What is my next step in faith in Jesus, and what is my next step in love for others because of Jesus?"

So, the Ephesian church is known for their faith and love. Paul is excited about it, and he's praying for them. This is what he says. Verse 16: ***"...I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened..."***

Let's just interrogate this a little bit. It's a big run-on sentence. Why is Paul praying here? He goes on to say he wants them to know some things and then says some things he wants them to know, but why does he pray those things for them and not just say, "Know these things"? Well, there is a certain type of wisdom, a certain type of enlightenment, revelation, that only comes through the Holy Spirit. You can't get it any other way. There's no other way to get it.

He's the source. He's not a subject matter expert. He's not like your world history teacher who won Teacher of the Year, knows a lot about world history, and if you have some questions, knows most of the answers. No, no. He's the source. He created all of the actors who have ever acted in world history, and in his sovereignty, he's directing all of world history toward his end, which is his glory. He's the source.

This feels theological, but I actually think it's very practical. Why is it practical? Because I think a lot of us are practically prone to seeking answers about life's deepest stuff, like, "How do I disciple my kids?" and "What's the purpose of this

painful situation I'm in?" and "How do I relate to God?" We're prone to going primarily or, worse, exclusively to subject matter experts and not to the source.

Let me be clear. What am I talking about here? When I say the "source," literally, what I'm talking about is direct communion with God through Bible reading and prayer. That's what I'm talking about. Subject matter experts... Oh my goodness. It's like everything else. It's your favorite Christian authors or speakers or pastors or Christian podcasts or whatever else.

They're great. I'm not saying throw the baby out with the bathwater. We should use them, but there's a right and wrong way to use them. Let me give a real example to try to make this real for us. *The Bible Recap* podcast. It's great. You should do it. It's amazing. It's one of the top Christian podcasts in the world for a reason.

Here's the wrong way to use it. During the "Read your Bible" part, get through it as fast as possible, don't really engage heart and mind, hit the snooze button, and then when Tara-Leigh starts talking to you, at that point engage heart and mind. That would be the wrong way to use it. Take the supplement. Use the subject matter expert. Take your vitamins, but don't forget to eat the meal. Don't live on vitamins. Make sense?

So, Paul is going to the source. He's praying to him. He says in verse 17, "**...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened...**" We just need to keep asking questions. Big run-on sentence, a lot of spiritual words.

What is that? *Eyes of heart*. Do you see that? "**...having the eyes of your hearts enlightened...**" What is that? Is that a real category? *Eyes of heart*. According to this passage, you have two types of eyes. The first one is self-evident: eyes of head. You're looking at me with them right now. But you also have eyes in your heart. It's a real category, according to this passage. It's helpful to understand eyes of head as an analogy for understanding eyes of heart.

So, eyes of head. I get that this is dumbed down, but what do they do? Eyes of head observe information in the physical world, and the eyes of your head inform your activity in the physical world. It's important to see correctly so you can act correctly in the physical world. Like, it's important to see that a light is red so you can brake and not get T-boned in the middle of an intersection. Right?

Okay. Let's think about the analogy. What do eyes of heart do? They observe realities in the spiritual world...not in the physical world, in the spiritual world. And they're real. This stuff is real. It's God, heaven, hell, sin, righteousness, good, and evil. It's the

most real stuff, actually, but you can't see it with eyes of head. You have to see it with eyes of heart.

This is important, guys. The eyes of your heart only work correctly if you are spiritually alive. Obviously, right? I mean, think about it. Can a physically dead person observe things in the physical world? No, they cannot. They're dead. In the same way, can a spiritually dead person (aka, a non-Christian) observe things correctly in the spiritual world? No, they cannot expect to do so. Only Christians. That happens at salvation when the Spirit illuminates the eyes of the heart.

This leads us to the next point. It's very interesting. It's more than interesting, but it's at least interesting. It is possible to think you see correctly with the eyes of your heart and to *not* be able to see correctly with the eyes of your heart. That's a possibility. How do I know this? Mark 4 says this: "**...they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.**"

This verse is saying it's possible to see and not perceive. It's possible to understand a spiritual reality and kind of mentally assent but not truly see it with the eyes of your heart. Let me try to give the most high-contrast example for us to kind of know what I'm talking about here. Let's think about a real example: Judas.

Judas is one of the twelve disciples. He walks around with the incarnate Son of God for three years, seeing him raise Lazarus from the dead, seeing him cast out demons, seeing him multiply food and feed thousands of people, healing people, but he was a fraud. He was fooling everybody but Jesus. The scary thing is I think he was even fooling himself a lot of the time. That's kind of scary to think about.

He was fooling everybody else. Think about this. Guys, this is crazy. In Matthew 10, Jesus sends the Twelve out on a mission trip, and he gives them authority over demons and to heal people. Judas goes out, and it doesn't say when they got back Judas' ministry partner said, "Hey, Jesus, uh, what's the deal with Judas? This guy can't do anything. He can't teach. He can't heal anybody. He can't cast out any demons. He has a bad attitude. What's the deal with this guy?"

So, I think it's safe to assume Judas could do some stuff, but in the end, Judas proved by his activity that he did not see correctly. Why? What did he do? In the end, he sold the Son of God for money, proving that he saw money as god and not Jesus Christ, which is obviously incorrect sight.

Okay. Why do I even bring this up? What am I saying here? Am I saying that some of us in here are in danger of being Judas? Well, not with the same global stakes but the same personal stakes. I think so. Guys, as an elder of this church... I love you guys so

much, but I'm concerned that there's a category of people coming around who are content being spiritually adjacent and not spiritually alive.

It particularly concerns me because I think most people in that category don't know they're in that category. I'm not trying to beat us up. I'm trying to be helpful. I don't want us to realize we're in that category when it's too late. So, what do I mean by this? It looks the same. Actually, the activity kind of looks the same a lot of the time.

There is more to it than coming to church to feel good about yourself. Judas did more than that. There's more to it than hanging out with people who really love Jesus. I mean, Judas did that. He was one of the disciples. He hung out with great friends. There's more to it than this mentality, like, "Oh man! Church has been great for my family. We've loved getting plugged in here. It's great for my kids. Youth ministry, the kids' ministry...it's great for my kids."

Is it good for *you* or is it just good for your family? And, by the way, precisely what do you mean by "it"? Are we talking about Jesus or are we talking about "A nice, safe place so my kids can have some nice, safe friends"? See what I'm saying? Spiritually adjacent. If we could just take a second, guys (I'm not trying to beat us up), just to be honest with ourselves.

For some of you, Jesus isn't your Lord. I'm not trying to beat us up, but it's helpful to see what's really happening. For some of you, it's money. If you take Jesus out of your life, your life looks pretty much exactly the same. He's not the thing without which your whole life doesn't make sense anymore, but money is. Or maybe fun is your lord. You're like, "What? I'm deeper than that. Fun is not my lord." I don't know. I know what you see by what you do, so I don't know.

Again, I'm not trying to beat us up. I'm not trying to be needlessly offensive. I'm trying to be helpful. You're like, "How is this helpful?" Here's how it's helpful. What do you do? Look back at the verse. If you see and perceive, there's always a first correct activity. You turn. And what? Get what you deserve? You get punished? No. You get forgiven. You get freed. You get healed. Jesus wants to heal you. He wants you to see it and then turn and see him as a forgiver and not run away like Judas, seeing him as a damner. Yeah, he's good.

So, Paul is praying that we would see. He's also praying (verse 18), "**...that you may know...**" Okay, really bite-size this time. See and know. You're like, "How is knowing any different than seeing?" Well, it's a little bit different, and we have to understand the Greek to understand how this is really different.

There are two words in Greek for *know*. The first one is *oida*. *Oida* is to understand facts merely. You understand it. You get it. You know it, but you understand the facts



merely. The word Paul is using here is *ginosko*. This is a felt knowledge that is gained through experience. I'll try to explain this a couple of ways.

I can know (*oida*) that a Dough-Joe's cinnamon sugar doughnut is made of one-half fat and one-half cinnamon sugar and made fresh in the back by a magical elf in the kitchen. It's magical. But I don't eat the doughnut. I know it; I don't eat the doughnut. Or I can not know that stuff and eat the doughnut. That's *ginosko*. That's the type of knowledge Paul is talking about here. It's emotional. It's experiential.

Let me explain this a different way. I think we can all know and understand the fact that it's thrilling to win the Super Bowl. There are different vantage points, though. On the one end of the spectrum (*oida*), you have... I don't know. Maybe it's Monday morning, and you forgot the Super Bowl was yesterday.

You're going through your news, and you're like, "Oh, a picture of the Chiefs winning." Patrick Mahomes (quarterback) and Andy Reid (coach) are hugging. Confetti is falling. "Oh, it looks like those guys had a nice time yesterday. It must be thrilling to win the Super Bowl." You don't click the article. You just go on. But you understand it. It's thrilling to win the Super Bowl.

Or way over *here* (*ginosko*), you've been a Chiefs fan since you were a little kid. You didn't go last time to the Super Bowl, but this year you're like, "I just love them so much. I'm going. I'm overpaying for tickets." You do that. You're in the stands. You watch it happen live. You see it. It's exhilarating. It's emotional. It's experiential.

There's actually another level over here. You're Patrick Mahomes. That's the other level. It's Super Bowl Sunday, and you put the pads on, and you put the jersey on. It's your hand slinging touchdown passes, and the confetti is falling on you. You're hugging Andy Reid, the coach, and the microphone is in your face. That's *ginosko*. That's what Paul is talking about here. It could not be more emotional. It could not be more experiential.

Guys, God has saved us to be Patrick Mahomes. He wants you to experience the thrill of your salvation like *that*, but I'm afraid that too many of us feel like we read about it in the news. If someone were to ask us, we'd get the answer mostly correct. We can explain how salvation operates, but we sound like people who read it in the news. We don't sound like people who have experienced the glorious things we're talking about.

We feel and sound like spectators of our own salvation and not experiencers of it. For so many of us, there's this tremendous dissonance between the faith we actually believe and the feelings we actually feel. Some of this is our fault. Some of this is not our fault, I think. Let me try to parse this out a little bit.

For those of us who this is not our fault... You're really trying. You try to seek the Lord. You love him so much. You're not a perfect person. You're doing it failingly, but you're trying to seek him daily. You're repenting of sin. You're running to him. If that's you, I just want to encourage you. Just keep doing the same things.

I feel like you a lot of the time, so maybe that's encouraging. "The guy talking to me about this feels like me." Paul is praying for you. I think that's encouraging. We've established that Paul is encouraged about this group of believers, their faith and love, but he's also praying that they would know it more experientially and emotionally, so that's encouraging.

*You pray.* That's a thing to do. Pray a prayer like this: "God, oh my goodness. I don't feel it. Help me to feel it. I feel ineffective and unemotional most of the time, but give me the strength in the meantime to just keep doing the same things and keep seeking you. When you show up, find me right here believing, eyes wide awake." And he *will* show up.

Let me finally encourage you with *this*: I know the end of the story. One day, you'll see him face-to-face. The faith you believe and the feelings you feel will be the same thing. They'll be united. It'll be freedom. You'll be doing exactly what you want to do. It'll be the right thing to do, totally emotional, totally experiential.

Now, for some of us, the dissonance is kind of our fault. We're caught in what I'm going to call the *spiritual sleep cycle*. What is this? It is an oscillation between two activities, the first of which is taking a really long spiritual nap, and then waking up for a little bit of time to take in some spiritual Netflix.

All right. What is a spiritual nap? A *spiritual nap* is you just have your eyes closed most of the time to the things of the Lord. You're not praying to him, not reading your Bible, not thinking about him. There's secular sight but there's spiritual slumber. Your secular eyes are wide awake. Your money eyes are open. You're aware. You know exactly where you are financially.

Your social media status eyes are open. "How many 'likes' did I get? I hope the number by the thumb is big." You're aware. You know. They're awake. But spiritually, you're asleep. Then every once in a while, you roll out of bed onto the couch for some spiritual Netflix. You're like, "Is this dude trying to explain a concept with the idea of spiritual Netflix?" Yeah, that's what I'm doing. Please try to follow me here. We'll see if it works.

What is spiritual Netflix? It's not so much an activity as it is a mentality. Here's the mentality: "Entertain me." You want the most bite-size, attractational spiritual content you can find. "I hope the preacher doesn't go too long. I hope he's funny. I hope they

play my favorite songs. I hope the mix sounds good." Then you just go back to sleep for a couple of weeks. If that's you, you're going to feel the dissonance. I mean, you're going to.

Again, I'm not trying to beat up. Just what do you do? How is this helpful? You pray too. You pray something like this: "God, I don't feel much toward you, and it's my fault because I've been sleeping on you. I haven't been thinking about you. I haven't been looking to you. So help me. Help me to look to you. Help me to see you as something that's worthy of my attention, because the problem is I don't see you that way, and I need your help to see you that way." I think that's a prayer he wants to answer. I really do.

All right. So, Paul is praying that we would see and we would know. See and know...what? Three things. The first one is in verse 18. "***...that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you...***" The first one is *hope*. The English word *hope* doesn't really serve this idea super well. The English word *hope* is kind of a wishful thinking-type of hope. Like, "Oh, I hope the weather is nice this weekend." You're not sure about it, but you would like for it to happen.

No, no. The biblical hope that is being talked about here is something in the future that you are sure is going to happen, and you're excited about it, and because of that, it creates activity and passion in the present. That's the hope that's being talked about here. Paul is praying that we would know a hope. Well, how do you know a hope? You know a hope by hoping. That's how you do it.

We love to do this. We do this all the time. We hope in a wedding day or a baby due date or a vacation, like my wife and I last year. It was our 10-year anniversary. We went to Cancun for our honeymoon, and we wanted to go back for 10 years. So, we bought plane tickets, and we reserved a room at this resort, and then it was sure it was going to happen, and we started hoping in it.

How do you know we were hoping in it? By our activity in the present. We started talking about it all the time. We did some things. We bought sunscreen. We bought some new clothes. We got Grandma to come up and watch the kids. Our activity looked like we were hoping on this thing in the future.

Then, a couple of weeks leading up to the trip, our hope was solving our bad days for us. It was crazy. It was like... Long day at work. Kids crazy. Finally got into bed. We look at each other. We're like, "We just got beat up. Spa in Cancun, man. Five days. Almost there." Hope is solving our bad days for us. Hope will do that. Interesting.

So then we get there, and Cancun is holding the weight of our hope. It's amazing. It's right there. We were having such a great time...until day two. I had a rash break out

on my arm and then quickly over my whole body. Right before we left for the trip, I did some yard work and apparently got into poison ivy. Yeah, it was a bummer.

I have not a normal person's reaction to poison ivy. I actually know other people who have gotten into poison ivy. I've actually been in the hospital before. Like, it's bad. I have a not normal person's reaction to poison ivy. We did go to the spa. First of all, Mexican steam rooms... They make them different in Mexico. They're way hotter down there. It was more like hell than it was paradise for me.

Here's the punch line: disappointing. Cancun didn't hold the weight of all the expectation I was throwing at it. It was disappointing. That's our problem with hope. Our problem with hope isn't that we don't do it; it's that we hope in things that tend to disappoint us. But biblically, we know there is one hope that *doesn't* disappoint us. His name is Jesus. He can hold the weight of all of the expectations and all the planning and all of the dreams we throw at him. He can hold the weight of it.

I'll explain this a different way. In my Community Group, we do these icebreaker questions before group. We have fun in my group. They're ridiculous questions. Here's an example of a question we had one time: "What is the minimum amount of money it would take for you to voluntarily chop off a finger, and which finger would it be?"

So we kick it around, and it breaks the ice, for sure. We're talking about it. In the end, we all have a number. They're big numbers, but we all have a number. There is a reward in the future that's rich enough for us to voluntarily endure the pain of cutting off a finger in the present. If the reward is rich enough, you'll chop off a finger.

If the reward is rich enough, you'll chop off your sin. You'll do it. If you see it clearly, you know it's coming... It's painful in the present to do that a lot of times. It's painful to cut off the porn addiction, but you'll do it. If the reward is rich enough, it'll get you through life's deepest stuff.

Some of us, in a room this size...deep stuff. There is some deep stuff represented in here. For some of you, the cancer diagnosis is real. That's your reality. For some of you, the abandonment is real. It is your reality. Hope in Jesus. Just the same way you can throw your dreams and expectations at him, you can throw all of your burdens at him. He can hold the weight of it.

You're like, "Dude, you don't know. You don't have my diagnosis." You're right. I don't. But I do know there was this guy named Stephen who was literally getting stoned to death. Like, the act was happening. The stones were hitting him, and he had a smile on his face because he saw his living hope standing there, ready to receive him in a few minutes. It got him through the hardest day of his life. It can get you

through. I promise. Jesus can get you through. He can hold the weight of it. Throw it at him. He can hold the weight of it.

All right. What else does he want us to see and know? Verse 18 also says, "**...what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...**" We talked about inheritance a little bit last week, *our* inheritance. Whose inheritance is *this*? What does it say? It's good to ask questions of the Bible. Whose inheritance? *His* inheritance. It's *his* glorious inheritance.

Okay. What could possibly be coming to God that he does not already have that would be considered a rich, glorious inheritance? Have you guys ever done one of those secret Santas with extended family? You get together, and you get assigned a person randomly. There's a dollar limit, and you have to buy a gift for somebody.

Well, imagine you're in the Bezos family. You have an uncle, this guy named Jeff...Uncle Jeff Bezos. You know, one of the richest guys in the world. He invented Amazon. *That* guy. You get assigned Uncle Jeff this Christmas, and you have a \$100 limit. What do you get the guy? A Kindle Fire? An Amazon Prime membership? What do you get the guy? He's got everything.

What do you get God? He's got everything. What does it say? It's so crazy. I mean, you can't make this up. The saints. It's us. His glorious inheritance is in his saints. Oh my goodness. Guys, he loves us so much. You're worth so much to him. Do you understand? Do you know it? Do you see it?

You know what something is worth by what somebody is willing to pay. Well, guys, God created heaven and earth for fun. It didn't cost him anything. He did it out of pure joy. He bought you by sweating drops of blood, being betrayed and abandoned by friends, and dying on a cross. You're expensive.

Hebrews says it was for the joy set before him that he did these things. He saw a vision of something in the future that allowed him to voluntarily endure pain in the present. It's crazy. Let's look at this. There's this verse in John 17. This is Jesus the night before he gives his life to buy sinners. Amazing stuff.

He says *this*. He's praying the night before he dies. "**Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.**" In other words, "Father, I know who I am. I'm the only begotten Son. I've been happy forever. Couldn't be happier...an eternal, perfect, joyful existence with you. Best thing ever. Let's share it with them." What? He's so different than us.

"Let's share it with them. I'm going to lay down my life tomorrow, willingly, to share it with them. I want them to see this glorious thing we're doing. Not just through a window as a spectator. No, no...as a co-heir. I want to buy them and make them brothers and sisters. I want them to know what it's like to be me." Unbelievable! He loves us so much. That's so generous of him. Who are we that he would do that? Who is *he* that he would do that? It's just crazy to think about.

Guys, the Holy Spirit (it's Bible) wants us to understand more and more and experience more and more the weight and the depth and the width of the love of God for us and how worthwhile we are to him. The more we see it, I think, the more we would look a little bit different. Spirit, help us see it more. He loves us so much. There's one more thing he wants us to see and know. Verse 19 now. He riffs on this one for a minute.

***"...what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."***

Commentators think power is actually the main theme of the book of Ephesians, so there's going to be plenty of teaching on power throughout this series. I'm not going to teach all of the teachings that could be done on power. Here's all I want us to see for today. God has unlimited, immense power at his disposal all the time, and he is using it all the time, and we're totally sleeping on it.

For example, we've all been sitting in here this morning, hearts beating, lungs breathing. Who's doing that? Are you doing that? Are you like, "Oh my goodness! I've got to get oxygen to every single one of my cells this morning so I don't die." No. We just call it *natural*. No, it's hard to do. Somebody is doing it.

God is doing it, powerfully. It's hard to do. He holds the natural order together powerfully. It's hard to do. But this verse is talking about supernatural power. He's doing supernatural things as well. What kinds of things? Oh my goodness. All kinds of things, but at least all of the things we've already talked about.

It takes supernatural power to take sinners, save them, and illuminate the eyes of their hearts so they can work correctly. That's hard to do, and he can do that. He *is* doing that. It takes supernatural power for God to turn a bunch of sinners into an inheritance that he's excited about, into a "treasured possession" is what it calls us. That's hard to do...take a bunch of people like you and me and turn them into something beautiful for God. It takes a lot of power to do that.

It takes a lot of power (this is literally what this verse is talking about) to take Jesus out of a grave and sit him on a throne...not a little bit above...*high* above everything else, now and forever (resurrection power), to establish him as our living hope. It's hard to do. It's a lot of power. It's resurrection power. It's so crazy.

What does this verse say? That that power is toward us who believe. That's good news, because a lot of us could use a little bit of resurrection power, a little bit of freeing power. I've preached for a while and talked about prayer but haven't prayed, so let's do that. Let's pray. Go ahead and bow your heads and close your eyes with me.

It's good news that there's resurrection power, that there's freeing power that is toward us, toward you, because some of you guys are still locked up. For some of you, it's hard to get out of bed in the morning. You do it. You hate doing it, but you do it, locked up in anxiety and depression. Locked up there.

For some of you, it's your marriage. You used to fight for it. Then you used to just fight all the time, and now you don't even do that. You're just waiting for the kids to leave, and you have a plan for what's going to happen. You feel locked up there.

For some of you, it's unforgiveness toward Dad. He shouldn't have done it, and you hate him for it. You're locked up there. For some of you, it's an addiction...sexual, substance, or something else. You can't even see it correctly. You think it's a playground. It's a prison cell, and you're locked up there.

Father, for all of us in all of these places, would you please unleash your freeing power? Break us out of these prison cells. Your resurrection power. Resurrect those dead places. God, I know the end of the story. I know you're going to do it. Ain't no one wearing chains around your throne...every last one of us, finally, fully, forever free around your throne. The only question is *when* you are going to do it.

God, I'm asking that you would do it now, sooner rather than later. We don't want the height of the power we experience in our lives, Father, to be the height of our abilities. No, no. We want the height of the power we experience to be the height of *your* abilities. We can't free ourselves. We would have done it already. We need you to free us, God. Work powerfully.

We're right here looking. Find us right here looking, eyes wide awake. Right here looking. Help us to see, God. Help us to experience. Let it be emotional, and wherever there's dissonance, give us grace, God. Work powerfully in us. It's not just for us. Work powerfully through us. Do it for our families. Do it for our friends, our neighbors. Glorify yourself. We pray this in your name, Jesus, amen.