

expect more

TERM ONE SERMON SERIES

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*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.*

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

Vision 2018

Our God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. There are no limits to what God can do today, other than the limits that we place on Him through our lack of obedience, understanding or faith.

The Old Testament records the stories of ordinary people who stepped out in faith when they faced the impossible and saw God do extraordinary things which only God could do. The Book of Acts records the acts of ordinary people filled with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit to share the Gospel of salvation and plant churches that would transform the community for generations to come. A life of faith in God has always been one that is lived with a great expectation of what only God can do.

This series will be a journey through the book of Acts, inspiring us to pray, serve, share and give with the same faith as the early church who expected God was able to do more than they had ever seen before.

As we celebrate our 90th anniversary as a Church family, it is important to look back, celebrate and be thankful for all that God has done in the past. It is equally imperative that we look to the future to prepare and pray for God to do even more than we have ever seen Him do before. I don't believe God is asking us to do more and make ourselves more exhausted than ever before but I do believe **He is calling us to expect Him to do more than what we have ever experienced before.**

If we expect God to do less than or equal to what we have seen Him do before, we will prepare for the status quo and probably achieve it. But if we expect God to do more than what we have ever asked or imagined, then maybe we will see God do more than what we have ever seen Him do before.

expect more

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common... And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." (Acts 2:42-47)

When Jesus told His first followers that they were to "Go and make disciples of all nations", they must have been thinking, "How are we going to make that happen?" They were ordinary young people with no worldly power or provision to fulfil the purpose that Jesus had given them. **As they constantly prayed in the Upper Room, the Holy Spirit filled them all with power to fulfil His purposes.**

They had no idea how to make it happen but God was able to do more than what they had ever imagined. Are you expecting God to do the same today?

Our God is able to do more than what we have ever seen before.

action

Expect God to do more in 2018 than what you have ever seen before.

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

Discussion: Come ready to share what you are expecting God to do in 2018. In your family? Your work? Your ministry?

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21

- Discuss the aspects of the character of God described in this prayer?
- What are the phrases that fill you with faith to expect more from God in 2018?

Read: Acts 2:36-47

- What in Acts 2 do you find most encouraging and most challenging?
- How can we encourage each other to expect more from God?

Other Scriptures to Explore:

Matt 6:9-13, Acts 6:1-7, Matt 28:18-20

PRAYER

For each other: Pray that God will fill each person with faith to expect more in 2018.

For Gateway: Read the Vision God has given Gateway for 2018. Pray that God will do more than what He has ever done before in our church.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Talk about a Vision for your family for this year.

Try to keep the conversation positive and not behaviour based. For example, your Family Vision could be to feel connected with each other. Throughout the year you can then set goals to intentionally take walks together, or play games together once a week.

Once you have decided your Family Vision, talk about some of the ways you could achieve it. Write the Vision on a large piece of paper and decorate it before putting it on your fridge.

more power through more prayer

"When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them... Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus. After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." (Acts 4:24-31)

Jesus first followers were told to stop speaking and teaching about Jesus or they would be imprisoned by the authorities. **When the early Church faced powerful opposition like this, their reflex was to pray to someone with greater power.** Their prayer in Acts 4 is the first recorded prayer of the Church. They expected that God had more power than the rulers they lived under. When they prayed they were filled with power from the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God boldly.

God has more power than any worldly power today. God listens to the prayers of His people today. God pours out His power when His people pray with expectation.

<i>action</i>	Commit to attend a Gateway campus prayer meeting:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 13 Feb Mackenzie• 20 Feb Ormeau• 27 Feb Redlands• 6 March Logan• 13 March City <p><i>(See the website for more details)</i></p>

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

Discussion: Come ready to share a time when God answered your prayer, or an unanswered prayer you need faith to keep praying.

Read: Acts 4

- What challenges were the early church facing? How did they respond?
- What similar challenges do we face today?
- Looking through chapters 3 & 4, notice the references to the name of Jesus (I found 12). Discuss what it means to pray and live in the power of the name of Jesus.

Read: Ephesians 3:14-21

- What do you find most encouraging about Paul's prayer?
- What is your 'expect more' prayer?

Other Scriptures to Explore:

Matt 6:5-15, Mark 11:12-14, 20-25

PRAYER

For each other: Pray for God to pour out His power as you pray for one another with expectation.

For Gateway: Our Gateway Value is, **we pray as if life depends on it.** Pray that we will be more and more dependent on God in prayer. Pray for those in authority in our city and our nation.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Prayer is powerful! Have a thumb war, arm wrestle or family tug of war. Even though the winner of your competition is strong, they are not as powerful as prayer.

Prayer is so powerful. Think of one powerful prayer request each. Write them on a piece of paper and pray for these things on a regular basis. At the end of the year have a look back and thank God for his faithfulness.

more people with more purpose

“Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”
(Acts 6:3-4)

In Acts 6 the early church was experiencing growth, but it also meant growing pains. The apostles were finding it difficult to meet the demands of a growing church. **The solution was to find and appoint more people to fulfil the purpose of the church.**

The Greek noun *diakonos* used in v.1 simply means ‘a deacon or servant,’ and seven were chosen to serve in very practical ways.

God is calling more people with more purpose.

God has been so gracious and kind to us here at Gateway, and we expect God is going to do much more in and through our church. In fact, as the Church we can do greater things than what Jesus did.

God has given spiritual gift to each of his children, and this present will coincide with your passion and purpose. Start somewhere. Get involved. Have a go. Step Up. Open doors. We believe God will reveal His purpose for you.

<i>action</i>	Find one place to use your gifts and serve at Gateway in 2018.
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LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

Discussion: Come ready to share a story of how you have been blessed by volunteering and/or helping others.

Read: Acts 6:1-7

- What challenges were the early church facing? How did they respond?
- What qualities did the church look for in the people they appointed?

Read: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 and Romans 12:3-8

- Discuss the Gifts of the Spirit that you recognise in one another.
- What are some of the obstacles you face preventing you from using your spiritual gifts? Discuss ways to overcome them with one another.

Don't know your spiritual gift? Go to the website and do a survey, at <http://gatewaybaptist.com.au/connect/#volunteering> or sign up for Next Steps Sunday on 11 March to discover your spiritual gifts.

PRAYER

For each other: Pray for each person as they consider where God wants them to serve in 2018.

For Gateway: Our Gateway Value is, **we are all in this together**. Pray that we will empower everyone to fulfil their unique role in the Church so that God's purposes are fulfilled in the world.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Each member of your family has a unique purpose. Ask each family member to individually sit on a chair as you share 2 or 3 special qualities about their character. Talk about and celebrate how you like to see them in that person. When everyone is finished, brainstorm together how that person could use these gifts to bless others.

more grace for more growth

Then Peter began to speak: "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right. You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all... While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on Gentiles." (Acts 10:34-36, 44-45)

Grace changes everything. It changes our perspective, it changes our heart and it changes our life. When we experience the profound gift of grace that Jesus offers we change and we grow. And the good news is that grace is offered to all without partiality or reservation. No matter your story, your past, your family or your failures – through Jesus you are offered grace. **And this gift of grace invites us not only into a relationship with God but it also invites us into a radical community of faith.**

In Acts 10, we read that God gives Peter a confronting vision of what the Christian community should look like, a community where everyone is welcome and where everyone encounters the acceptance and transforming power of God's grace. As a result the church experienced the power of the Holy Spirit and continued to grow. The same is true today. **When we commit ourselves to Christian community, we too experience the life and growth that comes from receiving and offering grace.**

action

Commit to one Life Group to grow in your faith in 2018.

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

Discussion: Come ready to share about a person who has had a significant influence on your life.

Read: Acts 10:23-48

- How is Peter's encounter with Cornelius different to what he may have expected?
- What does Peter's encounter with Cornelius show us about God's heart for people?
- How can we apply this to the people we live, work and laugh with today?
- Discuss practical ways that you can be a part of an inclusive faith community.

Read: Acts 15:1-21

- In what ways do we inadvertently 'make it hard' for people to come to Jesus?
- How can we actively break down these barriers?

PRAYER

For each other: Pray for a person who you can influence to grow in faith this year.

For Gateway: Our Gateway Value is, **we are a growing family**. Pray that we will be a growing family where everyone is welcome just as they are.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Discuss as a family or a small group how together you may be able to do a **random act of kindness**. This may be something for another family, a child at school, or a complete stranger. Plan this out together and set a time to do it, making sure everyone has a role and can contribute.

more courage to face more opposition

"But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: "Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them." (Acts 14:14-15).

Wherever the good news of Jesus is preached and embraced, opposition follows. While the Gospel is a message of love and grace, so often it confronts and challenges the cultural narratives; systems of power; and moral & religious structures of the day.

Throughout Acts we constantly see the Gospel being preached with incredible boldness and courage despite often violent and significant opposition. Despite this, the message of Jesus continued to transform individuals, families and whole communities.

Today, the good news of Jesus continues to transform lives, and it continues to bring opposition. Jesus wants to fill us with His Spirit, so we continue to bring the message of Jesus' love and grace to a broken world, with courage and boldness in the midst of opposition.

action

Share the good news of Jesus with one person you live, work and laugh with.

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

Discussion: Come ready to share your experience of sharing the gospel with someone, or when someone shared the gospel with you.

Read: Acts 8:1-8

- Discuss what it may have been like for the members of the early church at this time. Try to put yourself in their shoes. How would you have felt? What would you have done?
- What can we learn from Philip's response to persecution?

Read: Acts 14:1-7

- What challenges were the early church facing? How did they respond?

Read: Acts 14:8-18

- What evidence of Paul and Barnabas' faith do you see in these verses?
- How does this encourage and challenge you to share your faith?

PRAYER

For each other: Pray for a person you would like to share the gospel with this year.

For Gateway: Our Gateway Value is, **we value the ones.** Pray that whole families will be redeemed as we share the life changing message of Jesus.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Choose three people that you know that don't know Jesus and plan to pray for them and for opportunities for you to share your faith with them.

As a family talk about what can make it hard to share your faith with others. Think of things you can do or say that would encourage others to think about God. How could you invite them along to Kids Club or church? Spend a few minutes role playing the scenarios.

more provision for more places

"Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off." (Acts 13:1-3)

"It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts 20:35)

God set Barnabas and Paul apart and sent them off to preach the good news about Jesus and to plant churches. When we reflect on Paul's life, we see that church planting required great sacrifice and faithful commitment to continue to see the Gospel reach more people in more places.

Twice this year we will place our hands on some people and send them off to go and share the good news about Jesus, and plant another church campus. It will take great sacrifice and faithful commitment to see more people hear the Gospel in more places.

This year we will all have the opportunity to give generously to see more provision for more places for the Gospel to be preached. This is the mission of Jesus and the Vision He has given us at Gateway for 2018 and beyond.

action

Give to see Redlands and Logan campuses established in 2018.

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS

Discussion: Come ready to share a time when you have been blessed by receiving a generous gift.

Read: Acts 13:1-3

- What were the important aspects of Paul and Barnabas being sent out?

Read: Acts 20:17-24

- What are some of the sacrifices Paul made for the sake of the Gospel?
- What are the costs of church planting today?
- How does Paul's testimony encourage and challenge you?

Further scriptures to explore: 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

PRAYER

For each other: Pray that you will have the courage to *'complete the task that the Lord Jesus has given you.'* (Acts 20:24)

For Gateway: Our Gateway Value is, **we give with abundant generosity.** Pray for the teams going to plan the new Gateway campuses. Pray for the communities they are going to.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Barnabas and Paul travelled a long way and planted churches in lots of towns. Here are a few of the journeys they travelled on their mission trips: Ephesus to Caesarea (1046 kilometres), Jerusalem to Antioch in Syria (515 kilometres), Caesarea to Jerusalem (104 kilometres). You can often find these maps in the back of your Bible.

Using Google maps, find some towns that are the equivalent distance if you started from Brisbane. Talk about how it would have been for them travelling and the obstacles that were in their way.

Discuss what obstacles our church plants might face, and pray for them.