

DREAMS THAT TAKE ON LIFE:
The Metrics of Eternity

Ephesians 3:14-21

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Author Kelly Bulkeley has written a book (*Big Dreams: The Science of Dreaming and the Origin of Religion*), that seeks to address the neuroscience of dreaming and its relationship to faith. Modern neuroscience tells us that dreams can prime us for the spiritual. Even when the body is sleeping, at times our brains remain extremely active, especially in the areas responsible for visual imagination and emotional memories. The author cites famous psychoanalyst Carl Jung, who spoke of big dreams.

Big dreams. What if I told you that according to the Bible, most of our dreams are too small? The story is told of a Persian merchant who lived in a remote area. One day, he sold a beautiful rug for one hundred pieces of silver. He was ecstatic. When someone told him he could have gotten more than one hundred pieces of silver for that priceless rug, the seller replied, "Is there a number larger than one hundred?" Is there indeed? Are our dreams big enough?

You will remember our Imagine If logo. And that's our text this morning, from *The Message*: "God can do anything, you know--far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams!" Now, let's be realistic. Is that the way the church is--really--here on the ground? Doesn't Paul have his head in the clouds, sharing these spiritual thoughts in this pagan culture of Ephesus? After all, Ephesus was just a small city, about the size of Jefferson City, on the western coast of modern day Turkey. A small band of Jesus followers were there, trying to live out the resurrection in the midst of a very pagan Greco-Roman culture, dominated by Roman imperialism. They were very, very small and ordinary! Yet Paul has the audacity to pray this great big prayer for them--for us--using the metrics of eternity. Eugene Peterson reminds us that no one ever sees the church whole and complete. We only see snippets and fragments [*Practice Resurrection*, p. 17]. Think about it. You never see all that God is doing in and through FBC JC. And so Ephesians is in our canon of scripture to stretch our imaginations. God's love is so rich, God's plan is so amazing that it eludes our grasp of logic or reason. It literally "surpasses knowledge" (v. 19).

I once sat with a young couple in the hospital as they were given the news that their newborn child was born with Down Syndrome. I watched them the following Sunday come to the altar and express their thanks to God for entrusting them with this precious life, as the church family smothered them in love. How do we fill in the report sheet for that metric? The church is not like any other community in the world.

A teen is about to give up and give in, and then her small group at church encourages her and she feels fresh air breathed into her soul. How do we fill in the report sheet for that metric? The

church is not like any other community in the world. A man is converted to Christ while doing time in prison. He stays on fire for Jesus and after his death, for the next five generations, his offspring consists of preachers, missionaries, godly citizens who follow Christ. How do we fill in the report sheet for that metric? The church is not like any other community in the world. To quote Peterson again, we are invited to live eternity in the midst of time [*Practice Resurrection*, p. 13].

I'm aware that there are people present right now who may not even be a Christ-follower. You say, "This whole Jesus thing could be a cruel hoax." Right. Could be. But ***imagine if*** Jesus really came and died for us? ***Imagine if*** God really loves us more than we can express? ***Imagine if*** the metrics of eternity are more important than you had guessed? ***Imagine if*** the One above us has put power within us to change the world (vv. 16-18)?

You'll remember the five big dreams of FBC JC. I've shared them before, but notice, this week I've added the tag line, a simple statement of each of our bold dreams.

God-centered worship...*We love God.*
Life-changing faith...*We follow Christ.*
Authentic relationships...*We love each other.*
Community transformation...*We help people.*
Global partners...*We share Christ.*

A man was seeing Washington D.C. for the first time and saw the National Archives Building, with its inscription, "The Past Is Prologue," (this is actually a quote from "The Tempest," by Shakespeare). He asked his cab driver what that meant. The taxi driver thought for a moment and said, "I think it means, 'You ain't seen nothin' yet!'" That's what the Apostle Paul is saying! That's what God is saying to FBC JC.

A pastor I know was dining in a restaurant and commented to his waitress, "What a beautiful ceiling that is." She replied, "I've worked here five years. This is the first time I've looked up!" Is that us? Going through the motions. Laboring earnestly. But have you looked up? "Glory to God in the church! Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus! Glory down through all the generations! Glory through all the millennia! Oh, yes!" (v. 21, *The Message*).