

BEYOND IMAGINATION

We're all familiar with this wonderful doxology in Ephesians 3:20-21:

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.

When Pastor Don ends the service with this, I'm always lifted up, filled with hope.

- How do these verses make you feel?

The version in Eugene Peterson's Message is also very encouraging:

God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

- In your life, or in other people's lives, have you ever seen God do something beyond what you could imagine?
- Has God done anything for you beyond what you had even thought to ask for?

When God's power is obviously at work in us and in what we do, it is truly an amazing thing. And His power *is* available to each of us, if we trust Him and follow Him.

I'll tell you a little of my story, to show you how I've seen God's work in my life. He truly did far more for me than I could have imagined when I was young.

When I was young I was afraid to speak up in class or to other people. Being a leader of Living Room support ministries was the furthest thing from my mind, but that's what God made me.

When I think of what my life used to be like, I marvel at how it has changed. I was a teen with social anxiety disorder and depression. At the age of nineteen I spent nine months at Riverview, a major mental hospital in British Columbia. This was followed by a lifetime of struggles with psychosis, depression and mania.

At the age of forty I decided I could no longer live on my own strength but needed God. I learned what it was to receive divine love. My life became more meaningful. Although I wasn't cured of my disorder, I found a measure of healing. I grew.

I never dreamed that I would become an activist, trying to erase the stigma attached to mental illness. God's spirit worked within me, giving me the courage to respond to His invitation to join Him in the work He was - and still is - doing in the world. He led me from project to project, one step at a time. I never knew where He was taking me or how long the journey would be. That's how God operates. He doesn't let you see the big picture ahead of time. The important thing is to trust and follow.

God helped me create church-sponsored Living Room support groups, places where people with mood disorders could talk openly about their faith and their mental health problems. Before Living Room it was seldom possible for people to safely talk about these two things together - not in the secular world, nor in the Christian world.

I've struggled with bipolar disorder for 48 years now, unable to hold a paying job. In spite of that, I *have* been able to work for God - not doing anything wonderful on my own, but simply being His foot soldier. I went where He led, speaking and writing the words He gave me. Amazing what can be accomplished when we decide that the work is not our own, but God's. Such a wonderful world He opens up for us - a life that's beyond what we could ask for or imagine.

That has been my journey. And you can see, I only started following God when I was forty years old. Everyone's journey with God is different. For some it starts much earlier in life; for some, later.

- Can you see how God has led you on a journey?
- Would you like to follow God more closely? How could you do that?

God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Ephesians 3:20-21