



Let's Pray: April 2022

How can we pray well as we head into this new month?



"For this reason, I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

Ephesians 3: 14-19

In the middle of his letter to the Church in Ephesus, Paul shares his prayers for them. They are not small things he is asking of God, but huge and ambitious: That the Church will grasp the full extent of the love Jesus has for them – that love, he says, surpasses human knowledge; that the Church will be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God – how does one even begin to measure that fullness?

Paul has huge hopes, dreams and asks for the Church. He believes that they are capable of beautiful and powerful things, and he has faith that God will do great things in and through them.

Where does this come from? Why does Paul hold such ambition and generous hope for his brothers and sisters?

Perhaps it's because he loves and trusts in an ambitious and generous God.



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



Our God is one who exceeds what we believe to be possible. His love and his power can't be contained or measured in earthly words, numbers or even understanding.

He is able. And how does He demonstrate this ability? Through His power at work in us.

What if our following of and loving Him looked like sharing in His ambition and generosity? Not asking for more things for our own gain, but extending our asks and expanding our imaginations beyond what the world says is possible?

What might our pursuit of the 'immeasurably more' mean for the teenagers in care in our communities?

The numbers of young people in the care system aged 13 and over has been rising significantly and consistently over the last decade. The average age of children entering care has been rising too, with nearly a quarter of young people in care over the age of 16.¹

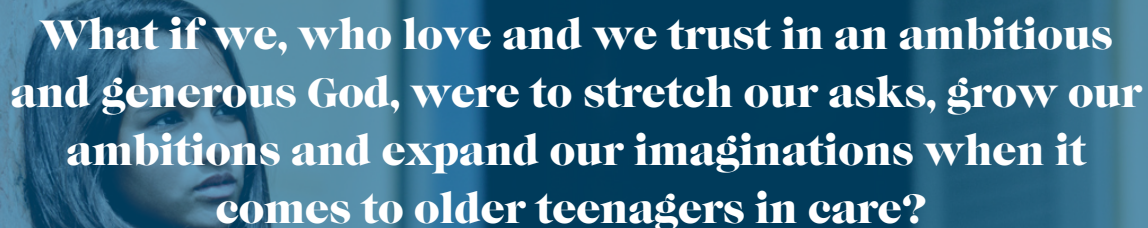
However, there are limited high-quality options for accommodating these young people in safe, appropriate places, with a shortage of foster carers in a position to care for teenagers and huge variation in the quality and support of semi-independent and independent settings.

When social workers have no choices available to them, young people can often find themselves in settings far away from home with little support and few people to turn to who can offer them belonging and keep them safe. In the worst instances, this can leave them vulnerable to exploitation and harm. Across the country, care-experienced teenagers as young as 16 are expected to be capable of living independently. Yet a 2022 Ofsted report highlights that many young people feel they do not have the required skills to live independently. Many said they felt isolated, not knowing where to get help with their mental health.²

The term 'independence' is often presented as the goal for older teenagers in care. 'Independence' should not and cannot be about a young person becoming completely self-contained and self-dependent. It is the relational connections with others and a sense of belonging to a family or community that bring joy and meaning to a person's life. In referring to independence, we should not create or perpetuate practice that encourages young people to feel that they should venture into adulthood on their own, in order to be 'independent'.³ Home for Good, Brimming with Potential

These young people are more the sum of their experiences, the decisions regarding their care, the milestones that determine their preparedness for adulthood and the statistics around their outcomes.

They are precious individuals, brimming with potential.



What if we, who love and we trust in an ambitious and generous God, were to stretch our asks, grow our ambitions and expand our imaginations when it comes to older teenagers in care?

Points for Prayer



Ask:

Let's pray for an increase in awareness and understanding of supported lodgings as a provision for teenagers. Ask that we will see awareness of supported lodgings within the general public doubled, so that more hosts will come forward and provide care and support to teenagers in this way.

Let's pray for greater consistency across the UK with regards to how supported lodgings is offered and facilitated. We'd like to see all local authorities operate a scheme so that this option can be offered to young people – let's pray for that to be a reality!

Let's pray for an increase in the number of supported lodgings homes across the UK. Let's pray that we will see the number of young people living in supported lodgings doubled.

Imagine:

Let's invite God to grow our imaginations when it comes to what we understand to be milestones worth celebrating. Let's ask Him to stretch our imagination beyond what society says is being prepared for independence. Let's allow Him to help us imagine more than the bare minimum with regards to what young people need as they enter adulthood.

Let's ask God to inspire us with hopes and ambition for care-experienced children and young people beyond the outcomes we see in statistics and headlines. Let's ask God to help us see the world the way He does, to shape our attitudes and understanding and to fix our focus on the potential of each child and young person.

Let's ask God to grow our understanding of what it means to be 'family'.



Creative prayer idea: God-sized prayers

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...

This month, we challenge you to grow the size of your prayers. As we've written above, this is not an invitation to ask for more for our own personal gain, but to enter into the generous and ambitious love and power of our Father in Heaven.

Write a prayer on a page, or into a note on your phone. You might want to use one of the prayer points listed above or choose something that is on your heart.

Revisit this prayer over the course of the month. You may want to come back to it every morning or every week, or you might want to leave this prayer somewhere you pass regularly – such as stuck to your fridge or mirror – and turn your attention to it each time you pass.

Each time you revisit this prayer, ask: how can I make this prayer more generous and ambitious? Edit and adapt your written prayer, growing and stretching it.

At the end of the week, consider how your prayer has grown. Perhaps what you have ahead of you seems ridiculous or insurmountable. If the prayer on this page – no matter how huge or ridiculous – is somewhere you would love to see God move, lift it up to Him, believing and trusting that He is able to do more than we could ever ask or imagine, knowing that He loves us more than we could ever comprehend.

Footnotes:

1. Children's Commissioner for England. 2019. Stability Index 2019: Overview Report.
2. Ofsted, 2022. 'Ready or not': care leavers' views of preparing to leave care.
3. Home for Good, 2021. Brimming with potential: The case for supported lodgings.