

## FIVE MINUTES WITH THE PRESIDENT

### EPHESIANS 3:14-19

#### HEART OF THE MATTER - A WORD FROM KEN

It's an intriguing thought. Imagine yourself welcomed into the Oval Office. It's not hard to do; there's a replica of the place right around the corner from our church right here in Yorba Linda. It's just you and The President. You've got five minutes. This is not an interview for a job. The President wants to listen. What would you do with the time?

Just two years ago, a book was published by that title: *FIVE MINUTES WITH THE PRESIDENT*. It is a compilation of answers to that very question. Some fifty-eight Hollywood notables took a stab at it; people like Tom Arnold and Patty Duke and Mike Farrell and Montel Williams and Minnie Driver. Each came up with a personal wish list; many took the opportunity to register complaints; most give the sitting President some rather direct, sometimes unvarnished advice.

What would *you* say? Would you ask a favor? Would you make a suggestion? Would you file a protest? Would you make a case? Would you offer counsel?

Philip Yancey brought it up in an essay for *Christianity Today*. He talked about the surprisingly large number of evangelical leaders who have been invited to the White House during this President's two terms. "Some Christian leaders long for access to political power and collect trips to the White House like badges of achievement," says Yancey. "I know the temptation, for I, too, was once invited there with a group of other Christians."

If an audience with the President stirs up something in your innards, then what about an audience with the Creator of the Universe? Because Jesus opened the door, we have a standing invitation. Paul took advantage – and in our passage, we have a written record of his five minutes with God. What did he say? What did he request?

This is **the heart of the matter**. He didn't ask for health or wealth. He didn't ask for buildings or property. He didn't name the sick or the missionary or the program about to be launched. He didn't pray for an open door or the conversion of the lost.

It's a stunning request, really. He gets on his knees. He prays for people who know God through Jesus – and asks that they might understand the truth they affirm in all its fullness. He asks for more – more of what? More connection with the living Christ who dwells in our hearts. More power to comprehend the vast resource of his love. To be filled up to "full measure."

Yancey remembers the day he sat in the Oval Office with a collection of evangelical notables. Mark Noll's answer to the "five minute" question is the one he remembers best. "We were sitting around a table with both the President and the Vice President," Yancey continues. "The scholarly Noll began, 'As an evangelical, I would say the same thing to you as I would to fellow academics and ordinary

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

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people: Put your faith in Christ and follow the Lord with all your heart."

A simple, yet profound answer. It took less than the allotted time.

Yancey reflected on all the thoughtful, articulate answers from the other nationally known leaders. His conclusion: "Mark Noll said the wisest thing of all."

When Paul got on his knees and made his request for those Ephesians, it was a request for us, too; the wisest, most profound request of all.

**BACKGROUND** - We've reached the pivot point of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Everything that's been said up until now builds up to this paragraph. Everything Paul writes afterwards flows from it. It is the theme of the book, and our Sunday morning series. It's Paul's heartfelt prayer. As the people of God come to comprehend this truth, others are drawn in. Two thousand years later, here we are: the *answer* to Paul's prayer, and at the same time – the *subjects* of his prayer.

*Read Ephesians 3:14-19*

Think it over...

1. Paul begins, "for this reason." For what reason?
2. Paul refers to God as "Father." In what sense does "his whole family in heaven and earth derive its name"? (compare Matthew 6:7-9a and 7:7-11)
3. What is the difference between our "inner being" and our *outer being*? Why does Paul give priority to the first?
4. What does the picture of Christ dwelling in our hearts tell you about our relationship with Him?
5. Why does it take a special power to comprehend the magnitude of God's love?
6. What kind of love surpasses knowledge?

Bring it home...

1. What does it mean for us to know the Almighty God as "father"?
2. Have you experienced the difference between change required on the *outside* versus change that springs from the *inside*? What is that difference?
3. Jesus makes his home in our hearts. How does that reality impact your life?
4. Has the horizon of your comprehension of God's love been expanded lately? How so?
5. How will Paul's prayer affect the way you pray for others? For our church?
6. Have you known a love that "surpasses knowledge"? Explain.

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