

# 2026 NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS EMPHASIS

## Sermon Outline

*Pastor, consider the sermon direction and material below as you prepare your own sermon that will lead your congregation to “More Than A Gift” of missions involvement and promote the Week of Prayer for North American Missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering (AAEO) in your church.*

*Before the sermon, show one of the Week of Prayer for North American Missions missionary video segments or the theme video, “More Than A Gift,” available at [AnnieArmstrong.com/resources](https://www.anniearmstrong.com/resources).*

### More Than a Gift

**Theme Scripture Verse:** Ephesians 3:20-21

#### Introduction:

We live in a culture obsessed with limits.

- How much time do I have?
- How much money can I spare?
- How far can I go before I burn out?

The language of limits shapes so much of our lives. And yet, in Ephesians 3:20, Paul explodes those categories with one phrase: “Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us ...”

God is not limited. He is more than able.

That’s why this year’s Annie Armstrong Easter Offering theme is “More Than a Gift.” When God’s people pray, give, and go, what we offer is never just money, never just time, and never just effort. It is joined to the limitless power of God.

In Paul’s day, the church faced what seemed like an impossible barrier. The gospel was spreading from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth, just as Jesus promised. But as Gentiles came to faith in the Jewish Messiah, the church was faced with a massive question: Could Jews and Gentiles truly be one family?

That cultural divide threatened the very glory of God in the church. And yet, Paul didn’t wring his hands in despair. He dropped to his knees in prayer, anchoring himself in God’s limitless power and love.

Friends, our generation faces barriers too—unbelief, apathy, secularism, brokenness, and division. The task of reaching North America feels overwhelming. But like Paul, our hope is not in what we can do but in what God can do.

The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering is one way we declare hope. Every dollar given, every prayer prayed, and every effort made is more than a gift. It is an act of faith in the God who is more than able.

## **Background:**

Paul writes to the Ephesians after spending the first two chapters laying out the supremacy of Christ and the wonder of salvation by grace through faith. Then, in chapters 2 and 3, he describes how Christ has torn down the “dividing wall of hostility” between Jew and Gentile, creating one new people of God.

This was no small thing. In the first-century world, Jew and Gentile represented the deepest cultural, religious, and ethnic divide imaginable. Yet Paul says that in Christ, they are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit (see Eph. 2:22).

But knowing the difficulty of this challenge, Paul does what he always does—he prays. “For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father ...” (3:14).

In his prayer, Paul asks for two things:

1. That believers would experience God’s power through the Spirit in their inner being (3:16).
2. That they would know the limitless love of Christ (3:18-19).

And then he anchors it all in the assurance of God’s ability: “Now to him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think ...” (3:20). In other words, when we face barriers to God’s glory, the remedy is not found in ourselves. It is found in experiencing God’s power, knowing His love, and trusting His promises.

## **Exposition: Three Truths About a God Who Is More Than Able**

### **1. Our Barriers Are Real (3:14)**

Paul begins, “For this reason I bow my knees ...” What reason? Because there were barriers to God’s glory in the Ephesian church. In their case, it was the Jew-Gentile divide. The mission of Jesus was spreading beyond Jerusalem, but many didn’t know what to do with Gentiles joining the people of God.

Barriers are not new. Every generation has them. Ours look different: division, unbelief, brokenness, materialism, apathy toward God, and so forth. But the truth is the same—barriers to God’s glory exist, and we cannot tear them down in our own strength. The good news? Paul’s instinct wasn’t despair, but prayer. He bowed before the Father because he knew the One who names every family is bigger than every barrier.

### **2. God’s Remedy Is Greater (3:16-19)**

Paul prays for two things that go far deeper than surface-level solutions:

### **a. Power in the Inner Being (vv. 16-17)**

Paul asks that believers would be strengthened with power—*dunamis* in Greek, the root of our word “dynamite.” This isn’t ordinary strength; it’s miraculous, explosive power. And Paul says it comes from the Spirit of God working within us, not from ourselves.

Notice where the power is directed: the inner being. This isn’t about flashy spiritual gifts or outward signs. It’s about transformation of character, the unseen realm of our souls, what Paul elsewhere calls “the inner man.”

Paul says the result is that Christ may dwell in our hearts. The Greek word for dwell carries the idea of settling down and making a home. Theologian D.A. Carson illustrated it with the image of buying a fixer-upper. When Christ takes up residence in our lives, He finds moral wallpaper to tear down, trash in the basement to clear out, and leaks to repair. Slowly but surely, He renovates our hearts until He feels at home.

That’s what Paul longs for—that believers experience the Spirit’s power reshaping them into a dwelling place fit for Christ.

### **b. Love Beyond Measure (vv. 18-19)**

Paul then prays that believers would grasp “the breadth and length and height and depth” of Christ’s love. How do you measure love like that? You don’t. You seize it. You apprehend it. You take hold of it so deeply that it becomes your foundation.

Paul says this is not just an individual experience but a corporate one, “with all the saints.” Knowing Christ’s love is something we do together as His people.

And then he adds the paradox: “to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.” To know what cannot be fully known! This is not mere information but revelation. It’s a Spirit-enabled awareness of Christ’s love so primal that it reshapes everything we think, do, and feel.

The result? “That you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” In other words, spiritual maturity. Becoming all that God intends for us in Christ.

## **3. His Promises Are Sure (3:20-21)**

Paul closes with a doxology that reminds us who we’re dealing with:

- God is able—He has the *dunamis* power.
- God is able to do far more abundantly—beyond what we ask or imagine.
- God’s power is already at work within us.
- God’s purpose is eternal: His glory in the church and in Christ to all generations, forever.

Paul’s assurance is clear: transforming sinners, tearing down barriers, filling His people with fullness—that’s not hard for God. That’s who He is. He is more than able.

## Application: How the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering Is More Than a Gift

Paul's prayer doesn't just give us theology. It gives us a roadmap for how to live as people who trust a God who is more than able. Here are four ways our participation in the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering becomes more than a gift.

### 1. Pray Beyond the Barriers

Paul bowed his knees because he saw barriers that only God could remove. The Jew-Gentile divide was too deep for human effort. Only the Spirit's power could bring true unity. Our missionaries today face barriers just as real—cultural suspicion, financial strain, loneliness, and spiritual warfare. Prayer is not window-dressing for missions; it's the engine.

**Illustration:** Imagine a missionary family like a ship cutting through stormy seas. The winds of opposition are fierce. Prayer is like the wind in their sails, pushing them forward when their own strength runs out. Without it, the voyage stalls.

#### Practical ways to pray beyond barriers:

- Adopt a North American missionary family (Send Network, Send Relief, Chaplain) to pray for regularly.
- Incorporate missionaries into mealtime or bedtime prayers with your kids.
- Organize prayer gatherings during the Week of Prayer for North American Missions.

When we pray, our offering is not just dollars collected. It's a spiritual partnership that tears down barriers.

### 2. Give Beyond Your Limits

Paul says God strengthens us "according to the riches of his glory." God's supply is limitless. Yet we often give according to our limits—what we can spare, what won't cost us too much.

But "more than a gift" giving is sacrificial. It looks beyond our comfort to God's sufficiency.

**Illustration:** Think about the boy with the five loaves and two fish (see John 6). By human calculation, his lunch was barely enough for himself. But when placed in Jesus' hands, it became more than enough for thousands. That's what happens when we give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering. Our limited offering, joined to God's unlimited power, becomes more than a gift.

#### Practical ways to give beyond limits:

- Challenge families to pray, "Lord, what would You have me give beyond what feels safe?"
- Share testimonies of God's provision when believers stepped out in faith financially.
- Encourage creative generosity—kids saving allowance, families giving up a meal out, churches setting a faith-stretching goal.

When we give beyond our limits, we declare that God is more than able to supply every need.

### 3. Love Beyond Measure

Paul prays that we would grasp the “breadth and length and height and depth” of Christ’s love. That love is the reason we send missionaries, plant churches, and give sacrificially.

**Illustration:** Imagine someone saying, “I love you 600 gallons worth.” It doesn’t work—we can’t measure love that way. Paul says Christ’s love is beyond measurement. And when we give to AAEO, we’re putting that immeasurable love into action for people who don’t yet know it.

Every dollar given is a tangible expression of Christ’s love:

- A family in Canada hears the gospel in their own language.
- A church plant in New England baptizes its first new believer.
- A college student in Denver encounters Christ through a planter’s ministry.

When we give, we’re not just supporting programs. We’re showing the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

### 4. Glorify Beyond Generations

Paul ends his prayer with a doxology: “to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever.”

When we give to AAEO, we’re not only fueling today’s mission—we’re investing in tomorrow’s legacy.

**Illustration:** Think about planting a tree. You don’t plant it for shade tomorrow. You plant it so your children and grandchildren can sit under it years from now. In the same way, every dollar given to AAEO plants gospel seeds that will bear fruit long after we’re gone.

Our giving glorifies God across generations:

- The missionary we support today trains leaders who will reach future generations.
- The church plant we fund today becomes the sending church for tomorrow.
- The child who hears the gospel through a ministry today may be the pastor who leads a church tomorrow.

AAEO is more than a gift because it glorifies God not just in our time, but in every generation to come.

### Transition to Conclusion

When we pray beyond barriers, give beyond our limits, love beyond measure, and glorify beyond generations, we are declaring with Paul that our God is more than able. And when we join our prayers and gifts to His mission, what we give is truly more than a gift.

## Conclusion

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 reminds us of three things:

1. Our barriers are real.
2. God's remedy is greater.
3. His promises are sure.

And it challenges us to respond in faith.

The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering is not just about meeting a budget goal or supporting an institution. It is about declaring that God is more than able. Every prayer, every gift, and every act of love is more than a gift.

So let's ask ourselves:

- What barriers to God's glory do I see—in my life, in my community, and in North America?
- How is God calling me to trust His power and His love beyond what I can imagine?
- Will I pray, give, and go in a way that shows I believe God is more than able?

To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

*Sermon outline by Noah Oldham, Executive Director of Send Network at the North American Mission Board*