

Joke: A little girl was sitting on her granddad's lap while he read her a story. She kept taking her eyes off the book and reaching up and touching his old, wrinkled face. After a few times doing this, she finally asked, "Grandpa, were you made by God?"

"Yes, dear," he replied. "I was made by God a long time ago."

The little girl paused for a moment and then asked, "And did God make me?"

"Of course, dear," replied her grandfather. "God made you not long ago."

The girl felt her own face and then her granddad's again, thought for a moment and then said, "God's getting better at it, isn't he?"

I'm going to start a new series based on the Movie Breakthrough. If you haven't seen it yet I would highly recommend it.

I think this movie has a lot to say about this thing we call life. And I believe it has many valuable lessons we can learn.

So today I want to begin with the topic Believe Big, Pray Big

I know that some of you here today are facing seemingly big impossibilities in your life. Everywhere you look it seems like you're facing huge problems. You may have walked in here today feeling like everything is caving in around you.

Things look bleak.

But, I'm here to tell you we serve a God who still does the impossible. There is no problem, no circumstance you're facing that God cannot break through and perform a miracle. If you need a miracle, take heart because He specializes in miracles.

God knows right where you are. And loves you more than you may realize. We see that throughout scripture. The good news is He still “breaks through today” no matter how challenging or impossible your situation seems to be.

So today, as we begin this series, we will be talking about how to see Breakthrough in our lives. I believe that, as we focus on the Biblical principles related to seeing a Breakthrough in our lives, we will see God powerfully breakthrough many of the impossible situations you and I are facing.

For some of you, this will be the season of a Breakthrough you have been praying for. It will be a season where God does the impossible in your life. It will be a season where He brings dead things back to life.

Maybe you feel like your marriage is dead, or your hope is dead, your family is dead, or your finances are dead. Maybe you are in a job that seems dead. Remember, we serve a resurrection God! He brings things back to life. That’s what He wants to do in your life.

Some of you here may be wondering if God still performs miracles today. In our world, many people — including believers — don’t believe God performs miracles anymore. We have too many unbelieving believers. They believe God stopped doing miracles after the Bible was written. I’m here to tell you today that God didn’t stop doing miracles. He still does them today.

He’s the same yesterday, today, and forever.

God has not changed.

So how do we see a Breakthrough?

You need to understand that we play an important role in seeing Breakthroughs and miracles. Throughout Scripture, when we see

God do a miracle, there is always a human conduit He works through. God does not perform miracles without human partnership. When God breaks through, He chooses to partner with people who have positioned themselves for a miracle.

That's how God still chooses to work.

When a person needs a miracle, they must position themselves to receive, and they need the people around them to be the conduit God can work through.

Next Sunday, we are going to talk about what it looks like to position ourselves for a miracle.

To see God breakthrough in our lives today, you need to understand that the principles are the same for us now as they were during biblical times. They are simple principles to understand, but difficult to practice in the middle of a crisis. They are hard to live out when it seems like nothing is changing. Or, even more challenging, when you pray, and things go from bad to worse.

Things happen that can shake a person to their core.

And in these moments that is when you must go with what you know, not what you see or feel.

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) - Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.

So, what do you know?

Scripture tells us that "all things work together for good." Scripture didn't say all things are good, but that we can trust the outcome will be good when we trust and obey.

We can't be driven by the outcome. We don't get to control the outcome. That's God's job. Our job is to be at peace with

whatever God chooses to do. We can also hold onto the fact that God promises to always walk beside us and carry us through the difficult times.

In times when the outcome is not what we expected, it's easy to ask the question "why?" But that is not the question we need to ask. Some times, God doesn't answer the why. The real question should be, "God, what do you want me to do with what's happening right now?" Let Him give you His divine strategy for the situation you are facing.

So many times, we give up because God doesn't work according to our timing. I know from experience that God's timeline is going to be often times different than our timeline.

The good news is God's timeline is always the best timeline. What I have found in my life is that God is always right on time. We must trust His timing and the outcome of every situation we are facing.

Here are the two most important keys to seeing a breakthrough in our lives: believe big and pray big.

We can't pray big until we believe big. The answer to our big problems and impossibilities is big belief and big prayer. If you believe in a big God, you will pray big prayers and see big miracles.

Ephesians 3:20–21 (NIV) - ²⁰ 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, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

What do big belief and big prayers look like?

We see examples of big belief and big prayer throughout the Bible. But what about today? Do we still see people with this kind of big belief praying big prayers? I'm here to tell you "YES!" We still see God breaking through and doing impossible miracles.

The movie "Breakthrough" is based on the true story of John Smith. When he was 14 years old, John fell through the ice in the St. Louis area. He was under the water for 15 minutes. When they pulled him out, he was dead, there was no breath in him at all.

They worked on John for another 45 minutes. Nothing. At this point, he had been without oxygen and without a pulse for over an hour. There was nothing else the doctors could do. They called his mom in to say goodbye. Joyce walked into the room and made a choice to believe big and pray big. Instead of accepting the outcome, she began to pray. I want to show you what happened.

(Show clip #1)

Talk about a picture of believing big and praying big. Joyce positioned herself for a miracle and stepped out. She was not going to accept the reports of the doctor. She stepped out and asked God to step in and break through. Because of her bold belief and bold prayers, God showed up and brought John back to life.

Church, God is still bringing things back to life in our lives today! Whether that's a loved one, or your marriage, maybe it's your family, or your job, or your financial situation. When we believe big and pray big, God shows up and does miracles.

I want to take you to a story in Scripture where believing big will help us see the breakthrough. It's found in Matthew 9:27-34.

Matthew 9:27-34 (NIV) - ²⁷ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of

David!” ²⁸ When he had gone indoors, the blind men came to him, and he asked them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” “Yes, Lord,” they replied. ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you”; ³⁰ and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.” ³¹ But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region. ³² While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus. ³³ And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.” ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, “It is by the prince of demons that he drives out demons.”

From the Message:

“²⁷⁻²⁸ As Jesus left the house, he was followed by two blind men crying out, “Mercy, Son of David! Mercy on us!” When Jesus got home, the blind men went in with him. Jesus said to them, “Do you really believe I can do this?” They said, “Why, yes, Master!” ²⁹⁻³¹ He touched their eyes and said, “Become what you believe.” It happened. They saw. Then Jesus became very stern. “Don’t let a soul know how this happened.” But they were hardly out the door before they started blabbing it to everyone they met.”

The statement that really gets me thinking from this scripture is “BECOME WHAT YOU BELIEVE.”

What if Jesus said that to us today? You are needing a miracle, or you are facing an impossible situation and you pray and ask Jesus to break through, and His response back to you is, “Become what you believe.” Or, what if He asked, “Do you really believe I can do what you are asking me to do?” How would you answer?

Jesus is still asking us the same questions.

So, how do we grow our belief and pray big audacious prayers?
What does Scripture say we need to do?

Here are three keys from scripture to help grow in praying big:

Key #1 – The deeper your relationship with God is, the greater your belief will be.

If you don't know who God is and the promises, He gives us in scripture, you will never be able to believe God for big things.

2 Corinthians 1:20 (NIV) - ²⁰ For no matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the “Amen” is spoken by us to the glory of God.

Look at some of the promises we have from God in scripture:

Romans 8:28 (NIV) - ²⁸ And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

Psalms 86:15 (NIV) - ¹⁵ But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV) - ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

Isaiah 40:31 (NIV) - ³¹ but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Joshua 21:45 (NIV) - ⁴⁵ Not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

Hebrews 10:36 (NIV) - ³⁶ You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.

Romans 4:18–21 (NIV) - ¹⁸ Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had

been said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ¹⁹ Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead—since he was about a hundred years old—and that Sarah’s womb was also dead. ²⁰ Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, ²¹ being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.

Pause and talk about the Old Testament story. . .

Acts 2:39 (NIV) - ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

Mark 11:24 (NIV) - ²⁴ Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

We must get these truths down into our hearts. That is where big belief comes from.

What you know about God will dictate what you believe about God.

Give examples. . .

God loves you so much and desires to have a relationship with you. He also has more for you and wants you to go deeper in your relationship with Him.

He wants to know you as a friend and as a father.

When you see God as a friend you can talk to him like a friend. But Scripture also tells us that God is our father.

Some of you haven’t had a good earthly example as a father. But I can promise you, He’s a good father. It’s important that we get to know God as our father from the perspective of Scripture and not the experiences we may have had with our earthly fathers.

We can't just know about God; we have to know Him. And that knowing Him happens when we build a relationship with Him.

You might say, "Pastor, I know this. This is not an earth-shaking revelation." Here's the truth: lots of people talk about this, but you need to do more than talk about it, you need to pursue after Him.

Here's a simple truth for you church, the more time you spend with God, the deeper your relationship will be.

We grow our relationship with God by:

- Prayer-talking to Him
- Getting into His word
- Listening to His voice
- Obedience - when God speaks, we obey.
- Making God your first priority. Matthew 6:33 tells us:

Matthew 6:33 (NIV) - ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

I love the next verse. . .

Matthew 6:34 (NIV): Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

We can't wait until a crisis comes to grow our relationship with the Lord.

We can't just be crisis Christians, who get close to the Lord only in crisis moments. When everything is going good, God is the last priority in their lives.

Instead, we need to make Him the first priority in the good times and the bad.

That's how we build our belief.

1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 (NIV) - ¹⁶ Rejoice always, ¹⁷ pray continually, ¹⁸ give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

Key #2 – Grow your belief by exercising it.

We grow our belief by exercising our belief, which is different than faith. Faith and belief come from the same root but operate differently.

Have you ever heard someone say, “I just need to have more faith?” No, you don't.

Jesus's disciples in Luke 17:5-6 asked Him once,

Luke 17:5–6 (NIV) - ⁵ The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” ⁶ He replied, “If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.

Jesus was saying you either have faith or you don't have faith.

Scripture tells us we are all given a “measure” of faith. The issue is not faith; it's a matter of asking, “Who we believe?”

Belief is how we put our faith into action. We could say that faith is having muscles, and belief is using our muscles. What grows our muscles is going to the gym and using them.

Likewise, what grows our belief is using it. When we actively believe God can and God will, we see God work, and our belief grows.

Our belief growing cannot be tied to what we expect the outcome should be. Because truth is most of us have set our expectations way too low. We have not seen God do this or that, so we are not convinced.

Thomas wouldn't believe the Lord rose again until He touched the wounds.

But look what the Lord told him. . .

John 20:29 (NIV) - ²⁹ Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

When we exercise our belief, we are positioning ourselves for a miracle because big belief leads to big prayers, and big prayers lead to big miracles.

Key #3 – Choose belief or fear

When we face situations that seem impossible, or we need a breakthrough, one of the most important choices we must make is choosing belief or fear. You can't have both. If you allow fear to rule the situation, it will steal your belief.

Choosing fear means we don't trust God or believe He can come through for us.

Joyce Meyer has a great explanation of fear. . .she said that fear is, false evidence appearing real. When we choose fear over belief, we are choosing to believe the false evidence the enemy is throwing our way.

Remember that the enemy loves to lie to us. In fact, that's how he best operates.

John 8:44 (NIV): You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

The battlefield is in your mind. In times of impossible situations where the enemy is hurling false accusations and lies, we need to stop and ask God what the truth is.

Give examples. ..

Choosing belief over fear goes back to our relationship with God. If we know how much God loves us and have experienced His perfect love, there won't be a place for fear to take root in our lives.

1 John 4:18 (NIV) - ¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

I love how the New Living Translation says it,

1 John 4:18 (NLT) - ¹⁸ Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.

Perfect love "expels" all fear.

Many believers allow fear to steal their belief. The outcome of allowing fear to rule your life is worry, anxiety, stress, and depression. And I know that makes me feel real good. . .NOT. Our world is struggling with the effects of fear.

With God's help, we have the power to break off the effects of fear in our lives. Why? Because perfect love casts out all fear. Fear is the reason we don't pray big prayers.

What if God doesn't answer our prayer? What if the outcome is not what I prayed for? Let me ask you this, what if He does?

In closing, I want to remind you about the power of prayer. One of the most powerful statements I have heard is, "If people truly realized the power of prayer they would pray more often."

Whenever you are facing an impossibility, don't forget the power of prayer! Believe Big, Pray Big! When you believe big, you will pray big. I want to encourage you to surround yourself with people who believe big and pray big.

As we begin this series, I want to declare over you that this is going to be a season of Breakthrough. The resurrection power that raised Christ from the dead is available to us today...if we just believe!

If you are needing a Breakthrough, I want to encourage you to believe this is your "Breakthrough" season. I believe that we, as a church, are going to see God break through hopeless situations.

I'm thankful that His power to break through is not limited to us. It's not about what we can do, it's about what He has already done.

When you believe big, you won't be worried about how God chooses to answer your prayer. Instead, you will know that God always answers your prayers, maybe not always the way you asked. But He answers.

Choosing belief over fear is a constant process. It's a choice we make every time life seems impossible. I can tell you this. If you give the enemy an inch, he will take a mile. This is especially true with fear. It's why our relationship with God is so vital.

As we close, I want you too hear this statement and speak it over your life both now and in the coming weeks. It's a statement from Beth Moore's Believing God Bible study:

“I believe God is who He says He is, and can do what He says he can do. I am who God says I am, I can do all things through Christ and God’s word is alive and active in me.”

Let’s say it together!

“I believe God is who He says He is and can do what He says he can do. I am who God says I am, I can do all things through Christ and God’s word is alive and active in me.”