

40 DAY
PRAYER
CHALLENGE

Day 8: Put On Waders

*They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord...
Confirming the word with signs following. Mark 16:20*

Author Mark Batterson tells the story when one man's faith rose to the occasion in Mississippi years ago.

"When drought threatened to destroy a season of crops, a rural church with many farmers in the congregation called for an emergency prayer meeting. Dozens of farmers showed up to pray. Most of them wore their traditional overalls, but one of

them wore waders! He simply said, "I don't want to walk home wet." And he didn't. But everyone else did."

I love that story because it exposes the lack of confidence I have in my own prayers. I agree with Mark that God is honored when we act as if He is going to answer our prayers. He continues, "We want God to go first. That way we don't need to exercise any faith at all, but that is backward. If we want to see God move, we need to make a move."

Personal Growth: It is daring to go after a dream that is destined to fail without divine intervention. What prayer, what dream, what Godly conviction requires you to step out in faith? The first step is always hardest but doing so means that signs will follow!

Bethany Growth: I shared with the staff this past week that one dream I have for Bethany is to become a stronger welcoming congregation for our special needs members and guests. I see a supernatural outpouring of blessings for families who otherwise may not find a church that they can call home.

Day 9: One God-Idea

"Speak to the earth, and it will teach you."

George Washington Carver is famous for introducing the concept of crop rotation. When the South was suffering due to the boll weevil, he encouraged farmers to plant peanuts instead of cotton. Problem was there was no market for peanuts. After a long conversation with God, Carver credits his prayers as the genesis for discovering over three hundred uses of the peanut. He claimed they were not good ideas; they were God-ideas.

"Good ideas are good, but only God-ideas change the course of history. And God-ideas are only revealed in the presence of God".

If you ask Bethany staff, they will tell you that I am wired with a futuristic gift that leads me to always ask the question, "What if?" I have learned that session after session of brainstorming while exciting for me, can become exhausting for others and lead to paralysis of action. But there is a difference between brainstorming and *prayerstorming*.

Personal Growth: Take more time in prayer today and speak to God like he knows you. You will find that the Holy Spirit will reveal things that can only be revealed in the presence of God. But we must have the conviction that God's grace and power knows no limits. Is God big enough to heal your marriage, or heal your child? Is he big enough for a miracle? If God is bigger than all those things, then pray like it.

Bethany Growth: Pray big prayers for Bethany. Our Vision is to start another location so that Bethany can continue to multiply blessings across our congregation, community and beyond.

Day 10: Dream Factory

We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5

I had a recurring nightmare when I was young. I was in a large room with tall ceilings with little light about the size of Bethany's gym. The room was full of people from my life; neighbors, friends, school mates, but they were wondering around anxious and lost. Out of nowhere a booming voice deep and ominous shook the room, though I couldn't understand what was said. I didn't stick around to find out and made myself wake up.

Many people think of God like this nightmare. An uncaring ominous being ready to take captive all the clueless people. If that is your view of God, then this passage in 2 Corinthians will be interpreted in a negative light. But what if God wants your dreams to come true? And what if the discipline of prayer is the stewardship needed to capture those dreams? What if God's dream for you and your dreams are really one?

Personal Growth: A great way to let God capture your dreams is to write notes while you pray. Some journal, but it could simply be a list of thoughts, dreams, or ideas. Things that the Spirit brings to your attention. To capture them write them down and add them to your prayers each day. Then, take a step of faith and see what follows. Obedience to Christ couldn't be more exciting!

Bethany Growth: This time of year, our staff is in planning for the 2019-2020 program year. This is the time that we allow for some dreams to surface. One dream we have is for Bethany to hit the 100 mark for small groups. Please pray that God continues to bless our small groups and for new groups to begin.

Day 11: Crazy Faith

"This woman is driving me crazy." Luke 18: 5 NLT

In this parable the widow is called persistent in most translations, the New Living Translation uses the word crazy. But it's not just any crazy, it's holy crazy. To get her day before the judge, the widow refused to follow protocol. And this reveals something about God, that *God couldn't care less about protocol.*

Sometimes our prayer life can be hijacked by our attempts to figure out the right protocol. We try to say the right words or use religious language that has no personal meaning. Let the crazy faith of the widow inspire you to take whatever means necessary to

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get to God. In the devotion today, Mark writes, "Maybe we need a new normal. Bold prayers and big dreams are normal. Anything less is subnormal. And when bold prayers become the norm, so do the miraculous breakthroughs that follow."

Personal Growth: Stop praying prayers that can be answered without God's help. Bold prayers honor God and God honors bold prayers.

Bethany Growth: Pray that the whole church will discover the power of prayer in our 40 Day Challenge. What could God do through a church that is a little crazy for God! Pray that our worship environments will become a little crazier for God's Glory!

Day 12: Sunday

Day 13: First-Class Noticer

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Colossians 4:2

I have said before that when we see as God sees we do what God wants us to do. But how do we see as God sees? In the devotion today Mark Batterson explains: Prayer is the difference between seeing with our physical eyes and seeing with our spiritual eyes. Prayer gives us a God's-eye view. It heightens our awareness and gives us a sixth sense that enables us to perceive spiritual realities that are beyond our five senses.

I have found in my own life that the more I pray the more quickly I notice what God wants me to notice. Unfortunately, when I have seasons that my prayers dry up and with it my ability to see God's movement in my life.

The problem is that we often think of prayer like it is a monologue, rather than a dialogue. Mark explains the dialogue; We speak to God with everything from words to groans to thoughts. And God speaks to us through dreams, desires, promptings, impressions, and ideas. Agreed, and I would add that God speaks to us through surprise circumstances, rhythms of conversations, and outright signs.

Personal Growth: Approach your prayer life today like it is a dialogue. Start with your thoughts, dreams, and concerns being lifted to God, then look through the promptings, impressions, and rhythms of your day for God's response. Wake up tomorrow, review, give thanks, and repeat.

Bethany Growth: Pray for our Council. In the next few months, our Council will need to be in dialogue with God about building expansion initiatives, debt-reduction, and the challenges to amplify our reach in our region.

Day 14: Sow a Seed

"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed..." Matthew 17:20

Some of the dreams that we have are in the germane season, which can cause us some anxiety about the timing of answered prayers. But when we think of prayer like a planting, as Mark goes on to say in this devotion today, it helps us understand the speed of a seed.

We want our prayers answered immediately. But that isn't the way it works in God's kingdom. We need the patience of a planter. We need the foresight of the farmer. We need the mindset of a sower.

We worry far too much about outcomes instead of focusing on inputs. We cannot make things grow. Period. All we can do is plant and water. But if we plant and water, God promises to give the increase.

Personal Growth: We all go through famine of some kind spiritual, relational, or financial famines. Don't stop planting. This morning return to a prayer you have planted from the last 12 days. Keep praying, keep obeying, keep giving, keep loving, keep serving. And remember the wisdom: If we do the little things like they are big things, then God will do the big things like they are little things.

Bethany Growth: Pray for our children and youth group leaders today. Each and every week there are seeds to be planted and the faithful efforts of these special servants should cause all of us to pause with respect. May the seeds grow to giant redwoods!