

Believe Big, Pray Big

Key Verses: Mark 9:14-29, Luke 17:5-6, Matthew 9:27-34

Good morning! I hope you're enjoying the service so far. But some of you perhaps, are not enjoying it as much as you can because you are struggling with an issue or issues in your life. Some of you here today, in fact, are facing big impossibilities in your life. Everywhere you look it seems like you're facing huge problems. You may have walked in here today without hope.

Things look bleak.

But, I'm here to tell you we serve a God who still does the impossible. There is no problem or issue you're facing that God cannot break through and perform a miracle. If you need a miracle, take heart. Performing miracles is His specialty.

God loves you today. He knows right where you are. We see that throughout scripture. The good news is He still "breaks through today" no matter how challenging or impossible your situation. Amen?

Today, we are beginning a new series called "Breakthrough." I was inspired by the movie we saw and I hope you were, too. So I thought, why not distill from it certain principles that we can all apply in our lives. If you agree with me, I think there are several things we can learn from that movie. Starting with praying big, believing the impossible, overcoming difficulties, getting close to Jesus, and being broken. So, those are things I'd like us to learn together in the next few weeks. From now until the early part of September, 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 many 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 your marriage is dead, or your hope is dead, or 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 in this room may be wondering if God still performs miracles today. In our world, many people — including believers — don't believe God performs miracles anymore. 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.

God hasn't changed. He still loves us and loves people who are lost. We break through because of His love and great compassion. If you will trust him for the breakthrough you are needing, God won't put you to shame.

So how do we see a Breakthrough?

To see God break through in our lives today, 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. Talk about confusing and challenging moments. Or, what about when you are believing and praying for a miracle for your loved one and that loved one dies instead?

Those are difficult questions that can shake a person to their core.

Now, 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.

"Breakthrough" is based on the true story of John Smith. When he was 14 years old, John fell through the ice in Lake St. Louis in Missouri. He was under the water for 15 minutes. When they pulled him out, he was dead.

They worked on John for another 45 minutes. Nothing. At this point, he had been without oxygen and a pulse for over one 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. Here's 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.

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

I want to take you to a story in Scripture where the importance of believing big causes a breakthrough. Turn with me to Matthew 9:27-31. Let's look at what happened.

"As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, calling out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" 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.

Then he touched their eyes and said, “According to your faith let it be done to you”; and their sight was restored. Jesus warned them sternly, “See that no one knows about this.” But they went out and spread the news about him all over that region.”

The statement that blows me away from this scripture is “*According to your faith let it be done to you*”. That stops me in my tracks.

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

Maybe that is why we don’t see more miracles. Jesus is still asking us the same questions. Our level of belief will dictate the level of the Breakthrough we will see in our lives and situations.

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 your belief and praying big:
Key #1 – The deeper your relationship with God is, the bigger 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.

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

- Romans 8:31-32 *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”*

- Romans 8:28 *“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 *“But you, Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.”*

These are powerful truths. We have to get these truths down into our hearts. That is where big belief comes from.

You see, what you know about God will dictate what you believe about God. And what you believe about God will dictate your outlook.

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. What is that relationship built upon? That He wants to know you as a friend and 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 experience with our earthly fathers, especially if they didn't do a good job.

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 few take the time to actually deepen their relationship with God. 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 first priority in our lives. *Matthew 6:33* tells us “*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*”

We can't wait until a crisis comes to grow our relationship with the Lord. If you are always working on growing your relationship deeper then, when difficult times come, you will be ready.

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, let's make Him the first priority in the good times and the bad times. That's how we build our belief.

Key #2 – Grow your belief by exercising it.

We grow our belief by actually exercising our belief. Now, there's a fine line between faith and belief. But faith is not the same as belief. Faith and belief come from the same Greek root, but operate differently and are built differently.

I've heard people say, “I just need to have more faith.” No, you don't. Or, they ask, “How do I grow my faith?” The answer is the same — you don't. In Luke 17:5-6, we read, “*The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’ 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 when we are saved.

I think of it this way: *Faith* is believing there is a God. *Faith* is believing that he has saved you. But *Belief* is believing that God will do what He says He will do. It's why we don't see Jesus asking people to have faith or asking if they have faith. He asked people repeatedly, “Do you believe I can do this?”

Earlier, I quoted Jesus saying, “*According to your faith let it be done to you.*” Properly translated, that should be “According to your belief.” And that is what some versions of the Bible have it. You see, faith gets you into heaven, but it is belief that positions you for a miracle. We need to grow our belief so we can believe big. We do this by exercising it.

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. 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. It has to be tied to trusting God for the outcome whatever He chooses to do and however He chooses to do it.

No matter the outcome or what God chooses to do, the principles in Scripture still stand. These are the moments when you must go with what you know, not what you see or feel.

So, what do you know?` 1q

Scripture tells us that “all things work together for good.” Scripture didn’t say all things are good, but that we can trust the final 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. Many times, God doesn’t answer the why. You may not want to know the answer to 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.

God’s timing is another important aspect. So many times we give up because God doesn’t work according to our timing. I can promise you God’s timeline is always going to be 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 rarely works on our timeline, but He is always right on time. We have to trust His timing and the outcome of every situation we are facing.

So, folks, 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 have to 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 the best explanation of fear: 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. 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.

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 (NLT) tells us *“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.”*

The NLT translation says this perfectly. 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. Our world is struggling with the effects of fear in a big way today. Believers can break the power of fear in their lives by choosing belief over 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?

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, just not always the way you asked. When you look back and see how everything plays out, you might be thankful God didn’t answer your prayers the way you wanted.

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.

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.

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 so many hopeless situations. I’m most 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 on the cross for us!

As we close, I want us to write down this statement and speak it over our lives 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!