

SERIES; YOUR BREAKTHROUGH TO HOPE
PART 3: PRAYING ANFASTING FOR A BREAKTHROUGH

Recently there was a post on facebook that said, “Nothing in my life seems to be working right now. I’m lonely. I’m broke. I’m out of work. I’m a minority and every door I knock on seems to close before me. Pastor, I feel like I’ve been headed down a blind alley, and I’ve reached a deadend in my work and with my girlfriend. Can you help me? Does God even care? I really need a breakthrough.” Friends, it was last phrase that caught my attention. God gave me the theme for this series and for the year before I read this posting, but it was all part of God leading me and, I believe, our CVCHURCH family, to position us to cry out to God together for our individual and corporate breakthrough.

That got me thinking, what is a breakthrough? In the dictionary a breakthrough is a sudden dramatic advance. Science has breakthroughs, technology has breakthroughs. Medicine has breakthroughs. Some of us need a breakthrough in our marriage and family life. Some of us need breakthroughs in our relationships. Others of us need a breakthrough in our careers and in our emotional and physical lives. Now, the opposite of a breakthrough is a setback. The truth is, friend, that if you’re not moving forward, then you are stalled out, and that could be the opposite of a breakthrough. You’re at an impasse or at a deadend. You’re at a deadlock. You’re stalemated.

If you were honest you might say, “I’m not making any progress in my life. I’m just marking time. I’m not seeing progress in my marriage. I know we’re stuck and I’m worried about us. I’m not making any advancement in my career.” This is where I think using our SERFVIP acronym is a great metric to see just where you need the necessary breakthroughs in your life. **SERFVIP stands for your Spiritual, Emotional, Relational, Financial, Vocational, Intellectual and Physical.**

I have said this before, and the majority of us know this truth--God often uses pain to get our attention. C.S. Lewis said, **“God whispers to us in our pleasure, but He shouts to us in our pain.”** It is one of the ways that He communicates to me that I was not created for my own pleasure. Pain says life is not about me. God often uses pain to prepare us for a breakthrough. If you're in pain right now I want to encourage you that God is saying to you, **“Start asking Me and seeking Me for your breakthrough.”** One translation puts Proverbs 20:30 this way, **“Sometimes it takes a painful experience to make us change our ways.”** Hard to argue with that, isn't it. **“We don't change when we see the light. We change when we feel the heat.”** Loved ones, this is an important truth for every one of us. **When things get bad, you never change in life until the fear of change is exceeded by your pain.** Have you ever noticed that when your pain gets worse than your fear, then you change? That's human behavior.

As we begin this year of hope, where do you need a breakthrough or several breakthroughs? You might need a health breakthrough, or a financial breakthrough or an emotional breakthrough or relational breakthrough or a personality breakthrough as you face some of your own character defects. What I have learned in 62 years of life and over 30 year of being in ministry is that breakthroughs happen generally when you seek them. They don't just happen spontaneously. You get a breakthrough when you seek God for a breakthrough. I want to look at two examples quickly from the O.T. of two different kings that sought God for their needed breakthroughs, and they received them. Then I want to look at Philippians 4:6-8 and how each one of us can seek God for the needed breakthroughs we all desire. The first example is located in 1 Chronicles 14:8-11. In Chapter 11 David becomes king of Israel. In chapter 13 David attempts to bring the Ark of the Covenant, which represented the presence of God, to Jerusalem. The parallel account of moving the ark in 2 Samuel 5-6 shows that David's building projects were completed before he brought the ark to Jerusalem. Some scholars argue that Chronicles puts the moving of the ark first in order to highlight David's spiritual accomplishments and relationship to God. David brought the ark there in order to make Jerusalem the nation's center for worship as well as being the

capital city of Israel. A tragedy happened in that David and the High Priest did not have the ark secured properly, and, when the oxen stumbled in the midst of Israel worshipping their God, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, and the Bible says that God's anger was aroused and struck him dead because he laid his hand on the ark. Uzzah did something God had warned them not to do. I bring this up because David becoming king was a highlight in his and Israel's life together. How many of us can witness to the fact that often times when great things happen to you painful and sometimes tragic things happen? After this incident David builds a palace for his family, and the Bible says that God greatly blessed his kingdom for the sake of His people Israel. When the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, they mobilized their forces to capture him. Again, two great things have happened to David, and he also experienced some incredibly painful situations in his life. Look what happened. **“When the Philistines heard that David has been anointed king over all Israel, they mobilized all their forces to capture him. But David was told they were coming. So he marched out to meet them. 9 The Philistines arrived and made a raid in the valley of Rephaim. 10 So David asked God, ‘Should I go out to fight the Philistines? Will You hand them over to me?’ The Lord replied, ‘Yes, go ahead. I will hand them over to you.’ 11 So David and his troops went up to Baal-perazim and defeated the Philistines there. ‘God did it!’ David exclaimed. ‘He used me to burst through my enemies like a raging flood! So they named that place Baal-perazim (which means ‘the Lord who bursts through’). 12 The Philistines had abandoned their gods there, so David gave order to burn them.”** As we seek God together for our personal breakthroughs and breakthroughs together as a family of faith the first thing David did, and we will start doing, is we pray to God and seek His will. David teaches us a very important lesson, church. Never go into battle without asking God first. Whether it is a legal battle, a financial battle, a relational battle, a work battle—don't ever fight a battle without asking God first. If you don't, you're on your own. Good luck with that. Notice the name of the valley is “The Lord who bursts through.” Some translations say **THE LORD OF THE BREAKTHROUGH**. God will guide and lead you to burst through whatever the obstacles are in your life.

The second example I want to draw your attention to is to King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles 20:1-4 **“After this the armies of the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites declared war on Jehoshaphat. 2 Messengers came and told Jehoshaphat, ‘A vast army from Edom is marching against you from beyond the Dead Sea. They are already at Hazazon-tamar.’ (This was another name for en-gedi.) 3 Jehoshaphat was terrified by this news and begged the Lord for guidance. He also ordered everyone in Judah to begin fasting. 4 So people from all the towns of Judah came to Jerusalem to seek the Lord’s help.”** It is clear that Jehoshaphat was outnumbered. Vs. 3 says he was terrified. Panic and fear are a natural first reaction when you are under attack. Notice when under attack the first thing the king did was to beg the Lord for guidance. He began to seek God. Notice he didn’t cave into his worry, fear and panic. The king switches his focus from panic to prayer. It’s a choice, church. Our fear, worry and fretting demand that we each make a resolve to seek God. Once he switches his attention to God, notice what he does next. Vs. 3 says the king ordered the people to fast. Why? It demonstrates that we’re serious about seeking God. Fasting says, “God I am willing to go without food because seeking You and gaining Your will in this situation is what is mandatory for me. I must have Your breakthrough. I must have Your strength and guidance to burst through my problems.” If you will read at home the entire story you will see how God delivered the breakthrough God’s people needed. I brought these two examples up because they did the four things that you and I must do to seek out and get our breakthrough that God has for us. For the remainder of our time I want to look with you in Philippians 4:6-8, **HOW TO SEEK GOD FOR YOUR BREAKTHROUGH TO HOPE: “Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. 7 Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. 8 And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”**

I. Refuse to be pulled in different directions

“Don’t worry about anything.” Philippians 4:6a. The Amplified Version says, **“Don’t fret or fear or have any anxiety.”**

I could have written, “Don’t worry about anything,” because that is what Paul writes. I chose to put one of the definitions of worry as the title because I think it will give us a window in how to deal with worry. Worry is more damaging than most of us think, because once we realize how destructive it is I think we will take Jesus’ and Paul’s admonition more seriously. The old English defines worry as **to strangle yourself**. If you have ever really worried you know the stifling effect it can have on you. The medical profession has established that worry has very clear physical consequences: headaches, neck pains, ulcers, even back pains. Worry affects our thinking our digestion, and even our coordination. Worry pulls you away from faith, trust, love, and belief in Jesus and His purposes, plans and His presence for you. From a spiritual point of view, **worry is wrong thinking (the mind) and wrong feelings (the heart) about circumstances, people and things**. Worry is truly the greatest thief of joy. Jesus said in Matthew 6:34 **“So don’t worry about tomorrow. For tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”** The verse before Jesus says, **“Seek God’s Kingdom above all else and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need.”** Focused seeking and following Jesus and His Word is the only remedy to allowing your mind to be pulled in different directions. This takes time, patience and real persistence and perseverance. Plummer writes, **“Worry means to carry the burden of the future yourself especially about things over which one has no control.”** Warren writes, **“Worry is focusing on my fears instead of God.”** If winning over worry is all about switching my focus how do I do that? Loved ones, you switch your focus by fervent prayer and fasting. You say, “I am setting extra time aside to fast and focus on God” as you pray. Daniel 9:3 says, **“So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with Him in prayer and fasting.”** Notice breakthroughs come from a serious, sober pleading and earnest beseeching of the Father to

answer your prayer. Fasting demonstrates how serious you are about meeting with God and discovering His purpose and plans for your life. Ezra 8:23 says, **“We fasted and earnestly prayed that our God would take care of us, and HE HEARD our prayers.”** Would you please mark this day in your calendar and on your notes. I’m calling on all of us who call CVCHURCH your home church and I am your pastor, that you will read the insert I created for you on fasting and pray and choose the fast that you believe you’re capable to fulfill, and we will fast as our CV family on February the 6th. You will decide what fast, what meals and the length. This simply is a way for us to focus ourselves to diligently seek God for breakthroughs to HOPE. We believe God for His supernatural intervention in our lives and in our community, culture, state and nation. Breakthrough starts with you choosing to refuse to be pulled in different directions through worry, anxiety and fear. The second action we take to seek God for breakthrough through to hope is...

II. Pray about everything

What is so powerful about this is that anything that matters to you--whatever you worry about, stress about or fear--that means that there is nothing too small, medium or big that God does not want you to bring to Him. Think of it this way, whatever I don’t bring to Him means I don’t believe I need His love, strength, power, wisdom and guidance in that situation. Paul says don’t be pulled in different directions but bring everything to God in prayer. Philippians 4:6b & c says, **“...pray about everything. Tell God what you need.”** 1 Peter 5:7 tells us why we can. Peter writes, **“Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you.”** Psalm 88:9 says, **“My eyes are blinded by my tears. Each day I beg for Your help, O Lord; I lift my hands to You for mercy.”** I want to give you a template you can follow as you commit yourself to pray every day as you seek God for your breakthrough. Will you take your hands and put them like this in front of you? Notice your thumbs are closest to your heart. Notice on your notes **your left hand will remind you who to pray for and your right hand will tell you what to pray for.** 1) **Your thumb represents your family and friends.** Your thumb is closest to your heart. You pray for your family and friends that are closest to you. 2) **Teachers and**

leaders. Index finger. These are the guides in your life. Pray for their salvation. 3) **Influencers.** Your middle finger. Pray they will influence for good and not evil. **Celebrities, athletes, movie stars, musicians, artists, politicians, intellectuals, authors.** 4) **Pray for the weak.** Pray for the sick, disabled, poor, and the powerless. 5) **Myself.** This is the littlest finger on your hand. I pray for my own needs but I start with family and friends first, then leaders, then influencers, then the weak. Your left hand represents who you pray for. Now your right hand represents what you are to pray for. **RIGHT HAND: My thumb: 1) My heart.** Proverbs 4:23 “**Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.**” God says guard your heart. It is your control center. Jesus says in the great commandment in Matthew 22:37 to “**Love God with all your heart. This is the most important command.**” Pray to God and ask Him to make your heart whole. “God, what is in my heart that is not right? What sin do I need to confess? What thoughts and what behaviors do I need to adjust? What do I need to change toward my family and my friends?” Pray for your heart and everyone else’s hearts. 2) **Your index finger: My priorities and schedule.** What am I to put first. How can I put first things first? For God to bless your schedule you must pray over your schedule. Don’t take that for granted. “What do I put first, Holy Spirit?” and trust Him to lead you. God wants us to major on the majors and not the minors. 3) **Middle finger: You pray for my influence and my example.** 1 Chronicles 4:10 says that Jabez prayed, “**Oh, that You would bless me and expand my territory! Please be with me in all that I do and keep me from all trouble and pain! And God granted him his request.**” 4) **Your ring finger: Your relationships.** Pray for your family relationships, spouse, children, parents, grandparents, your friends, your small group and the people in your CV family. 5) **Your little finger: Pray for material blessings.** Jesus says we have not because we ask not. Pray for God to bless your life materially, and then be incredibly generous with what you receive. God isn’t going to make us all millionaires. Here is God’s promises to you concerning your material needs. Philippians 4:19 says, “**And the same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from His glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.**” If you pray 15 seconds on each finger you will pray for 5 minutes and cover all of this. If you

do that 3x's a day, you will spend 15 minutes a day. Can you imagine as CVCHURCH takes this on and we pray? We're going to fast on February 6th and then another day before Easter and another day before our 12-week campaign on YOUR NEED FOR HOPE; we're going to see profound breakthroughs, because we're focused on seeking God and His purposes and plans. I am excited for you, I'm excited for my family and my CV family.

III. Thank God in everything

Loved ones, gratitude is the breakthrough attitude. Gratitude, thankfulness and a heart that is appreciative of all God has done for you is what causes breakthrough. The truth is the more grateful you are the more breakthroughs you will experience. This is the third step in Philippians. Philippians 4:6c **“And thank Him for all He has done.”** As you start praying and making requests to God for the 10 areas that your hands represent, make sure you're thanking God for all He has done. As you do it will increase your faith as you remind yourself just how faithful God has been and is to you. We praise and thank God in everything, not for everything. We don't thank God for evil but we make this claim that David did in Psalm 23:4 **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.”** Whatever crisis, trauma, terror, or trouble you are facing you can make this confession that whatever death shadow you're walking through you do not have to fear evil whatsoever because Jesus Christ is with you, and He is leading you and protecting you as you surrender your life to Him. He is the final outcome of your life.

IV. Fix your focus on true things

To experience the breakthroughs God has for us He tells us to stay focused on true things. Please read out loud with me Philippians 4:7-8 **“Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and**

worthy of praise.” Would you please underline the word fix. This is a mental habit and discipline habit that is part of the renewing of our minds. Friends, this the fourth key to a breakthrough in your life. This is just as important as the other three. Refusing to worry. Pray about everything with fasting. Thank God in everything.

I want to close in prayer, but before I do I want to draw your attention to the blue insert and the green insert.

“Father, as we start this journey of seeking You for the breakthroughs You have for us and this year of hope, we need Your breakthroughs. Each of us need breakthroughs in different areas of our lives. I’m asking You in advance to hear the prayers of our church family as we pray to You, as we pray for ourselves and especially as we pray for each other. I pray God that we’ll have story after story after story after story of things that’ll be turning around in lives because we did what You said to do.”

Will you pray with me in your mind and under your breath. Say to God, “God I need a breakthrough in my life. I want to develop these four habits in my life. I commit to have five and ten minute conversations with You three times a day. I want to listen to You from Your Word, and I want to talk to You in prayer. I want to lift my hands and know how to pray for and what to pray for. I want to pray these short times of prayer three times a day. I am serious that I want to grow, and I don’t want to stay at the same level. I don’t want to remain stuck and in an impasse. I desperately need You to do a breakthrough in my life, and You know where I need it. I’m going to do what You tell me to do, and I’m going to expect You to do what you say You’ll do.” If you have never surrendered your life to Jesus Christ just say to Him, “Jesus Christ, I want to get to know You. I open my life to You right now. I want to learn to trust You. Thank You for loving me. Thank You that You have a purpose for my life. Thank You for dying on the cross for me. As best I know how, I ask You to come into my life. In Your name, I pray.”

