

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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Prophesy Your Praise

Dr. Mark Batterson

Well, welcome to all seven of our campuses. Before we jump into the message this weekend, can I give you a little update on the city block that we are building out? We are sprinting towards the finish line of phase one; our LED screens installed a couple of weeks ago; theater seats installed this last week, and I think we might have a picture too. Would you like to see them? And so we'll pop these up, it is coming together. All that's missing is people, right? And so just a heads up on June 23rd Sunday evening, we're going to do an all church consecration. I think we got to get some worship in the walls. We might give you a chance to pen some prayers and so mark your calendars for that. This last week we cleared six out of 10 hurdles on our way to our temporary certificate of occupancy, hoping to clear four more hurdles this coming week. Now our contractors said we're coming in hot. In fact, he said, it's kind of like the space shuttle reentering the atmosphere without a parachute. So there's that. Okay, so, I want us to pray in just a moment. Now in a few weeks I'm going to update you on our 'Yes and Amen' campaign. I want to say a huge thank you to those of you who have made a pledge and if you want to be a shareholder in this vision next couple of weeks, great opportunity to get in on that, so many Ebenezer moments 'so far so God'. But I want us to pause and pray.

Lord, thank you. You have begun a good work. God, would you carry it to completion or right now we pray for an extra measure of grace for our contractor, for our subs. Pray for an extra measure of favor with the city. And Lord, we thank you for this piece of Promise Land. God, would you part the Jordan River this week? Would you make a sidewalk through the sea? And we will give you praise in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hey, one more little thing to put on your reticular activating system; next weekend we kick off a new series, Pentecost Sunday, going to do a series on the Holy Spirit. I think it'd be wonderful if we coupled that with that 21 days of prayer and fasting. This will coincide with us launching this new campus, and so just a little heads up; I'll set that up a little bit more next weekend.

All right, here we go. In 1976 a professor at Northwestern University published a paper title Knee Deep in the Big Muddy, a study of escalating commitment to a chosen course of action. In that paper, Dr Barry Staw describes a behavioral pattern known as the escalation of commitment. It's the natural tendency despite increasingly negative outcomes to keep doing what you've been doing, even when it's obviously not working. In the realm of finances, it's a sunk cost fallacy; it's throwing good money after a bad investment. Now this is the classic case of doing the same thing and expecting different results. I think we fall into this trap all the time. We want God to do something new while we keep doing the same old thing. It does not work that way. If you keep doing what you've always done, you will keep getting what you've always {gotten}. Your relationships, guess what they're perfectly designed for the results you're getting. Your diet perfectly designed for the results you're getting. Your habits perfectly designed for the results your getting. So here's the deal, if you keep doing what you've done, even if you escalate commitment to your current course of action, I don't think it's going to get you where God wants

you to go. Now you can try harder, but it's like spinning your wheels, isn't it in the mud? And you just get deeper and deeper in the rut. You might want to instead of trying harder, try something different and that's what we're going to do this weekend.

Over the last six weeks, we've been in a series called 'Out of the Shadows', and I know some of you knee deep in doubt, shame, addiction, fear. I'm praying for you, believing God this weekend for a breakthrough. So what I want to do to end this series, three action steps.

- Number one put on your rally cap.
- Number two release your scar tissue.
- Number three prophesy your praise.

Here we go. Some trace it back to the Detroit Tigers of the 1940s. Others referenced the Texas Rangers, 1977. Some say it was the '85 Mets. The origin of the rally cap is debatable, but it has become a ritual that is repeated in baseball stadiums all across the country from little league to major league. When our team is trailing in the late innings especially if there are runners on base what do we do? We turn our hats sideways or we turned them backwards or we turn them inside out and we rally cap a come from behind victory. Read the Gospels and you tell me; it sure seems to me like everywhere Jesus went, everyone Jesus met, everything Jesus did, rally cap, right. He touched lepers, no one did that. Celebrated Samaritans, what? Right. Befriended prostitutes and then defended tax collectors, ate with sinners, rallied around people who had made some mistakes. In other words, he put on his rally cap. He rallied around those who are hurting and struggling and sinning, and he said, a bruise need I will not break. He said, a smoldering wick, I will not snuff out. He said, come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest and that offer still on the table. Jesus never took his rally cap off. Right now, can I tell you what he's doing? He's at the right hand of the Father advocating on your behalf. Listen, that's where our confidence comes from, it's not a self confidence, it's a holy confidence. If God is for me, who can be against me? Right? Right? I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me and so can you.

Listen, we give up on people too easily and too quickly. I'll tell you why, see when we do something wrong, we ask God to exercise His mercy. Don't we? Now, when someone else does something wrong, we ask God to exercise his justice, right? I'm not sure that that's loving our neighbor as our selves. Now maybe mixing metaphors, but I think we've adopted a baseball mindset when it comes to things like forgiveness or justice or even restoration. Three strikes you're out. Jesus said 70 times seven that is next level grace. And as the followers of Jesus, we ought to be the best at this and I hate to say it, sometimes we're the worst at this. Can we put our rally caps on this weekend? I want to make sure you remember. Now listen, I figured I'd wear my dream hat cause I like it. And because that's what our Dream Center is all about, that's what we do day in and day out. Two years ago, we started serving an underserved part of our city. We put on our rally caps said, not on our watch. We said, we're gonna, we're gonna awaken some dreams and we're going to create a place where hope becomes habit.

Now, we've been casting vision for a phase three marketplace, remember where we're going to conscientiously create jobs for those who have the hardest time finding them, returning citizens, refugees. But guess what? Dream Center is already doing it. Um, huge props to our executive

director, Ernest Clover and our whole team. {clapping} Yeah, you give it up for our whole team and you know what, we did a job fair earlier this year. Check this out. 315 job seekers showed up, interviewed by 20 to potential employers, including Ebenezer's coffeehouse and 47 people got jobs as a result. How great is that? We can probably give it up twice. {clapping} Can I tell you what that is? That's us putting on our rally caps like Jesus. By the way, if you want one of these rally caps, you can support the Dream Center on a monthly basis just like I did and you can get one. Okay. <https://dcdreamcenter.com/>

Galatians chapter six, verse one says, *brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in sin* in other words, if someone is knee deep in the big muddy, you who are spiritual should judge them. No. Uh, you who are spiritual should rebuke them. No. *You who are spiritual should restore them in a spirit of gentleness.* This is restorative justice. Now that Greek word, it means to repair what is broken. This is the mechanic who fixes your car; this is the surgeon who fixes what is wrong? It means to mend until something is fully functional and fully operational. But here's the key. It's doing it in a spirit of gentleness. Listen, of the nine fruit of the spirit, doesn't it seem like gentleness draws the short straw? I mean, we headline love, joy, peace as we should. And then we subtitle, right, patience, kindness, goodness But man, it's that eighth fruit of the spirit, gentleness. I think especially in the day and age and in the culture in which we live you want to be counter-cultural. Listen, you do what Jesus did and now he could throw down, right? Went into a temple with a homemade whip and went Indiana Jones on the money changers. Okay. Tough as nails, nine inch nails. But so gentle and I think it's why you couldn't keep people away. May we be the church that rallies around those who are hurting who are doubting, who are struggling, who are knee deep in the big muddy. May we be the church, right with the rally cap.

Who do you need to rally around this week? I promise you there is someone who needs you to love them when they least expect it and least deserve it. There's someone this week that needs you to go the extra mile. There's someone this week that needs an extra measure of grace. Come on. Would you put on your rally cap and believe God for a come from behind victory for someone you love?

Number two, release your scar tissue. When I was in college, our basketball team made it to the national tournament. Now, I better note it was the NCCAA, the extra C stands for Christian. Now it was the final game of my sophomore season, fourth quarter and I hurt my knee cutting to the basket. I went to see the doctor. Doctor did an MRI and told me that I had torn my anterior cruciate ligament. Now I didn't know I even had an anterior cruciate ligament, okay. I think I had missed that class at 19, I had no idea, and so I naively said, how long will it take to heal? He said, never. I will never forget that feeling. At that point, basketball was so much of my identity. Basketball was so much of my life. The whole thing flashed before my eyes. A few weeks later had reconstructive knee surgery, took a piece of my patella tendon, screwed it into my knee, took about a year of rehab to regain full functionality, took a lot longer than that to regain competence cutting to the basket. Now, I made a comeback two years later, first team all American, again extra C remember that, okay. But I bet I could have dunked on you back in the day.

Now, that's a great story line, but here's the reality my knee has never been the same. I actually tore the ACL in my other knee, my senior season, had six knee surgeries; reconstructed,

arthroscopic. My knees will never be as good as new, but I'll tell you what I did. What I did was I rehab my way back to a new normal.

I want to share one of the lessons I learned the hard way when we experience physical trauma, the body forms scar tissue. Now, unlike our original tissue scar tissue aligns itself in a random or unevenly matched pattern and the net result is a loss of functionality or in my case flexibility. I never regained the full range of motion in my knee and I'll tell you why I didn't do what the therapist told me to do. She told me you got to break down the scar tissue by massaging it toward your heart. It's called releasing scar tissue. If you don't do it, it becomes a weak link in the kinetic chain and instead of trauma being evenly distributed across a muscle group; scar tissue causes an unhealthy tension. If you don't release the scar tissue, you open yourself up to reinjury.

Now, what's true of physical trauma is true of emotional trauma and relational trauma. We form scar tissue around these injuries. Someone you trust causes trauma. Someone you love betrays your confidence and if you don't have the coping mechanism to deal with it, what happens is you usually employ a defense mechanism. Now, it might protect you against pain, but it may not promote long-term healing. So how do you release that scar tissue? Well, no easy answers, no simple solutions, but I think it starts with one of the least practice spiritual disciplines. When I say confession, I know what comes to mind. You're probably immediately think sin and that certainly is one dimension of confession, but I want to come at it from a little different angle. I want us to think of confession as releasing scar tissue by massaging it in the direction of the heart.

So, not confessing what we've done wrong, although we need to do that. I want to flip that coin. I want to talk about some of the scar tissue that forms when someone does something wrong that affects us. If you don't massage those hurts in the direction of your heart, it breaks the kinetic chain and I'll tell you what happens. You lose your ability to experience joy. You lose your capacity to experience intimacy. Here's what I know for sure. Whatever you do not confess, you repress and whatever you repress will eventually depress. I want to be careful right here. I know that a lot of instances of depression, chemical imbalance, you may need a medical intervention just like I need it for 40 years medicine to treat the asthma that God has now healed me from. And so I totally understand that. I also know if you don't confess it, you repress it and eventually it will resurface in some dysfunctional ways and one of those things is depression and that's why confession is so important.

So, I want you to stick with me, I want to push this envelope a little bit. About a decade ago, I was invited to speak at a symposium in Wittenberg, Germany. Now this is where Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the doors of the Castle Church, this is where the Protestant reformation began. And I figured if I'm going to kind of home base for Martin Luther might want to know a little bit about him, so I picked up a biography and a lot of interesting things, but one thing struck me, and this was it, Martin Luther once spent six hours in confession. And the reason why it struck me is that I don't think I'd ever spent six minutes. I thought to myself, you know, Martin Luther bad, dude, he has a lot more confession than I do. Or maybe there's something else, maybe he understood something about confession maybe he was massaging scar tissue in the direction of his heart, and maybe that took a little bit more effort and time than what I had been doing.

And so if you're taking notes, I want you to jot this down because I think this is critical. A vague confession will result in a vague feeling of forgiveness. Lord, forgive me for everything I've ever done wrong. God, would you heal me of every hurt in Jesus' name? Amen. Six second confession right? Now, listen, am I saying that God cannot do that? Of course not but I bet the feeling of forgiveness lasts about six seconds because I'm not sure that we're doing the kind of business that we need to do with our heavenly Father. I'm not sure that we're giving him the kind of opportunity to come in and not just deal with the presenting problem, but really get to the root cause. Heal our hearts and heal our souls. I think the less we confess, the less we heal. In fact, I wonder if confession might actually be the ceiling on healing. James 5:16; "*confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed*". Now, I want you to notice what it doesn't say. It does not say in this instance so that you may be forgiven, it says so that you may be healed. Now listen, this is critical. We confess to God so that we may be forgiven. We confess to each other so that we may be healed.

So here's what I want you to do it this week. You already have one assignment, right? Who do you need to rally around? Here's a second assignment. I want you to reveal your deepest, darkest secret to someone. You hardly know. No! No, I don't want you to do that. Okay? What I want you to do is I want you to find someone you love, I want you to find someone you trust. I want you to find someone who wears a rally cap. Now listen, this could be a counselor, could be a mentor, could be a campus pastor, could be a spouse. I want you to release some scar tissue. Listening to me preach is not going to do the trick and what I want you to do, specifically a share some scar stories. Now in Galatians 6:17 Paul adds a little footnote at the end of this letter, it seems like a side note, but I think it's significant. He says, "*I bear on my body the scars that show I belong to Jesus*". Paul was whipped five times, shipwrecked three times. He was beaten three times and got stoned at least once, pelted with stones, a little clarification right there. You'll get that in about five minutes. Okay? Now, I can't imagine how many scars Paul had on his body, but I think he was releasing scar tissue by sharing those scar stories.

Now, I did a little bit of a counting, okay, and I think I have at least 17 scars on my body. Now again, most of them around the knee region, right. And some of those are minor incidents easy to share. I've got a scar on my ring finger. Right after Lora and I got married, I went out to play a little bit of basketball and I wasn't used to it so, I didn't take my ring off and my ring got caught in the rim as I was dunking, almost rip my finger off. But I kinda liked this scar because it lets me humble brag.

Would you release some scar tissue this coming week? I'll just say this, I started counseling a couple of weeks ago and I'll tell you why. Last year, heavy lift, a lot of wear and tear, a little bit concerned about level of stress. Lora, and I doing great. But you know what, sometimes you need someone to maybe give you a little bit of help and I just want to make sure that stress is being evenly distributed. You know what I mean? That there isn't a break in the kinetic chain and so whatever it is that you need to do; would you release some scar tissue?

All right, you ready for number three? Here we go; we're going to go fast. Prophecy your praise. Now confession catalyzes the healing process, but you can't just confess what's wrong, you have to profess what's right. I'm going to put this on the screen. If you want you can take a picture...

- Confession is **playing defense**
- Profession is **playing offense**
- Confession is **admitting what's wrong**
- Profession is **declaring what's right.**
- Confession is **kneeling at the foot of the cross**
- Profession, I think it's **walking out of an empty tomb.**

There comes a moment, you've heard me say this 117 times when you have got to stop talking to God about your problems, that's confession. Do that, but at some point you've got to flip the coin, you've got to start talking to your problems about God. This is profession. You have got to declare the character of God. You've got to declare the promises of God

I want you to jot this down whatever you don't turn into praise turns into pride and you know that. But I want to add another dimension, whatever you don't turn into praise, it turns into pain.

July 23rd, 2000 I'm preaching at NCC, I get about five minutes into my message and I double over in abdominal pain. The Pastor Joel has to preach an impromptu message, kind of wrap up the service. I went to see the doctor around midnight, discovered that my intestines had ruptured. Now, a spike in my white blood count was evidence that sepsis had been going on for about 12 hours, maybe 16 hours and so at two o'clock in the morning I went in for emergency surgery. I would spend the next two days on a respirator, unconscious, lost 25 pounds in a week, lost a foot of intestines forever. Doctors had to divert my digestive tract by a colostomy. I wore an ostomy bag for a year and then they reversed it at the end of that year. Now, when I came out of surgery, they couldn't close me up because the risk of infection. The wound had to heal itself and it took a long time, left a 14 inch scar right down the middle of my abdomen. Listen, some people have a six pack. I have a two pack, belly button moved up two inches, kid you not. You got to keep a sense of humor when you're in these circumstances. I remember lying flat on my back, too weak to walk. I'm gonna tell you what got me through. I did not just worship, I learned to prophesy my praise.

Can tell you what prophecy is? It is declaring what will happen in the future. Did you know that you can prophesy fear? You can prophesy doubt. You can prophesy shame. You can prophesy pain. I made a decision; I'm going to prophesy praise. Now, I want you to dial in right here. I love Great Is Thy Faithfulness, but worship is not just thanking God for what he has already done. Worship is thanking God by faith for what God will do and can do. I love this moment when the Israelites entered the Promised Land and God says, as they get to Jericho, I have delivered it into your hands. It seems like the wrong verb tense, right? It should be future tense, I will deliver. It has not happened yet, but its past tense. Why? Because God has already accomplished it in the spiritual realm.

Listen to me, you're healing, your deliverance, your breakthrough is not future tense it happened 2000 years ago. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement for our peace was upon him and by his stripes we are healed. So I am flat on my back and there was one song, one line of lyrics, put it on repeat that 427 times. You remember this song, Darrel Evans, Trading My Sorrows? I'm trading my sickness, I'm trading my pain, I'm laying it down for the joy of the Lord over and over again. God, I'm trading my sickness. I'm

trading my pain, God I'm laying it down for the joy of the Lord. I love Nehemiah 8:10 the joy of the Lord is my strength. That is not a verse I quote, I lived it for a very long year. I came out the other side and you can too, but you're going to have to prophesy your praise.

Second Corinthians 10:5 ³" *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.* ⁴*The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to (check this out) demolish strongholds."*

Let me tell you why praise is so powerful. There is nothing the enemy hates more or that God loves more. And I'll tell you why, when we worship, we're reminding the enemy of who he was. Lucifer led worship. Listen, the enemy flees when we worship, walls come down, healing happens, deliverance happens, breakthroughs happen but that's only half the story. We're not just reminding the enemy of who he was, we are reminding ourselves of who God is, his character, his promises, and when we worship, we are mirroring what is happening in heaven. Let me connect this dot remember, scar tissue, it's tissue that doesn't heal, right? It's out of alignment, it's unevenly matched, it's a break in the kinetic chain. Can tell you what worship does? It begins to bring us back into alignment with the reality of who we are, the reality of who God is. And so whatever situation you find yourself in this weekend, you've got to worship your way out.

I want to invite the worship teams to come at all of our campuses; I want to invite our prayer teams to come. And I want to end this series old school, is that, okay? We're going to prophesy our praise. I love this song 'No Longer Slaves'. Little line, 'you surround me with the song of deliverance'. Do you know that that's Psalm 37:2? God is singing songs of deliverance all around us all the time. So we're going to prophesy our praise, but I want to challenge you to do something else. Now, we're coming up on the three year anniversary of me praying a brave prayer and God, after 40 years healing my asthma, I live by a simple conviction. If we do what they did in the Bible, God's going to do what he did.

James 5 If any of you is suffering let him pray. If anyone's cheerful, let him sing praise. In other words, release your scar tissue; prophesy your praise, right. Then it says this, is anyone of you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Now, anointing oil is not Abracadabra, okay? It actually represents the Holy Spirit. But if you need healing this weekend, our prayer team is going to be available to pray with you, to pray for you. And I would challenge you to step out and let someone put the ball in God's court; give God an opportunity to do something miraculous in your life. And then I want to include one more group, and maybe there's someone you love, you gotta put that rally cap on. Would you come for them? Would you step out by faith and say tonight, this week I'm just going to intercede on behalf of someone I love. And here's what I believe, we're gonna see some breakthroughs. We're going to see some deliverance. We're gonna see some healing. We're going to give God the praise in Jesus name. Amen.

