

Sermon Title: Experiencing Breakthrough in Life, August 22, 2012 (Scripture is from ESV)

Introduction

Good evening Jubilee. My name is John-Michael Becker and it's a privilege to be here for Wednesday night service. I'm originally from Northern Virginia and graduated as an engineer from Virginia Tech. God led me to Korea at the end of 2005 to serve full time as a missionary in an orphanage, and I've been doing orphanage work since. I direct an orphanage volunteering ministry called Jerusalem Ministry that plugs in volunteers at different orphanages around Seoul. Just a year ago I married my beautiful wife Sky and we celebrated our first anniversary last Wednesday.

Tonight I'm going to share a bit about my life and then give a short message of encouragement to you all. But before I do that, I want to show a short video about Jerusalem Ministry that will give you all a good background about the orphanage ministry...

Jerusalem Ministry Video

<http://vimeo.com/40266103>

Father's Heart Ministry

Because Jerusalem Ministry is an independent NGO, we have volunteers from a number of churches in Seoul, including Jubilee. Karin Lim is our head volunteer here at Jubilee Church and she shared about her life a few months ago during a Sunday service. If you weren't here when she shared, I want to encourage you to listen to her sharing on Jubilee's website. It was powerful!

Just recently Jubilee has established "The Father's Heart Ministry." This ministry is being directed by Karin Lim and by some of our other current volunteers with Jerusalem Ministry. The Father's Heart and Jerusalem Ministry work hand in hand together, with the Father's Heart providing extra discipleship and covering for the volunteers from Jubilee.

As you saw in the video, serving at an orphanage requires commitment, with 6 months being the minimum for part time volunteers. But if you're unable to make such a commitment but really want to serve the kids, we also have two three-day camps each year. Every January we have an Arts and Crafts camp for elementary school girls, and every July we have a soccer camp for elementary school boys. These camps get better and better every year and provide a perfect environment for connecting with the kids. They love our camps! Check out our website, jerusalemministry.org, or our Jerusalem Ministry Facebook page for more information.

Testimony Sharing

As I prayed about what to share tonight, I felt I should share two testimonies with you: how God led me to Korea and how my wife Sky and I came together. So let me start with how God led me to leave my friends and family in 2005 and move into an orphanage in Korea with 80 kids.

How God Led Me to Korea

During my final year of studying engineering at Virginia Tech I spent a considerable amount of time in prayer and fasting for my future. I made up a long list of different career possibilities including different jobs, countries, and ministries and prayed over them. As the year went by, God began crossing different options off the list. By the time graduation came around, the only thing left on my list was doing missions in Japan. A prayer of mine from the

beginning was that my parents and I together would be led by God very clearly concerning my future. My parents were not at peace with me serving in Japan, but did understand my heart for ministry and were willing to let me go there for one year or two. I did not feel at peace with any of this. God had not yet made Japan clear to me or to my parents. It felt like I was just settling on it as the last option. I graduated in May of 2005 and upon coming home I told my mom I would be fasting for one day each week. She asked me why and I told her I was going to continue to fast for guidance for my future. She told me that my future was important to her and to my dad and that they would join me in fasting. This was a great blessing to me. Interestingly, the day after our first fast, my father told me that he had a dream that I was at the orphanage in Korea with the kids and the orphanage's founder Pastor Yoon Kwon Chae. This seemed so random that we laughed about it. (My father had met this pastor in Virginia one time back in the 1980's. I had also visited the orphanage in Korea for a couple days in 2003, but never thought anything would come of it.) This dream seemed completely out of the blue. Because at that point I was focused on Japan, we didn't take it too seriously. In the next few weeks, though, God made it clear that I was not to go to Japan, so once again my future was wide open. My once long list of career options had been completely crossed out. I began working a job at a construction site as I waited for God to speak and lead me. About a month after the dream of the orphanage my dad had another dream. This time it was a nightmare. Now I didn't know this about my dad, but he is the type of guy that lies down, goes to sleep, and wakes up. He very rarely remembers his dreams. After this bad nightmare he got out of bed in the middle of the night and went into another room and opened his Bible and began praying, asking God, "Why did you let me have this horrible dream?" As he was reading through Scripture and praying, God spoke to him in a very clear way. God said to him, "I speak in dreams. Pay attention!" At that moment my dad immediately remembered the dream he had of me being in the orphanage in Korea. So the next day he approached me and told me about this second dream and what God had told him. As he was telling me about his second dream, it clicked in my mind... I had literally been praying for my dad to dream dreams! You see, every semester and summer I make new entries in my prayer journal. I write down peoples' names and pray for them. As I pray for them, sometimes the Spirit will put something specific on my heart to pray for that person and I will write it down in the journal and lift up that specific request every time I pray for them. Well, the day after I graduated, I made a new entry in my prayer journal and my dad was the first name I wrote down. As I prayed for him that day, the Spirit put a verse on my heart. The verse was Joel 2:28, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions." I prayed over the verse and couldn't understand exactly how it related to my dad. I kept going over it in my head, "your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions..." and finally decided, "Well, my dad is my old man, I'll pray that he dreams dreams." So I wrote that in my journal, "Dream dreams, walks in your Spirit." And just a few days later my father had that first dream of me at the orphanage, and then a month later he had the second dream where God tells him, "Pay attention, I'm speaking!" After I told my dad I had been praying for him to dream dreams, he told me I need to e-mail Pastor Chae at the orphanage in Korea and find out what is happening there. We began praying over this possibility of serving in Korea. I e-mailed Pastor Chae (who can speak English, thankfully) and asked if I could be of any help at the home. This began a long, slow process of trading e-mails with him. He would e-mail me every few weeks to tell me, "The staff is considering, but we don't know yet." In the mean time, as summer ended and fellow graduates were starting their careers, I continued to work construction, wait, and pray, believing that God had a plan for my future. In late September, one night as I was laying in bed about to go to sleep, I found myself reflecting on the different faith jumps Korea would present (living in an orphanage that doesn't speak English,

living with a ton of kids, being on my own, not having a secure future, and even knowing I'd have to eat kimchi everyday). Then, amidst thinking of these concerns, God suddenly turned my mind to His promises. I remembered Hebrews 13:5, "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you." The end of the Great Commission in Matthew is this, "Surely I am with you always, even now to the very end of the age." I felt God's peace fall on me. I remembered all the times I had told God I would obey Him no matter what and go wherever He would send me. Now, because of His peace, I knew I finally had the strength to not just say I would obey Him, but to actually follow through and do it. About a week later my mom received an e-mail from a distant friend. This lady asked how I was doing. My mom replied that I was currently working construction and praying about my future... that I would either be getting an engineering job soon or perhaps serving at an orphanage in Korea. Her friend replied to that e-mail by telling my mom that she had just paid off all her debts and also had started a new job with an increase in pay. She is a prayerful woman and during one of her times of prayer God directed her to give the money from her raise to missions. As she prayed for more direction about who exactly to give the money to, God put me upon her heart. She wrote to my mom that beginning in December she would begin giving \$1,500 a month for an entire year for wherever God would lead me. That is \$18,000 in support! I had not asked her or anyone for support money yet, this was completely a gift from God. My mom called me in and showed me the e-mail, and then looking at me in shock said, "Well, if Korea doesn't work out, you have to go somewhere!" I had to laugh. God was answering my prayer. He was leading my parents with me. In fact, that same month my dad had two more vivid dreams of me living at the children's home in Korea. Before anything was confirmed, my family (parents, sisters, brother-in-law) gathered together and each shared their heart about me possibly leaving for Korea. They each felt God's hand was over everything that was happening. They each felt it would be beautiful for me to go love the children. They each voiced their blessing over me leaving and then together laid their hands on me and prayed for me. Shortly after that family gathering, Pastor Chae e-mailed me that he and his staff had prayed and wanted to welcome me to the orphanage, requesting that I arrive by the end of the year. I would live in the guest room in the home and teach the children English. Right after I received the e-mail, I purchased my plane ticket to depart December 29, 2005.

During my time before leaving, God began speaking to my father about my future. My father shared with me that he feels this children's home will be my permanent home from here on out. That I will live there, but after a few years God will begin sending me on different missions for His work. God will take me to different places, but I will always return to the children's home to rest, recuperate, and prepare for the next sending. I felt in agreement with him in my Spirit and excitement grew within me about what would come. **During this time God also reminded me of visions/daydreams I had when I was a 3rd year in college.** For a few weeks whenever I would lie down and begin to drift off to sleep, I would have daydreams that would take me to poor towns and villages in Asia. I would be with a team of young adult volunteers. During the day we would build a church and an orphanage and serve the community. Every night we would gather together and worship God, read His Word, and pray for each other. We would simply rely on God. And after a year or two, after the community would become strong, we would go to the next town or village and do the same... place to place, just like the Apostle Paul in the book of Acts. I remember smiling as I would have these daydreams... it all just seemed so pure, just completely trusting in God's promises and going in faith. But after a few weeks of entertaining those daydreams, my lack of faith caught up to me and I told myself, "I'm not cut out to be a missionary. I can't speak a foreign language. I don't have the experience. I like air conditioning and my car and American food. I'm an engineer. Those daydreams are for someone else." And I quit letting my mind wander there again. But now, as I was preparing to go to Korea, **God reminded**

me of those visions and I felt in my Spirit that there was a lot of truth in them. I had to repent for my lack of faith and recommit myself to Him. I began to feel that God was sending me to Korea to train me and prepare me for that work. By going to Korea I could learn the language, learn the children's hearts, and build a team. My hope was that after five years or so I would have the language down, have grown in God's love for the orphans, and would have a team of full time volunteers at different orphanages in Seoul. And then we would come together as a team and go and begin building orphanages for the orphans of North Korea, whether directly in North Korea or in North China for the refugees there. These were the hopes and visions that I carried with me to Korea and am continuing to pray towards.

Choosing to Follow God Completely

I really feel I can testify that my life is a life fully surrendered to the Lord. I know I'm not perfect, but I have continually set myself fully before God and entrusted to Him all my hopes and desires. And God has truly blessed me! And that leads to how my wife Sky and I came together...

When I was in high school my mind was thinking about girls almost all the time. My greatest desire was to find my wife and get married, and since both my sisters married at 21 and my parents married when they were 18 and 19, I didn't think my wedding day was far off. But as I began to really grow with God in university I felt God prodding me to give up pursuing girls until after I graduated. I decided to surrender dating and marriage to the Lord, and that decision enabled me to really focus on the Lord and run wholeheartedly after Him. By the time I graduated, I was fully ready to let go of everything to serve in whatever way He desired of me. And I recognized then that if I had dated in college, I would have probably rejected God's leading for me to be a missionary and prioritized dating and marriage over the calling. Instead, I was free and ready to go.

And as I came to Korea I kept my eyes focused on the Lord. I was very careful to follow the leading of His Spirit through prayer, the Word, and the counsel of people I trusted. And I can tell you that when God eventually opened my eyes to my wife, Sky, that I was really blown away by how God had prepared us for each other. And I know because I was careful to obey the Lord and obey the people I submitted to for counsel, God fully blessed our relationship. God blessed us so much to the point that her dad, who is Korean and had never met me, had a dream of me before Sky and I were dating. And so when Sky told him about me, he immediately knew the dream was about me and that we were meant to be.

I had actually led Sky to Christ when we first met at Virginia Tech in 2004. Years later she was able to lead her father to Christ and then her brother too. So when we talked with her dad for the first time these were his words to me, "You helped lead my daughter to Christ. She has then led me and my son to the Lord. I am eternally grateful to you. I thank you. I trust you. I love you. I bless you." Whew!

There was so much more to how God orchestrated not just our relationship but also our families to make things fully blessed for us. I am amazed. Isaiah 49:23 says, "Those who wait for the Lord will not be put to shame." The same verse in the NIV says, "Those who hope in the Lord will not be disappointed." This is the truth!

I wanted to share these testimonies with you all to release hope. There is far more to life than what you've been exposed to so far. And there are powerful, deep desires within each of you that you haven't fully tapped into yet. I believe your generation is a generation that is marked

by the freedom to dream. **More than any previous generation ever, the whole world is wide open before you all.** Think about that, because it's really true.

I'm not saying that all of you are called to the nations or are called to the ministry. God doesn't give cookie cutter dreams that are the same for everyone. God has made each of us unique, and that includes unique gifting, dreams and callings.

I think most of you would agree that the world is really wide open before you. You could purchase an airplane ticket and go almost anywhere in the world. I think you all would also agree God has a calling for your life and that He desires for you to live life to the fullest (John 10:10). And I think a number of you are also believing God for a spouse, too. But why hasn't there been clarity yet in some of these areas? You know you are meant to live life to the fullest, but why does it seem for many of you that life is just passing by? Clearly God is hearing your prayers, but why aren't the answers vivid and clear to you?

I want to give a short word of encouragement from Isaiah 58. Let's turn there. If you're taking notes, the title of this message is, "**Experiencing Breakthrough in Life.**" It's a brief message, but I know for many of you it's crucial.

Isaiah 58 is a beautiful chapter about correct fasting. When Isaiah spoke these words out, God's people were very faithful in their fasting. But God wasn't responding to their prayers, and so God's people were frustrated. In this chapter Isaiah rebukes them for their selfishness, and then gives them clear instruction for their prayers to be heard and for them to experience breakthrough in life. Let me read verses 6-9 for you...

Isaiah 58:6-9a – Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.

Target Strongholds and Deal With Past Sins

God's first command for fasting is to loose the chains of injustice, untie the cords of the yoke, set the oppressed free, and break every yoke. In other words, his first command is to target the bondages and strongholds affecting you and the people you are praying for. He commands us to set the oppressed free, and this has to be done spiritually before it can be done physically.

If you want to experience breakthrough in your life, you need to deal with whatever strongholds are in your life, whether past or present. Karin Lim spoke boldly in front of you and shared about her past of drug use, aimlessness, and her abortion when she was younger. And she shared about it all boldly, with confidence in the freedom Christ has given her. Just a year ago though, Karin hadn't shared about any of those things, particularly her abortion, with anyone. At that time she was struggling to get by here in Korea. But then conviction fell upon her, and she met with me and two other Jerusalem Ministry leaders. She confessed her past sins and the trauma she has endured. She repented of her past sins, forgave those who had deeply wounded her, and experienced God's love, forgiveness, and healing wash over her like never before. What had been bound up within her for so long was finally released.

God wants this for you. If you want to experience breakthrough in life, you need to be set free. **Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 10, “Freely you have received, now freely give,” but many of you haven’t received your full freedom yet. So how can you be expected to bring full freedom to others?** You need to deal with yourself first.

There are leaders and pastors in this church I know you can trust. They will treat you with love and acceptance, no matter what has happened in your past. Karin is one of the greatest examples of this. Romans 3:23 says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” If you want to experience breakthrough in life, then clean out your closet. Share with one of the leaders here and confess and repent of your sins. Forgive those who have hurt you. Experience every yoke and bondage on your life being broken off of you. You will never regret doing this!

Get Your Priorities Straight

God’s next command is to share your food with the hungry, provide the wanderer with shelter, clothe the naked, and to take care of those around you. Now that you’ve taken care of the spiritual strongholds, you’re able to focus on the physical injustices before you. Now it’s time to get your priorities straight.

1John 3:16 – This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

You want to experience breakthrough in your life and live life to the fullest? **Lay down your life and serve others.** Then you will experience what true love is. You will be living it!

So many of our generation work and play and spend their money on all the amazing things this world has to offer, but they wonder why they don’t feel fulfilled inside, and why they have to keep find newer and neater amazing things to buy and to do. Their priorities are completely off.

But the happiest and most content people I know are the people who both give and save their money. They tithe to their church and they also give offerings to missions and charities. And at the same time they save their money for their future spouse and for their future children. They don’t feel burdened by their money because they know their money is for something greater than themselves. To save for your spouse, and especially to save for your future kids is to love them without having met them yet. And there is such an excitement and genuine love in that! Suddenly the temptations of materialism aren’t as powerful anymore.

So many in our generation also complain about not having enough time. But when your priorities are straight and you’re investing into other peoples’ lives and fighting injustice, time won’t constrain you so much. When I am at the orphanage and I’m spending quality time with the kids, I’m never glancing at my watch and wanting to do other things. I’ll stay with them as long as I can.

Now there is a need to have wisdom and not spread yourself too thin with different ministries and appointments and such. But when you set your priorities to serve others first and have that as the purpose behind your life, **you will learn love like never before.** And that will equip you for marriage and having children more than anything else.

Watch His Light Shine

So if you choose to deal with the strongholds and bondages in your life, and then if you choose to prioritize loving others over yourself, God has some special promises for you. He promises that your light will break forth all around you and that you will experience quick healing. He promises that He will go before you and also protect you. And He promises that when you call to Him, He will answer and tell you He is right with you.

Why does His light break forth around you? Because the darkness of your past and present has been dealt with, and now you can see His light clearly. Now you have experienced true healing. And why is God now going before you and protecting you? **Because you are now walking according to His will. You are now prioritizing love and walking in it, and in doing so you are walking in His footsteps.** You are now living life to the fullest.

Psalm 37:4 – Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.

To delight yourself in the Lord is to know His heart. And the easiest places to experience His heart are with the victims of injustice: the orphan, the widow, the homeless, the sick, and the rejected. And God promises as you love them, you will be satisfied like never before.

Isaiah 49:23b – Those who hope in me will not be disappointed.

I can testify to you all today that as I have sought to obey the Lord in all my life, He has never disappointed me. God is good. In John 10:10 Jesus speaks...

John 10:10b – I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

God wants you to experience true breakthrough in your life. He wants you to experience life to the fullest. He wants to bless you abundantly!

****Pray****

- Pray for surrender of your fears, shame, and past. Pray for strength to confess and share with others.
- Pray for the hurting to stop... pray on behalf of the orphan, the victims of sex trafficking, those struggling with suicidal thoughts and depression
- Pray for North Korea, for breakthrough to come to the nation