



Scripture

"This is what the **LORD** says (Isaiah 43:16–18 NIV) —

he who made a way through the **sea**,

a path through the **mighty waters**,

who drew out the **chariots and horses**,

the **army** and **reinforcements** together,

and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick."



Scripture

*"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. **See, I am doing a new thing!**"* (Isaiah 43:18a NIV)

"Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:18b NIV)

"I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland." (Isaiah 43:19 NIV)



Introduction

Every once in a while, human beings experience a **breakthrough**.

We discover or invent something that moves us quickly from one era to another.

Penicillin gave us a way to treat a number of previously deadly diseases.

The **steam engine** provided a way to power the factories, trains and ships of the Industrial Revolution.



Introduction

According to The Atlantic magazine the **top innovation** since the discovery of the wheel was the **printing press**.

Technology writer George Dyson describes it as the turning point at which "**knowledge** began freely replicating and quickly assumed a life of its own."

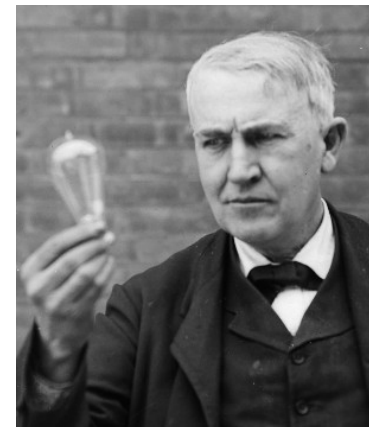
Without it the **Protestant Reformation** might not have spread as it did in the 16th Century.



Introduction

Other well-known **breakthroughs** include,

- electricity,
- paper,
- vaccinations,
- the internet,
- refrigeration, and
- gunpowder.



Introduction

But some innovations might surprise you, such as the **moldboard plow** — the first plow to dig soil up and also turn it over.

Whether well-known or not, all were **life-changing discoveries** or inventions.



Introduction

Yesterday, a movie called **Breakthrough** was released nationwide.

In it, a 14-year-old named **John Smith** falls through an icy Missouri lake on a cold winter morning.

It is about how a tragic, life-threatening situation became a **miraculous** breakthrough.



Introduction

After being pulled out of the water, he is taken to the hospital and lies lifeless for more than an hour.

CPR is performed for 27 minutes without success.

Although his life seems to be over, his mother Joyce is not ready to give up on him.

She musters all of her faith and strength, **crying out to God** to save her son.



Introduction

The movie is based on a true story, as well as on the book written by the mother, Joyce Smith.

It is called **The Impossible:** The Miraculous Story of a Mother's Faith and Her Child's Resurrection.



Breakthrough

In Isaiah, the people of Israel need a **breakthrough**.

They've been exiles, suffering in Babylon, and they ache to return to their homeland.

In this time of despair, the Lord **reminds** the people how he rescued them in the past and how during the Exodus he parted the waters and threw Pharaoh's army into the sea.

In other words, just when everything seemed loss, **God intervened**.

Breakthrough

When the Israelites were stuck between the Egyptian army and the Red Sea, **God opened a way where there was no way**.

God separated the waters and overwhelmed the attacking army, giving Israel a **breakthrough**.

The good news is that God continues to remove **obstacles**, making a way where there is no way.



Breakthrough

So then, just after the **Prophet Isaiah** reminds the people of what God has done to help his people in the past, he now says this.

*“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a **new thing!** Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”* (Isaiah 43:18–19 NIV)

Look forward, says the Lord, not back. God is doing something new, both in us and around us.

God Provides

According to the dictionary, a **breakthrough** is a sudden or a dramatic change in one’s circumstances for the good.

In case you haven’t noticed, the **Bible** is literally full of stories where **people’s circumstances** and situations were suddenly reversed or changed by the intervention of a faithful and loving God.

In fact, when we’re **backed into a corner** and no longer have hope or option, **God** delights in showing up and turning the tables on our **troubles**.

Breakthroughs

Abraham & Sarah conceived at Old Age.

Widow of Zarephath.

The Crossing of the Red Sea!

Shunammite’s son.

Manna from Heaven

Iron swims.

Sennacherib’s Army Destroyed.

Water from the rock.

Daniel and the Lion’s Den!

Parting of the Jordan River.

Meshach, Shadrach, and Abednego.

Walls of Jericho fall.

Personal Testimony

Years ago while working for **SuperAmerica** in Minnesota, I was in a **real dilemma**.

At that time, I was working as an **Area Manager** of seven stores.

I was also a brand new Christian and very much committed to following Jesus.

The crisis that I was going through was that in these stores we sold **merchandise** that I found objectionable, offensive and immoral.

For me, the Lord had been so gracious to me, giving me **real joy**, **love**, and **peace** that to compromise was the worse thing I wanted to do.

Personal Testimony

I made my feelings know to my **boss** and to tell you the truth, he didn't understand.

I also told both my **pastor** and my **Christian mentor** and while they told me I needed to follow my convictions, I didn't necessarily get a lot of wisdom on how to carry that out.

You see my father was a high ranking executive with SuperAmerica's parent company and for me to **exercise my faith** would have huge consequences.

So, I felt I was in a **corner** and needed a major breakthrough, as I didn't want to compromise my faith or cause unnecessary misunderstanding either.

Personal Testimony

What I did was to make **prayer** a major priority in my life and to pray every chance I had.

Whether I was home or on the road.

I even wrote out prayers and lifted them up to the Lord while I prayed extemporaneously.

You know what happened?

To my surprise, I had a **breakthrough!**

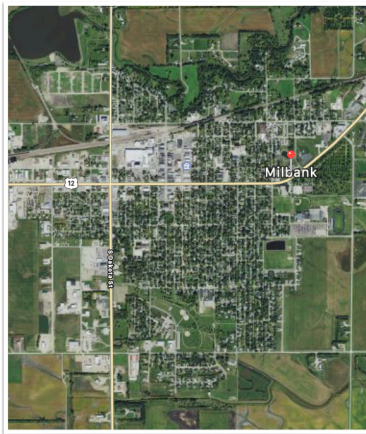
Personal Testimony

One day, I was at our store in **Milbank, South Dakota** and received a phone call from one of the secretaries at our corporate office.

She asked me what I thought removing adult magazines would do to our stores sales.

I gave her my **opinion** that no matter what the dent in sales, we ought to get rid of them.

In just a few days, all **adult magazines** were removed from our stores and to this day they have not returned.



Breakthroughs

To tell you the truth, this is just **one example** on how God helped me and my family over the years.

In fact, **trouble** is never absent from any of our lives and we need God's intervention all the time.

Why? Because we're mortals and we live in a fallen world where trouble and danger are always present.

The **good news** is that trouble and hardship can't separate us from the **love of God**.

Breakthroughs

So then, when we're boxed into a corner and things look bleak and we need a **breakthrough**, what should say to ourselves?

Oh woe is me?

From our Scripture reading tonight, we should say,

*See, God is about to do a **new thing!** Now it is already springing up; do you not perceive it? **God is making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.** (Paraphrase of Isaiah 43:19)*

Breakthroughs

God is in the **breakthrough business** and if you need one this is my recommendation!

Seek the LORD while he may be found; **call on him** while he is near. (Isaiah 55:6 NIV)

*The lions may grow weak and hungry, but **those who seek the LORD** lack no good thing. (Psalm 34:10 NIV)*

Breakthroughs

However, there is a **condition** when we seek the Lord. And what is that condition?

*You will seek me and **find me** when you seek me with **all your heart.** (Jeremiah 29:13 NIV)*

Moses says the same thing, . . . *if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will **find him** if you look for him with **all your heart** and with **all your soul.** (Deuteronomy 4:29 NIV)*

Parable of the Unjust Judge

In this parable from Jesus, it is the only parable in which he explicitly upfront gives us his purpose.

And what was **Jesus' purpose?**

*To teach his disciples that they should **always pray and not to give up!** [See Luke 18:1]*

His point is that if an "**unjust judge**" will give in to the demands of a persistent widow, how much more will a **loving God** respond to those he has called.



Parable of the Unjust Judge

In other words, if God is for us and not against us, ought we always take our troubles to the Lord in **prayer**.

In fact, in this parable, Jesus shares some surprising cynicism.

He says, *However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find **faith** on the earth?* (Luke 18:8 NIV)

Or will he instead, find **anxious individuals** spending more time fretting and complaining instead of **believing** God for **breakthroughs**.



Guidelines

So the following is **Pastor McCowan's** recommendations on how to place yourself in **position** for a breakthrough.

Set aside **quality time** for concentrated prayer.

Away from distractions.

Take your Bible and feel free to formalize your prayer in a journal.

Confess and Take Responsibility for your sins, mistakes, dumb decisions, or neglect.

Remind yourself that the God we serve is the **Lord of the Breakthrough**.

Realize too that Jesus' ministry was also dependent on prayer.

Conclusion

In the book of Hebrews, it says, *During the days of **Jesus' life** on earth, he offered up **prayers** and **petitions** with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was **heard** because of his reverent submission.* (Hebrews 5:7 NIV)

So too can we, when we submit to God's will with concerted prayer.

Breakthroughs are possible to those who **believe**.

