

10/13/2026

Week 42

Randy Robison & Blynda Lane

Mark Batterson

"The Power Of Persistence"

MALE ANNOUNCER: The following program is sponsored by friends of Life Outreach International.

ANNOUNCER: Have unfulfilled dreams made you feel hopeless? Mark Batterson reminds us that growth happens gradually, then suddenly.

MARK BATTERSON: We overestimate what we can do in a year or two. We underestimate what God can do in 10 or 20 or 30. We want things to happen at the speed of light, but they happen at the speed of a seed that has to take root before it can bear fruit, and so that takes a little bit of patience.

ANNOUNCER: Next, on "Life Today".



RANDY ROBISON: Welcome to "Life Today", I'm Randy Robison, great to have you here. It's also great to have Blynda Lane with me here.

BLYNDA LANE: Really happy to be here today. It's always fun when I get to do the show with you, Randy.

RANDY: It's always--.

BLYNDA: Well, because you keep it interesting, that's for sure.

RANDY: I was gonna say, yeah, it is probably not as predictable, but hopefully we'll have a good-- I think today's gonna be fun because we've had our guest on many times, I always enjoy talking to him.

BLYNDA: He's amazing, written so many amazing books. The one we're talking about today though resonated with me so well.

RANDY: Did it?

BLYNDA: It really did.

RANDY: Oh, I can't wait to hear why. Mark Batterson, welcome to "Life Today" again.

MARK: It's good to be back, here we are.

RANDY: It's good to see you, all right, pick us up that book.

BLYNDA: Yeah, so the book that you've written is called "Gradually Then Suddenly", and I feel like so many people can relate to this. But actually, I think what's interesting is I think most people can relate to they're still in the gradually, and that's tough, when they're toiling and tilling the soil and they're like, "Is it ever going to happen?" So what was the thought behind "Gradually Then Suddenly"?

MARK: Yeah, well, I mean, Ernest Hemingway, a 1926 novel, asked the question, "How did you go bankrupt?" And the rather famous reply: "Two ways, gradually then suddenly," which, you know, it's how-- I guess it's how you go bankrupt, but it's also how you get out of debt, it's how you run a marathon, write a book, start a business, build a marriage. It's how everything happens.

I think a black belt is a white belt that didn't quit, and I think it's true. We want things to happen at the speed of light, but they happen at the speed of a seed that has to take root before it can bear fruit, and so that takes a little bit of patience.

BLYNDA: I wish it could happen at the speed of a weed.

MARK: That's actually funny, yeah. Wow, yes, very true.

RANDY: What you're talking about is what we would call playing the long game, and that's the good news and the bad news, right? The bad news, I think, is sometimes, like you say, we want things now, or we want God to do things on our timetable, but all you gotta do is look at Scripture and you realize that's generally not how he works. What--how would you define the long game?

MARK: Yeah, well, we overestimate what we can do in a year or two. We underestimate what God can do in 10 or 20 or 30. So it's kind of living your life thinking about third and fourth generation, and it's long obedience in the same direction.

It's doing the right things day in and day out, and you know, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge your father. Long obedience in the same direction, and a life of integrity that impacted so many people, accumulating kind of a lifetime of faithfulness, and then we underestimate-- compound interest isn't just on money. I think it's on obedience, it's on faith, it's on the little mustard seeds that we plant, and God has a way of moving mountains if we keep playing that long game.

RANDY: So let me ask you something, since you mentioned my father. I can look back, and all you gotta do is listen to his sermons, so I'm not speaking out of turn, but I can see times where he failed, and did not quit.

And when you talk about obedience, we think doing the right thing all the time, but isn't obedience-- I mean, isn't repentance obedience? Isn't, you know, forgiveness and restoration and grace, aren't those all a part of obedience?

MARK: They really are. Our first attempt at church planting, at the ripe old age of 22, when you have everything figured out, I had a 25-year plan for a church plant in the Chicago area. We failed at that first attempt at church planting.

In retrospect, I'm grateful, for two reasons. One, the cure for the fear of failure is not success, it's failure in small enough doses that you build up an immunity to it and you discover that there is a God who is there to pick you up, dust you off, give you a second, third, hundredth chance, and you emerge out of it, I think, with less of an ego and a little bit more humility, and that honestly is how God got us from Chicago to Washington DC, where we've had the joy of pastoring a church on Capitol Hill for 30 years. But it was failure that set it up.

So I--closed doors, detours and delays, praise God. That's how I look back on my life.

Some of the greatest breakthroughs and miracles were the things that, "Lord, thank you for not answering my prayer," because I wasn't praying with omniscience, I was asking for the wrong thing. So, at the end of the day, God is always writing a bigger story.

BLYNDA: I was gonna say bigger, you probably weren't even thinking big enough for what God wanted to do. You know, if we got what we asked for, it would actually end up being smaller than what God had prepared for us, I believe that.

MARK: Yeah, I think we tend to dream kind of at the outskirts of human ability. No, no, no, he's able, able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine according to his power that's at work within us. So I think our biggest problem is our small view of God.

I think that's our biggest problem. I think it was A.W. Tozer who said, "A low view of God is the cause of a hundred lesser evils."

A high view of God is the solution to ten thousand temporal problems." He is a big God, a good God, and for that I'm grateful.

BLYNDA: So would you say, though, that it requires the person that is in the gradually, "I've been doing it, I've been doing it, I haven't seen the suddenly," like, that persistence to keep going? I know for me, I'm trying to personalize it, there's been times in my life and I do start going, "God, did I hear you? Are you--am I on the right track?"

Did I hear you right? Please let me know if I've gone off track, because why hasn't it happened yet?"

MARK: Yeah, yeah, well, and you know, we have to remind ourselves, like, if you go after a God-sized dream, so something that's beyond your ability, beyond your resources, maybe beyond your education, well, that means you can't do it, but God can. But it is gonna-- it's gonna take a lot longer than what you want, but it's about who you become in the process. It's not about accomplishing the dream, it's about the character of Christ being formed in your life.

So, and I, you know, this book, I'm not writing in a vacuum. I felt called to write at 22. I didn't write a book until 35.

Thirteen years is a long time to have a dream and have nothing to show for it. And then finally, you know, faith is taking the first step before God reveals the second step. Sometimes you have to step into the river, that's what God told Joshua and the priest.

If you want to walk on water, you gotta get out of the boat. And so sometimes you have to kind of almost self-impose a deadline, and then other times you just have to trust God's timing.

And by the way, I'm so grateful I didn't write a book at 22, because I would have had to write a book at 23 to retract what I said at 22. So, I am grateful in the grand scheme of things.

RANDY: I've gone back and read my first book and went, "I don't know about that."

MARK: Yeah, no, yeah, no, no.

RANDY: That's okay, that's okay, so, okay. So we look at this idea of long vision, and you know, and you're talking 13 years for a book, which, if we're honest, is not that long, when you're talking about maybe your lifetime. You mentioned generations.

How do we develop long vision, or can we? Is that just a gift from God, or both?

MARK: I mean, it's probably a combination. We tend to think, right here, right now.

God is thinking nations and generations. So we love Jeremiah 29:11, right, "I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you, not to harm you, plans to give you a future," and of course it's written--.

BLYNDA: You need to read before and after, the context.

MARK: Written to exiles, you know, in Babylon. But what I love is actually the verses before: "Seek the peace and prosperity of the city, for if it prospers, you will prosper." By the way, that's our whole approach in Washington DC.

We've been there for 30 years. In fact, let me just say it.

BLYNDA: You chose a really easy area.

MARK: A really easy-- everybody gets along, you know? There's a hill higher than Capitol Hill. It's a hill called Calvary, where sin and shame met their match, and I'm just-- is it okay if I preach a little bit?

And there is a house more important than the White House. It's a house of prayer for all nations. So what we've tried to do is not just build a church, let's bless a city to the third and fourth generation.

So in that Jeremiah 29, you remember Jeremiah says Hananiah, a false prophet, said, "You're only gonna be in captivity for two years." The problem with that is if you have a two-year mentality, you're not even gonna unpack your suitcase. You're gonna just rent the city.

But if you have a 70-year mindset and the average lifespan was 35, so you're talking about two lifespans, and Jeremiah says, "No, plant gardens, build houses," why? Here's my take. We drink from wells we didn't dig.

We eat from fields we didn't plant. We live in houses we did not build, and it's our responsibility, generationally, to do for that next generation what God has done for us.

RANDY: That can be hard to hear.

MARK: It can be.

RANDY: But that is definitely God's way, okay. So, part of long vision, accomplishing it, you would say, is long obedience, which you touched on. How do we measure that?

MARK: Ah, oh my. Yeah, well, first of all, I'm not sure we measure the way God does. We tend to look at the outward appearance and God says, "I'm looking at your heart."

I might back up one step, and I hope this is a word of encouragement to someone. You know, we live forward, but God is working backwards. It's kind of a branch of theology called teleology, that you are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works prepared for you in advance.

So God is setting you up. The challenge is, we don't know the future. So here's what I think happens.

"Lord, we've been circling Jericho for six days and nothing's happened. Lord, we've been climbing these stairs to the upper room for nine days, and there's nothing to show for it." And we count up, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

Listen, God is counting down, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. And so I think the word of encouragement is don't quit--God does not quit on us, don't quit on God. Our second attempt at church planting, it was not going much better than the first one.

We could have quit on 19 people, but we wouldn't have been quitting on 19 people, we would have been quitting on tens of thousands of people that we've had the joy of serving and pastoring and loving and discipling over the last 30 years. So, I think we have to keep on keeping on, and that long obedience piece, keep doing the right things day in and day out. God has a way of showing up and showing off.

BLYNDA: You even talk about the "keep calm and carry on" kind of idea, but in a storm, again, making it personal to me, I know I could allow the enemy to whisper me some lies in that, you know. How do you settle on, "God said it, this is God's truth, I'm gonna trust him and we're gonna keep calm and carry on. Even if we're not seeing results, we're gonna keep calm, carry on," how do you--?

MARK: Well, you know how in counseling there's grounding techniques, and it's breathing or it's different things to kind of-- we gotta ground ourselves in God's Word. So I feel like everybody needs to have like at least seven promises on speed dial. "He who began a good work will carry to completion."

"He's working all things together for good." "If God is for us, who can be against us?" "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

You have to--"Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee," but that's the thing that kind of keeps us centered. The only way I stay on script is by staying in Scripture.

It's the only way you can rewrite the negative narratives, rewrite the false narratives. So you really--you have to stay grounded in God's Word, and it kind of keeps you-- it helps you stay calm and carry on even when chaos is kind of all around.

RANDY: Yes, it does, and you know what, it helps you-- it helps me, anyway, hold on to that long vision when I take a Scripture both as admonition at times, and as encouragement when I realize it's not by my might or by my power, but by God's Spirit. So, you know, that can keep me from overexerting myself and spinning my wheels, and it can also keep me remembering, "You know what, God, he's faithful." If you look at the God working backwards, he made the Promised Land for the Israelites, right?

He prepared that place, I would argue, I don't know if it's in Scripture, but before he even delivered them from bondage. But what kept them in the desert? Disobedience.

And so a lot of times when I feel myself like I'm just running in circles I go, "Am I being disobedient somewhere?" Because that's what gets me back on track to get to that place that God's designed. And I think that's true for all of us, and I see that in your life.

BLYNDA: So interesting, yeah, because it makes me even think of Moses, it's like, when you talk about the suddenly, you know, he didn't get to see the Promised Land because of a choice that he made to-- the disobedience. But you're talking about-- when you talk about legacy, it's all coming together, like, he didn't get to see that, others after him did.

RANDY: He planted the seed.

BLYNDA: But he planted the seed. But he didn't get to, which is always a tough one for me because he did so many good things.

MARK: You know what? It really is. It really is.

But now I'm just kind of-- we're leaning into that story. Do you remember, they sent 12 spies in and they saw the same cities, saw the same giants, ate the same fruit? We don't see the world as it is.

We see the world as we are. Ten of them came back with a negative report. So think about it, 10 negative people cost Israel 40 years.

Ten negative people kept them out of the Promised Land. And so, that's a little bit of a reality check that evidently God takes that a little bit more seriously than maybe we do. But two of them did, and God sustained them.

Caleb says he brought back a report according to his convictions, and by the way, at 85, still as strong as he was at 40, which, saying something. The promises of God will do that, when you have a vision.

Without a vision, the people perish, but I think the opposite is true. I mean, I love old people who are young at heart, that they just--that they have a vision that kind of keeps them moving into the future, and that's part of that long vision and long obedience, and I think that is how you end up with a long legacy.

RANDY: And a right legacy, and you talk about that. All right, so this is good, and we didn't--actually we talked a lot about the gradually. The suddenly, how does that look?

MARK: Well, with the Lord, a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day. You know, God can accomplish more in one moment than we can accomplish in a lifetime. So, I mean, there's so many stories in the book that I think are encouraging.

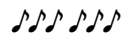
But you know, we--5 years to grow from 19 people to 250 people, just kind of plowing and planting and trying to establish a church in DC. And do you know the breakthrough moment? August 12, 2001, short version, there are decades when nothing happens, there are days when decades happen.

And we land on the front page of the Washington Post on a Sunday edition, and that's when and where and how the church just began to take off. And I used to say it was a slow news day, and then I felt convicted.

The Lord said, "No, it wasn't a slow news day, it was my time." "It was the favor of him who dwells in the burning bush," Deuteronomy 33.

RANDY: I love it, I love it, yeah, that the gradually prepares you for the suddenly. And if you wanna walk with Mark Batterson through that, some of the concepts and the process, the stories that you mentioned that you didn't get to hear today, you can get his book when you support an outreach that we call Rescue Life, what does that look like?

Well, it looks like a giant problem around the world that we address one life at a time, and we'd like to invite you into that. Watch this, and you'll see how.



ANNOUNCER: In the world of forced commercial sexual exploitation, women and girls account for 99% of all victims.

RITA: *[speaking foreign language]*

ANNOUNCER: Rita's nightmare began when an older lady befriended her and offered her some tea at a restaurant. She locked up Rita for three days and then forced her into a taxi, and eventually ended up across the border in another country.

RITA: *[speaking foreign language]*

ANNOUNCER: This is where Rita's life turned into a living hell, as she was forced to use her body to make money for sex traffickers. During the years of her captivity, Rita was drugged, beaten, tortured to the point of losing all hope.

RITA: *[speaking foreign language]*

ANNOUNCER: Rita eventually was able to escape with the help of a man with a motorbike. She made her way back across the border and was intercepted by our mission partners.

Rita did not want to return to what she described as "a home with no love," so our mission partners gave her a place to stay at the Life Center. There she learned sewing skills and started a new life on her own.

RITA: *[speaking foreign language]*

RANDY: You know, Blynda, it almost doesn't even feel like that could be real.

BLYNDA: It's like, is that a dramatization, you know, because it's so painful and it's so dark.

RANDY: I would maybe even question, if I hadn't been to places like this, and we say Southeast Asia, have you noticed that? Because we're not being specific. That's for the security and the safety of our workers there as well as the girls, because it really is that bad.

I have sat with families whose daughters, sisters have disappeared with promises of a job over the border or similar stories. It's very real, hard to really comprehend, but it's there, and it's pervasive. Okay, what do we do about it?

That's what we're talking about today, because the good news is your gift towards Rescue Life, which is our program simply to reach children before they are abducted or to rescue them while they're in captivity and then to restore them, to give them a hope, a future, a skill, the gospel. That's Rescue Life to us, and it's only possible because of you. Your gift of \$128 today will help reach, rescue, or restore one child.

That's the average cost of the programs in various parts of the world, not just what you saw today. But your gift of \$1280 would reach, rescue, or restore 10 children.

And you know, Blynda, the only way, and I've said it many times, the only way I can even face this is with the hope that Christ gives us, and that our viewers support this outreach. We know we can stop this.

BLYNDA: I see these images and I have daughters, and so I see those images and I think, "Oh my goodness, we have to do what we can to save the one." And you saw at the end of the video, and she was happy, and she had skills that she was learning. Like, her story is so beautiful, and that can be so many stories.

RANDY: It is, it is, and that's the beauty of what we do, but it's not an overnight thing, it's a process. It takes time, and it takes your support.

That's why we hope to hear from you today. Please call, go online, make the best gift you can.

FEMALE ANNOUNCER: Every day, innocent children are being trapped in the wicked web of human trafficking. Instead of dreaming about a future, they are sold into a nightmare of sexual slavery. But you can join the fight against this evil.

Through Mission Rescue Life, you can reach at-risk children before traffickers do, rescue those already enslaved, and restore young lives with hope for the future. A gift today of \$128 will reach, rescue, or restore a precious child and change their life forever. Gifts of \$64 or \$32 will be combined with support from others to help deliver one more child from the shame and pain of sex trafficking.

With a gift of any amount, we will send you James Robison's final book, "A Life Proclaiming Freedom", as a thank-you for your support. Discover James's personal journey from bondage to freedom, share in his calling to bind up the brokenhearted, and learn how to

experience your personal freedom so that you can bring healing to the hurting world around you. With your gift of \$128 or more, you will receive the "Life Proclaiming Freedom" bundle, which includes James's book, a special edition collection of the Gospels, and the beautiful Life planner.

Finally, your gift of \$1280 can help save 10 children from the horrors of human trafficking. With this special gift, you may request the inspiring bronze sculpture, "The Good Shepherd". Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

JOHN YEATTS: Behind me is the facade of evil, all the lights, loud music, people that are smiling. But you step in behind these doors, and these little girls aren't smiling anymore. There's horrors that go on in these streets that are unimaginable, but we have an opportunity to be able to change, to bring a real change to the lives of individuals that are caught in human trafficking.

Boy, we need your help. Whatever you can do right now, I'm asking you, give the very best gift you can, whether you go online or by phone, please call us, let us know it's coming, but we need your help to bring hope and healing to the girls' lives that are caught behind the doors of all these bright lights.

RANDY: You truly can make a difference. I hope you will join with us in whatever capacity God puts on your heart.

We'd love to hear from you today. And if you would request Mark Patterson's book "Gradually Then Suddenly", I know, Blynda, people will enjoy this.

BLYNDA: Absolutely, because I think everyone can relate to it.

RANDY: Yes, and it will put good things into your life.

BLYNDA: And build your faith, because he tells stories about the suddenly, and so that will build your faith.

RANDY: Is that all true?

MARK: It is true, I love it.

RANDY: And we love you being here, and we love you guys being with us. Please come back next time on "Life Today".

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JENNIFER ROTHSCILD: Jesus died so that he could bring heaven to me on this day.

MALE ANNOUNCER: A different perspective on heaven, tomorrow.

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