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Passion: Is a discernment of calling, a God-sized challenge to take-up or purpose to pursue.

- You ask, “God what would you have me to do?”
- You wonder, “What does God intend to do in and through me in my next season of life?”
- You seek a sign; you wait for an answer... and when it comes, you pray.

Prayer: Is a commitment to pursue that calling in obedience and humility (Phil 2)

Patience: Is the exercise of faith, courage, and sacrifice required along the way.

Persistence: Is (quite simply) a refusal to quit in pursuit of a dream.

Indeed...

- When they say it can't be done, you tell them it can
- When they say you can't do it, you show them otherwise
- When they say, “I'm with you” and then prove they are not, you press on
- When they seek to undermine your efforts & hope you fail, you keep your eyes on Jesus
- When they try to control based on power or preferences, you play for an audience of One
- When they leave, you take heart in those that remain and all those yet to come; and...
- When you realize wins along the way, you glorify God remembering from where you came

Today is just such a day to remember and glorify God. Indeed, it's...

- A day literally 20 years and 9 months in the making
- A day to reflect on God's faithfulness and give Him praise
- A day to testify that what He says He will do, He in fact does

Ahead of next week, let me tell you a story of persistence and the faithfulness of God

1. On May 17, 2001, God made it clear to Linda and me that we were to plant Mosaic.
2. By the end of June, a few people committed themselves to the church as members.  
*It was then that I first began to wonder: Where will we meet?*
3. On July 8, 2001, some 45 people gathered for worship and prayer in a small classroom at what was then Markham Street Baptist Church. Over the next 4 months, we drifted from week to week and place to place meeting wherever we could. As the church began to grow, so did the urgency to find a consistent location in which to meet.
4. In November 2001, Faith United Church became for us just such a place. Later that month and in that space, a Muslim gave his life to Christ over our first communion celebration. A very early and significant sign that God was with us.

5. For almost two years, we worshipped there on Sunday night... but after 16 months, we had completely maximized the space. Numerous efforts to relocate to another location in this area consistently failed.
6. One night, in April of 2003, I was awakened and heard the Holy Spirit say to me, "When you get up, go call Walmart."
7. And by the end of May that year, we secured an almost 3-year lease for just \$650 a month:
  - a. The next month, we conducted a prayer walk, giving glory to God and dedicating the abandoned space to his purposes.
  - b. And in July of 2003, we worshipped in the old Walmart for the first time.
8. In January 2006 the lease reverted back to the building's owner who then put us on a month-to-month lease. We knew that one day we would need to relocate because purchasing that building was not an option. So that spring, I was back at it: trolling the area for a permanent home.
9. While out looking one day, Linda, called me and said, *"What are you doing? Why are you wasting your time? Instead, you should be on your knees, praying. That's what you should be doing! Don't you know—don't you believe? God is going to take care of us. He's going to take care of the church!"*
  - a. In fact, for the past couple of years, Linda had been telling me that God had given her a vision: one day Mosaic would own and occupy this building.
  - b. She had seen the flags of many nations flying from the roof of the facility.
10. Still, I remained skeptical. This was the largest building in the area. I was certain it would become a car dealership or grocery store.
11. Nevertheless from 2005 into early 2006, we attempted to contact the owners working with a commercial realtor to try and secure a purchase.
12. When the building was sold to someone else in April 2006, you can imagine our shock and disappointment. There was literally nowhere else to go in this community... one to which we felt certain God had called us.
  - a. Filled with discouragement, I called Linda... "This doesn't make sense!" she said. "I just know God's going to give it to us, Mark. I'm sure of it! We just need to pray right now." And we did.
  - b. Next, I spoke to Harry who then told me about a time he and Melanie had once purchased a place in Idaho. Just after closing, a man called and offered him even more money than he had paid to purchase the home. "Maybe, the new owner would do the same for us?"
  - c. Immediately, I tracked down and called the new owner, Mike Montgomery.
    - i. In desperation, I said, "What if we were to give you \$500,000 more than you paid for the property? Would you be willing to sell?"
    - ii. Not only did we not have \$500,000, but we had also very little prospects of raising that amount quickly, if ever at all.
13. To my surprise, he invited me to come over and meet with him right away! Within 10-minutes of my arrival, we took a walk. Once outside, he stopped in the parking lot and said, "Someday, Mark, your church is going to own this property. And I can assure you, it has nothing to do with money! 11 years ago, I was a homeless drunk sleeping behind

'your' Walmart. I was eating food out of the dumpster at McDonald's, and my only light came from the candles I would occasionally purchase for a \$1 right here in this building. One day, someone came by and left a Christian tract, and after reading it, I began attending Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings. In time, I sobered up and gave my life to Jesus Christ. For 4 years now, I've watched your church grow and minister to 'my people' here in the community. It would thrill me to see Mosaic here in the future."

14. I was blown away! As we talked, tears began to flow from his eyes and mine. We both sensed this was a holy moment in which we were experiencing the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. In that moment and throughout the next 6 years, Mike was our "Esther" for such a time as this.
15. 8 months later, in December 2006, we signed a contract to buy the building by the end of 2012 for \$1.7M (though at the time it was worth only \$1.5M)
16. It would then take us 6 years to raise enough money for a down payment and to find a bank willing to take a chance on us (we were turned down by four banks along the way).
17. But we persisted. And on December 12, 2012, we secured a loan from Arvest and bought this building with only 3 weeks to spare.
18. In 2013, I contacted Eric Buckner, the owner of 10F and by the end of that year, 10 Fitness signed a 10-year deal to rent and renovate half the building from us...
  - a. Their rent payments covered our monthly mortgage
  - b. They invested \$1.7M in infrastructure
  - c. They opened in May of 2015 and 6,000 people joined in the next 12 months
19. Due to their investment and contract, the building jumped to \$3.9 million in value!
  - a. We now had \$1.1M equity and...
  - b. We leveraged it to build-out the space
20. On January 4, 2016, we held our first service in this facility and...
21. As you know we moved our English venue into this warehouse last October...
22. Today, then, is another historic day in the life of the church: The last move has been made... We are standing on holy ground, worshipping in this space, in this direction, on a permanent platform. We are finally home.

- Indeed, throughout the literal 20 years and 9 months that it has taken to get to this spot, it has required more passion, prayer, patience, and persistence than most can imagine.
- Symbolically, our journey to this point mirrors Israel's march from Egypt through the Red Sea and, after years of wandering, arrival in the promised land where their portable tabernacle housing the arc of the covenant would become a permanent Temple.
- To this day, the Jewish people pray to God there. And one day worship there too will be restored
  - Our journey to this spot has not taken 40 years but a close equivalent in modern times (from 2005 to 2022) some 18 years to complete.
  - We've experienced many miracles along the way, such as God's holding back the waters so-to-speak, sustaining us in the old Walmart for 10 years on a month-to-month lease.

- Our Red Sea was Colonel Glenn.
- Our promised land? A former Kmart; and this space, like the Temple (permanent)
- The fact is, it takes more than wishful thinking to realize a dream. It takes passion, prayer, patience, and persistence.
- And while many well-meaning individuals set out to chase a dream, most fail to achieve it... but not for reasons you might suspect.
  - Individual failure is most often due to a lack of persistence in the face of inevitable challenges along the way.
  - In short, would-be dream-chasers more often than not quit too early, too soon, too tired of facing challenges and obstacles that must be overcome, of standing up to critique or of the inevitable rejection of others along the way.
- The late Steve Jobs agreed.

I'm convinced that about half of what separates the successful entrepreneurs from the non-successful ones is pure perseverance. It is so hard. You pour so much of your life into this thing. There are such rough moments and times that most people give up. I don't blame them; it's really tough, and it consumes your life . . . unless you have a lot of passion about this, you're [not going] to survive, you're going to give it up. So, you[ve] got to have an idea, or a problem, or a wrong that you want to right that you're passionate about. Otherwise, you're not going to have the perseverance to stick it through; and I think that's half the battle right there.

- I wonder then... What has God put on your heart?
  - Are you willing to ask, "God what would you have me to do?"
  - Are you willing to obey?
  - More importantly are you willing to persist.
- Only in so doing can you someday tell a story of overcoming obstacles to realize a dream. And in so doing, bringing glory to God

Dr. Joel Anderson, Chancellor (2003–2016) University of Arkansas at Little Rock

I can identify three things about Mosaic that really impress me and that I like.

1. Mosaic, first of all, is a diverse congregation, just as the name of it implies...and is committed to it in a very real way.
2. The second thing that impresses me about Mosaic is its commitment to community engagement. And this has been there from the start, when the old Walmart property was rented, to all of the things that have happened in the meantime. The church has a record of community engagement that must surely be unequalled, if not in the city, certainly in this part of the city.

3. And the third thing that I would remark that I admire and appreciate about Mosaic, is their persistence. They certainly have maintained their commitment to helping people change from the inside out, but they've also made a commitment and stuck with it in this part of the city. They've been willing to invest in an old building once upon a time, and now they've invested in another property, once an old Kmart, that just has all kinds of opportunities for them.

Dr. Anderson spoke these words on October 16, 2012...

- Just 2 months before we completed the purchase
- Some three years before we moved in; and
- More than 9 years later, we are doing just as he said we would... stewarding this building well, creating space for others, blessing the community, turning dreams to reality and glorifying God in it all... rooted in passion, prayer, patience, and our undaunting persistence.