

WORDS FROM THE WILDERNESS

Establishing a Prayer Team To Share God's Heart to Reach the Lost

What Was Your Most Embarrassing Moment?

That moment you know you will never forget, while you wish you could erase it entirely?

For me, although there is a long list of nominees to answer that question, my mind immediately goes to one event from my freshman year of high school. Although I was a skinny, gangly kid, I had somehow made my school's JV basketball team — and we were undefeated. It was toward the end of the season, and the head coach wanted to pull up a few guys to see how they would handle the pressure of playing for the varsity team. So, a few of my teammates and I got the call up. For our next home game. Which was against our biggest rival. With a packed gym and every one of my classmates and peers there watching and cheering. I was terrified, but I did my part: Which, for the first half, meant sitting on the (far end) of the bench and cheering on my older, better teammates. But then, at halftime, the coach announced that I was going to start the second half. I was thrilled — This was my biggest moment. And I felt like throwing up. But then, when the second half started, I broke loose for the opening inbound pass, and they threw it to me. I turned and faced the basket from half court. I put a move on one defender, and got by him surprisingly easy. Then I dribbled past another, and suddenly I had a clear, unobstructed path to the basket. This was great. In front of the whole school, with everyone watching, I was going to be a hero. I was going to drive in for the decisive basket to set the tone for the second half. Nothing was going to stop me — I drove, and I drove hard. And then, just as I was elevating up for my “poster” moment, about to lay the basketball in from the upper part of the backboard.... I heard one of the cheerleaders yell, “No, Mark! Don't do it!” (Hey, what can I say, I was a 9th grader....what cheerleaders said mattered to me!). And that's when I realized, to my horror, what you may have already guessed: In the confusion of the moment, at the start of a half, when the teams switch sides, I had taken the in-bounds pass....and driven the length of the court...to the wrong goal! So here I was: In front of the whole school, with everyone watching, and I was shooting on the wrong goal. And the kicker of it is, I missed the shot!

I spent the rest of the game on the (even further) end of the bench, wishing I could just disappear. And I spent the weekend alone at home, hoping against hope that, somehow, everyone would forget about my embarrassing moment before Monday came and I had to go back to school. Those hopes were dashed, however, at 8am Monday morning when my homeroom teacher was taking roll to start the day. She reached my name and called out, “Mark Horn.” “Present.” And then she said with a grin, “Oh yeah, hi Mark. Nice shot last Friday night.”

Ouch. And I knew then, it was going to be a very long, very hard day.



Why do I speak to you of such things...and of such memories?

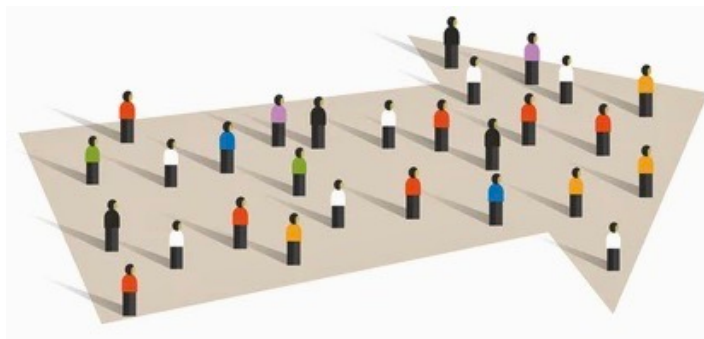
Well, partly to confess to all of you, here at the start of this ministry of evangelism, missions, and church planting in Ocean Springs, to admit and make clear that my calling from God is not because I am some super-competent, always having it together, never struggling, “Massively Magnificent Man of God.” I am still, deep in my heart, that scared, goofy kid, afraid of screwing up, knowing that I often do, and trying to trust that, despite all the reasons others might laugh at me... I have a Father who says, “I love you completely, and I chose you despite your failures and your fears.” That is the message I hope to take to broken and lost people in Ocean Springs! That is my hope in going to this call at all!

But I also share that story to illustrate the importance of having a team — Who are all going the same way together! Think of how God speaks of the church in Scripture.... What does He call her? His bride (precious and loved to Him). His family (chosen and adopted by Him). And His body (with Him as its head, and each part of the body with a vital role and function to play).

When Stephanie and I get to Ocean Springs, we are going as missionaries to take the gospel to the lost. And to do that — we are praying even that God will select, call, and empower a team of believers there to join us in this call. The work will be hard, but the goal is obvious: We are going to strive and pray and shepherd to form a church, a body of believers, a gospel community sharing life, sharing joys and tears, and gathering around the word, around prayer, and around the body and blood of Jesus, the way it was at the start (Acts 2:42-47). And that gospel community, that team of believers will have one goal, one mission, one purpose: To reach Ocean Springs to reach the world for Jesus!

So, with this letter, would you please pray for us and with us:

- Pray for the lost in Ocean Springs, that God would be at work even now in their hearts, preparing them to hear and respond to the gospel.
- But also pray for the church, the team of believers we are going to build. Pray that God will help us cast His gospel vision, and that He would make that vision clear to the believers on the coast whom He is calling to be part of this call, this mission, this church.
- Pray that we will not run hither and there, and all in different directions. But that we will be a church, a family, a bride, and a body consumed with one calling: To see the Great Commission fulfilled in Ocean Springs!



And will you be part of our team - Going the same direction toward the same goal with us?

In asking that I realize that, in the Lord's providence, most of you may never be physically on site and working in Ocean Springs with us (although, once we are there, you are all invited!). But, as surely as the body has many parts but one objective, and a team has different positions and players, but one right goal to be running toward, so we invite you to be part of the team God is using to get us to Ocean Springs and to build His church there:

- Some of you have already given to that calling and that goal, and it is my privilege to announce that, after three months of church visits, letters, and meeting with individuals, the Lord has blessed and brought people onto our team of partners and investors so that, as of writing this letter, we are just **north of 60%** of our support raised. Thank you, and God is good!
- If you have not yet given, would you pray and consider giving toward the goal of "bringing us home" and **reaching the goal of 100% of our support raised** - And of getting us to the coast to start our work of missions and discipleship there!
- And, if you have already sent in a one-time gift: Again, thank you so much! Would you pray and consider joining our team of monthly partners toward bringing this support raising to the finish line?
- To give, use the QR code to the right, or visit <http://give.pcamna.org/to/1749>
- Checks can also be sent payable to "Mission to North America"
PO Box 890233
Charlotte, NC, 28289-02333.
Please write "Mark Horn, Ocean Springs Church Plant" on the memo line.
- And finally, more information for all of this and for our Ocean Springs journey can be found at our website: www.PlantHopeOS.org



Thank you, grace and peace to you in Christ, and God bless you to run this race well!



A closing encouragement:

It is easy to believe that the Church has a lot of different objects - education, building, missions, holding services, even recreation...The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, and sermons are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose. It is even doubtful, you know, whether the whole universe was created for any other purpose. - C.S. Lewis