



**First Baptist Church of Highland Park
Men's Bible Study Handout
Monday, March 16, 2026**

Cathedral Thinking: Building What You May Never See Finished

Based on Chapter: 'Cathedral Thinking' from Mark Batterson's book 'Gradually Then Suddenly'

Opening Scripture – Hebrews 11:13 (NLT)

“All these people died still believing what God had promised them. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it all from a distance and welcomed it.”

1. What Is Cathedral Thinking?

Cathedral Thinking refers to the builders of the great European cathedrals who began construction knowing they would never live to see the finished building. Some cathedrals took more than 100–300 years to complete. Those builders worked faithfully knowing the vision was bigger than them, the mission would outlive them, and the reward belonged to the next generation.

Spiritual Principle: Faithful men build what future generations will benefit from.

Key Scripture – 1 Corinthians 3:10 (NLT)

“Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it.”

SEE REVERSE SIDE

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2. Faithful Men Think Long-Term

The world trains men to think about immediate success, quick rewards, and instant results. But God calls men to think generationally.

Biblical Examples:

- Abraham – God promised descendants he would never see.
- David – Prepared the temple Solomon would build.
- Moses – Led Israel to the edge of the Promised Land but never entered.

Lesson: Faithful men prepare what others will inherit.

Psalm 78:4 (NLT)

“We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord.”

3. Cathedral Thinking Requires Patience

Mark Batterson reminds us that God often works gradually before suddenly. We want microwave miracles, but God prefers slow construction that builds lasting character.

James 5:7 (NLT)

“Be patient as you wait for the Lord’s return. Consider the farmers who patiently wait for the rains.”

4. Cathedral Thinking Requires Sacrifice

The cathedral builders invested their entire lives in something they would never see completed. This is the difference between consumers and builders.

Consumers ask: What do I get out of this? Builders ask: What can I leave behind?

2 Timothy 2:2 (NLT)

“Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.”

Sports Illustration

Think about great championship organizations like the Pittsburgh Steelers. The players who built the culture decades ago may be gone, but the standard they established still shapes the organization today. Great programs think beyond one season. Great men think beyond one lifetime.

Africentric Illustration

The Tuskegee Airmen trained during World War II under conditions where many doubted they would ever even be allowed to fly combat missions. Their discipline and excellence opened doors for generations of Black pilots and military leaders. They were not just flying missions—they were building a future.

Deion Sanders Illustration (Elevate and Dominate)

In 'Elevate and Dominate', Deion Sanders emphasizes that true leaders do not just focus on their own success—they elevate everyone around them. When Coach Prime rebuilt programs and mentored young athletes, he constantly reminded them that their work today would impact the legacy of the program tomorrow. In other words, he was teaching cathedral thinking: build something bigger than your own career.

Discussion Questions for the Men

1. What is something God may be calling you to build that you might never see fully completed?
2. Who are the younger men or boys who may benefit from the faith you live today?
3. What habits must a man develop to think beyond immediate success?
4. How does our culture work against cathedral thinking?

Personal Reflection

What kind of legacy are you building? A paycheck legacy? A reputation legacy? Or a faith legacy? One day someone will stand on the foundation of your life. What will they find there?

Closing Charge to the Men

Men of God, cathedral builders never rushed the work—they laid one stone at a time. Our calling is the same. One prayer at a time. One act of obedience at a time. One generation at a time. The decisions we make today will shape families, churches, and communities long after we are gone. So build your life on faith, integrity, discipline, and devotion to God. Because God often works gradually before He works suddenly—and the structure He is building through your life may bless generations you will never meet.