CHASE THE LION

If Your Dream Doesn’t Scare You, It’s Too Small

Mark Batterson

New York Times Best-Selling Author
Praise for
Chase the Lion

“Chase the Lion is a powerful, passionate, and inspiring message! When you pursue God’s dream for your life, it can be a little scary, but man is it worth it!”
—Tim Tebow

“Creative. Inspiring. Challenging. Batterson’s writings always leave us encouraged, and Chase the Lion is no exception. If you feel as if life has caused you to shrink the size of your dreams, this book is for you!”
—Louie Giglio, pastor of Passion City Church, founder of Passion Conferences, and author of The Comeback

“Mark Batterson reminds us to trust in the powerful truth that with God we don’t have to let our thinking be limited. By obeying Him, we let our growing faith push us to dream big and lean in ever closer to Him without fear or hesitation. It’s time to trust in our God, who allows us to accomplish things that seem bigger than we could ever imagine!”
—Craig Groeschel, pastor of Life.Church and author of #Struggles: Following Jesus in a Selfie-Centered World

“We seek out community in everything we do—and our dreams should be no different. In Chase the Lion, Batterson reminds us to come together, share our dreams, and chase after them. And in doing so, we become not only dream chasers but dream catchers for the others in our pride.”
—Steven Furtick, pastor of Elevation Church and New York Times best-selling author

“Pastor Mark has done it again! This is a must-read for anyone who has ever felt discouraged or disappointed. Chase the Lion not only helped me take a fresh look at my life’s purpose, but it also gave me the renewed energy to dream big and work hard. Pastor Mark is truly gifted at making God’s Word accessible and encouraging.”
—Mara Schiavocampo, Good Morning America correspondent
“Chase the Lion fosters an expansive mind-set that drives our willingness to dream bigger than ever before. This mind-set is a choice, a decision, and a belief that God designed and created each of us for greatness, nothing less. If we aren’t courageous and bold enough to extend ourselves and believe that God will give us the capacity for greatness, we will have cheated our potential. This book is for anyone scared of not achieving the real greatness they are capable of.”

—Buzz Williams, head basketball coach at Virginia Tech

“Mark Batterson’s writing has had a profound impact on my life, both personally and professionally. Join me in accepting Mark’s challenge to pursue a dream so big that only God can turn it into a reality. Life is better when you’re chasing lions!”

—Kirk Cousins, quarterback for the Washington Redskins

“Mark’s books have inspired me and helped me to inspire our team. Straight from God’s Word, Chase the Lion is a great message for any team and for people in every walk of life.”

—John Harbaugh, head coach of the Baltimore Ravens

“Mark Batterson is an outstanding voice among the emerging generation of pastors in the US. He has much wisdom to offer anyone who wants to draw closer to Jesus, combining brilliantly the vision and clarity of a pioneer with the warmth and kindness of a pastor.”

—Nicky Gumbel, vicar of Holy Trinity Brompton

“I just finished Chase the Lion and am in tears, in awe of how my God created me to be a warrior for His great name. Mark’s words force me to ask and answer: What lions am I chasing? What dreams am I dreaming that will make a difference in my children and my children’s children and a hundred years from now?”

—Hugh Freeze Jr., head football coach at the University of Mississippi
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If Your Dream Doesn’t Scare You,
It’s Too Small

Mark Batterson
To the Lion Chasers
You have faced your fears and chased your dreams.
Keep running to the roar!
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The Lion Chaser’s Manifesto

Quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death.
Run to the roar.
Set God-sized goals. Pursue God-given passions.
Go after a dream that is destined to fail without divine intervention.
Stop pointing out problems. Become part of the solution.
Stop repeating the past. Start creating the future.
Face your fears. Fight for your dreams.
Grab opportunity by the mane and don’t let go!
Live like today is the first day and last day of your life.
Burn sinful bridges. Blaze new trails.
Live for the applause of nail-scarred hands.
Don’t let what’s wrong with you keep you from worshiping what’s right with God.
Dare to fail. Dare to be different.
Quit holding out. Quit holding back. Quit running away.

Chase the lion.
On a snowy day, he chased a lion down into a pit and killed it.

2 Samuel 23:20, NLT

When the image of a man-eating beast travels through the optic nerve and into the visual cortex, the brain relays an urgent message to the body: run! That’s what normal people do, but normal is overrated. Lion chasers don’t run away; lion chasers run to the roar. They don’t see a five-hundred-pound problem; they seize opportunity by the mane. They don’t take flight; they fight to the death for their dreams.

Buried in the second book of Samuel, the twenty-third chapter and the twentieth verse, is one of the most counterintuitive acts of courage in all of Scripture. It’s just 1 of 31,102 verses in the Bible, but it’s my personal favorite. It’s little more than a biblical byline, but it’s become the storyline of my life. My life motto is encapsulated in its message—chase the lion.

There was also Benaiah son of Jehoiada, a valiant warrior from Kabzeel. He did many heroic deeds, which included killing two champions of Moab. Another time, on a snowy day, he chased a lion down into a pit and killed it.¹

Napoleon Bonaparte made a distinction between two kinds of courage—regular courage and two-o’clock-in-the-morning courage. “The rarest attribute among Generals,” said the Little Corporal, “is two o’clock-in-the-morning courage.”²
Chasing a lion into a pit on a snowy day takes two-o’clock-in-the-morning courage. But that one act of courage completely changed the trajectory of Benaiah’s life. The same is true of you. You are one idea, one risk, one decision away from a totally different life. Of course, it’ll probably be the toughest decision you ever make, the scariest risk you ever take. But if your dream doesn’t scare you, it’s too small.

Scripture doesn’t explain what Benaiah was doing or where he was going when he crossed paths with the lion. We don’t know the time of day or his frame of mind. But it does reveal his gut reaction, and it was gutsy.

Put yourself in Benaiah’s sandals.


In the wild, man versus lion scripts the same way every time. Man runs; lion chases; king of the beasts eats manwich for lunch. But Benaiah flips the script. That’s what courage does! I don’t know if it was the look in his eye or the spear in his hand, but the lion turns tail and Benaiah gives chase.

A fully grown lion can run thirty-six miles per hour and leap thirty feet in a single bound. Benaiah doesn’t stand a chance, but that doesn’t keep him from giving chase. He can’t keep pace, but he can track paw prints in the freshly fallen snow. He comes to the place where the ground has given way beneath the lion’s five-hundred-pound frame. Benaiah peers into the pit. Yellow cat eyes glare back.

It’s a made-for-Hollywood moment. Imagine it on the silver screen.

Benaiah walks away from the pit while moviegoers breathe a sigh of relief. But Benaiah isn’t walking away; he’s getting a running start. The audience gasps as Benaiah turns around and takes a flying leap of faith, disappearing into the darkness. A deafening roar echoes off the walls of the cavernous pit, followed by a bloodcurdling battle cry.

Then silence, dead silence.

No one is eating popcorn at this point.

Everyone expects the lion to strut out, shaking its mane. But no. A human form reaches up and climbs out of the pit. Drops of blood color the
snow crimson. Claw marks crisscross Benaiah’s spear arm. But against all odds, the valiant warrior from Kabzeel earns an epic victory.

Closing credits roll.

Then, if I’m producing the film, there is a postcredit scene like in the Marvel superhero movies—Benaiah’s cage fight with a giant Egyptian.

### Chase the Lion

If you find yourself in a pit with a lion on a snowy day, you’ve got a problem. Probably the last problem you’ll ever have! But you’ve got to admit, “I killed a lion in a pit on a snowy day” looks awfully impressive on your résumé, especially if you’re applying for a bodyguard position with the king of Israel.

Benaiah not only landed his dream job as King David’s bodyguard, but his life exceeded his wildest dreams. Benaiah climbed the military chain of command all the way to the top, becoming commander in chief of Israel’s army. The lion chaser became the most powerful person in the kingdom of Israel, save the king. But the genealogy of his dream traces back to a fight-or-flight moment. One decision determined his destiny. And not much has changed in the three millennia since then. You can run away from what you are afraid of, but you’ll be running the rest of your life. It’s time to face your fears, take a flying leap of faith, and chase the lion!

In every dream journey there comes a moment when you have to quit living as if the purpose of life is to arrive safely at death. You have to go after a dream that is destined to fail without divine intervention.

You have to go big or go home.
You have to take the road less traveled or settle for status quo.
You have to bite the bullet or turn your back on your dreams.

I have a theory: your favorite scripture will become the script of your life. I take my cues from 2 Samuel 23:20. That script underscores who I want to be, what I want out of life, and what I believe about God. Chase the lion is more than a nice catch phrase; it’s the metanarrative of my life.

Most of us spend our lives running away from the things we’re afraid of. We forfeit our dreams on the altar of fear. Or we chase after the wrong
things. We’re so busy climbing the ladder of success that we fail to realize it’s leaning against the wrong wall. At the end of our lives, our greatest regrets will be the God-ordained opportunities we left on the table, the God-given passions we didn’t pursue, and the God-sized dreams we didn’t go after because we let fear dictate our decisions.

**No Guts, No Glory**

Most people believe God is real, but few people actually live like it. The result is a widening gap between their theology and their reality. They allow their circumstances to get between them and God instead of letting God get between them and their circumstances. Lion chasers measure everything against almighty God, including five-hundred-pound lions. That’s the difference between being a scaredy-cat and a lion chaser.

When everything is said and done, God isn’t going to say, “Well said,” “Well thought,” or “Well planned.” There is one measuring stick: “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

Faithfulness is not holding down the fort.

Faithfulness is chasing five-hundred-pound lions.

There is a brand of religiosity that seems satisfied with breaking even—**don’t do this, don’t do that, and you’ll be okay.** The problem with that is this: you can do nothing wrong and still do nothing right. Breaking even is breaking bad. God has called us to play offense with our lives. Those who simply run away from what’s wrong will never amount to more than half Christians. The only way to tap your God-given potential, to fulfill your God-ordained destiny is to chase five-hundred-pound lions.

God’s dream for your life is so much bigger, so much better than breaking even. If you focus on not making mistakes, you won’t make a difference. You don’t overcome sin by focusing on not sinning. You need a dream that is bigger and better than the temptations you’re trying to overcome. You need a dream that doesn’t allow you to become spiritually sidetracked, a dream that demands your utmost for His highest.
There is an old aphorism: *No guts, no glory.* When we lack the guts to go after five-hundred-pound lions, we rob God of the glory He deserves. By definition, a God-sized dream will be beyond your ability, beyond your resources. Unless God does it, it can’t be done! And that is precisely how God gets the glory. He does things we can’t do so we can’t take credit for them. God honors big dreams because big dreams honor God.

Destiny is not a mystery. Destiny is a decision—a difficult decision, a daring decision, a counterintuitive decision. You fulfill your destiny one opportunity at a time. Of course, those opportunities often come disguised as five-hundred-pound problems. Landing in a pit with a lion on a snowy day qualifies as a bad day, a bad break. But Benaiah didn’t see it as bad luck; he saw it as his big break.

If you’re looking for an excuse, you’ll always find one.
If you’re looking for an opportunity, you’ll always find one.

Lion chasers have an eye for opportunity. There are amazing opportunities all around us all the time, but you have to see them to seize them. Then you need two-o’clock-in-the-morning courage to chase them.

**The Genesis of a Dream**

When I was nineteen years old, I heard a sermon that would change the trajectory of my life. Sam Farina preached about a man named Benaiah, who chased a lion into a pit on a snowy day. I had never heard the story, and I could barely believe it was in the Bible. But a thought fired across my synapses: *If I ever write a book, I’d like to write a book about that verse.* That was the genesis of a dream titled *In a Pit with a Lion on a Snowy Day.*

It would take sixteen years for that dream to become reality, and I almost gave up on it a time or two. On October 16, 2006, *In a Pit* released with very little fanfare. In fact, it almost didn’t see its second printing. But *In a Pit* beat the odds and inspired a generation of lion chasers to go after their dreams. Ten years later *In a Pit* has a sequel: *Chase the Lion.*

I’m often asked which of my books is my favorite. You might as well ask me which one of my children is my favorite! I love them all, but there is
something unique about seeing your firstborn book on a bookshelf for the first time. *In a Pit* isn’t my best-selling book, but if the measuring stick is life-altering decisions directly resulting from reading it, it might get the grand prize. It’s been a game changer for lots of lion chasers, and I’ll share some of their dream journeys in *Chase the Lion*. Their dreams are as different as they are, but each one has chased a lion in his or her own unique way. I hope their five-hundred-pound dreams inspire you as much as they have me.

In the prequel to this book, I focused exclusively on King David’s bodyguard, Benaiah. *Chase the Lion* is the rest of the story. Like Washington’s inner circle or Lincoln’s team of rivals, David’s thirty-seven mighty men rank as a most remarkable band of brothers. They were insanely courageous, fiercely loyal. Their exploits would be unbelievable if they weren’t recorded in Scripture. And without them, David’s dream of becoming king would have died a fugitive’s death.

Our destiny is more intricately interwoven with others than any of us realize. The goal of *Chase the Lion* isn’t simply to help you discover your dream. The best way to discover your dream is to help other people accomplish theirs! That’s what the mighty men did, and in so doing, their lives surpassed their wildest dreams.

That’s my prayer for you.

May you discover your God-sized dream in the pages of this book, and may you have the courage to chase it. But your greatest legacy isn’t your dream; it’s the dreams you inspire in others! You aren’t just a dreamer; you are a dreamcatcher.

As you begin this dream journey, don’t go it alone. Dreamers love company! Chase the lion with a friend, a spouse, a mentor. Form a pride, just as lions do. Together you can accomplish far more than the sum total of your shared dreams. The God who is able to do immeasurably more than all you can ask will accomplish something way beyond what you can imagine,

And remember, if your dream doesn’t scare you, it’s too small.
Continue reading *Chase the Lion*
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