

To Learn More about *The Cause within You*

If Matthew Barnett's stories from the Dream Center motivated you to serve others and discover the cause within you, you might be interested in the resources available on *The Cause within You's* Web site. There you can find:

- Resources for group, ministry, or church discussion
- Videos by Matthew Barnett to encourage you to discover the cause within you
- Up-to-date information about the Dream Center and its activities

Visit www.thecausewithinyou.com

Introduction to *The Cause Within You*

Discussion Guide

The Cause within You is not a book intended to be simply read; it is a book that should be experienced. While Matthew Barnett's stories are drawn from his work with the Dream Center in Los Angeles, God has placed a cause on each person's heart, and Matthew's goal in writing this book is to help people discover that cause and act upon it wherever they are. To that end, this discussion guide will help you individually or with a group to reflect on, wrestle with, and comprehend the ideas that Matthew presents throughout the book and will provide opportunities for you to place what you've read in the context of your own life. It asks you to draw on your personal experiences to evaluate what you've read and to develop a deeper relationship with God as you pursue the cause within you.

For information about the book and more group discussion resources, visit www.thecausewithinyou.com.

Discussion Guide

Chapter 1: A Night on the Streets

1. Matthew says, “I felt uneasy in my gut. That is often how God grabs my attention” (p. 4). Why might God use uneasiness to grab our attention? How does God get your attention? How do you respond?
2. Why does Matthew spend a night on skid row? What insights does he gain from his experience? How do you “demonstrate solidarity with those [you] serve” (p. 5)?
3. Think about a time when God called you to do something outside your comfort zone. What was that experience like? How did you feel? What did God teach you through that experience?

Chapter 2: Lost and Found in LA

1. How did Matthew’s failure at Bethel Temple open him to the voice of God? How has God spoken to you in your failures?
2. Think about Matthew’s “new eyes” (p. 14) to see Echo Park around him. How did his view of the people in this area and of his reason for being in Los Angeles change? Have you ever experienced a similar eye-opener? Explain.
3. “Sometimes you need to get radical to get right, to get back in touch with the very heartbeat of the cause that lies within you” (p. 16). Have you found this to be true? Explain using personal examples, if possible.

Chapter 3: Sidewalk Celebration

1. Matthew says, “Fear cannot own you when a great cause rules your heart” (p. 19). How is this seen in Matthew’s skid row experience? Have you seen examples of this elsewhere, either in your own life or in the lives of others? If so, list them.
2. On page 20, Matthew refers to inconvenience as a gift. Have you viewed inconvenience in this way? Why or why not? How might viewing inconvenience as a gift change your perspective in difficult times?

3. Lawrence insists that Matthew bring a Bible with him to skid row, and the Bible changes the way others perceive and interact with Matthew. Why do you think this is? Why does the Bible he brought open opportunities for him to share his faith?

4. Describe Matthew's experience panhandling. How might you feel in similar circumstances? Does this affect the way you view those who ask you for money? Why or why not?

Chapter 4: The Reason to Get Out of Bed

1. What is the benefit of serving others instead of ourselves? What does putting others first look like?

2. "When you carry His load, it is light, especially in comparison to the burdens you create for yourself" (p. 40). When have you "carried His load" in the past by operating in areas of your strengths?

3. What does Matthew mean by "our little acts of love have a ripple effect" (p. 44)? Do you agree? Explain with examples.

4. What is the importance of identifying the cause within you now?

5. What do you think of the goal Matthew gives for life: "Use yourself up, doing good wherever you can, until you've got nothing left to give"? What is your initial reaction to this goal? How might your life change if you were to work toward this goal?

Chapter 5: Discovering the Cause of a Lifetime

1. What does it mean to "surrender your will to God" (p. 55)? Do you know people who have done this? What characteristics do they share?

2. "Often your cause is revealed when you are at the lowest point of the valley, not on the pinnacle of the mountain" (p. 59). Do you agree? Why do you think this is? How does Alfred's story support Matthew's point?

3. Caroline says, "I asked God in my prayers why it was happening and felt His response was . . . why *I* was allowing it to happen" (p. 67). How might viewing others' suffering as your own responsibility impact the way you serve them?

4. Matthew suggests being open to invitations to serve, since "that invitation might be the beginning of the adventure that identifies the means to filling the hole in your heart" (p. 70).

How open are you to invitations to serve? What might it take for you to be more open to such opportunities?

Chapter 6: Let Nothing Stand in Your Way

1. “There are things you have to do to survive . . . but the acts that push you beyond survival and provide you with a greater sense of joy are those that make the world a better place” (p. 75). What are the “things you have to do to survive”? Do you feel like you have time for a “cause” in the midst of your necessities? Explain.
2. What do you think of the idea of God’s “progressive revelation” (p. 75)? Can you relate to Matthew’s experience of progressive revelation in his work with the Dream Center? Give examples.
3. What does Matthew mean by “miracle space”? What are his examples of miracle space? What additional examples can you think of?
4. Have you ever been criticized for following God’s call? How did you respond? How can you turn negative criticism to your advantage?
5. Recall the stories that were told in this chapter—of Barry, Matthew, and Alena. What obstacles did they face to fulfilling their cause? How did they overcome those obstacles?

Chapter 7: The Power of a Proper Attitude

1. Matthew says, “If I allow my surroundings to dictate my feelings, before I know it, they’ll dictate my outcomes, too” (p. 98). What is your reaction to this statement? Have you found it to be true in your own life? Offer examples.
2. What is the benefit of learning to love the stage you’re in? Why does Matthew find it crucial to developing a right attitude for service?
3. Discuss Max’s story, on pages 106–108. How does Max come to the point of welcoming the homeless family to stay with him?
4. What is the difference between ambition and mission? Why is mission a better motivating factor?
5. What is the importance of “doing your homework” while engaged in a cause? Why does Matthew suggest devoting yourself to “diligence rather than perfection” (p. 113)?

Chapter 8: Get It Done

1. What does Matthew mean by “think big and act small”? What are your thoughts on this principle?
2. Why is urgency in meeting needs key in pursuing your cause? How does urgency many times force us to act before we are “ready”? Is this a good thing? Explain.
3. Think about the Dream Center’s response to the need created by Hurricane Katrina. How were they able to act so quickly? Imagine how you would act in their situation, and compare and contrast your reaction with theirs.
4. How does Nikki’s story illustrate the necessity of earning the right to be heard? How did Nikki earn that right?
5. How can changing the environment affect the fruitfulness of a ministry? Use Matthew’s stories of Jake or Emilio and Karina, or your own stories, as illustrations.

Chapter 9: Build Your Team to Change the World

1. Why is “partnership . . . a critical element in the pursuit of your dream” (p. 142)?
2. How is the statement “it is incredible how much can be accomplished when you don’t care who gets the credit” exemplified in Matthew and his dad’s roles at the Dream Center?
3. Aaron compares fulfilling one’s cause to an addiction. Does this comparison make sense to you? Have you experienced a cause like this? What other images might you use to illustrate fulfilling your cause?
4. Describe your honest thoughts on prayer. What is its purpose in your life? What rules and limitations (if any) do you impose on it?

Chapter 10: The Right Time to Quit

1. Describe a time when you felt like quitting. What led you to that point? What was the outcome?
2. Why is Matthew’s advice to those who are discouraged in their cause to “give it one more day” (p. 166)?

3. Have you experienced a breakthrough soon after you felt like quitting? Recall your story. How tempted were you to give up before the breakthrough occurred?
4. Why is it important to have balance in life, to “have a life beyond our cause” (p. 175)? How do you seek rest and balance in stressful times?
5. How can focusing on victories help you persevere in your cause?

Chapter 11: The Pleasures of Pursuing Your Cause

1. How does the story Matthew tells about Jim Bakker illustrate the importance of having and pursuing a cause in your life?
2. “Serving people gives you a greater motivation to keep on living” (p. 183). Do you agree? Explain.
3. How is joy related to the cause within you? Why is joy a key indicator of a cause?
4. What are the consequences of not pursuing a cause? What are the rewards for doing so?
5. What has been the strongest argument or example Matthew has given in favor of pursuing your cause? How will you move forward after reading this book?