

SUSIE LARSON

STRONG in battle

Why the Humble Will Prevail



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Strong in Battle • Susie Larson

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To Jesus

Who daily uses the weak to confound the strong.

For yet a little while and the wicked one will be gone
[forever];
Though you look carefully where he used to be, he will
not be [found].
But the humble will [at last] inherit the land
And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity and
peace.

Psalm 37:10–11 AMP

Happy are those who hear the joyful call to worship,
for they will walk in the light of your presence, LORD.
They rejoice all day long in your wonderful reputation.
They exult in your righteousness.
You are their glorious strength.
It pleases you to make us strong.

Psalm 89:15–17

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INTRODUCTION

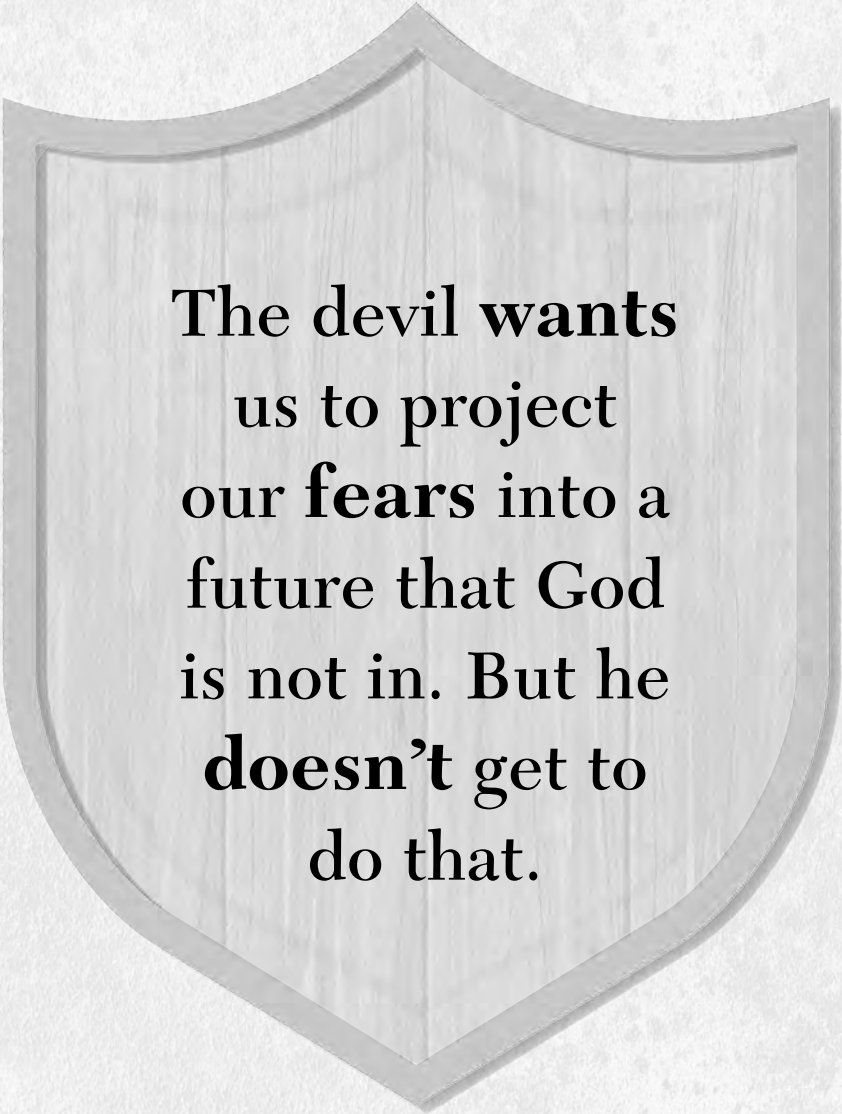
I'm someone who has battled varying levels of fear my whole life. Praise God, I've come quite far in this regard. I'm not at all who I once was. I no longer live in that perpetual state of fight or flight, always bracing for impact. Though I still experience occasional bouts of fear, I now *live* with a holy expectancy because I'm learning to trust God more than I trust my circumstances.

Despite what the enemy seems to get away with in the world, God is always moving in our midst. Every time I look for God on the battlefield, I find Him there—in one way or another. God never claims neutrality. He's indifferent about *nothing*.

I've picked up on an enemy tactic, and understanding it might help you fight and win your own fear battles.

We're afraid to suffer, and the enemy knows this. We figure that if God has allowed us to go through the hardships we've already endured, what trauma must await us around the corner? Add to that stress the oversaturation of angry news and the vitriolic behavior on social media, and before we know it, our souls are ridden with anxiety. How do we begin to deal with the cultural decline when our own private battles already seem to be too much for us?

When we are not anchored to God's goodness, we are easy prey for the enemy. We often fail to realize that the enemy uses the pain of our past along with our fears of the future to build a case against God



**The devil wants
us to project
our fears into a
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is not in. But he
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do that.**

in our minds. The devil wants us to project our fears into a future that God is not in. But he doesn't get to do that. The enemy is a liar. He's terrified that you'll finally get wise to his tactics. He wants you to forget that *absolutely nothing* can or will ever separate you from the profound and committed love of your Father (see Romans 8).

If you are in Christ Jesus, *He is in you*, which means there's no future part of your story where God is not present. When you embrace this truth, you can look back on your past hurts and remind yourself that they didn't get the best of you. And you can look at your present moment and know very well that God is with you here, giving you enough grace to take the next step, enough power, knowing that His Spirit resides in you, and enough purpose to impact the world around you.

You're still standing, and God is in the process of redeeming your story. We are in a battle. It's unwise to expect a life of ease in a day of war. Be wise to the enemy's tactics. Don't fall for his tricks. And don't confuse rest and replenishment with ease and apathy. God *will* still lead you beside peaceful streams. He's well able to restore your soul while the nations are in chaos.

God wants you to exude joy, belly laugh from your toes, and live with audacious generosity. He's also training your hands for battle. This is no time for numbed-out apathy, a life of perpetual leisure, or carnal pursuits that attach you to the things of this world. We need you in the kingdom! And your utter dependence on God *is* your superpower. The God who put the stars in place takes notice of every detail of your life. He is fierce in your defense. He tempers your storm, so you'll come through it more grounded in Him than you ever imagined. You can trust Him.



When I first was called to write this book, I felt a bit like Jonah. Given my constant health challenges, I didn't want to pick a fight with the enemy and put myself in the line of fire. Not a heroic

mindset, I know. Truth be told, I have to slay my inner sissy about five times a day. I bend toward self-protection when I'm not feeling well. But the more culture imploded all around me and fears rose up within me, and the more I heard cries for help in a way that felt beyond me, I knew the battle had amped up, which meant that we as God's people needed to rise up.

So I came up with a faith-declaration statement that I planned to build the book around (i.e., *As a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, I speak with precision, I pray with power, and I walk in authority*). I actually liked it a whole lot. But then I thought of Paul's words, *I put no confidence in the flesh*. Though my faith statements were biblically grounded, that approach didn't feel like the right strategy for me or for the times. My friend and I noted recently that when Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land, it was with a conquering mindset. And that was the Israelites' call for their time. But right now? Quite honestly, I see us more as a people who've been exiled to Babylon. We're called to thrive in Babylon like Daniel did, with a fear of God, deep humility, and profound wisdom.

In a day when people are in love with their own opinion and take constant liberties deciding who's in and who's out, we're putting our knees to the earth and our faces to the ground. Our battle is not against flesh and blood but against principalities and rulers in the heavenly realms. We have *one* enemy, and his name is Satan. On our own, on our best day, we're no match for him. He has studied us our whole lives. He knows our weak spots; he knows about our unhealed wounds and how to trigger our fears. We're like little children in the face of a Goliath of an enemy. Satan's not out to just poke fun at us; he wants to destroy everything that resembles Christ in and around us. But here's some *great* news:

But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.

1 John 4:4

We won't spend a lot of time in this book overanalyzing the enemy's ways because I'd rather we spend that time strengthening our attachment to our perfect Father who promised to get us safely home. We'll explore the fear of God and the profound power of a humble heart. We'll be quicker to identify the enemy's predictable lies so we can overcome them with the truth. We'll sort through our fears, address our faulty mindsets, encourage our hearts, and then we'll stand in the authority that Christ has entrusted to us. We'll tear down every and any perspective that seeks to exalt itself above the knowledge of God.

I'm praying that by the time we're done here, you feel equipped, empowered, and encouraged to stand in faith, knowing you're going to see God move in His time and His way.

I've noticed that the more I rehearse the ways God has come through for me in the past, the stronger my confidence grows that He will carry me through, fight for me, and make a way for me in my current battle. I'm pretty sure we can say that all of our trials thus far have made us better, stronger, and more secure in Him, right? He tempers every storm and filters every attack so there's just enough opposition to make us stronger. The devil is on a short leash. And God has planted grace in every space!

One more thing: Pay attention when you read the Scriptures; notice where God's manifest presence is made known in ways people do not expect. Each time God shows Himself for who He actually is, all of man's self-striving and self-sufficiency go out the window. I want these stories to serve as reminders that God's majesty is beyond anything we can comprehend. Every knee will one day bow before Jesus because when the world sees Him as He actually is, *no one will be able to stand*.

We've gotten used to living without a strong sense of God's presence, and whether it's the result or a cause, we've lost our fear of God. But I believe with everything in me that that's about to change. May we humbly and reverently embrace the mystery of God. The King we serve does not fit in a tidy box or a predictable formula.

And He's not to be trifled with. Up to this point, I fear we've been too sure of ourselves and completely unsure of how mighty God actually is. Jesus is coming for a pure and spotless bride. If our battles don't purify us and make us more like Him, then what did they accomplish? My friend Thann Bennett writes,

We have an irrational fear of the unknown . . .

But for those of us who claim to believe in a God who supersedes and surpasses the bounds of our human minds, it is at the very least inconsistent to walk in fear of the unknown. It is a fear we need to unlearn. We need to unlearn it primarily because the unknown is where the mystery of God abides.¹

The only way we're going to make it through these next few years is by growing more confident in God and less confident in ourselves. Bootstrap theology won't save us. But if we're willing to trust Him, we'll see our God move in ways that just might leave us breathless.

Let's raise a banner to the One who came and who is to come! Our King Jesus is coming for us. He commands us to stay engaged, keep our hearts in it, and live ready for His soon return. So let's live ready.

Living with Holy Expectancy,
Susie

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

A quick note before we get started: At the end of each chapter, you'll find an opportunity for deeper study. I call it *Spiritual Intelligence Training*. This section is for those who want to do a deeper dive into Scripture. We'll learn from some of the conflicts and battles found in the Bible. *This section is purely optional and is ideal for Bible study groups and book clubs.*

Within each chapter, you'll find practical application tools to help you apply the truths you've just read to the battle you're currently facing; this is not fluff or filler, so please don't skip over this important content. *You'll need a journal* to work your way through these sections. (Consider the forthcoming companion guided journal, *Soul Care for the Battle*.) Here's a quick preview:



The Humble Way: We plan to approach our battles in the spirit opposite of what we're seeing in the world right now. We're going low. The degree to which we allow God to deliver us from our pride, striving, self-justification, and self-sufficiency will be the degree to which we walk in Christ's all-sufficient empowering grace. Pride gives the

devil an open-door policy in our lives. Humility shuts the door in his face. God gives grace to the humble, He draws near to the humble, and He fiercely defends those who humbly fear Him. In this section, we'll explore the power of humility in every single battle we face.



Discern the Fiery Arrows: We put up with way too much from the enemy of our souls. In this section, we'll identify the lies, the harassment, and the attack he's aiming at you right now. When the battle is intense, it's easier to define, but it's often his subtle distractions that most often pull us off course. Here we'll learn to discern just what the enemy is up to so we can more effectively shut him down.



Say NO! Ephesians 6:16 reminds us that God has given us a shield of faith to block *every* fiery arrow the enemy sends our way. Your faith, coupled with God's Word, will change the trajectory of the battle every time. I like to say that our shield is how we tell our enemy, "Oh, no you don't!" This section will address ways to stand in faith and block the flaming arrows coming our way.



Say YES! Just as the shield is our way of saying, "Oh, no you don't!" our sword is our way of telling the enemy, "Oh, yes I will!" Your sword is your weapon of offense. Consider your current battle, and

get a vision for what *overwhelming victory* might look like for you (see Romans 8:37). Here we'll get a sense of what God wants us to fight for and what He has for us up ahead. We'll learn how to stand on God's Word more firmly.

Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God [set aside self-righteous pride], so that He may exalt you [to a place of honor in His service] at the appropriate time.

1 Peter 5:6 AMP

ONE

The Battle Is Real

Stay Dependent

In the resurrection, Christ was victorious over the devil and his power. Therefore, Jesus Christ is the permanent ruler of the whole world; the devil is only the temporary ruler of the part of the world that chooses to follow him.¹

Fear and panic jarred me awake in the middle of the night. Disoriented and in a cold sweat, I sat up in bed and looked around the room. Where was I? I shook my head to clear the fog, and then it came to me. I was out of state for a writer's conference and staying with a friend. Down in her basement. By myself. Terror gripped me. My neck prickled with fear. The room felt thick with an evil presence. A terrifying thought grabbed my heart and twisted it.

My youngest son, Jordan, was about to die. I could feel it. Didn't know how. Didn't know when. But the sensation was more real than my very breath. He wouldn't make it out of his twenties. I could barely breathe. I went to the floor, facedown, and cried to God for my son. *Oh, God in heaven, have mercy! Don't take my son at such*

a young age! Intervene. Guard and guide. Protect and provide! I felt no peace. Only terror.

That is what I call a trauma fear. When the enemy comes in like a flood, hits you out of nowhere, and literally traumatizes you with a threat that takes your breath away.

Jordan was in his early twenties when I experienced this. He's now in his early thirties.

How do we discern the difference between a trauma fear and a God-given spiritual warning? One stirs up anxiety and a sense of dread, while the other inspires focused, passionate, faith-filled prayer. We'll talk more about that a little later in the book, but looking back, I realize that *I* was the one who gave the enemy access to torment me. Jordan had been in a wandering season, and it devastated me. The fears I'd left unchallenged within me gave the devil easy access to my soul.

We'd been so intentional (and so *not* legalistic) about following Jesus. We laughed together, enjoyed deep conversations about God, and kept it real at home. Our kids would tell you that they loved God and loved our home life when they lived under our roof. I was flabbergasted when Jordan decided to start partying instead.

The fear that gripped my gut eclipsed my faith. Knowing what I know now, I would have told that fear what's what and put my feet back on the Rock and prayed from my place of authority in Christ Jesus. Because I'd opened the door to fear, the enemy came in and took great advantage of the opportunity. Thankfully, in due time, I learned how to more effectively battle for my kids.

And just a follow-up note on Jordan: He is thriving. He's a wonderful husband, father, and son. Jordan regularly makes us laugh and honestly has more honor than anyone I've ever met. In some ways, he did experience a death of the flesh in his twenties. And he rose up to the life God has for him. The enemy threatened Jordan's life, but God redeemed it.

No matter where your fear and anxiety come from, Jesus cares deeply about your battle fatigue. He not only recognizes the reality of

your battle, but He is also moved with compassion to help you move to a better place than you may find yourself in right now. Maybe your battle involves

- fear for your children's safety;
- prodigal children;
- acceptance (or rejection) of others;
- a troubled marriage;
- estranged family members;
- ill health in a tumultuous world;
- childhood trauma that still impacts you today;
- an accumulation of hard years;
- an acute trauma that actually happened (which has initiated your worst fears);
- your concern about society and where it will take us; or
- the battle within and your rogue thought life.

Or maybe yours is more of a global burden:

- the persecuted church
- widows and orphans
- poverty
- the unborn
- racial injustice
- human trafficking
- corruption in places of power
- unreached people groups

No matter where life finds you, no matter how the enemy opposes you, remember that Jesus loves you. *Deeply*. He cares about the burdens of your heart, and He's moved by the passion in your

prayers. He's not only your Rescuer, but also your Redeemer; He's not only your Defender, but also your Deliverer. He intends to move you from victim to victor, from a defensive position of playing not to lose to an offensive position of running your race to win. He'll work mightily through every nuance of your story for His glory, for the enemy's defeat, and for your victory.

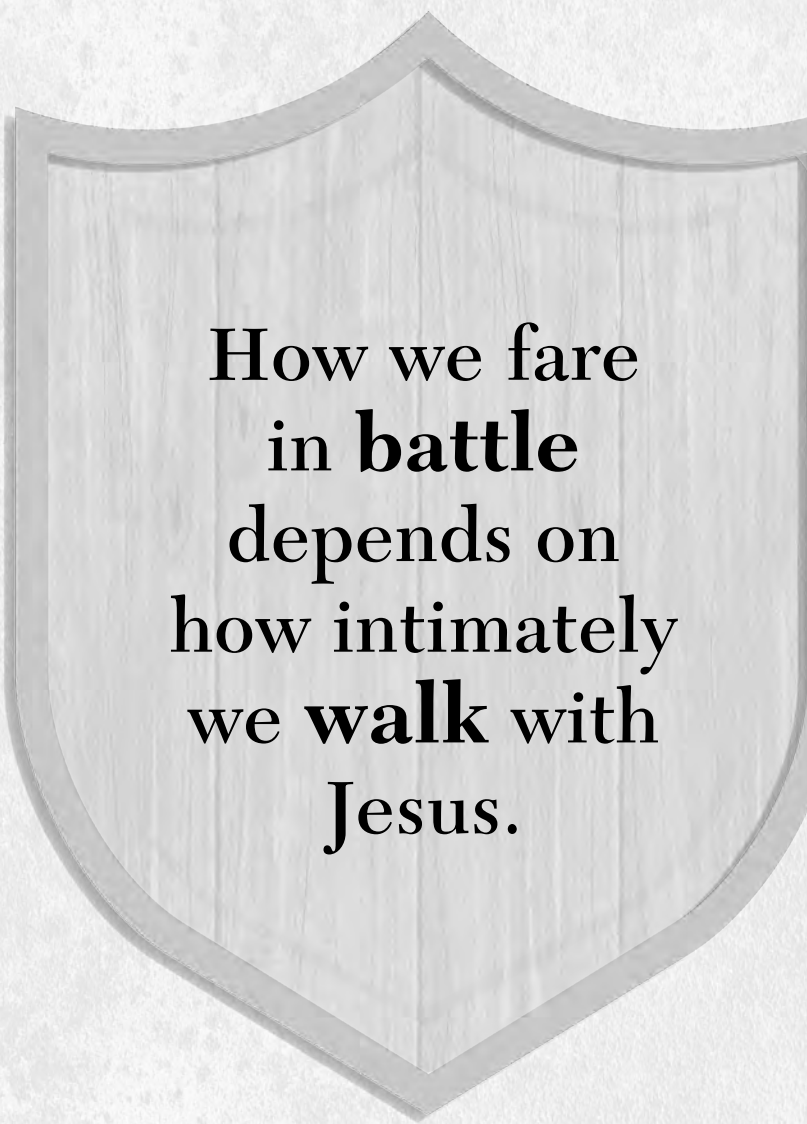
Jesus wants to transform you into someone you never dreamed you could be. He wants to turn your fear into faith, your tendency to self-protect into a passion to step out with purpose. He intends to train you to stand in battle not just for yourself, but for many who right now feel like they're on the losing side of their battle. You are part of a conquering army! When it's all said, the church will stand victorious. Your faith matters more than ever.

Wisdom in Warfare

To be clear, it doesn't always *feel* or *look* like Jesus is winning. But if we believe what we read in Scripture, we can show up to our battles with a strong assurance that God misses nothing, wastes nothing, and uses everything. He will one day turn the tables on our enemy and bring all things together under His glorious rule and reign. Our eyes will see it. Our hearts will rejoice. And we'll be glad we trusted Him.

Still, there's a cautionary word we must consider: Though God promises to get us safely home and use every bit of our story for His glory, that doesn't mean *we'll* automatically win every battle and come out of enemy skirmishes unscathed. Our enemy is cunning and would love nothing more than to batter us, berate us, and cause us to fall into one of his traps. Plenty of Christians take unnecessary beatings from the enemy and endure painful consequences as a result.

It's unwise and contrary to specific scriptural instruction to ignore the Holy Spirit's promptings and lean on our own understanding. When we don't fear God as we should, we trust ourselves way too much. How we fare in battle depends on how intimately we walk



How we fare
in **battle**
depends on
how intimately
we **walk** with
Jesus.

with Jesus. He never made a move without the Father's input, and we must not either.

A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions.
The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the
consequences.

Proverbs 27:12

Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly
before you.
Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be
steadfast in all your ways.

Proverbs 4:25–26 NIV

So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.

John 5:19–20 ESV

The only way we're going to win our battles, the only way we'll ever thrive as an exiled people (until Jesus comes again), is if we walk intimately with God, stay profoundly connected to His Word, live yielded to His precious Holy Spirit, love others deeply from the heart (even when it costs us), and learn to rightly interpret our battles. We're on the winning side. Any defeat is temporary. Every pain will be redeemed. Every loss—in some way, shape, or form—will miraculously be restored.

In the meantime, we must accept the fact that, from here on, there's no room for disengagement or autopilot Christianity. Yes, God calls us to places of rest and replenishment, but always with our hearts engaged, our eyes upward, and our spirits yielded to the Spirit of the Living God.

We're on earth for a short time. And during this time, God invites us to trust Him more than we trust ourselves. We fix our eyes on what we cannot see because what we see is temporary. We lose our way (and our nerve) when we get so caught up in the temporary that we lose sight of the eternal. As the song says, "Jesus has never lost a battle, and He never will."² Whatever He allows in our lives, He intends to redeem. Our trials are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever.

2 Corinthians 4:16–18

That's the goal, isn't it? To be utterly transformed by God's Spirit within us; for our spirits to be renewed day by day though outwardly all seems to be wasting away. The earth and everything in it will pass away. But we were made for eternity! Our setbacks are actually setups for that Great Day when God announces to all of creation that we belong to Him. The whole world will stand in awe when He reveals how He's been working marvelously behind the scenes (and sometimes quite publicly) to carry out His perfect plans for His people. Our God is meticulous and miraculous.

Eternity with Jesus will take our breath away: Unhindered intimacy with God. Abounding joy with no enemy opposition. Fellowship with our brothers and sisters as we share our awe-filled stories of how God intervened in our lives. Together, we'll marvel as we learn about all He provided and all He prevented, and we'll love Him even more than we did before. Jesus' desire to remember our faith-filled deeds and reward us for them will leave us utterly stunned.

If only we could live in such awe today because of those beautiful realities that await us. He makes note of our faith. He moves on our prayers. He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.

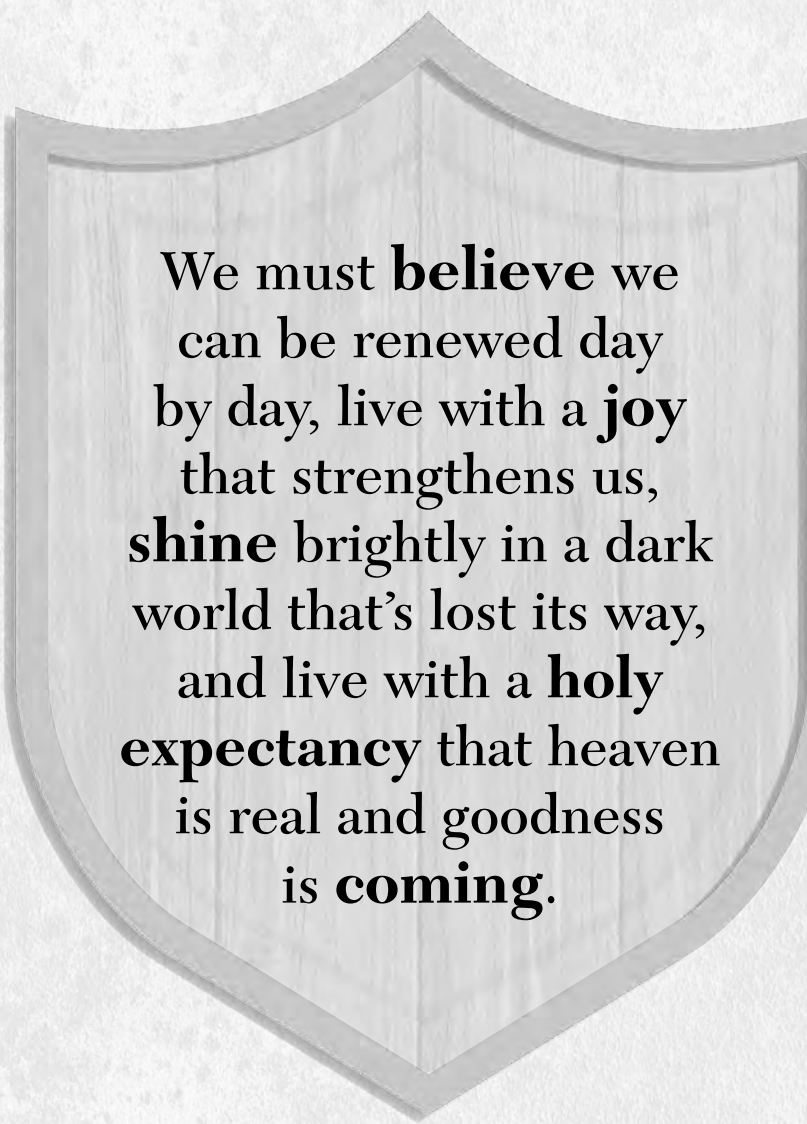


Jesus promises in John 16:33 that on our journey homeward we'll see trouble. Even so, in the same verse, He tells us to “be of good cheer” (KJV), which means to grab hold of courage, take heart, and cheer up! How will the world ask about the hope within us if they see no hope within us?

Does living out that hope mean we slap on a smile while walking through incredible hardship? No. But it does mean that we dig deep, find the fortitude God has put in us, and resolutely fix our eyes on the One who is coming for us and who promises to redeem all things. Especially in this day of battle, we must throw off every shred of apathy and passivity and engage with intentionality:

- *Interrupt* every rogue, inferior thought, and make it bow and submit to Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:5).
- *Receive* God's kingdom power by faith (1 Corinthians 4:20).
- *Believe* that you will indeed be renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16–17).
- *Yield* to the moment-by-moment influence of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16).
- *Trust* that you can live with a joy that strengthens you (Romans 15:13).
- *Shine* brightly in a dark world that's lost its way (Philippians 2:15).
- *Be expectant* about eternity (Revelation 21:4).

Though the battle is real, God is greater still—greater than your fears, greater than your enemies, and even greater than the times we're in. God is developing a warrior in you! He's teaching you how to



We must **believe** we
can be renewed day
by day, live with a **joy**
that strengthens us,
shine brightly in a dark
world that's lost its way,
and live with a **holy**
expectancy that heaven
is real and goodness
is **coming**.

persevere. And He wants you to know how to take care of your own heart. No doubt, some of your battles have taken a toll on your soul.

Don't go too long without acknowledging your need for repair, replenishment, and restoration. Are you offended with God because He allowed some prolonged trial? Hurt that He didn't intervene in a way you'd hoped He would? Are you holding a grudge against someone whose choices have made your life more difficult? Are you just plain exhausted from the fight? Have your fears made you timid and self-protective?

There's no shame here. No condemnation. Bring your whole self to Jesus—the mess, the fatigue, your hopes, and your dreams. Don't think for a moment that just because we're in a time of great spiritual battle, God doesn't care deeply about the desires of your heart. He does.

Ask Him to speak to you about His highest and best will for you. Ask Him to give you audacious faith and vision for your place in this holy race. *Invite Him to help you sort through your losses, hardships, and battle wounds in a way that brings newfound healing, strength, and even boldness.* Put a priority on your soul's restoration; it's the only way to last long and finish strong. Jesus loves to restore souls. And He's right here with you.

Prayerful Reflective Questions

1. *Father, I'm listening. How have my battles impacted me?
What in me needs to be healed and restored?*
 2. *Whom do I need to forgive?*
 3. *How have my trials impacted my view of You?*
 4. *What self-limiting and/or God-limiting beliefs hold me back
from the best of what You have for me?*
-
-



The Humble Way: Our flesh surfaces when the battle rages. We all have stuff in us that needs to go. In Christ Jesus, our status before the King is secure. But our stuff is often what the world stumbles over. To be clear, the world also stumbles over the Jesus in us because many love the darkness more than light. But we never want to attribute persecution to our blind spots and selfish habits. We all have character flaws and fleshly tendencies that need to go. In ever-increasing measures, we must decrease, and Christ must increase.

Always remember, though, in this process, there's *never any condemnation* for you because you're in Christ and He's in you! The enemy is the one who wants to beat you down. Ever and always it's Christ who picks you up, holds you up, and draws you close. He invites you upward and onward, deeper into His heart for you and for the world. And in the process, He increases your capacity to know His love and power in a way that changes you. Don't be afraid of the searching work of the Holy Spirit. Yes, it's humbling. But never humiliating. There's stuff in you that you can't see, but Jesus sees and still loves you with a smile on His face. Such good news, no? However, the enemy is a legalist and he'll look for an open door within you to leverage every opportunity against you. Pray this verse with me, if you will, then write down anything the Lord brings up in you:

Search me, O God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.

Point out anything in me that offends you,
and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Psalm 139:23–24



Discern the Fiery Arrows: Our enemy is the author of confusion. He loves to confuse then accuse, to deceive and then defeat. Before we know it, we're so disoriented by the flurry of chaos that instead of standing in battle, we fearfully run for cover. We shift our gaze onto people and circumstances, and reason that if they wouldn't have or would have done this or that, we wouldn't be where we find ourselves now. Yet, in such reasoning, we discount the sovereignty of God. Yes, man's choices wreak havoc on the earth in ways big and small. But if we truly believe that our great God works all things together for the good for those who love Him and are called according to His purpose,³ we won't spend our lives playing whack-a-mole reacting to things we cannot control.

Somehow, we need to find a way to release our fears and cares to God on a moment-to-moment basis so we can travel lightly and pray boldly. So back to the arrows. Once we're able to step back from the battlefield and remember that the Lord actually is in charge, we can better discern how and why the enemy is trying to take us out.

I've noticed for myself that at times, Satan shoots at unhealed areas that are easily triggerable. For example, it used to be that when specific neurological symptoms surged, my predictable emotional response was fear and then discouragement. Why? Because I never kept things in the present moment where God's grace was available to me. I'd connect current symptoms to old trauma and then project them into a fearful future. Each and every time, I'd crawl out of the ditch and repent for my lack of faith. Then my challenge was to accept His loving grace and not berate myself for stumbling in such a familiar way.

I used to despair over such weakness within me. Now I see it as a God-allowed battle that eventually gave me a strategy to shore up my life with more truth from God's Word—an invitation to heal on an even deeper level.

At other times, however, the enemy's arrows come at me with such fury that I know God is about to break through in some miraculous way. That is enemy opposition in its most predictable fashion.

I don't believe that Satan knows the future, but he's had time to study us, to watch God work, and to see God's angelic warriors mount up on our behalf. I think he senses when our breakthrough is just around the corner, and he pulls out all the stops to discourage us just beforehand. Our charge, then, is to take our stand, submit to God, and then resist the devil, knowing he has no choice but to flee.⁴

Pause now and spend some time with God. Ask Him to help you to discern the arrows aimed at you. Might they be

- rejection?
- fear of the future?
- abandonment?
- sickness?
- distraction?
- insecurity?

Discern the arrows and write them down; see them for what they are. You have one enemy, and he attacks in often predictable ways. But we're not going to put up with it any longer.



Say **NO!** As I mentioned in the book's introduction, the shield of faith is our way of saying NO to the enemy of our soul. God gave us this shield to block every fiery arrow the enemy sends our way.

In addition to all of these, hold up the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil.

Ephesians 6:16

In this section, take some time to dig in to the Word of God and find your combat verses. Here are a few examples to get you started.⁵

Rejection or Abandonment:

For the LORD your God is living among you.

He is a mighty savior.

He will take delight in you with gladness.

With his love, he will calm all your fears.

He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.

Zephaniah 3:17

Fear:

I prayed to the LORD, and he answered me.
He freed me from all my fears.
Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy;
no shadow of shame will darken their faces.
In my desperation I prayed, and the LORD listened;
he saved me from all my troubles.
For the angel of the LORD is a guard;
he surrounds and defends all who fear him.

Psalm 34:4–7

Sickness:

But he was pierced for our rebellion,
crushed for our sins.
He was beaten so we could be whole.
He was whipped so we could be healed.

Isaiah 53:5

Find a verse that speaks to your situation and that deeply resonates with your heart. Write it down. Memorize it. Say it, sing it, pray it.

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Say **YES!** Consider your current battle and get a vision for what *overwhelming victory* might look like for you (see Romans 8:37).

Write down a corresponding verse that speaks to the promise of a great victory in your specific area of struggle. Then write it out in a paraphrased declaration. Here's an example:

Yet I am confident I will see the LORD's goodness
while I am here in the land of the living.

Psalm 27:13

Paraphrased Declaration:

My God is good, and His promises are true! Fear will not have the last say in my life. And I won't have to wait for heaven to get the victory. I *will* see His goodness in the land of the living. My heart is set on Him!



Personalized Prayer

Precious Lord,

I humbly bow before You, acknowledging You as my Savior and King. You know the battles I've endured and the wounds I've incurred. Heal me, Lord! Restore my soul and make me whole! Show me what lies I picked up when life let me down. Show me what's true. And reveal to me afresh my role in the greater kingdom story. Give me renewed faith to believe You

for greater things in the days ahead. I don't want to shrink back in fear or fall down because I'm distracted. Awaken me to Your presence and power this hour. I'm so very honored to be an heir and a part of the coming kingdom. Help me to stay the course and to keep my heart in it. In Your precious name, I pray. Amen.

Spiritual Intelligence Training
WILL GOD MAKE A WAY?

1. When the spies initially scoped out the land *promised by God*, they came back with a fearful report (all but Caleb and Joshua). Their negative perspective infiltrated the camp. Read Numbers 13:25–33 and answer the following questions:
 - a. The land God had promised was a good land. Even the unbelieving spies said so. What did the land offer them?
 - b. What were the obstacles?
2. On the other side of every God-assigned battle is a promise. “Spiritual advance requires faith, and unbelief will never see beyond the difficulties. Unbelief sees ‘walled cities and giants’ rather than the presence and power of God. Unbelief looks at obstacles; faith looks at God.”⁶ Consider the power of a negative perspective. Conversely, ponder the power of a faith-filled one. How have naysayers kept you from stepping out and laying hold of something God had for you?
3. Read Numbers 14:1–4 and notice the crescendo of unbelief that takes place. When our fears become rebellious, we often do four things: 1. We glamorize the past. 2. We accuse God. 3. We project trauma and hardship into our future. 4. We construct a manufactured plan and take matters into our own hands. Based on this passage, write down the four ways the Israelites did these very things.
4. Time for some soul-searching. Consider the list above and prayerfully ask God to show you how fear and unbelief have compelled you to do the same things. (If you have them, give personal examples of these four points.)
5. Let’s read Psalm 106:24–25:

The people refused to enter the pleasant land,
for they wouldn’t believe his promise to care for them.
Instead, they grumbled in their tents
and refused to obey the LORD.

6. God made a promise to His people. He'd already performed miracles that had left them breathless. Yet when negativity, entitlement, and fear took root, the people sabotaged their destiny. We're saved by grace (see Ephesians 2:8–9), and God works all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28). Still, do you think a believer can miss the best of what God has for them? Write down your thoughts.
7. Someone once said, "There are only two things we should fear: (1) God, (2) nothing else." Read Numbers 14:5–44 and consider the contrast between men who humbly feared God and the masses whose fears had become rebellious. What stands out to you?
8. Dependence on God is everything. The abiding life is the miraculous life. Read John 15:5–8 and write it out as a personalized prayer.