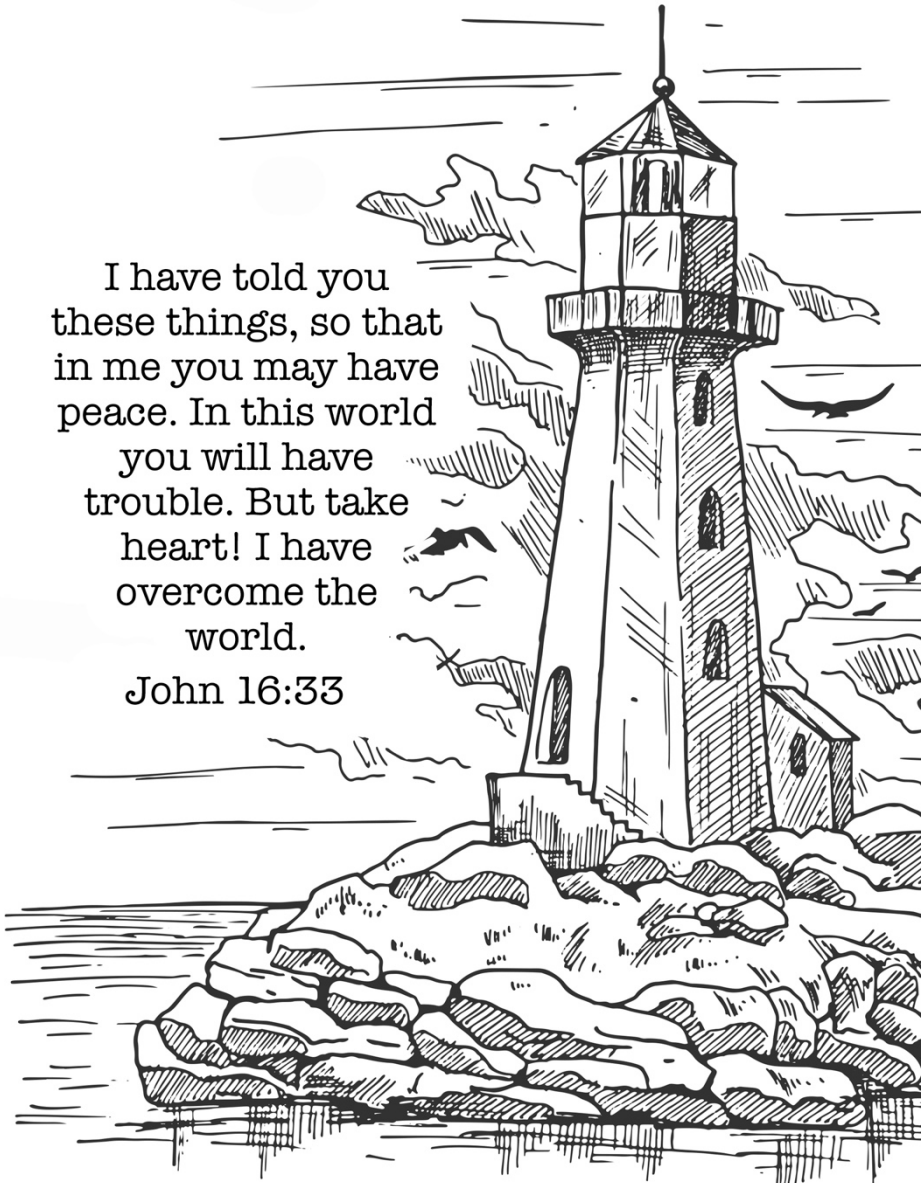


I have told you
these things, so that
in me you may have
peace. In this world
you will have
trouble. But take
heart! I have
overcome the
world.

John 16:33



Chapter Two

FAITH IN HIS POWER

Read: Numbers 14 & Matthew 14



I grew up in the shadow of my sister Bonnie, which is kind of funny, because she's too short to cast much of a shadow. Even so, when it came to personality, she was the star of the show—literally. She played the role of Oliver in our high school musical, and all I got to be was one of many orphaned kids. I guess you could say I was kind of an extra of sorts. I didn't have any lines, I just walked around with a bowl of porridge looking sad with the rest of the cast.

As I got to thinking about that today, I was reminded of Caleb. You don't hear all that much about Caleb. You hear about Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. You hear about Joshua crossing the Jordan and leading the fight in the battle of Jericho, but little attention is given to Caleb, a man of incredible faith. The more I read about him, however, the more I'm intrigued by his courage and spunk.

Caleb's the kind of person you want on your side—loyal, protective, and faithful. In a world of self-centered reliance, his courage was rare. And so, we're going to dig a bit deeper to examine the driving force behind this man of immense courage and strength.

DID YOU KNOW

THE WORD CALEB MEANS "DOG," AND
RIGHTLY SO, AS HE FEROCIOUSLY
PROTECTED THE CHILDREN OF GOD.
HE WAS SPIRITED, LOYAL, AND
FAITHFULLY COURAGEOUS.

WE'RE NOT WALKING ALONE

In the last chapter, we talked about the 12 men that Moses sent out to spy on Canaan. In that same chapter we read,

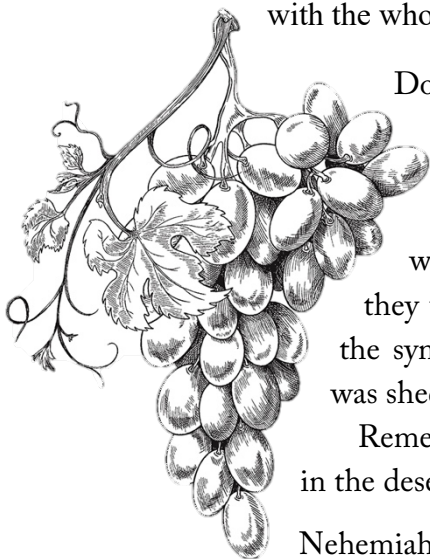
*When they reached the Valley of Eshkol, they cut off a branch bearing a single cluster of grapes. Two of them carried it on a pole between them, along with some pomegranates and figs.
(Numbers 13:23)*

What they were carrying is what's known in the Bible as "firstfruits." The word "first" thus signifying that there is a series to follow. In other words, this was merely a sample of many blessings to come.

In his book, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life*, Billy Graham explained this concept of "firstfruits" by saying:

"One of New York's leading grocery stores exhibited a basket of choice and beautiful grapes in the window. A notice appeared

above the basket announcing: ‘A whole carload like this sample basket is expected in a few days.’ The grapes were a ‘pledge’ of what was to come. The firstfruits are but a handful compared with the whole harvest.”



Do you see the significance of the grapes and the pole between two of the men? It’s symbolic of our Savior, “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” They weren’t walking alone on their journey—they were walking with Christ, as they carried the symbolism of the cross, and His blood that was shed.

Remember how God walked with the Israelites in the desert? Remember the fire and the cloud?

Nehemiah 9:19 says,

Because of your great compassion you did not abandon them in the wilderness. By day the pillar of cloud did not fail to guide them on their path, nor the pillar of fire by night to shine on the way they were to take.

**BECAUSE GOD IS WITH US WE NEED NOT
FEAR WHAT IS AHEAD OF US.**

– UNKNOWN

In the same way God was with His people in the wilderness, He was with the twelve men who went to spy out the land, but most of the

men failed to see this. Instead of putting their faith in the power of God, they foolishly chose to rely on the power of man.

Out of twelve men, only two of them had the courage to stand up against the enemy and fight for the land that God was giving them. What did they have that the other men didn't? They believed that God would fulfill the promise He made to them.

THEY ARE BREAD FOR US

Notice what Caleb says in Numbers 14:9,

Only rebel not ye against the Lord, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the Lord is with us: fear them not. (Numbers 14:9, KJV)

“They are bread for us,” he said. You see, Caleb saw what many Christians fail to see—that trials are the very thing that strengthen us. That the giants we conquer are as bread to our soul, and by the power of God working in us and through us, we grow.

We've all found the courage to face obstacles in our lives. Days when we put aside fear to step out in faith. After all, there are some things we just can't avoid. And then, there are people like David and Caleb—even people you may know today—faithful servants who run to the battle, leaving behind the comforts of home to glorify God.

In Joshua Chapter 14, we see Joshua dividing the land up between the families. Because of Caleb's faithfulness, however, the land was promised to him. And so, rather than simply assigning a



piece of land to Caleb, Joshua gave him a choice. And what did he choose? To dwell in the land of the giants.

"I am still as strong today as I was 45 years ago," he said, "and I'm just as ready to go out to battle now as I was then. Give me the land that the Lord promised me that day and let me go after the giants. With the Lord on my side, I will drive them out just as he said!" (Paraphrased from Joshua 14:10-12)

How often are we willing to say, "Give me this trial?" How many of us are willing to joyfully take on a giant or run to the battle when it comes our way?

WE CAN MINIMIZE OUR FEAR

If you look at an object in the distance while you're driving, you'll notice that the closer you get to that object, the larger it is. Let's say it's a mountain. It might look like a hill from a distance or merely a bump in the road. In the same way, once you get past that object, you'll notice it decreases in size. There's a simple reason for this. Our field of vision is shaped like a funnel that starts in the center of the eye and spreads out. The closer an object is to your eye the more space it takes up in that field of vision.

DID YOU KNOW

ACCORDING TO A STUDY CONDUCTED BY
PSYCHOLOGY GRADUATE, TAYLOR SCHMITZ, AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, "GOOD MOODS
ENHANCE THE LITERAL SIZE OF THE WINDOW
THROUGH WHICH WE SEE THE WORLD,"

Now, let's apply that concept to the way we view fear. The more space we give to our fear, the larger it seems. And so, it's not so much that our problems are big per se, it's the space they're taking up in our thoughts, or our mental field of vision. The less we think about them, i.e., problems we dealt with years ago, the smaller they seem. So, how to we minimize them? We take away their ability to live rent free in our minds.

We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

When we take our thoughts captive, we decide what goes and what stays. We trade lies for the truth. We pull out the weeds and plant flowers. We fill our minds with thoughts that nourish and encourage the soul. When we do that, we put God front and center in our field of vision, until He's the only thing we can see.

**YOU ARE NOT A VICTIM OF YOUR
THOUGHTS. YOU HAVE A VOTE. YOU
HAVE A VOICE. YOU CAN EXERCISE
THOUGHT PREVENTION. YOU CAN ALSO
EXERCISE THOUGHT PERMISSION.**

– MAX LUCADO, A LOVE WORTH GIVING

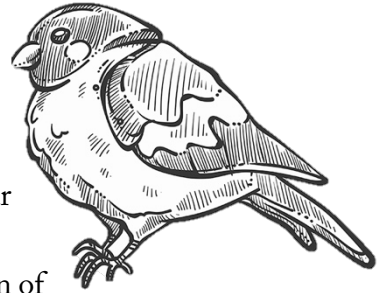
TAKE GOD AT HIS WORD

Some Christians look at scripture as a candy bowl in which they pick and choose their favorite colors to satiate their appetite. They're ready

and willing to do the light lifting when it comes to serving the Lord but shrink back when the going gets tough.

In high school, we had an incredible art teacher. She taught me how to mix colors, how to hold my brush, and how to see what I might otherwise miss.

“The first rule of art,” she said, “is to draw what you see, not what you *think* you should see.” You have to accept that reality and perception are two different things as you let your eyes lead your hand.



You see, the reality of God and our perception of Him might not be the same. The way we perceive God dictates the way we respond to God’s will. The question is, what is our perception of God? And what is it based on?

Caleb’s courage wasn’t based on a loose perception of God, or his own ability to fight, it was based on God’s promise that the land would be theirs. Notice his words, in Joshua 14:10 where he says, “*Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years...*” He had a promise that God would give them the land, and he held to that promise. It’s a child-like faith that takes God at His Word and stands by each promise He’s made.

Isaiah 41:10 says,

So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.

In the same way that they were given a promise that God would help them, strengthen them, and fight for them, we’ve been given the promise of His Holy Spirit. A power within to guide us, teach us, and strengthen us in the spiritual battles we face.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

YOUR VIEW OF GOD – HOW BIG YOU
THINK HE IS – WILL DECIDE THE
SIZE OF YOUR FAITH.
– TONY EVANS

WHO CAN BE AGAINST US?

In Romans 8:31, Paul asks the church, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" Paul is reminding them here, that the power of God is no match for this world.

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, Pharaoh tried everything within his power to keep them under his thumb, but nothing could stop God's plan from unfolding. When the disciples started the early church, they were met with great opposition. They were beaten, threatened, stoned, and imprisoned, but nothing could stop the gospel from spreading. When Joseph was sold as a slave to the Midianites by his brothers, and later imprisoned for refusing Potiphar's wife, God was using those trials to forward His plan.

Stop for a minute to examine your life. What's stressing you out? What's bringing you down? What's breaking your heart? If you are feeling down or afraid, don't lean on a loose perception of God or on your own ability to fight—lean on the promises of God. Open your Bible and start highlighting some verses. Remind yourself often that you're not fighting alone. Pray, asking God for peace, and

power, and strength. Have faith that He's at work in your life even on the days you can't feel it.

The more we read, the more we see the importance of hardship. We see the value of trials and the potential they have to make a person grow. We read the words, "I will strengthen and help you," and we know that we're not going through this alone.

When we're called according to His purpose, we have the assurance that all things will work out for good.

THE SOURCE OF OUR STRENGTH

Some days we say, "I can't do this,"

I'm not good enough

I'm not strong enough

I'm not smart enough

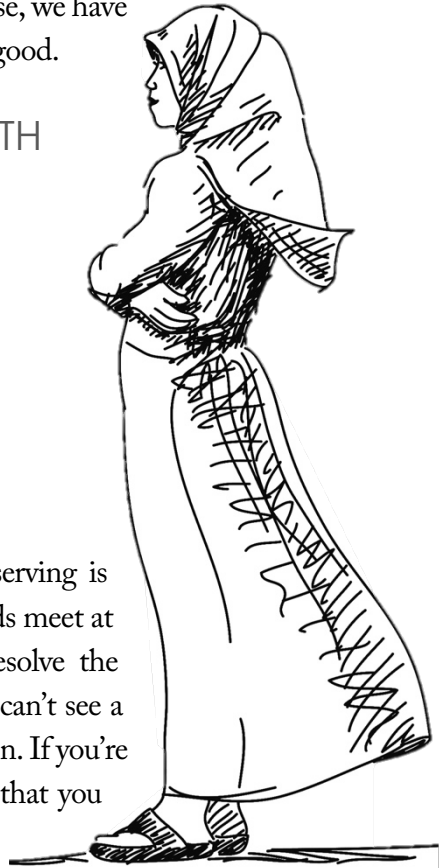
I'm not tough enough

I'm not experienced enough

I'm not brave enough

But here's the thing—the God that you're serving is more than enough. Maybe you can't make ends meet at the end of this month. Maybe you can't resolve the problems in your marriage. And perhaps you can't see a way of this difficult situation you find yourself in. If you're feeling that way, it's time to remind yourself that you serve a God Who specializes in miracles.

On the flip side, some days we take too much credit for things. We forget that there's a driving force behind us. "I did it!" we say. And in that moment of victory, we forget that the power of God is at work in our lives.



I finished my course.

I published a book.

I got the job.

I sold my first piece of art.

I graduated from college.

I found the man of my dreams.

I killed 10,000 men with a donkey's jawbone (this last one is from the story of Samson in case you're wondering!)

Sometimes we need a dry spell—a difficult day to remind us of the source of our strength.

WE MIGHT NOT SEE THE HAND OF GOD

In Matthew Chapter 14, we read how Jesus sent His disciples on ahead of Him in a boat. Later that night, as the wind picked up, they were buffeted by the waves.

Shortly before dawn, Jesus stepped onto the lake and started walking toward them. They didn't recognize Him, and so, at first, they were afraid. As you're reading this story, stop to consider three things:

1. This happened shortly before dawn
2. Jesus walked toward them in the storm
3. They didn't recognize Jesus

Isn't that how life is some days? It's always darkest just before dawn. The storm is raging, the waves are crashing, we're rowing hard against the winds of adversity, and it would seem that our Savior is nowhere to be found, but sometimes we don't recognize Him in the storm.

We might not see the hand of God when we're grieving. We might not feel the warmth of His comforting arms when we're facing our fears. Why? Because perception is deceiving at times. Our brains like to fit God into the comfortable box it's prepared for Him, instead of taking God at His Word.

DID YOU KNOW

IN 1986 AN ANCIENT FISHING BOAT WAS DISCOVERED ON THE SHORE OF THE SEA OF GALILEE. ALTHOUGH THERE'S NO EVIDENCE LINKING "THE JESUS BOAT" TO HIM OR HIS DISCIPLES, IT DOES GIVE US AN EXAMPLE OF THE TYPE OF BOAT THEY MAY HAVE HAD. (WIKIPEDIA)

STEP OUT IN FAITH

Like Caleb, Peter intrigues me. Maybe it's the fact that he's so eager to serve, or perhaps it's because he's so personable. I see a man who loves much, but sometimes his heart runs faster than his head. He reminds me of a new convert so full of love for God, while learning to take their first steps.

There's a great message behind Matthew Chapter 14. As Peter walks on the water, we learn that trusting in God is key to rising above the cares of this world.

In Psalm 69 David equates his suffering to that of being overcome by deep water,

Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in the miry depths, where there is no foothold. I have come into the deep waters; the floods engulf me. (Psalm 69:1-2)

Martin Luther once said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase. I can relate to that thought. When I'm driving on the highway at night, I'm always a bit apprehensive. I can't shake the feeling that the road might suddenly drop off or take a sharp turn. And so, there's an element of faith as I rely on the signs directing my path.

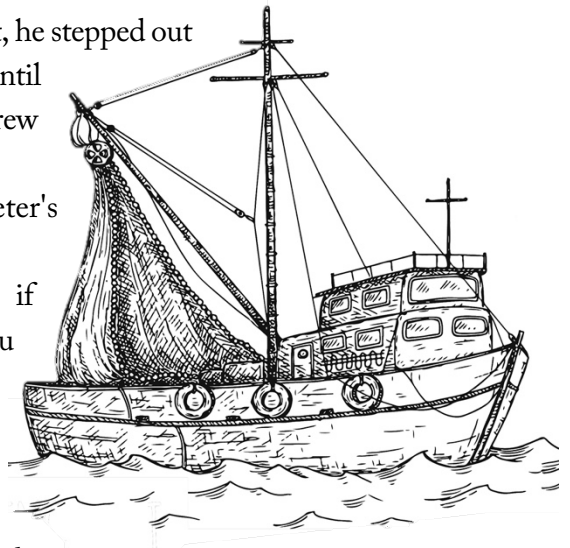
When Peter stepped out of the boat, he stepped out in faith. He was walking on water, until something grabbed his attention and drew his mind away from the Lord.

What was it that grabbed Peter's attention? It was the wind.

Wind symbolizes adversity, and, if you know anything about adversity, you know that it can either strengthen or weaken you. Any time we choose faith over fear, peace over stress, or joy over disappointment we're building the resistance muscle that we need to stand strong.

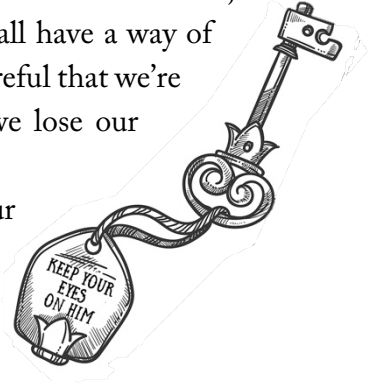
In Matthew Chapter 7, Jesus talks about a foolish man who built his house on the sand saying,

And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (Matthew 7:27)



As we learn from the story of Peter in Matthew Chapter 14, the key to rising above adversity is two-fold:

1. We need to always keep our eyes on the Lord. Problems, difficulties, worries, concerns... they all have a way of distracting us, and so we need to be careful that we're not so focused on our trouble that we lose our focus on God.
2. We need to reach out to the Lord as our source of strength. Psalm 50:15 says, *Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee.*



We don't serve a God Who steps aside when trouble comes. We serve a God Who walks toward us in the storm and sits beside us in the boat. We serve a God Who calms the wind and stills the waves.

The way the world looks at courage is that somehow our minds enable us to face danger. That somehow and somehow we're suddenly fearless. A more Biblical way of looking at courage would be a readiness to surrender to God whether we're fearful or not.

Courageous faith says I'll follow the Lord in spite of my fear, the way Caleb and Joshua did as they entered the Promised Land, the way David did when he ran toward Goliath, and the way Peter did when he stepped out of the boat.

The Bible tells us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, and so we give up ourselves minute-by-minute, day-after-day. We give up our will. We put fear aside. We step out of our comfort zone. We give up control. In return we have a powerful God leading and preparing the way.

PAUSE *AND* REFLECT

What promise were the Israelites given in Deuteronomy 9:3 as they were about to cross the Jordan River?

What promise do we find in Hebrews 13:5?

Looking at Numbers Chapter 13, list three things that intimidated the spies.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

They were especially afraid of the Anakites. Why?
(See Deuteronomy 9:2)

Can you think of a trial you've gone through that strengthened your faith? How did you feel at the beginning, were you afraid? How do you feel about it now?

Look up Hebrews 13:6, to finish this sentence. For God has said: Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. So, we say with confidence:

What does 2 Timothy 1:7 tell us about the Spirit inside us?

What did Joseph say about his struggles in Genesis 50:20? Write the verse out here:

Faith is the bridge between
where I am, and the place
God is taking me.

- Unknown

