

OVERCOMER

OVERCOMER

8 WAYS TO LIVE A LIFE OF UNSTOPPABLE
STRENGTH, UNMOVABLE FAITH,
AND UNBELIEVABLE POWER

DR. DAVID JEREMIAH



W PUBLISHING GROUP

AN IMPRINT OF THOMAS NELSON

© 2018 David P. Jeremiah

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, scanning, or other—except for brief quotations in critical reviews or articles, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Published in Nashville, Tennessee, by W Publishing, an imprint of Thomas Nelson.

Published in association with Yates & Yates, www.yates2.com.

Thomas Nelson titles may be purchased in bulk for educational, business, fund-raising, or sales promotional use. For information, please email SpecialMarkets@ThomasNelson.com.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version®. © 1982 by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.Zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.™

Scripture quotations marked NLT are from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation. © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked PHILLIPS are from The New Testament in Modern English by J. B. Phillips. Copyright © 1960, 1972 J. B. Phillips. Administered by the Archbishops’ Council of the Church of England. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the New American Standard Bible®. Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. (www.Lockman.org)

Scripture quotations marked KJV are from the King James Version. Public domain.

Any Internet addresses, phone numbers, or company or product information printed in this book are offered as a resource and are not intended in any way to be or to imply an endorsement by Thomas Nelson, nor does Thomas Nelson vouch for the existence, content, or services of these sites, phone numbers, companies, or products beyond the life of this book.

ISBN 978-0-7180-8320-5 (eBook)
ISBN 978-0-7852-2432-7 (IE)
ISBN 978-1-4041-0865-3 (Custom)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018951094

ISBN 978-0-7180-7985-7

Printed in the United States of America

18 19 20 21 22 LSC 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

CONTENTS

<i>Prologue</i>	<i>vii</i>
Chapter 1: Overcomer	1
Chapter 2: Overcoming Weakness with Strength	21
Chapter 3: Overcoming Falsehood with Truth	41
Chapter 4: Overcoming Evil with Good	61
Chapter 5: Overcoming Anxiety with Peace	81
Chapter 6: Overcoming Fear with Faith	103
Chapter 7: Overcoming Confusion with Wisdom	123
Chapter 8: Overcoming Temptation with Scripture	141
Chapter 9: Overcoming Everything with Prayer	161
Chapter 10: Overcoming Death with Life	183
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>203</i>
<i>Notes</i>	<i>207</i>
<i>About the Author</i>	<i>221</i>

PROLOGUE

It's hard out there. Sometimes it feels like the world is ripping apart at the seams. Sometimes it feels like your heart can't take any more hurt. But no matter what the world throws at you—*anxiety, fear, confusion, temptation*—you have a choice on how to respond.

You can concede defeat or live in the victory God promises you.

It's easy to say you choose victory, but are you ready to walk in it each day? Are you ready to win this fight against fear? Are you ready to overcome the world in practice and not just in theory?

In this book, I will show you how.

What would happen if you faced your challenges in the name of the Lord? What would life be like if your goal in every situation was to bring glory to His name? What would happen if you fully embraced God's strategy for victory?

If you did those things, you would be living as an Overcomer. And believe it or not, that's who you really are if you have placed your faith and hope in Christ: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

This book teaches you God's strategy for overcoming the challenges you face. How do I know what that strategy is? Because when the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to list the spiritual armor we need to protect ourselves, he wrote:

PROLOGUE

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. (Eph. 6:10–18)

Based on these verses, we know Satan attacks us in at least eight different ways:

- Satan wants to keep you from God's strength.
- He's after your honesty.
- He's after your heart and your righteous life.
- He wants to fill you with anxiety.
- He wants to fill you with doubt.
- He longs to confuse your mind.
- He loves to tempt you to sin.
- He hates it when you pray.

In each chapter of this book you'll learn an overcoming strategy to defeat these attacks. You'll meet men and women in these pages who

PROLOGUE

overcame their own adversity, so you can learn from and be inspired by their determination.

You'll also discover the path to victory over the trials you face in your own life. Yes, all of them: loss, disappointment, betrayal, abuse, injury, lies, addiction, self-doubt, mistakes, grief, anger, anxiety, regret. There's nothing Satan can throw at you that you cannot overcome.

But the time to prepare is now. I cannot stress that enough.

When Satan attacks, you won't have time to google "spiritual armor." You won't have time to phone a friend for advice on a counter-attack. You may not even have time to get down on your knees to pray.

You must be prepared.

In the first chapter, we'll focus on David, the Old Testament's greatest Overcomer. In the last chapter, I'll tell you the story of history's greatest Overcomer, the Lord Jesus Christ. And through the chapters in between, we'll discover eight strategies for overcoming the challenges we face in our lives:

- How to overcome weakness with strength
- How to overcome falsehood with truth
- How to overcome evil with good
- How to overcome anxiety with peace
- How to overcome fear with faith
- How to overcome confusion with wisdom
- How to overcome temptation with Scripture
- How to overcome everything with prayer

The journey of the Overcomer is a wonderful, profound, healing journey. God is all good, and He only gives good gifts—one after the other, again and again—to strengthen you for whatever the future holds. If you open your heart to receive those gifts, He will fill it to overflowing.

PROLOGUE

Living the life of an Overcomer will bring you strength, peace, courage, hope, and joy such as you've never known.

It will also bring victory in your spiritual life. That's important, my friend, because victory is God's purpose for His children: "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57). "Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ" (2 Cor. 2:14).

Join me on this journey to live a life of unstoppable strength, unmovable faith, and unbelievable power in the face of every challenge.

Join me and embrace your God-given destiny—for you are an Overcomer!

CHAPTER 1

OVERCOMER

You'd have to search long and hard to find a more unlikely hero than Desmond Doss, the real-life subject of the 2016 film *Hacksaw Ridge*. And you'd be equally hard-pressed to find a better representative for the theme of this book: how to live as an Overcomer.

Born in Virginia in 1919 to working-class parents, Doss volunteered for the army during World War II. Due to his deep religious conviction that God had called him to never carry a weapon, he trained as a medic and was assigned to a rifle company.

Imagine refusing to carry a weapon yet being determined to go to war! Doss's convictions earned him ridicule, abuse, and contempt from his fellow soldiers and disdain from his superiors, but he never wavered. Terry Benedict, who filmed a documentary about Doss in 2004, said, "He just didn't fit into the Army's model of what a good soldier would be."

But all that changed in April 1945, when Doss's company fought the Battle of Okinawa, the bloodiest battle of the Pacific war. The key to winning Okinawa was gaining a Japanese stronghold atop a four-hundred-foot sheer cliff the Americans called Hacksaw Ridge.

OVERCOMER

A bloody battle raged, but the Japanese held their ground. Finally, Doss's battalion was ordered to retreat.

But Doss could see American bodies strewn across the field, and he knew there were wounded among them. He stayed behind and, with machine gun and artillery fire bursting around him, ran repeatedly into the kill zone, carrying wounded GIs to the edge of the cliff and singlehandedly lowering them to safety in a makeshift rope gurney.

For twelve hours, he repeated this grueling task until he was sure no wounded American was left on the escarpment. By the time he finally left the ridge, Desmond Doss had saved the lives of seventy-five men!

Days later, the Americans took Hacksaw Ridge while Doss lay wounded in a base hospital. When his commanding officer brought him the precious charred and soggy Bible he'd lost in the initial assault, he was told every able man in the company—the same men who once ridiculed him for his faith—had insisted on searching for his Bible until it was found.

For his incredible feat, Doss was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Years later, he was asked how he found the strength to continue that night. His answer was simple. Each time he finished lowering another wounded man to safety down the cliff, he prayed, "Lord, just help me get one more."¹

As Desmond Doss discovered, overcoming is a spiritual issue. But the idea of "overcoming" also has a military meaning: to conquer. As members of God's kingdom, we're called to conquer the barriers between who we are and who God wants us to be. Our goal is to "come over" from where we are today, and to flourish as the person God made us to be.

The obstacles we must overcome fall into three main categories: sin, the world, and the devil. Our own sinful nature is an obstacle; the temptations of the world are an obstacle; and the devil himself is an

OVERCOMER

obstacle. Thankfully, in each case, God has equipped us to overcome every barrier in our path, as we'll discover starting in chapter 2.

In my estimation, David is the Old Testament's greatest Overcomer, and he is the poster child for the lessons we are about to learn. David fought a lot of battles during his life, but it's his first we all remember best—the day he defeated the giant Goliath.

In this first chapter of *Overcomer*, I invite you to take a fresh look at this well-known story. Listen to it as if you'd never heard it before, because I will use it to help you understand what it means to be an Overcomer. As you learn how David found the strength and courage to face down his giant, you'll discover how to overcome the challenges in your own life.

THE OVERCOMER'S CHALLENGE

In Israel today, there's a place where a deep ravine lies between two tall hills. This is believed to be the site where the battle between David and Goliath occurred.

On one hill was the army of Israel. On the other was the army of the Philistines. Down in the valley between them was a plain about one hundred yards wide—the length of a modern football field.

In the middle of that plain, between these two armies, stood a huge man named Goliath. And from the side of the Israelites came a teenage boy named David.

The story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 is not just a story about a boy fighting a giant. It's the conflict of the ages. It's the story of the battle that's raged since Satan first rebelled against God. The story of good versus evil; the challenge to the living God by the devil and his forces.

But first, how did these two unlikely opponents get there?
Let's start with Goliath.

OVERCOMER

The Bible specifically calls Goliath the champion of the Philistines and tells us he came from Gath, a well-known Old Testament city. Gath is the place the spies referred to when they returned to Moses with an evil report about the promised land. It was in Gath, according to the unbelieving spies, that giants existed—giants so huge that next to them they felt like grasshoppers.

One scholar claims that the portrayal of Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 is the most detailed physical description of any man found in Scripture.²

THE SIZE OF GOLIATH

“And a champion went out from the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, from Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span” (1 Sam. 17:4).

During a time when the average man’s height was about five feet tall, the measurements of Goliath are astounding. He stood “six cubits and a span,” which means he was somewhere between nine foot six and nine foot nine.

That would make him at least two feet taller than the biggest players in professional basketball. And more than a foot taller than the tallest human alive today, Sultan Kösen, who measures eight feet three inches tall. But Goliath wasn’t just tall and skinny. He was a huge man who probably weighed between four and five hundred pounds.

THE SIGHT OF GOLIATH

In his book *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*, author Malcolm Gladwell describes Goliath’s armor in detail:

To protect himself against blows to the body, he wore an elaborate tunic made up of hundreds of overlapping bronze fishlike scales. It covered his arms and reached to his knees and probably weighed more than a hundred pounds. He had bronze shin guards protecting

OVERCOMER

his legs, with attached bronze plates covering his feet. He wore a heavy metal helmet. He had three separate weapons, all optimized for close combat. He held a thrusting javelin made entirely of bronze, which was capable of penetrating a shield or even armor. He had a sword on his hip. And as his primary option, he carried a special kind of short-range spear with a metal shaft as “thick as a weaver’s beam.” . . .

Can you see why no Israelite would come forward to fight Goliath?³

To make matters worse, Goliath did not offer a one-time threat. Oh no. He came twice a day for six weeks, standing in the valley and shouting out his challenge every morning and every night.

THE SHOUT OF GOLIATH

Imagine this unnatural, huge beast of a man stomping to the middle of the plain in front of you and bellowing threats.

Then [Goliath] stood and cried out to the armies of Israel, and said to them, “Why have you come out to line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and you the servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us.” And the Philistine said, “I defy the armies of Israel this day; give me a man, that we may fight together.” (vv. 8–10)

What does the voice of a man the size of Goliath sound like? A bellow to shake your soul, is what I imagine. A sound to strike terror into the hearts of the Israelites, as if his size hadn’t already done that. He roared loud enough to be heard on both sides of a plain the size of football field, demanding that one man, just one, come and face him in single combat.

OVERCOMER

And not one man among the Israelites could bring himself to answer.

Single combat was a common practice in the ancient world. Rather than wipe out the enemy and lose all those potential servants, the Philistines preferred to settle their fights economically. Each side sent one man to fight, and those two men fought to the death. The winner's nation was declared victorious.

The loser's nation was enslaved, brutalized, and worse.

Who can blame the Israelites for not responding to Goliath's invitation? Their choice was certain death or certain slavery, and they all understood this. Who among us, doubting our skill and strength, lacking the power of the Lord, would want to be the man who faced that fate?

THE OVERCOMER'S CHARACTER

It was going to take some kind of warrior to confront Goliath. No one in King Saul's army was prepared to accept the job. But then, here came David.

David was the youngest of Jesse's eight sons. Although he had been anointed by the prophet Samuel as the next king of Israel, his time to rule had not yet come and he was still home with his family. Meanwhile, his three older brothers had followed Saul to the battle.

One day Jesse told David to go and check on his brothers, and to take them and their captain provisions. A wise father, Jesse not only wanted to ensure his sons had food, but also that their captain viewed them favorably. And, like any concerned father, he wanted news of how they were doing: "See how your brothers fare, and bring back news of them" (v. 18).

When his father sent him on this errand, it must have been thrilling for the boy to run off and see the armies. But, as excited as he was,

OVERCOMER

he did something significant before he left that morning. He tended to his responsibilities and made sure someone would be caring for the sheep (v. 20).

That's an important point, a small but telling character trait. Overcomers concentrate on details that go unnoticed by others. They do what needs to be done, even when no one is watching.

THE CONVICTION OF DAVID

When David got to the camp, he dutifully found the supply master and gave him the supplies he'd brought. Then he ran to the army and greeted his brothers. As they were talking, Goliath strode out on the field below and shouted his challenge.

David seemed shocked that no one answered. He asked the men around him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel?" (v. 26). The soldiers answered that the king would give that man great riches, his daughter in marriage, and exempt his father's house from taxes.

That was quite an incentive.

While it was hard for David to understand why no one had taken up the call to defend Israel, it was even more appalling to David that Saul had not risen to the challenge himself. Saul stood head and shoulders above all his soldiers, and he was their king; he should have been the one to respond to Goliath's threat in the full power and strength of the Lord.

But Saul's relationship with God had deteriorated so much that he was operating in the flesh. He'd lost his ability to trust in the Living God.

So David volunteered!

THE COURAGE OF DAVID

Before David declared he would fight Goliath, something happened that reveals the human side of overcoming—a side that hasn't

OVERCOMER

changed since biblical times. When David's oldest brother, Eliab, heard him asking about the reward, he was furious.

"Why did you come down here?" Eliab demanded. "And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your pride and the insolence of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle" (v. 28).

David responded, "What have I done now? Is there not a cause?" (v. 29).

This was a brilliant answer. David both deflected Eliab's anger and brought the focus back to the matter at hand. "Don't be angry at me," he basically said. "Isn't there something more important for us to be thinking about?"

When a man or woman decides to be a champion for God, they set themselves up for a lot of heat and criticism. But like David, we can stand firm in our convictions when we are following the Lord and His calling.

THE CONFIDENCE OF DAVID

Then David declared that he would fight Goliath. Imagine the response! There must have been derision, laughter, and disbelief slowly turning to consternation and anger. Or would there have been awe? Surely some of the soldiers felt dread—both for the terrible fate this boy would face and for themselves, with what seemed to be their inevitable fate finally at hand.

When Saul heard of it, he summoned David. At first he tried to talk the boy out of it, reminding David of his youth and inexperience, and that Goliath was an experienced and trained warrior—"a man of war from his youth" (v. 33).

But David was steadfast. He knew his power was in the Lord. His courage was truly a product of his faith in God. Without God, David was powerless against that giant; but with God, he could overcome the fiercest man alive.

OVERCOMER

Unable to talk David out of the battle, Saul offered him his armor. But when David put it on, he couldn't walk. So, he took it all off. It was the king's own royal armor, surely the best in the whole army, but David knew he shouldn't wear it. If he couldn't walk, how could he fight?

THE OVERCOMER'S CONQUEST

Let's stop here and note that the three terms describing Goliath are all physical: size, sight, and shout. But the three terms describing David are all spiritual: conviction, courage, and confidence.

This is a key observation as we witness what happens next.

DAVID'S SLING

David headed for the plain. On the way, he stopped at a brook, gathered five smooth stones, and put them in his shepherd's pouch. With a sling in his hand, he approached Goliath.

It's worth taking a moment to understand the importance of the sling in biblical times:

Ancient armies had three kinds of warriors. The first was cavalry—armed men on horseback or in chariots. The second was infantry—foot soldiers wearing armor and carrying swords and shields. The third were projectile warriors, or what today would be called artillery: archers and, most important, slingers. Slingers had a leather pouch attached on two sides by a long strand of rope. They would put a rock or a lead ball into the pouch, swing it around in increasingly wider and faster circles, and then release one end of the rope, hurling the rock forward.

Slinging took an extraordinary amount of skill and practice. But in experienced hands, the sling was a devastating weapon. . . . In the Old Testament Book of Judges, slingers are described as being

OVERCOMER

accurate within a “hair’s breadth.” An experienced slinger could kill or seriously injure a target at a distance of up to two hundred yards. . . . Imagine standing in front of a Major League Baseball pitcher as he aims a baseball at your head. That’s what facing a slinger was like—only what was being thrown was not a ball of cork and leather but a solid rock.⁴

DAVID’S STRATEGY

When Goliath saw David, he was insulted, even outraged.

“Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” he said, and cursed David by his gods, probably using the name of Dagon, whom David knew to be a false god. This was an insult to the Living God of David.

Then Goliath goaded the boy even more. “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!” (vv. 43–44).

Imagine what Goliath must have thought. He’d been coming to that valley every day for six weeks, waiting for somebody brave enough to meet him in battle, and all he ever saw were Israel’s terrified soldiers. Then he saw a boy with no armor, no shield, and no sword.

Verse 42 says that Goliath “disdained” David, which literally means “he curled his lip.”

David replied:

You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin. But I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you. And this day I will give the carcasses of the camp of the Philistines to the birds of the air and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel. Then all this assembly shall know that the LORD does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the LORD’s, and He will give you into our hands. (vv. 45–47)

OVERCOMER

This was the moment of truth. David had just infuriated the biggest bully on the block, and if God wasn't who David said He was, David would be history. David purposely intimidated Goliath, and in doing so set himself up to win the battle.

DAVID'S SHOT

At that, Goliath moved toward David. And that's when David ran *toward* the giant.

If you were watching from the hill, you'd have seen an enormous armed man start walking toward an apparently unarmed boy. Then you'd have seen something amazing: that boy running right toward the gigantic warrior!

This wasn't bravado. This was strategy. The giant wasn't going away, and David was determined to face him on his terms. So he ran to the point at which his sling's range was most effective. When he was where he wanted to be, he stopped running, quickly took a stone from his bag, and put it in the sling. Then, with years of experience and practice, he "slung it and struck the Philistine in his forehead, so that the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the earth" (v. 49).

Eitan Hirsch, a ballistics expert with the Israeli Defense Forces, recently did a series of calculations showing that a typical-size stone hurled by an expert slinger at a distance of thirty-five meters would have hit Goliath's head with a velocity of thirty-four meters per second [roughly seventy-six miles per hour]—more than enough to penetrate his skull and render him unconscious or dead.⁵

Then David made good on his promise. He ran and stood over Goliath, took the giant's own sword, and cut off the man's head with it.

The next few moments must have been filled with the shocked response of both sides. The Israelites probably thought, *Did I see what*

OVERCOMER

I thought I saw? And the Philistines knew they were in a world of trouble!

As Overcomers, when we reflect on this famous story, there are five lessons to be learned. Let's look at them one by one, through the lens of this story, and through the stories of others who faced similar giants—and defeated them.

When you're facing challenges . . .

REFUSE TO BE DISCOURAGED BY YOUR FRIENDS

Do you remember Eliab's reaction when he heard his youngest brother ask about Goliath? How many times has that happened to you? Have you ever determined to do something important, only to have your closest relatives or friends doubt you?

The sad fact is, we can't always count on those we look up to for support. In fact, sometimes all we can count on them doing is mocking or undermining us, instead of encouraging and standing behind us.

Whenever you want to do something great for God, get ready for your brothers and sisters to give you all the reasons why you'll fail. Often the criticism comes from those who don't have the courage to accept the challenge themselves. Their thinking seems to be that if they're not going to succeed, they don't want anyone else to either.

Be prepared for this challenge. Don't let the defensiveness, resentment, jealousy, or anger of others deflect you from your purpose. No matter how good your idea or goal is, don't expect others to immediately agree with your purpose or vision. You must be determined.

In the 1930s, Andrew Jackson Higgins ran a boat-building company in New Orleans. When America entered World War II, Higgins tried to convince the US Navy it needed a small landing craft with a flat bottom, high sides, and a front-opening portal to land troops in

OVERCOMER

shallow waters that larger ships couldn't reach. But the navy had no interest.

At that point in the war, the focus was entirely on larger ships—battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and aircraft carriers. But Higgins was persistent. Finally, he convinced the navy brass of the need for such a craft, but they chose to design their own rather than give him the contract.

Higgins still refused to be discouraged. He prodded and nagged for two more years, until the navy reluctantly agreed to let him compete with their preferred contractors for the boat's design. Sure enough, Higgins's design was clearly superior. Finally, he was awarded the contract to build thousands of LCVPs (the acronym for Landing Craft, Vehicle, Personnel).

But the story doesn't end there. It ends three years later, on the beaches of Normandy.

We've all seen films of LCVPs being used as landing craft when allied troops crossed the English Channel and stormed the beaches of Normandy, ultimately liberating France and Western Europe from Nazi control. Those were Higgins's boats!

The Battle of Normandy would have been impossible without the shallow-draft boat. General Dwight D. Eisenhower said of Andrew Jackson Higgins, "He is the man who won the war for us."

Indeed, Higgins was an Overcomer.⁶

You may not realize it, but you know of so many others: Abraham Lincoln, raised poor and illiterate, was rebuffed by bankers, voters, employers, and law school deans before becoming president of the United States. Thomas Edison's teachers told him he was too dumb to learn anything—and he was fired from his first two jobs. Walt Disney was fired as a newspaper editor, with his boss saying he lacked imagination. Colonel Harland Sanders was told no 1,009 times by restaurant owners before he found one who'd try his now-famous fried chicken recipe.

OVERCOMER

Get the idea? Sometimes the biggest obstacles we face in life are the people around us, the people we need to convince to support us, or the people of little vision who need us the most.

And that brings us to the next lesson . . .

REINFORCE YOUR FOCUS ON GOD

Before he became the president of Child Evangelism Fellowship, Reese Kauffman was a successful manufacturer in Indianapolis. Some of the lessons he learned in business have helped him in every area of his life and ministry. One of those came in the shape of a canoe.

“One Friday afternoon I drove home in a state of depression,” he said. “I lost four major accounts that week, customers I had worked hard to develop. Losing just one of them would have been a blow, but to lose all four in one week! I could see my business crashing down.”

His wife, Linda, suggested he take the canoe out on the river awhile.

So I launched the canoe into the White River and started paddling upstream toward the bridge. As I paddled I talked to myself, asking myself questions and working through my emotions verbally.

Is God sovereign over my affairs? Yes. Does He love me? Yes, with a love beyond comprehension. Would God hurt me? No, He would never hurt me. He’s my heavenly Father who works everything for my good. If those things are true, what am I worried about? I don’t know.

As I thought through things from a heavenly or biblical perspective, the cloud lifted. My countenance changed and my joy returned. I turned the canoe around and returned to the house a different man. Later I realized the Lord was deleting some smaller accounts that weren’t very profitable anyway. He cleared them out of my agenda to make room for larger and better accounts that were

OVERCOMER

coming. I also realized afresh that it grieves the Lord when we don't trust Him. He has never once failed us. I can't tell you how many times both in business and in ministry I've had to metaphorically get back into that canoe and remind myself that whenever I am fretting it's because I'm not thinking biblically or seeing clearly.⁷

Kauffman learned to get his eyes off the "giant" in his life and onto the God over his life, just like David.

Max Lucado notes that David made only two observations about Goliath:

One statement to Saul about Goliath (v. 36). And one to Goliath's face (v. 26, NIV). . . .

That's it. Two Goliath-related comments (and tacky ones at that) and no questions. No inquiries about Goliath's skill, age, social standing, or IQ. David asks nothing about the weight of the spear, the size of the shield. . . . David gives no thought to the diplomatic on the hill. Zilch.

But he gives much thought to God.⁸

Lucado goes on to list the nine times David referenced the Lord's strength: "God-thoughts outnumber Goliath-thoughts nine to two. How does this ratio compare with yours? Do you ponder God's grace four times as much as you ponder your guilt? Is your mental file of hope four times as thick as your mental file of dread? Are you four times as likely to describe the strength of God as you are the demands of your day?"⁹

It's all right to talk to God about your problems. But sometimes you need to talk to your problems about God. Preach the goodness of God to them. Prophesy the promises of God to them. Proclaim the victory of the cross to them.

Put your problems in perspective, and then . . .