

February 2009 Week 2 TEACHING

Survival of the Fittest...

Are You Ready to do Battle?

The title of this teaching may evoke images of the jungle, where the laws can be brutal and often fatal when an animal's hunger is at stake. Or given the current shenanigans of Wall Street, corporate heads and business moguls who have sold their souls to the devil for the almighty dollar may come to mind. And let's not forget a music industry that makes guns and skulls *must-have* accessories, where some of the most promising talents of our time have lost their lives trying to prove their credibility. All of these scenarios paint a "*me against the world*" scenario that seems surreal and farfetched, but in fact most of our lives have been touched in some way or another by a reality that maybe more ruthless than anything I've written here.

Let me say for the record, I believe in infinite possibilities. I believe we each have a God-given right to dream a beautiful dream for ourselves. We should nurture it, give it all the things it needs to survive, and then hold it in faith until it becomes a living, thriving reality. I seldom interject the world's condition into my teachings because I want folks to keep their eyes stayed on Jesus and their hearts focused on their dreams; our dreams help us to grow in Christ. But I find myself in the most peculiar of circumstances and I can no longer ignore what is happening.

Times are indeed precarious on every front. The war, harsh economic times, and problems facing the family unit in this country are of enormous concern. But instead of folks running to the comfort of our Heavenly Father, they are panicking... and what's worse, they're giving up. Even those who were steadfastly waiting on a breakthrough this time last year, are now abandoning it for a "*just let me get by*" mentality. This kind of defeatist thinking goes against everything that Jesus Christ taught, lived, and died for. It sends a message that a son or daughter of Zion isn't fit to survive when the pressure is hot and heavy.

We now have to come to grips with the fact that expecting a breakthrough isn't enough; it was never enough. It represented the promise of a brighter tomorrow

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in our minds, but it left out some crucial ingredients that some prosperity proselytizers have neglected to include. That crucial ingredient is our unwavering commitment to our Heavenly Father's agenda.

Past sins are coming home to roost. As the dirty laundry of indulgent and self-aggrandizing tycoons and public figures is aired, and the perplexities of a changing climate and diminishing peace in the world is among us, we can't help but think that a cataclysmic upheaval is stirring in that higher spiritual dimension. There's a spiritual battle going on and all signs point to these being our last days. But hold up....wait a minute! (*this is where you hear the screeching noise of brakes coming to an abrupt halt.*) Did we miss something? Did the foretold and much anticipated period of jubilation and abundance pass us by? I think not.

Spiritual warfare is nothing new. Times are perilous, there's no denying that. It's a jungle out there, and it may get worse, but the Christian has no excuse. God told us in 1Peter 5:8, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*" Did we think God was kidding around? For years I have warned that we will all face a point in our lives where we would need the full accompaniment of the armor that God has supplied. We need it to keep our heads above water. He has been incredibly patient with us and given us plenty of time to have enough ammunition in our spiritual reserves. And yet, many of us are still not ready...if we had to do serious battle this very moment, we would not be ready.

Some of our co-workers and friends are in the fight of their lives. They've lost their source of income and don't know how they'll make it. We think to ourselves, "*but for the grace of God go I.*" But what if it happens to you? What if you too are hit by some unforeseen event that devastates your reality. Don't wait until it happens, get prepared now!

How do you do that? How do you get prepared for whatever comes your way? Well the first thing to know is that what God has promised He is faithful to deliver. This is not the time to be quaking in your boots, but to have faith and sure up your commitment to the things of God. Take a cue from Joshua 1:

Joshua 1:1-9 NLT

1 After the death of Moses the Lord's servant, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun,

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Moses' assistant. He said,

2 "Now that my servant Moses is dead, you must lead my people across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them.

3 I promise you what I promised Moses: `Everywhere you go, you will be on land I have given you-

4 from the Negev Desert in the south to the Lebanon mountains in the north, from the Euphrates River on the east to the Mediterranean Sea[fn1] on the west, and all the land of the Hittites.'

5 No one will be able to stand their ground against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.

6 "Be strong and courageous, for you will lead my people to possess all the land I swore to give their ancestors. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Obey all the laws Moses gave you. Do not turn away from them, and you will be successful in everything you do.

8 Study this Book of the Law continually. Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey all that is written in it. Only then will you succeed.

9 I command you-be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua was getting ready to do some pretty powerful things amidst a daunting set of circumstances. Moses had been the leader of the children of Israel. He was admired by all and he had just died. Joshua knew that the Israelites didn't have an impeccable record of following directions, and yet he was handpicked by God to lead them into the promised land.

God made a promise to give them a land of rest, and He fulfilled that promise. He has promised in 2 Corinthians 3:6 to be our sufficiency, to take care of us no matter what is happening around us. And He will fulfill that promise as well. But a promise is a promise only if there are at least two parties who are willing to have faith in it, the one who makes it and the one who receives it.

Joshua 1 set a tremendous precedent for how we are to respond to our end of the bargain regarding God's promises. God said *"look, I'm fulfilling my promise here, but you need to be strong and courageous. Don't get all wobbly and flake out about the drama...drama comes, drama goes, but you're still my people. Obey all the laws that I've given you, because they'll keep you safe and out of the devil's*

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territory. Don't turn away from it and success will follow you everywhere you go. Be a craftsman of my Word. Study it all the time. Meditate on it day and night. If you do this, I guarantee you will be set for life. Now remember, don't flake out when trouble is all about you, just keep doing what I've told you to do and you'll be just fine." This was God's instruction to the children of Israel, and it is His instruction to us as well.

In the King James Version, Joshua 1:7 reads " ... *do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go.*" God said when it comes to His Word, don't turn to the right or to the left, just keep your eyes stayed upon Him. This is how we prepare ourselves for battle. You don't have to scurry about in a state of panic. You don't have to claw your way to the top. You simply have to know that God is who He says He is. You have to stand on His Word, which means you have to study it and know it for yourself.

It should have taken the children of Israel a few weeks to get to the land that God had promised them, but they wondered around in the desert for 40 years because they failed to trust God implicitly and to heed His Word. It took them 40 years to get their game together, and in the meantime, Joshua was honing his skills so he would be prepared for whatever God had in store for him.

This is your "*Joshua*" time. While it looks to everyone else to be a season of uncertainty and gloom, it's an opportunity for you to reprioritize, redevelop, and renew your relationship with our Heavenly Father. It's a time to get your house in order.

And lastly, about our breakthroughs, well we must never give up on them. But as you can see, it isn't enough to just expect them, we have to prove that we are prepared to seize them and usher them in with a deeper commitment to the faith, one that reflects our courage to stand firm even in times like these.

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